



**LANGUAGE TRANSITION AND EPISTEMIC ACCESS: THE  
TEACHING AND LEARNING OF ENGLISH AS FIRST  
ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE**

**By**

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**A Thesis in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree**

**MASTER OF EDUCATION (M.ED)**

**at**

**University of the Western Cape**

**Faculty of Education**

**Department of Language Education**

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**TITLE:** Language Transition and Epistemic Access: The teaching and learning of English as First Additional Language in the Foundation Phase



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## KEYWORDS

Epistemological Access, First Additional Language (FAL), English, Grade 3, Foundation Phase, Language Transition.



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## **ABSTRACT**

South Africa is a multicultural and multilingual country, with eleven official languages which include English, Afrikaans, IsiXhosa, IsiZulu, IsiNdebele, Sesotho, Setswana, Sepedi, TshiVenda and Xitsonga. While the nine African languages have official status, they are used for teaching and learning in the Foundation Phase (Grades R – 3) only. English is accorded high prestige and status, and it is used as the main Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) from Grade 4 to tertiary level. This occurs mostly in schools with African language-speaking learners only, while English and Afrikaans speaking learners maintain their home languages as LoLT from pre-primary to tertiary education.

This study argues that if learners do not have a solid foundation in their home language and in the first additional language (FAL), they may not cope with the demands of the Grade 4 curriculum where English additional language is used as the main LoLT. Therefore, this study explored the teaching and learning of English (FAL) in Grade 3 and the extent to which it prepared learners for transition to English LoLT and their epistemic access to knowledge in Grade 4.

The Constructivist and Sociocultural theories were used to understand how the teaching and learning of English LoLT occurred in the selected Grade 3 classroom, in an under resourced township school in the Western Cape. The study made use of a qualitative research approach. Data were collected by means of classroom observations, interviews and document analysis. Interviews were conducted with the Grade 3 class teacher, the Head of Department (HOD) and the principal. Data were analysed thematically.

The findings of the study show that the Grade 3 teacher made use of learner-centred strategies in teaching English. However, the learners were not challenged to think critically. Learners had reading and writing difficulties, as well as low proficiency in English. The study concludes that English (FAL) is a barrier to Grade 3 learners' epistemic access to learning and it could negatively impact on their transition to English LoLT in Grade 4.

## DECLARATION

I declare that *Language Transition and Epistemological Access: The Teaching and Learning of English as First Additional Language in the Foundation Phase* is my own work, and that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university. I further declare that it contains no section copied in whole or in part from any other source unless explicitly identified in quotation and acknowledged by complete referencing.

Full name: Molopetsane Naketsana

Date: January 2019

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Signature



## DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my children: Tadiwanashe Salizwa, Tinotenda Jay and Tshepiso Terry for their patience and support throughout my study. I love you so much, babies.



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the following people for their input in my study and their support that gave me the courage to continue and look for meaning in my research work.

Firstly, to my Lord and Saviour; thank you for the Grace and Mercy that you have given me. Thanks for granting me the opportunity and strength to pursue this study. I always put my trust and faith in you as I believe that if you are with me, nothing is impossible.

Prof. Vuyokazi Nomlomo, thank you for being such a caring supervisor. Thank you for all the effort and advice that you gave me throughout this process. Your support throughout this project was amazing. You brought my research to life and nurtured me into a young researcher.

Dr. Michelle van Heerden, thank you for your support throughout my study. You became more than a mentor. Your encouragement and support kept me going through challenging times.

To my mother, Mpho, thank you for giving me life and taught me that I must have a purpose in life. Thank you for your support and everlasting love. Thank you for being a good motivator and my pillar of strength in my life.

Lloyd Kapfumbe, thank you for your support as we embarked on this journey together. You became selfless and played a big part in motivating me throughout my study journey.

## ACRONYMS

ANA	- Annual National Assessment
BICS	- Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills
CALP	- Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
CAPS	- Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement
CTLI	- Cape Teaching and Leadership Institute
DBE	- Department of Basic Education
DOE	- Department of Education
FAL	- First Additional Language
GR	- Grade
HL	- Home Language
L1	- First Language
L2	- Second Language
LiEP	- Language in Education Policy
LoLT	- Language of Learning and Teaching
MT	- Mother Tongue
MTBBE	- Mother Tongue Based Bilingual Education
PIRLS	- Progressive in International Reading Literacy Study
PRAESA	- Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa
PSP	- Primary Science Programme
SACMEQ	- Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality





- TIMSS - Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
- UNESCO -United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
- WCED - Western Cape Education Department
- ZPD - Zone of Proximal Development



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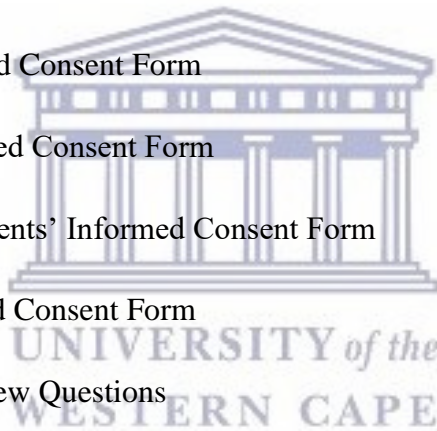
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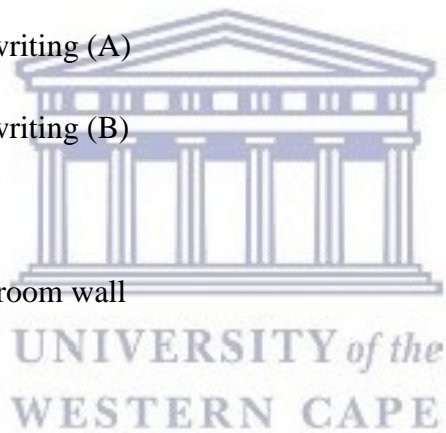
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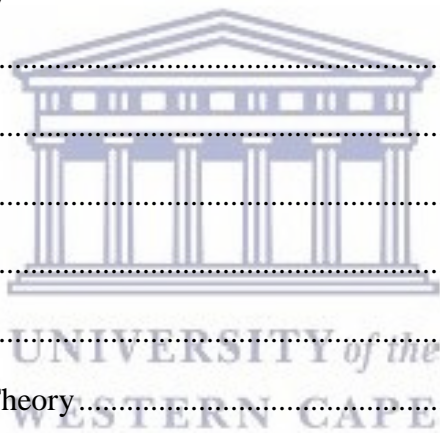


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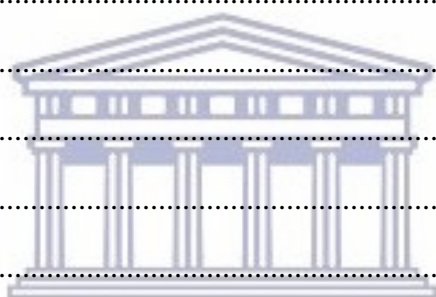
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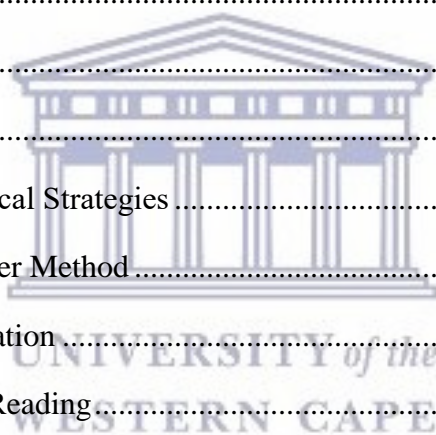


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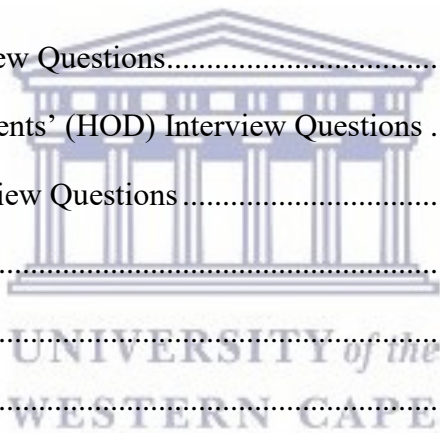
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# CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

## 1.1 Introduction

Globalization, transnational flows and migration across borders result in the preference and hegemony of English. Kramsch and Whiteside (2007) highlight the emergence of a geopolitical shift after the 1990s and the ways that the displacement and migration patterns have resulted in English as the preferred lingua franca. The hegemony of English is perpetuated as an international language; people everywhere are now opting to use English for business and economic purposes. This pattern is also evident in South Africa where there is rich linguistic diversity, due to people that have migrated to the Republic, yet the only language that facilitates communication in formal domains is English.

Since democracy, the South African government declared eleven official languages, namely IsiXhosa, IsiZulu, IsiNdebele, Sesotho, Setswana, Sepedi, TshiVenda, Xitsonga, English and Afrikaans in terms of Section 6 of the Constitution Act (No. 108 of 1996). Thus, the country acknowledges linguistic diversity in Section 6 (5) of 1996 and language rights in Section 31 (11) of 1996 and National Languages Policies (Department of Arts and Culture, 2003). The Constitution makes clear that all languages must enjoy the “parity of esteem” and be treated equally. Enhancing the status and use of indigenous languages was the first measure to regulate and monitor the use of all official languages in formal domains. As a result, the Department of Education (DOE) restructured the Language in Education Policy that was to be affected by the two policies; the Language-in- Education Policy in terms of Section 3 (4) (m) of the National Education Policy Act, 1996 (Act 27 of 1996) and the Norms and Standards. The Language Policy is part of Section (1) of the South African Schools Act, 1996 (Department of Education, 1997).

Language restructuring in the Language-in - Education Policy (LiEP) (1997) advocates an additive bilingual approach and stipulates that the South African children have the right to receive mother tongue education. However, additive bilingualism seems to pose challenges for many African-language speaking learners because they receive mother tongue (MT) instruction in the Foundation Phase only (Grades R – 3) and switch to English Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) from Grade 4. There are many reasons given for this situation such as the economic, political and upward

social rewards that English proficiency brings. For these reasons, many parents want their children to be taught through the medium of English so that they can access the academic and market spaces but not realising the unintended consequences, it holds for the development of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) necessary for success in learning across the curriculum. In this study, I focus on how Grade 3 learners were taught English First Additional Language in order to prepare them for transition to English LoLT in Grade 4.

## **1.2 Background and Context**

Across the globe linguistic diversity has become popular and it receives attention in many education spaces due to migration. Mother Tongue Education (MTE) has been a matter of debate for more than a century in Africa, as learners who are not home language speakers of English have to learn through an additional or second language in which they have limited proficiency. Since 1953, UNESCO has put an emphasis on the maintenance of mother-tongue education as a focus in research. It has been reported that there are benefits in learning through the mother tongue medium. In fact, UNESCO (1953) states that individuals start to formulate and express their ideas and thoughts through the mother tongue (MT). This has reinforced the importance of mother-tongue instruction and the role of language as a form of identity and cultural expression. UNESCO (2010) also points out that the Mother Tongue Bilingual or Multilingual Education for the children needs to start in early childhood. It sheds light on the role of the policy-makers and researchers on MT instruction in early childhood and in the early primary school years. It raises awareness of the value of maintaining the world's languages and cultures by promoting and resourcing Mother Tongue-Based Education (MTBE) for young children (UNESCO, 2010).

However, in the South African context, this is not the case. The call for MT instruction has been suggested by organisations such as the Project for Study of Alternative Education in South Africa (PRAESA). Bloch (2012) emphasises the importance of Mother Tongue Instruction (MTI) and questions the marginalisation of African languages in education. Bloch's (2012) work is supported by the Language-in-Education Policy of 1997 that supports additive bilingualism whereby learners are encouraged to learn through the medium of their MT in the early years of schooling (i.e. in Grades R-3). For many, this can be perceived as a "de facto" situation as some schools do not use

MTI regardless of the objectives of the LiEP (1997) which promotes additive bilingual education (Department of Education, 1997).

Based on our South African Constitution (1996), the country recognises eleven languages to be official in terms of Section 6 of the Constitution (Act No. 108 of 1996), on the grounds that their usage includes about 98% of the total population. With this in mind, it can be assumed that even in the education sector this will be the case as the country introduced the democratic Language-in-Education Policy (1997) that aims at promoting additive bilingual education. The LiEP aims to eradicate racial and linguistic discrimination and foster learners' equal access to, and success in education.

However, the LiEP objectives have not been properly implemented and realised in many schools. As mentioned above, African language-speaking learners receive MTI in the first three years of their primary school education and are expected to suddenly switch to English instruction from Grade 4 throughout tertiary education. As a result, their academic achievement is negatively affected. Bloch (2012) claims that it needs at least several years to know a language well. Cummins (2000) shares the same view that it takes a very long time for learners' to reach competency in their second language. This implies that strong MT skills are necessary for learning as they influence learners' epistemological access to learning.

Young children might struggle to learn through an additional or second language due to the differences in grammatical, syntactical and morphological rules, which influence their sense of self and cultural identities. Achievement and upward social mobility can be difficult in an additional language (Baker, 2006). A high level of proficiency in the MT facilitates the acquisition of an additional language (Apple & Muysken, 1987). Therefore, MTE is necessary for cognitive, social and individual development of children and English can be taught and learned as an additional language.

### **1.3 South African Schooling Context**

As mentioned earlier the majority of learners in many South African schools receive their tuition in an additional language from Grade 4 -12 (Howie, Venter & van Staden, 2007). Yet, the demographics show that English is spoken by only 9.6 % of South African citizens as a Home Language (Crawford, 2008). Probyn (2015) states that 7% of learners are English home language

speakers, while 81% of the learners use English as Language of Learning and Teaching from Grade 4. This implies that 81% of learners get exposure to English at school, and this is determined by the number of available reading materials in English at their schools, as well as the resources such as the library, books, and so forth that can support learners to access information in English.

The Progressive in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) of 2006 showed that South African learners in Grade 4 achieved very low scores for literacy (Howie et al., 2007). In fact, this international literacy test highlighted that South African learners performed at the lowest benchmarking level (Howie et al., 2007). It may be argued that the shift from mother-tongue instruction after Grade 3 has implications for South African learner's literacy performance rates.

In their analysis, Howie et al., (2007) argue that the poor literacy performance shows the cognitive challenges that African learners face when they shift from mother tongue to the English LoLT in Grade 4. Their findings indicate that there is a vast gap in reading literacy achievement between those learners who are learning in their home languages (Afrikaans and English) and those who learn in an additional language. In addition, it seems that the LiEP has not been uniformly implemented nor advocated well, although the parents are the ones who want their children to be educated through the medium of English due to its association with socio-economic benefits. The mismatch between the learners' home languages and LoLT is a big concern in education (Nomlomo, 2007). Hence, Breidelid (2003) argues that there is an education crisis in South Africa that is created mainly by the language situation. In other words, the LoLT issue is still a concern as it was during the apartheid regime in South Africa. Learners in the township and rural schools struggle to cope with the demands of English FAL at school as they have limited proficiency in it. Therefore, an early shift to English LoLT negatively affects learners' academic performance.

Furthermore, many scholars concur that our education system fails to provide quality teaching and education to "multicultural learners" in a diversified population (Probyn, 2010; Howie et al., 2007; Nel & Muller, 2010). In other words, the education system is not able to cater for all the South African official languages and does not have the necessary resources to implement mother tongue education. According to Paxton (2009) an opportunity should be granted for learners to learn through the medium of their home language to mediate and scaffold their learning. Furthermore, mother tongue instruction can contribute towards an affirmation of learners' identity and competence and can enhance learners' epistemological access to knowledge. Hence, this study

investigates how Grade 3 isiXhosa speaking learners are taught through the medium of English First Additional Language (FAL) in a township school in Cape Town.

Taylor and Coetzee (2013) argue that in order for South African children to gain equal access to meaningful learning in schools, they need to become proficient in the English FAL. In other words, the underdeveloped proficiency in English FAL has implications for the academic success of those learners who are non-English speakers (Taylor & Coetzee, 2013). For example, the PIRLS (2006; 2011) and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) of 2011, show that South African learners performed poorly compared to their counterparts (Howie et al., 2007; Taylor & Coetzee, 2013). This could be a reflection of how the LoLT factor contributes to learners' academic performance. An early transition to English as LoLT seems to pose academic challenges for non-English speaking learners. Thus, this study investigates the teaching and learning of English First Additional Language (FAL) in Grade 3 of the Foundation Phase.

#### **1.4 Problem Statement**

While the democratic government gave equal status to all South African official languages, it appears that in most schooling contexts this is not the case. Many schools make an early shift of the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) at Grade 4. This occurs in schools with African language-speaking learners only, whereas other schools maintain the learners' home language as LoLT from pre-primary to tertiary education. The latter applies to English and Afrikaans speaking learners only. This situation simply puts the learners who come from non-English backgrounds at a disadvantage that impacts on their epistemological access to knowledge. Baker (2006) argues that learners can learn an additional language at a young age. However, this becomes a problem for the First Additional Language (FAL) learners if they are learning English as a subject or additional language, and are also taught through its medium. This results in learners not achieving academically due to lack of adequate proficiency in English.

As indicated above, according to the PIRLS (2006) report the learners who performed better in this test were the English and Afrikaans HL learners who were tested in their home languages, while the African language speaking learners performed poorly (Howie et al., 2007). The report clearly shows that the language of testing was a problem as the learners were not able to

comprehend questions and express themselves very well in English. This problem influences the development of academic literacy for the non-English HL speakers.

The challenges of the LoLT issue are not provided in the PIRLS (2006) report only. The Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ III) survey of 2007 also shows that the South African primary education has a big challenge in mathematics and reading literacy (Spaull, 2011). Spaull (2011) claims that the Grade 6 South African learners performed below the 50% mean score in mathematics and literacy. Also, this test was conducted in English or Afrikaans, leaving the majority of the learners at a disadvantage when compared to other learners who are home language speakers of English and Afrikaans.

Additionally, the Annual National Assessments (ANAs) showed low performance by South African learners (Spaull, 2013). The ANAs of 2011 showed that a large number of the learners in the country do not meet the curriculum demands, especially at Grade 3 level (Spaull, 2013).

Furthermore, the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) (2006) reported that the literacy and numeracy skills in the province are below the grade level and learners are not developing academically. In other words, the Grade 3 learners do not meet the expected outcomes for the grade. The report shows that only 36% of the learners achieved the reading and numeracy outcomes that are expected of the grade (WCED, 2006).

The Grade 3 learners' underachievement in literacy is a great concern as these learners have to transition to English LoLT in Grade 4 where they are expected to learn all subjects (except other languages) in English. In this study, I argue that if learners do not have a solid foundation in their home language and first additional language, they may not cope with the demands of the curriculum where an additional language is used as a LoLT. It is against this background that this study explores the teaching of English FAL in Grade 3 level and the extent to which it prepares learners for the transition to English LoLT and epistemic access to knowledge in Grade 4.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

This study is underpinned by this main research question:

To what extent does the teaching of Grade 3 English FAL provide epistemic access for IsiXhosa-speaking learners when they have to learn through English as LoLT in the Intermediate Phase?



### **1.5.1 Sub questions**

1. What strategies do teachers use to teach English (FAL) in Grade 3?
2. What are the challenges experienced in the teaching and learning of English FAL at Grade 3 level?
3. What linguistic competency is required for successful completion in Grade 3 and for a transition to English LoLT in Grade 4?
4. What are the implications of linguistic competency for learners' epistemic access to learning across the curriculum?

### **1.6 Research Aims and Objectives**

The main purpose of this study is to investigate how English First Additional Language (FAL) is taught in Grade 3 to enhance learners' epistemic access and transition to the English LoLT in Grade 4.

In light of the above, the study sought to achieve the following objectives:

1. To observe and analyse the teaching approaches used by Grade 3 teachers in English FAL in the Foundation Phase (Grade 3).
2. To investigate barriers to the teaching and learning of English FAL and how teachers addressed them.
3. To understand linguistic competency appropriate for Grade 3 learners in English FAL to facilitate their transition to English LoLT in the next Grade.
4. To determine the implications of Grade 3 learners' language competency for epistemic access to knowledge across the curriculum.

### **1.7 Research Methodology**

This study used a qualitative research methodology, which made use of a case study design. Data were collected by means of classroom observations, interviews and document analysis. The

interviews were conducted with three participants: the class teacher, the Head of the Department and the Principal in order to get their views on the teaching of English FAL in Grade 3.

The observations entailed sitting in the Grade 3 English FAL classroom and analysing the teacher's pedagogical strategies. Interviews were used to triangulate classroom observation data while the document analysis was conducted to examine the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for English FAL for Foundation Phase (Grade 3). Other documents such as print materials in the classroom, the learner's written work and the textbooks were examined and analysed.

The collected data from the observations and interviews were audio recorded and were later transcribed and analysed in order to draw up a better understanding of how Grade 3 learners were taught English FAL. Details of the research methodology are explained at length in Chapter 3.

### 1.8 Definition of key terms

The following terms will be defined to highlight how they are understood and used in this study:

1. **Epistemic access:** Epistemic access refers to access to knowledge and meaningful learning required to achieve learning outcomes (Morrow, 2007). In this study, epistemic access is used to refer to meaningful learning in English FAL lessons.
2. **The Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT):** The DBE (2010) defines Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) as a medium in which learning and teaching, including assessments, takes place. This study uses LoLT to refer to the language of instruction in the Grade 3 classroom.
3. **Language Proficiency:** According to the DBE (2010) language proficiency means the level of competence at which an individual is able to use a language for both basic communication tasks and academic purposes. This study uses language proficiency to indicate the level of language competence of both the teacher and learners in English FAL.
4. **Language Transition:** This term is used to refer to the shift in the LoLT used in Foundation Phase (Grade 3) which is the learners' home language, and the LoLT used from Intermediate Phase (Grade 4) which is the FAL.

5. **First Additional Language:** According to the DBE (2010) this is a compulsory language subject that learners have to study in addition to their home language. In this study, FAL is used to refer to English which is taught as a first additional language or second language.

6. **Grade 3:** Grade 3 is the last grade of the Foundation Phase in the General Education and Training (GET) band. It is the exit to the Intermediate Phase (Grade 4-6) where the transition to English LoLT occurs.

### **1.9 Significance of the study**

It is anticipated that the findings of this study will shed light on the cognitive academic language proficiency needed for epistemic access in Grade 3. The study will contribute to knowledge on the pedagogical practice in English FAL in disadvantaged settings. It is envisaged that the study will inform the language policy with regard to the teaching and learning of English FAL, and the extent to which it can either be a facilitator or a barrier to learners' academic achievement. The findings should create awareness with regard to the role of language in enhancing learners' epistemic access to learning and the disadvantages of using an additional language as LoLT.

### **1.10 Chapter Outline**

This study consists of five chapters. Below is a short description of what each chapter covers:

#### **Chapter 1: Background and Context**

This chapter introduces the study and gives a brief background to the study. It outlines the aims, research problem and the research questions that guide the study. In this chapter, the key terms used in the study are highlighted and defined.

#### **Chapter 2: Literature and Theoretical Framework**

This chapter deals with the conceptual and theoretical frameworks which underpin the study. It also discusses the related empirical studies that informed this study.

### **Chapter 3: Research Methodology**

Chapter 3 deals with research methodology. The research methods chosen are discussed to show how they fit the purpose of the study. It also provides the school context and the research design that was used in this study.

### **Chapter 4: Data Presentation and Analysis**

The data are presented and discussed in this chapter. The data are analysed in order to provide explanations and interpretations that address the objectives of the study.

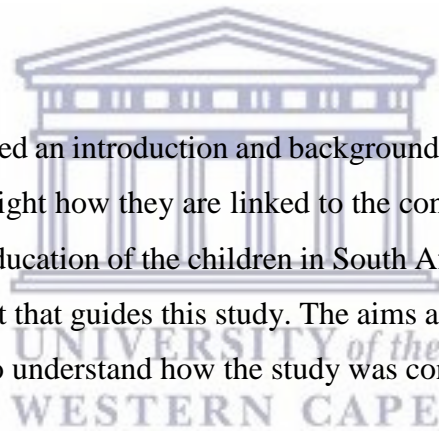
### **Chapter 5: Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations**

The findings of the study are provided in this chapter. The recommendations are given to contribute towards a scholarship in English FAL. The conclusion of the study is also given in this chapter.

#### **1.11 Chapter Summary**

In summary, this chapter provided an introduction and background to the study. Language policies were reviewed in order to highlight how they are linked to the constitution of the country and the implications they hold for the education of the children in South African schools. The chapter also discussed the problem statement that guides this study. The aims and the research questions of the study were discussed in order to understand how the study was conceptualised.

The next chapter focuses on the literature review and theoretical framework that has informed this study.



# **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

## **2.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature and the theories that support the teaching and learning of a First Additional Language in the early grades of schooling. The aim is to gain an understanding of how English First Additional Language is taught and mediated in Grade 3 for transition to English as a Language of Learning and Teaching in the following grade.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section deals with language policy issues and it is followed by the conceptual framework and related empirical studies. The Conceptual framework is based on the concepts of Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), the Threshold Theory, the Four Quadrant Language Model and the Input Hypothesis. These concepts are discussed in relation to learners' epistemic access to learning. Finally, the theoretical framework focuses on the Sociocultural and Constructivism theories that illustrate how learners construct meaning in their learning.

The chapter starts by discussing language issues such as the South African Language in Education Policy (LiEP) and its implications for learning. Below I discuss the South African language history.

## **2.2 The role of Language in Education**

Language is a powerful tool that can be used to convey meaning. It is not just as a linguistic vehicle for communication, but it also represents one's identity. Individuals need to have a language in order to be able to talk and express themselves. Alexander (2012) highlights two fundamental roles of language, namely, language as the ability for individuals to realise their intentions by means of language empowerment and language as a tool for disempowerment whereby individuals or groups of people impose their languages on others (Alexander, 2012). This implies that if one is proficient in a language, one is likely to command power and can access information easily. Conversely, limited or lack of proficiency in a language may lead to cognitive and social disempowerment.

Language is regarded as a good source of power that functions as a transmission mechanism of culture (Alexander, 2012). In other words, language plays a role in the formation of individuals and social identities. Education uses language to produce and reproduce the society it wants, and it creates cultural identity and causes social inequality in diverse communities (Martin-Jones & Heller, 1996). Educationally, not all the learners have equal epistemic access to learning due to the LoLT used in schools. For example, learners who are taught through the medium of English FAL are denied equal access to meaningful learning when compared to their counterparts who are taught in their home language (e.g. speakers of English and Afrikaans in South Africa).

The role of language can be examined through Bourdieu's (1979) notion of production and reproduction. Bourdieu (1979) states that language is a social construction in that it values the central role of symbolic domination whereby the most powerful language becomes a norm or acceptable to the minority groups. In this instance, people do not question why a particular language is the only one with prestige, but they regard that language as a symbol of power and status. Thus, Bourdieu's (1979) concept of reproduction and production becomes relevant in this study, as the differences in LoLT create inequalities within the education system. While the LiEP recognises the value of all the official languages, the post-apartheid education system in South Africa still reinforces the superiority or hegemony of English in relation to the African languages. In this way, schools reproduce the social and linguistic inequality that limit the use of African languages for meaningful learning and teaching. According to Martin-Jones and Heller (1996), the production and reproduction of relations of power and inequality are legitimised through language beliefs and are accomplished through social practices. This implies that the education system plays a role in creating language inequalities in the classroom. In line with Bourdieu's (1979) theory, the education system in South Africa marginalises African languages, as they are not conferred power for socio-economic development. For example, the development of technology and science shows the power of English and its high status (Pluddemann, 2010). Again, this shows that post-apartheid African languages are still not developed as academic languages.

Over the past two decades research in South Africa has shown that learners taught through the medium of an additional language often struggle academically and they demonstrate low academic performance (Nomlomo, 2007; Nomlomo & Vuzo, 2014; Spaull, 2013, Taylor & Coetzee, 2013; Probyn, 2015; Alexander, 2012; Bloch, 2012, Pretorius, 2015; Heugh, 2013).

According to Makoe and McKinney (2014) language ideologies are beliefs, values and cultural frames that inform which language should be presented and conceptualised as having more prestige power than others. Language ideology may affect learners' full linguistic repertoires, which could be used for resourceful learning (Makoe & McKinney, 2014). In other words, language ideologies influence the policy and practices in the classroom.

In the educational domain, language choice is influenced by ideologies that determine language power and prestige (Martin-Jones & Heller, 1996). In other words, the language ideologies come to play where certain interests are being served at the expense of others. For instance, African languages are used as the language of learning and teaching in the Foundation Phase (Grade 1-3) only, as stated in Chapter 1. Transition to English medium of instruction occurs at Grade 4 whereby African-language speaking learners are instructed in English, which is their second language, or third language, while English and Afrikaans learners maintain their home languages up to Grade 12 and beyond (Howie, Venter & van Staden, 2007). This is due to the legacy of the colonial and apartheid language policies. In the following section, I discuss the Colonial and Apartheid language-in-education policies and their impact on children's education.

## **2. 3 South African Language History**

The language history of South Africa is discussed below. It is based on three eras: the colonial era, the apartheid era and the post-apartheid or democratic era. Firstly, I discuss the colonial and apartheid language policies

### **2.3.1 The Colonial and Apartheid Language-in-Education Policies**

Africa as a continent was colonised by different states such as France, Germany and Great Britain. During the colonial era, the colonisers introduced their languages to Africans at the expense of the local African languages (Heugh, 2003; Alidou 2004). For instance, when South Africa was colonised by Britain, English had to be learned in schools and this gave power to those few who could afford to attend schools as they could communicate with the colonisers (Alidou, 2004).

According to Nomlomo (2007) and Heugh (2003), the colonial language policy promoted the use of English as a medium of instruction in schools instead of using African languages. This language policy followed transitional and assimilationist approaches whereby the colonisers did not

recognise the African languages to support education for African learners (Nomlomo, 2007). The assimilationist approach is based on the belief that other cultures must give up their heritage and take on the host's way of life (Baker, 2006). In the context of this study, the assimilationist approach could be explained by the fact that African language speaking learners have to learn through the medium of English First Additional Language in order to be able to compete in the job market. This approach perpetuates linguistic inequality and learners' unequal opportunities of epistemic access to learning. Ndimande-Hlongwa and Ndebele (2017) argue that the hegemonic status of English imposed during colonialism in Africa has led to the devastating effect of misleading educational possibilities and weakened the value of the African languages in learning. This implies that African language-speaking people have now accepted that their languages are inferior to English, hence, they want to their children to be educated through English.

The Colonial language policy aimed at promoting the colonisers' languages and the European economic and political interest, at the expense of local African languages (Alidou, 2004; Heugh 2003). As mentioned earlier, when Britain colonised South Africa, English became the medium of instruction in the country.

Similar patterns of exclusion can be seen in the apartheid language policy for education. The Nationalist Party that ruled in South Africa in 1948 was not different from the colonial government. The National Party government also marginalised African languages as it allowed English and Afrikaans as the only official languages. According to Nomlomo (2007) and Ndimande-Hlongwa and Ndebele (2017) the apartheid language policy preserved the interest of the white children, as they were taught in their own languages (English and Afrikaans), while African children were taught in both languages that were not their mother tongues. In this way, African children were not given an opportunity to access knowledge through their home languages, thus depriving them epistemic access to learning.

The apartheid government introduced the Bantu Education Act in 1953 which reinforced educational inequality in the country along racial lines (Heugh, 2003). This education system made use of the mother tongue as the language of learning and teaching until the end of primary school (Grade 1-8). According to Heugh (2003), this was a recommendation created by the Eiselen Commission which forced African learners to learn both in English and in Afrikaans as the



languages of learning and teaching from Grade 9 upwards. This was to be achieved by learners using both languages on a 50/50 basis (Heugh, 2003).

Although the apartheid policy was not meant to benefit an African child, research shows it produced better academic results that were based on the late transition to English FAL medium of instruction (Heugh, 2003; Nomlomo, 2007). This implies that the delayed transition from HL to FAL, which was eight years of MTI, seemed to have prepared learners well when they had to switch over to the FAL language of instruction in the ninth year of schooling (Heugh 2003; Nomlomo, 2007).

