

# **THE ACCULTURATION OF IMMIGRANT CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE**

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**THE ACCULTURATION OF IMMIGRANT CHILDREN  
IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE**

by

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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Department of Early Childhood Education

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UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

## DEDICATION

THIS THESIS IS DEDICATED TO  
THE KING OF ALL AGES  
IMMORTAL  
INVISIBLE  
THE ONLY WISE GOD

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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With a grateful heart, first to the Almighty God, I wish to acknowledge the immense assistance of many people who contributed to the successful completion of this thesis. I wish to say thank you to:

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I, ARLEN KEITH WELMAN, hereby certify that I have revised the language of the dissertation “The acculturation of immigrant children in the Foundation Phase” written by Opeyemi Temilola Adebajji, and have found the standard of the language acceptable provided the indicated corrections have been made.

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## ACRONYMS

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CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
CD	Compact Disk
CET	Critical Ecological Theory
COP	Communities of Practice
DOE	Department of Education
LoLT	Language of learning and teaching
LPP	Legitimate Peripheral Participation
SADC	South African Development Community
SGB	School Governing Body
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child



## ABSTRACT

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This research set out to explore the acculturation of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase with reference to its influence on academic performance. Participants were immigrant children from Zimbabwe aged six to seven years old and their parents and teachers. The study was navigated via the qualitative route using narrative and case study designs. Data were collected using semistructured interviews, observation and document analysis. This study was based on the theory of Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP) by Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger's (1998) theory of learning in communities of practice (COP). Findings that emerged from the study were fivefold. First it was found that the initial investment in the LoLT initiated at the home front assisted the immigrant children from Zimbabwe to engage with the curriculum content on the periphery of the COP. It was found that quick understanding of the LoLT enhanced their acculturation to the school as well as their academic performance. Zimbabwean immigrant children who understood the indigenous South African languages adapted well to the academic environment. Consequently they had a sense of belonging to the school, a resource which seemed to have focused their attention on academic matters. Second, teachers had no prior arrangements to address the linguistic concerns of immigrant children in the Foundation Phase. However, they arranged ad hoc solutions to meet the linguistic and academic challenges of immigrant learners. Third, parents of Zimbabwean immigrant learners who participated in this study discouraged their children from totally imbibing the cultures of South Africa. They only agreed to their children's academic acculturation rather than mainstream acculturation. They were determined to focus the attention of their children on coping with the curriculum. Some of them offered assistance to their children regarding the LoLT and their homework. Fourth, it was found that comprehension of curriculum content was enhanced by the acquisition of the LoLT. Fifth, it was found that issues of discrimination were uncommon among immigrant children and their indigenous peers in the Foundation Phase. Recommendations were made for policy and practice.

### KEY TERMS

- Academic performance
- Acculturation
- Foundation Phase
- Immigrant children





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## CHAPTER ONE

### An exploration of the research

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*“In their school careers, foreign students have to face both traditional structural inequalities and challenges specifically linked to their ‘foreignness’.”*  
(Mantovani & Martini, 2008:444).

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

South Africa has become “the locus for people seeking jobs or fleeing regional conflicts” (Klotz, 2000:834). This became more prominent after the demise of Apartheid and subsequent to manifest “social, political and economic uncertainty and insecurity” in the Southern African region (Sookrajh, Gopal & Maharaj, 2005:2). This accounts for notable boost in the number of immigrants coming in to South Africa (Sookrajh et al., 2005). It has been reported that immigrant parents seem to seize such opportunities to relocate so as to satisfy their desire to get away from the challenges confronting them in their natural countries of origin (Minnaar, Pretorius & Wentzel, 1995; Rogerson, 1997). Other families find themselves in refugee camps as a result of the war situation in their country. Eventually children from these families need to go to school (Sookrajh et al., 2005). These could also be some of the reasons for an increase in the number of immigrant children in South African primary schools, as it has been reported elsewhere in the world where the influx of immigrants is noticeable (Marks, Szalacha, Lamarre, Boyd & Coll, 2007; Yeh, Okubo, Ma, Shea, Ou & Pituc, 2008).

Immigrants from Zimbabwe have been reported to take the lead among immigrants seeking refuge in South Africa. The majority of these are middle-aged people (Tevera & Zinyama, 2002). Consequently it becomes imperative to unravel the adjustments required of the young children of this largest group of immigrants to the South African school system. It has been observed that most empirical studies on acculturation focused on adults. Accounts of how children experience acculturation rarely exist (Cavazos-Rehg & DeLucia-Waack, 2009:48). Therefore it becomes crucial to undertake a study that focuses on the acculturation of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase. It also becomes important to explore the impact of the adjustments they have to make on their academic performance.

An important consideration in this study entails the observation that immigrant children “often grow up with strong ties to two countries, two cultures, and two ways of being, which can produce multiple realities, multiple ways of being and communicating with the world”

(Rodriguez, 2009:17). Rodriguez (2009) presented a platform of exploration into the connections that the Zimbabwean immigrant children in this study had with the Zimbabwean and South African cultures. It presented a case that assisted in problematizing their predisposition to intermingling with two cultures, according to the attendant realities they negotiated. Rodriguez (2009) paved the way for disentangling how the Zimbabwean immigrant children communicated with their peers within the school environment and how they adjusted to these novel presentations of realities. This study becomes a platform for exploring a number of these reported realities of experiences negotiated by immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase in South Africa. They had to negotiate their home culture and adapt and attempt to use the language of communication at the school for academic purposes. This study revealed the versatility of acquiring the language of communication at the school front on the academic performance of the Zimbabwean immigrant children. It also elucidated an understanding of the connection between the language of communication and acculturation in line with the suggestion of Yeh et al. (2008). Consequently the impact of acculturation among the immigrant children from Zimbabwe was not explored in isolation of their capacity to communicate in the chosen language of communication at the school level.

In this study I responded to the declaration of Onchwari, Onchwari and Keengwe (2008) that the children of immigrants are inadequately researched despite being a progressively growing population. It therefore became vital to bring to awareness the challenges these children came across as they attempted to negotiate their positions within the school environment. This was envisaged to help teachers and other stakeholders in the Foundation Phase to gain understanding of how to effectively meet the academic needs of immigrant children in the Foundation Phase. This study therefore explored the influence of acculturation on the academic performance of Zimbabwean children who attended typical South African primary schools.

## **1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

It is argued by Alexander, Entwisle and Dauber (2002) that the primary school is a very significant aspect of a child's pathway, due to the fact that it is a vital phase of the child's life on which future academic performance depends. Yazıcı, İltter and Glover (2010) also suggest that when children go through encouraging events in the Early Childhood stage of their lives they have a strong preparatory advantage which enables them to develop a good personality and behave in a manner consistent with societal values. Similarly, the Education White Paper 5 on Early Childhood (DOE, 2001) in South Africa noted that what happens to a child in these early formative years leaves a vivid impression on the child until adulthood. This

prompted the need to study how immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase negotiate this early stage of their lives.

This study responded to the scholarship of Bygren and Szulkin (2010). In their study on the impact of ethnic environment on educational achievement of immigrant children in Sweden, they reported that the academic achievement of immigrant children is dependent on their communal milieu. Immigrant children were reported in the study of Bygren and Szulkin (2010) to naturally have to locate their positions within the host society. Consequently it is expected that immigrant children from Zimbabwe, who are the focus of this study will find a way of bargaining between their original backgrounds and the ways of life in their host country. Furthermore, in their study on the role of language on immigrant children's peer acceptance and victimization, Von Grünigen, Perren, Nagele and Alsaker (2010) posit that immigrant children are confronted by multiple challenges. Some of these challenges include language, new culture and having to associate with learners who are not ready to assist in alleviating their linguistic deficiencies. These issues from the body of literature raise the question of how prepared the school environment and indigenous children are to assist in integrating immigrant children from Zimbabwe into the Foundation Phase until academic performance is fostered among them (the immigrant children).

Some researchers (e.g. Turney & Kao, 2009) have observed that while the awareness of second generation teenagers is on the increase, there is a paucity of research on the encounter of early childhood immigrant children. In South Africa it was also observed because the Zimbabwean immigrant children had not been explored in terms of the impact of acculturation on their academic performance in the midst of their requirement to adjust to a novel academic environment and conflicting cultural mores. Yet Zimbabweans constitute the largest immigrant group in South Africa (Tevera & Zinyama, 2002). Dinkha, Abdulhamid and Abdelhallm (2008:119) also observed that although children of immigrants and refugees are a significant part of the school community, not much is known about them. This study therefore provides an avenue for addressing the acculturation of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase in South African primary schools. It aimed at looking at their adjustment within the school community and how this fostered academic excellence among them. A narrative account of their parents and teachers was also taken into account in order to illuminate the focus of the research.

### **1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Acculturation has been presented as a process requiring the negotiation between home and host country cultures (Asanova, 2005; Yeh et al., 2008). It is a phenomenon that entails the consideration of how an individual integrates to a new society. The interaction between

South African and immigrant children from Zimbabwe presented a predicament to be explored. This was considered in relation to how these immigrant children acculturated to the host society and the effect that such interaction had on their academic performance.

Language acquisition is one of the major facilitators of acculturation as it aids cultural coherence, which in turn is vital to growing beyond the immigrant's original culture and attaining a new one (Yeh et al., 2008:784). The intellectual question was to consider whether the linguistic concerns of immigrant children are addressed on arrival to the school, in dimensions that could foster the commencement of acculturation that could ultimately lead to academic inclination.

My experience in the teaching profession brought awareness of the fact that a number of public primary schools utilize a mixture of indigenous languages and English as languages of learning and teaching (LoLT). Immigrant children also bring their own indigenous languages to such schools (Sookrajh et al., 2005). In addition children schooling in a country different from theirs often confront various obstacles which they have to surmount in order to attain academic excellence and integrate into their society of sojourn (Millar, 2011). The effect of the encounter between the host and home cultures on immigrant children's academic performance in the Foundation Phase therefore requires investigation. Furthermore it becomes important to understand how teachers in the Foundation Phase assist immigrant children to adjust to the classroom environment in a way that fosters their acculturation. Rodriguez (2009) suggested that teachers are seldom prepared to engage immigrant children in scholarly matters because they come from backgrounds not known to them (the teachers). Consequently the preparedness of teachers to teach cross-culturally at the research site was problematized to explore their involvedness in the academic concerns of the immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase. Equipped with these problematized issues in the literature, I pinpointed the main research question subsequently.

## **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

### **1.4.1 MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION**

*How does acculturation influence the academic performance of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase?*

In pursuance of the above research question, the following research subquestions were raised:

#### 1.4.2 RESEARCH SUBQUESTIONS

- *What are the factors affecting the successful adjustment of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase?*
- *What vital transition is required of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase to attain academic achievement?*
- *How do teachers facilitate the adjustment of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase?*
- *How do familial and school experiences of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase affect their acculturation?*
- *How does language influence the academic performance of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase?*

#### 1.5 RATIONALE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

My teaching experience predisposed me to gaining firsthand information regarding the experiences of a number of South African children admitted to primary schools. Many of them are fluent in their home languages but not proficient in the English language. Many of them who are admitted to the Intermediate Phase (Grades 4-6) find it difficult to cope with the language of learning and teaching, which is English. Informal inquiry revealed that this was because they were taught in the indigenous languages in the Foundation Phase. Alexander, Entwisle and Dauber (2002), argue that the primary school is the foundation for future academic success of a child. It therefore becomes imperative to attempt to understand this academic phase of immigrant children who have come to the South African society with myriad diversities such as cultural values and language.

The intellectual rationale to conduct this study is based on the argument of Lucas (1997) that there is little research on immigrant children experiences. Rodriguez (2009:18) also reveals an intellectual rationale by reporting that “the number of children living in immigrant-headed households continues to rise”. This rationale appears to be consistent with what is evident in South Africa today; as immigrants continue to troop into South Africa as a result of the challenges confronting neighbouring African countries (Sookrajh et al., 2005:2). As a teacher I pondered on the reflections of Rodriguez (2009:18), reiterating that school teachers are seldom ready to meet the challenges of addressing the multifaceted experiences brought by their learners from “multiple places, cultures, and languages.” The observation of Rodriguez (2009) seems to corroborate the rationale for this study as acculturation is dependent on linguistic adeptness and culture, as suggested by Yeh et al. (2008). South Africa is emerging from decades of education based on racial lines. There is therefore a backlog of issues to deal with in order to bring parity to their education system (Yamauchi, 2004). This



compounded the challenges teachers had to deal with as immigrants trooped into the country. It is therefore vital that a study be conducted on how immigrant children adjust and adapt in the classroom, the help given to them and the impact of this on their academic achievement.

Similarly there is little research addressing the important issue of how immigrant “children are educated in their new country” (Sookrajh et al., 2005:2). Furthermore there is little research in South Africa on what academic challenges immigrant children in the Foundation Phase experience and how these influence their academic achievement. Therefore I sought to conduct this study to gain insight into the experiences of immigrant children in the Foundation Phase, and the influence of acculturation on their academic performance and how they adapt to the South African school community.

The study was aimed at making recommendations, useful to school principals, parents, teachers, the Department of Education (DoE) and other government departments. This study intended to broaden our understanding of the experiences of immigrant children, in terms of how they acculturate to the South African school environment. In addition, it provided an indication of the importance of acculturation to the academic performance of immigrant children in the Foundation Phase.

## **1.6 DEFINITION OF MAIN CONCEPTS**

The following main concepts are hereby defined as they apply to this study.

### **1.6.1 FOUNDATION PHASE**

In the South African system of education the Foundation Phase covers Grades R-3 and it is the first phase of the General Education and Training (GET) band. Children in this Phase are between the ages of six and nine.

### **1.6.2 ACCULTURATION**

Acculturation refers to the degree of adjustment and integration of immigrant children into their host society (e.g. Berry, Phinney, Sam & Vedder, 2006). For the purpose of this study, acculturation refers to the adjustment and integration of Zimbabwean children in the Foundation Phase to the school community, and the influence of this on their academic performance.

### **1.6.3 ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

Academic performance refers to the extent to which Zimbabwean learners in the Foundation Phase display proficiency with respect to expected curricula outcomes (Chow, 2006).

### **1.6.4 IMMIGRANT CHILDREN**

Immigrant children are children whose parents have moved to a new country in order to break away from the challenges confronting them in their countries of origin (Minnaar, Pretorius & Wentzel, 1995; Rogerson, 1997). Immigrant children in this study refer to Zimbabwean children in the Foundation Phase whose parents left their home country (Zimbabwe) to free themselves from the challenges confronting them.

### **1.6.5 LANGUAGE**

Language refers to the tool of communication within the school which fosters academic performance and social interaction within and outside the classroom (Yeh et.al, 2008).

### **1.6.6 PERI-URBAN**

For the purpose of this study, peri-urban refers to a location close to the main city.

## **1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985:221), a research design is “the plan, structure, and strategy of investigation conceived so as to obtain answers to research questions and to control variance.” I opted to conduct this study via the route of constructivism and interpretivism. Neuman (2006) posits that humans exist in multiple realities. Therefore outcomes of social behaviours are rather unpredictable. This stance positioned me to assume that the experiences of immigrant children from Zimbabwe are real and their stories are worth listening to. They also have diverse personal experiences and understanding of their individual situations from which worthy meaning-making can be deduced.

This research was conducted via the qualitative route (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). The route of qualitative inquiry was preferred in this study because I aimed to understand, interpret and reconstruct the lived experiences of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase. It is understood that a qualitative research design “refers to the collection and analysis of extensive narrative data in order to gain insight into a situation of interest which would not be possible using other types of research” (Ngobeli, 2001:50). Consequently this

study was designed using the narrative inquiry route of investigation, which is qualitative in nature (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:221).

Narrative inquiry involves giving the research respondents the opportunity to detail their experiences of a phenomenon of interest (Bleakley, 2005). In this study immigrant children from Zimbabwe were given the opportunity to tell their stories on how they acculturated to the South African school environment. The stories of their parents and teachers also contributed to the exploration by giving their own perceptions of immigrant children experiences with respect to acculturation and academic achievements. Narrative inquiry provided an avenue “for collecting the perspective of the respondent”, thus allowing “more of their voice to be heard” (Allen, 2006:5). As Savin-Baden and Van Niekerk (2007:463) write, “data sources in narrative inquiry include notes obtained from the research site, journal entries obtained from the research site, semistructured interviews and stories recited from the research subjects and observation of the participants.” The stories obtained from the research participants were “used as a verifying mechanism”, and “as a means of confirming or defending truths”. The stories were also used “as a means of control” (Savin-Badin & Van Niekerk, 2007:463).

I also employed the use of case study in this research. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:254) contend that case studies could be employed to describe “what it is like” to operate in a particular scenario in order to have an understanding of what naturally exists in the real world of research participants using diverse data sources. Similarly, Yin (2003) posits that a case study is a practical inquiry designed to explore an existing event in its natural context, where there is no clear-cut boundary between the event and perspective, but with the use of diverse sources of information. The use of case study helped in exploiting the understanding of the “case” of immigrant learners from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase.

## **1.8 RESEARCH SITES AND PARTICIPANTS**

The research sites were two peri-urban primary schools in Gauteng. One of the schools, Bakwena Primary School, was a public school, and the other one, Saint Agnes Catholic School, was a private school. Both schools were located around the same community. The language of learning and teaching (LoLT) in these schools was English which was used in the midst of diverse indigenous South African languages spoken by learners, and the convergence of other languages spoken by the immigrant children.

Four immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase in two peri-urban primary schools were the focus of this study. All the children were males, aged six to seven years, and had been born in Zimbabwe. They lived in South Africa for more than two years. It was difficult to obtain the consent of the parents of female Zimbabwean children who were

attending the public school. There were no female Zimbabwean children attending the private school. Each of the learners was interviewed at their homes. At the onset of this study, I was sceptical about interviewing the children participants considering their age. However, I received the courage to proceed with using a semistructured interview after going through some literature (e.g. Millar, 2011). In her study of cultural adjustment of Korean children to the early years of school in Australia, Millar (2011) conducted interviews with five to eight-year-olds. Furthermore Scott (2002:116) asserts that “asking children is one of the best ways of learning” from them. These seminal works gave me the confidence to use semistructured interviews with participating learners in this study despite their age range.

These children were also observed in class, on the playground during break and at home when interviewing their parents. Their stories were individually written, to learn from their experiences in terms of different components of acculturation, such as language, identity, culture and social integration, which could influence their academic performance. Immigrant learners in the Foundation Phase living in an urban setting and studying in a peri-urban primary school were investigated. These were black immigrant children exposed to the influence of Sesotho, IsiNdebele and IsiZulu indigenous languages and who had to mix these local languages with the language of learning and teaching.

## **1.9 DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

Data were gathered using observation, semistructured interviews, field notes and document analysis. Each interview session was recorded using an audiotape recorder to allow transcription and analysis of obtained data (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Manning & Cullum-Swan, 1994). Observation of learners was recorded in the observation journal. Documents perused include learners’ class work books as their reports were not available for scrutiny.

### **1.9.1 OBSERVATION**

Observation is a data-gathering instrument that was used “to understand and interpret cultural behavior” among research participants (Mulhall, 2003:306). Based on the nature of this research, which involves exploring immigrant children in the Foundation Phase, observation of the children was of paramount importance. The children were observed inside their classroom, thus providing the opportunity to have first-hand knowledge of their interaction with their teachers and peers during lessons. They were also observed in the schools during playtime on the field and also in their homes. Most of the parents of participating children disagreed with the use of a video-tape. Consequently, observed phenomena were recorded in the observation journal.

## **1.9.2 INTERVIEWS**

Learners, teachers and parents were interviewed individually. The interview designs were semistructured, to provide an interactional avenue between the researcher and the participants in order to gain ample understanding of their views. Interviews were conducted with parents and teachers in order to obtain triangulation of data obtained from the observation of, and interviews conducted with the immigrant children. The obtained data were analysed using manifest and latent content analysis techniques (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004) to discover themes which formed the basis of discussion in the study. Details of research design and methodology, and data collection methods are discussed comprehensively in Chapter Three.

## **1.9.3 FIELD NOTES**

A field note is a written documentation of events of what the researcher experienced, observed, and heard on the research field (Greeff, 2005). It also includes a record of the researcher's perceptions and interpretation of events encountered on the research site. Field notes enable the researcher to recollect and reflect on important issues that the researcher was confronted with in the course of data-gathering while at the research site (Mulhall, 2003).

## **1.9.4 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS**

Documents are written or printed sources of information that serve as evidence relevant to a study. They are pertinent sources of information that corroborate data collected during interviews (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh & Sorensen, 2006). Available documents used in data collection in this study were learners' class workbooks.

## **1.9.5 SELECTION OF RESEARCH SAMPLE**

The research sample constituted four male immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase schooling in two peri-urban primary schools in Gauteng, four parents, and three teachers. The sample was taken "purposefully, not randomly" in order to elicit the desired data (Merriam & Associates, 2002:179). Due to the fact that I was concerned with the need to explore specific experiences of participants in order to gain their individual perception and meaning, I employed purposeful, snowball sampling. This entailed making contact with the first willing participant who initiated the chain and linked me to other parents who participated in this study with their children. The teachers who participated in the study were the teachers who taught these children at the time of this study.

I was involved in capturing data personally, interviewing and observing each immigrant child. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:133) contend that “in qualitative data, validity might be addressed through the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached, the extent of triangulation and the disinterestedness or objectivity of the researcher”. Consequently, I did not rely on observation of learners as the only source of data collection, but also on interviewing them, their parents and teachers. These methods constituted the basis for triangulation of obtained data in this study.

#### **1.9.6 DATA ANALYSIS**

The data obtained from the study was analysed using a mixture of content analysis and document analysis. Content analysis involved the scrutinizing and analysis of the observation journal and interview transcripts to discover emerging themes from the study (Mayring, 2000). Deciding on the units of analysis is a fundamental aspect to be considered when using content analysis to analyse research data (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). The units of analysis were determined from the collected data. A unit of analysis is defined as a broad identification of relevant items to be examined (Mertens, 1998), which consisted of observations conducted on the immigrant children, field notes taken on the research site and the transcribed interviews. The portions that were identified to have given answers to the research questions were coded, and the emerging themes identified and studied for consistency (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996:32). Documents available for scrutiny at the time of the study were learners’ class workbooks which were studied and matched with responses given by the various respondents in the study. All these presented a platform for decision-making and interpretation of obtained data.

#### **1.10 TRUSTWORTHINESS, CREDIBILITY AND TRANSFERABILITY**

Reliability and validity in qualitative studies are usually measured as the trustworthiness of the study (Golafshani, 2003). Trustworthiness of obtained data in this research was the respondents’ acceptance to participate in the study and their truthfulness in disclosing facts about their circumstances. Moreover, the researcher’s precise presentation and explanation of obtained narratives constituted avenues of trustworthiness in this research. Trustworthiness improves the thoroughness of qualitative research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Trustworthy data hinges on dependable origins and the investigator’s endeavour to discard subjectivity or personal bias. The trustworthiness of this study was also enhanced through the diverse research instruments, giving rise to a platform constituting triangulation of the research instruments.

## 1.11 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

### **CHAPTER ONE: An exploration of the research**

This chapter discussed the introduction, rationale for and significance of the study, definition of main concepts, and the research questions. It also presented a brief discussion of the research design and methodology, data analysis and research trustworthiness.

### **CHAPTER TWO: Appraisal of the existing literature**

This chapter focuses on literature review on the acculturation of immigrant children from both national and international perspectives. In this chapter an attempt was made to highlight various reasons why immigrants generally relocate to a new environment. An attempt was also made to describe how immigrants negotiate their cultural mores in a novel society. Particular attention was given to how these factors affect children as they try to settle in a foreign country. This chapter also discussed the theoretical frameworks that underpin this study. The chapter was concluded with a summary of findings in literature.

### **CHAPTER THREE: Methodology of the study**

In this chapter details of the research methodology, paradigmatic stance, selection of samples, data collection methods and research trustworthiness employed in this study are adequately discussed. In this study case study and narrative inquiry were used as strategies. Research participants were four male Zimbabwean learners in the Foundation Phase, four parents and three teachers. I made use of purposive, snowball sampling. Data were gathered using semistructured interviews, observations, field notes and document analysis. This chapter also discusses in-depth the research quality criteria and ethical considerations.

### **CHAPTER FOUR: Voices of children participants corroborated by the stories of their parents and teachers**

In this chapter I present the manner in which data collected from participants were analysed. Emerging themes from the stories of learners, parents and teachers were consistently presented in a chronological order. The story of each learner was first presented under the relevant themes, followed by the story of each parent and teacher consistently under relevant themes. A narrative was chosen from the story of each learner, parent and teacher as a category for data analysis. Data were analysed based on different themes that emerged from participants' stories.

### **CHAPTER FIVE: Discussion of findings**

This chapter presents the context of this study as located in literature by discussing the connection between the study and literature reviewed in Chapter Two. This was done in order to ascertain a theoretical base for the study in relation to similar studies carried out by

other researchers. This chapter also showed the relevance of the theoretical frameworks; Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP) and Community of Practice (COP) used in the study to explain the acculturation of immigrant children in the Foundation Phase and its influence on academic performance.

## **CHAPTER SIX: Recommendations and conclusion**

This chapter summarizes findings from the study in relation to the research questions. It also offers recommendations on new courses of inquiry in the field of immigrant study in Early Childhood Education. The significance of the study and contributions towards policy and practice are further presented. The chapter is concluded by advancing recommendations for further research.

### **1.12 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Issues related to limitations in this study centred on the following; the focus of this study was a single unit of analysis from two schools within Gauteng province only. In addition all learners who participated in this study were males.

### **1.13 CONCLUSION**

Having set the pace for the commencement of this study in Chapter One, Chapter Two offers a platform for the appraisal of literature on the acculturation of immigrant children in the Foundation Phase. Existing literature in the domain of the study is reviewed at both local and international levels. The construction of theoretical frameworks employed is also presented for better understanding of the study.





## CHAPTER TWO

### Appraisal of the existing literature

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*“People displaced in space and time still need to justify their migration decisions, to maintain familial connections and to grapple with their identities.”*

(Kathleen A. DeHaan, 2010:126)

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

A summary of the intent and purpose of the research was outlined and meanings of key terms were given in Chapter One. Chapter Two presents a synopsis of empirical studies on acculturation of immigrants in a novel society and how this affects their various dimensions of life. Across the globe a number of studies describe different issues on immigration (for example, Berrigan, Forsyth, Helba, Levin, Norberg & Gordon, 2010; Capps, Bronte-Tinkew & Horowitz 2010; Drissen & Smit, 2007; Lopez, 2010). However I have restricted my review of literature to issues that are pertinent to the influence of immigration on the acculturation and academic performance of children in the Foundation Phase which is the scope of this study. This chapter looks at the concept of immigration and analyses some of the reasons for immigration to another country. It also explores previous and current research on acculturation and its reported consequences on immigrant children. The chapter attempts to decipher how acculturation affects the behaviour of immigrant children in the society of sojourn and identifies the gaps in research on the research problem of this study.

Furthermore this chapter presents the theoretical stance on which this study is based. The information offered in the theoretical framework produced the ability to channel the course of data analysis and interpretation. This gave guidance in obtaining a better understanding of the stories of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase. The theoretical framework also provided direction in understanding the manner in which immigrant children in the Foundation Phase adjust to their host community. This paved the way for meaning-making that assisted in understanding the relevance of the data concerning the research participants' stories and life experiences. A summary of findings in literature concludes the chapter. The next section gives an account of relevant literature perused in this study.

#### 2.2 THE CONCEPT OF IMMIGRATION

Immigration is the transition of people across the geographical borders of nations (Klotz, 2000; Weiner & Munz, 1997). It is a global phenomenon influenced by global shifts in economic processes such as “changes in the nature and structure of work, and therefore

labour markets' needs and opportunities" (Reitzes, 2004:345). Consequently, immigrants are people who leave their usual countries of residence to sojourn in a novel multicultural environment for better prospects (McEachron & Bhatti, 2005).

Ogbu and Simons (1998) give an advance definition of immigrants by placing them in two distinct categories, namely voluntary and involuntary immigrants. Voluntary immigrants are people who willingly relocate to another sociocultural terrain by virtue of their decision to seek better conditions of living. Involuntary immigrants are categories of humans who, by virtue of compulsion or circumstances beyond their control, move to an environment without a previous intention to do so (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). For the purpose of this study, immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase are conceptualized as involuntary immigrants. This is because they could not decide for themselves if they wanted to immigrate or not, as children in this age group do not have a say in family migration decision-making (Hutchins, 2011).

## **2.3 DOCUMENTED REASONS FOR IMMIGRATION TO ANOTHER COUNTRY**

All over the world there are various reasons for the movement of people from one country to another (Cornish, Peltzer & MacLachlan, 1999; Ottaviano & Peri 2005; Plender, 1986; Sookrajh et al., 2005). With the discontinuation of the apartheid system of government in South Africa, the country's immigration policies presented opportunities to different people looking for favourable means of survival (Weiner & Munz, 1997). Consequently the country's borders were opened to various categories of immigrants who came to South Africa for various reasons. A number of these reasons are enumerated subsequently to provide an understanding of the propelling forces behind the movement and settlement of people in different destinations of the world.

### **2.3.1 EMOTIONAL TRAUMA AND WAR IN THE HOME COUNTRY OF IMMIGRANTS**

A number of immigrants leave their usual countries of residence as a result of traumatic experiences arising from war and unrest. In a study conducted by Sookrajh et al. (2005:8) on inclusionary and exclusionary practices among learners of war and flight, it was reported that "almost 80% of the" immigrants "have been exposed to the violence of civil war" in their home country before immigrating to South Africa. Consequently, it may be affirmed that war and trauma, in the home country of the immigrants are causal effects predisposing them to leaving their home countries. The effect of trauma and war may not be terminated immediately when they arrive in the host country as suggested by Sookrajh et al. (2005:9) and, it may seem as if the immigrants have escaped "unscathed, it is quite possible that they continued to be predisposed to becoming emotionally traumatized." Based on the findings of

Sookrajh et al. (2005) it is presumed that there could be a possible residual effect of what immigrants went through in their home countries. It is posited that this may affect their predisposition as they attempt to settle in their host country. Of interest in this study is the importance of the prior experiences of immigrant children from Zimbabwe and their parents.

### **2.3.2 GOVERNMENT INSTABILITY AND ECONOMIC DOWNTURN**

Government instability and economic downturn are possible causes of migration of people to other viable economies. Minnaar, Pretorius and Wentzel (1995) observe that instability due to bad governance, famine as well as trade and industry stagnation are important causes of migration to other countries where immigrants see possible opportunities. This assertion evokes an inquiry into reasons for immigration among immigrant children in the Foundation Phase, especially from their parents, since these children may not be in a position to reveal reasons why their parents left their home country. Consequently an understanding of how they respond to new academic and acculturative challenges emerges.

### **2.3.3 ANTICIPATED OPPORTUNITIES**

According to Klotz (2000) South Africa presents itself as a terrain of opportunities for many black immigrants, especially from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) as a result of the demolition of apartheid rule since 1994. Consequently a number of immigrants relocate to South Africa with their families, in search of better living conditions and job opportunities, a scenario which predisposes them to xenophobic violence and sometimes brutal experiences (Maharaj, 2002, 2004). To support this argument Crush and McDonald (2002:2) maintain that the termination of official apartheid has fashioned novel and incompletely comprehended prospects for the resettlement of diverse people in South Africa. Maharaj (2004:2) uses a reasonable argument to explain the sudden influx of people from other countries to South Africa. Maharaj (2004) affirmed that the prevalence of poverty and pronounced dimensions of inequity within the African continent would continue to heighten the influx of immigrants to South Africa. In this study the consequence of anticipated opportunities among immigrant parents seems to be pivotal to the acculturation and academic experiences of their children. Consequently an inquiry into the effect of immigration on the acculturation and academic performance of immigrant children in the Foundation Phase becomes important in this study.

## **2.4 ACCULTURATION OF IMMIGRANTS IN THE UNUSUAL SOCIETY**

To assist an understanding of immigrant children's acculturation experiences with respect to its implications on academic performance in the Foundation Phase, a survey of the literature

shall be conducted nationally and internationally. Acculturation is a phenomenal and procedural construct which is common to immigrants in a new society - otherwise referred to as the unusual society. It is a measure of their degree of adaptation to the novel society (Berry 1997, Berry et al., 2006), in a number of dimensions that are pertinent to their survival and acclimatization as will be discussed shortly.

#### **2.4.1 ACCULTURATION PATTERN OF IMMIGRANT CHILDREN IN THEIR COUNTRY OF SOJOURN**

Berry (1980, 1986, 1997) describes acculturation as a measure of how people negotiate their cultural mores in the midst of contrasting cultural influences; as is the case between immigrant and indigenous children in the same school environment. It is posited that the manner and magnitude to which a person adjusts to the host cultures depend on the individual and the home country (Berry, 1986; Trickett & Birman, 2005). Migrant children have been reported to naturally negotiate their position within the host society. These children have to deal with multiple challenges including learning a new language, new culture and having to associate with peers who are not ready to assist them in their linguistic confrontations (Von Grünigen, Perren, Nagele & Alsaker, 2010).

The route taken by immigrant groups, with respect to the decision to acculturate or not, to the novel society has been indicated to be dependent on their country of origin and certain associated constraints and opportunities they confront. These may range from the degree of belonging to the extent of discrimination experienced by the immigrant children in the new society (Leyendecker & Lamb, 1999). Similarly Galchenko and Van de Vijver (2007) conducted a study on the effects of apparent cultural detachment on acculturation among different international students on an exchange programme to Russia. The findings of their study showed that the more the level of adjustments of immigrants within their host society, the less apparent would be the cultural detachment in the host society.

Many immigrant groups have been reported to choose some kind of biculturalism, where they adjust to the novel culture without giving up their original culture (Portes, 1996; Rumbaut, 1995). According to Portes (1996) a number of immigrant groups are resolved to maintain their cultural identities by being reluctant to negotiate their home cultures with the cultures of the host society. Acculturation may be predicted when immigrant children in a novel society indicate their extent of membership of their preferred culture (Berry, 1995; LaFromboise, Coleman & Gerton, 1993). A number of researchers (such as Jain & Belsky, 1997, Berry, 1980, 1986) argue that acculturation entails a dialogic process in which certain perspectives of the immigrant's indigenous and novel cultures intermingle to form a new and unique dimension of conduct, mind-set and way of life. Acculturation is also diverse in that the avenues and the degree to which people adjust to the home and host cultures change

over time. It differs by the extent to which some characteristics are gathered and certain others are not. It also differs from person to person and from one country to the other (Berry, 1980, 1986; Trickett & Birman, 2005).

According to Berry (1997:9) acculturation occurs in four ways in no particular sequence: (a) *integration*, in which immigrants uphold their original culture as they gravitate towards the larger culture, (b) *assimilation*, in which immigrants give up their indigenous culture to take up the culture in the host country, (c) *separation*, in which the immigrants distinguish themselves from the larger culture and (d) *marginalization*, in which immigrants demonstrate minimal involvement in both home and foreign cultures. Berry (1980, 1986) envisions acculturation as a phenomenon that involves the coming together of two cultures. The propensity of individuals to accept one or reject the other depends on the value they place on their home cultures. Consequently an exploration of the consequences of possible cultural attachment or detachment on the acculturation of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase becomes paramount in this study.

Three perspectives of how acculturation can be measured, especially in a way that suits children in the Foundation Phase, were explored by Mouw and Xie (1999). They first propose that we can measure the extent of acculturation of immigrant children by looking at their ability to learn the language of communication in the host society. Sookrajh et al. (2005:11) found that immigrant children learn the mainstream language, ethnic society values and the way of life of the mainstream society more briskly than grown-ups. It is posited that communication is paramount in adjusting to the acculturative process (Yeh et al., 2008). Communication is enhanced through language (Soto, 1997) as language is an essential tool in the interaction of children both in the classroom and on the playground (Gupta, 2009). Consistently, in her study of four Korean children in an Australian lower primary school, Millar (2011:15) observed that the adjustment of children to the school environment depended mainly on “actual and perceived” language inadequacy. Perceived language inadequacy may be viewed as incapability to interact with peers during play due to inability to communicate in the broader language.

Dockrell, Stuart and King (2010:500) identified some dimensions of language capable of assisting children in future educational attainment. These are the development of a vocabulary through interaction and a child’s ability to interpret his/her world of influence. Language is therefore viewed in this study in its natural form as it is used both within the classroom as language of learning and teaching (LoLT) and outside the classroom during social interaction. Church (1982) stipulates that when the level of language acquisition is low, adaptation to the host country is limited. Porras and Mathews (2009:27) contend that “fluency

in English is the first goal that must be achieved by immigrants in order to survive” in the society of settlement. This implies that immigrant children must first strive to be fluent in the language of the dominant culture. This may be due to the fact that the removal of linguistic differences among immigrant and native children is capable of reducing “some of the barriers of discrimination” (Porras & Mathews, 2009:28).

It seems obvious why Porras and Mathews (2009:33) conclude that “language is the predominant factor” capable of distorting the “assimilation” of immigrant children to the host society. The reason may be that when there is restricted communication between the immigrants and the indigenous children, the avenue to negotiate home and host cultures may become hindered. Consequently the process of adjusting to the culture of the host society among immigrant children may become reduced. Yeh et al. (2008:784) are of the opinion that language is “an important tool for social interaction and for retrieving information in daily life”, providing insight into exploring and observing immigrant children from Zimbabwe as they communicate with their peers in the Foundation Phase at the schools. In furtherance of this linguistic inquiry a platform of investigation into the language of communication within the schools becomes necessary.

It has been observed that many immigrant children experience discrimination when they are not able to speak the indigenous language (Souto-Manning, 2009). Moreover incompetence in the use of the local language predisposes immigrant children to victimization among their indigenous peers (Von Grünigen, Perren, Nägele & Alsaker, 2010:688). Consequently a point of inquiry in this research is to attempt to understand whether immigrant children are acculturating to the South African schools and immediate community. An attempt will also be made to explore their ease of mastering both the English language, which is the language of educational instruction in the classroom, and indigenous languages spoken among other children at the school during playtime.

The second perspective of how acculturation can be measured is the extent of belonging of immigrants to the society of sojourn (Berry, 1986). Billman, Geddes and Hedges (2005) acknowledge that belonging provides support for children to survive in their environment and fosters full achievement of their potential. It therefore becomes imperative to explore immigrant children’s perspective of extent of belonging to the schools where they attend. A sense of belonging also indicates the degree of attachment to the school and the entire learning that culminates as a result of this (Wenger, 1998). This is because learning subsumes every experience that the immigrant children are exposed to, both scholarly and non-academic (Wenger, 1998). Interaction of children with their peers in the classroom and



on the playground generates learning experiences which are acquired, though, informally (Gupta, 2009).

Chow (2007:512-513) suggests that immigrants will progressively build up a sense of belonging to the society of sojourn, making it to appear to be a procedural and phenomenal construct. This provides an opportunity to observe the phenomenon of acculturation as suggested by Chow (2006) and Yeh et al. (2008) among immigrant children in the Foundation Phase. A vital aspect of the development of sense of belonging is discrimination, because discrimination predisposes immigrants to isolation and rejection (Qin, Way & Rana, 2008). In particular children's sense of belonging may be eroded when there is apparent or manifest discrimination within the school environment (Agbenyega & Peers, 2010). Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado and Crenshaw (1993:6) highlight that racism is prevalent wherever immigrants are found. Von Grünigen, Perren, Nägele and Alsaker (2010:688) in their investigation of peer acceptance and victimization in a kindergarten class also observed that immigrant children experience rejection, isolation and victimization. These assertions create an avenue to explore whether immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase experience acts of prejudice, discrimination and isolation at the schools.

Thirdly since it has been suggested in literature (e.g. Yeh et al., 2008) that identity and acculturation are closely associated, an attempt is made in this study to use language to explore how immigrant children from Zimbabwe mediate their identities in South Africa. This exploration takes the form of investigating their degree of belonging (Asanova, 2005) to the South African community and the impact of this on their cultural identity. This is due to the fact that the extent of belonging of immigrants to the society of sojourn is a measure of their loyalty to, or detachment from their cultural identity (Eyou, Adair & Dixon, 2000).

Asanova (2005:191) posits that two salient factors initiate a sense of belonging capable of fostering identity: how teachers relate to students and the acceptance of the school administration and staff to diversity. It has been observed that children's sense of belonging is enhanced when they are aware that their peers and adults with whom they relate at the school and within the community are concerned about their welfare (Agbenyega & Peers, 2010).

An exploration of learner-teacher relationship in this study predicts the extent of belonging of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase to their school and the effect it may have on their cultural predisposition as it influences their academic performance. The issue of identity negotiation is seen as one of the major complications immigrant children have to contend with. Consequently, this is further discussed in section 2.4.4.

## **2.4.2 ADJUSTMENTS OF IMMIGRANT CHILDREN IN A NOVEL ENVIRONMENT**

One of the most prominent changes immigrant children have to go through is adjusting to a culture which is at variance with their home culture. Immigrant children are often at loggerheads with finding a balance between the home culture they were used to and the new culture they have found themselves in. In a study conducted by Mac and Alderson (2009) on Chinese immigrants in Canada, participants shared their stories in retrospect of their childhood experiences when they first immigrated to Canada. They recalled that one of the things they had to contend with was adjusting to the Western Canadian culture which was at variance with their Chinese culture. This situation brought about a dilemma regarding their need to find a point of stability between the two cultures. This study therefore presents a platform to explore the effect the South African culture has on immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase and the extent to which these immigrant children have to adjust to the South African culture.

Similarly children of immigrant parents have been reported to negotiate “acculturative stress”, a situation in which they traversed challenges in terms of the prevailing experiences in the mainstream society (Madhavappallil & Choi, 2006:137). These researchers conducted a study in the United States of America among Korean and Indian adolescents and reported that they experienced some dimensions of acculturative stress. It was an experience which culminated in disagreements between them and their immigrant parents. Immigrant children in this context were found to perceive the culture of the mainstream society as goals and aspirations to be met because they emulated the mainstream cultural practices. The mainstream cultural practices often made them relinquish their back-home cultural principles taught to them by their parents. It becomes a prerogative in this study to explore whether immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase also experience acculturative stress in terms of constraints these children had to negotiate at the school.

## **2.4.3 LINGUISTIC ELEMENTS OF ACCULTURATION**

A vital feature of acculturation involves linguistic competence among immigrant children in their new society of sojourn (Driedger, 1975; Hazuda, Stern & Haffner, 1988, Oikonomidou, 2007). Feliciano (2001) suggests that the affiliation of immigrant children in terms of their preferred language of communication in the host society is capable of determining their acculturative preferences. In a study he conducted on the advantages of biculturalism with respect to the exposure of immigrants of Asian and Latino descents, it was affirmed that the use of language may become a substitute and a consequence of acculturation among the users and learners of English. The immigrant youths who participated in this study were



reported to be more acquainted with the American culture when compared with users of other languages.

In a similar study by Chow (2006) on sociocultural and educational experiences of Vietnamese Canadian students schooling in Canada, he proposed that “proficiency in English is a major consideration in the necessity, rapidity, and ease with which immigrants adapt to a milieu dominated by English” (Chow, 2006:109). This study therefore looked at the impact of the dominant language used in the school environments on the acculturation of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation phase. An attempt was also made to observe the tenacity with which these children learnt the dominant language of instruction in the school as suggested by Rodriguez (2009:18) that “learning English becomes the most important goal for the children of immigrants to attain” in their host country.

Yihong, Ying, Yuan and Yan (2005:39) conducted a similar study on Chinese college students’ self-identity with regard to English language acquisition. In that study they observed that in addition to being a communication tool, language is also associated with a group of items related to “behavioral norms and cultural values” through which identity is constructed. Language is a versatile tool of communication which fosters social interaction and acculturation of immigrant children in the society of sojourn. Acquisition of a second language has been found to be associated with the development of relationships with community members who are not members of the family (Yazıcı, Ilter & Glover, 2010). It has been observed that when immigrant children are engaged in family chores, a reduction in contact with other children ensues with the result of diminished intercultural acculturation (Yeh et al., 2008). Language is purported as a tool used by children “to express their feelings during social contact and to communicate with others” (Mussen, Conger & Kagan, 1990:249). It is also a significant factor in assessing social integration among immigrants (OECD, 2006).

The importance of acquiring language competence among immigrant children is further highlighted by Mantovani and Martini (2008). The result of a study they conducted on immigrant children in Trento corroborates the notion that a low level of academic performance among immigrant children may not necessarily be the result of poor intellectual skill. It was also reported that immigrant children’s poor academic performance may be attributed to insufficient dexterity in language use. Souto-Manning (2009) observes that language use in the classroom environment can lead to the withdrawal of a child from the core of activities in the classroom and within the school environment. This action can cause physical and emotional isolation for the child as he/she finds it difficult to interact with other children in the classroom. The use of language within and outside the classroom is capable

of influencing the interactional stance of the child. This can also determine what and how a child learns in the classroom. These findings reveal the cultural inclination of language as it relates to the acculturation of immigrant children within their society of sojourn. These findings suggest that language is a tool that aids the ability to negotiate an immigrant's culture with the prevailing culture in the society of sojourn. It also evokes an inquiry to the adeptness of the Zimbabwean learners to the language of communication in the school environment in a dimension that is capable of fostering their total cognitive ability to demonstrate the acquisition of the required skills, knowledge and attitude needed to demonstrate the required academic achievement.

#### **2.4.4 IDENTIFIED COMPLICATIONS AMONG IMMIGRANT CHILDREN IN THE NOVEL SOCIETY**

Children commonly undergo a complicated course in their evolution from a known terrain to a novel one. Adjusting to the school environment can be complicated for children when they are not acquainted with the cultural mores of the host society. This is because this adjustment depends on their ability to decode information required to manoeuvre in mini-systems or "early childhood context" (Vidali & Adams, 2007: 124). Sanagavarapu (2010) suggests that it becomes imperative for educators in public schools to be aware of the necessity of helping immigrant children to have a hitch-free navigation to the school community and their host society. This process of change may be more complicated for children who come from a background of multiple cultures and languages such as the immigrant children from Zimbabwe who are the focus of this study.

Bélanger and Verkuyten, (2010) propose that a very significant aspect of the process of acculturation is the way individuals view and classify themselves within the host society. This is because people are known to define themselves to the extent to which they see themselves as similar or different from others. In another study by Tong, Huang and McIntyre (2006), it is posited that immigrant children may need to forgo their culture and ethnic identity if they take up too much of the majority culture. It may be inferred from Berry's (1997) stages of acculturation that immigrant children could experience confusion regarding the extent to which they should be embedded in the mainstream culture. Consequently this could have a bearing on how immigrant children define their distinctiveness.

Identity formation is viewed as a series of actions culminating in change (Vandeyar, 2008). This change however may not be total for immigrants to completely take on the cultures and values of the host country (Brinkerhoff, 2008). To maintain harmony between two diverse cultures may sometimes be challenging for immigrant children. A new sense of self can be created among immigrants when there is a comfortable balance between the mores and ideals of the home and host cultures (Tong et. al, 2006). This balance must be created in

such a way that permits immigrants to mingle both cultures in a harmonious way. However identity is presumed to be insufficient in measuring the extent of acculturation. This may be because identity is not either patently obvious, constant or conventionally approved (Bélanger & Verkuyten, 2010). This corroborates the assertion of Vandeyar (2008) that the identity of immigrants is transient. This may be because identity is grounded in previous experiences of immigrants in a specific sociocultural context. Furthermore, Mana, Orr and Mana (2009) describe immigrant's identity as a catalogue of encounters which has culminated in taking a stance on cultural issues as compared with the host cultures.

Identity formation of immigrants may also be dependent on the way they are received and perceived by their host countries. Ben-Ezer (2002) and Shabtay (2001), in their studies of Ethiopian-Jews and youths respectively, observed that self-image of immigrant groups may be a reflection of their perception by the host group. When immigrants perceive themselves as being different, for example, culturally, or as a result of their colour, they may be predisposed to being disadvantaged.

Group identity is one other significant factor to consider in the issues of identity. However it has been reported that the context of racial identity may not have a direct effect on children's definition of identity (Marks et al., 2007). However children discover and recognize from childhood the value of communal factions (Aboud, 2003). This may be due to the fact that children construct their cultural distinctiveness in a unique way depending on the level of attachment of their parents to the home culture (Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind & Vedder, 2001; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Therefore this study is aimed at identifying parental and familial cultural capital of Zimbabwean immigrant children in the Foundation Phase that may influence the way they construct their uniqueness in the school community.

Dhingra (2008) reiterates that in judging communal factions' adjustment into the patent components of an organized community, focus of study should be on people's comprehension of the prevailing mores within their host society, their social attachment to other occupants, the degree of preference for the home culture vis-a-vis the host culture and their involvement in educational institutions or the workplace. One other classification of identity documented by Brinkerhoff (2008) identified groups of immigrants who are completely assimilated into their host society versus those who hold on to identification with the homeland cultures among generations of settlement. The implication of this is that immigrants may completely be assimilated into the host societies, or decide to still hold on to their home cultures and values in the midst of their cohorts. A cohort of children as far as this study is concerned would imply indigenous children who are within similar age range with immigrant children from Zimbabwe age in the Foundation Phase.

## 2.5 ACCULTURATION AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

The subject of acculturation and academic performance has been a contested issue in literature as a result of the multifaceted perspectives and environmental predispositions of people concerned. Some studies conducted on immigrant students (such as Portes & Rumbaut, 2001) argue that immigrant students are disadvantaged academically. This, they suggested, could be the result of established sociological factors such as gender, family and socio-economic status. This study particularly looks at salient school and home experiences of immigrant Zimbabwean children in the Foundation Phase and how these influence their academic excellence.

Mantovani and Martini (2008) propose that one of the ways to determine the welfare of immigrant children in their host society is how well they are doing in school with regard to academic attainment. Traditionally the school provides instructional knowledge and educational abilities. In addition to this the school also acts as an agent of transmission of cultural values and norms of the society. It has been reported that application of instructional methods that consider disparities in cultural inclinations and the participation of the minority appear to achieve better academic performance in the classroom (Ryan, Casas, Kelly-Vance, Ryalls & Nero, 2010). Villenas and Deyhle (1999:432) reflect the same phenomenon. In an ethnographic study on the Latino schooling and family education, they assert that “a lack of motivation” may grow “out of repeated negative school experiences.” The school is thus an important social setting where learners develop association with one another in an influential way that may have a bearing on learning behaviour and ambition which consequently impact on academic performance (Bygren & Szulkin, 2010).

Academic wellness of immigrant children may be measured using factors such as final grade results, incidences of class repetition and time taken to complete school (Mantovani & Martini, 2008). Eng, Kanitkar, Cleveland, Herbert, Fischer and Wiersma (2008) in their study of school achievement among Chinese and Filipino American students predicted disparity in educational accomplishment based on ethnicity and parental participation. Acculturation was found to predict educational success among Filipino youths but not among Chinese youths. This suggests that ethnic origin of immigrant children may impact on how acculturation influences their academic performance. Immigrant youths who participated in Eng et al.’s (2008) study were observed to reduce their attachment to their home cultures and values as they gravitate towards higher integration into the majority culture. This had a great implication for educational achievement of the immigrant students. This phenomenon therefore makes me consider the extent to which ethnic background and parental participation influence acculturation, and consequently academic excellence among Zimbabwean immigrant children in the Foundation Phase.

James and Martin (2009), in a study conducted on the comparison of the parent-child interactions among Russian immigrant and non-immigrant families within a rural milieu in Missouri, found that educators within the rural setting often struggle with immigrant children who engage in learning a second language. Since acculturation, in one way or the other, has some influence on academic performance due to language (Yeh et al., 2008), a point of investigation is to examine whether immigrant children from Zimbabwe need to learn the language of learning and teaching, and the influence of this on their academic performance. Furthermore there is a need to determine if there is any influence pertaining to their requirement to adapt to the cultural mores at the school and their immediate environment, on their ability to excel academically.

Children commonly retrieve information for daily social interaction within their environment with innate cleverness and ingenuity. It is proposed in this study that such ingenuity is displayed in the classroom and is able to influence the acculturation of children. Corsaro, Molinari and Rosier (2002), in a study of transition narratives and Early Education in the United States and Italy argue that children fabricate and engage within the tenets of their discrete cultural domain by innovatively accessing information within their immediate environment in an attempt to deal with their immediate concerns. A notable point of inquiry from this finding predisposes this study to explore how Zimbabwean immigrant children in peri-urban schools gather information that is useful for their acculturation to the school and immediate environment. It also presents the opportunity to look at the bearing their ways of acculturating to the school and their immediate environment have on how they learn at the school.

### **2.5.1 IMMIGRANT CHILDREN'S ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND SCHOOLING EXPERIENCES**

To express the association between educational performance and the degree of incorporation of immigrant children to the host society, it becomes important to observe their educational wellbeing. This is based on the assertion that the educational wellness of immigrant children is indicative of their extent of belonging and acculturation to the society of settlement (Asanova, 2005). Academic wellness of immigrant children is measured by these factors, among others the duration of moving on to the next class, end-of-year school reports, the regularity with which they move on to the next class; whether their studies are, at one time or another, challenged by language; and the number of years of their parents' stay in the society of settlement (Hamilton, Marshall, Rummens, Fenta & Simich, 2011). It is posited that the concerns of educators in schools are multifaceted and they are inadequately equipped to comprehend the intricate circumstances and associations that immigrant learners have regarding several locations, customs, and verbal communication (Rodriguez, 2009:18). Consequently the academic performance of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in

the Foundation Phase and their schooling experiences require investigation. This has to be done in relation to the acculturation experiences as they attempt to settle down in the school community. Thus an inquiry in terms of language learning and acquisition of cultural tenets as they negotiate their culture with the cultural tenets of the school and their immediate environment becomes relevant.

Rigorous examination of the importance of language to the academic performance of immigrant children with respect to acculturation constitutes a particular focus on the research of Yeh et al. (2008:784) among Chinese immigrant children who were taken by their parents to American society. They argue:

Acculturation is not only a time to learn new norms and values, and to adopt salient reference groups of the host society, but is a process that includes the ability to grow beyond the original culture and encompass a new culture. Hence, communication is crucial to the adjustment process, and language is the fundamental means of effective communication.

Yeh et al. (2008) present a platform of investigation between the relevance of language to academic performance and acculturation. It may be perceived that the need to retrieve facts or gain knowledge on the culture of the novel society on a daily basis is hinged around language acquisition. The essence of negotiating the home culture of immigrants with the culture of the novel society seems to constitute a requirement to “grow beyond the original culture” of the immigrant children to incorporate into a novel culture. Qin, Way and Rana (2008), in a longitudinal study of 120 first and second generation Chinese American children from two studies carried out in Boston and New York, reported that immigrant children had the stamina to excel academically, despite challenges of harassment and bullying confronting them at schools. This indicates that it is possible for immigrant children to overcome challenges confronting them with regard to their academic potential. Therefore it is necessary to identify and explore those challenges confronting immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Early Childhood Phase. Asanova (2005) focused on immigrant children within a specialized school environment, and pointed to the effect of expectations of teachers and parents as causal factors of academic performance. This practice appears to be a cultural one. When teachers and parents have high academic expectations concerning children they are protected from the negative effects of conventional challenges capable of limiting their academic potential. Therefore at the research site an inquiry becomes vital to verify whether such practices occur.

Eckhart (2005) worked on factors predisposing children to being rejected and accepted at the school level. The study focused on the mindset and association of Swiss and foreign children. Foreign children were obviously minimally received compared with their Swiss classmates even if their academic performance was commensurate with their indigenous



classmates. This mindset towards their immigrant counterparts remained unchanged over the entire period that the study was conducted. The social distance between Swiss and immigrant children was prominent when compared with what existed among indigenous children at the school. It was reported that there was minimal integration between Swiss and immigrant children in terms of interaction and integration at the school. A platform of investigation is thus initiated in this current study to decisively address the degree of interaction between Zimbabwean children in the Foundation Phase and indigenous children at the school level. This presents grounds for analysing the potential of Zimbabwean children to relate and acculturate to their immediate environment. It also opens an avenue of discussion that unveils the connection between their ability to integrate with the social and academic environment as well as the effect this may have on their ability to focus and excel at the school.

Prominent amongst the literature on theories underpinning the academic performance of immigrant children are studies conducted by Ogbu (1987), in particular his seminal work on variability in academic achievement between immigrant and non-immigrant children. Although these studies centred on immigrant children in secondary schools, a few insightful issues may be taken and applied to this study in terms of exploring the theories to use when studying the academic performance and schooling experience of immigrant children in the Foundation Phase.

Ogbu's theory is referred to as the Cultural Ecological Theory (CET) (Ogbu & Simons, 1998), which posits that immigrant children outperform indigenous students in the society of settlement. On the other hand studies that have contested this theory argue that Ogbu's theory does not account for the experiences of all immigrant children (Erickson, 1987; Foster, 2004; Gilbert, 2009; Hamman, 2004), nor is it representative of all contexts. A number of researchers suggest that the CET alone is not capable of explaining the academic experiences of immigrant students in the country of sojourn. For example Hamann (2004) contends that Ogbu's theory may depict some degree of inadequacy at attempting to reveal the sudden achievement of a number of immigrant children.

Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco (2001), in their study of children of immigration are of the opinion that the available infrastructure and features at the school may tend to alleviate or aggravate the adaptation of immigrant children to the culture of the new school they find themselves in. This presents the opportunity of exploring the context of the schools in terms of the infrastructure, the attitude of teachers and the friendliness or harshness of the school environment on immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase. Similarly, Asanova (2005:191) posits that "the quality of teacher relationships" with the learners is

capable of fostering the acculturation of students to the school environment. These studies informed the decision to explore whether immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase are at home or not in the schools. This aided the perception of the researcher to make informed judgment about the available documents and the academic performance of the immigrant children as these reflect their adjustment in the schools. It thus becomes clear that the academic performance of immigrant children may tend to have underlying factors that may continue to predispose them to doing well or refrain from doing well at the school.

### **2.5.2 SPIRITUALITY AND ACCULTURATION**

Sewell (2009), in her study on developing a community of learners in primary school classrooms, uses a unique coinage of the concept of “spirituality” as a role played by teachers. This, in my own understanding, is related to one of the roles of an educator, referred to as the pastoral role (DoE, 2000; DoE, 2007). Sewell’s notion surpassed scholarly, communal or expressive associations in the role of being what was termed “spiritual” (Sewell, 2009:6). She therefore argues that, “as the teachers developed their classrooms as learning communities, they were also evoking and nurturing the spirituality of some children” (Sewell, 2009:6). Consequently she discovered that “a community of learners might be a source of spiritual development” (Sewell, 2009:6). It thus becomes obvious that it is possible for teachers in primary schools, especially in the Foundation Phase, to make children go through experiences that will foster their devotion to the school and their academic endeavours. Therefore it becomes important to explore how teachers in the Foundation Phase create an atmosphere that nurtures immigrant children from Zimbabwe in order to provide such experiences that provide an avenue for them to be devoted to the school and scholarly matters. Similarly a strong bond of friendship between indigenous and immigrant children has an immense positive influence on the academic performance of the immigrant children (Millar, 2011). Therefore it is proposed that when a strong bond of friendship exists between indigenous and immigrant children, they (immigrant children) settle quickly in the country of sojourn and acclimatize more easily.

Since acculturation and identity negotiations go hand in hand (Yeh et al., 2008), spirituality is engaged in this context to imply a profound perception of identity as explained by Palmer (1998). This is revealed in terms of how people associate with one another spontaneously, when the conditions to do so are favourable, for example when children are allowed to learn in an environment that is devoid of discrimination and prejudice (Sewell, 2009). This notion of spirituality is particularly important in this study because the Foundation Phase is the basis of education on which future educational experiences of children are built. Children in this education phase effortlessly blend with children from various ethnic backgrounds (Parrenas



& Parrenas, 1993: 183). The initiation of this perception of spirituality in this early stage helps them to be grounded in accepting other children as they progress through their educational career.

Spirituality becomes important, especially when we view it as being extensively “present in the lives of children” (Hay & Nye, 2006:9), so that teachers know how to engage with school children in an attempt to stir up learning that goes beyond the academic, to the social and the spiritual level as suggested by Sewell (2009). Consequently teachers may be able to bring out the abilities of the children to excel in their studies by creating an atmosphere where understanding and care are fostered on condition that they have a goal set to enhance learning among the children (Sewell, 2009). This suggests that when teachers earn the trust of these children by assuming the spiritual role, a significant feature of identity may be fostered. At this instance it becomes possible to explore the effect of such trust on their negotiation of their individuality and acculturation in a manner that may point to their commitment to academic performance.

As Sewell (2009:6) claims, spirituality will be used here to typify the way teachers in the Foundation Phase “connect with” the children in their classes, “both unselfconsciously” and unselfishly (Sewell, 2009:5-6) to the point that the uniqueness in each child is easily perceived. Sewell used the term, ‘spirituality’ to comprise the recurring practice of a learning environment that seemed to evoke a novel and genuine form of involvement within the classroom setting. These changes and the practices that appear to promote spirituality disclose the attendant spirit of membership within an academic environment (Sewell, 2009:6).

Participation or “spirituality”, as used by Sewell (2009) is synonymous with what Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) refer to as either peripheral participation, or participation that is full of meaning in the school environment. It is noteworthy that Wenger (1998) refers to all the activities of the school setting as a “community of practice” where learning takes place either directly or indirectly. Consequently this study explores the extent of participation among teachers, indigenous children and the immigrant children from Zimbabwe at the school, as it relates to their academic achievement profile, language use and acculturation.

Children are known to develop language skills through interaction with their teachers and adults in their surroundings. Fraser, McGee and Thrupp (2008) report that the relational level between teachers at the school influences the response rates of children. The moment instruction reaches a relational level in an educational institution, participatory involvement seems to meet children’s “needs for compassion, connection and unity” (Fraser et al.

2008:264). This supports Sewell's (2009) claim that teachers play spiritual roles in the development of children's capacity to learn. When educators cause their classrooms to grow into learning communities where there is joint ownership and where learning evolves, there is a probability of inducing and fostering the spirituality of a considerable number of children. Therefore a salient point of inquiry in this study entails investigating the relational level between teachers and immigrant children from Zimbabwe at the research site. A critical look is also taken at whether teachers are discriminatory or fair in their dealings with all the children at the school, since discrimination is a negative experience capable of deterring academic success (Ogbu, 1987; 1990).

### **2.5.3 PARENTAL INFLUENCES ON IMMIGRANT CHILDREN'S ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

Parental participation at school presents a distinct possibility for them to participate in their children's schooling experiences and this has important role in children's academic performance (Kordi & Baharudin, 2010:220). However, there is paucity of research regarding the ways immigrant parents bring up and care for their children in their country of sojourn (Turney & Kao, 2009). Researchers (such as Grobler et al., 2006; Chow, 2006) have found a connection between parental participation and the education of their children. Immigrant children are reported to underperform in their schoolwork due to lack of interest and participation of their parents (Ramirez, 2003). In another study by Niemeyer, Wong and Westerhaus (2009) they observed that immigrant children excelled academically due to high involvement of parents. Similarly, Lahaie (2008) in her study on the role played by parental involvement in the school-readiness of immigrant children concluded that immigrant children benefited from parental involvement when compared with their indigenous counterparts. This study is therefore aimed at exploring familial experiences of Zimbabwean children in the Foundation Phase and how these influence their acculturation and academic performance at school.

The effectiveness of parental involvement however varies from one race to another (Kao, 1995; Niemeyer, Wong & Westerhaus, 2009). Niemeyer et al. (2009) in their seminal work on the effect of parental involvement on academic performance among Hispanic and Caucasian adolescents observed that Hispanic parents are more involved in home-based academic supports whereas Caucasian parents are more involved in school-based supports. Similarly Driessen and Smit (2007), in their quantitative analysis of about eleven thousand kindergarten children in terms of immigrant parents' involvement in society on their children's school achievement, revealed the effect of parental participation on linguistic and mathematical skills of the children observed.

In South Africa parental participation is also significant from a policy point of view because increasing parental involvement in schools is one of the objectives of the Department of Education. From the Department's point of view, parents should be involved and allowed to play a greater role in the schools' development. Parents are also expected to support teachers in dealing with the various needs of the learners (DOE, 1996). This is because the association between parents of young children and their teachers is vital to the children's educational achievement (Millar, 2011). There appears to be obvious improvement in academic results when children perceive a positive relationship between their parents and their teachers (Billman et al., 2005).

Ogbu and Simons (1998) reiterate that immigrant parents demonstrate a high degree of influence on their children's time. This ensures the effective use of children's time on their school work though their parents may not be available to assist them. In a similar study conducted by Li (2001) on the expectations of Chinese immigrant parents for their children's education, it was observed that immigrant parents apparently have high expectations concerning their children's academic performance. This energizes immigrant children to do their best in their schoolwork which subsequently leads to academic excellence. Although Li's study was conducted on older immigrant students, it is intended to explore whether immigrant parents in this present study have the same expectations for their children in the Foundation Phase.

Kao and Tienda (1995) contend that some vital elements of familial existence, such as disparities in the ways immigrant parents talk to children about their educational experiences and the degree of involvement of parents are capable of affecting academic performance of immigrant children. This study therefore aimed at exploring parental involvement of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase and the influence of this on their academic performance. Consequently, it becomes imperative in this study to explore the relational factors existing between Zimbabwean immigrant learners in the Foundation Phase and their parents. It is also of importance to have an understanding of parental expectations of these children and to determine what impact this may have on their academic performance.

## **2.6 THEORETICAL STANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study may be better understood by relating it to the theory of Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP) by Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger's (1998) theory of learning in communities of practice (COP). Wenger (1998) proposes that people in communities of practice share a bond through mutual skill and have a zeal for common venture. In communities of practice learning de-emphasises individualism and emphasises connectivity

among community members. This implies situational learning within a social context such as exists in a school setting. Immigrant children from Zimbabwe in this study have found themselves in a different sociocultural perspective differing from their usual context of living in the home front. Consequently these interconnected theories offer significant insight into understanding intricacies involving their experiences as immigrant children with regard to their adjustment to the South African school environment. In her study Millar (2011) observes that inadequacy in language was one of the major concerns of the Korean children in adjusting to the Australian school system. These theories therefore become relevant because language facilitates social interactions and could ease or impede participation in communities of practice. Furthermore language is the core of acculturation and it is one of the vital aspects of learning.

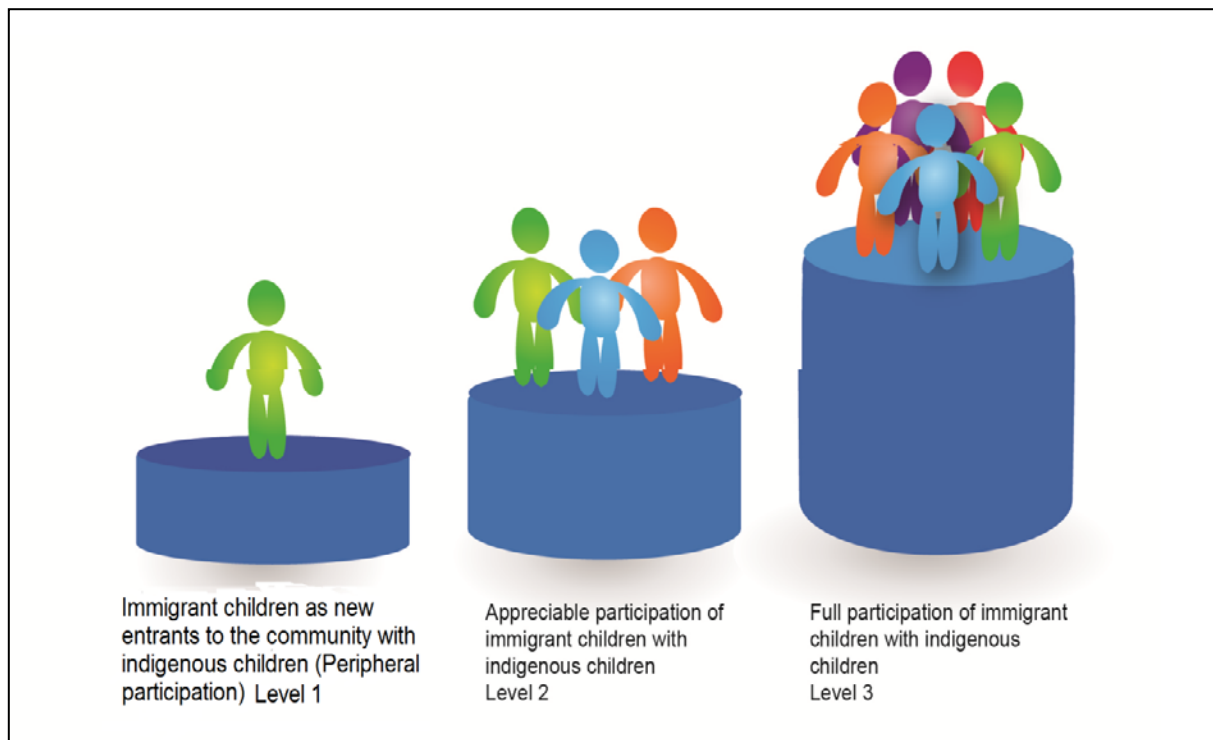
## **2.7 LEGITIMATE PERIPHERAL PARTICIPATION (LPP) AS LOCALIZED LEARNING**

Legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) is perceived as localized learning, because it occurs within a specified locality. The specified localities in the context of this study are the primary schools' environments. Learning is perceived to occur within the confines of a community with the associated prospects and disputes (Lave & Wenger, 1991). It seems as if the concepts of LPP are related to the principles of communities of practice. The concept of LPP presents the opportunity to comprehend the arrival of Zimbabwean children as legitimate peripheral participants as they are admitted to the school. LPP also allows an exploration of how the Zimbabwean children learn via interaction or non-interaction with the other indigenous children, teachers and staff at the school. It assists in evaluating the attendant learning expressed by the Zimbabwean immigrant children as deviant from the conventional forms of academic learning to involve issues relating to how they acculturate and identify with the tenets of the school environment in connection with the acquired values at the home front as well as values they have been able to gain or lose at the school front (Serpell, 2007:26). However, the effects of acculturation on academic performance become a key factor in this study and are conceptualized as pertinent to the academic identities of the immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase.

## **2.8 THE CONTEXT**

The school environment, as an educational organisation, is conceptualized as a community, according to Wenger (1998) and Lave and Wenger (1991). The teachers, indigenous children, and staff of the school are conceptualized as experts who are knowledgeable in their own rights within the community. They are presumed to be upholders of the culture of the school community, otherwise referred to as the curriculum of the community (Wenger, 1998). On the other hand, the immigrant children from Zimbabwe are perceived as legitimate

peripheral participants entering at the periphery of the community (level 1, Figure 2.1). Lave and Wenger (1991) postulate that the degree of involvement of legitimate peripheral participants in the learning curriculum of the community determines access until full participation is ensured “centripetally” (Wenger, 1998:122). Access of newcomers to the community gives them the opportunity to participate actively in tasks also involved by experts in the community. Consequently learning is seen as an expedition that involves other people in the pathway (Lawthom, 2011:154). A pictorial conceptualization of the process is shown in Figure 2.1.