Both the colonial and apartheid education policies reproduced an education system that denied African learners opportunities to meaningful learning as the languages used for teaching-learning were a barrier to their learning (Nomlomo, 2007). These systems created a space that did not support the development of African languages to be used for educational purposes. It is within this context that I argue that the colonial and apartheid regime created an impression to parents that in order for a child to learn properly, they needed to be educated through the medium of English that had prestige and power. Mother tongue education was despised as inferior education and its benefits in learning were ignored (Nomlomo, 2007). It was associated with poor education that aimed at producing learners who would not be able to compete with white children academically, socially and economically.

When South Africa gained democracy in 1994, the new government changed the policies in order to redress the imbalances of the past. The new policy introduced the idea of additive bilingualism, which is a way of recognising language diversity by learning additional languages. In the following section, I focus on the post-apartheid Language-in-Education Policy, which promotes multilingualism as a means of redress and equity.

### **2.3.2 Post-apartheid Language-in-Education Policy**

The Language-in-Education Policy (LiEP) (1997) is viewed as part of the national plan and democratic process brought by the post-apartheid government in South Africa. According to Braam (2004) the aim of the LiEP is to pursue a new direction for the country's education, whereby the state moves towards the additive bilingualism approach. In other words, the sole principle of this policy is to allow learners the right to be educated in their mother tongue, while they are

provided access to the global language, namely English. The Department of Education's language policy (1997) supports the continuous process of developing all the eleven official languages in the country, including the sign language. Furthermore, it focuses on multilingualism and gives a right to parents to choose the LoLT for their children. This implies that the parents are the ones who can choose the medium of instruction for their children although it appears that many parents are ignorant of this option as they still allow schools in their communities to use English FAL as the main medium of instruction (Nomlomo, 2007).

According to Mayathula (2001) the LiEP's principle is to maintain the home language while providing access to additional languages. The aim of the LiEP is to:

1. Promote full participation in society and the economy through equitable and meaningful access to education;
2. To pursue the language policy most supportive of general conceptual growth amongst learners, and hence to establish additive multilingualism as an approach to language in education
3. Promote and develop all official languages;
4. To counter disadvantages resulting from different kinds of mismatch between home language and the languages of learning and teaching (Department of Education, 1997:2).

In line with the aims of the LiEP 1997, all the learners in South Africa have to receive education in their home languages for meaningful learning. However, it seems that there is a mismatch between the intended policy and practice as the learners who are not English home language speakers are instructed in their FAL. Additive bilingualism is not fully implemented as the schools located in non-English communicates are using English FAL or second language as a LoLT. This practice contradicts the aims of the policy, which promotes the development of all languages for equal epistemic access to learning.

The LiEP is supported by the South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1996, which states that South Africa promotes bi/multilingual education. However, English still dominates as a LoLT in many South African schools because it is regarded as a global language and it is associated with economic growth (Mayathula, 2001). African languages are used as LoLT from Grade 1-3 only. Assessment of learning is facilitated through the LoLT and this puts learners at risk of failure,

especially the African language-speaking learners in the township and rural schools who have limited exposure to English.

Alexander (2012) argues that at Grade 3 level learners' proficiency skills in English are still underdeveloped for this language to be used as the main LoLT in the Intermediate Phase. Hence, many learners are often negatively affected by the LoLT shift at Grade 4 level.

For meaningful learning to take place, learners must have a sound knowledge of the LoLT. In the following section, I discuss the role of language in learning and how it influences learners' learning and scholastic achievement.

## **2.4 Language and Epistemological Access to Learning**

In his work, Morrow (2007) uses the term “epistemological access” to refer to meaningful learning. Access may imply “physical access” and “epistemological access.” Physical access has more to do with allowing learners to be enrolled in schools i.e. the ability to physically access schools. Physical access is based on the number of learners enrolled in a particular school while epistemological access to learning entails a form of education that enables meaningful learning to achieve the learning outcomes. According to Morrow (2007) new ways of teaching in South Africa are needed.

Lotz-Sisitka (2009) refers to epistemological access as a problem of an empiricist dominance in epistemology in education. While physical access may be attained by learners, epistemological access may not be achievable due to the use of different languages in teaching and learning. In other words, if learners are instructed in a language that they are familiar with, they are likely to achieve the intended outcomes of the curriculum and are able to make sense of the learning content.

Language is a social construct and its role is to communicate (Heugh, 2013). In education, it becomes important as it is used to facilitate interaction between teachers and learners. It facilitates effective communication that leads to an understanding of the subject content. Language communication reflects a sense of identity and meaning making by learners. When learners fully understand the language, they are able to express and reflect their thoughts meaningfully.

In the multilingual society of South Africa, learners enter schools with oral proficiency in their home languages, yet they are expected to use these languages for a very short period of their

schooling i.e. from Grades 1-3 only. As mentioned earlier, the LiEP promotes additive bilingualism by allowing learners to be taught in their HLs while learning an additional language. Yet in practice, learners have to adapt to English medium of instruction from Grade 4 and beyond.

According to Benson (2004) instruction through the language that the learners do not speak is holding them under water without teaching them how to swim. This implies that learners face academic challenges, as the language becomes a barrier to their learning. In the South African context, the issue of transition from HL to FAL seems to pose challenges for both learners and teachers, as it is not a smooth progression (Nomlomo & Vuzo, 2014). Learners often demonstrate difficulties to fully comprehend their FAL in a way that allows them to make meaning of the subject content. Furthermore, the early transition to FAL medium of instruction affects learners in making sense of the learning content. Nomlomo and Vuzo's (2014) study indicated that 85% of South African and Tanzanian learners had limited competence in English, but they felt at ease when they spoke their home languages, i.e. Kiswahili and IsiXhosa. Such evidence is confirmed in the Progressive in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) results, Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), and Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ III) survey, which are discussed in the previous chapter.

Mother tongue education allows learners to use their HL through speaking, reading and writing in (Benson, 2004). The language skills learned in HL may be used systematically to transfer to the learners' FAL to make meaning of what learners are learning. Ellis (1985; 2005) refers to this as language transfer. Language transfer may be defined as the application of rules from one's HL to the FAL and this may be seen as a cross-linguistic activity (Larsen-Freeman, 2013; Cummins & Hornberger, 2008; Bylund 2013). This implies that if learners transfer their HL skills to the FAL, they can make meaning of both the HL and FAL.

Ball (2010) sheds light on growing research in language acquisition and bi/multilingual learning that complements the rights to mother tongue education in the early years schooling i.e. before introducing a FAL as a medium of instruction. Ball's (2010) work claims that if learners are given an opportunity to learn through their HL, they are likely to succeed in school. Additionally, their parents might get more involved in working with the teachers to ensure that their children have more learning opportunities, which will result in better learning opportunities. Cummins and

Hornberger (2008) state that in bilingual situations, learners should be encouraged to use translation as a tool to transfer across languages.

According to Larsen-Freeman (2013) learning in the FAL becomes difficult for learners to use their reading knowledge of their HL. Learners tend to use the reading skills in the FAL if they have achieved some kind of threshold in their FAL. As languages differ in terms of their structure of phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics, it is crucial for the child to be taught in their home languages as they are powerful linguistic tools they have when they come to school. In the following section, I discuss the home language and its role in learning.

## **2.5 Home Language Acquisition**

The home language is a language that a child is socialised in at home. It is usually learned at home from parents (Ndamba, van Wyk & Sithole, 2017). Sometimes it is referred to as mother tongue (Oostendorp, 2013). According to Dass and Rinquest (2017) the home language is what the learner knows best and is comfortable with in reading, writing and speaking. Ndamba et al., (2017) states that the home language allows people to speak at their best and it is often the basis for sociolinguistic identity. This applies to the context where many languages are spoken.

The acquisition of language may be seen from different perspectives. According to Oostendorp and Bylund (2013) acquisition refers to a gradual development of ability in a language by using it naturally in communicative situations. On the other hand, learning refers to a more conscious process of accumulating knowledge of features such as vocabulary and grammar. Language learning takes place in formal settings such as schools or language classes. This implies that the home language is acquired naturally from the surrounding environment (Nemati & Taghizadeh, 2013). In other words, the home language is acquired rather than learned. Palacois and Kibler (2016) and Nemati and Taghizadeh (2013) indicate that the child may be able to acquire a home language without any formal learning as they have an “innateness” aptitude for language acquisition known as the Language Acquisition Device (LAD).

Clark (2009) defines the LAD as a natural mental ability that assists a child to acquire and produce language. In other words, the LAD allows children to learn a language without getting direct instruction on how to learn it. The LAD can be associated with Piaget’s (1952) work on

assimilation and accommodation. In this case, the children might use their existing knowledge to create a system that allows them to fit in the new information in learning.

On the other hand, the second or additional language is learned in formal domains and the child needs to be exposed to it. This becomes different from the home language because FAL needs to be taught and learned in order to develop or attain proficiency in it.

The other difference between HL and FAL lies in the input that the child receives when learning in terms of its quantity and quality (Nemati & Taghizadeh, 2013). In HL learning learners develop phonology, syntax, vocabulary and morphology naturally and start applying the language rules without having to be taught in formal domains. In other words, HL learning can be achieved as the children start making up their own sentences by listening to the language that is used in their environment.

The difference in HL and FAL learning is important in this study as it has implications for FAL learning and its use as LoLT in the Intermediate Phase. In the following section, I discuss the challenges of learning an additional or second language.

## **2.6 First Additional (Second) Language Learning**

As mentioned earlier, effective language learning is determined by exposure to the target language. In other words, language occurs in a social context whereby meaning is made. In this section, I focus on the learning of an additional or second language.

According to Bylund and Oostendorp (2013) the first additional or second language is any language that is not an individual's native or first language. It is any language that is learned subsequent to the first language (Gass & Selinker, 2008). In other words, the second language is not learned at birth. For most people, the second language may be learned through formal instruction e.g. in school. Freeman and Freeman (2011) state that the second language must be learned in the same way that one learns any subject such as History or Biology. In other words, learning a second language requires explicit instructions or teaching.

According to Freeman and Freeman (2011) the process of first additional language acquisition entails being surrounded by people that speak that particular language. Freeman and Freeman (2011) also state that if one is adequately exposed to the target language, one is likely to acquire

the additional language easily. First Additional Language proficiency may range from basic to advanced levels.

In the case of this study, learners' exposure to English is limited as most of the learners come from communities and homes that do not speak English for communication purposes. Their teachers are also not English home language speakers. Hence, I argue that socio-cultural factors influence the development of the learners' second language acquisition. I align my argument with Gass and Selinker's (2008) view that if the child has target language peers, there is a greater social context that enables him/her to learn the first additional language rules efficiently. This implies that the child will be exposed to the grammatical rules of the target language.

In light of the above, Malone (2012) gives an analogy of a bridge to illustrate the process of learning an additional language. She states that if the bridge is not solid, obviously it will collapse. This implies that if there is no solid foundation for non-English language learners, they are not likely to achieve proficiency in this language. Therefore, children need good language foundation in order to gain proficiency in a particular language and to access information for meaningful learning.

Language vocabulary is very important in language learning (Wilkins, 1972 cited in Wang and Xiang, 2016). Wang's and Xiang's (2016) refer to language transfer which indicates the difficulties of learning new words of different systems due to the influence of the home language. Likewise, Ellis (1985) highlights the theories of language transfer and how the learners' HL could have either a positive or negative impact on the acquisition of the second language, based on the support or interference of their learning experience. In other words, the home language can facilitate the learning of an additional language when rules of the HL are not different from the additional or second language rules. However, the inverse can be expected if the rules are different and there is a wide gap between the two language systems. For African language-speaking learners learning about English and through English (as LoLT) might be a barrier to their epistemological access to learning.

An individual learner may have a system to apply to learn a language. This system is known as an interlanguage (Bylund 2013; Gass & Selinker 2008; Freeman & Freeman 2011). The interlanguage is the manner in which the learner creates his/her own language system. According to Bylund (2013) the materials that make an interlanguage come from both the learner's HL and from the

target language. For Freeman and Freeman (2011) this form of language is not the same as the language a learner speaks, but it has consistent rules and logic of its own. The interlanguage can be seen as imperfect because it does not follow the grammatical rules of the target language (Bylund, 2013). In other words, the interlanguage does not lack the systematic order, but the grammatical rules are different from those of the target language.

The above view is supported by the work of Ellis (2005) which indicates that if learners discover that the additional language rules are not in line with their familiar rules, they interpret the rules as equivalent to their HL. This practice often results in learners using direct translation which often leads to errors that distort the intended message.

In learning the First Additional Language, one can look at the extent to which people use their knowledge of the HL. The relationship between HL and FAL acquisition leads to a crosslinguistic influence. Crosslinguistic influence is defined as the process whereby the person's knowledge of a language influences his/her knowledge and use of another language (Bylund, 2013). This process takes place naturally when one learns their FAL. For example, when a person pronounces a certain word, it becomes easier to relate the word to their native language, based on the phonetic features of their native language. Therefore, the crosslinguistic transfer can be associated with language transfer (Ellis, 1985; 2005).

The other important factor in language learning is the linguistic distance between the HL and FAL, i.e. how similar or different the two languages are. For instance, English and IsiXhosa are not cognate languages. Some African languages are mutually intelligible e.g., IsiZulu and IsiXhosa are linguistically similar to each other. In cases where languages are linguistically distant from each other, the learners may have trouble in making sense of the learning content.

Furthermore, domain specificity is a big factor in crosslinguistic influence. The different domains of FAL such as the syntax, morphology, lexicon and phonology are influenced by the native language to varying degrees (Gass & Selinker 2008; Bylund 2013; Saxton 2010). It is easy to determine the influence of HL phonology on the FAL as it is visible. For instance, the sentence structure of English may follow the Subject-Verb- Object (SVO) structure, but the learners' HL may not follow this pattern in the construction of the sentences. This may lead to an incorrect and meaningless sentence structure. While it is common to find FAL speakers who have good knowledge of grammar and lexicon of the target language, their intonation and accent may still



reflect the HL influence. Therefore, learners may demonstrate good oral language in the target language and poor FAL academic proficiency in the same language. Hence, I refer to the notion of Basic and Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 2000) to illustrate second language learners' proficiency levels in the target language.

### **2.6.1 Language Proficiency**

As highlighted above, the child's language competence in the FAL or second language is dependent on the home or first language (Baker, 2006). In other words, one needs to be proficient in their home language as it can be used as a scaffold tool for the additional language. This shows that if one has well-developed skills in his/her home language, it may be easier to build on these skills for second language learning (Baker, 2006). Conversely, if the child has a low proficiency in the home language, he/she is likely to experience problems to achieve bilingualism.

Cummins (2000) introduced a distinction between fluency of a language and skills needed to thrive in academic settings. Fluency for everyday language conversation can take two years to develop while the academic language can take five to seven years to develop. It may take several years to reach the same level of competence as a native language speaker. Cummins (2000) claims that there is an interception that highlights a range of cognitive demands, and contextual factors that support language. He argues that the timeframe for learners to be competent in a second language is long. Two important concepts, namely the "Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills" (BICS) and "Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency" (CALP) are associated with this view (Cummins, 2000). Cummins (2000) refers to the fluency in a language as BICS while CALP refers to the students' ability to understand and express themselves in both oral and written modes that are relevant for academic success. This implies that the register acquired by learners at school could determine the basis for academic progression across the different schooling grades. In the case of this study, the progression will be looked at in relation to Grade 3 English FAL as a means of preparing learner's transition to English LoLT in Grade 4.

The learners' BICS are enhanced when there is support of the FAL learning. Baker (2006) refers to "context embedded learning" and "context-reduced domains" to explain how learning could be mediated. Various forms of support such as using gestures and instant feedback to support verbal

language relate to the notion of "context embedded learning" (Baker, 2006). On the other hand, CALP occurs more in academic settings and can be associated with "context-reduced domain" (Baker, 2006). In other words, context-embedded learning allows individuals to use gestures and point to the objects to get the message across and to understand the intended meaning of the message. In the case of context-reduced settings, the meaning is drawn from meaningful engagement with different texts. In this way, learners are challenged to think. In language learning, CALP challenges the mind by using high order thinking to evaluate language knowledge. It enables learners to comprehend the language for meaningful learning.

The BICS and CALP have implications for the failure or success of learners who are not English home language speakers (Pretorius & Mampuru, 2007; Rooy, 2010). If learners display well-developed conversational skills (BICS) in the additional language, it does not necessarily mean that they are academically proficient to learn through the medium of English FAL. Moreover, the Grade 4 learners' CALP is not well developed to deal with the demands of the curriculum that is delivered in an additional language. Thus, the notion of BICS and CALP is relevant to understand how isiXhosa speaking learners are supported to learn English FAL.

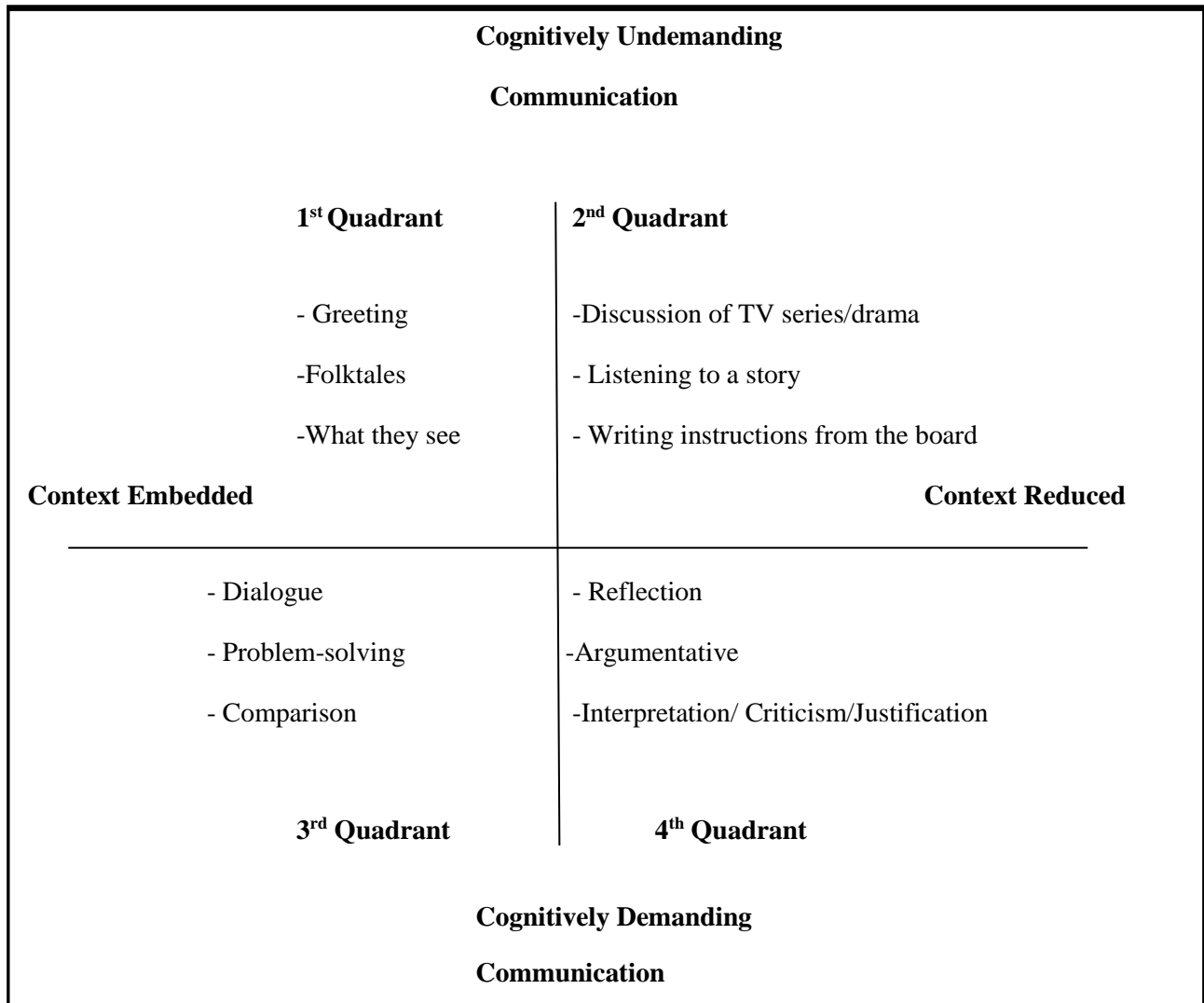
In relation to the above, Cummins (1981) Four Quadrant Model provides a clear explanation of how FAL learners develop proficiency in the target language. Cummins (1981) developed the language quadrant model as an evolution of the Language Development Interdependent Hypothesis (Baker, 2006). This hypothesis illustrates that the child's language competence is dependent on existing competence in their HL. In other words, if the child has well-developed HL skills, it becomes easier to develop FAL skills. Conversely, if they are not developed in their HL, they may not achieve full bilingualism.

The language quadrant model relates to both BICS and CALP in that they both look at language communication and proficiency. A learner can easily acquire proficiency in context-embedded settings while it may take several years to gain fluency in context-reduced settings, in which they are required to use CALP for learning.

The purpose of the four Quadrant diagram is to illustrate the amount of communication proficiency that is needed by a learner for contextual support. Both Baker (2006) and Freeman and Freeman (2011) highlight that context-embedded communication happens if there is good support for communication. The support can be provided by using body language, eyes and gestures to

illustrate the communication or point, while a context-reduced communication happens when one is able to make meaning of abstract situations

Figure 1: The 4 Quadrant Model in Language



*Adapted from Baker (2006)*

The first dimension of the quadrant is cognitively undemanding. The skills needed in this dimension include mastery of communication that is needed for easy communication. Answers to cognitively undemanding questions are usually straightforward or simple ones (Freeman & Freeman, 2011).

The four Quadrant Model is important in teaching and learning as it can inform curriculum delivery. It can assist teachers in planning for learners who are not home speakers of the target

language. It illustrates that the knowledge and background of the learners should be considered in language learning and teaching. For instance, the kind of texts selected for learning should be within the learners' linguistic capabilities that could be enhanced by making use of different teaching approaches.

Cummins (1981) suggests that a teacher can try to make the lesson context-reduced by using different strategies and resources. This approach could help the non-English speakers not to depend on the linguistic cues only for meaning making but also use different media to access learning. However, this approach may be irrelevant to other contexts in South Africa, as not all our township or rural schools are well resourced to facilitate this kind of learning. Another hindering factor could be the teachers' ability to use technologies for teaching and learning.

Cognitively demanding work does not depend so much on the subject but on a person's background knowledge (Freeman & Freeman, 2011). For example, talking about the weather with a person is not cognitively demanding but asking a person to solve a problem such as mathematical problem could demand high order thinking that depends on meaning comprehension and proficiency in the target language. Cummins (1981) claims that even if a person has developed the conversational (BICS) fluency, they might still lack the academic language proficiency that is needed for proficiency in their FAL. For example, a learner may do well in the first quadrant where they listen to the teacher and read the cues, which are context-embedded and cognitively undemanding. The same learner may struggle if they are placed on the fourth quadrant where the context is reduced and the language is cognitively demanding.

The above discussion relates to Ramani and Joseph's (2006) work who state that in the fourth quadrant where the context is reduced, the aim of language in learning is to require learners to possess and produce cognitively challenging texts in the language that is not supported by the clues as it happens in the first quadrant. In other words, learners need to move away from the first quadrant bit by bit in order to get to the next level where scaffolding can be reduced slowly in order to try to be independent learners. In this way, they are challenged to use their abilities to function in cognitively demanding situations.

The above language quadrant is relevant to my study as it enables us to understand how communication is facilitated in the teaching of English FAL in Grade 3. The first quadrant of the diagram is context-embedded and the use of language is cognitively undemanding. The CALP

could be associated with the third and fourth quadrants of the diagram that are context-reduced as the language becomes cognitively demanding (Freeman & Freeman, 2011; Baker, 2006). The above language quadrant model illustrates that proficiency in an additional language is dependent on home language competence. This suggests that learners who learn English as FAL need a solid foundation in their home language. They also have to be given cognitively demanding tasks to reach the fourth quadrant, which is context-reduced.

Freeman and Freeman (2011) and Cummins (1981) maintain that non-English speaking learners should be scaffolded so that they can be able to make sense of the difficult academic concepts. The instructions should be cognitively demanding, but not context reduced so that learners can be able to relate to them in their learning.

According to the Four Quadrant Model, the learners move from quadrant 1 to 4 using their home language as base knowledge to understand the target language. At the same time, the teacher should be able to use the learners' home language to mediate and scaffold them to achieve proficiency in the FAL, while maintaining and developing proficiency in their home language. In this process, the teachers should not use learning materials or vocabulary that is beyond the learners' understanding. This means that the teachers should take into account that the learners come to the classroom with prior knowledge (i.e. their HL). Teachers must acknowledge learners' prior knowledge as building blocks for meaningful learning. Learners learn better, when the teachers use dramatic gestures, intonation and images. In this way, learning becomes context-embedded as the teacher may allow learners to talk about familiar topics. This type of teaching approach aligns with the Threshold Theory, which is discussed in the following section.

### **2.6.2 The Threshold Theory**

Toukamma and Skutnabb-Kangas (1977) and Cummins (1976) developed the Threshold Theory. This theory portrays the relationship between cognition and the degree of bilingualism, which is described by a different threshold. The threshold indicates the level of language proficiency that a learner can potentially reach when exposed to two languages i.e. bilingualism (Baker, 2006). According to Baker (2006) the Threshold Theory envisages a child who can achieve the cognitive benefits of bilingualism.

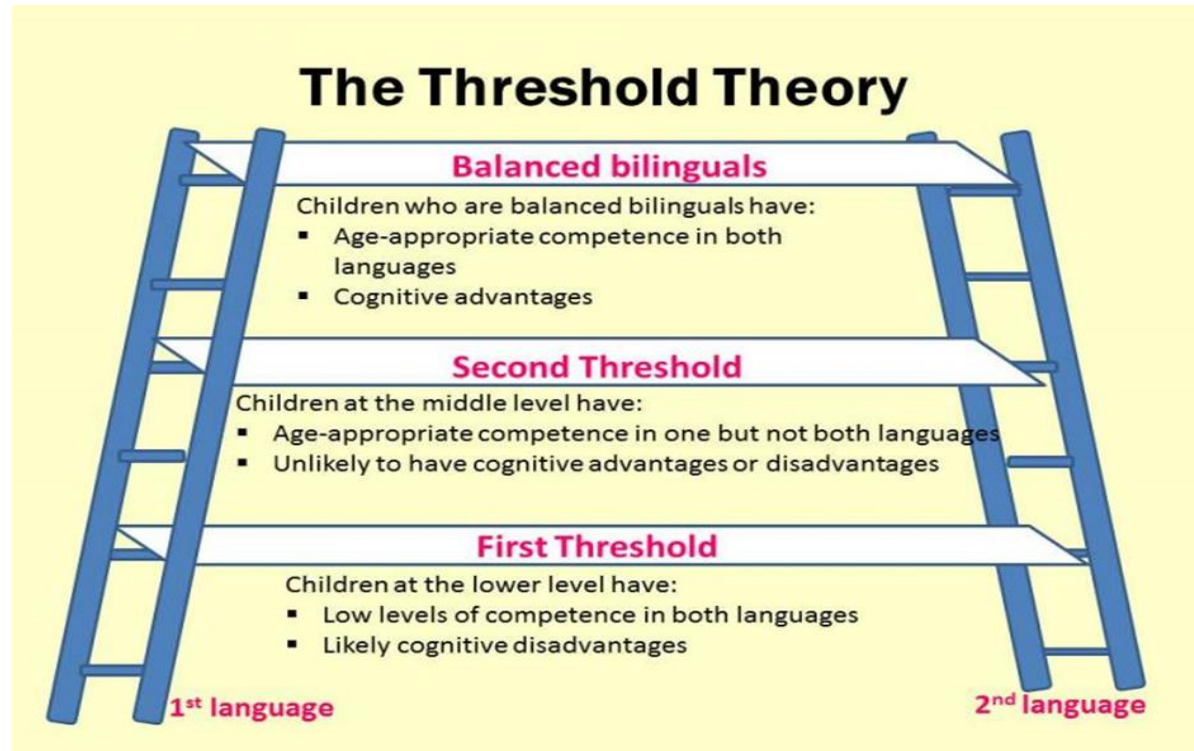
According to the Threshold Model, there are two languages that are placed on the side of a ladder, which indicates that a bilingual learner habitually moves aloft, and will not usually be immobile on the floor (Baker, 2006). These levels are divided into three. The bottom floor of the ladder refers to learners whose current competence in both languages is insufficient or inadequately developed when compared to their age group (Baker, 2006). This level indicates that there is a challenge that could have severe cognitive effects for these learners. In other words, it becomes a challenge for the learners at this level to deal or cope with the demands that are placed on them by the curriculum due to their low proficiency in both HL and FAL.

The second level in the threshold depicts that the learner is able to experience positive outcomes of bilingualism. The second level is the middle level where learners are at the appropriate age level and are competent in one of the languages, but not in both. The learners may be competent in their home language but not in their FAL. According to Baker (2006) learners at this level are quite different from the monolingual children as they are unlikely to have negative differences in terms of cognition when compared to monolinguals. In other words, they can use their HL to transfer language skills to their advantage but they can be hindered by the differences in the structure of the HL and FAL. Such differences can lead to errors in the FAL due to limited proficiency in this language.

The third level reflects a balanced learner who can approximate balanced bilingualism. This means that the learner has the age-appropriate language skills and is competent in both HL and FAL (Baker, 2006). At this level, learners have well-developed language skills and they are able to deal with the demands of the curriculum in the classroom. In fact, at this level learners are referred to as bilinguals.

The diagram below illustrates the Threshold Theory Model.

Figure 2: The Threshold Theory



*Adapted from Baker (2006)*

Based on the Threshold Hypothesis, it is assumed that many black South African learners who are taught through English LoLT are on the first threshold, especially at Grade 4 level. This could be attributed to the fact that these learners are instructed in their HL, and learn English as an additional language in the Foundation Phase. From Grade 4 learners are taught all the subjects in English (FAL) and their HL is learned as a subject. It may be argued that they do not have well-developed language skills in both HL and FAL. Hence, they are likely to experience cognitive disadvantages. They are at risk of losing their own mother tongue in the process of learning through English LoLT with no adequate support in their home language. This may lead to subtractive bilingualism.

According to Cummins (1979) Threshold Hypothesis, learners with a low proficiency level in the HL and FAL proficiency or semi-linguals are likely to have underprivileged interaction with their educational environment. This can be both in the input and output levels. In other words, when they have to apply the skills of writing they may have difficulties in constructing a basic structure of a text. The same thing is likely to happen when they have to narrate a text or genre. Learners who do not have strong competence in their HL are unable to apply the HL in learning the FAL.

On the other hand, those who have well-developed proficiency in one of their languages do not experience such disadvantages. Furthermore, those who have full proficiency in both HL and FAL or have balanced additive bilingual skills are likely to enjoy cognitive and academic advantages that can lead to better academic achievement.

In light of the above, there is a trend in the South African education system, whereby learners from underprivileged backgrounds are disadvantaged in terms of language proficiency and academic success. The schools often deny the bilingual learners opportunities to access literacy and comprehensible academic input in both languages i.e. HL and FAL. In this way, learners are denied the benefits of additive bilingualism. This often results in learners not performing according to the grade level or lagging behind when compared to their counterparts. This perpetuates educational inequality and unequal opportunities for epistemic access to learning according to learners' socio-economic backgrounds. However, if the input is comprehensible, it creates greater learning opportunities and meaningful access to knowledge. In the following section, I discuss the Input Hypothesis and how it informs teaching and learning.

### **2.6.3 Input Hypothesis**

Stephan Krashen introduced the notion of “Comprehensible Input.” Krashen’s (1985) Comprehensible Input explains how people acquire language by making sense of language messages. According to Krashen (1985) the input is about understanding where you want your learners to be in relation to their current language competence. It is not about forcing early language competence but it allows learners to move at their own pace with regard to language learning.

According to Freeman and Freeman (2011) Krashen’s Input Hypothesis has become the key factor in the acquisition of a language. It assumes that people acquire language when they receive oral and written input or messages that they understand. Furthermore, this hypothesis assumes that for learning to take place, learners must have a good understanding of the language at hand and their knowledge needs to be challenged to reach a higher level of cognition (Freeman & Freeman, 2011). Thus, the input is represented as  $i + 1$ . This formula could be explained as building on top of what the learner already knows. If the input is not beyond the learners’ current ability ( $i + 0$ ), language



learning may not be effective (Freeman & Freeman, 2011; Nomlomo, 2007; Gass & Selinker, 2008). In other words, learners may experience difficulties in acquiring the target language.

Comprehensible input helps learners to learn the academic content. It is also through the output that individuals may be able to engage in discussion; possibly, through the influence of the input they received (Gass & Selinker, 2008; Freeman & Freeman, 2011).

Krashen's Input Hypothesis is relevant to this study, as I believe that learners should be introduced to FAL when they have developed language skills in their HL. They can use their HL as a scaffold in acquiring the additional language when their HL skills are well developed and are proficient enough to handle instruction in an additional language. Krashen's theory (1985) supports the view that delaying the switch to the LoLT in an additional language could yield good academic results.

The Input Hypothesis can be associated with the Sociocultural Theory of Vygotsky (1978) which is discussed in section 2.9.2. of this thesis. This theory assumes that learning takes place through interaction between the more knowledgeable other and the learner. Nomlomo (2007) claims that language is socially constructed as the teachers and learners interact with each other through the process of mediation and scaffolding. The use of HL as a mediation and scaffolding tool can be best understood if we look at bilingualism and its degree of complexity. In the following section, I provide an in-depth description of Bilingualism.

## **2.7 Bilingualism**

There are many definitions of bilingualism which vary according to the context in which they are used. In Latin, the prefix "bi"- means "two." According to Baker (2006) bilingualism can be defined as one's ability to use two languages in speech or writing. One has to be able to read and understand both languages. Grosjean (2010) defines bilinguals as people who use two languages or more languages or dialects in their everyday life. According to Moradi (2014) bilingualism is the ability and skills to operate fully and equally well using two languages across different contexts. Hammers, Blanc and Blanc (2000) define bilingualism as the ability to use two languages with fluency. Hence, there is an interrelationship between bilingualism and biliteracy, as one can develop literacy skills in both languages (Nomlomo & Katiya, 2018).

Furthermore, bilingualism has dimensions of use that refer to the domains in which it is used or applied e.g. schools or street (Baker, 2006). According to Gass and Selinker (2008) the idea of bilingualism in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) has a different approach when compared to other fields such as Psychology and Education. One component looks at the linguistic dimension in relation to that of a native speaker of the language, while the other component looks at a person who has learned another language. This suggests that the definition of bilingualism is complex. Bhatia and Ritchie (2006) claim that achieving a "native-like" competence is rare among bilinguals.

In the case of this study, it may be argued that learners who are instructed through the medium of English (FAL) are unlikely to achieve native-like proficiency in English. The degree of language distance influences learners' language proficiency in the two languages e.g. the difference in the syntactic and phonetic structure of isiXhosa and English.

As discussed earlier, the South African Language-in-Education Policy aims to promote additive bilingualism. According to Oostendorp (2013) additive bilingualism is defined as the ability to use two languages in a complementary manner. This means that the learner is able to use both languages i.e. the HL and FAL. Another form of bilingualism is subtractive bilingualism, which is referred to as someone whose FAL is acquired at the expense of the aptitudes already acquired in the HL (Gass & Selinker, 2008). In this study, these two forms of bilingualism are relevant as the study attempts to uncover whether the teaching of English FAL promotes additive or subtractive bilingualism of Grade 3 learners as they prepare for transition to Grade 4.

In some instances, bilingual children and teachers code switch to their HL, if they are not able to find the matching word in their FAL. Code switching refers to the use of more than one language in a conversation (Oostendorp, 2013). For instance, if the child finds that he/she is not able to interpret the rules, he/she may refer to the HL to find the equivalent rule and translate it. This may lead to language errors and the intended message may not be interpreted well. At the same time, it shows the influence of the HL and the importance of bilingual education in multilingual contexts.

In light of the above, Bilingual Education has many benefits. Firstly, it allows learners to maintain their home language and it supports students' learning. According to the Threshold Theory language competence reached at school supports Bilingual Education which has potential to develop learners' positive attitudes towards their HL. The bilingual approach could support

learners who are academically disadvantaged and who are taught in a language that they do not fully understand (Western Cape Education Department (WCED), 2006)

The following section discusses Bilingual Education at length.

### **2.7.1 Bilingual Education**

According to Baker (2006) bilingual education is a complicated issue which is affected by many factors and ideologies. Baker (2006) and Nomlomo (2007) mention that bilingual education involves the promotion of two languages in education. Nomlomo (2007) points out that for effective bilingual education to occur schools have to support high levels of multilingualism which provides better academic achievement. While the LiEP promotes additive bilingualism, there is a mismatch between the policy and practice in schools. Nomlomo (2007) asserts that in the LiEP it is not stated that the transition from Grade 3 to Grade 4 should be through English LoLT only for African language speaking learners. But this has become a norm that the schools have taken English as the LoLT from Grade 4 except for Afrikaans medium schools. Due to learners' low proficiency in English, learners experience barriers to meaningful learning.

Bilingual education takes into account the learners' HL and the language of the community in which the school is situated (Baker, 2006). There are different types of bilingual education namely Transitional Bilingual Education, Maintenance Bilingual Education, Static Maintenance and Development Maintenance (Baker, 2006). Maintenance Bilingual Education focuses on strengthening the "minority" language and, the cultural identity of a learner (Baker, 2006). In other words, it encourages the rights of the ethnic group in a country or state. The Static Maintenance preserves the language skills of a learner when he/she enters the school. Baker (2006) asserts that the Development Maintenance serves to develop the home language skills of a child until they reach a level of proficiency, which supports the child's biliteracy skills. Baker (2006) defines Transitional Bilingual Education as a form of education that intends to remove the learner from the HL while introducing the dominant language.

This study relates to Transitional Bilingual Education. In this type of bilingualism, learners are allowed to use their HL in learning for a short while. Baker (2006) and Cummins (1992) state that Transitional Bilingualism gives learners an opportunity to become proficient in the majority language so that they can be able to join the mainstream education. For instance, if the learners are

using their HL to learn they can gradually be introduced to the FAL to enable them to deal with the demands of the curriculum taught in the medium of FAL. In this way, they are supported to cope with both languages during the learning process.

Transitional Bilingual Education may occur as an early or late exit (Baker, 2006). In early exit bilingual programmes, learners are prepared for the transition by receiving tuition through the medium of their HL in the early grades (Freeman & Freeman, 2011). In other words, learners are provided with an opportunity to develop proficiency in their HL so that they can be instructed in an additional or second language later. In the South African context, learners are taught in their HL in the Foundation Phase only. This is an example of an early exit to LoLT in the First Additional Language. Thomas and Collier (2002) state that through early exit learners lose proficiency in their HL as they have not yet mastered their own HL due to their young age.

Freeman and Freeman (2011) and Baker (2006) state that late exit allows learners to be taught through the medium of their HL longer. Late exit is regarded as a one-way model that allows non-English learners an opportunity to maintain their HL (Freeman & Freeman, 2011). Late exit prolongs the HL as LoLT until the learner is able to cope with the demands of the curriculum and of the FAL. Nomlomo's study (2007) showed that in a delayed exit to English LoLT learners displayed better language proficiency in both the HL and FAL and a good understanding of the science subject content. Therefore, in this study the scholarship of Bilingual Education enabled me to understand how Grade 3 learners coped with English FAL and the extent to which they were prepared for transition to English LoLT in Grade 4.

The following section looks at related empirical studies that have been conducted on how learners' experiences of learning through English LoLT in schools. These empirical studies were conducted in different parts of the world, but they all indicate that learners experience difficulties in learning through the medium of an additional language.

## **2.8 Empirical Studies**

Over the past two decades, the question of language transition has received attention from many scholars who have explored the language shift in the early grades of schooling (MacDonald, 1990; Probyn, 2010; Nomlomo & Vuzo, 2014; Alexander, 2012). As indicated earlier, African language speaking learners are the ones who are mostly affected by the LoLT shift as they need to learn

through the medium of English FAL from the Intermediate Phase (Howie et al., 2007). These learners are introduced to the English FAL as LoLT in Grade 4 while the speakers of English and Afrikaans are taught through their HLs from Grade R until Grade 12, and beyond. As stated earlier, learners who switch to an additional language as LoLT experience problems with regard to literacy, hence many South African schools perform poorly in literacy in the Foundation Phase (Howie et al., 2007). The early shift to English FAL as LoLT from Grade 4 exacerbates the pressure that these learners have to confront as they enter the Intermediate Phase where there is also an increase in the number of subjects that the learners have to do. For example, in the Foundation Phase learners are taught four subjects and from Grade 4 they have eight subjects.

MacDonald's (1990) Threshold Project found that Grade 5 learners were not ready to learn ten subjects in English. She also observed that the learners did not have the required language skills to cope with the switch to English in the ex-DET schools (MacDonald, 1990). As a result, the learners did not perform at the appropriate grade level because the language was one of the barriers that hindered their learning. She also found out that the learners' vocabulary was limited in relation to the grade level. Another finding was the teaching approaches that teachers used which did not facilitate learners' vocabulary development.

Similarly, Tolon's (2014) study discovered that the language skills of the learners who were taught through the English LoLT were minimal and not fully developed. She concluded that MT education provides better opportunities for learners to achieve academically as they are familiar with the language (Tolon, 2014). In other words, MT provides learners with a fair chance of academic achievement and it enhances their self-worth.

Researchers in Australia had similar results that showed that the bilingual learners were not proficient in English and their language skills were far below when compared to English HL speakers (Goldfield, O'Connor, Mithen, Sayers & Brinkman, 2014). Also, the majority of learners who were not proficient in English were living in disadvantaged areas of Australia and had not attended preschool. This finding is relevant to the South African context where learners who come from informal settlements, townships or rural areas are not adequately exposed to English. Others cannot attend preschool before they start school and these factors seem to have a negative impact on their learning and literacy development.

Probyn's studies (1995; 2010) show learners' difficulty of learning through English in Grade 8 Mathematics, Science and Accounting. Specifically, Probyn's (2010) qualitative study also shows that the teachers' thoughts and responses to the English LoLT are affected by the low input that the learners bring to the class. This study supports MacDonald's (1990) findings in that the learners did not understand the language used in teaching.

The teachers acknowledged that the level of English proficiency for the learners was very poor and weak. Likewise, Nomlomo and Vuzo's (2014) study showed that learners' competence was a concern as the learners from Tanzania and South Africa had very low proficiency in English, which the learners' FAL in both cases.

In South Africa, the concern of language of instruction is not only experienced in Basic Education only, but also in higher education as well. For example, Nel and Muller's (2010) study indicates that the university student (pre-service teachers) made basic errors such as grammatical errors, incorrect use of tenses, concord and spelling errors, which were influenced by their home language. This study was conducted at a long-distance teaching University in South Africa and it focussed on final year students who were enrolled for the Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE).

The teachers' level of training for teaching in the second language seems to be a factor and challenge that impacts negatively on learners' language proficiency (MacDonald 1990; Probyn 2010). Some studies show that learners depend on the teachers to spoon-feed them, as they are aware that the teachers can easily translate the instruction if they do not get the response they are expecting (Mbekwa, 2008; Probyn 2010; Nomlomo & Vuzo 2014; Tolon 2014). Furthermore, Nomlomo and Vuzo (2014) state that learners did not participate actively in the classrooms they observed for their research but they waited for the teacher to translate the terminology in their respective home languages.

In other words, learners kept silent when the instruction was in English and they wrote answers in their HLs where they did not know the words in English. Translation into their HLs enabled them to play a role in the lessons. This indicates that the HL of learners is a linguistic resource that allows learners to deal with the demands of the curriculum (Nomlomo & Vuzo, 2014). It is also an indication that the learners' limited language proficiency in the LoLT is a barrier to the learners' meaningful learning.

The same study by Nomlomo and Vuzo (2014) highlighted how teachers and learners experienced the transition to English LoLT in two grades (Grade 4 and Form 1) in Tanzania and South Africa. The results showed low levels of competence in English regardless of the fact that Tanzania delayed the shift to FAL for seven years and South Africa introduced the shift as early as Grade 4 (Nomlomo & Vuzo, 2014). Lastly, both countries experience the negative effects of the LoLT transition in schools.

Nomlomo and Vuzo (2014) state that code switching is one of the pedagogical strategies that supports learners' conceptual development to compensate for low proficiency in English. Mbekwa (2008) concurs that teacher's need to code-switch to the learners' home language in order to facilitate learning, which can only be achieved if the LoLT coincides with the learners' home languages.

Likewise, Nomlomo's (2007) qualitative longitudinal study indicated that learners perform better when taught through the medium of their home language and that MT education strengthens learners' self-esteem and motivation to learn. She compared the advantages of prolonged MT instruction in IsiXhosa with those who received instruction in English in the Intermediate Phase. She found that learners learning in their home language up until Grade 6 had a solid language base as opposed to those who were not taught in their home language. She also claims that parents can become active participants in their children's work if they understand the LoLT (Nomlomo, 2007).

Furthermore, Nomlomo (2014) stresses how challenging it is for many South African learners to achieve good academic results due to English LoLT which is perceived as a barrier to learning. This view is further supported by the work of Pinnock (2009) who claims that the gap in the academic performance is big among learners who are taught in their additional language. Langenhoven (2006) refers to terminology in the learners' HL as a means of facilitating learners' understanding in subjects such as Science.

A similar study was conducted in Rwanda in, Kigali public schools where language transition was experienced by African language speaking learners. In this study, Tolon (2014) explains how language power played when the Rwanda government decided to change from French to English; the language that learners have little exposure to and the teachers themselves had minimal training. Tolon (2014) used semi-structured interviews as a means of collecting data from two schools with

eleven teachers. The aim of the study was to get the voices of teachers that needed to be heard regarding the shift from French to English medium of instruction.

Tolon's (2014) findings revealed teachers' attitudes, opinions and feelings concerning the language shift. Her findings revealed the external factors that include the governmental decisions that do not take into consideration the teacher's voice in the implementation of the policy that affects learner's prior knowledge. Another issue of language shift was experienced in Malaysia in 2003 whereby the government introduced a new policy to have English as the LoLT for Science and Mathematics at all levels of the education system (Sua & Raman, 2007). Such a policy was against the principle of mother tongue as the best medium of instruction in primary school education (Sua & Raman, 2007).

A study by Goldfield et al., (2014) conducted in Australia showed that the learners who entered school with low proficiency in the language of instruction faced a range of challenges. The amount of vulnerability displayed by these children was increasing instead of diminishing as the time passed by (Goldfield et al., 2014).

According to Baker (2006) the skills that support reading, writing, speaking and listening have the same central engine regardless of the language an individual uses. This means that when a person speaks two or more languages, there is one integrated source of thought (Baker, 2006). This could be associated with Cummins (1980) "Iceberg Analogy" which claims that the bilingual competence of an individual can be depicted as two icebergs. The iceberg analogy is referred to as the Common Underlying Proficiency Model (Cummins, 1980) which illustrates that language used by bilingual individuals are fused together and cannot function separately. Therefore, it may be argued that if HL is not fully developed, there could be a limited chances to develop adequate proficiency in the additional language. This can result in learners' language deficiency which impacts on their cognitive functioning. In fact, the learners may not be able to cope with the demands of the FAL and of the curriculum at large as shown in the findings of the studies mentioned above (Probyn, 2010; Nomlomo, 2007; Nomlomo & Vuzo, 2014).

Some scholars propose translanguaging as a strategy to be used in multilingual classrooms (Makalela, 2013; 2015; McKinney, 2014; Krause and Prinsloo, 2016). Translanguaging can be seen as a best practice in the classroom as it enhances learners' epistemological access to learning



and it fosters biliterate development (Makalela, 2015). Therefore, it can be deduced that the LoLT is a key factor that influences learners' epistemological access to knowledge.

From the above empirical studies, it can be deduced that the non-English speaking learners are affected by the language transition and this has an impact on their academic performance. Many learners have limited exposure to the target language, and this affects their learning as the LoLT becomes a barrier to their learning.

From the foregoing discussions, we can learn about the gaps in language policy implementation in different countries. English hegemony seems to be the main challenge in many schools on the African continent. It hinders learners' access to meaningful learning which results in poor academic achievement. The reviewed literature also indicates that the HL can be used as a tool to facilitate learning in the FAL. It is apparent that the English LoLT blocks learners' full participation in their learning, especially those who do not speak English as a home language. This can constrain learners' epistemic access to quality education that the constitution of the country envisages.

In the following section, I draw attention to the theoretical framework of this study which is based on the work of Constructivist and Sociocultural theorist.

## **2.9 Theoretical Framework**

This study is situated within two theoretical frameworks, namely, the Constructivism (Piaget, 1976) and the Sociocultural perspectives Vygotsky (1978). The two theories acknowledge that learning takes place through social interaction and that language plays an important role in shaping thoughts and in directing one's cognition in the process of learning (Santrock, 2008). These two theories play a major role in supporting language learning as the learners construct new knowledge using their existing knowledge, which is constructed in a social context (Santrock, 2008). The next section is an in-depth description of the Constructivism Theory as it relates to language learning.

### **2.9.1 The Constructivism Theory**

Firstly, the Constructivism Theory is derived from the work of Jean Piaget (1976) on constructivism. The origin of this approach is rooted in Psychology and Philosophy of that time (Amineh & Asl, 2015). The constructivist view holds that learning is a process that allows an individual to create meaning (Wardsworth, 2004). According to Mvududu and Theil-Burgess

(2012) constructivism is an approach that challenges children to think and reach a higher degree of cognition. In other words, learners need to be able to make sense of what they learn.

Constructivism is regarded as an individualistic perspective as it focuses on an individual only rather than on the context or environment that the person interacts in. According to Wardsworth (2004) Piaget's constructivist approach suggests that learning does not occur passively, but it is an active process that takes place through the creation of meaning.

Piaget's (1952) work on cognitive development shows that the child's intellect and cognitive abilities advance through different stages. All these stages are characterised by the occurrence of new abilities to process new information. He referred to the creation of new information as a "scheme," which illustrates that a child is born with an inherent ability to interrelate and make meaning of his/her environment. The child can show the patterns of behaviour or thinking called "schemes" to deal with the matters in their world (Piaget, 1952). These patterns of behaviour can also be found in older children or adults. According to Mvududu and Theil-Burges (2012) schemes may be used by the children to find out more about matters and act on how to treat certain items. In fact, children use the schemes they have developed to create or construct meaning in learning.

Both the Constructivism and Cognitive Development approaches look into how learners' construct meaning on their own and how they relate new knowledge to prior knowledge and familiar contexts. In other words, these two theories deal with cognition and its importance in fostering self-discovery and independent learning.

Two major concepts that emerge from Piaget's Cognitive Development theory are Assimilation and Accommodation (Piaget, 1952). Assimilation is the process of understanding a new event of the existing scheme while Accommodation refers to modification of an existing scheme in light of the new information or experience (Piaget, 1952). In other words, Accommodation refers to alternative methods of learning new concepts. In the context of this study, Assimilation implies that the English FAL learners use their existing scheme from their HL to learn about what they do not know in the FAL and they start to realise the difference in the morphological, syntactical and lexical structure of an additional language through accommodation.

According to Amineh and Asl (2015) if the child has to deal with the situation that is not fully handled by the existing schemes, this may create a state of disequilibrium between what is

understood and what is encountered. They have to try to reduce such imbalances by paying attention to the stimuli that cause the disequilibrium and develop new schemes or adapt old ones until equilibrium is restored.

If the equilibrium is restored, learners are given the opportunity to learn and develop further (Amineh & Asl, 2015). In the case of this study, equilibrium may be attained if the learners have a greater understanding of the language of instruction.

In the context of this study, the Constructivism Theory is important as it embraces the learners' prior knowledge that should be acknowledged in the classroom. The learners' HL is useful in learning and it enhances social interaction which forms the central part of the Sociocultural Theory.

### **2.9.2 The Sociocultural Theory**

The Sociocultural Theory sheds light on how social interaction plays a crucial part in the development of cognition (Amineh & Asl, 2015). The pioneer of the Sociocultural Theory is Lev Vygotsky (Santrock, 2008). According to Vygotsky (1978) caregivers, peers and parents play a big role in influencing one's beliefs and perceptions in learning. According to Roth (2000), the individual's knowledge is likely to be found in their interactions with the environment and other people before the knowledge is internalised. This view concurs with Vygotsky's (1978) argument that the cognitive growth level takes place at a social and subsequently within an individual (i.e. cognitive level).

Unlike in Constructivism, Vygotsky's (1978) theory believes that the child is embedded in a socio-historical context. His theory moves away from the individualism to collaboration through interaction with the sociocultural environment (Santrock, 2008). This characteristic distinguishes Piaget's Constructivism theory from Vygotsky's Sociocultural theory. As discussed earlier Piaget (1952) emphasises that learners construct their own knowledge by transforming, organising and reorganising their previous knowledge (schemata), while Vygotsky (1978) emphasises the learning context which is influenced by culture. Culture includes the language, beliefs and skills possessed by individuals. According to Vygotsky (1978), if we are to examine the child's holistic development, we need to look at the external social world that the child had been brought up in.

The Sociocultural Theory emphasises the importance of language in teaching and learning. Lantolf and Thorne (2002) also acknowledge the importance of the Sociocultural Theory in learning. This theory recognises the role of social interaction as people create knowledge and negotiate meaning for themselves in the real life situations. At the same time, one gains the necessary language skills through interaction with the teacher and more-skilled peers (Santrock, 2008). In other words, social collaboration is central in the teaching-learning process (Amineh & Asl, 2015).

The sociocultural approach also recognises the different dynamics that each classroom might have, as there are different learners with different experiences. Regarding language learning and teaching, culture plays an important role, because the language the learners speak in particular social settings need to be considered. In line with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, the language learning process can be achieved through mediation in order to facilitate working towards the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The following subsection discusses the role of mediation and its role in language learning.

#### **2.9.2.1 Language as a mediation tool**

From a sociocultural perspective, mediation is a tool that can be developed to give learners a sense of what they are learning at a particular moment by using different tools (Nomlomo, 2007). These tools have to stimulate learners to relate to the lesson. During the learning process, the teacher as an expert, provides an interactive instruction aimed at developing the child's learning experience. For example, through mediation the teacher can give a problem as a learning activity that needs to be solved by the learners. Mediation fosters learner-centred approaches and allows learners to discover or make meaning on their own.

Challenging learners to solve or discuss problems among themselves gives them an opportunity to collaborate in their work. This process mediates learning as learners discover knowledge on their own or with each other, and they do not only depend on the teacher as the only expert in the teaching-learning process. In other words, through interaction the learners acquire academic abilities and can act as mediators to others (Nomlomo, 2007). According to Fernyhough (2008) and Thompson (2013) mediation does not only serve as a tool that influences learning but it allows independent learning. This implies that mediation helps learners to scaffold their own learning. According to Fernyhough (2008) and Thompson (2013) mediation does not only serve as a tool

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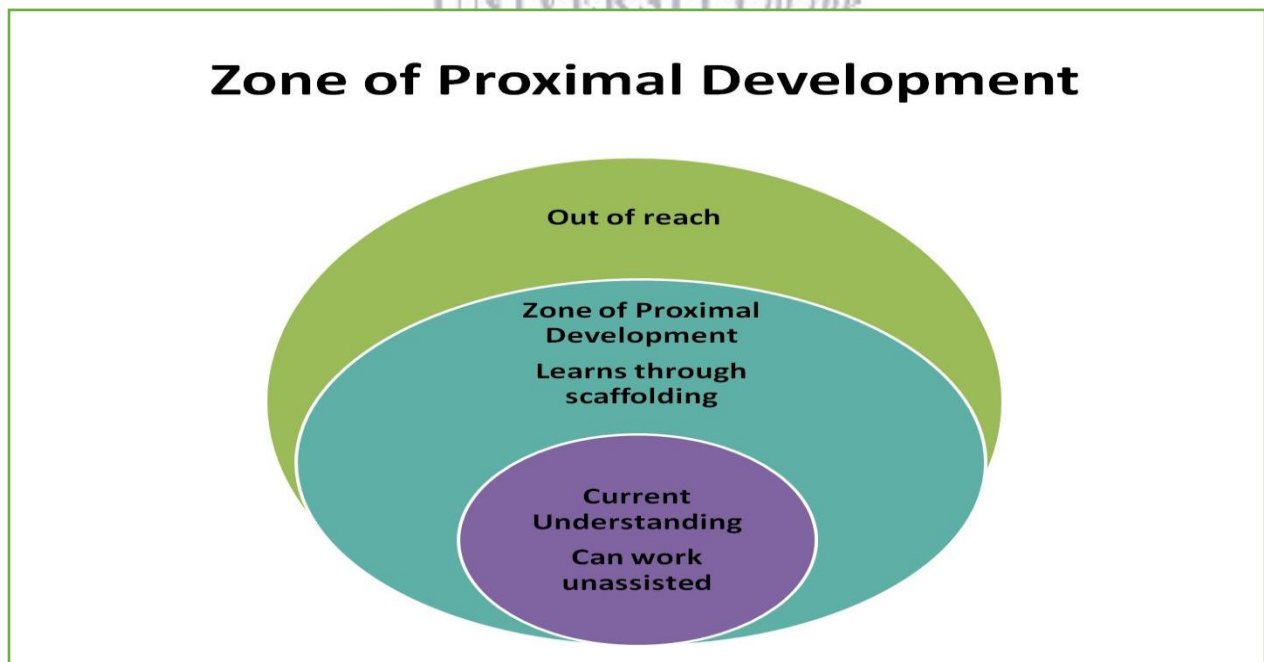
In the following section, I discuss scaffolding and its role in the teaching-learning process.

### 2.9.2.2 Scaffolding

According to Santrock (2008) scaffolding is a technique that involves adjusting the amount and level of guidance to advance the student's current performance. According to Vygotsky (1978) scaffolding enables learners to get to higher levels in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is a range of tasks that are difficult for children to master alone, but can be mastered with the guidance and assistance of adults or more skilled peers (Santrock, 2008).

Dialogue is a crucial aspect of learning as children have rich but unsystematic, disorganised and spontaneous concepts that need to be scaffolded in the ZPD. In other words, through dialogue with the more experienced and skilled people, learners are challenged to be rational and logical in their thinking. The following diagram represents the ZPD.

*Figure 3: Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development*



*Adapted from Santrock (2008)*

The first layer of the ZPD represents the day-to-day knowledge that the child possesses i.e. the current understanding of the learner. The teacher needs to acknowledge and embrace this form of knowledge so that it can be developed. With day-to-day knowledge children learn to work independently, without any assistance.

The second layer, which is the Zone of Proximal Development, shows that learners learn through scaffolding or support to reach the ZPD. Guidance or support can be given by the teachers or parents who are more experienced than the learner.

The third layer (out of reach) aims to shape the learners' current knowledge into independent knowledge. As children experience the verbal instruction and demonstrations, it becomes easier to organise information to existing mental structure (Santrock, 2008). Eventually, they can achieve the skills or do the tasks independently.

The ZPD representation can be associated with the Four Quadrant Model that has been discussed earlier in this chapter. In the first quadrant of the model, learners use simple language that is based on their current understanding of issues that are not cognitively demanding. The learners then move through the ZPD or second quadrant of the Language Quadrant Model by making use of the language for meaning-making. The out of reach layer of the ZPD is in line with the third and fourth quadrants where learners have developed the necessary academic language and are able to use it in more cognitively demanding tasks.

Furthermore, the ZPD could be understood in relation to the Threshold Theory. The ZPD's current understanding (first layer) relates to the first floor of the threshold whereby the learners' HL is not well developed. The teacher uses HL to mediate and scaffold learning in the FAL in order to reach the top floor of the threshold where they will be able to function in both languages.

The Constructivist and Sociocultural theories illustrate that language plays a central role in children's learning by stimulating their cognitive skills (Santrock, 2008). Both theories regard the teacher as a facilitator in learning. In other words, opportunities for children to learn with the teacher or skilled peers are established through interaction and cooperative learning (Santrock, 2008; Amineh & Asl, 2015). Lastly, children explore their world and construct knowledge by means of language.

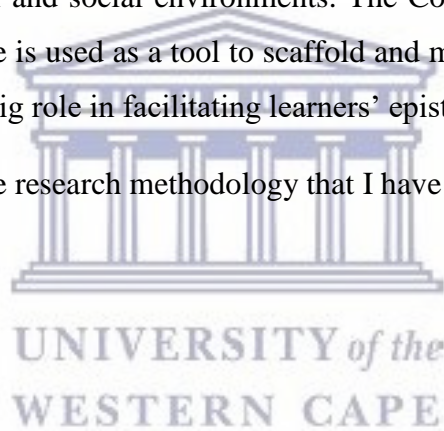
## 2.10 Chapter Summary

From the literature, it is evident that learners experience difficulties when they learn through the medium of an additional language e.g. English. The chapter looked at the South African language history and how it influences the current situations in schools, where the non-English learners have to learn through the medium of English FAL.

The conceptual framework suggests that many African language-speaking learners have underdeveloped proficiency in English FAL. This is due to the linguistic and cultural distance between African languages and English and the differences in the structure of English and African languages in terms of morphology, syntax and lexicon.

The theoretical framework enables us to understand how learners make meaning of learning as they interact with their internal and social environments. The Constructivism and Sociocultural Theories illustrate that language is used as a tool to scaffold and mediate meaningful learning. In other words, language plays a big role in facilitating learners' epistemic access to knowledge.

In the next chapter, I discuss the research methodology that I have used to conduct this study.



## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the research methodology followed in this study. In this chapter, details of the research design and approaches used to gather data have been explained. The research site and participants are described in order to provide a clear picture of the context of research. The validity and reliability of data, as well as ethical considerations have been explained.

Firstly, I provide the research paradigm that underpins this study. I explain why this particular school of thought was chosen for this study. Secondly, I draw attention to the research approach followed and how it has influenced the study. Finally, I discuss issues of ethical considerations, validity, reliability and triangulation and how they were observed in this study.

### **3.2 Research Paradigm**

A paradigm is an important way of looking at and establishing interpretations and thinking in research (Babbie, 2008). Three schools of thought underpin a research paradigm. These are the Positivist, Interpretative and Critical Paradigms. The Positivist Paradigm views the world as an objective part, where the society functions as an organ that is guided by the universal law (Babbie, 2008). In other words, if we study the world like an organ or system, every part will have to fit somewhere in order to be functional. Thus, this paradigm sees reasoning and logic as a phenomenon that is guided by certain principles that are based on the law.

On the other hand, the Interpretative Paradigm looks at how individuals interact with and relate to each other (Babbie, 2008). In other words, this paradigm is subjective as it looks at the role of each person, and his or her imagination to understand different situations. The interaction is enhanced by an underlying common understanding, using language and other symbolic systems (Babbie, 2008).

The interpretative paradigm ontology maintains that there is no single external reality (Carson, Gilmore, Perry & Grohaug, 2001). In other words, there are many ways of looking at the world. Martella, Nelson, Morgan and Marchand-Martella, (2013) and Carson et al., (2001) concur that



the epistemology in this paradigm suggests that the world of knowledge is perceived through different eyes.

Carson et al. (2001) state that in the interpretative approach the role of the researcher is to allow feelings and reason to govern actions. The participants narrate their stories and their voices are to be heard. The researcher needs to have an understanding that the participants have their own knowledge and ways of interpreting events. This implies that the interpretative paradigm seeks to understand specific contexts by applying a specific research methodology.

Finally, the Critical Paradigm believes that the social behaviour within communities may be seen as a dominant process (Babbie, 2008). The Critical Paradigm is a school of thought that deals mostly with the economic relations that create inequalities in our schools such as gender, class and race. This paradigm often explores conflicts caused by social status whereby others may be oppressed.

All the above-mentioned paradigms influence how researchers conduct and engage with research participants.

From an interpretative perspective, the aim is to accept the influence of both science and personal experience (Martella et al., 2013, Carson et al., 2001 & Neuman, 2013). In other words, when dealing with a study involving people the researcher needs to understand that the participants have the first-hand experience that may not be taken for granted.

As stated earlier, the interpretative paradigm works well with a qualitative research approach as it deals with meaning making in research. By using an interpretative paradigm, one is afforded an opportunity to become part of the study. This gives the integrity and consistency to the collected data, as one cannot rely on a single set of information. The interpretative paradigm is appropriate for the qualitative research approach as it allows one to study a problem in its natural setting and let participants make meaning for themselves.