**Figure 2.1: Pictorial representation of LPP as newcomers enter the community of practice**

Newcomers (immigrant children from Zimbabwe) are conceptualized to enter the community at the periphery (level 1, Figure 2.1). With the passage of time there is profound interaction between the teachers, immigrant and indigenous children (level 2, Figure 2.1). At this level immigrant children attempt to learn the indigenous language of communication and participate considerably in the activities within the community. Consequently they move towards the hub of the community. With deeper penetration into the community (level 3, Figure 2.1), they begin to learn the culture of the community via participation in the stipulated and non-stipulated activities at their disposal. Stipulated activities could comprise their requirement to focus and learn the curriculum of study. Non-stipulated activities may be in terms of informal association with their peers who are deemed to be custodians of certain perspectives of the mores and values within the school environment. As long as the

participation of the newcomers is in a centripetal direction (towards the core of the community) learning will evolve to attain an identity (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

As Wenger (1998:163) puts it, “Identity combines multiple forms of membership through a process of reconciliation across boundaries of practice.” Communities of practice comprise different perspectives of associations, namely teachers, indigenous learners, immigrant learners and the school administration as far as this study is concerned. Each group of individuals comprising the different perspectives of expertise is a community of practice combining “multiple forms of membership through a process of reconciliation across” the different departments that they belong to. Drawing on Wenger’s (1998:163) scholarship it requires a process of reconciliation between the different communities of practice through the process of negotiation with its members in the different communities of practice for learning to attain an identity to evolve. I believe with the explanation given by Wenger (1998:108) that in communities of practice there are subsets of communities of practice intertwined to achieve the same goal for learning to evolve. Therefore the different stakeholders, namely immigrant learners, indigenous learners, teachers and the school administration are conceptualised as subsets of a bigger community of practice (the entire school). These subsets of communities of practice work together to achieve the purpose of learning to attain an identity.

A prominent assertion that provokes deep understanding could be the newcomers’ non-participation in the activities in the community. One could imagine whether any learning could evolve in this context. It is proposed that refusal of newcomers to participate in the activities in the community, according to Wenger, (1998:164) would be taken as their trail of learning. Non-participation of some members of the community is seen as a symbol of participants’ dimensions of how they have chosen to be identified within the community of practice. As they continue to participate in the activities of the community (curriculum), it is envisaged that they will attain full participation as time goes by.

From the understanding obtained from the scholarship of Wenger (1998), Lave and Wenger (1991) and Reyes (2007), to mention but a few, it is inferred in this study that refusal of the children to participate in the core of activities in the community would evolve in their chosen dimension of identity of “not wanting to be involved”. Therefore, their refusal to centripetally participate is conceptualized as an emergent form of identity among the children who chose to steer from the core of learning activities.

Reyes (2007:625) describes legitimate peripheral participation as “a social-psychological construct that examines learning that occurs in interactions in communities with more



knowledgeable others” possessing the capability to “engage in a particular practice”. In this context the school and home front are seen as perspectives of practice, in which the actors (immigrant children, teachers and indigenous children) co-exist. Participation “refers to a process of taking part and also to the relations with others that reflect this process” (Otten, 2009:410). It is important to know that the moment an immigrant child begins to learn in a particular context, s/he seems to start adopting the features and culture of those that have been accustomed to the tenets of the community by developing a learning culture (Reyes, 2007:625). These theories therefore suggest that everything that has to be learned in particular communities of practice has to be done by learning the principles governing the communities of practice for the desired learning to take place. The schools therefore make a place for exploring how immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase learn, and whether they learn in the communities of practice available to them.

## **2.9 COMMENCEMENT OF PARTICIPATION**

The work of O’Donnell and Tobbell forms a platform of discussion on how participation begins in a typical community of practice. O’Donnell and Tobbell (2007:315) describe the initiation process of entering a community of practice (COP) by stating that as newcomers approach a community, they are potential new learners who have been given access to the community by virtue of special characteristics that they possess. They gradually become legitimate peripheral participants until they become accustomed to the tenets of the community. As they become full participants, their identities are said to have shifted by virtue of compliance with the rules and regulations of the community. Identity as used here by O’Donnell and Tobbell (2007), indicates a change of orientation from their former perspectives of doing things to what is available to them within the stipulated communities of practice (home and school fronts, in this particular context).

In this study the Zimbabwean immigrant children in the Foundation Phase are conceptualized as legitimate peripheral participants by virtue of the entry requirements that they possess to enter the primary school where they learn. Learning in this context may not be limited to academic learning alone, but to other facets of learning that may tend to foster their peaceful or chaotic coexistence with the other stakeholders, depending on the available curriculum of activities at the schools. Therefore in this study it is envisaged that learning may not be streamlined to academic learning alone, but may involve a predisposition of learning not to be what is available on the ground at the academic institution of learning. This in itself is an emblem of identity negotiation as it involves the character of learning to be, or not to be what is within the premise of the attendant curriculum at the academic institution (Wenger, 1998:164). Therefore, legitimate peripheral participation is premised on situated or positioned learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991). LPP takes “human learning as less about the

process of receiving information” alone, to “changing forms of participation in social practices” (Serpell, 2007:26).

## **2.10 ATTRIBUTES OF A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE**

Traditional learning theories conceived learning as unidirectional, individual-bound and rigid. However communities of practice as proposed by Wenger (1998) conceptualise learning as located within communal and the usual environments of learners. It therefore implies that learning in communities of practice emphasises the importance of interaction among community members rather than on individuals. Papadopoulou and Birch (2009) draw our attention to the fact that when learning is situated within a social context, learners cannot be viewed as separate from their secular world, of which they are part. The fact that learners are physically present within their social environment creates lived experiences in physical and emotional dimensions. It is conceptualised in this study that these experiences are such that they are difficult to disregard because learners are actively involved in the process of learning within the COP. Learning in this context goes beyond acquiring information to granting learners access centripetally to the core of the community until they become experts. As learners advance towards the core of the community, they come into contact with other members of the community from whom they learn its tenets and mores. This makes learning interactional.

Barab, Barnett and Squire (2002:495) describe communities of practice as groups of people who are communally reliant and accommodate jointly expressed cultures and repertoire within a specified dimension of time in search or acquisition of a collective goal or achievement. In this context the collective goal may involve the learning undertaken by Zimbabwean immigrant children in the midst of indigenous and other stakeholders in the learning community. A learning community is a group of individuals who engage in specified activities, share a set of attributes or a concern regarding a subject matter, and who entrench their understanding and insight in these joint concerns by associating with one another within a specified time dimension (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002:4).

A community itself has been defined as a social set-up where concerns are outlined as valuable to pursue and our involvement is identifiable as competency (Wenger, 1998:4). According to Wenger (1998:122), learning in communities of practice is vital because it changes our identity and expertise. It is expected therefore that the impact of acculturation on Zimbabwean immigrant learners would transform them to the point of attaining an identity. This is because learning does not just entail the gathering of expertise and the know-how, but the course of attaining an identity (Wenger, 1998). As Wenger (1998:122) sees it, it is conceptualized that when immigrant children arrive at a society of settlement, they tend to



shift their position as they interact with other members of the community via multifaceted involvement in the COP. As they interact it is conceptualized that opportunities to learn within the context of the community are created in the continuum.

From literature it is important to note that acculturation cannot be considered without identity, due to their involvedness and interdependence (Yeh et al., 2008). Identity shifts may ensue if there is any attempt to deny “access” capable of “limiting centripetal movement of newcomers” into the community. Such shifts may tend to distort the learning curriculum of the community (Wenger, 1998:122-123). By inference from the available literature perused so far (e.g., Chow, 2006; Yeh et al., 2008), linguistic challenges may deter “centripetal” movement of immigrant children within the communities of practice. This study provides a platform of investigation among Zimbabwean immigrant children in the Foundation Phase, especially, finding the effects of “centripetal” movement within the learning community.

Lave and Wenger describe the key point of belonging as suggested by other researchers (e.g., Asanova, 2005; Gay, 2000; Osterman, 2000) by perceiving the initiation of learning “as legitimate peripheral participation”, thus implying “that learning is not merely a condition for membership” in a community of practice “but is itself an evolving form of membership” (1991:53). In summary this theory provides a platform for understanding the events within the immediate environment of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase, by looking at the effect their new communities will have on them. Language is seen as the entry point of negotiation in the communities of practice. Consequently when the level of linguistic integration is low on the periphery of access then the extent of interaction between novices and experts may become a concern because interaction to attain a set identity may be adversely affected. To comply with the suggestion of Lave and Wenger (1991:53) the only perceivable circumstance that fosters learning would be in terms of initiating communication that tends to lead to opening an avenue of interaction between novices and experts until learning becomes “an evolving form of membership” (Lave & Wenger, 1991:53). Learning would become an “evolving form of membership” when members of the community reach the point of comprehending the tenets of the community as participation is further triggered in a centripetal direction until full participation is reached (level 3, Figure 2.1).

In communities of practice interactional engagements provide opportunities for learning. This idea is substantiated by Piirainen–Marsh and Tainio, (2009). They focused on additional language learning as embedded in membership in the communal activity of cooperative game-play. It was reported that participation provided the opportunity for members (players) to use English, thus adding the language to their catalogue of communication. Learning was noted to have been mutually constructed among participants and viewed as a route of

negotiating meaning and knowledge. They also highlighted the role of repetition and imitation. Repetition and imitation improved the understanding of members of current events and creating a standpoint on their interests. Consequently this study presents an insight into the extent to which participation and interaction between indigenous and Zimbabwean immigrant learners in the Foundation Phase promote learning in such a manner that fosters acculturation with consequent influence on their academic performance.

## **2.11 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS IN LITERATURE**

The review of the extant literature has resulted in outlining the key findings in the study as follows:

Language proficiency has been observed as a key player when exploring acculturation among immigrant children. When they struggle to learn the languages spoken in the host society and at the school, acculturation may be impaired. Similarly language learning is perceived as a cultural event that aids social interaction among immigrant and native children (Yeh et al., 2008). It has been found to initiate the fortitude to have a sense of belonging among immigrant children as it fosters the avenue for social interaction and bonding with peers at school. According to Yeh et al. (2008), it is a means of expressing and negotiating between cultures of host and home countries, resulting in the process of acculturation among immigrant children.

Thus language is pivotal to the survival of immigrant children in the country of sojourn. Both the language of instruction at school and languages spoken in the host society are important when exploring the academic performance of immigrant children. The language of instruction at the school is a determinant of academic achievement (Chow, 2006). When immigrant children are unable to learn the language of instruction easily, their academic potential may be hampered.

Identity is used in the context of this study to imply a construct specifying the learning attained by participants in communities of practice. This conceptualization emerges from Wenger's (1998) theory detailing identity as a combination of diverse perspectives of involvement via the course of negotiation from one boundary of practice to another. The concept of identity reinforces the argument that there are subdivisions of communities of practice working together for the common good of its stakeholders (Wenger, 1998:108). Therefore the notion of one practice to another is taken as an indication that there are subdivisions of communities of practice. The culmination of all the workings in communities of practice is to attain an identity which announces the perspective of learning that has taken place among stakeholders.

A sense of belonging of immigrant children was observed to diminish when subjected to unfavourable experiences such as discrimination and prejudice that tend to exclude them from the communal system in their country of sojourn (Nieto, 2002). Consequently the sense of belonging among immigrant learners may be connected with how they are capable of interacting with stakeholders in communities of practice for learning to evolve. Identity also fosters cultural negotiation and it is connected with salient issues that may inform the readiness of an immigrant to acculturate and take on the cultural perspectives of the new environment in which they find themselves (Fischer, 2004; Kohn, 2002). Identity extends to aspects of an individual questioning who he or she is, after participating in communities of practice to show the extent of learning that has taken place (McCaslin, 2009; Wenger, 1998).

It was also shown that parental participation is a construct that has a far-reaching influence on academic performance of immigrant children. Children are noted to excel academically when participation of parents is high. Parental influence ranges from managing the children's time to maintaining effective communication within the home. It implies, on the home front that there are communities of practice capable of assisting the effort of the other stakeholders at the school for effective learning to take place among immigrant children. However it was shown that the effectiveness of parental participation varies from one ethnic group to another (Wang & Phillion, 2007).

Finally, the relevance of theoretical framework was made profound in this chapter. An attempt was made to base the study on the theories of COP and LPP for better understanding. In this study, the school environment was conceptualised as a community where immigrant learners, indigenous learners and teachers interact. The teachers, indigenous learners and staff members within the school environment are viewed as knowledgeable in the culture of the community. When educators cause their classrooms to grow into learning communities where there is joint ownership, and where learning evolves, there is a probability of inducing and fostering the spirituality of a considerable number of children to adapt to their environment. In Chapter Three I present the methodology used in this study.



## CHAPTER THREE

### Methodology of the study

*“By adopting a flexible, reflective stance, early years researchers can learn much from children, not only about their perspectives, but also about how to include young children in the research process”*  
 (Rosie Flewitt, 2005:553)

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an account of the course of action for planning the study. It provides information on the research design, research site and the sampling methods used in collecting data for analysis. It also presents the research methodology adopted in directing the study, method used in data analysis and issues relating to research quality. The chapter concludes by stating the ethical procedures and considerations made in the study. An outline of the research strategy is presented in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1: Summary of the research strategy and methodology** (Adapted from Adebajji, 2010)

<b>RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</b>		
Paradigmatic consideration	Interpretivism and constructivism	
Research Methodology	Qualitative research approach	
<b>RESEARCH DESIGN</b>		
Narrative inquiry and case study		
<b>SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS</b>		
Purposeful, snowball sampling	Selection of four immigrant learners from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase from two inner city schools in Gauteng, four parents and three teachers.	
<b>DATA COLLECTION</b>		
Data collection methods	Observation, Semistructured interviews and researcher's observation journal.	
<b>RESEARCH QUESTION</b>	<b>METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>VALUE</b>
<b>Main research question:</b> How does acculturation influence the academic performance of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase?	Semistructured interviews with learners, parents and teachers; and observation of learners in the classroom and on the play field.	To get participants' views on how immigrant children are performing and adjusting to the school environment and the community.

<b>Research subquestions</b> 1. What are the factors affecting the successful adjustment of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase?	Semistructured interviews and observation	To acquire an understanding of how immigrant children in the Foundation Phase overcome the myriads of barriers they are confronted with as they navigate their position within the school environment.
2. What vital transition is required of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase to attain academic achievement?	Semistructured interviews and observation	An understanding of acculturation may predispose teachers and other stakeholders to the need to be culturally sensitive and responsive, in terms of curriculum design and development in the Foundation Phase.
3. How do teachers facilitate the adjustment of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase?	Semistructured interviews and observation	This will produce a holistic approach to how teachers in the Foundation Phase are prepared for linguistic diversity as Rodriguez (2009) posits that teachers are caught unawares, in terms of how to deal with diversity in the classroom.
4. How do familial and school experiences of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase affect their acculturation?	Semistructured interviews and observation	To explore how parents prepare their children to integrate with indigenous children in order to facilitate acculturation.
5. How does language influence the academic performance of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase?	Semistructured interviews and observation	To have an understanding of how teachers and indigenous children assist in alleviating language challenges encountered by immigrant children in the Foundation Phase.
<b>DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION</b>		
Content analysis: coding, formation of themes and documents analysis		
<b>QUALITY CRITERIA OF THE RESEARCH</b>		
Credibility, Transferability, Dependability and Confirmability		
<b>ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF THE RESEARCH</b>		
Informed consent, anonymity, safety considerations, confidentiality and reliance		

### 3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

A research paradigm is construed as the worldview of a researcher which structures what he/she believes to be knowledge and how such knowledge may be understood (Mukherji & Albon, 2010:7). It is therefore understood that the research paradigm assumed by a researcher impacts on the choice of methodology adopted by the him/her. Since the aim of this study was to explore the experiences of Zimbabwean children in the Foundation Phase, I

chose the route of qualitative paradigmatic stance to be able to derive meaning from participants' stories via interviews and observations (Savin-Badin & Van Niekerk, 2007).

### 3.2.1 PARADIGMATIC STANCE

This study employed the constructivist and interpretivist models (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2005; Williamson, 2006). Constructivism is a branch of various interpretivist representations which relate to how people construct experiences around their domain of operation (Williamson, 2006). Social constructivists believe that learning develops from and becomes significant in the culture and context of learners (Papadopoulou & Birch, 2009). Consequently knowledge is constructed based on the understanding of their different backgrounds, circumstances and perspectives.

Therefore I sought to gain insight into the lives of immigrant children from Zimbabwe, their parents and their teachers who are participants in this study. I obtained an understanding of how they constructed and ascribed meanings to their experiences. Constructivism became a useful tool in this study because it is a supposition of knowledge which is perceived as a natural subdivision of the study of human society and social relationships (Adler, 2005:12).

The initiative to navigate this study in the constructivist line of action was created by the work of Kelly (1955) who described the involvement of a researcher in the world of respondents as personal constructivism. Kelly reiterated that humans orchestrate their experiences by constructing diverse dimensions with respect to meaning making. This was referred to as a personal construct based on the notion that it involves a dialogue between the researcher and the world being investigated. Adler (2005) gave a vivid perception of the thin connection between constructivism and interpretivism as important concepts that could aid the comprehension of experiences under exploration.

Interpretivism attempts to comprehend, construe and give meaning to a particular domain with respect to the involvement of participants concerned (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2005:28). Consequently the interpretivist paradigm considers research participants to be of the utmost importance in qualitative research. They (participants) form the nucleus of the research as story-tellers who give meaning to their worlds of operation. Interpretivism as a paradigm accentuates the collection of qualitative data obtained through inductive reasoning in the study carried out in its natural setting (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Pouliot, 2007; Williamson, 2002). The interpretivist paradigm asserts that individuals always bargain and bestow meaning on the various influences evoking change in their lives. Therefore interpretivists argue that people construct their individual circumstances thereby making them different from the usual position (Williamson, 2002). The interpretivist paradigm

became useful in this study because it aided the study of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in their natural state by making use of an inductive style of interpretation and giving prominence to qualitative data obtained (Williamson, 2006).

According to Neuman (2006) the interpretivist paradigm does not subscribe to the existence of universal objective truth. On the contrary individuals experience diverse realities which are dissimilar but dependent on their personal experiences, feelings and opinions. This connotes subjectivity based on social contact, knowledge or skill acquired over time. Individuals consciously select, connect with one another and assign significance to their social world. This forms a platform for understanding how immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase construct their own meaning of what it means to school and live in South Africa based on their personal diverse experiences. The same applies to teachers who taught them at the schools because they based their perceptions on the dealings they had had with the children over a period of time. Consequently the teachers became observers of how immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase gave meaning to the experiences they had in relation to other children at the school. Furthermore the perception of their parents became important as they matched the experiences their children had with what was reported to them by teachers and the academic record presented to them. Therefore teachers and parents became observers, fabricators and interpreters of the experiences negotiated by the Zimbabwean children in the Foundation Phase.

### **3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.3.1 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH**

In this study the qualitative research approach was embarked upon. This option was chosen considering the fact that the study was focused on exploring the experiences of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase. These children are involved in interacting socially with their teachers and their peers at school and at home. Children have subjective ways of relating to their worlds of influence. This results in various ways of assigning meaning to their daily encounters “depending on their understandings, predispositions and individual processes” (Papadopoulou & Birch, 2009:270).

The qualitative research approach therefore lends itself to giving the researcher the opportunity to access participants’ views by asking a wide range of questions. This culminates in obtaining data consisting of a generous proportion of words from participants, which are explained and explored for emerging themes from the study (Creswell, 2007:46).



According to Ngobeli (2001:50) a qualitative research points to the gathering and breakdown of wide-ranging descriptive data. The data are obtained in an attempt to gain access to a state of affairs which interests the researcher, with the exclusive nature of no other possibilities to explore the scenario under consideration. The use of qualitative research therefore allows the researcher to have an intimate outlook on how people assign meaning to their experiences. This is in consonance with the fact that qualitative research makes room for the concession of a variety of perspectives and allows the researcher to make logical interpretations arrived at from data collected (Mukherji & Albon, 2010:24-25). I decided to follow the route of qualitative research in agreement with Mukherji and Albon (2010) which seems to corroborate my standpoint as follows:

- I purposed to gain detailed information on a small sample in contrast to a large population.
- I resolved to listen to the stories of participants in this study for constructive meaning-making.
- The study was aimed at studying immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase in their natural setting (home and school) as this seemed to allow minimal disruption in their normal everyday activities. This gave me the opportunity of seeing the children “as they are.”
- I aimed at involving immigrant children from Zimbabwe as research participants who were considered very important in the research process. Qualitative research design considers the research process of equal importance as the research outcomes.
- Using qualitative research provided an opportunity for self-reflexivity.

When using the qualitative research method, it is important that researchers be emotionally prepared in case of unanticipated episodes of ethical predicaments. They must also possess the flexibility required in adapting to diverse situations they may encounter at the research sites (Li, 2008:109). This equipped me to be on my guard against any eventuality at the research sites.

### **3.3.2 CHILDREN AS RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

Researchers working with children are often confronted with the issue of power relations. They frequently have to negotiate issues relating to dealing with children as research objects, subjects or participants (Mukherji & Albon, 2010; Woodhead & Faulkner, 2002). Due to the developmental stage of children their lives have usually been studied and understood by using adults' views; their views being discredited, ignored and compromised (Christensen & James, 2002). These adults could be parents, teachers or caregivers. There is however a paradigm shift that has given recognition to children as valuable research participants. Hence



research is conducted *with* children rather than *on* children. This notion qualifies children as a formidable group of research participants who are special, knowledgeable and skilled in issues relating to them (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). Although it has been observed that children may sometimes have restrictions in language use (Scott, 2002), they are capable of providing immense, insightful information regarding the issues in their lives. It has been noted that children are lucid and astute reviewers of their individual lives and experiences whose viewpoints provide evidence of variety and distinctiveness of occurrences embedded within their dynamic occupation (Flowerdew & Neale, 2003; Taylor, 2006). Consequently, immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase, who are the focus of this study, are considered experts in their own right regarding issues concerning their lives.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) supports the propositions for the involvement of children in matters that affect them. This conception of involvement is highlighted in articles 12 and 13 of the UNCRC.

Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the view of the child being given due weight.

The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds... either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.

This document has since accentuated the rights of the child to have a say in matters relating to him/her. It can be seen from this document also that children are expected to be taken seriously when their opinions are expressed in whatever form they choose namely talking, writing, pictures or story-telling.

Mayall (2002) points our attention to the fact that when children are allowed full participation in research as expected, they are capable of influencing the rate and course of dialogue. They can also generate ideas and fully discuss subject matters with minimal contribution from the researcher. Involving children this way provides opportunities for adults to gain access to their world, providing better understanding on issues relating to them (children). However, children's shared experiences must be perceived in relation to their individual circumstances and contexts (Christensen & James, 2002).

Although the new social move has accorded much power to children, I concur with the views of Woodhead and Faulkner (2002:31). They are of the opinion that according respect to the social status of children should not limit the responsibilities of adults towards them. This respect for children's social status rather places a degree of responsibility on adults who are

watching over the children. Adults who are involved with taking care of children should lead them to acceptable codes of conduct that are commensurate with the level of reasoning of these children. These adults should also facilitate children's involvement in things that appeal to them, as well as the skill to relate with them in terms of aspects that directly impact on their wellbeing. Consequently I decided to include interviews with parents and teachers of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in this study. This is due to the fact that they (parents and teachers) are regarded as responsible adults and overseers of the affairs of these children. Involving them will also give depth to the research. Moreover, parents and teachers are an indispensable part of children's experiences as they move along in life (Dockett & Perry, 2005).

### **3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Research design is the arrangement, construction, and approach of exploration devised in the mind of the researcher in an attempt to find solutions to questions posed in a study and to manage discrepancy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:221). Based on the definition of Lincoln and Guba (1985:221) this study is designed using the narrative inquiry and case study routes of investigation, which are both qualitative in nature.

#### **3.4.1 NARRATIVE INQUIRY**

Narrative inquiry involves giving the research respondents the opportunity to detail their experiences of a phenomenon of interest (Bleakley, 2005). The core of inquiry involves the asking of questions. Inquiry is initiated by the act of posing questions with the undertone of uncertainty (Hendry, 2010:73). This connotes that the researcher assumes the position of someone who is not knowledgeable in the issues being explored, and willing to learn from the participants' stories. He/she therefore sees the research participants as a very important part of the research process. Narrative inquiry has the practice of informing "us about something unexpected" (Bruner, 1996:121). Narratives give attention to "the use of stories as data" (Savin-Badin & Van Niekerk, 2007:459). The initiative of narrative inquiry entails the notion that stories are gathered in an attempt to understand experience "as lived and told, through both research and literature" (Savin-Badin & Van Niekerk, 2007:459). Connelly and Clandinin (2006:477) reiterate:

People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as phenomenon under study.

Children are believed to be active players in communal issues and capable of being involved in social actions (Hendrick, 2002). They possess the ability to tell stories of their knowledge and understanding of their childhood experiences (Farrell, Tayler, Tennent & Gahan, 2002). Mayall (2002) also asserts that children are a lasting aspect of the society, and are the only ones who know what it means to be a child due to their personal experiences. Consequently they should be afforded the opportunity to share their stories. Based on these assertions, this study provides a platform for immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase to tell their stories on how they are being acculturated into the South African school environment. Their parents and teachers were also involved to allow triangulation of the obtained data.

In this study data were gathered using semistructured interviews, observations and field notes. Each interview was recorded using an audio recorder. Observations were recorded using field notes to allow transcription and analysis of obtained data (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994; Manning & Cullum-Swan, 1994).

### **3.4.2 CASE STUDY**

The case study research technique was employed in this study. The particular “case” of interest in this study was the immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase in two peri urban primary schools. These were black immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase exposed to the influence of Sepedi, IsiNdebele and IsiZulu indigenous languages, and who often mingled these local languages with the language of learning and teaching. Cohen Manion and Morrison (2007:254) contend that case studies could be employed to describe “what it is like” to operate in a particular scenario in order to catch a glimpse of what naturally exists in the real world of research subjects using diverse data sources. A natural context, as it relates to this study, comprises studying immigrant children from Zimbabwe in their homes and the schools that they attend. This way a high degree of divergence is not demanded of them “from the place(s) they are used to, what they usually do or who they are usually with” (Mukherji & Albon, 2010:26).

According to Yin (2003) a case study is a practical inquiry designed to explore an existing event, in its natural context, where there is a clear-cut boundary between the event and perspective with the use of diverse sources of information. The diverse sources of information in this study include, among others, “observations, interviews and documents” (Freebody 2003:82). Each of the learners was observed in class, on the playfield during break and at home when interviewing their parents. Their stories were individually written, to learn from their experiences in terms of different components of acculturation, such as language, identity, culture and social integration, which could influence their academic

performance. In a case study research approach, attention is given to a specific illustration of learning experience with the intention to access hypothetical, proficient and deep understanding arising from a complete documented evidence of that illustration (Freebody, 2003:81).

### **3.5 RESEARCH SAMPLE**

#### **3.5.1 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS**

The research sample constituted four immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase, aged between six and seven, four parents, and three teachers. Three of these learners were from a public peri-urban primary school and one was from a private peri-urban primary school. Both schools were located in Gauteng province, and under the same district according to the jurisdiction of the Department of Education (DoE). The sample was taken “purposefully, not randomly; that is, a particular person, site, program, process, community, ... because it exhibits characteristics of interest to the researcher” (Merriam & Associates, 2002:179). Participating learners were immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase. Their parents must have lived in South Africa for at least two years. I also made use of snow-ball sampling (Creswell, 2007; Cohen et al., 2000) in which the first parents to give their consent introduced me to other parents who participated in the study.

Initially this study was focused on immigrant children from Zimbabwe in Grade 3 in the Foundation Phase. However, all the parents of the Grade 3 learners I contacted refused to participate in the research; neither did they allow their children to do this. They seemed uncomfortable about the study probably because they thought I was trying to figure out their immigration status in South Africa. Another reason for their unwillingness to participate hinged on the notion that I could use the situation to abduct their children. This further confirms that researches involving children present various distinct “practical problems” (Scott, 2002:100). The selection exercise was very rigorous and hectic. Details of my experiences in the research field are presented in section 3.11. When it became impossible for me to go through with the Grade 3 learners, I extended participation to other grades in the Foundation Phase and also included a private school within the same area. My acquaintance with literature (e.g. Millar, 2011) encouraged me to do this. I was introduced to the parents of a Grade 1 learner in the same school initially chosen as the research site. These parents later introduced me to two more parents whose children also attended the public primary school and who were willing to participate in the study. I was later introduced to the parent of the child in the private school by a colleague. This explains why the entire children participants were males.

### 3.5.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH SITES

One of the research sites (the public primary school) was located within a residential area within Bakwena in Gauteng, seemingly for middle-class people. All the houses around the area were modern bungalows or one-storey buildings. The school structure was made of bricks and very spacious. The classrooms were constructed to form quadrangles with spaces in the centre. The Grades R and 1 both had two classes per grade. There were provisions for recreational facilities, such as a sports field. The school had two separate playgrounds. The playground for the Grade R children was separated from the other playground meant for older children. This was to allow younger children to interact effectively and freely with their peers and also to protect them from being hurt by older learners. This idea seemed to facilitate good interaction at the Foundation Phase for better connection as they moved up to higher grades. The school was well fenced with a security guard and access-controlled gates to prevent unnecessary loitering by schoolchildren. The school population was predominantly Black children from within the Bakwena community and neighbouring townships. The language of learning and teaching (LoLT) was English. The children were taught by both Black and White African teachers.

The other research site (the private primary school) was located in a large piece of land that was used as farmland. It was situated further away from the Bakwena community. The school enrolment was relatively low compared with that of the public school. The population of this school comprised predominantly Black children who came from different townships around the area. The LoLT was English. All the teachers were Black teachers. The classrooms were made of bricks. The school was fenced around with gates. Children had a spacious area for recreation and adequate interaction.

The choice of schools located within a peri-urban setting was deliberate. My experience as a primary school teacher in such a location exposed me to the fact that the majority of the children that attended schools in this area lived in the townships. They were often very skilled in indigenous languages like isiNdebele and their teachers often code-switched to some of these indigenous languages in the classroom. I also came to understand, though informally, in my course of teaching in this area, that children in the Foundation Phase attending public schools in this location were actually taught in the indigenous languages. This knowledge aroused the desire in me to explore how this affects immigrant children from Zimbabwe attending schools in this area.

### 3.6 ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

Research that involves children requires that the researcher positions him/herself in a way that disperses the power relation intrinsic in studies involving children (Scott, 2002). Due to the nature of children and their position at a particular developmental stage, gaining access and obtaining consent, should be adequately considered and incorporated into the research process (Mauthner, 1997). Consequently I gave particular consideration to how I positioned myself in accessing the families of the participants. I negotiated my role as a researcher *cum* guest (Mayall, 2002) by first making informal visits to the families who showed an interest in participating in the research. During this period I elaborated on the intent and purpose of the research and the anticipated involvement of the parents and their children. Visits were also made to the schools to get to know the research sites, and to meet with the principal and participating teachers. The children's ages ranged from 6 to 8 years. I later commenced my official data collection after this visit. At my first official visit, I allowed the children to see and handle the recorder which I would be using to record their interviews. I also showed them the observation journal which I would use to take down notes on what I saw and observed when I subsequently came to visit. I re-emphasized the fact that they were at liberty to discontinue at any stage of the study and should not feel under pressure to answer any question they were uncomfortable with. I did not take the stance of an expert who knew it all. Children participants, their parents and their teachers were rather involved as collaborators whose opinions, ideas and contributions were highly welcome and valued. This enabled me to blend with the world of the participants and to gain their trust and confidence.

In conducting research with children, the researcher must make use of diverse amenable means (Mukherji & Albon, 2010; Thomas & O' Kane, 2000; Flewitt, 2005). This is to ultimately allow children to communicate their thoughts and views on the matter being studied. The work of Harwood (2010) paved the way for my decision in conducting research with children. Harwood (2010) posits that children provide valuable and honest account of their experiences if research and methodological decisions are made clear and unambiguous throughout the entire research process. The researcher's task should entail supplying several means of support to enable and empower children to participate in the research and be motivated to contribute their views to foster enlightenment on the study. However it is possible to gain access into the children's covert world through a research process that encourages discourse, listening and working jointly with children (Mayall, 2002). These affirmations made me position myself as being in a relationship with immigrant children from Zimbabwe, who are participants in this study. This enabled me to create an atmosphere that fostered good rapport with these children, and as such facilitated gaining their attention during the research process.

The data-gathering instruments were designed with the guidance of my supervisors. I went further to obtain official permission from the University, the Gauteng Department of Education and the school authority (see Appendices A, C and E). Formal data-gathering process was then embarked upon. When visits were made to the research site, I observed in the public primary school that the classes were fairly large. Despite this, the educator had good control of the learners and a high level of interaction was perceived between the educator and the learners. Although I did not ask for the precise cultural composition of the class, I assumed the learners would be representative of the diversity that exists in South Africa. This was because all the learners were black. I was only sure of the fact that the composition included learners from Zimbabwe. Since I was not allowed to speak to any of the children on the school premises, I assumed the role of a strict observer.

It was noted that strict adherence to ethical expectations in studies involving children, such as this one, was very challenging. For example, during break some of the children came to me and wanted to interact with me. I was cautious of my level of interaction at this point so as not to contravene the principal's instructions. Moreover one of them insisted he would not talk to me unless I made a video recording of him. I had to use the video recorder, with the permission of his parents, avoiding his face, as much as possible in order not to reveal his identity. It was easy to get along with all the teachers. This may probably be due to the fact that they were all females. We got engaged in one or two discussions especially when the children were busy with classwork, although we were careful not to distract the children or disrupt the lessons. The following section provides detailed information on how data were collected.

### **3.7 DATA COLLECTION STRATEGY**

Data were captured using interviews, observation (see Appendices G, H, I and J) and document analysis. Participants in this study were four immigrant learners from Zimbabwe, four parents of the learners and three of their teachers. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:133) contend that, "in qualitative data, validity might be addressed through the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached, the extent of triangulation and the disinterestedness or objectivity of the researcher". Consequently, I did not rely on observation as the only source of data collection, but also on interviewing teachers and parents because they could discuss their experiences with the children over a period of time. These methods constituted the basis for triangulation of obtained data.

This study was conducted within the children's natural environment – home and school environments. Diverse forms of data sources – document analysis, observations and



interviews - were used to obtain data for this study. These multiple sources of information presented distinctive stances on the issue of acculturation of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase and how that influenced their academic performance. Immigrant children from Zimbabwe were interviewed and observed to gain access to their own views on how they perceived their situations.

The children, parents and teachers were interviewed on a one-on-one basis. The interviews were semistructured. Questions were already prepared to be used as a guide to channel the course of the interview (see Appendices G, H, and I). Participants were allowed to express their views and tell their stories in detail. This was in order to obtain immense and substantial data that contributed to the validity of this research. They were intensely probed to obtain comprehensive information that aided in answering the research questions of the study. Documents analysed were class workbooks. This was done because the children's reports were not available for scrutiny at the time of data capture.

### **3.7.1 NARRATIVE INQUIRY**

Narrative research affords a means of gathering the viewpoint of the participants, thus allowing "more of their voice to be heard" (Allen, 2006:5). As Savin-Baden and Van Niekerk (2007:463) write, "data sources in narrative inquiry include" notes obtained from the research site, journal entries obtained from the research site, semistructured interviews and stories recited from the research subjects and observation. The nature of narrative research is such that it comprises acquiring information about, and subsequently pondering and thinking deeply on how human beings construct their understanding of situations (Josselson, 2007:537). The essence of this is that researchers are disposed to having a connection with participants. As a result of the need to study people's lived experiences, narrative inquiry is characteristically initiated with attention given to individual perceptions and their personal experiences relative to their particular circumstances (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2007). Data sources used in narrative inquiry in this study are subsequently discussed in the subsections that follow.

#### **3.7.1.1 Semistructured interviews**

One of the advantages of interviews is the ability to facilitate the researcher's acquisition of a thorough understanding of views and experiences of research participants (Cohen et al., 2000; Freebody, 2003). This allows the research participants to be actively involved in the research process. This study made use of semistructured interviews to provide an interactional avenue to obtain ample understanding of the immigrant children, their teachers' and parents' perspectives. This provided the opportunity to collect much data. The interview



sessions were initiated with open-ended questions which gave participants the prerogative to respond freely (see Appendices G, H and I).