This study follows an Interpretative Paradigm because it is a study of how people understand events in their lives (Martella et al., 2013). The interpretative approach has allowed me to view the world through the eyes of my participants, namely the Grade 3 learners, the Grade 3 English FAL teacher, the Grade 3 Head of Department (HOD) and the Principal of the selected school. It has enabled me to fully immerse myself as a researcher in the culture of my participants. Through

this approach, the participants' experiences and meanings were taken into consideration to understand the situation they found themselves in. The aim was to understand how the teaching of English FAL in this Grade 3 class facilitated learner's access to meaningful learning.

In the following section, I focus on the research approach that the study used.

### **3.3 Research Approach**

This study is rooted in a qualitative research methodology, which entails spending time interacting with the participants to investigate the research problem (Martella et al., 2013). Qualitative research explores the complex research of the unknown (Martella et al., 2013). In other words, this form of research provides the opportunity to discover more of the unknown. In addition, qualitative research focuses on real-world situations and non-manipulative settings. The researcher spends time in the selected setting or site in order to provide rich descriptive data (Martella et al., 2013).

The qualitative research method is mostly concerned with understanding the context in which the behaviour takes place, and not just the extent to which it is observed (Martella et al., 2013). It allows for flexibility and systemic approaches to understand the qualities of the occurrence that are surrounding the social context of the participants. Therefore, a qualitative approach takes a holistic view of events, i.e. it focuses on the process as well as the outcomes of research.

The qualitative research methodology was appropriate for this study as I observed how English FAL was taught in order to understand the extent to which it facilitated learners' epistemic access to English LoLT. I observed the teaching strategies that were used in the English FAL lessons and I noted the teacher and learner interactions during the teaching-learning process. I examined and analysed the language curriculum document (CAPS) in order to gain insight into its requirements pertaining to the teaching and learning of English FAL in Grade 3.

### **3.4 Research Design**

This study used a case study as a research design. A case study is defined as an approach used in research to provide an in-depth vantage point that enables one to understand the process and situations in context (Lichtman, 2013; Nunan, 1992; Yin, 2012). A case study is an appropriate approach in qualitative research as it allows for a rich and detailed description of data, whereby the researcher is required to be clear and thorough in explaining the events of the study. In other

words, a qualitative case study is an intensive holistic description of a single entity. The researcher needs to be detailed in every aspect of their case when giving their description.

Baxter and Jack (2008) define a case study in qualitative research as an instrument that allows a researcher to study a difficult problem very well within its context in order to generate a programme for intervention or build a theory. According to Yin (2012) case studies mostly focus on the justification of certain actions and how they were implemented and what was achieved. The key purpose of a case study is to ensure that a topic is explored well and that the essence of the “phenomena” is revealed (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

This study used a case study as an approach that focused more on the participants’ experiences and the setting. Out of four Grade 3 classes, only one class was chosen to be studied very well in order to obtain rich data. This class was chosen because the teacher was more experienced than the other three Grade 3 teachers. She was responsible for planning the English FAL in the grade. In order to understand how the selected Grade 3 teacher taught English FAL to her learners to facilitate language transition to English as LoLT in Grade 4, I had to observe her lessons, conduct interviews with her and analyse the CAPS document.

This case study was a descriptive case study because it described the teaching and learning of FAL in Grade 3 for meaningful learning. It sheds light on the challenges that confront learners who use English FAL as LoLT in which they had limited proficiency.

The following section provides a description of the research site.

### **3.5 Research Site**

In South Africa, two policies influence the classification of schools: the South African Schools Act of 1996 and the School Fee Exemption that is part of the Amended National Norms and Standards for Schools Funding of 2006 that determines whether a school will be a fee or no-fee paying school (Dass & Rinquest, 2017). These policies classify the schools according to quintiles. According to Van Wyk (2015) the quintile system reflects the socio-economic status of the school. In other words, schools are ranked according to the poverty levels of the surrounding school community. According to Van Wyk (2015) one of the factors for such classification is the surrounding infrastructure of the school. The number and nature of houses in the area; whether they are made of bricks, wood and iron sheeting determines the quintile classification. Because of

this classification, schools are divided into 5 quintiles based on the socio-economic status of the community in which they are located. Quintile 1 - 3 schools are poor schools while quintile 5 schools are the most affluent schools (Van Wyk, 2015; Dass & Rinquist, 2017).

The ranking of the school quintiles also determines the financial support schools receive from the state. For example, the WCED provides funding per learner on a yearly basis to exempt them from paying school fees. In addition, such schools are given a feeding scheme. In this way, learners from poor homes are able to have something to eat while they are at school during the day.

For the purpose of anonymity, this school is referred to as XYZ. XYZ Primary School is located in the Northern Suburbs of the Western Cape in one of the townships of Kraaifontein, where most of the learners live in informal settlements. The area is of very low socio-economic status and many learners come from the working-class background.

This school falls under quintile 2 and learners do not pay fees. These selection criteria were influenced by the research focus as I looked for a school where learners were mainly isiXhosa HL speakers, and they learnt English as FAL in the Foundation Phase.

### **3.6 Sampling**

A sample in qualitative research refers to a small group of individuals in a population (Aggarwal, 2011). In qualitative research, a sample is selected by enlisting the criteria on which the selection is based in order to avoid generalisation of the results. The selected sample should meet the pre-determined measures. This implies that if the selected sample does not match the established measures, this may influence the quality of the research. According to Babbie (2008) sampling enables the researcher to choose their participants who meet the criteria beforehand.

There are several forms of sampling, namely snowball sampling, random sampling and purposive sampling. Snowball sampling allows the interviewees to suggest or refer other people who can be interviewed (Babbie, 2008). Random sampling is defined as a method that gives a fair chance of selection for the participants, as they are selected randomly (Babbie, 2008). It provides an equal or fair chance of being selected for the study. Purposive sampling is the process of selecting individuals based on certain criteria, hence it is known as criterion-based selection (Palinkas, Horwits, Green, Wisdom, Duan & Hoagwood, 2013; Merriam, 2009). The snowball and purposive

sampling appear to be similar because they both show the characteristics of nonprobability sampling.

Purposive sampling is a technique used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases that contribute to the understanding of the research question (Palinkas et al., 2013; Denvers & Frankel, 2000). This involves identifying and selecting individuals that are knowledgeable or have experience with the “phenomena” of interest. The selection may not only be about their knowledge and experience of the participants, but their availability and willingness to partake in the study. Palinkas et al., (2013) state that the participants’ abilities should not only be limited to their knowledge and experience regarding the phenomenon, but also to have the ability to communicate experiences and opinions in a clear, open and insightful manner.

This study made use of a purposive sampling as this type of sample gives the researcher the chance of selecting the participants beforehand and be able to judge who can be the most useful or representative participant (Babbie, 2008). The selection and the criteria were developed before entering the research site.

I chose one Grade 3 class as this grade is a bridge between the Foundation Phase and Intermediate Phase where the LoLT changes from the learners’ home language to English FAL. So, choosing this grade enabled me to have an understanding of how learners were being prepared to cope with the demands of the curriculum taught through the medium of English (FAL) in the next phase. Secondly, I chose only one grade out of the four Grade 3 classes in the school, as I wanted to study one class in-depth to gain a deeper understanding of how the teacher delivered the lessons to facilitate learners’ epistemic access to learning. Furthermore, I wanted to establish the extent to which her pedagogical strategies prepared learners for the shift to English LoLT in Grade 4.

In the following section, I give the profile and background of the research participants.

### **3.7 Participants**

This study involved different participants. One of the participants was the Grade 3 teacher, Mrs Jane (not her real name) and her Grade 3 English FAL class. Mrs Jane had been teaching in the Foundation Phase for the past four years and had two years' experience in teaching English FAL in Grade 4 although she had qualified to teach in the Senior Phase (Grade 7-9). She worked as a

contract employee for two years, and she obtained a permanent position in Grade 3 where she had been teaching for the past four years. Mrs Jane gave permission to audio record her lessons and her interview responses.

Permission was sought from parents to involve their children in the study as shown in Appendix 11. I audio recorded their interaction with the teacher during the lessons that I observed. In the next chapter I have used pseudonyms in order to protect the learners' identities.

The Foundation Phase Head of Department (HOD), Thelma (not her real name) was also involved in the study. The purpose of including her in the study was to understand the level of support she provided to the Grade 3 teachers and her understanding of the teaching and learning of English FAL in Grade 3. Thelma had eight years of teaching experience in the Foundation Phase. She gave me permission to record her interview responses.

The Principal, Mrs Kom (not her real name), also participated in the study. She had 20 years teaching experience at a primary school level. I wanted to understand her role in teaching and learning in her school, as well as her support to teachers with regard to language teaching. I also investigated her views on learners' transition to English FAL in the Intermediate Phase. She gave permission to be audio-recorded during the interviews.

Below is a summary of the participant's profile:

*Table 1: Participants' profiles*

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Class Teacher</b>	<b>Head of Department (HOD)</b>	<b>Principal</b>
<b>Home language</b>	Sesotho	IsiXhosa	IsiXhosa
<b>Teaching Experience</b>	6 years	8 years	20 years
<b>Qualification</b>	B.Ed	B.Ed B.Ed Hons	Diploma in Teaching CACE
<b>Gender</b>	Female	Female	Female
<b>Subjects Taught</b>	IsiXhosa Mathematics Life Skills English FAL	IsiXhosa Mathematics Life Skills English FAL	IsiXhosa HL Grade 6

### **3.8 Research Methods**

In this qualitative study, I used interviews, observations and document analysis to collect data. Observations were conducted in order to investigate the teacher's pedagogy in English (FAL) and how learners interacted with her. Interviews and document analysis were used for triangulation purposes.

#### **3.8.1 Observations**

Observations in qualitative research entail immersing one's self into the culture of the participants (Lichtman, 2013). The purpose of observations is to allow the researcher a chance to have an understanding of the research problem in its natural setting (Lichtman, 2013; Punch, 2009).

According to Punch (2009) observations should be done systematically whereby the researcher looks for a particular behaviour. The researcher can record important aspects and stages of what they observe.

In this study, I observed the teaching methodology applied by the teacher in one English FAL classroom, and how her pedagogical strategies facilitated learners' epistemic access to English (FAL). I also looked at the extent to which her teaching strategies aligned with the CAPS requirements for English FAL in Grade 3 and how they enhanced learners' competence to cope with English LoLT in Grade 4.

Structured observation is when a researcher collects data but does not have direct involvement with the participants during data collection (Punch, 2009). This study took the structured observation format as I wanted to make sense of how learners were taught, without interfering with the teaching-learning process. In other words, the structured observations helped me keep a distance from the teaching-learning process.

From March to May 2018, I observed 10 Grade 3 English (FAL) lessons for an hour, three days a week (Monday – Wednesday). The English FAL period started at 12h00 p.m. and would end at 13h00. The observed English FAL lessons were based on the four language skills, namely; reading, listening and speaking, writing and language use/structure. I sat at the back and observed the teacher without any interruptions. This worked well because the learners did not pay attention to me and were acting naturally. Mrs Jane used to ask for my input to assist learners in the

pronunciation of difficult words. Sometimes she asked me to assist learners to log into computers and to find stories but I did not participate in her lessons.

Each lesson would focus on at least one or two of the language skills. For example, in one lesson the teacher would do a reading, discuss the story with the learners and give them 2-3 sentences to write. In the writing, she would focus on the language part, whereby learners needed to identify nouns, tenses and present tense, even though the learners were not writing everyday. The same lesson would be carried over to the next day where she would recap the lesson and continue with writing. Full details of lesson presentations will be given in Chapter 4.

I took notes of what the tape recorder could not capture such as the movements in the classroom and body gestures that the teacher used to explain to learners. I made a follow-up through an interview with Mrs Jane to understand the rationale for her teaching strategies. For example, she used to bring two different books to the class and learners in the same class read two different books. She explained to me that she was aware of the reading challenges in her classroom, so she had to provide reading material to learners. The observed lessons were aligned with my research questions and they addressed the research objectives.

### **3.8.2 Interviews**

According to Thomas (2011) an interview is a conversation with someone with the purpose of gathering information. Information gathered by means of interviews can be facts, opinions or attitudes of the participants.

Interviews were conducted with the Grade 3 teacher (Mrs Jane), the HOD (Thelma) and the school Principal. All the interviews were conducted in August 2018 at different times. The biographical information of the three participants was asked at the beginning of each session. I made use of semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are open-ended and in-depth tools that are commonly used in qualitative research (Thomas, 2011). Below I explain how interviews were conducted with each participant.

#### **3.8.2.1 Interview with the Class Teacher**

The teacher (Mrs Jane) was interviewed in order to understand the teaching strategies she used in her classroom. The interviews elicited the challenges she experienced and those experienced by



her learners in English FAL. The use of a semi-structured interview allowed me to explore the teacher's meaning and interpretations of events and situations that faced her in the teaching of English FAL. I was able to understand and relate to her with regard to her teaching practice and how she facilitated learning in English FAL. The interview lasted approximately 50 minutes.

During the interview, Mrs Jane was allowed to use any language she felt comfortable with. We ended up using three languages namely (Sesotho, isiXhosa and English) in one interview. In this way, Mrs Jane was comfortable and able to express herself freely. I was able to understand the three languages and there was no need for translation.

Mrs Jane gave me written consent to record her interview. After I had transcribed the interview data, I took the manuscript back to her to verify her answers because I did not want to misinterpret the data.

### **3.8.2.2 Interview with the Head of Department (HOD)**

The Foundation Phase Head of Department (HOD), Thelma, was interviewed in order to understand the type of support that she offered to Grade 3 teachers. The interview took place during the week at 14h00 when her learners had gone home. The interview with Thelma took approximately 30 minutes.

The interview was conducted in English and isiXhosa through code switching. The aim was to facilitate communication in the languages in which Thelma was comfortable to express herself.

Thelma's interview focused on her views on the teaching of English FAL and its use as LoLT in Grade 4. It touched on the challenges experienced by teachers and learners in English FAL, as well as how she supported Grade 3 teachers in the teaching of English FAL.

### **3.8.2.3 Interview with the Principal**

The Principal of the school, Mrs Kom, was interviewed in order to establish her role in the teaching and learning process. The interview also aimed at understanding her support to teachers, and her understanding of language debates in education.

Her interview also elicited her views on the LoLT transition from Grade 4, as well as the challenges experienced in the teaching and learning of English FAL in Grade 3. The interview took approximately 45 minutes.

Mrs Kom used both isiXhosa and English to respond to the interview questions. The use of the two languages facilitated free communication between the two of us, and we were able to understand each other very well.

In the following section, I focus on document analysis.

### **3.8.3 Document Analysis**

Document analysis is important as a means of triangulating research data. It entails using some material already collected by someone else (Thomas, 2011). The material could include the public or government database.

For the purpose of this study, I analysed the Grade 3 English FAL textbook that was prescribed by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the teacher's guidebook supplied by DBE. I had to refer to the teacher's guide for English FAL and CAPS documents. Mrs Jane also gave me two separate books that she used in her class to supplement the information provided in the prescribed textbook. She used different books that were CAPS aligned.

I analysed the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) to investigate the requirements for teaching English FAL in Grade 3. I also looked at the contact time or hours allocated to the teaching of this subject.

I also wanted to establish the relationship between the Grade 3 and Grade 4 CAPS requirements and the competencies that were expected of Grade 3 learners to cope with English as LoLT in Grade 4.

As part of document analysis, I also looked at the school's timetable to see if hours matched those allocated in the CAPS document or not. This allowed me to understand whether the time allocated to English FAL was realistic with regard to the development of Grade 3 learners' language skills and proficiency in English FAL.

I also analysed the print material on the classroom walls. I analysed these materials in order to see the kinds of prints that the learners were exposed to in English FAL lessons and to understand how the print material was used to develop learners' literacy in the English FAL. This analysis was inspired by my belief that if learners are adequately exposed to the FAL materials, they could refer to the prints to enhance their learning of English FAL.

In summary, the data collection methods used in this study gave me an opportunity to triangulate data from the observation, interviews and to the document analysis. These methods allowed me to use multiple ways of collecting data to address the research questions stated in Chapter 1.

In the following section, I discuss validity and reliability and how they were observed in this study.

### **3.9 Validity and Reliability**

The issue of validity and reliability is very important in both qualitative and quantitative research. Validity is defined as the truth or the full explanation of the participants' realities by the researcher (Creswell, 2008). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) define validity in research as the truthfulness of findings and conclusion.

Qualitative research uses different methods to ensure the validity of the collected data (Martella et al., 2013; Golafshani, 2003). The researcher may check for validity through triangulation of data (Cohen et al., 2007). Triangulation in qualitative research refers to the use of multiple ways of sourcing the information in order to eliminate the misrepresentation of data and to clarify meanings from the participants (Cohen et al., 2007; Golafshani, 2003; Martella et al., 2013). In other words, triangulation can be used to validate the claims of the collected data as a way of detecting different truths of the participants' worlds. Triangulation allows the researcher to see things from different perspectives (Cohen et al., 2007). Therefore, I had to triangulate the data to determine whether there was any consistency in the information collected from different sources.

Cohen et al., (2007) propose that content validity should cover the whole content. In this study, the purpose of validating data was to avoid generalisations or speculations regarding the collected data. Validity was a true reflection of what the participants offered me and how they made meaning of their own world.

Truthfulness in this study was promoted by allowing the participants to behave naturally. Their self-reflection on their practice was encouraged during classroom observations. This allowed them to be true to themselves rather than acting for the purpose of the study.

### **3.9.1 Reliability**

Credibility or reliability and the quality of the findings are important in qualitative research. Reliability is defined as a fit of what actually took place during research and what is recorded as data (Martella et al., 2013). Golafshani (2003) views reliability as a way of producing quality data that eliminates errors for accurate description and interpretation of events.

There are many ways that the qualitative researchers may verify their observations and crosscheck their sources. For example, one may give the description of methods applied and the underlying logic (Martella et al., 2013). This implies that each time the researcher uses a method, they need to explain why they are opting for that particular method instead of the others. The second way of ensuring reliability of data is to give the description of the range cycle of activities that were observed (Martella et al., 2013). Furthermore, to ensure reliability the researcher needs to collect data from multiple sources (Martella, 2013).

In this study, I observed the Grade 3 teacher over a period of three months in order to gain an in-depth understanding of her practice. My school visits were dependent on the teacher's availability. In some instances I visited the school once per week. I complemented classroom observations with interview data that were verified by the participants. This was a means of avoiding my own biases and beliefs so that they could not influence my research findings.

### **3.10 Ethics**

Ethics in social science research is regarded as a guiding tool that has standards that one needs to uphold when conducting research (Flick, 2006; Litchman, 2013). According to Flick (2006) there are many issues when it comes to ethical concerns for research such as seeking permission and consent from the participants, voluntary participation, confidentiality and anonymity of participants. All these ethical issues should be explained to the participants from the beginning of the study.

In conducting this study, I followed ethics so that I could not violate the participant's privacy and rights and disclose their identity. Firstly, I had to seek permission from the gatekeepers. Gatekeepers in research refer to people who stand between the researcher and the participants or the site (Keesling, 2008). In other words, gatekeepers are the ones who control access to the research site. In this study, I had to obtain research permission from the Western Cape Education Department (WCED), the school Principal and School's Senior Management Team (SMT) who all had power and influence in the school as shown in Appendix 3.

I had to strike a balance between the demands that were placed on me as a researcher in pursuit of the truth, and the participants' rights and values that could be potentially threatened by my research. It is for this reason that I had to declare to the participants that their participation in the study was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study anytime they wanted to do so. I also had to explain that they would not be harmed during their participation in the study.

Secondly, the participants were given consent forms that stated the purpose of the study and what the study hoped to achieve. Consent forms allowed the participants to volunteer in the study with an understanding of what they were expected to do in the study. The participants signed consent forms as a memorandum of understanding. As this study involved minors, I had to give parents the consent form to allow their children to be part of the study, as I conducted classroom observations to see how they interacted with their teacher. The consent forms were given to the learners and were signed by the parents.

As mentioned earlier, anonymity and confidentiality of participants should be prioritised, and the identity of the participants' identity has to be protected (Litchman, 2013). The participants were given the assurance that their identity would be respected and that their names would not be disclosed. Pseudonyms were used as a way of protecting the participant's identity or names as shown in Appendix 1.

Finally, the pictures collected from the learners' books and their names were kept anonymous to protect their identity.

The following section deals with the limitations of this case study.

### **3.11 Limitations**

Limitations in social science research refer to the flaws of the study which the researcher has no control over (Simon & Goes, 2011).

The limitation of this study was the sample size as I collected data from one school and one grade only. The advantage of using one school was to manage the project adequately. It was easier to study one class well to understand the research problem. Another advantage was that I could manage to keep up with data collection and I had time to spend over certain questions that were not clear to me.

However, the disadvantage of using one school was that my data are based on one school and therefore the findings cannot be generalised to all the schools. In other words, the small number of participants does not speak for the whole school population from this particular primary school and for the whole province of the Western Cape.

My data collection was also affected by the fact that I could not attend all the days we had agreed upon with the participant due to unforeseen school activities that prevented me from conducting classroom observations on certain days. Some of the factors that affected my classroom observations included public holidays and other activities such as music competitions and fundraising activities.

I responded to these limitations by conforming to ethics to ensure that I respected the school and its activities. I had to be flexible and understand that the participants had other obligations and commitments that I had to respect and accept.

### **3.12 Chapter Summary**

This chapter focused on the methodological framework that was used to carry out the research activities for this study. The study used a single case study, which aligns with the qualitative research approach. Interviews, classroom observations and document analysis were used to collect data from the participants.

The purposive sampling was used in selecting participants for this study. The participants included the Grade 3 class teacher and her learners, the HOD and the Principal. Ethical considerations were observed throughout the data collection process

In Chapter 4, the collected data will be presented and analysed.



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# CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

## 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present data collected by means of observations, interviews and document analysis. This chapter is divided into two sections. Firstly, I present data that were collected by means of classroom observations of English FAL lessons in Grade 3. Secondly, I present data that were obtained through interviews with the Grade 3 class teacher, the Head of Department (HOD) and the school Principal. Lastly, I present data from document analysis, which includes the Curriculum and Assessment Policy (CAPS), timetable and other materials that were used in the teaching and learning of English FAL in the Grade 3 classroom.

Section two of this chapter focuses on data analysis. The first section deals with the themes that emerged from the data. Guided by Thematic Analysis, I discuss the data in relation to the research questions stated in Chapter 1.

## 4.2 Data Presentation

Data presentation entails description of data that is guided by the research questions and objectives. In this section, I present the classroom observation and interview data, as well as data collected from various documents. As a starting point, I describe the data that were collected by means of observing Grade 3 English FAL lessons.

### 4.2.1 Data from classroom observations

I observed 10 lessons in Mrs Jane's class. Out of the 10 lessons, I chose four lessons that appeared to align closely with the research questions. These lessons deal with a variety of language aspects such as adjectives, nouns and the past tense. The data also covered reading of different texts that were used in the class, vocabulary, listening and speaking skills. Writing was based on the stories that were read in class. Below is the presentation of data on reading lessons.



#### 4.2.2 Lesson 1: Reading

The focus of this lesson was on reading and learners read a story using their prescribed textbook. The teacher (Mrs Jane) led the reading and learners read after her.

Mrs Jane started the lesson by instructing learners to turn to page 24 of their English (FAL) textbook, entitled Platinum. Mrs Jane started by asking the learners to discuss the picture in the story as a class. They shouted what they saw e.g. [**we see a house**]. She moved on to ask the learners to identify different features of the picture. Before they could respond, the teacher told them that they all had homes or houses. She looked at the picture and asked for the description of the house. Learners were required to describe the house from the roof. Mrs Jane decided to ask what a roof was, as she did not get a response from the learners. She used the learners' home language to explain, and said "**luphahla**" (it is a roof). After this explanation, learners responded to her as [it is red]. Mrs Jane took this answer and said: "**[Yes, it is red; the house is red]**". She consolidated their answers by repeating what they had said. She never asked them to describe the wall of the house or anything else regarding the house.

The teacher started reading and led the class. She read the first paragraph and learners followed after her. As she progressed with reading, the text became more complex and the learners started to experience difficulties. They mumbled the second paragraph and it appeared that they could not make sense of what they were reading. As she got to the third paragraph, she had lost a large number of her learners, who were just singing after her. She asked learners to read in their respective groups so that she could see where the problem was. The reading groups were given fruit names, namely the 'Bananas, Apples and Strawberries'. The "Bananas" read well on their own while the "Apples" struggled to read. "Strawberries" could not read at all. The text below was used as a reading story in the class.

**Read and view**

1. Read about what happened when Mani's family fixed their new house.

**Mani's new house**

On the first of April, we fixed our new house. All the family came to help.

Uncle Jim fixed the roof. My cousin Paul painted the walls. Cousin Linda cleaned the gutters. Cousins Jabu and Boone fitted the window. Grandfather tiled the front porch.



We also helped my Mom in the garden. Cousin Joan mowed the grass. I planted flowers. Mom put a load of compost in the vegetable beds. We all helped to clean the pool.

Aunt Tessa and Uncle Tom cleaned all the rooms. They cleaned the windows and washed the walls. They swept the floors.



Then they soaked the dirty broom in a bucket of water.

Figure 4: Story read in class

In reading this text, learners from all the three groups struggled with certain words. They had difficulties with the words ending with [-ed]. Mrs Jane became aware of this challenge and extracted all the words ending with [-ed]. She wrote these words on a white board and asked learners to read them out. However, this method did not seem to work as learners kept pronouncing the words the way they were spelt. The difficult words for the learners were:

**[fixed, painted, cleaned, fitted, tiled, helped, washed, soaked and stopped]**

Assisting the learners to pronounce these words correctly took Mrs Jane a very long time. After the pronunciation of words, Mrs Jane explained to her learners what the story was all about. She tried to make use of concrete examples such as fixing of broken things in their households. The following excerpt shows how Mrs Jane used the learners' L1 in explaining the concept of fixing:

Mrs Jane: Mamelani, nikhe nibone xa kulungiswa komawenu, xa kukho into emoshakeleyo. Ela xesha kulungiswa loo nto it means they are fixing what is broken

*Listen, do you ever notice when things get fixed at your homes, when there is something broken.*

*When something is repaired, it means they are fixing what is broken.*

She used the learners' L1 as a way of scaffolding the lesson and learners started to interact well after she had used their L1. She asked them: **[what does fixing mean?]**. One learner responded and used his L1: **[ukulungisa] (to fix)**. Mrs Jane gave the meaning in English: **[to fix broken things]**. " She continued with the lesson as follows:

**(R 1)** Mrs Jane: Do you help at home to fix broken things... Even if you sweep or clean?

**(R 2)** Learner: I help and fixed the car with my dad, it was broken.

**(R 3)** Mrs Jane: Only one person helps to fix things, huh? Maybe you fix or help by doing dishes or cleaning.

*(All learners engaged in the lesson and shouted)*

**(R 4)** Learner 1: I wash dishes

**(R 5)** Learner 2: I make coffee

**(R 6)** Learner 3: I make eggs

Mrs Jane: Yes, to fix means we only fix broken things to be new again.

In this lesson, learners read a story about fixing a house and different duties that each person performed when they had to fix things in their household. The excerpt below shows some of the learners' responses:

(R 7) Mrs Jane: So, you are telling me that none of you help in your homes, huh?

(R 8) Learner 4: I help by cleaning the house

(R 9) Mrs Jane: Omnye (*Another one/somebody else*)

(R 10) Learner 5: I help by making tea and eggs when mama is busy

(R 11) Mrs Jane: We only fix broken things "Xa imoshakele okanye zophukile" (*When broken or damaged*). To fix is to make new or beautiful

In the above interaction, the word "fix" had been given a new meaning by the teacher, which distorts the actual meaning of the word "to repair." For example, cleaning and cooking are not good examples of fixing.

She allowed discussion that analysed the pictures in the story although this did not work well at times. Only few learners would participate actively in the discussion to share their thoughts. It appeared that the majority of learners were unable to express themselves in English. Thereafter, learners were assessed on the story. Below is a set of questions that learners had to answer after reading the story:

## Make sense

1. Read the story again. Answer these questions.
  - a) Who planted the flowers?
  - b) Who cleaned the gutter?
  - c) Who painted the wall?
2. Answer **True** or **False**.
  - a) Dad helped Mom in the garden.
  - b) Aunt Tessa painted the walls.
  - c) Cousin Joan fixed the roof.

Figure 5: Questions based on a story

Mrs Jane used books with simple vocabulary to mediate learners' reading skills. Learners were able to understand the context of the stories because Mrs Jane always tried to make the reading relevant to their daily lives and experiences. However, it was hard to achieve independent reading at this level, as learners seemed to rely too much on the teacher and had difficulties to pronounce some English words. They mumbled when the text got more complex.

When it came to reading, Mrs Jane tried to apply different methods. For instance, she would ask learners to look at the picture in the book or computer and then ask them what the picture meant to them. She allowed her learners to share their own understanding or use their prior knowledge in the lesson. She used this method regularly to explain the vocabulary to the learners to understand the text. This pre-reading strategy allowed learners to make connection with their daily lives. For example, the class once did a story about the wedding. Mrs Jane started the lesson by playing the quiz of the Television show that played on Channel 161 called “Our Perfect Wedding.” All the learners seemed to be familiar with this show and it became easier for them to relate to the story as Mrs Jane probed their understanding of the story.

Mrs Jane always started reading to the learners and would only make them read as a group once she noticed that they did not comprehend the text. There was not much individual reading in the lessons I observed in Mrs Jane’s class. She used to divide her learners according to groups, although she would focus on the class as a whole at some instances. I noticed that she paid more attention to those who were able to read.

In summary, during reading Mrs Jane allowed learners to use their home language to understand concepts. She used the learners’ home language to keep them engaged with the lesson or to understand the lesson better. After reading the text, Mrs Jane gave learners an activity to do and questions to answer based on the story. She intervened when she saw that learners did not read or pronounce words properly, and she tried to allow cooperative learning by allowing learners to share experiences.

The next section discusses lessons on language use that emanated from the reading lesson.

#### **4.2.3 Lesson 2: Language Structure and Use**

The focus of this lesson was on language use. Mrs Jane started the lesson by summarising the previous story for the learners. The focus of the language lesson was on adjectives. She instructed the learners to look at the picture and find adjectives. Learners kept quiet and she realised that they did not understand the meaning of the word [**adjective**]. She wrote the meaning of an adjective on the blackboard and started reading to them as follows:

**“An adjective is a describing word. It describes the colour, size, or feel of something.”**

The whole class read what an adjective was from the blackboard and they replaced [*an*] with [*a*] as shown below:

(L 1) Whole class: A adjective is a describing word. It describes.....

(L 2) Mrs Jane: Iadjective ngesiXhosa sisichazi (*An adjective is a describing word in IsiXhosa*)

(L 3) Whole class: Isichazi (*Adjective*)

(L 4) Mrs Jane: Iadjective ngesiXhosa sisichazi

(L 5) Whole class: Isichazi (*Adjective*)

(L 6) Mrs Jane: Iadjective ngesiXhosa sisichazi

(L 7) Learners: Isichazi (*Adjective*)

After drilling the learners on the meaning of an adjective in isiXhosa, Mrs Jane noticed that they could understand an adjective in their home language. She reminded them of the lesson on nouns that they did previously and translated [**nouns**] in their home language. To get their attention, the teacher used the learners' L1 to say what an adjective and noun were. Immediately the learners seemed to understand and started to participate as indicated below:

(L 8) Mrs Jane: Izibizo (*Nouns*)

(L 9) Whole class: Izibizo (*Nouns*)

(L 10) Mrs Jane: Izibizo (*Nouns*)

(L 11) Whole class: Izibizo (*Nouns*)

(L 12) Mrs Jane: Izibizo (*Nouns*)

(L 13) Whole class: Izibizo (*Nouns*)

In her interaction with the learners, Mrs Jane allowed her learners to give a description of an adjective in a chorus form.

(L 14) Mrs Jane: The roof is red, the wall is yellow.

(L 15) Learner 1: Oh! Ndiyabona ke ngoku (*Oh! I see now*)

(L 16) Mrs Jane: Makhe sitsho ke ukuba yintoni iadjective (*Let us say what an adjective is*)

(L 17) Whole class: A adjective is a describing word. It describes...

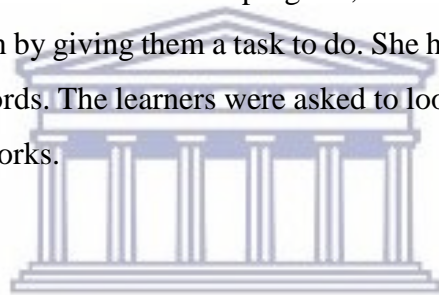
(L 18) Whole class: A adjective is a describing word. It describes...

(L 19) Whole class: A adjective is a describing word. It describes...

(L 20) Whole class: A adjective is a describing word. It describes...

(L 21) Whole class: A adjective is a describing word. It describes...

Mrs Jane seemed to be pleased with her learners' progress, and allowed learners to demonstrate their understanding of the lesson by giving them a task to do. She handed out a sheet with a picture of an ostrich with describing words. The learners were asked to look at it and identify an adjective and explain how an adjective works.



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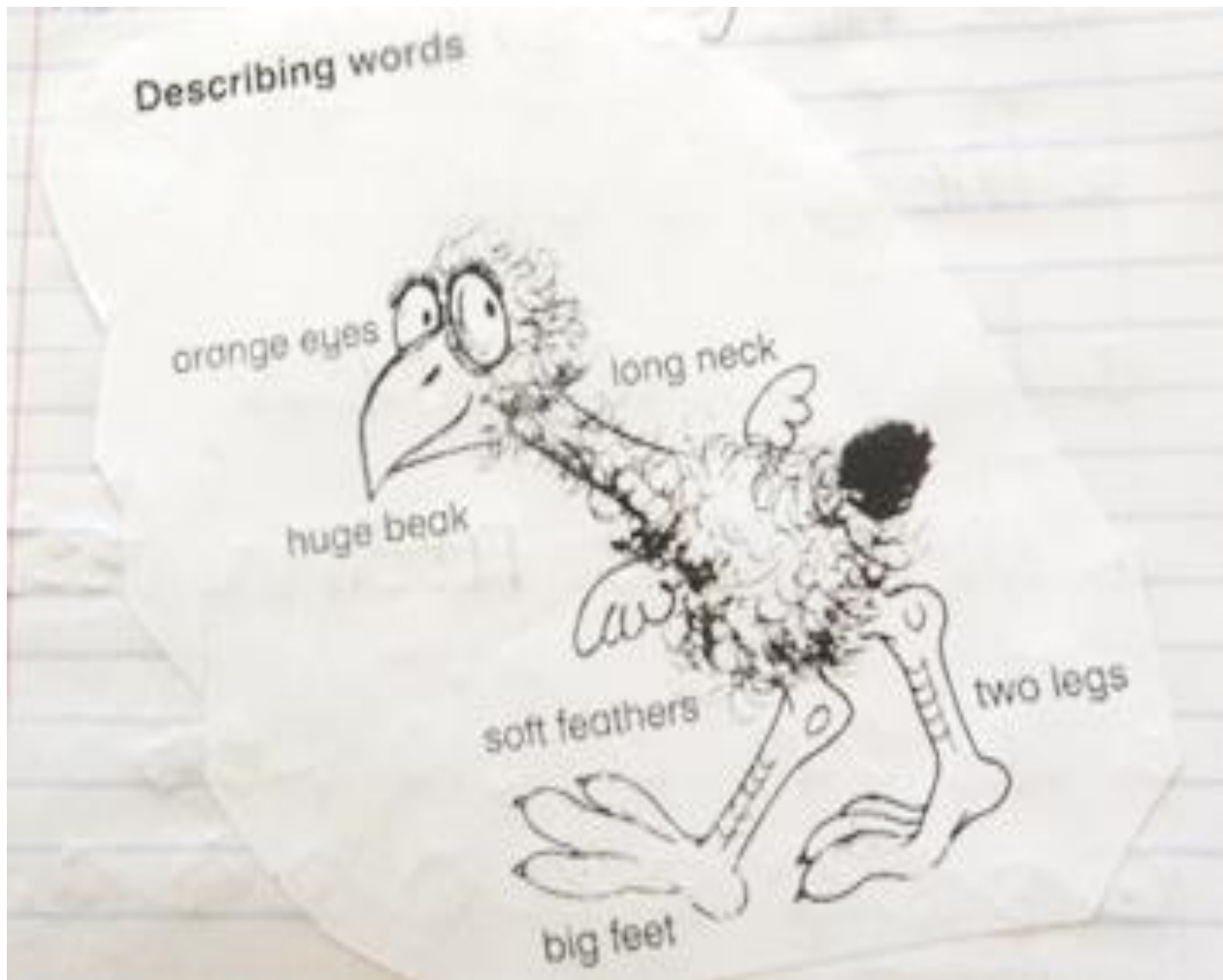


Figure 6: Use of adjectives

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Mrs Jane realised that the home language translation helped her in this lesson, although not all her learners seemed to follow the lesson. She decided to use real objects to mediate learning. For example, she used triangles, circle and squares with different colours to demonstrate how an adjective works in a sentence. She kept on making emphasis on the objects she was holding e.g.

[I have a red square]

[I have a blue square].

In this way, she tried to remind them that an adjective describes the noun. She wrote a sentence on the board to illustrate the use of an adjective in a sentence. She identified the adjective and a noun in the sentence, although she made a spelling mistake in writing the word [noun] as [nouse] on the board.

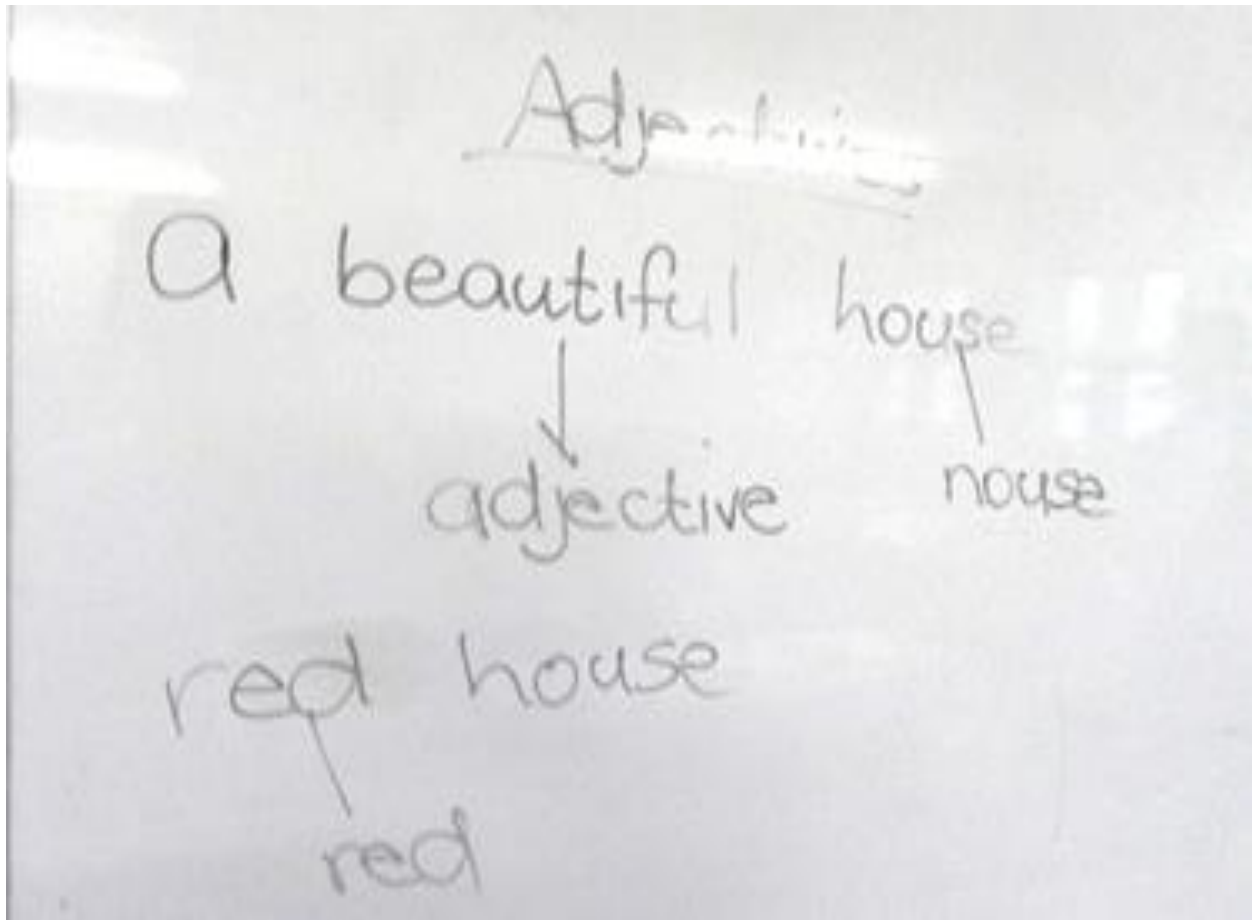


Figure 7: Illustrating the use of an adjective

The teacher used practical examples to make learners to understand what an adjective is. She also used gestures to illustrate to the learners the function of an adjective in the sentence. She lifted up two different sizes of books to illustrate to the learners the use of an adjective. She then asked this question:

(L 22) Mrs Jane: This book is big or small

(L 23) Whole class: The book is red.

**Mrs Jane:** It also describes the size of an object (book); it also describes how tall, short, colour is and so on.... It also describes the feeling of something. For example, this plastic is soft or hard.

Learners seemed to understand after she had used real objects to explain the concept. She moved on as the learners seemed to follow the lesson well.

(L 24) Mrs Jane: Who knows what is a cotton wool?

(L 25) Learner 2: Uboya obuthengwayo bufakwe endlebeni (*Wool that is bought to be put in the ear*)

(L 26) Mrs Jane: Is it soft or hard?

(L 27) Whole class: It is soft.

(L 28) Mrs Jane: It is not hot but...

(L 29) Whole class: It is warm

(L 30) Mrs Jane: No, it is cold

In the above excerpt, it appeared that Mrs Jane wanted the learners to give opposites or antonyms, but she did not guide the learners. As a result, they did not follow her and she gave them the correct answers without explaining their mistake.

In this language lesson, Mrs Jane used learners' home language to make her lesson interactive as learners were passive when she used English only. The use of the learners' home language facilitated her learners' understanding of the lesson. However, I noticed that there were those learners who kept quiet and only a few seemed to understand and participated actively in the lesson. She tried to include everyone when she brought visual objects for learners to understand or classify objects as being hard, soft, small, big, round, with different colours. This encouraged learners to be active. The following lesson was based on learners' knowledge of language and reading. Learners had to apply their knowledge and speak in English.

The next lesson focuses on listening and speaking skills.

#### **4.2.4 Lesson 3 (a): Listening and Speaking**

The primary focus of this lesson was on listening and speaking. The first part deals with the speaking (oral) lesson and the second part deals with listening.

Mrs Jane started the lesson by asking learners to speak about how they prepared their food and how they got to school. The learners needed to describe the process that was involved in their preparations.

(S 1) Mrs Jane: How do you come to school?

(S 2) Learner 1: I walk

(S 3) Learner 2: Transport

(S 4) Learner 3: Umama Uyandikhapha (*Mom accompanies me*)

**Mrs Jane:** Okay, mamelani before nize apha (*Listen before you get here*)... you bath, eat, or whatever you do then you come here. You bath, eat... All of that is a step by step process of how you do something.

Following this explanation, Mrs Jane told the learners that they each would have two minutes to come and share how they prepared a cup of coffee or tea. The teacher gave them key words to guide them on how they should explain the process. The guiding words to explain the process were: **[First, Then and Next]**.

To break the ice, the teacher started to explain how she made tea for her friends when they came to visit her. She asked who would begin. The learners were hesitant, and after a few minutes, a volunteer raised his hand.

(S 5) Mrs Jane: Whose gonna do? Sikho<sup>1</sup>. This means we give our ears to Sikho and respect

(S 6) Sikho: How to make a cup of tea, I will take two cups and boil water, and I put there in a cup of tea and I stir. Then I enjoy.

(S 7) Learner 1: How to make a cup of tea, I take a kettle, I plug, water... (He could not finish the sentence as he was trying to remember words to use)

The teacher interrupted the learner by saying;

(S 8) Mrs Jane: You say first, then, next.

Learners repeated these words after the teacher for several times.

(S 9) Whole class: First, then, next.

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<sup>1</sup> Sikho - Psuedonym

(S 10) Whole class: First, then, next.

(S 11) Whole class: First, then, next.

(S 12) Learner 2: First I take and put a cup. I plug the kettle. I put a cup. I put a coffee. I put a cup tea. I put a sugar and I boil a water in a cup and I stir and I enjoy.

Learner 2 seemed not to realise that she was not using any of the connecting words that the teacher had written on the whiteboard. Mrs Jane had to assist her, as shown below:

(S 13) Mrs Jane: First, I boil. Don't say I boil a water, a cup of tea, a cup of coffee. Don't use the word "a" right through. We do not say a water, but we say water. Who wants to be next?

(S 14) Learner 3: How to make a cup of tea: First of all, I boil water, take out two cup, I put sugar, I put milk, I put teabag. I put boiling water and I stir and I enjoy the tea.

This learner used actions to illustrate how he made tea.

(S 15) Mrs Jane: Remember your connecting words and speak up.

(S 16) Learner 4: How to make tea, first I boil my water, I put teabag in a cup, sugar then I stir and enjoy my tea.

(S 17) Mrs Jane: Who's next?

After these five learners, the rest of the class did not seem willing to present how they made tea. Eventually, some of them presented and they could not use connecting words properly as advised by the teacher.

Mrs Jane used a rubric to assess how the learners performed in this lesson. But the rubric seemed to assess a recount instead of a procedural text. For example, the rubric looked at how the learner gave details of the story and how many sentences the learner was using to narrate the story. It did not consider the step-by-step process to prepare coffee or tea. The rubric is attached as Appendix 15.

### **Lesson 3 (b): Listening**

In this lesson, the key focus was on listening. The learners were supposed to listen to a story and talk about the story or respond to the questions that the teacher asked them. The teacher played the

story on a CD player (radio). The learners had to be quiet and pay attention to the story. Mrs Jane started to explain the purpose of the lesson to the learners as follows:

**Mrs Jane:** Mamelani, kuzakufuneka nithule nithi ncwaka kuba leradio ivolume ayivakali xa nithethayo.

**Listen, you will have to be very quiet, as this radio's volume will be inaudible when you speak**

Mrs Jane turned the radio on and selected the story number that the class was supposed to listen to. She played this story thrice on the radio. She told the learners to listen very carefully as she would be asking questions about what each person heard from the radio. At the end, she asked the following question:

**(Ls 1)** Mrs Jane: Makhe sitsho ke kuba siventoni na. **Let's say what we have heard.**

The learners seemed to be excited about the story. They raised their hands and started calling the names of different places they heard.

**(Ls 2)** Learner 1: Johannesburg, Durban

**(Ls 3)** Whole class: Eastern Cape

**(Ls 4)** Learner 2: East London

**(Ls 5)** Whole class: Gauteng

**(Ls 6)** Learner 4: Mpumalanga, Limpompo

The learners gave the names of the places they heard from the story. It appeared that they did not understand the question that was asked by the teacher. Mrs Jane was aware of this and she asked the question differently.

**(Ls 7)** Mrs Jane: Bethunana, nifuna ukundixelela ukuba nive amagama endawo zodwa na?

**Guys, do you want to tell me that you heard the names of the places only?**

**(Ls 8)** Learner 5: Iitrip kaDisemba Miss. (December trip Miss)

**(Ls 9)** Mrs Jane: Ewe, ndiyavuma. Omnye umntu ingabe uve ntoni na yena?

**Yes, I agree with you. What did the others hear?**

Mrs Jane became aware that the learners did not understand the story, so she read the story instead of playing a CD. But this was not effective as the learners could not tell what they had heard from the story. Therefore, she had to go back to the answer given by one learner (Learner 5) and gave an example that seemed to be clear to the learners.

Mrs Jane: NgoDisemba, wonke umntu uyahamba agoduke mos siya e'makhaya. Xa sihambayo sigoduka zibakhona iindawo esidlula kuzo sizibone.

**During the December holidays, we all go home. There are places that we pass and see.**

After giving this example, the learners appeared to understand what she is saying. They could relate to the story as most of them came from the Eastern Cape and were familiar with the December trips. She asked this question:

(Ls 10) Mrs Jane: Which province is your home in?

(Ls 11) Whole class: Cape Town

(Ls 12) Mrs Jane: iCape Town ayiyo province yitown. Igama leprovince it's Western Cape.

**Cape Town it is not a province but it's a city. The province is the Western Cape.**

This lesson appeared to be complicated for these learners as some of the places that were mentioned in the story were not familiar to the learners. But Mrs Jane tried to explain what a trip was and how one prepares for a trip.

After observing this lesson, I felt that the purpose of the oral and listening lesson was not achieved as Mrs Jane had planned. Realising that the lesson was unsuccessful, Mrs Jane told the learners that she would read the story again and they would talk about it again on the following day. The story used for listening is attached as Appendix 18.

In short, the two lessons were based on listening and speaking. The learners did the procedural text and spoke about how they prepared a cup of coffee. In the oral lesson, the learners were unable to use connectives in their explanations and they were struggling to express themselves fluently in English. In both lessons, the learners appeared not to understand the questions asked by the teacher.

They were unable to comprehend this story without the teacher's explanation of certain words in isiXhosa. Interestingly, these learners could relate to the Eastern Cape trip as most of them were from this province.

#### 4.2.5 Lesson 4: Writing

In this lesson, Mrs Jane focused on writing. Learners were instructed to take out their English books as they were about to write. Before the writing started, Mrs Jane reminded the learners about the nouns and adjectives that they had learned previously. She made a simple example, as follows:

**(W 1) Mrs Jane:** If you remember the story on page 24-25 the house was fixed. Now can you remember what was fixed?

**(W 2) Whole class:** Yes Miss. (Chorus)

**Mrs Jane:** Make a list of all the things that were fixed at the house.

The whole class was quiet and did not understand what they were supposed to do. Mrs Jane took them back to the story they had read, hoping that this would trigger their memory. Learners seemed not to understand the word "list." She decided to define what the word meant and gave an example.

Mrs Jane: List means to write all the things in one paper. If someone comes and asks for Grade 3 D class list, it means that all the names of everybody will be in that list.

Although she was aware that her learners could not understand the question, she continued and said, "*Have a look at the list, and tell me what was fixed in that house.*" She saw that they were still lost, and she left the section that required learners to write a list of words. She introduced a new topic for the day.

Mrs Jane: Mamelani (*Listen*), namhlanje sizobhala (*today we will write*) sentences using nouns from the board.

**(W 3) Mrs Jane:** What is a noun?

**(W 4) Learner 1:** A noun is a name of a person. (Learner speaks softly)

**(W 5) Learner 2:** Noun is a name of a place.

**(W 6) Learner 3:** A noun is a name of things.



(W 7) Mrs Jane: Noun is a name of a person, place. Always think about yourself and where you stay, that way you won't forget about a noun.

(W 8) Mrs Jane: Show me a thing that is a noun

(W 9) Learner 1: Linda, Joan, Paul.

Mrs Jane: There are a lot. There's mother, Uncle John, Tessa.

She noticed that her learners were quiet as only few had their hands up.

(W 10) Mrs Jane: Pick up the place.

(W 11) Whole class: Mumbling

(W 12) Mrs Jane: Now look at the board. Sebenzisani ezi words (use these words) to write sentences.

The nouns on the blackboard were:

**[Father, Friends, Book, Wallacedene, Monday, Linda]**

Learners wrote in their books but they seemed to be taking longer than they were expected. After a while, the teacher wrote on the blackboard and the learners read the sentences. She seemed not to be patient as half of her class was still writing. She kept giving three extra minutes from the original five minutes she had given.

(W 13) Learner 1: I see father running. (She speaks softly as she seems not sure of what she wants to say)

(W 14) Mrs Jane: huh? Speak loud.

(W 15) Learner 1: I see father driving car.

The teacher decided to write a sentence on the board using the noun [father]. The teacher asked the learners to read from the board the correct sentence she had written on the board.

(W 16) Whole class: My father drives a car.

(W 17) Whole class: My father drives a car.

(W 18) Whole class: My father drives a car.

(W 19) Learner 2: I play with my friends.

The teacher wrote this sentence on the board and asked the whole class to read it repeatedly.

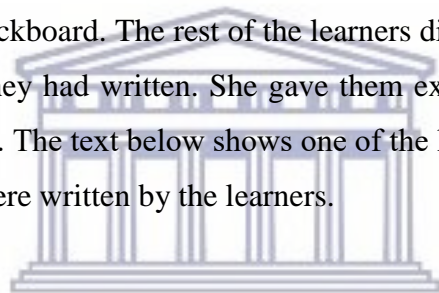
(W 20) Whole class: I play with my friends.

(W 21) Whole class: I play with my friends.

(W 22) Whole class: I play with my friends.

After writing the sentence, the teacher reminded them of the rule of using a capital letter and finishing off by placing a full stop.

In this lesson, the teacher disregarded the incorrect use of language by the learners and only wrote the correct sentences on the blackboard. The rest of the learners did not say anything, instead she made each person read what they had written. She gave them extra five minutes and out of 39 learners, only 10 learners wrote. The text below shows one of the learners' writing in their books. It is one of the best texts that were written by the learners.



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Write sentences using the following nouns.

1. Thabo is playing with his friends.

2. Wallace - My friends they don't like Wallace.

3. Book - I like to read my book.

4. Cat - My cat likes to sleep.

Figure 8: Sample of Learners' writing (A)

The learners were given five nouns and were asked to construct sentences. Some learners wrote and finished the tasks at the allocated time. Others appeared unable to write simple sentences correctly. The example below shows one learner's work who had difficulties in English.

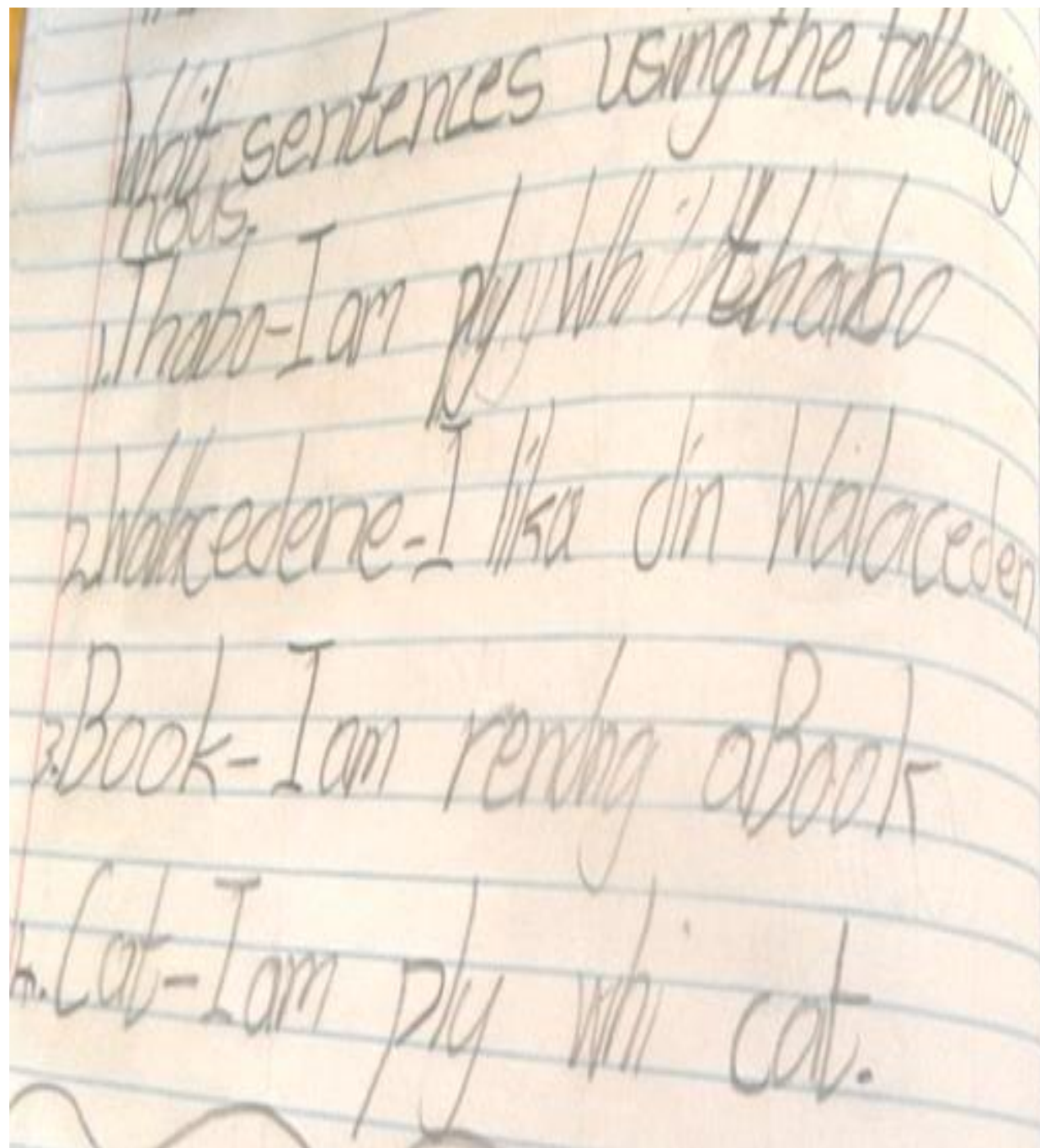


Figure 9: Sample of Learners' writing (B)

#### **4.2.6 Summary of classroom observations**

The observation of the Grade 3 English (FAL) classroom showed that the learners had an understanding of their home language (isiXhosa). The teacher took advantage of this as she tried to mediate learning through the learners' home language. The observations showed that the teacher intervened a lot in the lesson when she saw that her learners were not doing what was expected of them. In every lesson when she saw that her learners made a mistake (e.g. language rule/concord error), the teacher did not correct them, instead she gave correct answers to the learners. She did not appear to cater for learners' individual differences in writing. Hence, it was difficult for some learners to finish their work in time.

During the observations, Mrs Jane used different strategies to teach English FAL in her classroom. Her teaching methods seemed to allow learners the opportunity to participate actively in the teaching-learning process. The learners' home language (isiXhosa) was used to enhance meaning making in this classroom, especially when it came to vocabulary. However, due to limited proficiency in English, some of the learners did not participate actively in the lessons. As a result, most of the answers were given in a chorus.

Having observed Mrs Janes' English FAL teaching, I had to interview her to ask about the teaching approaches she used in the classroom. I also interviewed the HOD and the Principal to gain their views on the teaching of English FAL in the Foundation Phase. The following section presents data from these interviews.

#### **4.3 Data from Interviews**

As stated in the previous chapter, the study collected data by means of interviews. In this section I present data from the interviews with the three participants, namely the class teacher (Mrs Jane), the Head of Department in Grade 3 (Thelma) and the Principal (Mrs Kom). All the names given to the teachers are fictitious and they are used to protect their identity.

##### **4.3.1 Teacher's Interview**

The interview with Mrs Jane (J) aimed at getting a better understanding of the teaching of English (FAL) in the Foundation Phase, specifically in the Grade 3 class. Furthermore, the interview

focused on English (FAL) at Grade 3 level and how it prepared learners for transition to English medium of instruction in Grade 4. As mentioned in Chapter 3, I made use of a semi-structured interview to allow Mrs Jane to express her views freely.

During the interview, Mrs Jane gave a detailed description of the teaching methods she used for teaching reading and writing in English (FAL) in her classroom. Below is the excerpt that indicates the methods she used in the English (FAL) classroom:

**(J 1)** My methods for teaching FAL in the classroom vary according to the lessons we have. For instance, when I teach vocabulary I take it from the text they are doing.... I always go back to the text we did or are doing to identify the words. One week we still do the same story... Grammar,.. Phonics ...Reading and Writing. Retell the story. Day 2: We recap the story to pick up nouns, grammar and present tense. Day 3: We do side words ...determiners...Rhyming words. ...Day 4: Learners write simple sentences. We model what you are doing ...Teacher makes gestures such as sign for washing, cooking etc. This allows them to be able to understand the meaning of the words. While they are writing these small sentences, I do not look at the spelling or punctuation but I look at the meaning. Is this learner able to make sense of what is expected from them? I teach all of them that they should be able to follow the guideline... Structure of writing a sentence. They should be able to know when they should use punctuation. I always start with simple sentences ...2-4 sentences... 4-6 sentences.

Mrs Jane would let the learners read and pick up words that the learners had difficulty in pronouncing. In the interview she said:

**(J 2)** During the teaching of English (FAL) in my class, I always try to make my learners to have a discussion based on the title or picture... Big Book, so that I can be able to prompt questions from them and see their own critical thinking before we engage with a text. I collect these words to try to create a dictionary strategy to enhance language development in English.

During my observation, I noticed that she approached the teaching of reading in the same way she explained in her interview. Concerning the teaching of reading she stated that:

**(J 3)** I usually do individual reading before so that I can be able to identify who can read and also their reading level. In other words, those who can read fast, slow and not read at all. This allows me to be able to know their level of reading. I give them a paragraph as a basic way of seeing how they read and understand what they are reading.

In the interview, Mrs Jane mentioned that she did not have sufficient materials in English and she felt that this had an impact on her learners' reading proficiency. She encouraged learners to read newspapers and magazines. She made use of the "Talking Stories" to enhance learners' reading and listening skills as the stories cater for learners' different reading proficiency levels. Despite this kind of support, some of the learners could not read at the level of Grade 3. Therefore, she had to use Grade 2 reading materials as mediation tools for enhancing learners' reading.

When asked about the methods she used to teach English (FAL) in her class, Mrs Jane responded by saying:

**(J 4)** I try to encourage them to speak using full sentences even if it is a simple sentence. I use group work as a method of teaching. Pictures to stimulate thinking and reasoning. Grouping 12 per group...shared reading. split that group into two... those who are not in the same level do the same work.

She felt that in most cases learners appeared to learn better when they taught each other, as they were patient with one another and understood better through peer tutoring. She only acted as a facilitator to ensure that learning was meaningful to her learners.

When asked about the challenges she experienced when teaching English (FAL) Mrs Jane highlighted that:

**(J 5)** Some of the challenges is that when I do a lesson on speaking I ask learners to share news with the class...News after weekend. For few minutes, not all of them are able to share their own stories and explain what they have done. I encourage them to share news. However, those few learners that feel free to share they do.

Concerning speaking, Mrs Jane had this to say:

Speaking ... some of the learners especially those who cannot read it appears that they are not able to express themselves very well and also not confident when they have to speak. Somehow, it feels like they are being isolated.

When asked about the challenges she encountered when teaching reading comprehension, Mrs Jane mentioned that:

**(J 6)** Reading comprehension... reading a story, some cannot read the story that we do in class. As a result, I need to improvise by getting a book that will be in a low level (i.e. Grade 1-2 books, level 1-2) as they struggle with the level 3 reading book or Grade 3 reading material.

Concerning the challenges she encountered when teaching writing, Mrs Jane stated:

**(J 7)** For writing... the formulation of the story does not seem to happen much but I also avoid looking at it, instead I look for sense making.

During the interview Mrs Jane stated that she encouraged her learners to read extensively in preparation for the next grade i.e. Grade 4:

**(J 8)** I always encourage my learners to read as much as they can, even if they are at home or somewhere. They must not only limit reading to our books we do in class, for instance, they can read newspapers, magazines and road signs as a way of them developing their reading ability and understanding. In this way, this can prepare or help them to read for understanding and develop a little bit of language that can later allow them to be able to fit when they get to the next grade.

The interview illustrated that Mrs Jane experienced challenges with learners who had underdeveloped L1 skills at Grade 3 level. This deficiency had a negative impact on their reading interest and comprehension. She mentioned that:

**(J 9)** Five out of 10 learners do not understand what they read and they cannot read at all. They struggle to pronounce words. They do not have that eagerness "*Intshiseko*." It seems that they have lack of support from the previous grade, as I now have to go back to the previous grade's work ...reading books to try to cover them. From these ten learners, five have shown little progress, as we are moving but others there is no progress at all. These learners also struggle in their home language but it is not as bad it is in English.