The reason for embarking on the use of semistructured interviews is to obtain first-hand narratives from the research participants. This type of interview is observed to suit children (Murkherji & Albon, 2010), especially in the Foundation Phase. This is because it provides the advantage of obtaining a firm grip on events and circumstances in the children's lives, and allows them to freely express themselves without feeling constrained. Moreover the best group to give facts on children's perspectives is the children themselves (Scott, 2002:99). Consequently, to obtain a comprehensive perspective of this study, in-depth semistructured interviews were employed. Immigrant children from Zimbabwe were interviewed in the comfort of their homes and in the presence of their parents. Each child was interviewed using a semistructured interview protocol with already prepared questions (see Appendix H). The interview protocol consisted of questions in three sections, which are biographical information, schooling experiences and identity. The interview protocol however served as a guide. Questions were asked in a way that was comprehensible and age-appropriate for the children. This afforded the opportunity of obtaining honest and sincere views of the children in terms of their predisposition to learn, both at home and at the school. They also gave their opinions on what it meant to them to live in South Africa.

Parents and teachers were also interviewed on a one-on-one basis (Creswell, 2007:226). This interview design is semistructured in nature (see Appendices G and I). The questions put to parents bordered on their personal experiences in South Africa, their children's schooling experiences and their stances toward the South African culture (see Appendix I). The main focus of questions put to teachers was on their individual experiences with the immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase (see Appendix G). The interviews with parents and teachers were conducted in order to achieve triangulation of obtained data from the observation of and interviews with the immigrant children. The obtained data were analysed using manifest and latent content analysis techniques (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004) to discover themes which formed the basis of discussion in the study. It is observed that semistructured interviews are typified by flexibility and power issues in research (Murkherji & Albon, 2010:123). The issue of power was addressed by making the children realise that they were participants in this study and that their contributions were valuable in the research.

### **3.7.1.2 Observation**

Observation is a data-gathering instrument that is used to understand a phenomenon in its natural setting (Merriam, 1998) and has its foundation in ethnography (Handwerker, 2001).

When used as a data-gathering technique, observation may be structured or unstructured. The major distinction between the two is that when using unstructured observation, the researcher goes to the study site without premeditating on distinct observable conducts from the participants. In this study the unstructured observation technique was used. This is due to the fact that unstructured observation has its foundation within interpretivism and it is used to appreciate and construe the cultural demeanour of a group of people as it applies to the context with joint meaning-making between the researcher and participants (Mulhall, 2003:306). This notion therefore assisted me in the meaning-making process as the behaviour and conduct of the immigrant learners from Zimbabwe were observed as events unfolded in their natural settings. However, observation protocol was prepared in advance to guide me in the various observable aspects of the phenomenon (see Appendix J). Observable phenomena such as classroom atmosphere, interaction between learners and teachers, and interaction between immigrant children and the indigenous children were documented in the observation journal. I also assumed the role of a non-participant observer (Creswell, 2007) who watched the participants from a vantage position without getting involved in the activities. The children in all the classes where observations were to be made had been previously informed by their teachers that they were going to receive a “visitor”. On arrival in each of the classrooms I was introduced as the expected visitor and therefore they were not too surprised to see me. This reassured them about my presence in the class and they could still carry on with their normal daily class activities. This added value to this study as there was no contrived or controlled behaviour as a result of my presence.

Visits were made to each school two days in week for three weeks. The children were observed inside their classroom, thus providing the opportunity to have first-hand knowledge of their interaction with their teachers and their peers, the language spoken in the classroom and learners’ emotions as they participated in classroom activities. It also provided a basis to receive insights from observable situations such as the classroom mood and non-verbal communications among learners and between the learners and their teachers.

They were also observed during playtime on the field with their peers, taking note of their interactions with different sets of learners in their various groups. This gave me the opportunity to observe the children as they were engaged in the process of socialization with their peers. During the observation session on the playground, attention was given to the language used by the children as they interacted with one another.

I also observed children’s interaction with their parents and in their neighbourhood. Some of the parents disagreed with the use of a videotape. However, observations were documented and recorded in the observation journal for analysis to gain a deeper understanding of how

immigrant learners from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase acculturate in the South African school community. This afforded the opportunity of analysing the data in an attempt to make an unbiased assessment of how these immigrant children acculturate by learning the culture of the school and thus identifying with the indigenous children.

### **3.7.1.3 Document analysis**

Documents are sources of information that enable the researcher to gain access to facts that are useful in substantiating evidence on the research site (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh and Sorensen, 2006). Documents are vital resources that can be used to complement the interviews. Moreover, documentary data are principally good sources usable in qualitative case studies, while an inquiry is rooted in the perspective of the problem being explored (Merriam & Associate, 2001:126). The strength of documents as a source data collection lies in the fact that they are already available in the situation and are rooted in the setting in which the research is conducted. Documents do not interfere with the situations or research settings in ways that the presence of the researcher could; neither do they rely on the inclinations of people involved in the data-gathering process (Merriam & Associates, 2002:13). Documents perused at the research sites were mainly learners' class workbooks. Learners' report cards were not made available to me for scrutiny at the time of conducting the research.

### **3.7.1.4 Field note**

A field note is an account of events observed in the research field as documented by the researcher. It is a portrayal of the experiences of the researcher regarding what is seen, heard and a reflection of his/her perception regarding the events (Greeff, 2005:298). The interview transcripts constituted the major field notes for the analysis of the data. Notes obtained from the non-participant observation sessions also aided the analysis of the data (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2001; Sanjek, 1990). I adhered to the advice of Gay and Airasian (2003:213) that interview transcripts obtained in a study may form part of the field notes in the study. Field notes were useful for individual reflections as the study commenced (Emerson et al., 2001; Mulhall, 2003). This is because the self is unstable and there is a possibility of creating one's self in the course of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). The use of field notes facilitated comprehensive understanding of the experiences of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase in a peri-urban primary school.

### **3.7.2 DATA-GATHERING PROCESS**

Obtaining permission to conduct research at the schools involved an extended path involving concessions from several interested parties in the research. Data collection began after obtaining ethical approval from the University of Pretoria Ethics Committee, the Department of Education, and permission from the school authority and parents of the immigrant children. I sought children's consent by telling them about the study in a way that they could understand. I also asked their parents to talk to them about the study and the scope of their involvement. Consultations were made with the school principal for formal data-gathering process to begin. The principals of the schools gave me two days in a week for three weeks, within which I was able to observe the children in class and on the playgrounds during break at their respective schools. Data-gathering instruments used were semistructured interview protocols, observation schedules and field notes.

### **3.8 RESEARCH QUALITY PRINCIPLES**

The following quality standards and principles were embarked upon in this study.

#### **3.8.1 TRUSTWORTHINESS**

In quantitative studies reliability and validity are the measures of enhancing the trustworthiness of a research (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). On the other hand, reliability and validity in qualitative studies are usually measured as the trustworthiness of the study (Golafshani, 2003). It has been argued that the issue of validity and reliability are contradictory in a qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The quality of a qualitative study is more appropriately measured by its trustworthiness (McGlobin, 2008). This may be seen as the conformity of the study to measure what it was supposed to do (Creswell, 2005). Furthermore trustworthiness of data collected is the respondents' acceptance and truthfulness, and the investigator's precise presentation and explanation of requested narratives.

Trustworthiness improves the thoroughness of qualitative research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Trustworthy data hinge on dependable origins and the investigator's endeavour to discard subjectivity or personal bias. The trustworthiness of this study was enhanced through the diverse research instruments, giving rise to a platform constituting triangulation of the research instruments. Data were transcribed verbatim to make provision for the unambiguous analysis of participants' views. Different procedures were also used during the analysis and in making meaning of data collected in order to present clear interpretation of the outcome of the study. The choice of participants from diverse backgrounds also lent

credence to the trustworthiness of data collected. The trustworthiness of this research was also ensured through the unrelenting efforts of my supervisors who followed up the data capture and analysis processes. Another way of ensuring validity in a qualitative research is by eliminating bias through maintenance of clear intentions and purpose (Onwuegbuzie & Leech 2007:242). This was kept in mind from the inception of the study and maintained throughout the data collection and analysis processes.

### **3.8.2 CREDIBILITY**

The use of content analysis in this study enhanced its credibility. This involved the use of different views of research participants through the collection of in-depth and comprehensive data which are capable of providing a clear interpretation of the study (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007:244). Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007:244) further acknowledge that such exhaustive data are able to enhance “transferability”. This is the extent to which knowledge can be extended to similar events and circumstances. In this study participants were allowed to give a comprehensive description of their experiences in a detailed manner. Children participants were interviewed in a friendly way, using simple, comprehensive language that is understandable by them.

Credibility was also enhanced through peer debriefing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), data triangulation and leaving an audit trail of data used in the study (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Participants were allowed to peruse the transcribed interviews to ensure that they were not wrongly interpreted. Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007) categorized credibility into internal and external credibility. Internal credibility can be defined as the accuracy, relevance, consistence, objectivity, reliability, as well as trustworthiness of elucidated data. Furthermore conclusions arrived at should be contained by the fundamental background or class under study (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007:234). External credibility denotes the extent to which the result of a study transverses diverse groups of people, situations, perspectives and periods (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007:235).

### **3.8.3 TRANSFERABILITY**

Fade (2003) observes that transferability is the extent to which a study can predict similar occurrences or be broadly applied in a more general manner. Qualitative study may not proffer generalizable statistical evidence. Findings from a qualitative research are frequently applied to a broad scope of scenario and not just the particular research context (Fade, 2003). The onus therefore rests on the researcher using a qualitative approach to determine the extent to which findings from the study may be extended to similar context. This could be ensured through collection of broad and detailed data capable of providing a comprehensive

account (Guba, 1981:86). This study may, arguably, not apply in other contexts. This is due to the fact that users of qualitative findings are at liberty to find a common ground in their own experiences and conclusions from other findings (Fade, 2003:140).

#### **3.8.4 DEPENDABILITY**

Guba (1981) suggests that dependability of qualitative research is the degree of stability of data gathered. The use of a small research sample in a qualitative research makes dependability a debatable issue (Bellefeuille, Martin & Buck, 2005). However, dependability may be enhanced through triangulation and keeping audit trail (Guba, 1981). Furthermore the ease with which a different researcher can keep track of the research process and audit its path is a measure of dependability (Sandelowski, 1986). Dependability was ascertained in this study by following a research process that was easy to assess.

#### **3.8.5 CONFIRMABILITY**

Confirmability is the demonstration of the means by which the researcher arrives at the conclusion of the research findings (Koch, 2006) in a way that is objective and free from private interpretation (Mouton, 2001). Guba (1981) points out that triangulation and the researcher's reflexivity are some of the ways to guarantee confirmability of research findings. This study therefore followed a clear and transparent path to advance the confirmability of the findings. This was done through engaging in a research process open to scrutiny during data-gathering and analysis.

### **3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The study of Flewitt (2005) became a useful resource for me in this study because the study centres on ethical issues among vulnerable individuals. The immigrant children from Zimbabwe are categorized as vulnerable individuals because of the usual stigmatization of immigrants as foreigners. Flewitt (2005:553) argues that ethical considerations become significant in the course of conducting research. These issues are particularly noticeable when vulnerable groups such as immigrant children in the Foundation Phase are explored. However Denzin (1989:83) proposes a valuable suggestion to be kept in mind when exploring vulnerable subjects:

... our primary obligation is always to the people we study, not to our project or to a larger discipline. The lives and stories that we hear and study are given to us under a promise, that promise being that we protect those who have shared them with us.

This suggestion was kept in mind as this study was undertaken. The promise of protection was made and upheld by adequately protecting the confidentiality of all research participants.

Pseudonyms were used in place of participants' real names and identities. The identities of the schools used as research sites were also protected using pseudo names to replace the real names of the schools.

Approval to conduct research was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria before the commencement of the study (see Appendix K). The Department of Education (DoE) in Gauteng Province was also contacted to obtain permission before the study proceeded (see Appendix E). Permission was also sought from the school authority and the school governing body, teachers and parents of the learners (see Appendices A, C, G and H). Furthermore assent of the children who participated in the study was also obtained (see Appendix I). However, it will be worthy of note to point out that oral assent of the children was obtained while their respective parents signed the assent letters for their children. Parents and teachers were involved in helping to give the children a clearer intent of the research as these adults are the ones closer to the children and could understand them better. They also knew how to explain issues to children in a way that they could understand (Mukherji & Albon, 2010).

Efforts were made from the outset of the research to provide ample information to research participants and concerned authorities about the research purpose, intentions and process involved. The reason for this was to ensure transparency (Glesne, 2006). After contact and verbal explanations, participants were allowed to have the consent and assent letters for a minimum of 24 hours. This was to allow them to read over the contents for better understanding before they went ahead to decide to participate or not. Participants were given the option to withdraw at any stage of the research, if they felt uncomfortable to continue. They were assured that their non-participation carried no penalty of any sort. Quality time was also spent with research participants to establish a good rapport and to create a friendly and amiable environment. This was in order to make sure that the data gathered were reliable and free from power influence. This way, the credibility of the study was further enhanced.

### **3.10 DATA ANALYSIS**

Data analysis progressed concurrently with the data-gathering process. Analysis began as soon as the first interview was conducted. Data obtained were transcribed to identify key information emerging from the interviews and to obtain deeper understanding of the information gathered. This formed the basis of understanding the experiences of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase. The data obtained from the study were analysed using a mixture of content analysis and document analysis. Content analysis involves the scrutinizing and analysis of observation protocols and interview transcripts, to



discover emerging themes from the study (Mayring, 2000). The units of analysis, as specified by Graneheim and Lundman (2004), were determined from the collected data. A unit of analysis is defined as a broad identification of relevant items to be examined (Mertens, 1998), which consists of observations conducted on the immigrant children, field notes taken on the research site and the transcribed interviews. The portions that were identified to give answers to the research questions were coded, and the emerging themes identified and studied (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996:32). Documents pointing to the research questions, in terms of work done in class were studied and matched with responses given by the various respondents of the study. All these produced a platform for decision-making and interpretation of obtained data.

The transcripts obtained from conducted interviews, field notes and observation journals became the units of analysing the research (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992). Aspects of the transcript that were carved out and coded for analysis also constituted the units of analysis for this research study (Weber, 1990). I experienced the rigours associated with making meaning of the obtained data as reiterated by Breen (2006). The context of analysis entailed scrupulous identification of meaning units. Consequently, I generated meaning units from the transcribed interviews, field notes and the observation journal obtained from the study. Meaning units became emergent aspects of words or phrases that offered similar accounts in relation to what was being aimed at in the research questions posed in the study. This was deemed as utterances or portions that were linked to one another in terms of what they comprised and contained. This idea was translated to scrutinizing the field notes, document analysis and observation journal entries made at the research sites (Baxter, 1991). They were pertinent aspects which suggested the essence of what was being explored during the research (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004: 106). The meaning units that were carved out were compressed to elicit the perspectives of texts that were recognized as pertinent portions with meaning, capable of complementing the research questions set out in the study. The consolidated or compressed meaning units are taken to imply the trail of reducing, at the same time, retaining the core essence of the portions of texts under analysis (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004: 106). Related data which seemed to answer the research questions were rigorously perused in an attempt to commence the interpretation of analyzed data. These steps led to the report writing process.

### **3.11 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

A number of limitations may be found in this study. Firstly, qualitative data is limited, in terms of not having many samples. This study comprised only four learners. This sample could be an exception rather than rule. A more comprehensive view would have been possible if more



learners were available. However, in qualitative research, the scenario is not usually about generalization, but about depth (Fade, 2003).

Secondly, one of the children interviewed could not divulge information properly in English, thus short-circuiting data collection and limiting the extent to which this child's voice could be heard. This anomaly was lessened by the data obtained during the observation session and from his parents. The parents of the learner who could not fluently speak English gave me the fortitude to match what I had observed during the observation session with the learner in comparison with what they had narrated to me about the experiences of the learner in question.

The third limitation involved immigrant parents not owning up due to their immigration status, in an attempt to run away from immigration officers. The spectrum of learners explored could have spanned the entire range from Grade R to 3, but was truncated by this anomaly. This limitation however persisted and was beyond my control since I had to allow voluntary participation. Fourthly this study was viewed from the perspective of the immigrant children from Zimbabwe. The study did not extend to consider the perspective of the indigenous children among whom these immigrant children cohabit. This issue became a gap in this research and produced an opportunity for further research in terms of finding ways to research learners from Grade R to 3, in an attempt to obtain a holistic perception of the acculturation of immigrant children from Zimbabwe from Grade R to 3.

### **3.12 IN RETROSPECT**

This study gave me ample experience in various dimensions on research in general and research involving children in particular. Gaining access to the public school was quite challenging. This may be due to the fact that gaining access could entail a protracted route of negotiation involving a number of stakeholders (Mulhall, 2003:309). Therefore obtaining access was not just a simple procedure that involved having dialogue with those in charge of affairs at the research sites. It also involved substantial investment of time and a rigorous attempt to obtain the consent of all stakeholders in this study (Mulhall, 2003:310). On my first visit to the public school I arrived at the reception and told the receptionist that I wanted to see the principal. She asked me what my mission was and I told her that I was a Master's student from the University of Pretoria. I told her that I had chosen the school as my research site. I showed her the approval letters from the University of Pretoria Ethics Committee and the Department of Education. She turned me away and told me I could not see the principal because she (the principal) was not likely to be interested in my research and that she would not agree to my "disturbing" the children and obstructing their classes. I tried explaining to her but she refused bluntly. However I persuaded her to give the documents to the principal

to see, and hear her personal opinion. I sat down at the reception for about one hour. When she saw that I was not ready to give up, she forwarded my documents to the principal. To my amazement, the principal called for me immediately and with much enthusiasm welcomed me to do my research.

Initially I intended to involve immigrant learners from Zimbabwe in Grades 2 and 3 as participants in the study. The principal gave me the telephone numbers of the parents of the learners to contact them personally. I was also told to obtain hand-written consent letters from the parents once they agreed to participate in the study. However, none of the parents contacted agreed to participate in the study. Some of them took me for a con person who was using 'research' as a cover to abduct children. This revealed to me how sensitive parents can be when it comes to children who are minors. It also revealed the intricate ethical issues involved in research concerning children. Moreover it gave me the opportunity to think through the position stakeholders put children in. I reiterated the view of Hendrick (2002:55) that "if children are to be seen as social actors, they first have to be seen as capable of social actions." I questioned what the response of the children would be if they were allowed to decide if they wanted to participate in the study or not. This became a concern, especially considering the views of Woodhead and Faulkner (2002:31) that adults who are overseers of children should make it easier for the children to contribute to things that interest them. The question that arises is: what happens when such children are prevented from having access to information that concerns their welfare? This thus becomes a gap for research in ethical issues relating to children. Another intellectual puzzle that arose from that experience was what was the level of perception of safety immigrant parents had for their children in South African schools and the level of confidence they had in decisions taken by the schools on behalf of their children.

When I could not convince the parents of the Grades 2 and 3 learners to participate in the study, I extended the participation to children in Grades 1 and R. This time the principal, understandably, absolved herself from getting involved. I had to find a way on my own of contacting the parents. I first contacted a parent of one Grade 1 learner, and she subsequently introduced me to three other parents who voluntarily participated in the research. I was required by the school principal of the public school to obtain handwritten consent from the parents of participating children and also that I could only interview learners at home in the presence of their parents. These, to me, were not difficult conditions to adhere to. However I learned a lot from this experience that research with children is not as easy as it seems. It is also important to take cognisance of and gain the permission of gatekeepers at every stage of the research.

Gaining access to the children in their respective homes was not such a difficult task. This was because my contact parent was well known to other participating parents. This made access easy for me. I tried to conduct an informal interview with the children to be sure that they were capable of answering my questions. I was excited to see that, contrary to my thinking, these children could tell their stories in a logical and comprehensible manner, though not as clearly as adults.

### **3.13 CONCLUSION**

This chapter presented adequate understanding of the research design and methodology employed in this study. It also gave details on the research instruments, data collection and analysis as well as the relevant ethical issues. Reflecting on the whole research process, I submit that research with children, though very challenging, can also be very interesting if the research process is effectively managed. Chapter Four presents a discussion on the research findings following an analysis of data.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### Voices of children participants corroborated by the stories of their parents and teachers

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*“Immigrant children bring a different set of experiences and perspectives on understanding the world... For (them), their understanding of the world is based on beliefs, customs, and skills learned from their home cultures—usually very different.”*

(Onchwari et al., 2008:270)

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter Three focused on the choice and justification of the research design and methodology embarked upon in channelling a course in exploring the acculturation of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase. This chapter aims at presenting how the data collected from learners, parents and teachers were interpreted. Data were collected using observation, interviews and document analysis. The analysis of participants' life experiences led to the meaning-making of their insightful messages conveyed through their narratives. This provided an avenue to extract constructive deductions which were a reflection of their expressions in the various data collected. Children participants in this study told their stories in a way that conveyed profound meaning deducted from their narratives. Many of them responded in monosyllabic responses which is typical of children (Scott, 2002). However their responses during the interview sessions were matched with what was observed during the observation session. Their stories were also corroborated with those of their parents and teachers in order to obtain a more insightful understanding.

Themes and categories emerged from data obtained through observations, interviews and field notes. The themes obtained from the stories of immigrant children from Zimbabwe are presented as follows:

- Outgoingness and a sense of belonging as predictors of acculturation.
- Evidence of academic integration and performance.

These themes were consistently applied to each Zimbabwean immigrant learner's case to depict particularity.

On the part of the parents of the Zimbabwean immigrant children, the following themes consistently emerged:

- Familial perspective of academic experience.
- Familial perspective of linguistic and cultural predisposition.

- Protection against acts of discrimination.

These perspectives were addressed with respect to the parents' narratives obtained from the interview transcripts.

Emerging themes obtained from the stories narrated by the teachers are consistently classified under the following themes:

- Evidence of acculturation from the teacher's perspective.
- Adjustment mechanism of Zimbabwean immigrant learners.
- Teacher's perspective of academic performance.

In analysing the data, I briefly discussed the theme for each group of participants. I then chose a narrative as a category from the story of each of the participants in relation to the emerging themes. This was done to address the particularity of each situation and to allow an easy-to-follow flow of discussion presentation. The story of each learner was introduced with the narrative peculiar to him. This was intricately woven into the biographical information as a point of connecting each child's background with his storyline. Findings obtained from the data collected from the learners were first presented for each participant. This was followed consistently with the presentation of findings from data collected from parents and teacher of each child in a systematic way. The choice of this method of data presentation was deliberate to allow an easy course of understanding each learner's story in a logical manner. This course was also preferred for its relevance and efficacy in providing answers to the research questions. All the four children participants in this study were males between the ages of six and seven. The participants were all males because these were the children whose parents gave consent for them to participate in the research. The stories of learners were corroborated by those of their parents and teachers not because data collected from children were unreliable but for triangulation of obtained data. Moreover children characteristically answer questions with monosyllabic responses because, though they are adept at understanding their world, they sometimes lack sufficient communicative skills to express themselves (Scott, 2002:115) as much as adults.

The names of the children are Tommy, Dave, Chester and Nicholas. The names assigned to the teachers who taught them are Ms. Sylvester, Ms. Bowen and Ms. Mawande respectively. The names of the parents are Mr. William, Mrs. Tshangarai, Mr. and Mrs. Chiron, and Mr. and Mrs. Timbale respectively. The research sites are Saint Agness Catholic School, and Bakwena Primary School. Table 4.1 showcases names of learners, their grades, names of the schools, their parents and teachers who participated in the study.

**Table 4.1: Profile of children participants**

Learner	Grade	Name of school	Parent	Teacher
Tommy	2	Saint Agness Catholic School	Mr. William	Ms Sylvester
Dave	1	Bakwena Primary School	Mrs. Tshangarai	Ms Bowen
Chester	1	Bakwena Primary School	Mr. & Mrs. Chiron	Ms Bowen
Nicholas	R	Bakwena Primary School	Mr. & Mrs. Timbale	Ms. Mawande

A summary of the proposed themes and associated categories that emerged from the children's story is presented in Table 4.2.

**Table 4.2: Proposed themes and associated categories for children participants**

Theme	1. Outgoingness and a sense of belonging as predictors of acculturation	2. Evidence of academic integration and performance (As observed by the researcher via observation of class work)
Category	1.1 Tommy: "When I come to school every morning, my friends always welcome me."	2.1 Tommy did all the tasks given to him by his teacher today as I observe him in the classroom and he coped without much assistance because he was proficient in English.
	1.2 Dave: "My friends taught me how to speak Zulu. I have fun with my friends."	Dave was proficient in English and had academic achievement.
	1.3 Chester: "I make my friends play with me, I have lots of friends."	Chester did not achieve academically due to linguistic challenge in the language of learning and teaching.
	1.4 Nicholas: "My friends like me very much."	Nicholas had academic achievement because he could decipher the language of instruction.

**Table 4.3: Summary of themes and associated categories emerging from parents' stories**

Theme	1. Familial perspective of academic experience	2. Familial perspective of linguistic and cultural predisposition	3. Protection against acts of discrimination
Category	1.1 Mr. William: "I will say his academic performance is excellent."	2.1 "I wouldn't mind him speaking any of the South African languages <i>but</i> I would want him to know his own culture preferably."	3.1 "Not that he has really complained about something."
	2.1 Mrs. Tshangarai: "I can say they are doing better with the introduction of CAPS."	2.2 "I am not worried. He can also learn Afrikaans and I am willing to encourage him."	2.3 "... but there was not any problem, not even on the first day..."

	3.1 Mr. Chiron: “We use our native Shona language... Having to learn English now became a problem...”	3.2 “Learning <i>the South African culture</i> is not a problem.... But he must not practise it.”	3.3 “I see he has so many friends in school so this means there is no discrimination.”
	4.1 Mr. Timbale: “We are not complaining. He’s getting on very well and I think he’s got the potential to do better.”	4.2 “He speaks the local languages... We would actually mind if he takes on the South African culture.”	4.3 “We haven’t got any kind of report of <i>discrimination</i> .”

**Table 4.4: Summary of themes and associated categories emerging from teachers’ stories**

Theme	1. Evidence of acculturation from the teacher’s perspective	2. Adjustment mechanism of Zimbabwean children	3. Teacher’s perspective of academic performance
<b>Category</b>	1.1 Ms. Sylvester: “I think they are easily accepted... At first they don’t feel free until after a month or few weeks.”	1.2 “It is not easy for them to start schooling here. At first it’s difficult for them, but as time goes on, they cope.”	1.3 “The performance of the immigrants is better than the ones that are here.”
	2.1 Ms. Bowen: “One of them (Dave) adapted beautifully.”	2.2 “... he always understands things before I explain to him.”	2.3 “He does so brilliantly. His work is very lovely.”
	3.1 Ms. Bowen: “He could not speak English at all at the beginning of the year... It was difficult for me to communicate with him...”	3.2 “I sit him next to another boy from Zimbabwe, so they could communicate.”	3.3 “I can say Chester is still struggling, not socially as much as academically.”
	4.1 Ms. Mawande: “When he came in here in the beginning of the year, he had friends with whom he came together from the crèche so that made it easy for him.”	4.2 “They don’t even notice he is from another country... They were together from the crèche so they just play nicely with him.”	4.3 “He didn’t have any problem with language... So that helped him to cope with his academic work.”

#### 4.2 OUTGOINGNESS AND A SENSE OF BELONGING AS PREDICTORS OF ACCULTURATION

In analysing outgoingness and a sense of belonging as predictors of acculturation, I considered issues that facilitated the ease of adjustment for each learner within the school environment. I observed that each learner had a point of connection with the school in a unique way that enabled him to mix with the indigenous learners despite coming from a foreign country. Various factors such as ability to freely mix with others, learn the indigenous language and find a unique level of connection with indigenous children allowed each child to freely settle in the school environment. It was observed in this study that all the children participants felt at home in their schools because they did not experience any act of

discrimination. Their outgoingness played a vital role in helping them to blend with their peers at the schools.

#### 4.2.1 TOMMY'S BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Tommy was seven years old at the time of conducting this study. He was born in Zimbabwe and brought to South Africa by his parents at about three years of age. He had a younger sister who was about four years old. He was a learner at Saint Agness Catholic School. This school was the first school he attended, apart from the pre-schooling he had. He was a vibrant child with a warm and welcoming disposition.

#### 4.2.2 TOMMY'S STORYLINE: "WHEN I COME TO SCHOOL EVERY MORNING, MY FRIENDS ALWAYS WELCOME ME"

Tommy was an amiable boy with a predisposition to mix freely with other children. A prominent narrative that characterized his storyline was that he had friends who were always optimistic to receive him every morning. This was an indication of acculturative tendency, implying that he was always welcome at the school. When he was asked how he felt about the school, he said, "*When I come to school every morning, my friends always welcome me.*" His reason for enjoying the school was based on the friends he made. He was a pleasant boy with a sociable personality. This gave him the inclination to blend easily with other learners. This character trait was observed when he began to respond to questions put to him, to decipher his connectedness with his friends at the school in terms of his ability to adapt to the school he found himself. He had this to say: "*We exchange our crayons, our erasers, and sharpeners.*" During the observation session I had in his class, it was observed that he mixed freely with other learners. He also had a meticulous attitude to his school work despite being free to relate with his peers.

What he taught me was an indication that it could be possible for a learner to have the ability to mix with other children with the resultant effect of having a sense of belonging to the school. He was able to learn in the midst of other children in the class, despite coming from a foreign country. He had only two close friends at the school but mixed well with other children. I gathered from Tommy's narrative that academic performance among children could be hinged on their degree of belonging to the academic environment. It thus seems that the work of teachers in the Foundation Phase may be eased when they are adept at fostering an amiable environment that allows children to relate and interact with their peers.

Tommy's predisposition to his friends at the school gave an indication that the extent of outgoingness among foreign children could assist in developing a character that surpasses



discrimination. Children tend to feel at home when they come from families that make room for interaction. He mentioned two prominent names of friends who played with him at the school; although there were other friends he played with who were South Africans. When I asked him to mention his friends' names that he played with, and the kind of game they played, he had this to say:

Kagiso and Nomfundo are my friends in class. This is the kind of game we play. The name of the game is "Touch." You must say the number you are, then the first number, number 1, then you touch another one.

Tommy's experience with his peers pointed to the fact that it is possible for immigrant children to hardly experience act of discrimination due to the simple nature of children. Tommy's two friends were South Africans. Tommy did not look for fellow children from Zimbabwe or children from other foreign countries. In studies I perused (e.g. Asanova, 2005; Chow, 2006; French, Seidman, LaRue & Aber, 2006; Piedra & Engstrom, 2009; Yeh et al., 2008), I found that adolescent immigrant students associate with students from the same countries or other foreign countries. The situation was however found to be different with children who participated in this study.

They had no yardstick for deciphering nationality or status symbol. At school it was found that their young ages and outgoingness played vital roles in their ability to blend with peers and the school environment. Outgoingness of children seemed to enhance their capability to free themselves from the possible differences they brought from their home country to the novel academic environment. Tommy's desire to return to the school the following year was evidence that he was acculturating to the school environment. When I asked him if he was willing to return to the school the following year, he was eager to respond in the affirmative. Consequently the wherewithal to blend with friends and scholarly matters seemed easy for him.

#### **4.2.3 DAVE'S BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION**

Dave was seven years old at the time of this research study. He was in Grade 1 at Bakwena Primary School at the time of this study. He was born in Zimbabwe and brought to South Africa by his parents. He had three other siblings; one elder brother and sister, and one younger brother. Out of all the learners who participated in this study, Dave seemed to be the most outspoken. Dave told me he could speak Shona (an indigenous language of Zimbabwe) and Zulu (an indigenous South African language) and he also conversed very well in English.

#### 4.2.4 DAVE'S STORYLINE: "MY FRIENDS TAUGHT ME HOW TO SPEAK ZULU"

Dave was a buoyant and energetic boy. The prominent narrative that characterized his storyline emanated from the response he gave during the course of the interview. He emphasized his capability to speak Zulu, an indigenous South African language and how he was able to learn the language. He said, "*My friends taught me how to speak Zulu. I speak English and Zulu at break time and during the school hours with my friends.*" His proficiency in Zulu was an indication of his connectedness with his friends. This was an indication that he acculturated to the academic institution via interaction and participation in learning the prevalent indigenous language spoken at the school. I attempted to probe Dave in an effort to explore the extent to which he was proficient in speaking Zulu. He responded by saying "*I speak Zulu with my friends very well.*" Dave's experience was a second dimension of evidence that interaction and association of children with more knowledgeable others could predispose them to learning the prevalent language in a community of practice like the primary school. His experience was evidence that he was already acculturating to the academic environment.

I inquired from Dave if he was at peace with the academic institution. He responded by saying "*I have fun with my friends.*" Dave also seemed to enjoy the company of his teacher. This was revealed when he said "*I like my teacher very much, and I enjoy mathematics as a subject.*" Dave's experience with his friends and teacher seemed to have led to his stance on acculturation and predisposition to the academic institution. These experiences gave me insight into the actions of immigrant children who sometimes seem to look for something or someone to connect to in an attempt to find ways of adapting to the culture of the school. Dave could relate well to the vicinity of the school environment and actors therein because of the instinctive tendency of outgoingness commonly found among children in the Foundation Phase. During the interview session, I observed a deep vacuum in Dave when he was asked to recount some of the experiences he had had while he was in Zimbabwe. I felt a kind of resentment and his voice was shaking. It was as if he felt some degree of pain because he was taken away from Zimbabwe at an early age. He seemed to have felt disappointed that he was not allowed to have a taste of Zimbabwean culture. Consequently, it was concluded that he seemed to have deliberately attached to the South African culture. This may have culminated in his aggression to learn Zulu in order to connect with the South African culture as a replacement for the lost Zimbabwean culture. He said these words sighing, "*I was small in Zimbabwe that's why I don't know (my culture) and I was taken away to South Africa.*" Dave seemed not to really like his disconnection from his home culture. It was observed during the interview session that he was almost in tears. In addition he could not confidently answer subsequent questions. For example when he was asked if he had been to Zimbabwe

since he was brought to South Africa, he only responded with a nod. This loss seemed to be compensated for, through his attachment to the South African culture.

I noticed that Dave's parental disposition to allowing him to freely mix with indigenous children created an atmosphere that encouraged him to develop a high level of interaction with his friends. Dave had a long list of South African friends that he exchanged visits with. He was free to go to their homes and they were free to come to his house. Dave asserted that, *"sometimes I go to their homes and sometimes they come to my house to play."* It was observed in literature (e.g. Berrigan et al., 2010) that the sense of belonging and acculturation of immigrants can be measured by racial mix of age cluster with which immigrant children spend their leisure time.

Dave's experience gave a clear direction that when children are not spatially isolated from their community they have the tendency to commence a relationship that may foster a sustained process of acculturation. Dave opined, *"All my friends are South Africans and I enjoy playing with them."* Dave's experience attested to the fact that when immigrant children are accepted wholeheartedly by their peers, they may not be vulnerable to incidences of victimization (Hodges, Boivin, Vitaro & Bukowski, 1999). His connectedness with his peers became evident when the researcher asked him whether he played games. He became interested in answering the question in a hilarious manner saying, *I play soccer, hide and seek and tsotsi police.* "The researcher asked him to elaborate on what the games entailed. He reiterated with these words:

It's just that you stand in a line. Let's say this side is the police, that side is the tsotsi. After then they say, you go to the police, then you start to run towards (*chase*) each other. If you get the one who is the tsotsi, you put him in jail.

The inference made from Dave's description of the game pointed attention to the connectedness and the sense of belonging he had with his peers. It was a kind of interaction and participation that was devoid of prejudice and intimidation. My observation as Dave narrated his story pointed to a significant research finding made by French et al. (2006) that discrimination is not normally salient among immigrant students before the age of adolescence. However a prominent narrative which pointed to selectivity in terms of choice of friends was documented from Dave's story. I conclude that immigrant children seem to have a preference in the choice of friends, especially in terms of having to locate friends that could interact with them without hate or violence. He mentioned three names of peers he would not want to associate with. The reason he gave pointed to the aggressive nature he saw in them, and as such he was not willing to associate with them. His words are presented, *"Because these boys are boring and always like to fight, I don't play next to them."*

#### 4.2.5 CHESTER'S BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Chester was seven years old at the time of conducting this research. He was a Grade One learner from Zimbabwe and schooled at Bakwena primary school. He was born in Zimbabwe and brought to South Africa at about the age of three years. He is the fourth child in the family. He has four siblings. He liked his school and this was demonstrated when he revealed to me that he would want to return to the school the following year.