To address the reading challenges, she borrowed reading books that were at a lower grade level, as mentioned below:

**(J 10)** I borrow books from lower grades to deal with this problem of reading.

The books that I take from the lower grades ...Grade 2 level also I cannot take level 3,... that is advanced as they cannot read it either, so I have to use level 1-2 of Grade 2 English reading books or for Grade 3 level I have to leave them on the beginner level. This has somehow helped to deal



with the challenge of not having learners who cannot read at all. I make them do activities such as pasting as a way of trying to cut the writing, as they never get to finish or even try to write at all.

In summary, Mrs Jane used a variety of teaching strategies that enhanced her learners' meaningful interaction. These strategies involved question and answer, discussion and learner centred teaching approaches. She experienced challenges such as learners' low reading performance and inability to express themselves fluently in English. She made use of books for the lower grades to address these challenges and she made use of the learners' HL to foster their understanding.

In the following subsection, I present the interview data from the Grade 3 Head of Department (HOD), Thelma.

#### **4.3.2 Head of Department's (HOD) Interview**

The Head of Department (HOD) in Grade 3 was Thelma (T) as mentioned in Chapter 3. Her interview became crucial as the study sought to understand the kind of support that she, in her capacity as the HOD, offered to the Grade 3 teachers. The interview also focused on how she viewed learners' transition to English LoLT in the Intermediate Phase.

Thelma viewed language transition to Grade 4 as a sudden shift and felt that learners were not ready to change over due to several factors. She mentioned the increased number of subjects compared to the previous class, the number of hours the learners had per subject, the different teachers the learners had to be exposed to in a single day and being instructed in their FAL (L2), which seemed to be the biggest challenge.

Thelma mentioned that their learners struggled a lot in the first two terms of Grade 4. They experienced high failure rate in the English (FAL) assessments. One of the problem was the learners' poor reading proficiency that affected their understanding of questions. As a result, they always wanted the teacher to translate the questions into isiXhosa.

In her interview, she stated that the teachers had challenges when it came to teaching of English (FAL) in Grade 3:

(T 1) Reading is a big challenge for our learners; some learners cannot read at a grade level as expected by the curriculum. This leads into *abantwana ufike ukuba (learners tend)* they do not

answer iComprehension questions *kakuhle kuba (properly because)* they do not have a basic understanding of a question or what they are reading at all.

Thelma also stated that teachers had a problem of learners who were unable to write. Teachers had to spend extra time to support the learners in reading for comprehension.

In her interview, Thelma provided an insight that could strengthen the teaching and learning of English (FAL) in Grade 3. She mentioned that more reading materials in English were needed. During the time of data collection, Mrs Jane used the DBE textbook and there were not enough books to read for enjoyment. Thelma said that it became difficult to teach reading with insufficient resources. Thelma also mentioned that their walls were not print rich. This was a concern for her as she stated that:

*...a classroom must have a print rich wall in order to stimulate ukucinga ebantwaneni (critical thinking from learners) as I believe ukuba abantwana bafunda ngokubona.. (that learners learn better if they can visualize...)*

With regard to the support she provided to Grade 3 teachers in the teaching of English (FAL), she stated that the school was committed to supporting the teachers. Teachers planned together as a means of supporting each other. For example, one person would plan English (FAL) lesson and assessment for the whole group, and the next person would do a different subject. This support extended to a point where teachers started to co-teach if the learners did not understand their own class teacher or if they were struggling with a particular concept.

She indicated that the failure of reading in class could be attributed to the fact that Grade 3 learners' home language is not well developed. She explained that in Grade 3 some of the learners were still not speaking or using their L1 properly. So, they could not be expected to know English properly. For example, she mentioned that if one could listen attentively to the children when they spoke, one would realise that they were not structuring their sentences properly in their home language. Therefore, an adult or teacher needs to correct that form of language.

*ixesha elininji xa phulaphula abantwana bethetha uyeva kuba isentence strucure yabo ayivakali kakuhle ncam, so wena mntu omdala okanye tishala kufuneka ulungise ukuthetha”.*

**Most of the time if you listen to these children speaking, you are likely to find improper use of language, as an adult or teacher you will need to correct their oral language.**

Regarding how they supported Grade 3 teachers to teach English (FAL) for transition to Grade 4 when English becomes the LoLT, Thelma seemed to be unsure, and had this to say.

(T 2) Siyazama ukusebenzisana noGrade 4 kakhulu, maar kunzima kuba asikwazi ukuyilandela kakhule as thina ixesha lethu (**We try to work with Grade 4 a lot, but it is difficult as we cannot follow up most of the time as we focus more on HL as it is important for us**) we focus kwi home language as ibalulekile kuthi. Remember our main focus sisiXhosa kuba we need to be sure that learners can read, write and understand their language, njengokuba Systemic (**as Systemic Evaluation**) requires them to know their language well in order to be able to answer the questions. That is why ufika ixesha lininji sibethelela isiXhosa (**most of the time we focus on developing isiXhosa**).

Thelma's response to the question of transition to English LoLT seemed to indicate that in Grade 3 learners need to know their home language as the assessment occurs in this language. She said that they tried their best to work with the Grade 4 teachers but it was a bit difficult as they needed to focus on Grade 3 learners' home language, as the home language was used to assess the learners. The Systemic Evaluation was also written in the learners' home language (i.e. isiXhosa).

The HOD interview indicates some of the challenges that faced Grade 3 learners in English FAL. These challenges included the learners' inability to read at the grade level. Learners had undeveloped HL, which influenced their FAL learning. The HOD also mentioned the challenge of having inadequate teaching materials in English FAL. She highlighted that the Grade 3 learners were not ready to transition to English as LoLT. She highlighted the importance of learners' home language.

The following section presents data collected from the Principal (Mrs Kom).

### **4.3.3 Principal's Interview**

An interview with Mrs Kom was conducted in order find out about her understanding and views of the teaching and learning of English (FAL). I also wanted to understand the role she played as

a principal to support both the Foundation Phase and Intermediate Phase teachers in the delivery of the curriculum in English (FAL).

In her response, Mrs Kom seemed familiar with the language debates around the use of English as a medium of instruction to non-mother tongue speakers. She mentioned that she always wondered if there could ever be a possibility to instruct learners in their home language in township schools. Concerning language transition to English LoLT in Grade 4, her thoughts are reflected in the excerpt below:

**(K 1)** Sometimes mna (**me**) I feel that kwiFoundation Phase siyazama kakhulu ukubalungiselela abantwana kodwa ke ufumana ukuba abakakabikho (**we try hard to prepare these learners but you will discover that they are not**) ready for olu tshintsho (**this change**) as you know in Grade 4, it's not only about the language the learners have to be familiar with. Firstly, the teachers are more than one as opposed to Grade 3 and isubjects zininji (**many subjects**). So mna (**me**) I always see it as sometimes ingathi abantwana (as if children) they get overwhelmed with the transition of INTERSEN, especially kwi LoLT as bangekayiqheli kakuhle kuba (**they are not used**) eFoundation Phase from Grade 1 they focus on basic English and amaxesha amaninji (**most of the time**) they read after the teacher and also Grade 1-2 bayamamela ixesha elininji akufani xa kufuneka bafunde and bathethe kakhulu (**they listen most of the time, it's not the same when they have to read, speak a lot**). KwaGrade 3 ke ngoku kukhona apho kuqalwa ukuba bafunde and bathethe kakhulu (**in Grade 3 they start to read and speak a lot**). So that's why mna ndisithi ngamnye amaxesha ingathi abakakabiready for utshintsho lwe (**that is why I say that it seems as if they are not yet ready for the change of**) LoLT to second language.

She felt that learners were not ready for the transition to English LoLT. This challenge was not only about the change in the LoLT but more about how the learners were overwhelmed by the change of the LoLT and also the academic pressure they experienced in the Intermediate Phase.

On the question on the kind of support the school offered to teachers to strengthen literacy learning, Mrs Kom mentioned that the school tried to have programmes where they reached out to children to encourage reading:

**(K2)** *...it never matters kuba bafunde ngolwimi lwabo (that they learn in their language) or in English but the main important thing is that they read, and get exposure to reading...*

Mrs Kom was asked about her role in supporting both Grade 3 teachers and learners for the transition in LoLT in Grade 4. She stated that she always tried to make sure that both the Grade 3 and 4 teachers got extra support from the Cape Teaching and Leadership Institute (CTLI) and attended the training workshops conducted by the Primary Science Programme (PSP) and CTLI. Mrs Kom also mentioned that at the beginning of the year Grade 4 teachers always reported learners who struggled with English in the grade. This challenge affected the learners and the teachers' time to finish the curriculum for the first term:

*(K3) ...I have become aware over the past few years that the transition between these two grades ayihambi kakhuhle as ootishala tend to think kuba eFoundation Phase akufundiswa, maar (doesn't go smoothly as teachers think that there is no teaching in the Foundation Phase) I know that the Foundation phase is working tiressly and this is evident in our systemic results....*

She claimed that her role was to facilitate cooperation among teachers:

*(K4) A teacher from Grade 4 can come and consult the teacher in Grade 3 if ikhona igxaki (there's a problem) especially when it comes to reading.*

When asked about the challenges the teachers experienced with regard to the shift to English LoLT in Grade 4, Mrs Kom gave the response below:

*(K 5) In Grade 4, there are lots of challenges especially the first two terms of the grade and year. The HODs from INTERSEN complain that in their weekly meetings teachers are reporting that abantwana abakwazi ukubhala and kwaye nokufunda kunzima kubo (learners cannot write and reading is a challenge for them). Bakhala besithi (they complain that) learners take too long to write activities and this is not only FAL but also even esiXhoseni kuyafana (in isiXhosa it is the same). The first term Grade 4 teachers are always lagging behind kuba kunzima ukushiya abantwana emva (it is difficult to leave children behind). As a result, you tend to notice kuba icreative writing it becomes iproblem in this grade because the learners are not getting it right and at the same time, teachers are losing patience ebantwaneni kuba (with these learners) they are expecting ready-made products.*

The excerpt above illustrates that in Grade 4 learners had a difficulty of reading and writing. Teachers often complain that the problem was not experienced in English (FAL) only but also in

the learners' home language (isiXhosa). Teachers worked hard to assist learners, and as a result, they tended to lag behind with their work in the first two terms. This challenge impacts on the completion of the curriculum as stipulated in the CAPS document. When it comes to creative writing, learners struggle a lot.

Mrs Kom also mentioned that there were many learners that failed English (FAL) assessments in the first and second terms of the year. She also stated that the learners' performance was worse in the first term because Grade 3 learners were unable to read and understand questions. As a result, teachers tended to make learners repeat the assessment tasks. Since the majority of the learners failed the first assessment set by the teachers, this affected their overall literacy performance. Mrs Kom said:

(K6) ...it's only those few that can pass on their own, but even so those who pass they will be around 50-60%, so it becomes difficult to have more than 80% in the first term or second term in Grade 3...

Concerning strategies to address the challenges, Mrs Kom stated that at Grade 4 level learners must maintain their home language as LoLT because learners were not ready to go through the LoLT transition. Some of the learners had under-developed skills in their home language. She explained that this challenge created a stressful learning environment not only to the learners, but also to the concerned teachers. The excerpt below captures her thoughts regarding the LoLT transition:

(K 7) If bekusiya ngokwam mna (**if I could**) I would delay this transition maybe until baphume apha (**they leave primary school first**) ePrimary kuqala. Umzekelo, ukuthetha kwangolwimi lwabo basafuna ukulondoza kwabona. Uyafika basaphitisana amagama (**for instance, when they speak in their HL they still need to be supported as they still mix up some of the words**).

In short, Mrs Kom was of the view that the transition to English LoLT could be delayed until the end of primary education. She felt that learners were still not ready and the change was overwhelming for the learners. She highlighted that the learners still needed guidance in their home language to use the language properly. She mentioned that in the first two terms there was a high rate of failures in English (FAL) in both Grades 3 and 4. Mrs Kom also indicated that they tried to offer support and encourage teachers to attend workshops and training. Literacy was encouraged

in the school as they promoted reading programmes in order to allow learners the opportunity to read and develop their reading skills. Their literacy programme was not only limited to FAL but to other forms of literacy.

#### **4.3.4 Summary of the Interviews**

All of the interviews with the different teachers (class teacher, HOD and the Principal) highlighted that the learners experienced reading and writing challenges and this affected their reading comprehension. The learners were unable to read at the appropriate grade level. It appeared that reading was a challenge not only in English FAL, but also in the learners' home language (isiXhosa). The lack of appropriate resources and reading materials in FAL (L2) was also a challenge.

Secondly, all the interviewed teachers were of the view that learners did not have well developed skills in their home language, and this affected their reading proficiency in English FAL. The learners experienced learning challenges in the first two terms of Grade 3 due to their low reading and writing proficiency in English. As a result, the failure rate was high at the beginning of the year in Grade 4.

Concerning language transition, both the HOD and the Principal were of the view that the LoLT transition to English LoLT in Grade 4 was sudden and it was an overwhelming experience for the learners. Learners did not seem to have access to meaningful learning due to the use of English as LoLT. Hence, the Principal was of the view that delaying the switch to English FAL could yield better results for the learners who are non-mother tongue speakers of English.

In the next section, I present data collected by analysing relevant documents. The aim of document analysis was to triangulate data collected by means of classroom observations and interviews.

#### **4.4 Data on Document Analysis**

This section looks at document analysis. The data were collected from the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) document, the learners' writing activities, the textbook and prints from the classroom wall.

I begin by giving a brief description of the (CAPS) concerning the requirements for English (FAL) in Grade 3. I will also provide the description of the books that Mrs Jane used in her classroom, and the print material that was available in the Grade 3 classroom.

#### 4.4.1 The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)

The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) was analysed in this study in order to have an understanding of the requirements of the curriculum for English (FAL) in Grade 3. I scrutinised it to understand whether the requirements were met in the teaching of English FAL in Grade 3 to enhance their transition to English LoLT in Grade 4.

The CAPS document (2011) states that by the end of Grade 3 learners should have gained high level competence in English (FAL) as they enter Grade 4. It stipulates that by the time learners leave Grade 3, they must have strong levels of literacy and rich vocabulary. These language and literacy skills should assist them to read and understand the teaching material in English FAL for all the subjects taught in Grade 4. This simply means that when learners leave Grade 3, they are expected to be competent in reading and writing for learning in Grade 4. It indicates that in Grades 2 and 3 the literacy progress needs to be enhanced to prepare for the transition to English (FAL) LoLT. In analysing the CAPS document, I aimed at understanding whether Mrs Janes' teaching practice aligned with the CAPS and the extent to which Grade 3 learners were prepared for the LoLT transition in the following grade.

The study also looked at the CAPS requirement for Grade 4 (Intermediate Phase) in relation to the Foundation Phase (Grade 3) requirements. The CAPS requirements for Grade 4 indicate that learners are expected to have high levels of competence in the FAL at the end of Grade 3. The curriculum states that learners should have developed the basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) at Grade 2 -3 levels. They should also be able to apply their literacy skills from home language learning. In Grade 4, learners are expected to use their FAL for reasoning and thinking. In other words, they should possess strong cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) that is needed for other subjects such as Science and Mathematics. Finally, by the end of the Intermediate Phase, learners should have developed strong interpersonal and cognitive academic skills for meaningful learning.

These are the requirements of the curriculum for English FAL as reflected in the CAPS document for Foundation Phase (DBE 2011: p. 8 and 12)

- Children come to school knowing their home language. (p.8)



- The First Additional Language takes advantage of learners' literacy skills in their home language. (p.8)
- In South Africa, many children start using their additional language, English as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) in Grade 4. (p.8)
- They must have high level of competence in English by the end of Grade 3, they need to be able to read and write well in English. (p.8)
- Progress in literacy must be accelerated in Grade 2 and 3. (p.8)
- Grade 3 focus should be given to developing literacy skills in the First Additional Language. (p.8)
- This is very important for the children who will be using English as the LoLT in Grade 4. (p.12)
- This will require high levels of literacy, and especially a wide vocabulary in English. (p.12)

The Grade 3 CAPS requirements show greater connection with the Grade 4 English First Additional Language CAPS requirements, as reflected on CAPS for Intermediate Phase (DBE) (2011, p 9-10):

- Well-developed Reading and Viewing Skills are central to successful learning across the curriculum. (p.10)
- They (learners) will build on skills developed in Foundation Phase to carry more sustained conversations, discussions, and short oral presentation. (p.9)
- By the time learners enter Senior Phase, they should be reasonably proficient in their First Additional Language with regard to both interpersonal and cognitive academic skill. (p.9)

In analysing the CAPS document, I also looked at the teaching contact time (time allocation) for English (FAL). The aim was to determine how the allocated hours were used in the Grade 3 English (FAL) lessons. It was also to investigate the gap between the HL and FAL requirements. The CAPS document (2011) showed that the gap between HL and FAL was great, i.e. HL was allocated 8/7 hours, whereas the FAL was allocated 4/3 hours per week.

The CAPS requirements for English FAL in both grades are interrelated although there is a big gap between HL and FAL with regard to contact time. This gap raises a concern regarding learners'

exposure to the FAL, especially that the learners are not home language speakers of English. The curriculum has its own requirements for successful transition to English LoLT.

The following section looks at the English FAL reading materials used in the Grade 3 classroom. It seeks to establish whether materials supported learners' exposure to the target language (English) and whether these materials were used to facilitate learners' epistemic access to English FAL.

#### **4.4.2 English (FAL) Reading and Print Materials**

In Mrs Jane's class, there were not enough reading materials or books besides the prescribed textbook of English (FAL). Some reading materials were in isiXhosa, e.g. Nali'bali reading material. Mrs Jane used the Platinum English (FAL) textbook which included a reader. She expressed that the textbook was not enough as it did not adequately explain certain concepts, particularly the language structure. She used different books which were CAPS aligned in order to design lessons that would be meaningful to her learners. Mrs Jane stated that she made use of different books in order to gain richer content and clarity on certain concepts. She appeared to be creative in terms of exposing her learners to a variety of reading texts to support their language development.

Figure 10 below represents one of the extra texts she used in some of her lessons to supplement the textbook information. The samples of books that she used are reflected on Appendix 16.

Read and understand the story. Then answer the questions.

### The farmer and his sons

In a small village, lived an old farmer. He had eight sons. His sons were always quarrelling among themselves. This made the farmer very sad.

One day, he asked all his sons to bring a stick each to him. He tied all the sticks together. Then he said, "Break this bundle of sticks."

Each of his sons tried very hard to break the bundle of sticks. All of them could not break it.

Then the farmer untied the bundle of sticks. He gave a stick to each of his sons and asked them to break it. They could break the sticks easily.

The farmer explained to his sons, "You are strong if you are united. You are weak if each of you only cares about your own self."

Figure 10: Extra reading texts

The purpose of analysing the books was to understand how they were used as mediation tools to develop learners' vocabulary and language skills. Through reading books, learners create an understanding and meaning of the language. Mrs Jane was aware that if her learners had enough reading materials and adequate exposure to reading materials, they could develop vocabulary and language skills. However, this was not possible as the learners did not read much and had limited exposure to English FAL (L2) reading materials.

The exposure to print material is very important for any child's learning. Thus it is important that children are exposed to a print rich classroom. Furthermore, teachers can use the print rich classroom to enhance learners' emergent literacy in the FAL. Print rich classrooms enhance incidental learning. However, Mrs Janes' classroom was not print rich; she had a small section with few prints. For instance, one of the pictures in the classroom was on the language aspect such as the antonyms (opposites) and synonyms. The other pictures that were displayed were also on language, focusing of the past tense and colours. The material that hung on the wall seemed to have been pasted a long time ago. Mrs Jane did not refer to the material pasted on the wall in her lessons during my observations of lessons. Below are examples of the posts that were on the classroom wall.

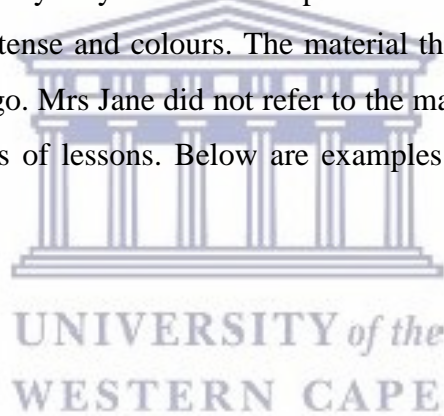




Figure 11: Prints from the classroom wall

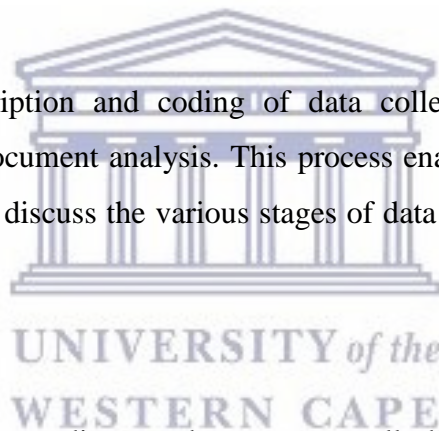
#### **4.4.3 Summary on data collected by means of Document Analysis**

The CAPS document stipulates that learners at the Grade 3 level should be competent in their FAL (L2) as this grade prepares them for the transition to English LoLT. Document analysis corroborates the data from the three interviews that highlight the insufficiency of reading materials in English, which impacts on learner's access of information. Limited exposure to reading in English FAL (L2) appears to be one of the barriers to learners' reading proficiency. It appeared that learners did not have enough material to read for leisure and for the teacher to use in the classroom. Although has a library, this resource is not adequately used. This necessitated the learners to go to the computer laboratory where they could read and listen to stories.

In the following section, I focus on data analysis.

#### **4.5 Data Analysis**

Data analysis entailed transcription and coding of data collected by means of classroom observations, interviews and document analysis. This process enabled me to categorise the data into emerging themes. Below I discuss the various stages of data analysis, namely transcription, coding and thematic analysis.



##### **4.5.1 Transcription**

As stated in Chapter 3, I used an audio recorder to capture all observation and interview data. I had to transcribe data in order to translate the recorded data into words. This made it easier to analyse the written words, and to focus on the utterances of the participants. According Bless, Higson-Smith and Sithole's (2013) words fill in every part of human lives and provide an opportunity into looking at how people think and relate to each other and how they function in a society. In the case of this study, words refer to the data coming from the observations and interviews of the three participants. Transcribed data (or words) enables one to generate high quality data in preparation for analysis (Bless et al., 2013). Therefore, transcription of data in qualitative data is important because it familiarises the researcher with their data and enable them to categorise the data.

Davidson (2009) defines “transcription” as a process that is theoretical, selective and representational. Transcription becomes representational as the researcher choose what is presented in the transcripts, with regard to its purpose and outcomes. Furthermore, Davidson (2009) also mentions that transcription requires translation.

In this study, different languages were used with the participants. I had to translate the conversation into English. During transcription, I was able to decode the recordings of the data and focus more on those that were relevant to the aims and questions of my qualitative research study.

#### **4.5.2 Coding**

During the transcription process, one may develop a method to sort out the data according to fragments. This process is referred to as coding of the data. Bless et al., (2013) define coding as breaking up the texts into fragments that share the same characteristics. In other words, coding data allows the researcher to categorise, break the original transcripts, and classify all the data into different categories. In this way, the researcher is able to look for themes and patterns within the data. According Bless et al., (2013) the process of coding is to write notes alongside the original text.

One needs to complete transcription, break all fragments, and allocate them to particular codes to achieve the coding process (Bless et al., 2013). In the case of this study, I did this by using different colours on transcripts in order to show different coding categories. This approach did not only influence the coding of data but also assisted me in identifying common themes that emerged from the data.

The coding process develops into a coding system that allows the researcher to look at the emerging themes and code ideas that may suit the need of the study and disregard those data that do not answer the research aims or question (Bless et al., 2013). Coding should be done in a consistent manner. For instance, in coding my data, I categorised it according to the themes that addressed a common factor. I then developed sub-theme that address the major themes. Finally, I re-coded the entire data set.

### 4.5.3 Thematic Analysis

The data was analysed using Thematic Analysis (TA). According to Maguire and Delahunt (2017) Thematic Analysis is a method used by qualitative researchers to look for themes and patterns that emerge from reviewed data. The emerging themes are used to address the research questions. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that a theme captures the important facets that relate to the research question and has meaning within the data set that relates to the response. In other words, the theme may appear across all the data set.

However, Braun and Clarke (2006) highlight that the instances do not necessarily mean that the theme is more crucial. They state that the 'keyness' of a theme does not depend on quantifiable measures, but it captures something significant and related to the overall research aim or questions. Using Thematic Analysis is to move beyond the description of what has been said to the interpretation and explanation of the phenomena (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). In Thematic Analysis, the researcher may develop patterns by reading and re-reading data. According to Vaismoradi, Jones, Turen and Snelgrove (2016) Thematic Analysis is flexible as it provides comprehensive interpretations of the data.

In this study, Thematic Analysis (TA) was used as a reflection on the teaching and learning of English (FAL) in Grade 3 and to determine how learners were being prepared for English as LoLT in Grade 4. TA was also used to triangulate data from the interviews, observations and various documents that included the curriculum (CAPS) policy, reading books and print materials. By using TA, I was able to arrive at the themes that emerged from the analysed data. In this instance, I had to interpret the data based on my understanding of literature and theory so that I could be able to arrive at the findings of the study.

The following themes emerged from the data which relate to the teaching of English FAL in Grade 3. There are various categories or sub-themes discussed under each theme.

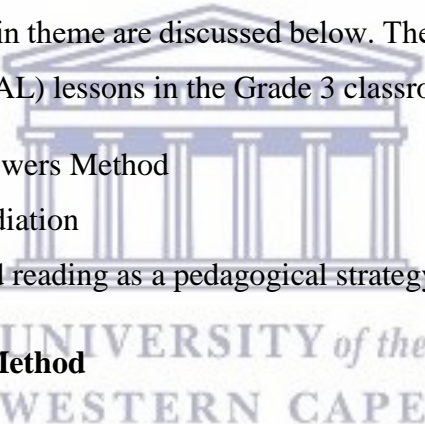
- (1) Teachers' pedagogical strategies
- (2) Enhancing Learners' Epistemic Access to Learning
- (3) Challenges in the teaching and learning of English FAL
- (4) Implications for LoLT Transition



#### 4.5.3.1 Teachers' Pedagogical Strategies

Teachers' pedagogy deals with theory and practice of teaching and how it influences learners' epistemic access to learning (Tondeur, van Braak, Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2017). In other words, the applied pedagogical strategies the teachers choose need to support learners' access to knowledge and support learners' language proficiency through the learning process (Ngece, 2014). In addition, the teacher needs to have thorough knowledge of the subject content as subject content knowledge influences the teaching-learning process. Furthermore, the pedagogical strategies must be aimed at developing the learners' understanding and provide them meaningful access to the learning content.

The theme on teachers' pedagogical strategies addresses the first research question stated in Chapter 1 "*What strategies do teachers use to teach English (FAL) in Grade 3.*" Three sub-themes or categories that address the main theme are discussed below. These categories depict Mrs Jane's teaching strategies in English (FAL) lessons in the Grade 3 classroom. They are:

- 
- (i) Question and Answers Method
  - (ii) Language for mediation
  - (iii) Group and Shared reading as a pedagogical strategy

#### 4.5.3.2 Question and Answer Method

Classroom observation data illustrate that Mrs Jane made use of interactive teaching strategies whereby learners were active participants in their own learning. For example, Mrs Jane allowed learners to interact with her by asking questions as shown in the lessons presented above. These questions stimulated them to talk about their own experiences and how they understood certain terminologies. The learners gave input and shared their thoughts and knowledge. Such strategies were interactive and learner-centred and could be understood in line with the Sociocultural Theory (Santrock, 2008; Amineh & Asl, 2015) and Constructivism Theory (Wardsworth, 2004; Amineh & Asl, 2015; Kim, 2001). These theories acknowledge that learning takes place through social interaction for meaning making (Amineh & Asl, 2015; Wardsworth, 2004; Santrock, 2008). However, the teachers' questions were of low order thinking and did not encourage learners' critical thinking.

The use of the question and answer method in Mrs Janes' class was evident from lesson observations (1 – 4). This method seemed to promote peer interaction as learners shared information with each other. Peer interaction is supported by the Sociocultural Theory and Constructivism Theory as it allows learners to use language to interact and become active participants in their learning. However, the learners seemed unable to answer questions that demanded critical thinking.

Observation data also show that Mrs Jane made use of closed and open-ended questions to enhance learners' understanding and oral skills. This is apparent in Lesson 1, where she asked the question in line R1: [Do you help at home to fix broken things... Even if you sweep or clean]. ' In the same line she expands on this question as shown in Lines R2:

R2: Only one person helps to fix things, huh? Maybe you fix or help by doing dishes or cleaning.

When Mrs Jane scaffolded the learners by giving an example, some of the learners responded well to her (e.g. R4: I wash dishes).

According to the Language Quadrant Model learners need to be moved from quadrant 1 to quadrant 4 to develop learners' language skills (Ramani & Joseph, 2006). In other words, the teacher has to develop full language skills that enable them to deal with the demands of the language curriculum. In the same vein, by asking learners questions that stimulate them to move from the known to the unknown supports them to reach the Zone of Proximal Development through mediation and scaffolding (Santrock, 2008; Vygotsky, 1978).

In the case of this study, by moving the learners from their everyday knowledge to new knowledge could enhance their language skills to develop balanced bilingualism, with balanced competence in their HL and FAL. Furthermore, open-ended questions stimulate their cognitive ability that enhances vocabulary development in the FAL. As stated earlier, the teachers' questions did not challenge the learners' high cognitive abilities.

Cummins (2000) makes a distinction of language fluency and skills needed to thrive academically, and how it may be affected by the level of proficiency in a language. According to the 4 Quadrant Model learners need to have a greater understanding of the language so that they can be critical thinkers who can reflect on their learning. This implies that language fluency can only be achieved

if the learners are balanced bilinguals and are able to communicate and function in the HL and FAL. In the case of this study, it appeared that Grade 3 learners had basic communication skills that influenced their academic fluency in English FAL.

As highlighted above, Mrs Jane seemed to understand the importance of scaffolding feedback in order to allow learners to make meaning of what they learn. She scaffolded learners in line R 3 [*... maybe you fix or help by doing dishes or cleaning*] and made use of learner's prior knowledge. This practice is supported by the Constructivism Theory that encourages the construction of knowledge by stimulating learners' prior knowledge (Santrock, 2008; Amineh & Asl, 2015). The learners' prior knowledge enables them to reflect on their familiar context and make sense of the new learning content.

However, there were instances whereby Mrs Jane did not challenge learners to make self-discovery in their learning. For example, when the task got more difficult for the learners, she provided them with answers and did not provide them opportunities to make attempts and explore new knowledge. This approach goes against the principle of Constructivism as it does not challenge learners to think to a high degree of cognition to construct their own knowledge (Mvududu & Theil-Burges, 2012).

#### **4.5.3.3 Language for Mediation**

In this study, interaction is defined in terms of the language support or scaffolding that the teacher afforded the learners to do activities independently to construct meaning by themselves. This kind of interaction is in line with Vygotsky's mediation and scaffolding process, which entails giving the child an opportunity to have access to the information on their own (Nomlomo, 2007; Fernyhough, 2008; Thompson, 2013).

As previously mentioned in Chapter 2, the Sociocultural Theory holds that for the mind to be critical and creative, it needs to interact with others in the society (Amineh & Asl, 2015; Roth, 2000; Lantolf & Thorne, 2002). In relation to this study, the school or classroom uses interaction for language development. By interacting with others, learners may learn to express themselves and make meaning of the subject matter.

Mrs Jane encouraged learners' communication to enhance learners' language learning. In lesson 1 (Lines R4 - 8) and in lesson 4 learners were encouraged to use full sentences in responding to the teacher e.g. [*I wash dishes, I make coffee; I'm going home with my friends; I read my book*]. Learners used language to share their ideas with their peers and with the teacher. In this way, they constructed their understanding of language with each other (Santrock, 2008; Amineh & Asl, 2015). Santrock (2008) states that oral language could be used to shape thoughts and direction of cognition.