#### 4.2.6 CHESTER'S STORYLINE: "I MAKE MY FRIENDS PLAY WITH ME"

Chester was a lively boy with a friendly disposition. One noticeable characteristic of Chester was his inability to converse fluently in English. I made sense of his story through constructivism and interpretivism. However, he portrayed a strong enthusiasm for school and he had strong ties with a number of indigenous children at the school. The strong affiliation he had with other children was a demonstration of the fact that he was welcome at the school. The prominent narrative that depicted his affiliation to the school and his peers pointed to his sense of belonging to the school via the connectedness he had established with his peers. When asked what he enjoyed at the school, he said, "*I make my friends play with me.*" A scrupulous analysis of his narrative suggests that he had strong ties and allegiance with friendship, despite being in Grade One. This gave me the drive to explore the world of immigrant children in the Foundation Phase that they seem to have some ardent charisma of association that fosters acceptance among their peers. However, a notable challenge Chester had to face was his inability to construct words properly in English. He was also not proficient in any of the indigenous South African languages. This aroused in me the curiosity regarding how he survived academically in terms of coping with the LoLT and how he coped with his friends during interaction with them. However, in spite of this obvious challenge in communication, deep messages could be deciphered in my interaction with Chester. This gave room for constructive meaning-making of data collected in the course of the interview.

Chester demonstrated a strong sense of belonging to the school and to his teacher. He made this known by saying, "*I have lots of friends and I like my teacher because she teaches me everything.*" Despite his linguistic challenge, he could decipher how to communicate with his friends and teacher. His experience was a first hand information that gave me the understanding that linguistic challenge among children may not be a total limiting factor to their ability to interact and negotiate their belonging to an academic institution. The intellectual puzzle that evolved as I reflected on this finding was to explore how immigrant children who are linguistically challenged like Chester manage to create rapport with their peers and teachers.

Chester's storyline indicated the ingenuity of the language of communication among children in the Foundation Phase. The intellectual puzzle also centred on his acculturative tendency which was unabated. This finding places tremendous responsibility on the researcher in terms of exploring avenues that could afford an understanding of the dynamics involved in capturing the relevant pedestal of understanding that attempts to give clarity to the finding at stake. Chester's storyline is divergent from the observed trend among other immigrant children explored so far in this study in the Foundation Phase. After deeply reflecting on Chester's case, I pondered as the data capture progressed to consider the possibility of finding a similar case or similar cases that could corroborate what was observed in Chester's storyline. As part of the academic rigour in research, Chester's storyline indicated how challenging it could be, when exploring a scenario from a child's point of view. Although his response was limited during the interview session, data obtained was triangulated by observation and response from his parents and teacher. This made the meaning-making aspect of the research easier.

#### **4.2.7 NICHOLAS' BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION**

Nicholas was a Grade R learner of the Bakwena Primary School. He was six years old at the time of this study. He is the first child of his parents. He was born in Zimbabwe and brought to South Africa as a baby. He had one younger sister who was about three years old. He was an amiable boy with a charismatic character. During the interview it took some time to engage him in a conversation by virtue of his frivolity. Eventually, his mother found a way of assisting in making him grant the interview.

#### **4.2.8 NICHOLAS' STORYLINE: "MY FRIENDS LIKE ME VERY MUCH"**

The prominent narrative describing Nicholas in this story reveals his character and amiability towards his peers. When I asked if he had friends at the school and how much his friends liked him, he said, "*My friends like me very much.*" This was an exposition of his tendency to associate with peers at the school and an indication that he was not being prejudiced against. Nicholas' storyline was another exposition that children in the Foundation Phase hardly experience discrimination. A point of attraction to South Africa expressed by Nicholas pointed to a number of things he enjoyed. He said, "*I like Chips, coke, chocolate, bubble gum, toys, and skipping ropes.*" Children seem to attach importance to things that amuse them and they seem to relate very well to such things that interest them. On one occasion during the observation session, his teacher informed me that she often gave learners chips to encourage them to concentrate. It was not unlikely that Nicholas looked for the opportunity to go to school to receive chips from his teacher. This was likely a point of attachment that likely enhanced his desire to go to school and adjust to the culture therein. When he was

asked whether he liked his teacher, Nicholas responded ecstatically by saying “yes” in the continuum.

Nicholas revealed to me that he spoke Zulu in the taxi on his way to and from school. The extent of interaction displayed by Nicholas likely resulted in his comprehension of Zulu. The capacity he had to interact was a depiction of his outgoingness which seemed to have initiated the process of acculturation to the academic environment. I was afforded the opportunity to learn in terms of the importance of immigrant children associating with more knowledgeable others, and the possibilities it predisposed them to, in terms of acculturation. It became first-hand information to learn that when immigrant children display extroversion as character traits, they likely become adept at learning and speaking the prominent indigenous languages in a particular environment. He only spoke Zulu with his friends in the taxi, on his way to school and not at home. A platform of reaching the indigenous learners at the school was fostered by Nicholas’ comprehension of Zulu. This gave him a podium for negotiating the capacity to socialize with his peers who were regarded as being more knowledgeable in terms of speaking Zulu. His proficiency in Zulu seemed to have given him the sense of belonging to the school environment. When I asked Nicholas how he had learned Zulu, he said, “*I don’t know.*” However I reasoned on his inability to explain how he learned and spoke Zulu. It became clear to me that, through association with peers, language learning becomes easy for children of his age. Consequently Nicholas’ experience gave an indication of the relationship existing between outgoingness (an innate character trait) and acculturation to the society of influence among immigrant children in the Foundation Phase.

#### **4.3 EVIDENCE OF ACADEMIC INTEGRATION AND PERFORMANCE**

Data collected on academic integration and performance were based mainly on document analysis and attestation from parents and teachers on the academic performance of the children. I also gathered evidence on academic performance based on observation of learners in their classrooms and scrutinizing previous work done in their class workbook.

##### **4.3.1 EVIDENCE OF TOMMY’S ACADEMIC INTEGRATION AND PERFORMANCE**

During the observation session with Tommy, I checked his notes and the tasks given to him by his teacher. He had done all the tasks and the homework. This was an indication that he was coping with academic work. He was proficient in English, an indication that his parents communicated with him in English. However, he could also understand the traditional language spoken to him by his parents at home. His parents communicated with him both in English and Shona (a Zimbabwean indigenous language). From my observation, I found that when parents are adept at communicating with their children in English, it could become an



academic advantage for the children. This practice likely paved the way for Tommy's capability to comprehend academic tasks. His teacher attested to the fact that Tommy could communicate with her and could write in English. Tommy's teacher pointed to his character when it was time for academic work. His teacher attested to the fact that he was academically focused and willing to learn.

#### **4.3.2 EVIDENCE OF DAVE'S ACADEMIC INTEGRATION AND PERFORMANCE**

I observed that Dave was one of the best performing learners in his class. His mother and teacher also made a similar declaration concerning his academic excellence. I observed that Dave was very adept in the use of English, which was the medium of instruction at the school. He had a very good ability to learn and was quite inquisitive. He could reason logically and constructively. These qualities helped him to perform excellently in his school work. Dave's parents made time and resources available to him at home to support his learning. These were likely to contribute to excellent academic performance of Dave at school.

#### **4.3.3 EVIDENCE OF CHESTER'S ACADEMIC INTEGRATION AND PERFORMANCE**

Chester was reported to have notable linguistic challenge in terms of the LoLT (see section 4.2.6). The repercussion of Chester's linguistic inability became evident when I went through the academic tasks given to him by his teacher. He did not achieve academic excellence; neither did he demonstrate adequate learning. The main reason for his inability to demonstrate academic learning centred on his linguistic deficiency in the LoLT, which was English. Despite this obvious challenge, Chester was able to socialize with his peers. His experience was an eye opener to the fact that it is possible for immigrant children in the Foundation Phase to have acculturative tendencies to the point of being able to socialize with peers, but their ability to socialize may not translate into academic advantage. In essence though Chester was not doing well academically, he was enthusiastic about the tasks ahead of him because he had not given up hope.

#### **4.3.4 EVIDENCE OF NICHOLAS' ACADEMIC INTEGRATION AND PERFORMANCE**

Nicholas was in Grade R at the time of conducting this research. I noticed in his class workbook that he could write reasonably well. He could also identify numbers and letters. When I was in Nicholas' class to observe him, and to see how he fared academically my first point of attraction was how he conversed well in English. His teacher called him during the observation session to perform a task, which he did well, despite the fact that he did not know that the researcher was in the classroom to observe him. This was an indication that

Nicholas did not experience any language barrier in terms of the LoLT. His comprehension of the LoLT seemed to have assisted him to learn very fast. At another time to observe Nicholas, he cited his family's itinerary in terms of all the places that he was to visit for the weekend. His expression in English was quite fascinating with respect to how he articulated his construction in English.

Out of the four learners Chester was the only one found to have an obvious academic challenge which negatively impacted on his academic wellness at school. The effect of this is elaborately discussed in section 5.2. The next section discusses the narratives of the parents.

#### **4.4 FAMILIAL PERSPECTIVE OF ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE**

I discussed the familial perspective of academic experience by looking at the views of each parent on the academic welfare of their children. I also looked at parental involvement in the academic wellbeing of their children. This section contains a brief introduction of each parent, their challenges since they came to South Africa followed by their views on their children's academic performance at the schools.

##### **4.4.1 MR. WILLIAM: "I WILL SAY THAT HIS ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IS EXCELLENT"**

Mr. William is Tommy's biological father. He came to South Africa in February 2008 with his wife and son for economic reasons. At the time of this study, he had been living in South Africa for four and a half years. The prominent narrative describing his passion for living in South Africa entails the notion that the economic situation in South Africa was more preferable to him than in Zimbabwe. He elaborated by saying that "*The economy here is more stable compared to what it is back home.*" His experience was an indication that influx of people to South Africa was based on looking for greener pastures because their situation was dire in their usual country of residence.

Mr. William shed light on the academic performance of Tommy at Saint Agness Catholic School. I inquired how Tommy performed academically in an attempt to match his response with what was observed during the observation session in Tommy's class. Mr. William had the following to say about his son's academic achievement:

I will say that his academic performance is excellent. For instance last year his report card showed that he really did well. I am satisfied; it's just that I don't know whether the South African curriculum satisfies all the learning needs that are required of him at this stage



The concern he raised centred on the issue that bordered on the extent to which the South African curriculum was meeting the academic needs of Tommy. He seemed to have felt that there was disparity between the South African and Zimbabwean curriculum. Mr. William's concerns indicated an aspect of the predicaments experienced by parents of immigrant children in an unusual society. His concern for Tommy was heightened by these words, "*If he goes back to Zimbabwe and learns there, will he be at the same level with the children there?*" A critical look at these words revealed the possibility of foreigners returning to their country, and the implications that may stem from their children's academic experience in South Africa to the point of comparability with what exists in their home country.

Tommy enjoyed the assistance of his parents in terms of his academic work. His parents helped him with his school work. This was a regular back up plan embarked upon by his parents to assist him in his studies. When I asked Mr. William whether he assisted Tommy in his studies, he spoke as follows, "*Most of the time I help him with his school work. And sometimes his mother also helps him.*" Mr. William's statement revealed that Tommy enjoyed parental support in terms of his academic work. The implication seems that, apart from the teaching that Tommy had at the school, his parents also contributed to his academic success.

#### **4.4.2 MRS. TSHANGARAI: "I CAN SAY THEY ARE DOING BETTER WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF CAPS"**

Mrs. Tshangarai was Dave's mother. She had been living in South Africa for almost four years when this interview was conducted. She was self-employed because she could not obtain employment in any of the South African formal employment sectors. However, her husband was employed as a manager in a health-related Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO). Mrs. Tshangarai held a foreign diploma certificate and was studying accounting at the University of South Africa in an attempt to improve her academic status. She pointed to a prominent matter which seemed to characterize the experience of a number of immigrants in South Africa because of the sociocultural diversity, particularly the language.

When I asked her about what her challenges were in South Africa, she said, "*It was only a difficulty in the language barrier.*" This was an important consideration which I pondered on because of the effect that a language barrier could have on immigrant children and their parents. The matter became important because children tend to learn directly or indirectly from the predicament of their parents. However my observation was challenged by the tenacity that children possess in terms of learning another language, disparate from their parents' linguistic predicament. This became an eye-opener, especially with respect to

Dave's experience, compared with his mother's, that immigrant children bypass the linguistic predisposition of their parents because they tend to have the fortitude to interact with their peers who could be seen as being more knowledgeable within the school context. I quickly pondered over the theoretical framework of the study which has to deal with the degree of interaction with more knowledgeable others in a community of practice like the primary school setting. It gave me a predisposition to reflect on the ingenuity that accrues to children in terms of their extent of association with peers at all cost until they become proficient in the use of an indigenous language, which their parents may not be capable of demonstrating. To this effect, it became clear how immigrant children develop the knack for acculturation via the acquisition of the indigenous language which is vital as access to the cultural tenets of the mainstream society which the children have found themselves.

An exploration of academic experiences may become challenging if the foundational circumstances surrounding an immigrant child are not explored. Dave's mother (Mrs. Tshangarai) mentioned the fact that the curriculum in Zimbabwe was different and faster than what was being used in South Africa. This was of concern to her because she felt Dave's academic trajectory was much slower compared to if he was still studying in Zimbabwe:

The curriculum here is a bit different from the Zimbabwean curriculum. I can say it's a bit slower and behind here. My sister who is in Zimbabwe has a child in Grade 2. But her child is much faster than a Grade 2 learner here because they are learning faster. I can say they are a bit ahead. My child may not be able to do some of the things they do in Grade 1 in Zimbabwe.

Dave's academic performance was however encouraging as far as his mother was concerned, despite the disparity in curriculum between South Africa and Zimbabwe. Her comments are presented:

I can say they are doing better. They are doing better with the introduction of the new curriculum. CAPS or what? I think they are much better.

Parental dedication was a prominent feature of Mrs. Tshangarai. She mentioned her commitment to ensuring that Dave succeed in the long run by encouraging and communicating the positive effects of hard work to him because she had a goal for him to earn a degree later on in life:

As a parent I will be helping with the school work and the homework. I would give him counsel on how important education is. I would tell him my personal experiences that I passed all the other levels of education but I didn't go on to the University so that is why I'm not having a nice job. So you must work hard, finish matric, pass it and go to the University. Pass your degree and even do the masters. And then you can find a nice job. My husband and I always discuss this with the children.

Parental motivation seemed to enhance the focus of Dave on his studies from evidence obtained from Mrs. Tshangarai. This was valuable information that aided my understanding of the probable dynamics behind Dave's focus and commitment, even at an early age. Mrs. Tshangarai mentioned the importance of going to the university as an avenue to secure the future. Although Dave was a child at the time of this interview, regular communication about the importance of studying to earn a degree in order to obtain a good job seemed to have been passed on to him. All of these were intended at fostering a suitable mental stance for him to settle down to study.

Dave had the benefit of receiving support from his parents with regard to his academic trail. This seemed to have had a positive contribution towards his excellence in his school work. He enjoyed close monitoring and guidance at home. When I asked who helped him with his homework his mother reiterated;

Most times I help him with his homework. Even when I'm tired or I come home late I ask my other children to help him with his homework. But I will check whether they have done it nicely.

Evidently, Dave experienced unreserved support from his parents which gave him a sound academic foundation that is expected to propel him to higher academic aspirations. This is an indication that when children are afforded such support; it gives them the fortitude to excel academically. Dave's parents also made provision for educational software which are resources to enable him succeed academically.

#### **4.4.3 MR. CHIRON: "WE USE OUR NATIVE SHONA LANGUAGE...HAVING TO LEARN ENGLISH NOW BECAME A PROBLEM"**

Mr. Chiron was Chester's father. He came to South Africa from Zimbabwe during the economic crisis period of Zimbabwe. He came with the entire family because of the quest for survival. He came to South Africa in 2007, but his family joined him in 2008. His relocation to South Africa was an involuntary one because he did not seem to be attuned to the happenings in South Africa as a result of the stories of relentless crime that occurred unabated. When asked what his challenges were, he unequivocally said, "*Initially I wasn't really comfortable coming to this society*". He opened up to me that the economic situation in Zimbabwe forced him out of his society of usual comfort. Coming to South Africa became a matter of compulsion for the entire family. He affirmed by saying, "*We have managed to come. We have managed to mix up and stay.*"

The major challenge and point of concern to Chester's parents was his linguistic challenge. Firstly, an exploration of the language of communication used at home was

made in an attempt to comprehend the extent to which it influenced Chester's linguistic acumen at school. It was found that at home, the predominant language spoken was Shona (a Zimbabwean indigenous language). Shona was used more than English to communicate with Chester. From findings obtained from Chester's parents, Chester's inability to communicate well in English became glaring because the predominant language spoken at home was Shona. Mr. Chiron claimed responsibility for Chester's inadequate comprehension of the English language. He asserted that their habitual indulgence in the use of Shona language was a limiting factor that impeded his comprehension of English. Mr. Chiron agreed that for Chester to become fully integrated into the new school he attended, he had to start learning English. Chester's father admitted:

We use our native Shona language. Sometimes we use English but mostly it's the native Shona language. He was basically exposed to more of the Shona language which is our home language. Having to now learn in English among those who do not understand his native language became a problem. We have to start working on that so that he can integrate with others.

The familial experience of Chester did not seem to help him to cross the transition line from Shona to English. This further consolidated my understanding that the language spoken at home could deter the linguistic survival of immigrant children, especially when it came to academic achievement. Secondly, in an attempt to explore the level of academic assistance given to Chester on the home front, I was interested in knowing whether Chester received regular assistance with homework from home. It was discovered that Mr. Chiron paid attention to resolving academic issues with his son by regularly going through homework with Chester. Chester's brothers also assisted him with respect to his academic challenges. Mr. Chiron's response to the question on familial assistance with respect to homework was, "*One of us in the house assists him with his homework. It's either me or his brothers.*"

#### **4.4.4 MR. AND MRS. TIMBALE: "WE ARE NOT COMPLAINING. HE'S GETTING ON VERY WELL AND I THINK HE HAS THE POTENTIAL TO DO BETTER"**

Mr. and Mrs. Timbale were immigrants from Zimbabwe, and the parents of Nicholas. They came to South Africa as a result of the economic downturn in Zimbabwe. They came to South Africa in anticipation that their life would be better than it was in Zimbabwe. However they found that it was not as easy as they had expected. The prominent narrative which describes their challenges in South Africa points to the acts of discrimination against them by indigenous South Africans. They were called "Kwerekweres", a stigmatization against foreigners who have no understanding of the indigenous languages spoken in South Africa.

They said this to describe the discriminatory acts against them, *“It’s very difficult to dwell with people who are not welcoming and who call you names. We are normally referred to as Kwerekweres.”*

According to Mr. and Mrs. Timbale, the academic performance of Nicholas was not on the decline. His parents expressed satisfaction with his academic progress at the school based on the academic record they got, but they affirmed by saying that Nicholas’ academic performance could still be better. From all indications, his comprehension of the LoLT seemed to have assisted him in gaining an understanding of the curriculum of study in the Foundation Phase. Nicholas’ parents both thought he could do better academically. Nicholas’ father said, *“We are not complaining. He’s getting on very well and I think he’s got the potential to do better.”*

Immigrant parents seem to transfer their acquired cultural capital with respect to hard work to their children. Nicholas’ parents were poised to train him in a godly way with a view to imparting academic focus and responsibility on him by teaching him to have the fear of God. By teaching him the fear of God, they felt this idea would help to advance him in the line of academic integration. They also believed in getting close to him as a tool to lead him away from error and extraneous distractions. They seemed to have the perception that it was important for him to develop a culture of reading to academically broaden his horizon. Nicholas’ parents both spoke on the issue of their ploy to integrate him into academic focus: We want to mould him to become a hard worker. Part of our strategy is to make him grow up as a Christian. We try to be as close to him as possible. We try to encourage him to like books and know how to read.

#### **4.5 FAMILIAL PERSPECTIVE OF LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL DISPOSITION**

This theme originated from the stories of the parents on how they prepared their children to acculturate to the South African school environment. This section also reveals parental predisposition to their children taking up the South African culture. It exposes the notion that immigrant parents have about their children’s choice of which culture to practise in the host country. It also highlights what immigrant parents tell their children about the culture of the host society and how they get their children connected to their home culture.

##### **4.5.1 MR. WILLIAM: “I WOULDN’T MIND HIM SPEAKING ANY OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN LANGUAGES BUT, I WILL WANT HIM TO KNOW HIS OWN CULTURE PREFERABLY”**

Mr. William revealed Tommy’s linguistic predisposition. He mentioned the fact that Tommy was not fluent in any of the indigenous South African languages. However, he was grasping

a few words in some of the South African languages. Mr. William revealed Tommy's linguistic inclination to the South African languages: "*He only knows a few words but he's not fluent in any South African language.*" Mr. William was flexible in terms of his son's tendency to speak the indigenous South African languages, "*I wouldn't mind him speaking any of the South African languages. Basically with children they do pick up local languages.*" The connection of language and culture made the researcher to inquire about the cultural preference of Mr. William between the South African and Zimbabwean culture. Mr. William preferred Tommy "*to grow in his home culture*" instead of the South African culture but, "*I will want him to know his own culture preferably.*" This was evidence that immigrant parents had an inclination to condone their children in terms of learning the languages of the novel culture, but not to the extent of imbibing the totality of the unusual culture.

I asked Mr. William a question that involved how he managed to connect Tommy to the Zimbabwean culture, and at the same time maintain a balance between the South African and Zimbabwean cultures. This was to decipher the connectedness between language and culture. He explained that he ensured this by paying regular visits to Zimbabwe to enable Tommy have contact with his home front culture. Mr. William reiterated:

Culture can be learnt through language. At home we speak our home language. Once in a while, at least twice a year, we go back home. He gets exposed to his grandmother and other family. That's how we try to keep him in touch with our culture.

Tommy was thus seen to confront an array of internal and external forces that were cultural in nature. He had to learn the language of learning and teaching (LoLT), the Zimbabwean culture and the indigenous South African languages at the same time. For example, Mr. William revealed that Tommy was eloquent in terms of the Zimbabwean language. He further reiterated: "*He's very fluent in Shona language. He speaks it very well.*" This is an exposition that immigrant children seem to navigate different dimensions of learning, apart from the curriculum of study at the school.

#### **4.5.2 MRS. TSHANGARAI: "I AM NOT WORRIED. HE CAN ALSO LEARN AFRIKAANS AND I AM WILLING TO ENCOURAGE HIM"**

Mrs. Tshangarai pointed to the intermittent use of English to communicate with Dave at home in an attempt to assist him in comprehending the LoLT. English language was the medium of linguistic transition on the home front. This was another factor that was noticed in his academic path as an advantage because he spoke and understood English well. I found that Dave's ability to comprehend English likely paved the way for him to be reached by his teachers and peers. Undoubtedly his comprehension of English seemed to assist him in understanding the curriculum of study. Mrs. Tshangarai responded to the researcher's



question in terms of the use of language, “*Our home language is Shona. We use English just to help them because they attend an English-medium school.*” The response from Dave’s mother gave the researcher a clear perspective of reasons behind his ability to cope with the South African curriculum. Mrs. Tshangarai attested to the briskness at which Dave learnt a number of South African languages. She said Dave could speak “*Zulu, Sepedi and Sotho.*” This was another clear indication that Dave was well connected with the South African culture because, according to literature, the comprehension of the language of communication in an unusual culture allows penetration of that culture (Yeh et al., 2008).

A vivid indication that Dave’s parents were not intimidated that he was learning the South African indigenous languages emerged when she voiced her desire that Dave could “*learn all the 11 languages of South Africa*”. She reiterated her stance in terms of her agreement that Dave could learn indigenous languages by saying, “*I’m not worried. He can also learn Afrikaans and I am willing to encourage him.*” By virtue of the link between language and acculturation, a pedestal of adapting to the South African cultures via the avenue of learning the indigenous languages seemed to have paved the way for the acculturation of Dave to the typical South African school terrain. With all of these assets in terms of linguistic capital, which fostered the acumen and propensity to socialize with peers at the school, a culmination of the right predisposition to settle down to learn was aroused in Dave. Hence the report obtained from the researcher’s observation and also from his mother that he was coping academically in his class. Dave’s case was a special case, disparate from what was observed in the literature. Wang and Phillion (2007) observe that in the American context, immigrant parents were disinterested in their children losing their home languages. Mrs. Tshangarai’s case was a deviation from the American stance. This was an indication of linguistic liberality that was displayed towards her son. She said this during the interview:

Personally I love languages. I don’t have a problem with any type. If possible I can learn everyone’s language. So it’s not a problem with me. Also I can say it also helps them interact with other people just to communicate because it’s not all the people who are speaking English. So if they can speak at least a South African language, they can communicate without any difficulties.

Mrs. Tshangarai displayed an understanding of the requirements of an immigrant child in a novel culture. It was as if she understood the process of acculturation in an unusual society. She mentioned the language of communication as an important agent of socialization. It became lucid in this research that some of the parents of immigrant children could be passionate about their children learning at least one of the South African languages in an attempt to ensure their adaptation to the South African society. A line of demarcation was however drawn by Mrs. Tshangarai when the researcher inquired whether she would not mind her son claiming the South African identity. She said, “*I am still thinking about that. I am*

*still in-between. I still want him to be a Zimbabwean but he can make a choice when he is old enough.*” Her response demonstrated a stance of liberality but it was a struggle. This gave the researcher the first-hand experience that, though immigrant parents may not mind their children learning another language, they may be reluctant to allow them to change their identity to that of a novel terrain. A notable point of compromise noticed was in terms of Mrs. Tshangarai’s appreciation of academic excellence. She appeared to have reached a compromise that her son could learn the indigenous languages as long as these languages would assist him to adapt, socialize and learn effectively at school.

#### **4.5.3 MR. CHIRON: “LEARNING THE SOUTH AFRICAN CULTURE IS NOT A PROBLEM.... .BUT HE MUST NOT PRACTISE IT”**

Mr. Chiron demonstrated linguistic tolerance by not minding his son learning the indigenous South African languages. He saw the art of learning the indigenous South African languages as a source of power and knowledge to his son. He said the following with regard to linguistic tolerance:

I do encourage them because language is power. It’s like education. When you learn something, it’s to your advantage. It’s a tool for communication. You can move anywhere and you can communicate.

However, when the researcher inquired reasons behind his son’s inability to speak the indigenous South African languages at his disposal, he responded by saying:

May be it’s because there were mostly English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking people where we were staying and they were mostly interacting in English. Maybe that’s why they were not able to pick up the native languages. Although they can pick up one or two words, I can’t say they can communicate fluently.

A valuable finding emerged from Mr. Chiron’s response to the researcher’s question which was posed above. This gave an indication that at times children may be confused in the midst of diverse languages of communication. This situation may be responsible for Chester’s inability to proficiently speak any of the indigenous South African languages. The amazing experience that was prominent to the researcher was the ability of Chester to interact with the other children at school. This experience was profound because it gave me first-hand information that suggests that children always find common ground to interact with one another despite the linguistic limitation between them. In older children, according to a number of studies (e.g., French et al., 2006; Wang & Phillion, 2007; Yeh et al., 2008), immigrant children use a common language of communication to initiate the process of acculturation in a novel society.



The challenging effect of Chester's linguistic inability became evident to his parents because of his inability to comprehend the LoLT. They admitted that he was struggling as it was noticed during the observation session at the school and during the interview with Chester. However, they rose to the challenge by organizing extra classes for him with a teacher who was from Zimbabwe. This idea was institutionalized by his parents because this teacher was also from Zimbabwe and could speak Shona to Chester, and at the same time translate from Shona to English for him. Chester's father confirmed this by saying:

Yea, I can say it's really affecting him but we are trying to work on that one because he is really being affected. We have arranged extra lessons for him with someone who has basic a foundation. He is also from Zimbabwe and will be able to translate to him and take him through the path so that when he catches up he can now understand.

By virtue of the seamless relationship between language and acculturation as suggested by the scholarly work of Yeh et al. (2008), I became interested in exploring Mr. Chiron's state of mind about his son learning the South African culture. He said Chester could learn the South African culture but that he had to ensure he would not practise it. As far as Mr. Chiron was concerned, learning a culture is different from putting it into practice. This suggests that parents of immigrant children mind their children practising another culture that is different from their home culture. He categorized the extent to which his son could learn the South African culture by spelling out certain important details. He broke down learning into knowing and doing. Mr. Chiron wanted his son to know the South African culture to his son's social advantage. This, I believe, could mean that he only wanted his son to learn the South African culture to be able to interact with the indigenous children and integrate into the system. However, a quick presentation of Mr. Chiron's argument brings out an important issue as far as acculturation to the mainstream society is concerned. Socializing with members of the mainstream society is thus seen in this study as an approval of Mr. Chiron's acceptance of his son's acculturation to the mainstream society for the purpose of acquiring the capacity to adjust to the academic terrain of the school environment. He revealed his stance on the issue of culture by saying:

I have to understand exactly from which point he wants to take it from. Learning is not a problem. It's a little bit to his advantage. If he wants to learn there is no problem but he must not practice it. Learning and practicing are two different things. I don't have any problem with learning. He can understand more about the people around him.

It has been suggested in literature that acculturation and identity mediation are complex processes which are intricately connected and negotiated (Adebanji, 2010; Yeh et al., 2008). In an attempt to consolidate findings in terms of the extent of acculturation of Chester to the South African academic environment, I inquired further on how Mr. Chiron wanted his son to be referred to, in terms of identity. As suggested by McCaslin (2009), identity is the

answer to the question of who an individual is. Consequently it was a point of interest for me to know what Mr. Chiron's perspective was, in terms of how he wanted his son to be referred to and how he had to act. Mr. Chiron simply responded to the question posed to him by saying, "*I would want my son to be referred to as a Zimbabwean.*" This assertion was an ardent adherence to the Zimbabwean culture, despite the extent of liberality displayed by Mr. Chiron to the South African culture. It also suggested to the researcher that the acceptance of foreign nationals in terms of the academic and social tenets of the novel society is not an indication of acculturation and identity to the mainstream society. Rather, such acceptance was geared towards the acquisition of scholastic culture which was seen as capable of assisting immigrant children to succeed and adapt to the new society of sojourn and the academic environment.

#### **4.5.4 MR. AND MRS TIMBALE: "HE SPEAKS THE LOCAL LANGUAGE...WE WOULD MIND IF HE TAKES ON THE SOUTH AFRICAN CULTURE"**

Mr. and Mrs. Timbale were of the mindset that Nicholas did not need to speak any of the South African languages. They seemed to be drawn away that speaking an indigenous language is a measure of withdrawal from home front cultural tenets. However there was no intervention on their part to impede his move to learn the indigenous languages. This family was seen as a sensitive family in terms of their cultural predisposition. They held more tenaciously to home front cultural tenets than the other parents that were interviewed in this study. This finding gave the researcher the information that different families tend to hold on to home front cultural tenets than the others. Nicholas' parents opined:

He speaks the local languages but we don't encourage him. When he is at home he pretends like he doesn't know how to speak. But we know he speaks. I don't know which one of the languages he speaks in particular because it's a mixture.

Nicholas' parents expressed their feelings in terms of the versatility of English as an international language. They wanted him to develop his ability to speak fluently in English because of the future prospects it could bring. I obtained first-hand information on how Nicholas' vocabulary was built. He had a furnished predisposition to learning and speaking English from the home front. This finding gave the researcher the idea of how he got to know and speak English at the school. This home front approval of English as a language of communication assisted him to adjust to the curriculum. The learning of the local languages assisted him to acculturate to the academic environment. This was an indication that familial expectations in terms of the future prospects of immigrant children could provide a foundation that may propel the children towards achieving academic excellence.

The thing is that even our own Shona language he will easily pick up. We know that as long as he remains here he will pick the South African language. We want him to master English. We want

to mould him to be internationally prepared so that wherever he goes he would be able to speak internationally. (Mrs. Timbale): if you go to most countries English is the medium of communication.

Mr. and Mrs. Timbale were of the opinion that teaching their son the Zimbabwean cultural tenets was important. They were determined to do this by teaching him the Zimbabwean language which was to lead him to the details on his home country culture. They agreed it was not possible to make him learn all he needed to learn at that age with respect to the Zimbabwean culture. However, they believed he could learn with time. They expressed the fact that Nicholas had what they referred to as a “*subculture*”. Nicholas’ parents seemed to know the importance of cultural teaching via language. Their consideration became understandable to the researcher because of the knowledge acquired in literature in terms of the connection between language and the development of culture (Asanova, 2005; Yeh et al., 2008). It was obvious to them that they could not stop him from negotiating the South African culture. The difficulty expressed by Nicholas’ parents was in terms of their inability to display the Zimbabwean cultural tenets to the level that he would comprehend them. They reiterated that Nicholas’ understanding of the Zimbabwean culture was in terms of what he saw at the home front. Inasmuch as they wanted him to grasp an understanding of English, they taught him the Zimbabwean culture in their indigenous language. They reiterated:

We teach him things that are related to our culture which we want him to do. By that he would be learning our culture gradually. At this age we cannot teach him everything that he needs to know about our culture. But we gradually teach him some good values that will form part of his culture. Already he has his own subculture, a mix of South African culture and our Zimbabwean culture. He doesn’t know the Zimbabwean culture. He takes it as the culture which is in the house.

Mr. and Mrs. Timbale however made a stern disapproval of Nicholas, imbibing the total culture of South Africa. They apparently felt objected to this. They said:

We would actually mind if he totally takes on the South African culture. That’s why we are always close to him. In actual fact we say our culture is the best. The way we are brought up is the best. So we want that to happen for our children as well.

#### **4.6 PROTECTION AGAINST ACTS OF DISCRIMINATION**

This theme emanated from data gathered on the views of parents on their children’s schooling experiences and how they were received and treated at the schools. The order followed from previous analysis above is still adhered to. I commence with Mr. William’s (Tommy’s father) views.

#### **4.6.1 MR. WILLIAM'S VIEWS**

On the schooling experience of Tommy, Mr. William corroborated his son's response that Tommy had only attended Saint Agness Catholic school besides the pre-school he had attended before. Mr. William gave a vivid picture that there was never any time that Tommy was discriminated against at school. This gave an indication that Tommy had an amiable learning experience at Saint Agness Catholic School. Therefore, Tommy's experience at school paved the way for easy comprehension of what he was taught at the school.

#### **4.6.2 MRS. TSHANGARAI'S VIEWS**

Dave's mother knew the importance of transiting from one culture to another. As soon as the entire family relocated to South Africa, she was burdened by the challenges that could confront Dave as he changed over from the Zimbabwean culture to the South African sociocultural terrain. One such challenge that she pondered upon was discrimination against foreigners. To her surprise she found this did not exist at the school. She found that teachers were welcoming and accommodating to all students. According to her, her son was never labelled "foreigner", which is the usual enigma of stigmatization wherever people from an unusual culture are present. She established a channel of communication with her son's teacher as a constant follow-up on his wellbeing at the school. The foundation of Dave's coping capacity was thus inferred from the familial engagement with him and the predisposition it gave him in terms of how well he had coped at school with academic endeavours. This was the commencement of the indication that could exist in terms of the ingenuity of enjoying familial benefits in connection with the teaching and learning that children experience at school. These findings gave the researcher the pivotal intuition that the learning experience of children undoubtedly seems to depend on diverse forces that are at play between the home, cultural milieu of the society of sojourn and the academic environmental factors. She opined ecstatically:

When he started Grade R it was excellent. I was worried about what my child would experience. I thought maybe when he gets to school they would treat him as a foreigner or maybe he would not be able to cope with the other children. But there was not any problem, not even on the first day. Because he never went to any crèche or preschool so I was wondering how he would mix with the other big boys at school. But I found that the Grade Rs have their own play fields and this was very fine. The teachers also are very welcoming. I communicate with his Grade R teacher almost every week.

In the same vein I became interested in exploring whether Dave ever reported incidences of discrimination or maltreatment against him from his peers at the school. The mother had this to say:

There has never been any case to that effect. He has never reported any case of hatred or discrimination against him. The teachers are very nice and accommodating.

The reason behind such an inquiry was due to the report in literature that discrimination against immigrants at school predisposed them to high dropout and failure to complete their studies (e.g. Gilbert, 2009; Matsuda et al., 1993; Ogbu & Simons, 1998; Tinto, 1975, 1993). However, many of these studies centred on the secondary school experience of immigrant students. This aroused my interest to make an inquiry to explore if such acts of discrimination were present in the Foundation Phase. Consequently the observation that Dave was coping at school became clear in terms of the underlying factor with respect to the absence of discriminatory forces in his academic path.

#### **4.6.3 MR. CHIRON'S VIEWS**

Mr. Chiron made a valuable contribution to issues relating to discrimination. Discrimination could arise as a result of inability to communicate with peers within the classroom and the school environment. His perspective indicated the fact that immigrant children hardly become victims of discrimination because they are from another country. His assertion pointed to the fact that children did not really have to be foreigners before they were bullied at school as bullying is a common occurrence in the school environment. As far as he was concerned, his son was never discriminated against because he never brought such reports home. His utterance suggests that children seem to be invulnerable to acts of discrimination but could be bullied by other students, but not because they were from another country. He spoke:

I have never heard any report from him but you know kids bully one another now and then in school whether they are from the same country or from another country. You can't run away from bullies at schools. He hasn't been discriminated against. I see he has so many friends in school so which means there is no discrimination. It's only the language, and which we have to work on.

#### **4.6.4 MR. AND MRS. TIMBALE'S VIEWS**

Mr. and Mrs. Timbale gave an important detail relating to issues on discrimination. They opined that children rarely become victims of discrimination even if they were from another country. When the researcher asked if Nicholas ever came home with any report of discriminatory acts or unfair treatment from his friends, they responded, "*We haven't got any kind of report*". Their experience seems to support a number of findings in the literature in terms of the absence of discrimination among immigrant and indigenous children in a novel sociocultural milieu. It gives an invaluable opportunity to discuss this finding with the already known experience among immigrant children.

## 4.7 EVIDENCE OF ACCULTURATION FROM THE TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE

This and subsequent themes emanated from the stories of the teachers with respect to how well immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase are coping within the schools. This theme highlights factors that are responsible for the adjustments of the immigrant children from their teachers' perspectives. It follows sequentially from Tommy's teacher to Nicholas' teacher.

### 4.7.1 MS. SYLVESTER'S ACCOUNT

Ms. Sylvester was Tommy's teacher at Saint Agness Catholic School. She was a teacher of learners in the Foundation Phase. She was an immigrant teacher from Zambia. She had been a Foundation Phase teacher for four years in South Africa. Out of her four years experience in South Africa, she had spent two years in Saint Agness Catholic School at the time of conducting this study. She understood the challenges confronting immigrant children in the Foundation Phase. She mentioned the fact that the population of immigrant children at Saint Agness Catholic School was more than that of the previous school where she taught.

Ms. Sylvester expressed the acceptance of immigrant children by their peers at Saint Agness Catholic School. She mentioned the condition for acceptance as the language of communication. The language of communication was thus seen as a tool of academic and social integration among children in the Foundation Phase. Ms. Sylvester spoke:

I think they are easily accepted at the school because what is important is the language because when they do not understand the language that is used in the class with other learners, it is difficult for them. Even in the previous schools I have taught, English is being used so they are easily accepted and accommodated.

Immigrant children have been reported by Ms. Sylvester to adjust quickly to the primary school community. She opined that initially the immigrant children could not converse with their peers because of their inability to speak the indigenous South African languages. The common language of communication between immigrant and indigenous children was the use of English language. Their brisk adjustment was thus seen as an inherent characteristic to get used to other children. Ms. Sylvester disclosed to the researcher in a private discussion that she was very close to the family of Mr. William. She was a frequent visitor to their residence and found that Tommy's parents conversed with him in English. Tommy found a common ground to adjust because he could interact with his peers in English. This kind of interaction at the home front seemed to have led to Tommy's acculturation to the school environment. The type of acculturation experienced by Tommy could be perceived as

academic and social acculturation because it was facilitated by the learning of English. Ms. Sylvester recounted:

I think the immigrant children adjust faster to the LoLT. They normally use English when they are playing at home and with their parents. So they find it easier to communicate with their friends.

The school, according to Ms. Sylvester had no policy in place to aid the adjustment of immigrant children to the school environment. Ms. Sylvester said they were considered “*like other children who*” were at the school. A strategy that she employed to facilitate the acculturation of the children to the school was in terms of initiating the use of English between the indigenous and immigrant children. This idea assisted in bridging the gap in communication between the indigenous and immigrant children. She opined that the children had a turnaround time of almost a month before they began to adjust to the other children in the school. Ms. Sylvester elaborated:

At first they don't feel free with their friends until after like a month or few weeks when they are used to them. But as teachers we help them to use (speak) English to the newcomers so that they feel at home as well.

Ms. Sylvester gave evidence that pointed to the acculturation of immigrant children to the school, firstly, in terms of their freedom to interact with other children. Secondly, she pointed to the fact that they began to learn the indigenous languages spoken by the South African children. Thirdly, they sat with other children by attempting to share and understand them better. The response of Ms. Sylvester is presented:

They start moving together, playing together. They also start learning the indigenous languages. They sit down with their friends and share ideas, understanding each other.

A sense of belonging to the school was promoted through cultural teaching by Ms. Sylvester. This was achieved through learning of other languages and meaning of words. According to Yeh et al. (2008), language is a link between cultures because people gain access to other cultures via the tool of language. It seemed Tommy felt at home because platforms of discussion in different home languages were allowed. The discussion in terms of culture is presented:

When there is a topic that relates to culture, we ask other learners from other countries ‘what do you call this in your local language at home’? They also interact with their friends. They don't feel shy. They don't feel left out because they are immigrants. They feel very happy and free. They feel like we also recognize where they come from, that we recognize their home language.



#### 4.7.2 Ms. BOWEN'S ACCOUNT

Ms. Bowen is a white South African who, according to her description of her identity grew up in the Bakwena community where the primary school which Dave attended was situated. In terms of the geographical serenity of the environment, she had a vast understanding of the dynamics of operation at Bakwena Primary School. She studied Foundation Phase Education in one of South African's universities. It was her second year at Bakwena Primary School and her second year of experience of teaching in the Foundation Phase because she graduated in 2010. In her first-year experience at the school, she did not have any immigrant learners in her class. At the time the study was being conducted, she had three immigrant learners that she taught concurrently. Out of the three immigrant learners, two of them were from Zimbabwe. Ms. Bowen taught both Dave and Chester. Consequently her accounts on both learners are hereby presented, starting with Dave and followed by Chester.

An indication of how children acculturate became evident from Ms. Bowen's storyline. The ability to decipher the LoLT was mentioned as the pertinent tool to acculturate both academically and socially. Ms. Bowen cited two distinct examples of Zimbabwean children to corroborate her experience of Zimbabwean children in the Foundation Phase. One of the learners, Chester, was depicted as learning slowly due to his inability to comprehend the LoLT. The other learner, Dave, displayed astute understanding of the LoLT.

Ms. Bowen indicated that Dave was acculturating without stress because he could decipher the LoLT.

Well as always, you know it will definitely differ from child to child as you can't really define somebody by what race or what country they are from. Each of the children in my class adapted differently. One of them adapted beautifully, the other one is still struggling.

In pursuance of factors that tend to challenge the acculturative tendencies and academic performance of children in the Foundation Phase, the researcher probed Ms. Bowen to narrate if there were any incidences of discrimination against immigrant children from Zimbabwe. She expressed her view by saying such was not common among children in Grade One. There seems to be no line of demarcation among children in the Foundation Phase in terms of country of origin and race. During the interview session she responded to the question put to her on discrimination against immigrant children from Zimbabwe by saying:

Not within the Grade One classes. As for the other phases I don't know how it works. I don't know if the children are more aware of the differences between the Zimbabwean children and the South African children and the whole xenophobia thing. Like I said with the little ones as long as you



are friendly and you are willing to share your “chappies” (bubble gum), it doesn’t matter where you come from.

The importance of cultural teaching was explored to capture an understanding of the extent to which it assists immigrant children from Zimbabwe to establish a sense of belonging to their environment. Ms. Bowen applauded the relevance of “Life skills” as a subject in terms of further establishing an amiable environment among immigrant and indigenous children. Tutelage in terms of the requirement to accept people from other countries appears to be the central theme of the subject. She emphasized the fact that children need to learn to accept others from other countries seeing that South Africa is *“only a small country in a big world.”* Ms. Bowen however hammered on the quest among children to get connected to *“family, home and the life surrounding them at home.”*

Many of the themes in life skills are linked towards discussion about racial acceptance and the cultural differences and similarities. The themes are also in terms of how we get along and adapt to living peacefully together. It’s difficult to touch on ‘in your culture, how do you do it’? Because at this age they are not really aware of culture as much as they are aware of family, home and the life surrounding them at home. I love telling them about different countries outside South Africa because I think it’s important for them to learn from a very young age that we are only a small country in a big world. And what we say and do are important.

This narrative substantiated my inclination that the dimension of tutelage given to children in the Foundation Phase could be responsible for the sense of belonging among immigrant children. The narrative gave the researcher an indication of the possible source of undeniable rapport and understanding demonstrated towards immigrant children in the Foundation Phase. Consequently, it was not difficult to delve into the realm of intricate matters that could be responsible for the focus and determination expressed by the immigrant children to demonstrate the necessary “belongingness” required to display academic achievement at the school.

In Chester’s case, Ms. Bowen faced a dilemma on how to teach him because she was not able to reach him with the curriculum which was presented in English. Ms. Bowen knew Chester had to be helped in adjusting to the school environment but it was a predicament as to how to help him commence acculturation due to the linguistic challenge he had. This finding pointed to some of the problems encountered by teachers of immigrant children in the Foundation Phase in terms of reaching children with linguistic challenges with the presented curriculum. Ms. Bowen could not speak Chester’s indigenous language; neither did she know what his indigenous language was. This pointed to the fact that at times teachers of immigrant children are at cross-roads on how to communicate the curriculum of study to non-

English speakers at the Foundation Phase. Ms. Bowen's challenge as far as reaching Chester is hereby presented:

He couldn't speak English at all at the beginning of the year and there was no one to speak his language, I'm not sure what language it is, but there was nobody who could speak his language, it was really difficult for me to try to teach him or communicate with him because there's no way of interpreting or make somebody explain in his language what he is expected to do.

#### **4.7.3 MS. MAWANDE'S ACCOUNT**

Ms. Mawande was Nicholas' teacher. She is a Black South African from Kwazulu-Natal. She had been a teacher at Bakwena Primary School for seven years. She started her journey as a preschool teacher before transiting to the Foundation Phase and had gained experience in terms of her desire working with children. She was comfortable with teaching immigrant children because the immigrant children she had been teaching could understand the LoLT. Consequently her experience with immigrant children was without challenges. According to Ms. Mawande, Nicholas seemed to have enjoyed the fact that he had attended the crèche before coming to Bakwena primary school. She saw the bonding that Nicholas had with his peers from the time he began to attend the crèche as an advantage which likely triggered his quick negotiation in terms of acculturating to the school environment and to his peers. She spoke:

As I said he was in the crèche before, so when he came in here in the beginning of the year he had friends with whom he came together from the crèche so it was easy for him to adjust.

#### **4.8 ADJUSTMENT MECHANISM OF ZIMBABWEAN CHILDREN**

In this section I discuss the means by which immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase adjust to the school environment from their teachers' perspectives.

##### **4.8.1 MS. SYLVESTER'S PERSPECTIVE**

A notable challenge experienced by immigrant learners was voiced by Ms. Sylvester. This was in terms of initial adjustment to the South African curriculum and academic community. She noted that immigrant children had brief transition periods within which they negotiated the South African curriculum and community. According to Ms. Sylvester, Zimbabwean children had a quick adjustment mechanism. She pointed to the fact that Zimbabwean children in the Foundation Phase interacted and coped well when they were in the midst of other children. This observation, made by Ms. Sylvester pointed to the benefits in terms of associating with more knowledgeable others in an attempt to gain the necessary skills, knowledge, attitudes and values that could foster integration into the academic environment.

Consequently, it was not too difficult for Zimbabwean immigrant children in the Foundation Phase to adjust to the academic climate of the school.

A valuable point made by Ms. Sylvester pointed to the possibility of learning by observation as suggested by Wenger (1998:164) because Ms. Sylvester observed that the immigrant children learned as they observed their peers. Wenger (1998) worked with adult apprentices and noted how they gained expertise. This study revealed the possibility of extending the frontiers of the Community of Practice (COP) tenets to children. She opined:

Yes, ah, it is not easy for them to start schooling here because their curriculum is different from the South African curriculum. At first it's difficult for them but as time goes on they change and cope with what their friends are doing.

#### **4.8.2 Ms. BOWEN'S PERSPECTIVE**

With regard to Dave, Ms. Bowen attested to his ability to cope socially with other children in the classroom and at the school. This was an indication of the adjustment mechanism of immigrant children. The reason may be due to his capacity to communicate with the indigenous learners and also his ability to engage with the LoLT as an instrument of comprehending the subjects he had to learn. This was evidence that learning the indigenous language and being adept at LoLT is an important requirement for the briskness at which immigrant children adapted to the school environment as well as the curriculum. Dave's experience points to the fact that the language of communication in the Foundation Phase could become a determining factor of the extent of academic stride that an immigrant child could take in order to holistically adapt to an unusual culture.

In Chester's case his inability to communicate in English became centre stage as revealed by Ms. Bowen. Consequently he could not excel academically because of this challenge. His inability to communicate in English did not however deter him from socializing with his peers, despite his inability to speak any of the indigenous South African languages. It could be predicted from Chester's case that children have the tendency to devise means of communicating with one another despite linguistic shortcomings. During the observation session with him, I noticed that at times he could slightly comprehend English language, but not always. This was an indication that he had a very small vocabulary in English. Although this was the case, his peers could decipher what he communicated to them. Ms. Bowen's response on the issue of language of communication opened up another important aspect of children's disposition to participation in a school environment. She commented on the absence of discrimination among children in the Foundation Phase. This was an indication that children are not usually particular about the country of origin of their peers. It was another point of corroboration in terms of the finding in literature that children are not

bothered by the country of origin when interacting with one another (French et al., 2006). Chester was adjusting to the social serenity of the classroom and not to academic issues. He found a realm of adjusting to the demands placed on him by his peers but this did not translate into academic advantage at the time of this study. Ms. Bowen had this to say concerning Chester:

When he speaks to me, he definitely struggles. He has many friends, he gets along well with them, and they accept him. You know for children it doesn't matter where you are from, they accept you as same. The first problem I have experienced so far is the language barrier.

After a while Ms. Bowen devised a means of reaching Chester with the curriculum. She began to sit him beside another learner (Dave) from Zimbabwe who could understand English and speak it fluently. This learner from Zimbabwe also could speak Shona. It was evident that this strategy began to work for Chester because he had a peer in class who could communicate the curriculum to him in Shona as Chester progressively battled to learn the LoLT. Ms. Bowen also gave more attention to Chester by using a different means to teach him new words. When other learners had to copy words directly from the board Ms. Bowen assisted Chester to copy the words into his book. She simplified the arrangement of words for him because he had to learn slowly. Chester got additional support from the learning support educator who spent more time with him so that he could make progress with the curriculum. The support within the reach of Chester at the school is presented by Ms. Bowen:

It's difficult for me considering the fact that I don't speak Chester's indigenous language. I seated him next to the other boy from Zimbabwe, so they could communicate and that helped a little. In the beginning of the year I didn't know that the other boy was from Zimbabwe. When I found out, I put them near each other. Also I spend quality extra time with him, sitting down, helping him do his work individually, giving him extra things, simplifying the orders that I gave the others.

The learning support educator at the school, according to Ms. Bowen, had an array of resources that were available to learners with academic challenges via CDs. The information in the CDs contained tips that taught learners how to pronounce words. Chester's parents were also reached by Ms. Bowen and told the importance of teaching him at home to enhance his comprehension of the LoLT. Ms. Bowen devised a means of alleviating Chester's inability to adjust to academic work by giving him personal attention. She often copied school work directly into his notebook and sat by his side to assist him. She elaborated on the path taken to initiate Chester's adjustment initiative:

For example I would write school work on the board and they would have to copy the words on the line to practice the spelling words. For Chester, I normally write the words directly into his book, so that he doesn't have to copy from the board. Also I sent him to our learning support educator. She

helped a lot. There are CDs available that help the children to learn how to pronounce the sounds and how the parents can help the children.

Inasmuch as Ms. Bowen was willing to focus on alleviating the challenges confronting Chester, she was encumbered by the multicultural diversity within South Africa. South Africa, with the unique approval of 11 official languages and the recognition of about 17 other languages, posed a cultural challenge to Ms. Bowen. The researcher used “cultural challenge” because culture and language are intricately intertwined (Yeh et al., 2008). She could not concentrate on solving the linguistic challenge of a Zimbabwean learner at the expense of other children in her class with their own dimensions of challenges. This was evidence that an average South African educator in the Foundation Phase is confronted by a multiplicity of cultural challenges in concert. Ms. Bowen spoke:

When I realized I have Zimbabwean learners in my class, I went and did some extra research. I tried to find out how I can help him adjust, but it's difficult as you know in South Africa where we have so many cultures in one class trying to get the educator to cater for everybody's needs. But I try to focus on the important things and not to press issues and there is also a collision of interest. Adding another child into the mix from a completely new culture makes it difficult.

#### **4.8.3 MS. MAWANDE'S PERSPECTIVE**

Ms. Mawande categorically expressed the notion that children were not discriminated against in the Foundation Phase. As suggested in literature, discrimination prevents children from having a sense of belonging, which is important for the process of acculturation to begin (Qin et al., 2008). She attributed the absence of discrimination to the bonding which existed between the children while they were at the Crèche before coming to the Foundation Phase. Her expression was evidence that discrimination does not feature among children in the Foundation Phase. This was also evidence that Zimbabwean immigrant learners found ways of adjusting to the school community. She related her experience:

They don't even know he is from another place (country). They don't have any problem. They just see him as a friend. As I said, they were together from the crèche so they don't have any problem. They just play nicely with him.

Ms. Mawande found the notion of specially preparing for immigrant learners a challenging experience. The researcher inquired about the preparations that were made by teachers, in an attempt to aid the adjustment process of immigrant children in the Foundation Phase. She cultivated the attitude of treating all the learners equally. Her decision to treat them equally was from the current government decision in terms of recognizing 11 official languages. She stressed the linguistic diversity in South Africa as a stress factor, apart from the challenges of immigrant children. For example she could only speak 3 of the 11 official South African languages. This was compounded by the presence of immigrant children in her class. The

situation became a complex issue because South African learners were also linguistically challenged and needed attention as well. Ms. Mawande, in terms of the workload she grappled with could not imagine having to set time aside to teach immigrant children English as implied from her posture during the interview. She spoke:

I'm not going to say I did prepare for them, but when they come to my class I just treat them as the other children. I don't know if I have to prepare for them. Like in South Africa we have eleven languages and I can speak only three languages out of the eleven languages. For them they speak Sepedi, Sotho, Setswana, IsiNdebele, and Zulu at home. So when they come to school, they speak English, so this is a challenge for everyone.

#### **4.9 TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVE OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

In discussing this theme I elaborated on the views of the teachers on academic performance of the learners.

##### **4.9.1 Ms. SYLVESTER'S VIEW ON TOMMY'S ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

In an attempt to reconcile findings from observation conducted on Tommy, I asked Ms. Sylvester to comment on Tommy's academic performance. She was of the opinion that immigrant children find the curriculum of study in South Africa easier to follow than what they negotiated back home. This observation directed my attention to the notion that other extraneous factors could be responsible for the focus and commitment of immigrant children to their studies in South Africa, apart from the effort of teachers in South Africa. Moreover, the assistance enjoyed by Tommy from his parents in terms of ensuring that he did his homework was another resource which seemed to aid his focus on academic matters (see section 4.2.3). This notion may not be exposed to Ms. Sylvester, but was likely to be responsible for his success at school. Ms. Sylvester recounted her experience:

They cope very easily and very fast. The performance of the immigrants is quite better than the ones that are here (indigenous learners). Yes it's quite different. They do better than them (the indigenous learners). I think it's because where they come from their curriculum is tougher than the one they find here so when they come here they find it more easy than the one they were learning back home.

##### **4.9.2 Ms. BOWEN'S VIEWS ON DAVE AND CHESTER'S ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

Ms. Bowen reiterated that Dave's academic performance was enhanced by his comprehension of English which was the LoLT at the school. This gave him the aptitude to understand the subjects he had to learn. She was ecstatic to inform me that he coped well with the curriculum of study at the Foundation Phase. This finding was evidence that when children are able to understand the language of learning and teaching, they cope excellently

with scholarly work. According to what was noticed during the observation sessions, the amiable academic environment seemed to have been instrumental to Dave's sense of belonging to the academic institution. Ms. Bowen responded to the inquiry regarding Dave's academic performance by saying:

He does so brilliantly. His work is very lovely, his English is beautiful and he always understands how to do the things before I explain it to him.

On the other hand Ms. Bowen expressed the fact that Chester's linguistic ineptitude was already affecting his comprehension of the Foundation Phase curriculum. This assertion made by Ms. Bowen matched my observation that Chester was not coping academically because he could hardly express himself in English. From the available evidence, Chester did not pass through the Grade R but was directly admitted to Grade 1. His teacher pointed out this anomaly because it seemed to have affected him. Had he been given the opportunity to negotiate the Grade R route, he probably would have associated with his peers to the point of gaining an adequate vocabulary that could have assisted him in adjusting to the curriculum of study in Grade 1. Chester's teacher elaborates on his inability to cope academically:

I can say that Chester is still struggling, not socially as much as academically. I think it has really had a negative effect on his academic performance, especially at the beginning of the year. He didn't have a very good foundation and he missed a lot in terms of miscommunication and gaps that this has created. I can see that this is already affecting him. When other children learn, he finds it difficult to learn.

Ms. Bowen pointed to an important consideration in a community of practice which involves learning by renegotiating a terrain of learning more than once as suggested by Wenger (1998). It was established that Chester had to repeat Grade 1 in order to give him the chance of learning better in the future. Ms. Bowen saw the act of promoting Chester to Grade 2 as an act of injustice to him. It was a premonition that allowing him to repeat Grade 1 could give him the opportunity to adjust to the South African education system. In a private discussion of the researcher with Chester's parents, they had agreed to the necessity of Chester repeating Grade 1 to give him sufficient adjustment time to learn the LoLT and the culture of the academic institution. Ms. Bowen's perspective on the requirement for Chester to repeat Grade 1 is presented:

I think he will benefit greatly from a second year in Grade 1. I think promoting him to Grade 2 will be unfair to him because he is going to struggle there so much. He's not going to understand the work. He's not going to cope at all because he would not have a good foundation. I think going through Grade 1 a second time will give him time to adjust to South Africa, the language and the differences and give him the opportunity to do much better.



#### **4.9.3 Ms. MAWANDE'S VIEWS ON NICHOLAS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

Ms. Mawande attested to Nicholas' comprehension of the LoLT by referring to his involvement at the crèche. This was an indication that Nicholas' attendance of the crèche gave him the opportunity to interact with other children who likely communicated with him in English. Although one could not rule out the possibility of Nicholas learning the indigenous South African languages at that stage as well. She responded to the researcher's question on linguistic proficiency of Nicholas:

This boy also didn't have a problem with language because he was in the crèche before, here in this area and they were speaking English in the crèche. So that helped him to cope with his academic work.

Nicholas' freedom of expression and acculturative tendency at the school was noticed by his teacher. Ms. Mawande pointed out the outstanding character of fearlessness and openness displayed by Nicholas. This character trait seemed to have helped him to adjust quickly to the school community. The researcher was told about the next agenda on Ms. Mawande's list in terms of cultural teaching. She pointed to Nicholas as one of the learners she hoped to learn a lot from in terms of the Zimbabwean culture. This was a demonstration that Nicholas had an understanding of how to teach his culture. She elaborated:

Nicholas is a free boy. He can say whatever he wants to say. Maybe he's going to tell us something. I hope he's going to tell me what's going on in Zimbabwe.

From the accounts of the teachers we can deduce that immigrant learners cope well at school and can show academic achievement when they are adept at the LoLT. It can also be construed that discrimination is not common among children in the Foundation Phase in South African schools.

#### **4.10 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has highlighted the stories of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase. It has been dealt with by interviewing the immigrant learners, their parents and teachers who had different perspectives of information to divulge about them. Narratives from the immigrant children, their parents and teachers were used in this chapter. This was done in an attempt to triangulate the obtained data. The narratives obtained from the teachers and parents consolidated the monosyllabic responses that were basically obtained from the Zimbabwean immigrant children in the Foundation Phase. It was observed that although children are adept at understanding their world they sometimes seem to lack the verbal expressive capabilities. However, this was not seen as a disadvantage as it was



possible to make sense of their expression. The observation sessions provided good interaction with these children and this paved the way for making sense of data collected.

There were points of agreement and disparities in the stories of each immigrant learner. A summary of these will be presented in Chapter Five. These findings would constitute the basis of discussion and points of reference when answering the research questions in relation to the divergence from or convergence with the literature. One of the Zimbabwean immigrant learners in the Foundation Phase faced a linguistic challenge in the language of learning and teaching. Others were proficient in speaking and understanding English. The Zimbabwean immigrant learners who could comprehend the language of learning and teaching could show academic achievement, while the one who struggled with English did not achieve academically. Zimbabwean immigrant learners in the Foundation Phase who could speak the indigenous South African languages adapted better to the school and classroom environment. The one who neither spoke English nor the indigenous South African languages found his own ways of relating and interacting with the indigenous learners. There were no acts of discrimination or prejudice found among the Zimbabwean and indigenous learners. Chapter Five presents the discussion on the obtained findings.



*“Acquisition of multiple identities to negotiate new forms of social participation and the concomitant attendant multiple languages and multiple cultures is sine qua non to success in English language learning classrooms.”*

(Lasisi J. Ajayi, 2006:468)

## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter Four findings obtained from the respondents of this study were presented according to the emerging themes. The themes and categories that emerged were chronologically presented to showcase the commonalities and disparities among the stories of the immigrant children from Zimbabwe. The emerging similarities and disparities were substantiated by narratives from their teachers and parents. This chapter presents a discussion on the findings obtained in Chapter Four in connection with the theoretical perspectives of the literature as discussed in Chapter Two. Commonalities and differences between findings in the voluminous literature on immigrant children and the findings from this study are discussed. The discussion is based on the research questions posed at the outset of the study in Chapter One. The chapter is concluded by a synopsis in line with how contributions have been made to the body of literature.

Table 5.1 showcases the different areas in which the participants in this study agree and disagree.

**Table 5.1: Points of convergence and divergence**

Points of convergence	Points of divergence
All the learners who participated in this study had brisk adjustment to the school environment	Not all the learners adjusted well to the LoLT
All the learners did not experience discrimination at school	Not all the learners were adept at speaking the indigenous South African languages
All the learners had a sense of belonging to the school	Not all the parents were in support of their children learning any of the indigenous South African languages
All the learners were assisted by parents and/or siblings in doing their homework	Not all the parents spoke English to their children at home
All the learners were well accepted by the indigenous children at the schools	Not all the teachers agreed that immigrant children from Zimbabwe outperform indigenous children.

Points of convergence	Points of divergence
All the parents were against their children taking up the South African culture	
All the parents ensured connectedness to the home culture through regular visits to Zimbabwe	
All the parents would want their children to retain the Zimbabwean identity	
All the teachers agreed that adeptness in the LoLT facilitates ease of adjustment of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the classroom	
All the teachers agreed that discrimination is not common among children in the Foundation Phase.	

## 5.2 THE DISCOURSE

I initiate discussion by taking a brief look at the themes that emerged from the narratives of the Zimbabwean immigrant children during the analysis of data. These were “Outgoingness and a sense of belonging as predictors of acculturation” and “Evidence of academic integration and performance”. I shall attempt to support my discussion with the themes that emerged from the parents and teachers. The themes obtained from parents were “Familial perspective of academic experience”, “Familial perspective of linguistic and cultural predisposition” and “Protection against acts of discrimination”. On the part of teachers the following themes were found, namely “Evidence of acculturation from the teacher’s perspective”, “Adjustment mechanism of Zimbabwean immigrant learners” and “Teacher’s perspective of academic performance”.

From section 5.3 I commence discussion on how acculturation influences the academic performance of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase by exploring the previously stated research subquestions in Chapter One section 1.4.1.

## 5.3 WHAT ARE THE FACTORS AFFECTING THE SUCCESSFUL ADJUSTMENT OF IMMIGRANT CHILDREN FROM ZIMBABWE IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE?

The first research subquestion of this study is tackled by exploring the adjustment dynamics of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase, studying within the sociocultural context of two primary schools namely Bakwena Primary School and Saint Agness Catholic School. In an attempt to unravel this scholarly puzzle, narratives obtained from the immigrant children from Zimbabwe, their parents and teachers who taught them would be utilized. These would provide scholastic argument on the process of adjustment among Zimbabwean immigrant children in the Foundation Phase. I shall discuss factors

relating to the successful adjustment dynamics of immigrant learners from Zimbabwe in an integrated manner in the following subsections.

### **5.3.1 A SENSE OF BELONGING AND SWIFT ADAPTATION TO THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT**

In Chapter Four, sections 4.2.2 and 4.3.1 I reported on Tommy's sense of belonging to the school and his academic integration and performance. Tommy was found to be coping with his academic environment and school work, not initially but after a period of time. At first Tommy could not integrate with the academic community but adjusted within a short time. An important narrative that points to the initial struggle generally encountered by immigrant children in the Foundation Phase was voiced by Ms. Sylvester (Tommy's teacher). She pointed out that immigrant children initially find it difficult to cope within the school environment, but they gradually adjusted as they observe their peers. She spoke thus:

At first it's difficult for them but as time goes on they change and cope with what their friends are doing.

Pondering on the abovementioned narrative, Ms. Sylvester's response links up with what Reyes (2007:625) theorizes that people learn by observing more knowledgeable others in communities of practice. They also tend to learn and become established in the tenets of the community as time elapses. At the point of entry to Saint Agness Catholic School, Tommy, like other immigrant children, became a legitimate peripheral participant based on his admission to the school. This line of reasoning was orchestrated by the scholarly work of Lave and Wenger (1991). With centripetal participation and association with more knowledgeable others (an indication of interaction and association with his peers and teachers at the school) they began to learn by observing what experts (teachers and indigenous South African children) in the school did and knew. In this study the experts are taken to be custodians of stipulated cultural mores and principles. Teachers are regarded as more knowledgeable in terms of academic principles as well as sources of bequeathal of social standards within the school community. On the other hand indigenous South African children are conceptualized to be in possession of cultural and social values needed for survival by the Zimbabwean immigrant children. The culmination of the associated learning was his ability to negotiate his previous learning with the new dimension of learning he had to face at his new school. Furthermore the theories of communities of practice and legitimate peripheral participation afford an understanding of his learning trajectory as he began to listen to his teacher while she taught him in the class.

Similarly in sections 4.2.4, 4.2.8, 4.3.2 and 4.3.4 of Chapter Four, Dave and Nicholas were found to possess an adequate sense of belonging to the school environment and perform well academically. They could comprehend the language of learning and teaching. They also

adapted quickly to the school environment and could associate and relate well with their peers at the school. Their innate predisposition in terms of outgoingness seemed to have given them the knack to develop a sense of belonging to the school. This likely gave them the capacity to develop an identity because they combined “multiple forms of membership through a process of reconciliation” from one periphery of practice to another as suggested by Wenger (1998:163).

This study agrees with the finding of Corsaro, Molinari and Rosier (2002) in a study of transition narratives and Early Education in the United States of America and Italy. They posit that children construct and participate within the tenets of their distinct cultural domain by innovatively accessing information within their immediate environment. They argue that they (children) do this in an attempt to deal with their immediate concerns. As was found during my observation sessions with the immigrant children from Zimbabwe, their concerns were in the direction of wanting to belong to the school environment as they participated in the groups of the other children. I found that this aspect of belongingness was initiated by the innateness present within them to associate and partake in academic and social configurations at the school.

### **5.3.2 ADEQUATE LINGUISTIC CAPITAL IN THE LoLT**

I started by citing evidence from the observation conducted on Tommy while in the classroom and on the playground. Tommy was focused during the entire class period that he was observed and needed minimal attention from his teacher. He could decipher academic information based on the level of English comprehension that he demonstrated. From available evidence he came to the Foundation Phase with an endowment of linguistic capital which had been acquired prior to coming to the school environment. Consequently he was not lost in class and could listen to instructions and what he was taught. A thorough analysis of the class work he undertook revealed the versatility of his ability to grasp the language of instruction. His academic performance was quite encouraging to the extent that his teacher pointed my attention to how well he was doing at school. Basic understanding obtained from the available evidence reveals that the comprehension of the language of instruction, coupled with the advantage of disparity in curriculum between the South African and Zimbabwean curricula paved the way for his success. This line of argument is presented based on the fact that Ms. Sylvester perceived the Zimbabwean curriculum as higher in standard than the curriculum of study in South Africa. Likewise, in section 4.3.2 Dave was reported to perform well academically. In section 4.9.2 Ms. Bowen said concerning Dave “*His work is lovely, his English is beautiful and he always understands things before I explain to him*”. This provides evidence that adeptness in the LoLT facilitated Dave’s quick adjustment to the school.

Similarly in section 4.3.4 Nicholas was found to have achieved academic excellence. He could comprehend the language of learning and teaching. My observation while in Nicholas' class made sense that he adjusted to the school environment. He spoke English very well and understood tasks given to him. While I observed him, he started a task given to him by his teacher and completed it in record time. This gave me an indication that he could participate in class discussions and could relate well to scholarly matters. Nicholas' father seemed satisfied with his adjustment process by saying, "*We are not complaining. He's getting on very well and I think he's got the potential to do better*" (refer to Chapter Four section 4.4.4). In Chapter Four section 4.9.3 Ms. Mawande, Nicholas' teacher attested to his brisk adjustment to the school by saying:

This boy also didn't have problem with language because he was in the crèche before, here in this area and they were speaking English in the crèche. So that helped him to cope with his academic work.

Nicholas' teacher identified prior learning of English at the Crèche as an important factor in the experience of Nicholas at the school.

### **5.3.3 AMIABLE TEACHER-LEARNER RELATIONSHIP**

I present the following as evidence of the claim that rapport between the teachers and immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase facilitated their adjustment to their academic environment. This ensues in dimensions that culminated in commendable integration that resulted in substantial academic achievement. In Chapter Four section 4.2.4, when an inquiry was made from Dave to decipher whether he found peace in the academic institution, he said "*I have fun with my friends*". He also seemed to have been intrigued by the acceptance of his teacher when he said, "*I like my teacher very much, and I enjoy mathematics as a subject*". Similarly, in section 4.2.6 when Chester was asked how much he liked his teacher, he fondly responded "*I like my teacher because he teaches me everything.*" Despite the challenge Chester had academically, he still found a point of attachment to his teacher. This means that he had a deep appreciation of the effort invested by his teacher in contributing towards his academic achievement. Nicholas also could not stop saying "yes" in response to my question on how much he liked his teacher (see Chapter Four, section 4.2.8). These were evidence of adjustment to the school environment in readiness for learning to take place as a result of the amiable relationship between these learners and their teachers. These experiences likely manifested themselves because of the expert-novice relationship in communities of practice as suggested by Lave and Wenger (1991). Teachers at the schools constituted communities of practice, as suggested by Wenger (1998:108), providing the opportunity for learners to acculturate and have a sense of belonging for learning to ensue. This likely took place by virtue of the teacher-learner relationships which

were positive. These experiences support the work of Asanova (2005:191) that “the quality of teacher relationships” with learners enhances their acculturation to the school environment.