Observation and interview data show that Mrs Jane used different strategies to mediate learning in the English (FAL) lessons. For example, she used individual tasks where learners could work independently. In lesson 3, she allowed learners to speak about how they prepared tea or coffee as individuals.

She began the lesson by asking how they came to school (S1). In line S2 - 4 learners responded in one or two responses e.g. [*I walk; Transport*]. Similarly, in lesson 4 learners gave one word answers to respond to the question on nouns e.g. [W9: *Linda, Joan, Paul*]. Baker (2006), Freeman and Freeman (2011) claim that such responses may be used for basic communication which can be associated with the first quadrant of the language model where the language is less demanding. Learners can give short answers and speak about what they see because questions are straightforward and not cognitively demanding.

At the same time, Mrs Jane recognised the importance of individual work and the use of language to demonstrate one's understanding of learning content. For example, in lesson 3 (Line S6-7) learners used language to express themselves in full meaningful sentences, despite a few grammatical errors e.g. [*First I take and put a cup. I plug the kettle. I put a cup. I put coffee. I put a cup tea. I put sugar and I boil a water in a cup and I stir Then I enjoy*]

Likewise, in lesson 4 (lines W4-6) learners tried to express themselves in full sentences e.g. [A noun is a name of a person; I see father running]. In the interview, Mrs Jane stated that she did not pay much to learners' grammatical errors but she focused on meaning making.

While grammar may not be an absolute measure in language learning, it is equally important that the teachers' language proficiency does not affect learning. During classroom observations, the teacher also made language errors. For example, in lesson 1 she interpreted the word "fix" as

“making new or beautiful again” and continued to give example of sweeping and cleaning the house. Although Mrs Janes’ interpretation of “fix” could be acceptable in a particular context, it was inappropriate in the manner it was used in the lesson whereby learners were asked to give their domestic chores to illustrate the concept of “fix”. This could be attributed to the fact that the teacher was not a home-language speaker of English and her interpretation was consistent with an isiXhosa term “*ukulungisa*”, which includes cleaning up as means of making the house tidy. This aligns with Nel’s and Muller’s (2010) claim that the home language may influence the incorrect use of grammar and use of concord rules.

While some of Mrs Jane’s strategies were interactive, observation data also indicate that she made use of drilling in her teaching. For example, in lessons 1 and 2 when learners had difficulties with words, they repeated several times after the teacher [*Isichazi (Adjective); Izibizo (Nouns)*]. They were also drilled on the definition of an adjective.

Drilling may not be an effective teaching strategy as it often leads to rote learning. Kani and Sa’ad (2015) and Rimba and Hiyadat (2016) mention that drilling is a process of repetition of information in learning until a learner could recite a given sentence without any mistakes. This implies that there is no actual learning taking place as the learners are not able to make meaning of what they are learning.

The disadvantage of using drilling as a teaching strategy is that it is narrow in aims and content (Kani & Sa’ad, 2015). Learners do not get to understand and apply the rules of FAL in their learning. In this study, drilling was against the principles of the Input Hypothesis theory by Krashen (1985) which suggests that the best practice should not be grammatically sequenced, instead the input must be developed, be understandable and accessible. In this study, the use of drilling seemed to limit the learners’ use of English FAL to express their understanding of the learning content

#### **4.5.3.4 Group and Shared Reading**

Observation data show that Mrs Jane made use of group and shared reading. In this way, it was easier for Mrs Jane to identify those who could read and those who were struggling. This approach is supported by the CAPS document, which highlights the importance of organising the learners into groups according to their ability levels (DBE, 2011). In her interview, Mrs Jane stated that

she conducted individual reading in the classroom which enabled her to identify the reading levels. She grouped learners according to their reading proficiency levels. It is through the use of group reading that Mrs Jane began to realise that her learners had a problem with the words ending with [-ed].

Furthermore, Mrs Kom had mentioned in her interview that shared reading was used in the Foundation Phase, and this was consistent with Mrs Jane's interview response (J4). By making use of shared reading, the learners were able to talk about the story and respond to the teacher's questions. According to the CAPS document, using shared reading enables the teacher to relate the story to the lives of the learners. In the case of this study, Mrs Jane linked the lesson to the learners' prior knowledge as illustrated in the excerpts of lessons 1, 2 and 3. This approach aligns with Piagets' Constructivism and Vygotsky's Sociocultural theories whereby learning needs to be immersed into familiar context in order to trigger a sense of familiarity to the learners. In this case, the learners' prior knowledge was used to enable learners to construct their own meaning that reflected their social environment.

In addition to shared reading, Mrs Jane used group work in her teaching. For example, in lesson 1 she made the learners read in their respective groups and these learners were grouped according to their reading proficiency levels e.g. one group read well on their own, the second group was reading at an average level and the last group experienced many reading difficulties. Literature indicates that shared reading allows motivation and encourages learners to read and speak to each other (Johnson, Johnson & Smith, 2014). However, the teacher seemed to pay more attention to learners who were reading at the expected grade level, while the struggling readers did not get much attention. In this case, it may be argued that the good readers were not challenged to reach their highest levels of reading comprehension.

During the observations and interviews, Mrs Jane encouraged discussion in the classroom whereby learners used language to negotiate meaning and to express themselves (e.g. in J2). In this case, learners used language to share their own understanding and experiences with other learners in the classroom. Roth (2000) claims that one's knowledge can be displayed when they interact with their environment.

In summary, both observation and interview data indicate that Mrs Jane used a variety of strategies for her learners to make meaning of English FAL. However, the question and answer approach did

not seem to challenge learners to use high order thinking for reasoning and language development. With regard to communication and interaction, learners appeared to be using basic communication skills which affected their English language proficiency and confidence. While the teachers' pedagogical strategy was learner-centred, it appeared to limit the learners' self-discovery in learning.

#### **4.6 Enhancing Learners' Epistemic Access to Learning**

Enhancing the learner's epistemic access to learning is crucial in the teaching and learning process. In the case of this study, epistemic access to learning is discussed in relation to the teaching and learning of English FAL. Enhancing epistemic access to learning is important as learners were taught English FAL at Grade 3 level in preparation for LoLT transition in Grade 4.

The analysed data showed that Mrs Jane tried to enhance the learners' epistemic access to the learning of English FAL. She tried to enhance their level of understanding of the language by making use of different strategies. These strategies involved the use of the learners' home language (isiXhosa), the use of audio-visual resources and providing extra support to struggling learners.

##### **4.6.1.1 Home Language as a Linguistic Resource**

Observation data indicate that Mrs Jane offered support to learners who displayed low proficiency in English FAL. She used the learners' home language to mediate learning and to connect their prior knowledge with new knowledge. In this way, Mrs Jane used the learners' home language as a linguistic resource in learning. As discussed above, she rephrased the questions in the learners' home language in some instances. For example, in lesson 2 Mrs Jane used the learners' home language to teach adjectives and the learners demonstrated an understanding of the lesson e.g. one of the learners was able to recall some of the concepts [line L15]. Her practice is supported by the CAPS document which states that learners need to transfer their home language skills in learning the FAL. The use of the learners' home language was also a means of strengthening the learners' bilingual competence. The LiEP promotes additive bilingualism (DoE, 1997). The educational benefits of the learners' HL are acknowledged in literature (Ball, 2010). According to Lantolf and Thorne (2006) language is a useful resource that develops ones' thinking skills for knowledge construction.

The use of isiXhosa for mediation in English lessons can be explained in terms of Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory. As discussed in Chapter 2, this theory emphasises mediation in language learning to facilitate attainment of the Zone of Proximal Development ZPD (Santrock, 2008). The Threshold model supports mediation of learning as a means of achieving balanced bilingualism which is at the top of the threshold ladder.

Mbekwa's (2008) study highlighted that code-switching enables learners to have a better understanding of the lesson. In this study, data show that when the teacher code switched to isiXhosa during the English FAL lesson, the learners became more active in the classroom. Furthermore, in using codeswitching in the classroom, learners were scaffolded to a higher level of understanding as shown in the data presented above. In Chapter 2 scaffolding is defined as a technique that involves changing the level of support for learning (Santrock, 2008). Moving between languages, i.e. translanguaging in the classroom also fosters learners' epistemic access to learning and strengthens learners' biliteracy (Makalela 2013, 2015; McKinney, 2014; Probyn, 2015; Krause & Prinsloo, 2016).

While Mrs Jane tried to use the learners' HL to facilitate learners' advancement in the language threshold, observation and interview data indicated that the Grade 3 learners had underdeveloped HL and FAL skills. In other words, they were at the lowest level of the Threshold ladder as discussed in Chapter 2. According to Baker (2006) if the learners are in the first floor of the house or threshold, they cannot transfer their HL skills into FAL and this may be a barrier to their learning. In this way, it may be argued that not all the Grade 3 learners had adequate epistemic access to learning English FAL.

#### **4.6.2.2 Use of Audio-Visual Resources**

Mrs Jane used audio-visual resources in her teaching. For example, in lesson 2 she referred to the objects such as the house and square with different colours to demonstrate how adjectives are used in a sentence. By making use of the visual objects, the learners were able to identify adjectives in a sentence. This supports the importance of visual aids in facilitating meaningful learning (Shabiralyani, Hasan, Hamad & Iqbal, 2015).

Mrs Jane also used a CD player to teach a story. Learners had to listen to the story and recount what they had heard. However, it appeared that the learners did not have a good understanding of



the text due to the vague questions that were asked by the teacher. The teacher's questioning style was not in line with Bloom's taxonomy which requires the hierarchical modelling of educational learning objectives into levels of complexity (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). In other words, the Bloom's taxonomy fosters the developmental of cognitive skills as one moves the learner from knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. This model provokes learners' higher order thinking skills that enable them to handle cognitive demanding tasks.

While the use of audio-visual aids facilitated learning through listening skills, learners demonstrated low comprehension skills. This could be attributed to the learners' low proficiency levels in English and the teacher's questioning style that was vague. Most of the questions did not challenge the learners to think critically to make sense of the story they had listened to.

#### **4.6.2.3 Extra support to Learners**

In order to support learners in learning English FAL, extra support was provided. The interview data show that Mrs Jane used reading material that was below the grade level for learners who were struggling with reading. In this way, she provided extra support, while scaffolding them to reach the expected or accepted reading level at Grade 3 level. Mrs Jane mentioned that some of the learners had shown little progress while others had not progressed as expected.

The school had an intervention reading programme to assist learners with reading and writing difficulties. This programme aimed at promoting a culture of reading in the school. Adequate exposure to reading develops learners' vocabulary in the target language as stipulated in the CAPS document (DBE, 2011). The Grade 3 reading programme is likely to enhance the necessary language and literacy skills (vocabulary, comprehension and language use) needed for learning through the medium of FAL in Grade 4.

Intervention is defined as a process of preventing an action from occurring or stopping it from happening if it is already present (Nondalana, 2015). Nondalana (2015) mentions that literacy intervention programmes are a means of supporting learners with reading and writing challenges. The intervention programme is in line with the Sociocultural Theory that stresses mediation of learning to get the learners to their ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978). Intervention programmes with parental involvement are often effective and result in improved literacy performance (Nondalana, 2015).

However, this study did not look at parental involvement in the teaching and learning of English FAL.

Interview data showed that some of the teachers at XYZ primary school understood the importance of learners' home language in accessing knowledge. The Grade 3 HOD indicated that their focus was on the learners' home language (isiXhosa) development. Benson (2004) acknowledges the importance of mother tongue education as it strengthens learners' basic language skills and fosters learning in the academic content. As already mentioned in Chapter 2, if the learners have developed proficiency in their home language, this may assist them to transfer these skills in learning FAL (Ellis 1985 and 2005; Cummins & Hornberger, 2008; Larsen-Freeman, 2013).

#### **4.6.3 Challenges in the teaching and learning of English FAL**

This theme addresses one of the research questions: *“What are the challenges experienced in the teaching and learning of English FAL at Grade 3 level?”*

Data from different sources showed that there were challenges in the teaching and learning of English FAL, which affected the learners' epistemic access to learning. These challenges pertain to learners' reading and writing proficiency. The key challenges that were experienced included the following:

1. Reading and Writing
2. The Classroom and Socio-economic Environments

##### **4.6.3.1 Reading and Writing**

In the interview and observation data reading was highlighted as one of the challenges experienced by the learners. Data presented in lesson 1 show that many learners struggled with reading and pronouncing words. Learners were unable to read with comprehension and many of them could not read independently. This was evident in the observation data as learners could not respond to the questions that were based on the text they had read. All the three interviewed teachers also indicated that reading was a challenge for the learners who experienced decoding and comprehension difficulties. The learners were reading at a lower grade level, hence Mrs Jane had to use Grade 2 reading books. They could not make inferences from the texts.

Through reading learners develop vocabulary and fluency in a language. The CAPS document (DBE, 2011) states that reading gives learners more exposure to the additional language, and vocabulary development is enhanced through extensive reading.

Reading comprehension is crucial for learners' access to meaningful learning (Probyn 2010; Howie et al., 2007). The decoding and comprehension difficulties can be explained in terms of Cummins' (2000) notion of BICS and CALP which is discussed in Chapter 2. It may be argued that if the learners have difficulties to comprehend and decode reading texts, it is likely that they do not have well developed CALP in English FAL. Learners are expected to have well-developed CALP and literacy skills at Grade 2-3 level, but the Grade 3 learners under study seemed to be operating at the basic communication levels.

In addition, interview data showed that there was a lack of English FAL reading material which seemed to affect learners' exposure to the target language. The interview with the principal and the HOD also indicated that there was high failure rate in the first two terms of the year in Grade 3 due to learners' low levels of literacy. This observation corroborated the observation data that demonstrated that learners were unable to read with meaning. The learners waited for the teachers' interpretation of questions into their home language. Previous empirical studies indicate that learners taught through the medium of English FAL often struggle to understand their work and they rely on the teachers' translations in their HL (Probyn, 2010; Tolon, 2014; Nomlomo, 2014; Nomlomo & Vuzo, 2014). Therefore, English FAL seems to be a barrier to learners' epistemic access to learning.

Observation data also showed that learners struggled with writing. For example, lesson 4 indicates that learners took long to write and some of them could not finish their tasks even when they were given extra time. In an interview, the principal stated that creative writing was the biggest challenge for Grade 4 learners where they had to apply reasoning or critical thinking. Writing is influenced by the knowledge of the language. In this case, learners' poor reading skills seemed to impact on their writing skills. Learners were unable to express themselves orally and in writing. In the academic space learners have to express themselves through writing. According to the CAPS (2011) document, writing enhances learners' thinking skills and language development e.g. grammar and spelling.

The challenges stated above may be attributed to learners' low proficiency in English FAL, which is associated with the first quadrant of Cummins (2000) Four Quadrant Model. Observation and interview data seem to place the Grade 3 learners in the first and second quadrants of the Four Quadrant Model. Likewise, the Threshold Theory holds that the first floor of the ladder illustrates limited proficiency in both languages. This implies that balanced bilinguals should display adequate competence in the home language and in the FAL for meaningful learning across the curriculum (Baker, 2006). Therefore, the Grade 3 learners could not be described as balanced bilinguals.

#### **4.6.3.2 The Classroom and Socio-economic Environment**

According to Freeman and Freeman (2011), a child has to be exposed to the FAL (L2) environment. This could be done by having print rich classrooms or by exposing learners to appropriate reading materials to enhance their literacy skills. Print rich environment plays an important role in the development of vocabulary and reading skills.

The CAPS document encourages print rich in classrooms for emergent literacy (DBE, 2011). Data from the interviews showed that teachers were aware of the significance of a print rich environment in literacy teaching and learning. However, the observation data show that Mrs Janes' classroom did not have rich print material. Although there were posters on the wall, she did not use them in all the lessons I observed.

In the previous chapter, the school's socio-economic environment is provided. Through my observations, it became apparent that the school was under-resourced and the learners were from low socio-economic backgrounds. As indicated earlier, there was a lack of reading material which prevented learners from reading for enjoyment, both in the HL and FAL. Taylor (2012) claims that learners from disadvantaged environments often lag behind their counterparts with regard to literacy development.

In line with the Sociocultural and Constructivist Theories, language is an important mediation tool in the teaching-learning process (Lantolf & Thorne, 2002; Thompsen, 2013; Santrock, 2008). In other words, the learners' prior knowledge in the form of home language influences the learning of FAL. This implies that if the home language environment is impoverished with regard to literacy materials, it is likely to affect the learning of the FAL literacy.

In summary, there were challenges in the teaching and learning of English FAL. Reading and writing appeared to be the most common challenge in Grade 3 English FAL lessons. Observations and interviews with three different teachers showed that learners were not able to read at an expected grade level, while the CAPS document expects learners to be in full possession of the necessary language skills of FAL at this grade level. The analysed data show that learners had limited vocabulary, which seemed to impact negatively on their learning. The school had insufficient teaching and learning resources to enhance English FAL literacy. Lastly, the socio-economic environment seemed to influence the learners' English FAL development due to lack of resources and limited exposure to English FAL inside and outside the classroom.

#### **4.6.4 Implications for Transition to English LoLT**

Based on the analysed data, there appears to be a mismatch between the intended curriculum and the practiced curriculum in the teaching of English FAL. The CAPS for English FAL requires learners to have high level of competence by the end of Grade 3 (Foundation Phase) which includes reading, writing proficiency and extensive vocabulary. Reading with meaning or comprehension and oral communication (speaking) form part of the CAPS requirements for FAL. However, the analysed data indicate that the learners had underdeveloped proficiency in many aspects of English FAL, namely reading, writing and speaking. Most of the learners read at a lower grade level, hence Mrs Jane used Grade 2 reading books to assist some of them.

The CAPS document recognises the transfer of HL skills and knowledge in the learning of FAL. Literature supports the transfer of rules from ones' HL to FAL learning (Larsen-Freeman, 2013; Cummins & Hornberger, 2008; Bylund, 2013). Cummins and Hornberger (2008) also suggest that bilingual learners should be encouraged to use translation and transfer across languages. While HL (isiXhosa) transfer of certain sounds was observed in the English FAL lessons, it was not helpful as isiXhosa and English have different phonetic and phonological structures. In other words, the phonological and morphological differences between isiXhosa and English seemed to be a barrier in the reading of certain English sounds. This was observed in the pronunciation of words which ended with /-ed/ as indicated in data presentation (e.g. washed, fixed, etc.). This could be associated with negative crosslinguistic influence (Bylund, 2013) referred to in Chapter 2.

On the other hand, the Grade 4 English FAL curriculum requirements illustrate that learners must have a high level of competence in this language. It requires the learners to possess well developed BICS and CALP to cope with the demands of all the subjects taught in the Intermediate Phase (Grade 4-6). In other words, the curriculum expects learners to be ready for English FAL instruction when they enter Grade 4.

However, data from the interviews indicate that most of the Grade 3 learners could not read with comprehension and struggled to write meaningful sentences in English FAL. They were unable to answer questions that needed them to reason and think critically. As a result, the school experienced high failure rate in English FAL at Grade 4 level. The data suggest that BICS and CALP have an impact on the failure of the education system for those learners who are not English home language speakers (Pretorius & Mampuru, 2007; Rooy, 2010).

Ramani and Joseph (2006) state that learners need to be moved from the first quadrant gradually until they can be able to handle tasks that are cognitively demanding. It would require learners to be balanced bilinguals in order to reach the third level of the threshold ladder (McDonald, 1990). The observation data indicates that some of the teachers' questions were not cognitively demanding, and learners experienced difficulties when they were challenged with high order questions. In other words, the learners seemed to be at the low levels of the Four Quadrant Model where they needed more support in the use of English.

Based on the above discussion, it can be deduced that the Grade 3 learners who participated in the study are not ready to learn through the medium of English FAL in Grade 4. There are many factors that affect their English language proficiency such as limited exposure to English FAL, insufficient resources, etc. Therefore, it is implied that transition to English LoLT may impact negatively on the learners' access to learning across the curriculum.

#### **4.7 Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, the triangulated data were presented and analysed to address the research questions stated in Chapter one. Thematic Analysis was used to arrive at the main themes that align with the study aims. The main themes that emerged from the analysed data include teachers' pedagogical strategies, challenges in the teaching and learning of English FAL, learners' epistemic access to

learning and the implications of English FAL for LoLT transition in Grade 4. These themes influence the research findings that are discussed in the following chapter.



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# CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

## 5.1 Introduction

This study investigated how English as First Additional Language (FAL) was taught in Grade 3 and the extent to which the teaching strategies provided learners' epistemic access to knowledge. The study also set out to understand whether the teaching of English FAL could enhance learners' transition to English LoLT in Grade 4.

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the findings of the study that emanated from the analysed data discussed in Chapter 4. From the findings, the study draws a conclusion and recommendations.

## 5.2 Research Findings

From the analysed data, the following findings emerged and they address the teaching and learning of English FAL in the Grade 3 classroom. The findings are guided by the research questions which are stated in Chapter 1, which are as follows:

1. What strategies do teachers use to teach English (FAL) in Grade 3?
2. What are the challenges experienced in the teaching and learning of English FAL at Grade 3 level?
3. What linguistic competency is required for successful completion in Grade 3 and for the transition to English LoLT in Grade 4?
4. What are the implications of linguistic competency for learners' epistemic access to learning across the curriculum?

In this section, I discuss the findings in relation to the above sub-research questions.

### 5.2.1 What strategies do teachers use to teach English (FAL) in Grade 3?

Concerning the teaching strategies, Mrs Jane made use of learner-centred approaches and the learners' HL to facilitate learning. However, some of these strategies did not seem to foster learners' critical thinking and independent learning.



### 5.2.1.1 Learner-Centred Teaching Strategies

The study indicates that Mrs Jane used strategies that were learner-centred in the teaching of English FAL in the Grade 3 classroom. She encouraged her learners to speak and interact with her during the English lessons. She used a question and answer method and group activities to allow learners to collaborate during the teaching-learning process. Working in groups seemed to work better to facilitate active and meaningful learning. It also enabled the teacher to identify learners who needed extra support. Mrs Jane used the learners' HL to facilitate active interaction when they had difficulties in understanding English FAL.

The learners constructed knowledge as they interacted together during the teaching-learning process. Mrs Jane seemed to be aware of active learning to enable learners to negotiate their own understanding (Amineh & Asl, 2016). This approach is regarded appropriate in language learning and literacy development (Apthorp, 2006). It is in line with the Sociocultural Theory discussed in the second chapter.

However, some of Mrs Jane's questions were of low order thinking and did not challenge learners to elaborate or justify their answers using language. Most of these questions encouraged them to recall facts from what they have heard from the stories or from what she told them. This practice does align with the (CAPS 2011) document that requires teachers to scaffold and mediate learning to develop a high level of cognitive thinking.

With regard to teacher's pedagogical strategies, peer and group discussion enables learners to discuss work using language. The discussion amongst learners allows them time to share their experiences and use language meaningfully. This enhances their creativity, which could strengthen their language and literacy development. Therefore, the teachers need to support the use of learners' HL as a resource in learning English FAL for academic development (McKinney, 2014; Krause & Prinsloo, 2016). The learners need to be able to read and write in the target language in order to develop vocabulary and improve their FAL skills.

Roth (2000) is of the view that knowledge can be constructed through interaction with the surrounding environment. From a sociocultural perspective, learning is a social process that is facilitated through interaction and collaboration (Kim, 2001). An interactive and collaborative social environment inspires a high level of cognitive processing which demands high order

thinking through the ZPD (Kim, 2001). Language is the main tool of mediation in learning. Data analysis shows that Mrs Jane facilitated interaction by making use of the learners' home language in learning FAL.

### **5.2.1.2 Home Language as a resource in the English FAL classroom**

Language plays an important role in learning. It is used to teach different subjects in schools and the learners use language to think, reason and express themselves. Low language proficiency affects learning negatively (Lin, 2016). The teaching of Language Across the Curriculum (LAC) is important as it facilitates the teaching and learning of language within a subject. In other words, the teaching of reading and writing should not be limited to language learning only, but it should be used across the curriculum to develop language for critical thinking in other subjects (Lin, 2016).

The analysed data shows that Mrs Jane used strategies that aimed at developing learners' vocabulary in the target language. She used guided reading in her classroom. This implies that she was aware of the importance of vocabulary development in language learning, although the learners still showed low proficiency in using the acquired vocabulary in meaningful sentences.

The importance of HL in learning FAL is very crucial as it has an influence on how a learner makes meaning and relates to the target language. Ellis (2005) suggests that the learner can use their language skills from HL to FAL in order to make meaning. This implies that the learner needs to be able to use their HL effectively and be proficient in it to support the learning of the FAL. This implies that the HL is important, as learners need to be bilinguals and be biliterate. Learners need strong literacy skills in both the HL and FAL from the early years of schooling (Pretorius, Jackson, Mackay, Murray & Spaul, 2016).

The learners' HL has an influence on how learners create meaning to make sense of the learning content. Hence the learners' HL is regarded as a linguistic resource that could enhance learners' epistemological access to learning (Makalela, 2015; Nomlomo, 2007).

According to Alqahtani (2015) vocabulary in FAL is important in language learning as one gets exposed to new words. This could be in books or through interaction in the classroom. Vocabulary development is a critical tool that influences how one learns the FAL. Underdeveloped vocabulary affects learners' communication and acquisition of the FAL (Alqahtani, 2015).

Schmitt (2000) is of the view that the importance of lexical knowledge is a crucial aspect that can enhance competence in the FAL.

## **5.2.2 What are the challenges experienced in the learning and teaching of English FAL at Grade 3 level?**

There are many challenges that were experienced in the teaching and learning of English FAL in this study. These challenges include learners' limited exposure to the target language, learners' low proficiency levels in English FAL reading and writing difficulties as discussed below.

### **5.2.2.1 Learners' limited exposure to English FAL**

The lack of a print-rich classroom environment seemed to affect the learner's proficiency in English FAL. The CAPS document promotes adequate exposure to reading material and print to develop learners' emergent literacy skills (DBE, 2011). It can be argued that learners' low language proficiency and literacy levels in English FAL impact on the learners' epistemic access.

Socio-economic factors affect teaching and learning. As indicated in Chapter 3, the school is located in a disadvantaged community with high unemployment and poverty rates. It is a no-fee school that falls in quintile 2 (Van Wyk, 2015; Dass & Rinquest, 2017). This implies that this school is dependent on the state for funding. As a result, the school had limited resources, especially the reading material in English FAL. This challenge affected learners' exposure to the target language as there were insufficient reading material that learners could read for enjoyment. Additionally, the learners were exposed to English FAL at school during the English FAL period only. This seemed to negatively affect the learners' vocabulary development. Furthermore, the learners' parents could not assist them with reading in English as many of them had limited proficiency in this language.

The finding is consistent with McNamara's (2012) view that emphasises the importance of exposure to reading material to enhance the development of vocabulary and reading comprehension. Learners need to be exposed to the target language in order to develop proficiency in it (Freeman & Freeman, 2011; Gass & Selinker, 2008).

### **5.2.2.2 Learner's low proficiency in English FAL**

The analysed data indicated that the learners had low language proficiency in English FAL. Many of them could not construct meaningful sentences in English FAL. Although some of them could communicate at a basic level, they struggled to use the language in responding to cognitively demanding questions that needed long answers. Hence they waited for the teachers' translation into isiXhosa to respond meaningfully to the questions. This suggests that the home language is a good resource for learning.

The finding is supported by Cummins' (2000) work of language fluency which entails the importance of both the Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) which is needed to thrive academically. Given their young age, the learners had not yet achieved balanced bilingualism as they still needed to develop both their home language and FAL skills. However, they displayed good oral skills in their home language as discussed in the previous chapter.

Literature suggests that it takes about seven years for learners to develop CALP in the second language (Cummins, 2000). Therefore, young learners often do not have strong language and literacy skills in both the HL and FAL hence some of them usually experience cognitive and educational disadvantages (Baker, 2006; Probyn, 2010; Nomlomo 2014; Alexander, 2012; Goldfield et al., 2014).

The learners' low proficiency in English FAL has implications for learners' epistemic access to learning. Research on literacy achievement in South Africa indicates that the Foundation Phase learners performed poorly both in the HL and FAL literacy tests (Taylor & Coetzee, 2013, Howie et al., 2007, Rooy, 2010). So, this finding supports the recent literacy achievement scores in many South African schools.

### **5.2.2.3 Reading and Writing Difficulties**

Data analysis showed that learners experienced reading and writing difficulties in English FAL. Learners were unable to read with understanding and this seemed to impact on their writing for learning. Reading and writing skills are crucial for learners' critical thinking and access to

information (McNamara, 2012). The learners' poor reading and writing skills could be attributed to their low proficiency in English with regard to oral and comprehension skills.

The reading and writing difficulties experienced by learners in this study suggest that the learners have not yet attained the code of basic reading and writing for meaningful literacy activities in Grade 3. The lack of basic skills may be disadvantageous in learning and accessing information across the curriculum. Hence Pretorius et al. (2016) propose that teachers need to have knowledge about reading in both HL and FAL so that learners may acquire the necessary reading levels that can develop their academic learning.

The ability to read and write affords learners access to information improves their language vocabulary and enhances language development (Pretorius & Mampuru, 2007). This implies that there is a relationship between reading and writing. In other words, learners who are able to read are likely to develop good writing skills. Conversely, those who cannot read may struggle with writing meaningful sentences. Lin (2016) states that if one is a skilled reader and writer, they can reproduce and reflect back on what they have learned.

In the case of this study, it appeared that learners lacked the ability to read with meaning which is one of the important skills that children have to acquire in primary school (Pretorius et.al., 2016). If the learners have a good foundation of basic reading, they are likely to understand what is in print and connect it to the spoken language. This finding is consistent with the literacy crisis in many South African schools where learners are not able to read fluently and comprehend texts well when they leave Grade 3 (Pretorius et al., 2016; Zimmerman & Howie, 2016).

### **5.2.3 What linguistic competency is required for successful completion in Grade 3 and for the transition to English LoLT in Grade 4?**

This study discusses linguistic competency in relation to learners' epistemic access to learning. The aim is to show how linguistic competency affects learning.

#### **5.2.3.1 Lack of strong competency in the Home Language and in English FAL**

The analysed data from various sources suggest that strong language and literacy skills in English FAL could facilitate learners' epistemic access. The CAPS (2011) document highlights that the

learners need adequate language and literacy skills for reading and writing and for learning across the curriculum when they get to Grade 4. The CAPS (2011) states that learners should be able to transfer their HL skills in learning FAL and should have a well-developed vocabulary and literacy skills in the FAL (CAPS, 2011). They should have developed the necessary skills to function well using both their HL and FAL with fluency. This means that they should have adequate bilingual with biliteracy skills for meaningful learning (Hammers et., al, 2000; Nomlomo & Katiya, 2018).

In the case of this study, learners are expected to function well in both languages to cope with the Grade 4 curriculum demands. They should have well developed BICS and CALP (Cummins, 2000) to operate at the appropriate grade level. However, the analysed data showed that Grade learners 3 learners who participated in the study did not have strong language skills in FAL which could facilitate their epistemic access to learning in Grade 4. In other words, the learners did not seem to have the necessary linguistic competency that the curriculum expects of Grade 3 learners.

#### **5.2.4 What are the implications of linguistic competency for learners' epistemic access to learning across the curriculum?**

Learner's linguistic competency has implications for learning across the curriculum. This implies that the language plays a key role in teaching and learning in all subjects.

The teaching and learning of language across the curriculum is in line with the CAPS (2011) document that promotes the genre-based approach to language teaching for meaning construction. If learners have low language proficiency levels, this is likely to have a negative effect on the learning of other subjects. Effective learning is also dependent on high order thinking skills.

According to Kubanyiova and Crookes (2016) the importance of language across the curriculum is to promote, maintain, strengthen and enable the learner to navigate complex learning demands in the curriculum. It also enables learners to make sense of the reading material in different subjects. In other words, learners with strong language and literacy skills are at an advantage to learn to use their skills in any subject and achieve better results than those with underdeveloped literacy skills. In this way, they can have better epistemological access to learning across the curriculum.

### 5.3 Summary of Findings

The study findings are crucial in the learning and teaching of English FAL in Grade 3. They suggest that the Grade 3 teacher was aware of learner-centred pedagogies that aimed at facilitating learners' epistemic access to learning. For example, the question and answer method, group work and shared reading are efforts to enhance active and collaborative learning which often leads to positive learning outcomes. However, the teacher's questioning style did not challenge her learners' high order thinking skills as most of her questions were of low order thinking. In other words, learners were not given adequate opportunity to elaborate on their answers so that they could use the language meaningfully. Low order thinking questions do not stimulate learners' critical thinking and self-discovery of information.