#### **5.3.4 QUICK ADJUSTMENT TO THE CURRICULUM**

A case of curriculum disparity was given by Ms. Sylvester as evidence to account for the quick integration of Zimbabwean immigrant children to the new academic community. In section 4.9.1 of Chapter Four Ms. Sylvester hilariously said, immigrant children “*cope very easily and fast*”. She compared the academic performance of immigrant children to that of the indigenous children and said, “*The performance of immigrant children is quite better than the ones that are here*” (referring to the indigenous children at the school). Ms. Sylvester attributed the brisk academic transition of the immigrant children to the curriculum of Zimbabwe. In her words, she said, “*I think it’s because where they come from their curriculum is tougher than the one they find here so when they come here they find it easier than the one they were learning back home.*”

#### **5.3.5 LACK OF DISCRIMINATION AND ACCEPTANCE BY INDIGENOUS CHILDREN**

Zimbabwean immigrant children in the Foundation Phase who participated in this study were found to negotiate favourable adjustment tracks. There were no noticeable traces of discrimination against them at the school as seen in sections 4.6.1; 4.6.2; 4.6.3 and 4.6.4 of Chapter Four. These assisted them to acculturate to the school environment to the extent that their adjustment culminated in improved academic performance. I found that this created an intrinsic motivation to connect to and participate in academic and social forms available at the schools. This was facilitated by the absence of discriminatory attitudes at the school from their peers and teachers. Evidence obtained in this perspective seems to support the finding of French et al. (2006) that discrimination is not salient before the age of adolescence among immigrant children in a novel society of sojourn. Similarly, the findings of this study are supported by the work of Parrenas and Parrenas (1993:183) that at the commencement of primary education, children integrate in the midst of sociocultural diversity, but start to separate out toward the end of primary school. A gap for further studies is provided because this study was not targeted at monitoring the end of their primary school education.

#### **5.3.6 PARENTAL INFLUENCE**

It was reported that parents of Tommy, Dave and Nicholas endeavoured to communicate with their children in the English language. (See sections 4.3.1, 4.5.2 and 4.5.4). They did this to assist their children make a swift adjustment to the school community. This practice assisted them in the process of learning to master the use of English. This finding is in



support of the findings of Chow (2006:106) that “proficiency in English is a major consideration in the necessity, rapidity, and ease with which immigrants adapt to a milieu dominated by English.” Similarly this study’s finding with respect to the craving to learn the English language by immigrants seems to support Rodriguez (2009:18) that “learning English becomes the most important goal for the children of immigrants to attain” in the society of sojourn that has chosen English language as the language of instruction at school. This study also agrees with Yeh et al. (2008) that learning English is important for social interaction and for academic adjustment in a new society. Consequently these parents of immigrant learners from Zimbabwe chose to incline the understanding of their children in the direction of learning the English language at home because of the future goal that they set for them to proficiently communicate in English in an attempt to adjust to the sociocultural diversity of the South African schools which they attended.

### **5.3.7 UNIQUE INTRINSIC CHARISMA**

Among the four immigrant children that were explored in this study, Chester was the only one found to have a protracted academic challenge, an indication of delayed adjustment to the academic environment. His delayed adjustment was orchestrated by the state of incommunicado that he found himself in. As suggested by Yeh et al. (2008), Chester’s experience was firsthand evidence that diminished communication in the LoLT is capable of slowing down the adjustment process of immigrants to the society of sojourn. However he had the charisma to associate with his peers despite not being capable of speaking English or any of the South African languages (see Chapter Four section 4.2.6). His charismatic capital was however not sufficient to give him a sense of belonging which is vital for academic performance. His sense of academic belonging seemed to have been eroded by his inability to relate to the curriculum of study. His inability to relate to the presented curriculum was due to his linguistic insolvency in the language of learning and teaching.

Chester’s linguistic insolvency provided evidence that seems to support the scholarly input of Yeh et al. (2008) that English language comprehension is a tool that assists immigrants to comprehend academic work. However Chester’s ability to decode what was spoken by his indigenous South African peers without being capable of speaking English or any of the indigenous South African languages seems to depart from the other aspect of Yeh et al.’s (2008) finding that the English language is important for communicating in the novel society. This aspect of their finding seems to exclude immigrant children in the Foundation Phase. I was puzzled at Chester’s capacity to decode information from his indigenous South African peers despite his inability to speak any of the indigenous languages and English. Chester’s inability to verbally communicate with his peers seemed to continue to the point that he began to explore avenues of interacting with his peers in his own devised ways.



After deep reflection the researcher became resourceful at theorizing the scenario at hand. It is argued that outgoingness and ability to fight the barrier of language among immigrant children seem to break the insurgence that could arise against them in terms of the possibility of exclusion from the academic environment. This argument seems to suffice when the relationship between the sense of belonging and academic performance is considered. As suggested by Asanova (2005) there is a thin line of demarcation between sense of belonging and academic performance. Asanova (2005) posits that the right dimension of sense of belonging among immigrants in the society of sojourn is capable of enhancing their academic performance. Asanova's (2005) line of thought becomes relevant in an environment where there is minimal discrimination. In this context, Chester was found with the charismatic capital which seemed to have given him a sense of belonging. The sense of belonging which he had, did not translate into academic achievement because of the absence of a common language of communication required for academic learning to take place. Had he been able to find a point of coherence in terms of gathering the required dimension of English, the situation could have been more plausible for exploration. It is theorized that as immigrant children who are linguistically challenged gather the capacity to rise above the challenges of linguistic incapability, a stage could be reached when they begin to make sense of utterances that they project among themselves to the point of understanding the communication between them and their peers. I argue that at such instances, body language during the process of communication becomes important. I presume that Chester could understand his peers despite his inability to speak either English or any of the indigenous South African languages by decoding the body language of his peers as they played together at the school.

Such a dimension of learning to decipher information is categorised in this study as informal learning, which leads to the ability of children to handle non-academic information. It is also theorized that Chester's informal ways of deciphering information among his peers could not make him cross over to academic mode of knowing and retrieving information in an academic environment because such information could only be intellectually processed and deciphered. Therefore it is argued in this study that the capacity of children to associate and adjust to an academic environment, despite their linguistic challenge may not translate to improved academic performance, but to having a sense of belonging to the academic environment.

#### **5.4 WHAT VITAL TRANSITION IS REQUIRED OF IMMIGRANT CHILDREN FROM ZIMBABWE IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE TO ATTAIN ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT?**

In answering this research question, Chester's case comes to mind because he was the only Zimbabwean immigrant learner who could not negotiate his transition from his home language to English (see Chapter Four section 4.7.2). In this study it was found that an important factor necessary for academic achievement bordered on the ability of immigrant learners to make the transition from their previously acquired language of communication to the LoLT. The reason is that it was required for academic transaction at the school in terms of the communication of the curriculum content to them. It was also required for their development of a sense of belonging to the school environment. As I observed during normal class lessons, it was challenging for Chester to either communicate with his peers in English or in any of the indigenous languages. Chester employed body language to decode the information passed to him by his peers, but he was limited because he lacked verbal acumen to successfully exchange ideas with them. The same factor was found to dominate his dealings with his teacher and the curriculum content because of the presumed difficulty in comprehending academic matters via body language alone. Consequently he had a protracted academic challenge.

Tommy, Dave and Nicholas were found to have commenced transition from their home languages to English. Their quick transition seemed to help them by not experiencing protracted academic challenges. Based on my observation on Chester, it was found that he could neither read nor write on his own. He could only write with the assistance of his teacher. He could also copy words written on the white board, and at times he copied words written on this board incorrectly due to his inability to know words properly in English. When I checked his work in numeracy, it was the same challenge. He did not do well in numeracy. It is therefore posited that the linguistic challenge experienced by Chester prevented him from comprehending the curriculum of study, despite his innate character of outgoingness.

The experience gathered on Chester supports the finding of Vidali and Adams (2007:124) that young children can encounter complexities in adapting to school if they do not possess the "knowledge of language, others' cultures and communication codes" required to manipulate within the school environment. The experience of Chester seems to support Yeh et al. (2008:776) that a number of immigrant children arrive at the host society with diminished or non-proficiency in English. The experiences of Tommy, Dave and Nicholas seem to support the argument of Oikonomidou (2007) that the capacity to transit to the language of communication in an environment may be responsible for the adjustment process of immigrants to a society of sojourn. I make this claim because the three of them

were quick in adjusting to the school community by virtue of their comprehension of the English language.

An answer has been provided based on the experiences of the Zimbabwean immigrant learners that the transition that needed to be made by them was in terms of crossing from their previously acquired language of communication to the English language because it was the LoLT at their schools. The validity of Chow (2006:109) is again reiterated that English language comprehension is important in the requirement and briskness at which immigrant students adapt to an environment that has chosen the English language as the medium of instruction.

## **5.5 HOW DO TEACHERS FACILITATE THE ADJUSTMENT OF IMMIGRANT CHILDREN FROM ZIMBABWE IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE?**

In Chapter Four section 4.8.2 three important strategies emerged in terms of how teachers in the Foundation Phase addressed the adjustment process of immigrant learners from Zimbabwe. Since Chester was the only learner who had protracted linguistic and academic adjustment problems, his teacher (Ms. Bowen) spoke extensively on his case. First, she reiterated her limitation regarding how she was constrained by virtue of not being able to communicate effectively with him during lesson periods in class. She mentioned that if she could speak Chester's indigenous language (Shona), it could have been helpful to teach him in Shona in order to reach him with the presented curriculum before translating the curriculum content into English for him.

Fortunately for Ms. Bowen, there was another learner from Zimbabwe (Dave) who could speak Shona language and understood English. Ms. Bowen took advantage of the fact that the other learner from Zimbabwe was proficient in English. She made it a point of duty to seat Chester with this learner so that he could be assisted by communicating with Chester throughout the class sessions of each day. Ms. Bowen devised another strategy by spending extra time with Chester because of his inability to comprehend the LoLT. She often wrote words directly into Chester's workbook to teach him "spelling words". The last strategy employed by Chester's teacher was to link him with the learning support unit of the school. The learning support unit of the school was where learners with learning deficiencies were referred to, in an attempt to rehabilitate them. At the learning support unit CDs were used to teach learners who could not pronounce words in English very well. Parents of such learners, according to Ms. Bowen, were informed at the learning support unit on how to address their children's academic challenges and the measures to take to address such challenges. These three strategies give answers to the research question on how teachers could facilitate the

adjustment of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase to transit from the indigenous languages to the LoLT.

### **5.5.1 SCHOLARLY PERSPECTIVE OF EDUCATORS' ACTION ON FACILITATING THE ADJUSTMENT OF LINGUISTICALLY CHALLENGED IMMIGRANT LEARNERS**

I use the action embarked upon by Ms. Bowen to situate her strategy in the body of literature. This was done in an attempt to base the measures she took to alleviate the challenges that confronted Chester at the school. The research conducted by Sanagavarapu (2010) seems to be supported by the action embarked upon by Ms. Bowen in an attempt to revamp Chester's linguistic and academic challenge at the school. Sanagavarapu (2010) suggests that it becomes vital for educators in public schools to be aware of the necessity of helping immigrant children to have a hitch-free transition to the school community. Although Ms. Bowen's action was scholarly and not solely aimed at integrating him to develop a sense of belonging to the social stratum of the school, her action seemed to have initiated a process that was directed at making him (Chester) transit from his state of incommunicado to a level that could assist him to develop a scholastic sense of belonging. The development of a scholastic sense of belonging could only be achieved by making Chester learn and comprehend the LoLT for academic achievement to be guaranteed. The involvement of Ms. Bowen in terms of the good relationship she demonstrated towards Chester was an indication of commitment and dedication to ensure that he survived academically at the school. This amiable learner-teacher relationship seems to support one of the assertions of Asanova (2005:191) that "the quality of teacher relationships" with students is capable of enhancing their acculturation to the school environment. Although the study of Asanova (2005) was conducted among secondary school students, it finds a significant place among learners and teachers in the Foundation Phase.

The findings of James and Martin (2009), in a study conducted on the comparison of the parent-child interactions among Russian immigrant and non-immigrant families within a rural milieu in Missouri seems to be supported by the action of Ms. Bowen in assisting Chester to learn the language of learning and teaching. They found that educators within the rural setting often struggle with immigrant children who engage in learning a second language. The environmental context of learning that Chester found himself was not rural but peri-urban, yet he struggled to comprehend his academic tasks. He did not only struggle to catch up, his teacher also struggled to make him cope with tasks in the classroom. Consequently it is posited that within the peri-urban stream, educators also struggle with immigrant learners who are confronted by the task of learning a second language. In the case of Chester, the second language he had to learn was the LoLT.

This study lent itself to considering the study conducted by Qin, Way and Rana (2008), in a longitudinal study of 120 first and second generation Chinese American children from two studies carried out in Boston and New York. Although Qin et al. (2008) did not explore immigrant children in the Foundation Phase a few concepts were borrowed to explore similarities and differences in terms of the two research contexts. They report that immigrant children had the stamina to excel academically, despite challenges of harassment and bullying confronting them. Based on the academic experiences of Dave, Nicholas and Tommy, the finding of Qin et al. (2008) is supported by this study. However the academic experience of Chester is a departure from the scholarly output of Qin et al. (2008) because there was a condition of linguistic incompetence in his case. It is posited in this study as an additional contribution to the work of Qin et al. (2008) that immigrant learners in the Foundation Phase may only be capable of overcoming academic challenges confronting them if they have crossed the transition from proficiency in their indigenous language to the language of learning and teaching. It is argued that no matter how cognitively alert an immigrant learner may be, without the ability to transit from the indigenous language to the language of learning and teaching, academic achievement may be challenged.

A consideration of Eckart's (2005) publication, in a study conducted on the recognition and rejection in schools, relating to the attitudes and relationships of Swiss children and immigrant children, became a dilemma in this study. The findings of Eckart (2005) were placed side by side with the findings of this study with respect to the academic performance of the Zimbabwean immigrant learners. A thorough analysis of the transcribed data from this research study indicates the absence of discrimination and pointed to the acceptance of the four immigrant learners by their teachers and peers. One could lucidly argue that the other three immigrant learners' ability to comprehend the language of learning and teaching was responsible for their acceptance by their peers. The fact that some of them could speak and understand the indigenous languages could also be argued to be instrumental in their acceptance to the school community. Chester's case was different because he could neither proficiently speak English nor any of the indigenous languages of communication. However Chester also found place among the children in terms of associating with them but the limitation was that he could not speak English as the other three immigrant learners did.

Eckhart (2005) indicates that the social distance between Swiss and immigrant children was prominent when compared with what existed between other indigenous children at the school. It was reported that there was minimal integration between Swiss and immigrant children in terms of interaction at the school. In the context of this study the social distance was not visible because the immigrant and indigenous children blended together and related with one another. The fact that Chester could neither speak English nor any of the

indigenous languages was not a barrier to associating with his indigenous peers, and there was also no noticeable social distance between him and the other indigenous peers. This was because they related to Chester in their own devised way of communicating with him. Consequently it is argued in this study that inability to communicate effectively among immigrant children in the Foundation Phase with the indigenous peers may not necessarily culminate in the creation of a barrier to the extent that they would not be capable of communicating with one another. The major hitch in this perspective entails an understanding that such communication may not lead to the acquisition of the skills that lead to cognitive capacity to decipher scholarly tasks. Hence Chester's indigenous peers could not assist him in academic tasks within the classroom as his peer from Zimbabwe did as specified by the choice of his teacher to unite him with his Zimbabwean peer who could speak Shona.

## **5.6 HOW DO FAMILIAL AND SCHOOL EXPERIENCES OF IMMIGRANT CHILDREN FROM ZIMBABWE IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE AFFECT THEIR ACCULTURATION AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE?**

The discussion on how familial and school experiences of immigrant children in the Foundation Phase affect their acculturation and academic performance is discussed by considering the individual cases of the immigrant learners in the Foundation Phase. This is in order to highlight the different coping mechanisms adopted by each parent to facilitate the acculturation of each child into the school environment. The discussion is made in terms of the seamless relationship between language and acculturation, their sense of belonging to the school environment and the predisposition of family members of the immigrant learners to their children's acculturation experience and academic performance. A scholarly perspective of the findings is entrenched in the body of literature in the following sections, to ascertain the levels of similarity and disparity in terms of the findings.

### **5.6.1 THE INFLUENCE OF TOMMY'S FAMILIAL AND SCHOOLING EXPERIENCE ON HIS ACCULTURATION EXPERIENCE**

Acculturation is a stipulation of the adjustment of immigrants to the society of sojourn. In this case discussion is made in terms of the acculturation of the immigrant learners to the academic institution and the mainstream society. This is done as influenced by parents of the immigrant learners. I initiate this discussion by exploring the seminal work of Yeh et al. (2008) regarding the acculturation experience of immigrants in the society of sojourn. I argue based on the liberality of Tommy's father who said, "*I wouldn't mind him speaking any of the South African languages.*" This statement is a depiction of Mr. William's liberality with respect to his son's mindset on learning the indigenous South African languages. According to Yeh



et al. (2008:784), acculturation is not indicative of the learning of new customs and principles, and to embrace “salient reference groups of the host society”, but it entails a course that requires the capacity to outgrow the original way of life to imbibe a novel culture. An analysis of Mr. William in respect of Tommy’s allowance to learn the indigenous languages may not be taken to imply that he was allowed to acculturate to the mainstream society. Tommy’s father allowed him to learn the indigenous South African languages based on his intention to allow him gain what I refer to as “scholastic acculturation”. I differentiate the mainstream society acculturation from “scholastic acculturation.”

Scholastic acculturation may be taken to imply the necessary adjustments that an immigrant learner may make in order to adjust to the dictates of the academic institution. Such measures of acculturation are not usually intended for settlement in the mainstream society. This argument is premised on the link existing between the process of acculturation and the language of communication as suggested by Yeh et al. (2008). This argument is substantiated by Mr. William’s narrative in Chapter Four section 4.5.1. Mr. William preferred his son “*to grow in his home culture*” instead of the South African culture. He reiterated by saying, “*I will want him to know his own culture preferably.*” Cultural preferences are indicative of an identity of choice among immigrant children as suggested by Kohn (2002) and Vandeyar (2008). The notion that Mr. William had that Tommy needed to learn and know his home culture was a deviation from the path of acculturating to the mainstream society. Mr. William was not oblivious of the route to cultural negotiation. He knew the versatility of language learning as the entry route to definite cultures. Mr. William in his words said, “*Culture can be learnt through language.*” He expressed the route to learning culture by asserting that “*At home we speak our home language. Once in a while, at least twice a year, we go back home.*” The fact that Mr. William and his wife used Shona to communicate with Tommy was an indication that they did not want him to get detached from his cultural roots. This experience seems to support the finding of Wang and Phillion (2007:100) that, “the language use of both parents and students at home proves that parents are concerned about their children losing their home language”(Wang and Phillion 2007: 100). It is noteworthy that the context under which Wang and Phillion (2007) conducted their research was at high school level. However their work is informative in terms of revealing the stance of parents in terms of retaining the indigenous languages. I therefore posit that it may not only be at the secondary school level that parents mind their children losing their indigenous languages; it extends to the Foundation Phase. By virtue of the findings of Yeh et al. (2008) that language retention and culture are synonymous, it thus implies that parents indirectly contend for their ethnic heritage by affirming that their children had to keep their home language.



The purpose of home visits was geared towards familiarizing Tommy with people of the same cultural origin. Mr. William revealed the mechanism of action to keep Tommy connected to his cultural roots by allowing him to get “*exposed to his grandmother and other family*” members. When the utterance of Mr. William is weighed against what he said that Tommy could learn the indigenous South African languages, it becomes lucid that Mr. William was flexible in terms of allowing Tommy to learn the indigenous South African languages with a notion to allow him to develop what I refer to as “scholastic acculturation and sense of belonging.” This dimension of acculturation is disparate from the mainstream acculturation which is procedural as suggested by Berry et al. (2006). The acculturation that leads to eventual settlement in the mainstream society involves the negotiation of immigrants’ home cultural principles with the indigenous cultural tenets. Mr. William’s astuteness in terms of strict adherence to the Zimbabwean culture was a stern departure from considerations with respect to intercultural negotiation between the Zimbabwean and indigenous South African cultures.

Utilizing the Legitimate Peripheral Participation theory to analyse the scenario (Lave & Wenger, 1991), I argue that Tommy’s association with his peers at the school, in terms of the fact that he was allowed to relate with them, could be taken as legitimate peripheral participation at the time he joined them at the school. The fact that his father was not against him to learn the indigenous South African languages seemed to have given him the currency of negotiating the scholastic and social cultures at the school. His case was enhanced by the capability he had in terms of his proficiency in English which he could use to initiate negotiation of the scholastic culture present therein. Tommy’s English language proficiency seemed to have given him leverage in terms of the ability to ask questions from his peers in English.

Consequently a platform of understanding the indigenous languages was likely made because every unknown indigenous word could be understood via the dimension of interpretation in English. Lave and Wenger (1991) posit that as participants in the community of practice continue to associate with more knowledgeable others via observation of the curriculum of the community, they move inwards centripetally until full participation is achieved (see Figure 2.1). Mr. William’s differentiation, in terms of the extent of acculturation that Tommy could get involved with, could prevent Tommy from moving inwards centripetally to the full membership status.

The extent of participation between Tommy and his peers could be located within a realm that could only allow him to acquire scholastic acculturation, rather than the acculturation to the mainstream society. Consequently the schooling experiences of Tommy entailed an

amiable scenario where his peers in the Foundation Phase related and associated with him to the point that the line of verbal communication was opened for the negotiation of scholastic and academic institution cultures. His father's intervention in terms of limiting his extent of intercultural association was seen as a hindrance to "his becoming" involved in full participation in terms of intercultural negotiation that leads to full membership in the community. Consequently this study agrees with Yeh et al. (2008) that acculturation surpasses the gimmick of learning salient rules and values of the mainstream culture, but involves the capacity of immigrants to outgrow their home culture to incorporate a new one. However, the language of learning and teaching was seen as a tool for negotiating scholastic culture. It also constituted the initiation of learning the indigenous South African languages at Tommy's discretion.

Parental involvement in the academic trajectory of their children became evident in this study. It gave the opportunity to explore how their involvement was instrumental to their academic experience. Mr. William gave an important response that pointed to regular involvement in Tommy's academic experience. It was in terms of his regular assistance to Tommy with his school work. This assistance seemed to support the effort of Tommy's teacher at the school. Mr. William said, *"Most of the time I help him with his school work. And sometimes his mother also helps him."* It could be argued that the home front likely became an extension of the effort embarked upon by the school to assist in the academic performance of Tommy. This experience in terms of parental assistance indicates that at the home front there are communities of practice instrumental to the academic experience of children. Based on this evidence parents are likely additional forms of communities of practice because of their involvement in their children's academic work. They also fall into the group recognized by Wenger (1998:108) as subdivisions of communities of practice working for the common good of stakeholders. It is argued that as long as parents assist their children in their school work, they are part of the stakeholders in their own rights. Consequently, it is posited in this study that the home front of immigrant children could be taken as an extension of scholarly tasks. The scholarly tasks that were administered by parents could also be taken as a bid to make their children negotiate the transition arising from the disparity in curriculum between the novel society and their home country curriculum. This finding seems to support the work of Niemeyer, Wong and Westerhaus (2009) who observe that immigrant children tend to have good academic achievement because of their parents' involvement in their study. In section 5.6.2 the influence of Dave's familial and schooling experience on his acculturation experience and academic performance is discussed.

## 5.6.2 THE INFLUENCE OF DAVE'S FAMILIAL AND SCHOOLING EXPERIENCE ON HIS ACCULTURATION EXPERIENCE AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

In Chapter Four section 4.5.2, I analysed Mrs. Tshangarai's narrative regarding her predisposition to her familial language and the language of learning and teaching. First, she reiterated the salience of the familial language (Shona). This is taken to imply strict adherence to the Zimbabwean cultural tenets. Second, she relayed her tolerance to Dave's use of the English language because it was the language of instruction at Bakwena Primary School. To be precise Mrs. Tshangarai reiterated that their home language was Shona. They used English to communicate with Dave because they wanted him to make a quick transition to English since it was the LoLT (see Chapter Four section 4.5.2). From her account she wanted Dave to acclimatize to the culture of the academic institution. At the same time Dave was not to relinquish negotiation with the Zimbabwean culture. The chosen way to achieve this aim was through the use of Shona language at home, mixed with the use of English. The familial use of English at the home front was targeted at advancing his potential to become versatile at using English at home, which was the tool of instruction at the school. Mrs. Tshangarai's tolerance in terms of the notion that Dave could learn other languages is thus evidenced (see Chapter Four section 4.2.4). This was an indication of his connectedness to the school environment because he could learn the indigenous language at the school. Dave's mother also demonstrated her approval of Dave's freedom to learn Afrikaans (see Chapter Four section 4.5.2).

It was clear evidence that his indigenous peers could not hide anything from him because he understood the indigenous language spoken during playtime. As such they saw him as one of them. A precise analysis of Dave's words indicates the versatility of being capable of switching from English to Zulu and back to English. The sequence seems inexhaustible because the dialogue seems to continue until proficiency in Zulu language evolves. The capability that Dave acquired to speak Zulu with his friends during break was an indication of the development of the sense of belonging to the school community. The understanding and capacity that Dave had until he could speak Zulu gave him the leeway into a novel cultural domain (Zulu). His ability to speak Zulu with his indigenous South African friends was his ticket to becoming accepted so that he could enjoy the social opportunities available at the school front.

The development of a sense of belonging among immigrants in an academic institution is pivotal to their acceptance and ability to receive immunity against acts of discrimination as suggested by Asanova (2005). Consequently it is argued in this study that when familial and schooling experiences are conducive, immigrant children become comfortable and adept at developing the right dimension of sense of belonging. Their development of a sense of belonging becomes an asset that is capable of integrating them and focusing their attention

on demonstrating academic achievement. Their capacity to demonstrate academic achievement seems entrenched in the absence of discriminatory acts against them. This line of thought matched my observation and document analysis which pointed to the reasons underlying Dave's achievements in academic terms. It is furthermore argued that when parents of immigrant children in the Foundation Phase are liberal to the point of allowing their children to learn the indigenous language, it works well in assisting the children to develop a sense of belonging to the school. The development of a sense of belonging in turn tends to lead them to achieving academic success. The acculturation experience of Dave was thus seen as a procedural encounter, with the home front flexibility in terms of the tolerance to concurrently learn and speak Zulu and English. This is supported by Chow's (2007:512-513) finding that immigrants will procedurally acquire a sense of belonging, making the process of acculturation appear as a procedural and phenomenal construct.

From the Legitimate Peripheral Participation lens (Lave & Wenger, 1991), Dave's ability to speak Zulu, Sotho and Sepedi became his currency for negotiating a sense of belonging to the school. His proficiency in these three indigenous languages enabled him to transact his acceptance to the community of indigenous children at the school. The indigenous South African children at the school were seen as custodians of the indigenous languages (experts). Dave began to learn these indigenous South African languages as he associated and participated in the discussions with the indigenous South African children who were more knowledgeable than he. Consequently Dave became a full participant as he began to discuss matters with the indigenous South African children in the indigenous South African languages. Using Wenger's (1998) lens Dave participated in a subdivision of communities of practice comprising the experts (indigenous South African children at the school) who could speak the indigenous South African languages via legitimate peripheral participation until he achieved the status of full participation. This study is supported by the theory of Lave and Wenger (1991) that as novices enter a community of practice, they become full participants with centripetal association with more knowledgeable members of the community. It is furthermore posited that as the participation of immigrant children in the community reaches full potential, they are capable of developing the requisite dimension of sense of belonging. The acquired sense of belonging transcends acts of discrimination and prejudice against them by virtue of their capacity to decipher indigenous languages of communication in the community.

By virtue of the connection between acculturation and the negotiation of identities (Yeh et al. (2008), the researcher inquired about Mrs. Tshangarai's stance on Dave's declaration and definition of identity. Mrs. Tshangarai said "*I am still thinking about that. I am still in-between. I still want him to be a Zimbabwean but he can make a choice when he is old enough.*" A

thorough analysis of Mrs. Tshangarai's response indicated an uncertain stance regarding Dave's definition of his identity. She was still battling with the possibility that his son could become a South African. This was a clear indication that the definition of identity among immigrants is a struggle that requires both latent and manifest consideration. However, she indicated her choice as Kohn (2002) declares that the issue of identity is a matter of choice within a multiplicity of experiences that immigrants traverse in the society of sojourn.

Consequently, Mrs. Tshangarai submitted, by virtue of the liberality that she had shown, that it was Dave's prerogative to decide whatever he wanted for himself. This was a clear indication that as immigrant children acculturate to a novel multicultural domain, they do so with considerations in line with parental judgment and liberality until they become old enough to choose whether to belong to the novel society or to relinquish belonging to that novel society. Going by Kohn's (2002) suggestion that the issue of identity requires a consideration of choice and a multiplicity of experiences in the society of sojourn, this study affirms that the development of a sense of belonging among immigrant children is not a stereotypic scenario, but involves familial predisposition and the child's futuristic dimension of experiences. Dave seemed to be taking too much of the indigenous South African cultures via the acquisition of the indigenous languages that he could speak. This finding supports the work of Tong, Huang and McIntyre (2006) that when immigrant children are too attached to other cultures within an environment, they may need to forgo their culture and ethnic identity if they take up too much of the majority culture.

Mrs. Tshangarai's involvement with Dave's academic tasks given to him at school became prominent. It gave an indication of the assistance that Dave regularly received on the home front. It also pointed to the advantage that accrues to immigrant children in terms of familial monitoring capacity. During the interview session with Mrs. Tshangarai, she elaborated on the commitment she had made to engage Dave after school hours by saying, *"Most times I help him with his homework. Even when I'm tired or I come home late I ask my other children to help him with his homework. But I check whether they have done it nicely."* This was a second level of exploration in terms of the commitment of immigrant parents regarding their children's academic tasks. Mrs. Tshangarai seemed to deliberately control the available time for her son's academic progress. Mrs. Tshangarai's involvement in terms of control and commitment to seeing that her son was academically inclined on the home front seems to corroborate the scholarly work of Ogbu and Simons (1998) that immigrant parents demonstrate a high degree of influence over their children's time. The influence in this perspective was in terms of making their children become committed to doing their homework. Consequently the academic achievement of immigrant children from Zimbabwe becomes understandable. Mrs. Tshangarai's perspective of monitoring Dave's academic

progress also supports the scholarly work of Delgado-Gaitan that despite the fact that “immigrant families are unfamiliar with the new system of education, they are nevertheless eager to do whatever it takes for their children to succeed in school” (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994: 150). This claim is entrenched in the narrative obtained from Mrs. Tshangarai regarding the disparity between the South African and Zimbabwean curriculum (see Chapter Four section 4.4.2).

### **5.6.3 THE INFLUENCE OF CHESTER’S FAMILIAL AND SCHOOLING EXPERIENCE ON HIS ACCULTURATION EXPERIENCE AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

In Chapter Four section 4.4.3 it was reported that Chester could not proficiently converse in English. He was proficient in his home language (Shona). An intellectual puzzle emerges as to how he managed to interact with his indigenous peers at the school because language of communication aids the process of acculturation as suggested by Yeh et al. (2008). In section 4.5.3 it was reported that Chester’s father (Mr. Chiron) was a linguistically liberal person. He did not mind his son learning the indigenous languages, but Chester’s case was a special one. He could neither speak proficiently in English nor in any of the indigenous South African languages. On Mr. Chiron’s stance on learning languages, he said: *“I do encourage my children to learn different languages because language is power.”* However his linguistic tolerance was in terms of mobility. Mr. Chiron saw the learning of the indigenous languages in the light of its capability to aid the mobility of his son. He said: *“It’s like education. When you learn something, it’s to your advantage. It’s a tool for communication. You can move anywhere and you can communicate.”* Moving everywhere, in Mr. Chiron’s context, meant moving within South Africa. Mr. Chiron’s acceptance of multilingualism was a scholastic one. He saw language as a ladder that assists in climbing and negotiating cultures. His narrative gives us an understanding of the ploy of immigrant parents who are linguistically liberal. They seem to be linguistically malleable because of the future goal of having their children in multiple dimensions of places and cultures in order to make them eligible for versatility to fit into diverse perspectives of cultures.

Mr. Chiron was definitive in terms of his liberality to allow Chester to learn the indigenous South African cultures (see Chapter Four section 4.5.3). Mr. Chiron seemed to have placed a line of demarcation as to the extent that his son could learn the indigenous South African cultures. This was an indication that Mr. Chiron minded his son getting being fully adjusted in the South African society. His liberality in terms of his son learning the South African culture was vested towards academic motive. Mr. Chiron’s voice corroborates this claim,(see Chapter Four section 4.5.3).Mr. Chiron’s refusal in terms of the notion that Chester could learn the indigenous South African cultures, but could not practise them was an indication of



his approval of scholastic or academic learning of the South African cultures which does not lead to mainstream acculturation. He reiterated his conceptual perception of his son learning the indigenous South African cultures (see Chapter Four section 4.5.3). This kind of familial predisposition of acculturation seemed to have been aimed at Chester's understanding of his academic environment so that he could focus on his studies. It was not targeted at his mainstream acculturation experience that could lead to eventual settlement. Unfortunately for Chester he could neither speak in English nor in any of the indigenous South African languages. The intellectual puzzle was whether he began to acculturate or not.

In section 4.2.6 of Chapter Four I found that in spite of Chester's linguistic inability, he devised a means of socializing with his indigenous peers. This kind of socialization was aimed at his development of a sense of belonging which he could not verbally define due to his linguistic challenge in English and in the indigenous South African languages. Consequently it is posited that Chester's dimension of acculturation was deviant from the scholastic acculturation which could offer him the necessary sense of belonging to his academic tasks (see section 4.3.3). I argue that Chester had an undefined communal or non-academic dimension of acculturation to his school. Based on Chester's experience at Bakwena Primary School, I argue that non-academic acculturation may be taken as a shadow of scholastic acculturation. The only feasible time that non-scholastic acculturation may lead to scholastic acculturation seems to be when there is an accomplishment in learning the LoLT. Chester's dimension of acculturation to his school environment and to his peers may be taken as a *caricature* kind of acculturation which is deficient in terms of its inability to deliver the right dimension of what I refer to as an "academic sense of belonging" to Bakwena Primary School's curriculum of study.

An academic sense of belonging is conceptualized in this study as the fortitude of immigrant children to take responsibility for learning the academic language of communication to the point that it leads them to developing the necessary capacity to interact and associate with peers and the school curriculum until academic achievement is accomplished. At such an instance academic acculturation may be seen to have evolved. This finding in terms of Chester's inability to negotiate academic acculturation seems to support the finding of Feliciano (2001) that the attachment of immigrant children with respect to their preferred language of communication in the society of sojourn is capable of unravelling their acculturative preferences. The finding in this regard seems to support the work of Turney and Kao (2009:257) that the experiences negotiated by children in the Foundation Phase emphasize a vital foundation of note. Despite the fact that the school and educators are important in the educational path of children, parents are more important in ascertaining the experiences that are navigated by the children.



Chester's parental influence on his academic performance took on a different perspective. His familial involvement in his academic tasks was divergent due to his state of incommunicado. He was not able to neither speak nor understand the LoLT. Mr. Chiron (his father) made a concerted effort to alleviate this concern. Both parents of Chester were very busy and could not sit down with him to assist in revamping him from his inability to comprehend English. An observation of the family schedule during the data capture of this study revealed that both parents could not make time available to assist Chester. They were both engrossed by the challenge to make ends meet. It was very challenging to reach both parents as they were both on the move. When I engaged them to inquire about their busy schedule, they lamented that it was challenging to get employment in South Africa. They both made a decision to look for a teacher who could speak Shona (a Zimbabwean indigenous language). This Shona-speaking teacher was to code switch from Shona to English and vice versa (see Chapter Four section 4.5.3). Mr. Chiron's stance to get Chester a teacher seemed to be a palliative measure which differs from parental connectedness. Their unavailability is dispersion from the stipulated policy of the DoE that parents are expected to support teachers in dealing with various needs of the learners (DOE, 1996). The unavailability of Chester's parents seems to support the seminal work of Ramirez (2003) that immigrant children under-perform in their school work due to lack of interest and participation of their parents (Ramirez, 2003). It is however noteworthy that in the case of Chester's parents; their unavailability was orchestrated by their quest for survival rather than lack of interest in their child's academic work.