Secondly, several factors influence learners' access to meaningful learning in English FAL. Learners' limited exposure to English FAL and linguistic distance between English and isiXhosa remain a big challenge in learning. English and isiXhosa are not cognate languages and language transfer between the two languages may not be useful in learning. The learners displayed very low proficiency in English FAL with regard to speaking, reading and writing. Their low proficiency in English FAL affected their expression of ideas, fluency and comprehension in reading, as well as their writing in English. This suggests that basic language skills are interrelated and influence each other in the learning process.

Thirdly, the findings indicate that the learners do not possess strong language skills in English FAL, which could facilitate a smooth transition to English LoLT in Grade 4. The learners' competency in English FAL is below the CAPS requirements for Grade 3 learners. In other words, the learners did not show strong linguistic competency that is required at Grade 3 level due to low language and literacy proficiency in English FAL. Given that English FAL is the main LoLT in Grade 4, it may be argued that the majority of learners who participated in this study may struggle with the LoLT transition in Grade 4. This could have implications for their epistemic access to learning across the Grade 4 curriculum.

Finally, it appears that the learners' low language and literacy proficiency in English FAL was influenced by the low socio-economic backgrounds of the learners and that of the school. The school lacked teaching and learning resources that included reading material in English FAL. In

addition, the learners did not get parental support in English FAL and this seemed to impact on their literacy development in this language.

While the RSA Constitution (1996) and the LiEP (DoE, 1997) promote equity and equal access to education, the findings of this study give a different picture. They seem to suggest that learners in impoverished areas struggle to gain adequate epistemological access to learning compared to their counterparts who come from rich families and attend well-resourced schools. Therefore, the teaching and learning of English FAL in the Foundation Phase has implications for transition to English LoLT in the Intermediate Phase and learners' equal access to meaningful learning across the curriculum, and in further education.

#### **5.4 Conclusions**

Based on the findings, the Grade 3 teacher was aware of learner-centred approaches as she used interactive activities that stimulated learner participation in the classroom. However, the findings suggest that she did not make use of high order thinking questions to stimulate learners' critical thinking and self-discovery. Therefore, it can be concluded that learner-centred teaching approaches do not necessarily translate into effective and independent learning that reinforces critical thinking and knowledge construction due to the number of factors such as pedagogical, socio-economical and structural factors.

This study findings show consistent low language and literacy levels among Grade 3 learners which are consistent with the findings of the ANAs, PIRLS, SACMEQ, TIMSS and Systemic results that are discussed in Chapter 1. These results indicate that many African language-speaking learners have low language proficiency in English FAL and this influences their literacy performance. Low proficiency levels have a negative impact on the learners' reading comprehension which is necessary for learning across the curriculum. It appears that there is a correlation between the learners' language development and literacy performance in the HL and FAL. Learners with strong language and literacy skills in the HL are likely to perform better in the FAL. Similarly, good readers also tend to be good writers.

Whilst there are a number of other factors that influence language learning (e.g. limited exposure to the target language, lack of resources, etc.), the findings of this study show the effects of language and social inequalities that negatively affect learners' equal access to meaningful



learning in South Africa. The LiEP (DoE, 1997) and other education policies promote equality and equity to redress the imbalances of the apartheid education system. However, the findings of this study indicate that learners from low socio-economic backgrounds often experience learning difficulties. Some of these difficulties pertain to language learning and the LoLT that is unfamiliar to the learners. This suggests that the language used in the classroom determines learners' epistemic access to learning. In this case, it can be concluded that the Grade 3 learners who participated in this study did not have equal access to meaningful learning due to low proficiency in English FAL. This limitation is likely to affect their learning in Grade 4 (Intermediate Phase) and beyond. Therefore, these learners are not well prepared for a transition to English LoLT in Grade 4

## **5.5 Recommendations**

The findings suggest that there are challenges in the learning and teaching of English FAL in Grade 3. Based on these findings, this study recommends the following:

### **5.5.1 Teacher and Learner Support**

More support should be given to teachers, especially those who teach English FAL. Adequate support could influence their teaching of this subject positively. Teachers have to be exposed to innovative teaching approaches that stimulate learners' creativity and critical thinking.

Learners who are learning in English FAL also need extra support as they are not HL speakers of English. The support may be in the form of workshops and seminars for teachers, and language intervention programmes can be designed to support learners.

### **5.5.2 Adequate teaching and learning resources for language and literacy development**

The schools located in disadvantaged communities need adequate resources. With adequate and relevant resources, the teachers can mediate learning effectively. The use of teaching and learning resources enhances meaningful learning.

It is important that learners are exposed to a variety of reading materials to support their literacy development. Adequate exposure to English FAL materials could encourage extensive reading that is likely to increase learners' vocabulary. Fluent reading leads to comprehension and better writing

skills. Effective use of teaching and learning resources could also strengthen learners' linguistic competencies to reach the expected grade levels. In other words, it could facilitate learners' epistemic access to learning.

### **5.5.3 Understanding the significance of language transition**

It is important that all stakeholders, including the teachers, parents and officials from the Department of Basic Education understand the critical stage of language transition to English LoLT that occurs at the Grade 4 level. All the stakeholders should participate in activities that strengthen the teaching and learning of English FAL in the Foundation Phase and the competencies required for successful transition to English LoLT in the Intermediate Phase. This could entail extra support to teachers and learners in preparation for this transition.

Through professional development courses, teachers should be equipped with knowledge of the theories and practices that support language learning. This could enable them to gain an understanding of the intersection between HL and FAL teaching methodology

### **5.5.4 Further Research**

This research investigated the teaching and learning of English FAL in Grade 3 and the extent to which it provides epistemic access to learners when they transition to English LoLT in Grade 4. Another study could investigate how English FAL is taught in neighbouring countries that are not English HL speakers in the Foundation Phase.

In the school where I conducted the study, teachers were supported by the WCED through workshops. Therefore, there is a need to develop a model that could support the teachers within their classroom to enhance their practice.

Another study could develop a model to assist or support teachers who teach English FAL in the township or rural schools where there is limited exposure to English FAL.

### **5.6 Concluding Remarks**

The findings of the study cannot be generalised as this was a single case study and the sample was small. However, it has shown that the teaching and learning of English FAL is still a challenge,

especially in disadvantaged schools. The findings resonate with other research findings that low literacy performance in under-resourced schools has a direct link with the learners' HL and the socio-economic status. The study indicates that English FAL remains a barrier to learners who are not the home language speakers of English. In addition, the curriculum has high expectations of Grade 3 learners in English FAL which do not seem to be met in real practice. In other words, it appears that there is a big gap between the expected curriculum by the state and the achieved curriculum outcomes at schools.

This study has contributed to knowledge on the teaching and learning of English to African-language speaking learners in South Africa. The findings of the study could inform language policy and practice in primary schools across the globe.



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**REFERENCE:** 20180215–9348

**ENQUIRIES:** Dr A T Wyngaard

Ms Molopetsana Naketsana  
3 Strelitzia Road  
Suikerbossie Mews Flat n0.7  
Belhar  
7507

**Dear Ms Molopetsana Naketsana**

**RESEARCH PROPOSAL: LANGUAGE TRANSITION FOR EPISTEMIC ACCESS:  
ENGLISH AS FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE AND  
AS THE LANGUAGE OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN THE INTERMEDIATE  
PHASE**

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **01 March 2018 till 28 September 2018**
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T Wyngaard at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number?
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.



10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:  
**The Director: Research Services**  
**Western Cape Education Department**  
**Private Bag X9114**  
**CAPE TOWN**  
**8000**

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Signed: Dr Audrey T Wyngaard

**Directorate: Research**

**DATE: 19 February 2018**



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## Appendix 2: Information for Research Participants



**University of the Western Cape**

**Faculty of Education, Private Bag X17, Bellville, South Africa**

### **Title of the research project**

Language Transition for epistemic Access: English as First Additional Language in the Foundation Phase and as the Language of Learning and Teaching in the Intermediate Phase

### **Research aims**

The primary aim of this study is to explore how English as First Additional Language (FAL) in Grade 3 is taught and the ways that the teaching of English (FAL) can provide epistemological access when learners switch to the English LoLT in Grade 4. Therefore, the overarching aim is to understand if these learners are given enough opportunities to engage at both Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) level in English in the Foundation Phase. To understand the teaching of English FAL, I will evaluate the current curriculum, the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) (2012) in order to see how it has been designed.

### **Data Collection**

Data will be collected by means of classroom observations, interviews, and documentary analysis. I will observe the teaching and learning of English (FAL) in the Grade 3 classroom. The Grade 3 teacher will be interviewed to gain a deeper understanding of her interaction with the learners in English (FAL) lessons. The CAPS and other relevant documents will be examined and analysed.

### **Ethical issues**

Parents, learners, and teachers will be informed about the purpose and nature of the research project. The research project will not interfere in any way with school functioning or with teaching

and learning during school hours. In addition, all participants in the study will remain anonymous and information received as part of the study will be used for research purposes only.

I will seek permission from the Western Cape Education Department to access the research school. Permission for video and audio recordings of lessons and teacher interviews will be obtained in writing from the participants. Participation in the study will be voluntary and research participants can withdraw from the study at any stage.

For further details regarding the purpose and nature of my study, please contact.

Yours sincerely

**Researcher:** Molopetsane Naketsana

**Phone number:** 081 059 3014/063 408 2121

**Email:** [mnaketsana@yahoo.com](mailto:mnaketsana@yahoo.com)



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### Appendix 3: WCED Permission Letter



University of the Western Cape

**Faculty of Education, Private Bag X17, Bellville, South Africa**

The Research Director

Lower Parliament Street

WCED

Cape Town

8000

Dear Dr Wyngaard

#### **RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT XYZ PRIMARY SCHOOL**

I am currently registered for the M.Ed. degree at the University of the Western Cape. I have to conduct research to fulfil the requirements of this degree. My research explores the teaching and learning of English (FAL) in Grade 3 and how it can provide epistemological access for transition to English LoLT in Grade 4. More specifically, the intention is to understand if Grade 3 learners are given enough opportunities to engage at both Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) level in English (FAL) in the Foundation Phase.

I hereby request permission to conduct research at XYZ School, which is located in Kraaifontein. The research project will not interfere in any way with school functioning or with teaching and learning during school hours. In addition, all participants in the study will remain anonymous and information received as part of the study will be used for research purposes only.

Should you require any further information regarding my research, please contact me at [mnaketsana@yahoo.com](mailto:mnaketsana@yahoo.com). You can also contact.

Yours sincerely,

**Researcher:** Molopetsane Naketsana

**Email:** [mnaketsana@yahoo.com](mailto:mnaketsana@yahoo.com)

**Phone number:** 081 059 3014



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## Appendix 4: Principals' Letter



**University of the Western Cape**

**Faculty of Education, Private Bag X17, Bellville, South Africa**

**The Principal**

**XYZ Primary School**

**Kraaifontein**

Dear Sir/Madam

### **RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL**

I am currently registered for the M.Ed. degree at the University of the Western Cape. I have to conduct research to fulfil the requirements of this degree. My research explores the teaching and learning of English (FAL) in Grade 3 and how it can provide epistemological access for transition to English LoLT in Grade 4. More specifically, the intention is to understand if Grade 3 learners are given enough opportunities to engage at both Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) level in English (FAL) in the Foundation Phase.

I hereby request permission to conduct research in your school. I wish to highlight the following ethical considerations:

- the school's participation in this study is voluntary
- the school has the right to withdraw from the study at any time
- the information collected from the school will be treated confidentially to protect the identity of the school, teachers and learners
- the findings will be used for research purposes and will not damage the name of the school.

Should you require any further information regarding the research project, please contact me.

**Researcher:** Molopetsane Naketsana

**Email:** [mnaketsana@yahoo.com](mailto:mnaketsana@yahoo.com)

**Phone number:** 081 059 3014



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## Appendix 5: Head of Departments' (HOD) Letter



**University of the Western Cape**

**Faculty of Education, Private Bag X17, Bellville, South Africa**

**The Grade 3 Head of Department**

**XYZ Primary School**

**Kraaifontein**

Dear Sir/Madam

**RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN GRADE 3**

I am currently registered for the M.Ed. degree at the University of the Western Cape. I have to conduct research to fulfil the requirements of this degree. My research explores the teaching and learning of English (FAL) in Grade 3 and how it can provide epistemological access for transition to English LoLT in Grade 4. More specifically, the intention is to understand if Grade 3 learners are given enough opportunities to engage at both Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) level in English (FAL) in the Foundation Phase.

I hereby request permission to conduct research in Grade 3. I wish to highlight the following ethical considerations:

- the school's participation in this study is voluntary
- the school has the right to withdraw from the study at any time
- the information collected from the school will be treated confidentially to protect the identity of the school, teachers and learners
- the findings will be used for research purposes and will not damage the name of the school.

Should you require any further information regarding the research project, please contact.



**Researcher:** Molopetsane Naketsana

**Email:** [mnaketsana@yahoo.com](mailto:mnaketsana@yahoo.com)

**Phone number:** 081 059 3014



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## Appendix 6: Teachers' Letter



**University of the Western Cape**

**Faculty of Education, Private Bag X17, Bellville, South Africa**

**The Grade 3 Teacher/s**

**XYZ Primary School**

**Kraaifontein**

Dear Sir/Madam

### **RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL**

I am a student registered for the M.Ed. degree at the University of the Western Cape. I am required to conduct research as part of my studies. My research explores the teaching and learning of English (FAL) in Grade 3 and how it can provide epistemological access for transition to English LoLT in Grade 4. More specifically, the intention is to understand if Grade 3 learners are given enough opportunities to engage at both Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) level in English (FAL) in the Foundation Phase.

I hereby request permission to conduct research in your classroom. This will entail observing English (FAL) lessons and looking at the learners' work and other relevant documents. I would also like to interview you in order to understand pertinent issues in English (FAL) teaching. I wish to highlight the following ethical considerations:

- your participation in this study is voluntary
- you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time

- the information collected from you will be treated confidentially to protect the identity of the school, teachers and learners
- the findings will be used for research purposes and will not damage your name and that of the school.

If you require any further information regarding the research project, please contact me.

**Researcher:** Molopetsane Naketsana

**Email:** [mnaketsana@yahoo.com](mailto:mnaketsana@yahoo.com)

**Phone number:** 081 059 3014



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## Appendix 7: Parents' Letter and Reply Slip



University of the Western Cape

**Faculty of Education, Private Bag X17, Bellville, South Africa**

Dear Parent/s

### **RE: PERMISSION TO INVOLVE GRADE 3 LEARNERS IN MY RESEARCH**

I am currently doing my M.Ed. degree at the University of the Western Cape. The purpose of my M.Ed. research is to explore the teaching and learning of English (FAL) in Grade 3 and how it can provide epistemological access for transition to English LoLT in Grade 4.

In order to do the investigation, I kindly request your permission to involve your child in my research. The research will take place during normal school hours and the learners will be observed during English First Additional Language (FAL) lessons. The research project will not interfere in any way with school functioning or with teaching and learning during school hours. In addition, all participants in the study will remain anonymous and information received as part of the study will be used for research purposes only.

Should you require any further information regarding my research, please contact me.

**Researcher:** Molopetsane Naketsana

**Email:** [mnaketsana@yahoo.com](mailto:mnaketsana@yahoo.com)

**Phone number:** 081 059 3014

Please complete the slip below and indicate whether your child will be allowed to participate in the research. Please cut the slip and return it to school.

Yours sincerely

Ms. M. Naketsana

---

**PERMISSION SLIP** Please indicate by making a tick (✓) in the appropriate box:

Yes, my child can participate in the research.

No, my child cannot participate in the research.

Parent's signature: .....**(DETAILS NOT INCLUDED TO PROTECT IDENTITY)**



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## Appendix 8: Teachers' Informed Consent Form



**University of the Western Cape**

**Faculty of Education, Private Bag X17, Bellville, South Africa**

### **Title of the research project**

Language Transition for epistemic Access: English as First Additional Language in the Foundation Phase and as the Language of Learning and Teaching in the Intermediate Phase

As a participant in this study, I hereby acknowledge the following:

1. The researcher has explained to me the purpose of this study. She also gave an undertaking to keep anything said in this group confidential. I understand that information received as part of the study will be used for research purposes only.
2. I have given permission for her to interview me and if necessary to use video or audio recordings.
3. I understand that audio recordings will not be used in any public forum such as a conference without my permission for the extract/s to be used.
4. I have given permission for her to observe lessons and to collect documents such as teaching and assessment tasks.
5. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any stage.
6. I understand that my school and all participants in the study will remain anonymous.
7. I undertake not to repeat anything that occur during the research project outside the group.
8. All potential risks have been explained to me.
9. What I say will be confidential and my name will not be used anywhere in the research.
10. Should information I have given be used, a pseudonym will be used.
11. The interview will be audio recorded. I will be shown the transcript of the interview.

12. The data collected is for research purposes only and will be destroyed after five years. Only the supervisor of the research will have access to it.

**SIGNED:** .....(DETAILS NOT INCLUDED TO PROTECT IDENTITY)

**DATE:** .....

**PLACE:** ..... (DETAILS NOT INCLUDED TO PROTECT IDENTITY)

**Researcher:** Molopetsane Naketsana

**Email:** [mnaketsana@yahoo.com](mailto:mnaketsana@yahoo.com)

**Phone number:** 081 059 3014



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## Appendix 9: Principals' Informed Consent Form



**University of the Western Cape**

**Faculty of Education, Private Bag X17, Bellville, South Africa**

### **Title of the research project**

Language Transition for epistemic Access: English as First Additional Language in the Foundation Phase and as the Language of Learning and Teaching in the Intermediate Phase

As a participant in this study, I hereby acknowledge the following:

5. The researcher has explained to me the purpose of this study. She also gave an undertaking to keep anything said in this group confidential. I understand that information received as part of the study will be used for research purposes only.
6. I have given permission for her to interview me and if necessary to use video or audio recordings.
7. I understand that audio recordings will not be used in any public forum such as a conference without my permission for the extract/s to be used.
8. I have given permission for her to observe lessons and to collect documents such as teaching and assessment tasks.
5. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any stage.
6. I understand that my school and all participants in the study will remain anonymous.
7. I undertake not to repeat anything that occur during the research project outside the group.
8. All potential risks have been explained to me.
9. What I say will be confidential and my name will not be used anywhere in the research. Should information I have given be used, a pseudonym will be used.
10. The interview will be audio recorded. I will be shown the transcript of the interview.



11. The data collected is for research purposes only and will be destroyed after five years. Only the supervisor of the research will have access to it.

**SIGNED:** ..... (DETAILS NOT INCLUDED TO PROTECT IDENTITY)

**DATE:** .....

**PLACE:** ..... (DETAILS NOT INCLUDED TO PROTECT IDENTITY)

**Researcher:** Molopetsane Naketsana

**Email:** [mnaketsana@yahoo.com](mailto:mnaketsana@yahoo.com)

**Phone number:** 081 059 3014



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## Appendix 10: Head of Departments' Informed Consent Form



**University of the Western Cape**

**Faculty of Education, Private Bag X17, Bellville, South Africa**

### **Title of the research project**

Language Transition for epistemic Access: English as First Additional Language in the Foundation Phase and as the Language of Learning and Teaching in the Intermediate Phase

As a participant in this study, I hereby acknowledge the following:

1. The researcher has explained to me the purpose of this study. She also gave an undertaking to keep anything said in this group confidential. I understand that information received as part of the study will be used for research purposes only.
2. I have given permission for her to interview me and if necessary to use video or audio recordings.
3. I understand that audio recordings will not be used in any public forum such as a conference without my permission for the extract/s to be used.
4. I have given permission for her to observe lessons and to collect documents such as teaching and assessment tasks.
5. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any stage.
6. I understand that my school and all participants in the study will remain anonymous.
7. I undertake not to repeat anything that occurs during the research project outside the group.
8. All potential risks have been explained to me.
9. What I say will be confidential and my name will not be used anywhere in the research. Should information I have given be used, a pseudonym will be used.
10. The interview will be audio recorded. I will be shown the transcript of the interview.

11. The data collected is for research purposes only and will be destroyed after five years. Only the supervisor of the research will have access to it.

**SIGNED:** ..... (DETAILS NOT INCLUDED TO PROTECT IDENTITY)

**DATE:**.....

**PLACE:** ..... (DETAILS NOT INCLUDED TO PROTECT IDENTITY)

**Researcher:** Molopetsane Naketsana

**Email:** [mnaketsana@yahoo.com](mailto:mnaketsana@yahoo.com)

**Phone number:** 081 059 3014



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## Appendix 11: Parents' Informed Consent Form



**University of the Western Cape**

**Faculty of Education, Private Bag X17, Bellville, South Africa**

### **Title of the research project**

Language Transition for epistemic Access: English as First Additional Language in the Foundation Phase and as the Language of Learning and Teaching in the Intermediate Phase

As parent of the learner in Grade 3, I hereby acknowledge the following:

- His/ her participation is voluntary
- She/ he can withdraw their participation at any time
- All potential risks have been explained to me
- What she/he says will be confidential and his/her name will not be used anywhere in the research
- Should information he/she have given be used, a pseudonym will be used
- The interview will be tape recorded
- He/ she will be shown the transcript of the interview
- The data collected is for research purposes only and will be destroyed after 2 years
- Only the supervisor of the research will have access to it.

Signed:..... **(DETAILS NOT INCLUDED TO PROTECT IDENTITY)**

Date:.....

**Researcher:** Molopetsane Naketsana

**Email:** [mnaketsana@yahoo.com](mailto:mnaketsana@yahoo.com)

**Phone number:** 081 059 3014

## Appendix 12: Teachers' Interview Questions



University of the Western Cape

Faculty of Education, Private Bag X17, Bellville, South Africa

### 1) Personal Information

Grade taught:

Gender:  M  F

Age:  20-30  30-40  40-50  50-60

Teaching experience 0-5 yrs  5-10 yrs  10-15 yrs  15-20 yrs  20+ yrs

Teacher's qualifications: Certificate:

Diploma:

Degree:

Other:

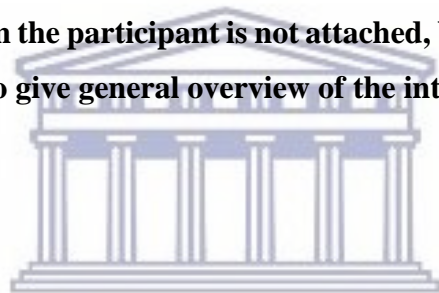
(Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

### 2) Teaching methods

1. Which method/s do you often use to teach English (FAL) in Grade 3?
2. Can you explain the method (s) you use for teaching reading and writing in Grade 3 English (FAL)?
3. How do you teach the language structure of English (FAL) in Grade 3?
4. What challenges do you face when teaching English (FAL), particularly with regard to listening, reading comprehension, speaking and writing?

5. How often do you pay attention to the grammar, vocabulary and spelling in English (FAL) lessons? Why?
6. How do you pay attention to grammar in English (FAL) lessons? Why?
7. How do you pay attention to vocabulary in English (FAL) lessons? Why?
8. How do you pay attention to spelling in English (FAL) lessons? Why?
9. In your practice as a teacher (English) do you support communication skills to prepare your learners for the next grade (4) LoLT? Elaborate.
10. Do your learners during English (FAL) period read for enjoyment? Explain and give examples.
11. Do you experience any challenges associated with learners' underdeveloped home language skills at Grade 3 level? Explain your answer.
12. How do you address these challenges?

**The transcribed response from the participant is not attached, but the questionnaire to guide the conversation is included to give general overview of the interview.**



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## Appendix 13: Head of Departments' (HOD) Interview Questions



University of the Western Cape

Faculty of Education, Private Bag X17, Bellville, South Africa

### 1) Personal Information

Grade taught:

Gender:  M  F

Age:  20-30  30-40  40-50  50-60

Teaching experience: 0-5yrs  5-10 yrs  10 – 15 yrs  15 – 20 yrs  20 + yrs

Teacher's qualifications: Certificate:

Diploma:

Degree:

Other:

(Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

1. What challenges do learners experience with English FAL in Grade 3?
2. What challenges do teachers experience with English FAL in Grade 3?
3. What support do you provide to Grade 3 teachers in the teaching of English (FAL)?
4. Describe your role in supporting teachers and learners to transition from IsiXhosa Home Language instruction to English LoLT in Grade 4.
5. What support do you need as an HOD in this grade?
6. How can the teaching and learning of Grade 3 English FAL be strengthened?

7. Would you agree that the most possible answer to the failure of reading in class could be attributed by the fact that the learners' home language is not yet profound? Explain your answer.
8. How are you preparing your teachers to be able to teach English FAL for the transition that is going to take place in the next Grade or Phase when English becomes the LoLT?

**The transcribed response from the participant is not attached, but the questionnaire to guide the conversation is included to give general overview of the interview.**



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## Appendix 14: Principals' Interview Questions



University of the Western Cape

Faculty of Education, Private Bag X17, Bellville, South Africa

### 1) Personal Information

Grade taught:

Gender:  M  F

Age:  20-30  30-40  40-50  50-60

Teaching experience: 0-5 yrs  5-10 yrs  10 – 15 yrs  15 – 20 yrs  20 + yrs

Teacher's qualifications: Certificate:

Diploma:

Degree:

Other:

(Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

1. How familiar are you with the debates on English as LoLT for non-mother tongue speakers?
2. What implications do you think this holds for your learners when they transition to English as LoLT in Grade 4?
3. What kind of support does the school offer to teachers to strengthen literacy and learning?
4. What is your role in preparing both Grade 3 teachers and learners for the transition in LoLT in Grade 4?

5. What challenges do teachers experience with regard to the shift to English LoLT in Grade 4?
6. How can these challenges be addressed?

**The transcribed response from the participant is not attached, but the questionnaire to guide the conversation is included to give general overview of the interview.**



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**Appendix 15: Oral Rubric**

ORAL RUBRIC

1	2	3	4	5
The learner doesn't give a recount of the story	The learner gives 1-2 sentences of a simple recount	The learner Gives 3 sentences that are accurate and simple	The learner gives 4 sentences of accurate and simple recount	The learner gives 5 sentences that are accurate and includes details about the story

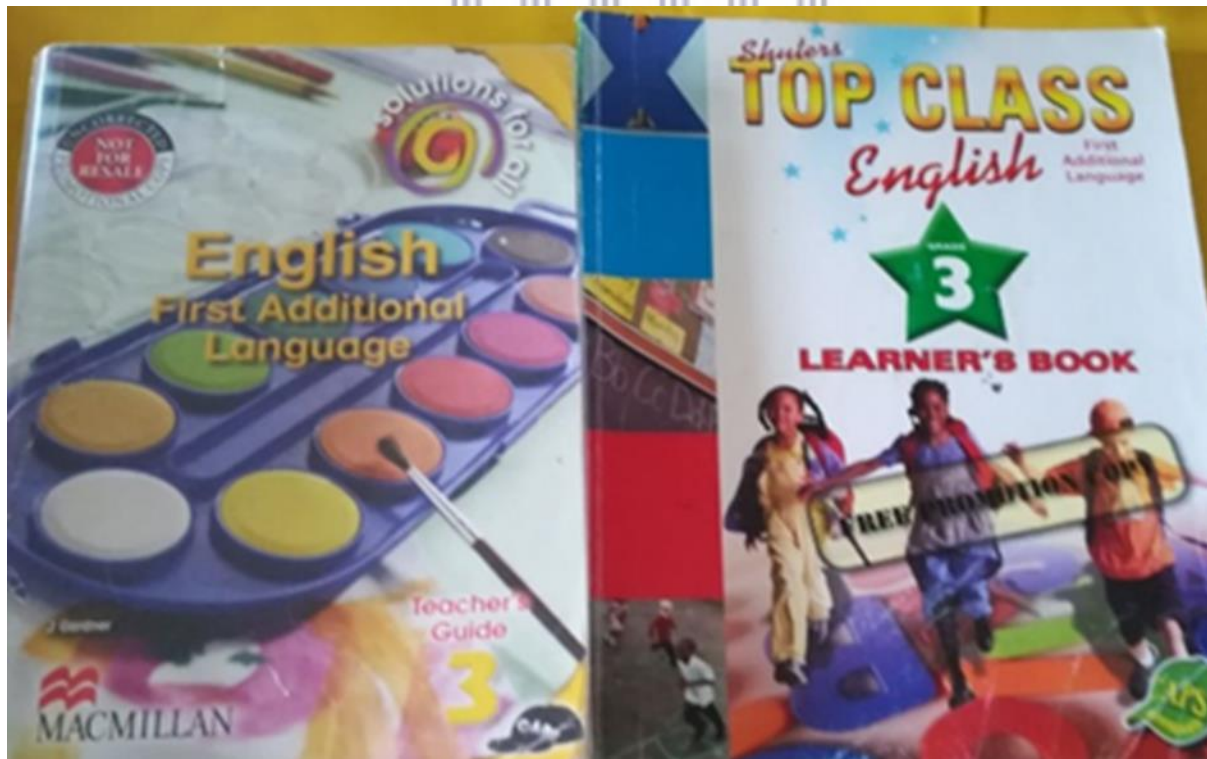
(5)

TOTAL MARKS: 10

Appendix 16: Sample of books



Book 1 (Prescribed Textbook)



Book 2 (Additional Textbooks Used)

## Appendix 17: Timetable

09:59-10:11 (12min)	L/SKILL Social wellbeing	L/SKILL Social wellbeing	L/SKILL Social wellbeing	L/SKILL Social wellbeing	L/SKILL Social wellbeing
10:10-10:30 (20min)	INTERVAL	INTERVAL	INTERVAL	INTERVAL	INTERVAL
10:30-10:48 17min	HL Phonics	HL Phonics	HL Phonics	HL Phonics	HL Phonics
10:48-11:03 15min	Shared Reading	Shared Reading	Shared Reading	Shared Reading	Shared Reading
11:03-11:18 15min	Guided Reading	Guided Reading	Guided Reading	Guided Reading	Guided Reading
11:18-11:33 15min	Guided Reading	Guided Reading	Guided Reading	Guided Reading	Guided Reading
11:33-11:50 13min	Beginning / Prior /Knowledge	Beginning / Prior /Knowledge	Beginning / Prior /Knowledge	Beginning / Prior /Knowledge	Beginning / Prior /Knowledge
11:50-12:10 20min	INTERVAL	INTERVAL	INTERVAL	INTERVAL	INTERVAL
12:10-1:04 1hr25min	L/ SKILL Visual Arts 40min	L/ SKILL Creative Arts /Performing Arts /Creative Games &Skills. 60min	L/ SKILLS Visual Arts 40min	L/ SKILLS Creative Arts /Performing Arts /Creative Games &Skills. 60min	L/ SKILLS Visual Arts 40min
13:04-13:37 33min	FAL Reading, Phonics, Writing. 39 min		FAL Reading, Phonics, Writing. 39min		FAL Reading, Phonics, Writing. 39min
13:37-13:49 12min	FAL Listening & Speaking.	FAL Listening & Speaking.	FAL Listening & Speaking.	FAL Listening & Speaking.	FAL Listening & Speaking.
13:49-14:00 11min	FAL -Writing 12min	FAL- Writing 12min	FAL-Writing	FAL- Writing	FAL- Writing

## Appendix 18: Listening Story from the CD

### **Theme 5, Listen and speak, page 36**

Last December, I took a trip through South Africa with my family. We started our journey in Limpopo Province and travelled to Mpumalanga where we visited the Mac Mac Falls.

We then travelled to Gauteng and stayed in Johannesburg. Johannesburg is very big and busy with lots of cars and big buildings.

After that, we travelled down through the Free State to Durban in KwaZulu-Natal. We passed the Drakensberg Mountains on the way to Durban. The roads through the mountains were quite scary.

I was glad when we reached Durban and the coast. The first thing we did was to go to the beach and go for a swim in the Indian Ocean. The water was very warm.

After that, we travelled along the coast to East London. We rested in East London for awhile then continued the journey down to Cape Town. We could see the Indian Ocean for most of the way, from the Eastern Cape to the Western Cape. When we got to Cape Town, we visited Table Mountain. I really enjoyed that trip.