#### **5.6.4 THE INFLUENCE OF NICHOLAS' FAMILIAL AND SCHOOLING EXPERIENCE ON HIS ACCULTURATION EXPERIENCE AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

In reference to section 4.5.4 of Chapter Four, Mr. and Mrs. Timbale had an objective that was in line with Nicholas' academic potential. They wanted Nicholas to be proficient in English because it was used to teach at Bakwena Primary School. They were made up in their minds that as long as he stayed in South Africa, he would be capable of speaking the indigenous South African languages even if they discouraged him. However it was their choice that he had to learn English at all costs. This was due to their futuristic goal of wanting to prepare him for international opportunities.

On the issue of learning the indigenous South African languages, Mr. Timbale attested to Nicholas' understanding of the local South African language which he spoke at the school. Nicholas was not encouraged to speak in any of the indigenous South African languages because of the future goals and aspirations set for him by his parents. Mr. and Mrs. Timbale seemed to have been preparing Nicholas for academic acculturation, and not mainstream

society acculturation. They felt that learning and speaking the indigenous South African languages could limit his acquisition of academic acculturation.

Mr. and Mrs. Timbale rather preferred to teach Nicholas cultural principles of Zimbabwe (see Chapter Four section 4.5.4). They seemed to have identified the difference between academic and mainstream acculturation. Their concern about Nicholas' proficiency in the indigenous language was an indication that he could become integrated into the mainstream society beyond their control to the point that he could relinquish his Zimbabwean cultural orientation. Empirical evidence depicts my interpretation of their stance on the mainstream society acculturation. Nicholas' parents were resolute that he did not have to acculturate to the South African cultural tenets. They devised a means of getting him as closely connected as possible to the Zimbabwean culture (see Chapter Four section 4.5.4). From the narrative account of Mr. and Mrs. Timbale, it is evident that they did not want Nicholas to be engulfed by the cultural principles of the South African society. This was an attempt to dissuade him from getting totally connected to that way of life. They adopted a regular rehearsal of the Zimbabwean culture to him by presenting it as the best of all cultures. An important observation from the narrative account of Nicholas' parents was that they were particular about Nicholas' capability to communicate in English because of his academic endeavour. It is posited in this study that certain immigrant children negotiate selective acculturative processes by virtue of their parent's involvement in the course of their lives in the unusual society. The experience of Nicholas and his parents in terms of not permitting him to learn the languages of South Africa was an indication that immigrant children are predisposed to growing "up with strong ties to two countries, two cultures, and two ways of being, which can produce multiple realities, multiple ways of being and communicating with the world" (Rodriguez, 2009: 17).

These experiences seem to support the argument of Rodriguez (2009:17) because Nicholas' parents attuned him to growing up with two different cultures but emphasized a measure of preponderance towards the Zimbabwean cultures while he was at the same time encouraged to learn the LoLT. These were seen as dimensions of manifold actualities, because Nicholas wanted to learn the indigenous South African languages but had to confront the challenge of refusal from his parents that he did not have to learn them. Consequently he was confronted by the dilemma of relating to his world of influence with different perceptions which could imply that he dealt with his immediate environment in different ways.

Utilizing the legitimate peripheral participation theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991), I argue that Nicholas' participation on the periphery of the school was not devoid of familial input. He seemed to have carried the home cultural tenets to the school as he journeyed through the

school to associate and participate in the school curriculum. His participation within the school with his indigenous South African peers was likely with the idea that he could not learn the indigenous South African languages. However he confronted the reality that he could only speak English with his friends. I perceive in this study that the assertion by his parents that he did not have to speak in the indigenous language was a rule that had scope at the home front. This was because Nicholas spoke the indigenous languages in his private space away from the familial influence. My argument becomes vital at this point because despite the command given to him that he should not speak the indigenous South African languages, he spoke them fluently. Consequently his acculturation negotiation trajectory could become a mixture of academic acculturation and an avoidance of the mainstream acculturation which was constantly being checked by his home front dynamics and control to stay away from learning the indigenous South African cultural tenets.

Making sense of Nicholas' acculturative experience seems to be a challenging one with respect to tracing and understanding his home front dynamics with his sense of belonging at the school. His experience seems to make the seminal work of Vidali and Adams (2007:124) understandable. In their study they contend that children usually negotiate a complex path in their progression from a known environment to a unique one. They argue that adjusting to the school environment can be complex for children when they are not acquainted with the cultural mores of the host society. This is because this adjustment depends on their ability to decode information essential to operate in a "mini-systems or early childhood context" (Vidali & Adams, 2007: 124). I relate the argument of Vidali and Adams (2007) with respect to "mini-systems" as his dilemma with his parents that he needed to emphatically learn English and not the indigenous South African languages. The affirmation of Mr. and Mrs. Timbale are categorized as a sort of "mini-system" according to Vidali and Adams (2007), capable of challenging Nicholas' acquisition of the indigenous languages. Consequently it is posited that the findings in this regard are in support of the argument of Vidali and Adams (2007) that an array of enforcements seem to challenge the holistic acculturation of immigrant children to the society of sojourn because of issues pertaining to ethnic identity.

Utilizing this scholastic lens provided by Vidali and Adams (2007), it becomes understandable that Nicholas' parents seemed to have made his acculturation to the mainstream society complex. This was because he was being tailored by home cultural injunctions whereby his communication with the indigenous South African cultural mores was being shifted away from his perception and consideration. Nicholas' ability to decode the mainstream cultural principles was blurred by the home front cultural adherence as stipulated by his parents. The observable reason for this complication was due to the fact that he was a child and as such had to go along with the dictates of his parents as to which culture to

choose and embrace. A challenging aspect of his acculturation which Mr. and Mrs. Timbale could not influence was in the dimension of learning the indigenous South African languages which he involuntarily picked up via his association with more knowledgeable others as reiterated by Reyes (2007). I bring the argument of Lave and Wenger (1991) to this discourse at this instance by arguing that his (Nicholas) association with peers who spoke the indigenous languages seemed to have inclined him to understanding and speaking a number of these indigenous languages involuntarily. I reiterate the issue raised by Lave and Wenger (1991) in a COP that association and interaction with experts in the community is capable of fostering the understanding of the indigenous languages despite instructions at the home front to de-emphasize the use of indigenous languages. It therefore seems as if there is a recognisable magnitude of inculcation in terms of association and interaction with more knowledgeable others in a COP. Nicholas' parents seemed not to have had control of him with respect to his comprehension of the indigenous South African languages because a part of him had acculturated to the communal scenery of the school. His acculturation to the communal environment of the school likely gave him the academic acculturation he had to focus on his studies at Bakwena Primary School. Furthermore it is argued that when immigrant children acquire the necessary dimension of acculturation to the school environment through the comprehension of a language of communication, they tend to focus on academic learning. Familial interventions seem to complicate the acculturative stance of immigrant children to the extent that they are limited and incapacitated to take on the culture of the adopted society.

#### **5.6.5 SYNOPSIS OF ZIMBABWEAN IMMIGRANT LEARNERS' ACCULTURATION PREDICAMENT**

Berry (1997, 1980, 1986) proposes that acculturation ensues in four ways, and it progresses in no specific order: (a) integration, in which immigrants maintain their usual culture as they settle en route into the mainstream culture, (b) assimilation, in which immigrants relinquish their home culture to adopt the culture in the unusual society, (c) separation, in which the immigrants differentiate themselves from the mainstream culture and (d) marginalisation, which is disconnection from both home and foreign cultures. This appears to summarize the acculturative tendencies explored so far among the Zimbabwean immigrant learners in the Foundation Phase especially from their familial and schooling experiences. From the available evidence drawn from the research respondents of this study I summarise the acculturation predicaments of immigrant children from Zimbabwe as follows:

- Familial dynamics seemed to predispose these Zimbabwean immigrant children to receive incessant protection in terms of the culture to adopt and the culture to refuse. Parents of these Zimbabwean immigrant learners were firm in terms of how their children could become integrated to the South African society en route to their exposure to unfamiliar cultural principles at their disposal. These immigrant parents,

however, maintained unanimous stances towards the development of their children's academic identity. This seemed to limit the children to Berry's (1997,1980, 1986) acculturation stage of integration. These children were able to uphold their home culture as they moved towards the majority culture of the host society. The Zimbabwean immigrant children's academic identity seemed to have ensued from their familial assistance in the negotiation of acculturation in scholastic terms. This argument emanates from familial narratives that their children could learn the South African languages in order for them to adapt to the society. Parents of immigrant learners from Zimbabwe were however emphatic on the extent to which their children could adjust by instructing them to solely concentrate on learning English which is currently the language of globalization. Their motive for guiding their children in the direction of learning English seemed to be as a result of their preconceived notion that it could assist them in gaining the required understanding to comprehend academic tasks. Out of Berry's (1997,1980, 1986) seminal proposition in terms of the format of acculturation of immigrants in a novel multicultural milieu, it seemed as if familial influences predisposed the Zimbabwean immigrant learners to adhering to only one of the four dimensions of acculturation that was proposed by Berry (1997, 1980, 1986). This was in terms of incorporation to the academic society, in which their children had to maintain their usual culture as they settled en route into the mainstream culture.

- None of the Zimbabwean immigrant learners in the Foundation Phase experienced acculturative stress in the mainstream South African society. At the school they enjoyed an amiable association with their indigenous South African peers. The fact that Chester did not speak nor proficiently comprehend English did not deter him from associating with his friends. This was an indication that among immigrant learners in the Foundation Phase, language may not be a barrier to associating and relating with their indigenous peers. According to Madhavappallil and Choi (2006), immigrant adolescent children in the United States of America were found to experience acculturative stress. It could be argued that their (adolescent) age was likely responsible for their outright choice that directed them in the direction of opposing their home front cultural principles handed over to them by their parents. In this context the immigrant learners from Zimbabwe were still very young, and were not predisposed to taking the dimension of reasoning and independence undertaken by the adolescent immigrant children that were explored in the United States of America by Madhavappallil and Choi (2006). I argue that acculturative stress may not normally be experienced by immigrant learners in the Foundation Phase because they are usually under the tutelage of parents and teachers.

- Parents verbally communicated their intentions in terms of academic expectations to their children. Dave's mother told him to be focused so that he would excel academically up to postgraduate level. This gave Dave the fortitude not to lose grip on his school work even at a young age (see section 4.4.2). Familial participation in Nicholas' academic work was more in terms of his need to cultivate the habit of reading. This was probably because he was still in Grade R at that time, and that the workload at school was not very heavy. Mr. Timbale made this known, "*We try to encourage him to like books and know how to read*". This verbal communication seemed to have a far-reaching impact on the children at the time of this study as they did well at school. It is argued that verbal communication of parents to their children could constitute a basis for them in terms of developing the skill, and the right attitude towards academic performance. This seems to support the argument of Kao and Tienda (1995) that the way parents talk to their children about their educational experience is capable of enhancing their academic performance.

## **5.7 HOW DOES LANGUAGE INFLUENCE THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF IMMIGRANT CHILDREN FROM ZIMBABWE IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE?**

This research question is first approached from the perspective of the challenging effect of deficiency in the language of learning and teaching. The scholarly work of Mouw and Xie (1999) forms the basis of interpreting the acculturative tendencies of the immigrant learners from Zimbabwe. Mouw and Xie (1999) reveal that an exploration of the extent of acquisition of the language of communication in the society of sojourn may be employed to predict the extent of acculturation among immigrants. Out of the four Zimbabwean immigrant learners who were explored in this study, Chester's case was the most challenging. The first reason for this challenge was due to his inability to speak and understand the LoLT. The second reason was in terms of his teacher's inability to reach him with Shona, in an attempt to code switch so that he could keep abreast of academic tasks in the classroom.

It was a challenging task for Chester's teacher because she had to find the means of reaching Chester with the curriculum. I present Ms. Bowen's (Chester's teacher) narrative with respect to the linguistic challenge of Chester in the LoLT. She said, "*When he speaks to me, he struggles*". When a learner is linguistically excluded, he is technically excluded from the curriculum of study. This kind of exclusion makes a learner ignorant of what he is required to learn. Consequently failure to demonstrate academic achievement may ensue. Ms. Bowen narrated the experience of Chester further as he was initially admitted to the school. This was a symbol of legitimate peripheral participation by virtue of the admission that was given to Chester, to participate in the school curriculum. Linguistic incapacity in the LoLT seemed to have deprived him from negotiating with the curriculum of study to an extent



that could have earned him academic achievement. Ms. Bowen recounts her experience as Chester entered the school initially, *He couldn't speak English at all at the beginning of the year and there was no one to speak his language.*" An analysis of Chester's experience at the border of the community of practice reveals that he had a protracted challenge in the LoLT, which was the currency of transacting academic tasks. Chester recorded failure because there was no one to communicate the curriculum to him for a very long time as Ms. Bowen reiterates, *It was really difficult for me to try to teach him or communicate with him because there's no way of interpreting or make somebody explain in his language what he is expected to do.*" A scrupulous analysis of Chester's academic experience, based on documents and academic record at the school revealed that he did not achieve much in any of his school work. Chester's academic experience was an indication of what deficiency in the LoLT could cause a learner to go through.

Chester's case was well known to his parents. I was curious as to what remedial strategy was put in place by his parents to alleviate his linguistic challenge in the LoLT. His father mentioned the extent of the challenge he had in the LoLT in terms of his academic performance by saying *it's really affecting him but we are trying to work on that one because he is really being affected.*" Chester's parents began to work on revamping him from his state of academic incommunicado by employing the services of a Zimbabwean educator who could speak Shona. The strategy was that the educator would explain class lessons to him in Shona and then teach him again in English. It was more of a scenario which entailed code switching from Shona to English and vice versa. Chester's father explains with these words as evidence to the claims made, *"We have arranged extra lessons for him with someone who would take him through the path so that when he catches up he can now understand his work in English."* These experiences seem to confirm the argument of Yeh et al. (2008) that language competence is vital for academic achievement. The linguistic incapacity of Chester also serves as additional evidence that "proficiency in English is a major consideration in the necessity, rapidity, and ease with which immigrants adapt to a milieu dominated by English" as reiterated by Chow (2006:106).

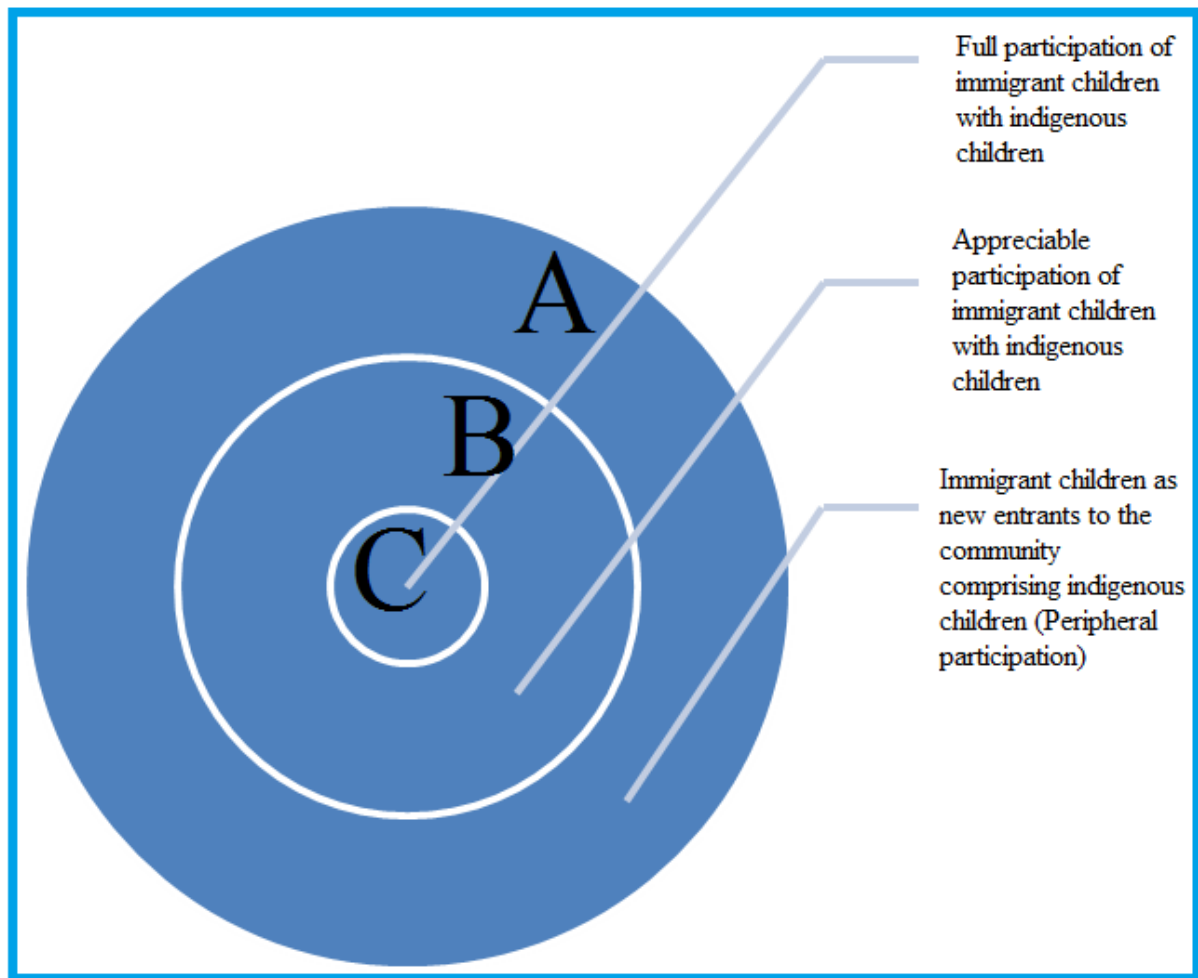
The academic trajectory of Chester from familial and teacher's perspectives elucidate an understanding of the impact of curriculum incommunicado on the academic performance of immigrant children. Based on the available evidence obtained from this study it is posited that linguistic incapability among immigrant children could predispose them to being excluded from scholarly tasks that are administered to them. On the other hand the cases of the other Zimbabwean immigrant learners who could speak and understand the LoLT assisted in making an intellectual judgment. In Chapter Four sections 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.3.4, 4.4.1, 4.4.2, 4.4.4, 4.9.1, 4.9.2 and 4.9.3, it becomes lucid that the capacity to understand the



LoLT assisted the other three immigrant children from Zimbabwe to demonstrate academic achievement. Some of them could also understand the indigenous South African languages. Their understanding of the indigenous South African languages could have also assisted them to learn with their indigenous peers in the indigenous South African languages. Although English was the official language of instruction at the school, they could have devised means of relating academic tasks to one another via the means of code switching from the indigenous South African languages to English and vice versa. Consequently answers have been provided in terms of the influence of language on the academic performance of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase.

#### **5.7.1 IMPLICATIONS OF THE DYNAMICS OF LANGUAGE AND ACCULTURATION ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

At this juncture I incorporate the argument of Lave and Wenger (1991) to present the dynamics involved in the negotiation of the four immigrant children's academic performance and their acculturation to their school environments. Tommy, Dave and Nicholas were in possession of the required dimensions of linguistic capital which gave them access to engage in legitimate peripheral participation, in the communities of practice (their schools). They could comprehend the LoLT, which was vital for academic interaction with teachers and the other learners at their schools. According to the COP principles, interaction with more knowledgeable others presents the opportunity to engage with the school curriculum until full participation is attained.



**Figure 5.1: Pictorial representation of the negotiation of Zimbabwean immigrant children in the Foundation Phase as they approach the COP**

In Figure 5.1 Tommy, Dave and Nicholas approached the COP at point A, and proceeded to point B until they had reached full participation at point C. Their movements were likely catalyzed by the linguistic capital they possessed at the periphery of the COP. This was likely because, at the home front they had been speaking English. This prior knowledge of English was seen in this study as a kind of linguistic acculturation which likely became resourceful to the three children at their schools. It was found to initiate their interaction and academic transaction with the curriculum of study as they engaged with their teachers and peers. I bring the notion of Kohn (2002:155) to this discourse because of its relevance to the mediation of identities. Kohn (2002:155) posits that “Identity is all about choice, action and a multiplicity of experience and allegiance” The parents of three of the Zimbabwean immigrant children (Tommy, Dave and Nicholas) seem to elucidate an understanding of the scholarly disposition of Kohn (2002) that identity entails a contemplation of “choice”, “action” and a diversity of experiences and “allegiance” in the mainstream society.

I use the lens of Kohn (2002) to explain the choices made by the parents of these three Zimbabwean immigrant children. I argue that the parents deliberately chose to temporarily relinquish their ethnic identity because of the future goals set for their children to learn and comply with the tenets of the curriculum at the two schools. They did this by compromising their stances to allow their children to speak in English at home, in order to be capable of participating in the curriculum of study at the schools. This decision seems to comply with the suggestion of Kohn (2002) that identity is a matter involving a contemplation of “choice” in the midst of multifarious experiences.

The multifarious experiences are seen in the forms of the available indigenous languages spoken at break among the children at the schools. The LoLT likely gave them (Tommy, Dave and Nicholas) the fortitude to engage with teachers and peers until they developed the scholastic acculturation necessary to take responsibility for their learning. I reflect on the basis that scholastic acculturation could be developed by learners as suggested by Asanova (2005:191), in relation to the acquisition of the relevant sense of belonging to the school environment. Asanova suggested that a sense of belonging could be developed when teachers amiably engage students in scholarly matters. The resultant effect of a sense of belonging was found to evolve in scholastic acculturation at the two schools. Consequently Tommy, Dave and Nicholas were found to have crossed the barriers of scholastic exclusion, which seems to have given them the fortitude to engage with the curriculum of study at their schools (via the ability to use the LoLT). These three children’s experiences seem to indicate the fact that the argument of Lave and Wenger (1991) may be consistent with the findings of this study that interaction is important for academic integration.

On the other hand Chester lacked the potential to speak English because his parents did not prepare him at the home front to legitimately participate in the activities of the COP. They did not incline him in the direction of deliberately acquiring the use of English during normal conversation at home. They (Chester’s parents) were likely in control of their ethnic identity, never to relinquish their Zimbabwean identity because language and identity are closely linked together as suggested by Yeh et al. (2008). Consequently Chester approached the COP with insufficient linguistic capital (LoLT), recognised for the negotiation of scholastic enterprise at his school. He was linguistically excluded from scholarly principles used to disseminate the curriculum of study. A look at Figure 5.1 suggests that Chester struggled at the periphery of the COP (see point A) because he lacked the linguistic capital to interact with teachers at the COP. Although he found ways of interacting with his peers without being able to verbally communicate proficiently, these communications were likely based on the use of body language. The use of body language without the verbal aspect of communicating and interacting with the curriculum and experts (teachers) in the COP likely became

inconsequential to his academic endeavours at the school. Consequently he could not achieve academically at the school because he was on another linguistic terrain (Shona language), not recognised by the dictates of the COP in the dissemination of the curriculum. This study presents the significance of the academic language of communication in the COP as pivotal to every other experience in the COP. I present the LoLT as pivotal to the engagement in the COP because it is capable of inclining the attention of children in the direction of academic relevance until academic achievement is attained.

Based on the interplay of forces between acculturation and language, I posit that Tommy, Dave and Nicholas academically acculturated to their school environments, drawing on the suggestion of Yeh et al. (2008). Chester did not acculturate academically because he was ostracised by his state of incommunicado, despite being a member of the COP. I argue that the language of communication in the school environment is capable of fostering the required dimension of academic integration. Academic integration provides the opportunity to demonstrate academic achievement because of the requisite dimension of the skill to interact with teachers and the curriculum content.

In a study conducted by Gupta (2009) on the Vygotskian perspectives on using dramatic play to enhance children's development and balance creativity with structure in the early childhood classroom, it was found that language is a vital instrument that aids interaction among children, both in the classroom and during informal interaction. This research study agrees with the notion of Gupta (2009) that the language of communication is versatile for engaging children in terms of scholastic and non-scholastic activities.

Porras and Mathews (2009:27), in a study of language development among immigrant students from the perspectives of two different assimilated instructors contend that "fluency in English is the first goal that must be achieved by immigrants in order to survive" the challenges of an unusual society. As conceptualized in this study, Bakwena Primary School and Saint Agnes Catholic School were unfamiliar communities of practice to the Zimbabwean immigrant learners. From narratives obtained in the study it is evident that Zimbabwean immigrant learners at the schools needed to capture an understanding of English in order to demonstrate academic performance. Consequently it is argued that proficiency in the language of learning and teaching is an important scholastic ingredient that is necessary to consolidate the learning of immigrant children in an academic institution that has chosen the English language as the language of instruction. I agree with Porras and Mathews (2009:27) that proficiency in English should be the initial investment that must be made by immigrant children before their commencement of interaction and engagement with the academic environment if academic achievement is to be guaranteed. This is important for

immigrant children who are schooling in an academic environment where English language is the LoLT.

The findings obtained from three out of the four learners (Tommy, Dave and Nicholas) that were explored in this study revealed that immigrant children possess the knack to briskly adapt and learn the indigenous languages of the mainstream society. They were also predisposed to learning the prevailing cultural values of the mainstream society. This finding is in support of Sookrajh et al.'s (2005:11) work that immigrant children learn the mainstream language, ethnic society values and the way of life of the mainstream society more briskly than grown-ups. For the survival of immigrant children in the school environment that has adopted English as language of instruction, it seems that the initial investment made to elucidate their comprehension of the English at the home front becomes their take-off point when they newly approach the periphery of the COP. It thus becomes challenging for teachers to begin to acclimatize them concurrently as scholarly matters of the curriculum are taught to them.

## **5.8 CONCLUSION**

The language of communication, acculturation and academic performance are taken as a cyclical force, capable of determining the overall success of immigrant children in an unusual society. From the available evidence in the study it becomes lucid that the language of communication is linked to a learner's trajectory of acculturation to the school environment. It (language) is also a determinant of the academic survival of the immigrant learners. The acculturation of Zimbabwean immigrant learners has been explored as academic or scholastic acculturation. It (acculturation) was considered in relation to the mainstream acculturation experience of the Zimbabwean immigrant learners. The parents of the four immigrant learners that were explored displayed control over their children's mainstream acculturation experience. This was done in an attempt that they did not have to forget their ethnic cultures while they permissively learned the indigenous languages. The liberality (of Tommy's, Dave's and Nicholas' parents) in terms of the notion that their children could learn English was targeted at their children's acculturation to the school environment in terms of their children not being excluded from academic matters. These three parents (Mr. Williams, Mrs. Tshangarai and Mr. and Mrs. Timbale) had the effrontery to engage their children by teaching and speaking to them in English at the home front. Chester's parents (Mr. and Mrs. Chiron) wanted him to learn and speak English but did not intentionally engage him in conversation by speaking to him in English at home.

In this study it was discovered that parents of all four immigrant children minded their children becoming totally acculturated to the South African society because they held home

cultural principles in high esteem. The Zimbabwean immigrant children who had academic achievement did so because of their capacity to understand the LoLT. The only Zimbabwean immigrant learner who had protracted academic challenge was not adept at comprehending the LoLT because of his familial influence of Shona language on him. We are able to learn in this study that the LoLT is of the utmost importance if academic performance is desired by parents and teachers. We also learn that a deliberate attempt of parents, communicating with their children in the medium of English at home is an invaluable asset, capable of initiating their legitimate peripheral participation as they approach the COP. Culture is an important ingredient in the legacy of families, exercised by the dynamics of contending for the retention of ethnic languages among parents. The belief of parents is that cultural value retention is achieved via the retention of home front ethnic languages. However it is of the utmost importance that parents work hand in hand with the teachers of their children to achieve focus by assisting their children at the home front to learn English. Chapter Six concludes the study by presenting a holistic conclusion, contribution to the body of literature, recommendation for future studies and recommendations for practice.



## CHAPTER SIX

### Summary of evolving themes, findings, contribution to knowledge, recommendation and conclusions

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*“Acculturation reflects more than the effects of the passage of time.”*

(Trickett & Birman, 2005:36)

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter Five discussion on the findings was presented in relation to theoretical perspective as situated in the body of literature. This chapter presents a synopsis of the inquiry with regard to the research questions. It also proffers recommendations on novel courses of inquiry in the field of immigrant study in Early Childhood Education. Contributions are further presented on the acculturation of immigrant children in the Foundation Phase and how this influences their academic performance.

Adequate literature was perused, both locally and internationally, to gain insight into the study. This also provided ample information in understanding the intricacies involved in conducting research with children. Consequently adequate information required for conducting the research in an ethical manner particularly suited to children was provided before going to the field. Therefore a solid foundation was laid for a deep and enlightening study. The study was based on COP and LPP as theoretical frameworks. This led to the explanation of the acculturation process of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase.

Qualitative research methodology was chosen in conducting the study because of its ability to support the exploratory nature of the research. The methodology and justification thereof were discussed in Chapter Three. The research participants were male children in the Foundation Phase (Grade R to Grade 2), their parents and their teachers. Their stories were told and merged into themes and categories.

#### 6.2 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

This study focused on the acculturation of immigrant children in the Foundation Phase: influence on academic performance.



CHAPTER ONE presented the rationale for this study. Perusal of literature both locally and internationally revealed a gap in empirical research on the acculturation of immigrant children in the Foundation Phase and what influence this had on their academic performance. Information acquired from literature provided a basis for exploring the study as it applied to the South African context.

In CHAPTER TWO a presentation was made of various documented reasons why people migrate to another country. Consultation with literature revealed various reasons such as economic strangulation and wars in the home country. Other reasons are anticipated opportunities available in the country of sojourn. These provided an understanding of how immigrant children came to be in their host country as a result of the predicament of their parents. Acculturation of immigrants was approached by focusing on both international and local accounts. On the international level it was observed that immigrant children often encounter complex problems as they negotiate their position in a novel society. Such problems range from having to learn a new language and culture, to acceptance by peers in the community (Von Grünigen, Perren, Nagele & Alsaker, 2010).

On the local level the available record of immigrants was not in the Foundation Phase, but among high school students who were refugees and learners of war and flight (Sookrajh et al. 2005). Although the research sample comprised high school students, it provided the opportunity to form a basis of inquiry regarding the behaviour of immigrants in another society. For example Sookrajh et al. (2005) found that refugee children were adept at learning the English language and performed well academically. The finding of Sookrajh et al. (2005) presented a platform of investigation as I engaged in document analysis to ascertain the academic performance of the immigrant children from Zimbabwe. CHAPTER THREE discussed the methodology used in directing the course of this study. The justification of methodological choice, description of research sites, data collection methods and ethical considerations were also discussed. CHAPTER FOUR revealed the voices of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase. Their stories were corroborated by those of their parents and teachers for triangulation purposes and to enhance the depth of data collected. These were substantiated by document analysis of academic records to explore their academic performance. Understanding gained from the stories of these immigrant learners provided answers to the main research question: How does acculturation influence the academic performance of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase? It also assisted in answering the following research subquestions:

- What are the factors affecting the successful adjustment of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase?

- What vital transition is required of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase to attain academic achievement?
- How do teachers facilitate the adjustment of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase?
- How do familial and school experiences of immigrant children in the Foundation Phase affect their acculturation?
- How does language influence the academic performance of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase?

Data collected from learners, parents and teachers were merged into themes. Each participant's narrative was discussed under the theme that had emerged. Each participant's story was elicited by a narrative. Such narratives formed the crust of their stories and the categories embedded in the themes. These were delicately interlaced in their biographical information connecting each participant to his or her spectacular story. A deliberate attempt was made from inception of the study to include the voices of parents and teachers in the study to enhance the meaning-making process of data collected. I engaged my skill as an interpretivist and constructivist to decipher their responses in consonance with the narratives of their teachers and what I found from their parents. Making meaning of the Zimbabwean children experiences was an intellectual predicament. From the inception of this study, it was intended to present the stories of immigrant learners from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase. This necessitated the use of diverse data collection instruments. This assisted in providing valid and reliable data on which interpretation was based. In CHAPTER FIVE findings obtained in Chapter Four were comprehensively discussed in relation to the theoretical perspective in literature as discussed in Chapter Two. Commonalities and differences between findings in the voluminous literature were highlighted.

### **6.3 LITERATURE COMPLIANCE**

This study was conducted by analysing a body of literature which was useful in providing the basis for the enrichment of the analysis of data and discussion of findings. The analysis of data and discussion of findings in this study were bounded within the body of literature consulted. Table 6.1 below provides a summary of findings from the study in comparison with literature consulted. The "subject" column contains main arguments from the study which are relevant to the research questions raised in the study. Points of departure or unification were highlighted with reference to the literature consulted.

**Table 6.1: Summary of emerging themes and categories in comparison with literature**

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Author and year</b>	<b>Existing knowledge</b>	<b>Constructive deductions from the study</b>
Adjustment requirements of immigrant children in the Foundation Phase	Corsaro, Molinari and Rosier (2002)	Children attempt to deal with their immediate concerns by innovatively accessing information within their immediate environment.	Most of the Zimbabwean immigrant children explored in this study eventually adjusted to the academic environment. They did this by learning from more knowledgeable others.
	Yeh et al., (2008)	English language is essential for immigrant children to succeed academically.	One of the learners in this study was found not to excel academically due to his deficiency in the LoLT, which was English language.
	Yeh et al., (2008)	English language is important for communication in a novel society.	One of the learners explored in this study coped socially despite his inability to speak English or any of the indigenous South African languages.
Evidence of discrimination among children in the Foundation Phase.	French et al., (2006)	Discrimination is not prominent in children	None of the Zimbabwean children explored in this study experienced any acts of discrimination at school.
Teachers' preparedness to facilitate the adjustment of immigrant children in the Foundation Phase.	Sanagavarapu (2010)	It is crucial for educators in the public schools to consciously assist immigrant children to have a hitch-free journey to the school community and their host society.	In this study it was observed that teachers provided ad hoc solutions to meet the needs of immigrant children in the Foundation Phase. There was no prior preparation to ameliorate anticipated challenges confronted by immigrant children in the Foundation Phase.
Influence of familial experience on acculturation and academic performance.	Niemeyer, Wong and Westerhaus (2009)	Immigrant children are inclined to have academic accomplishment due to their parents' involvement in their study.	Immigrant parents explored in this study showed deep concern about their children's academic welfare in one way or the other. This contributed to academic achievement.
Identity negotiation among immigrant children in the Foundation Phase	Kohn (2002)	The issue of identity entails a contemplation of choice and a diversity of experiences in the society of sojourn.	The development of a sense of belonging among immigrant children in the Foundation Phase is not fixed. It involves familial inclination and the child's futuristic dimension of experiences.

## 6.4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS IN THE STUDY

This research study set out to explore the acculturation of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase in relation to its influence on academic performance. Findings that emerged from the study were five-fold:

First, it was found that the initial investment in the LoLT initiated at the home front by parents assisted the immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase to engage with the curriculum content on the periphery of the COP. They comprised communities of practice involved in engaging their children in learning English because it was the LoLT. This initial linguistic investment became resources for teachers who could relate with three out of the four immigrant learners until they complied with the expected goal of attaining academic achievement. The only learner who did not arrive on the periphery of the COP with an initial linguistic investment in the LoLT did not demonstrate academic achievement. This was likely because he lacked the linguistic capital to interact with the teachers and peers as he legitimately and peripherally participated in academic matters.

The understanding that three out of the four Zimbabwean learners had in terms of being capable of speaking the indigenous South African languages and the amiable relationships which they enjoyed from their teachers seemed to have fostered their development of sense of belonging to the schools. Their ability to speak the indigenous languages and the cordial relationships they had with their teachers enabled them to acculturate to the school environments in manners that assisted them to settle down to learn curriculum content. I present the fact that each dimension of acculturation has its own basic ingredient for academic and social survival among immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase. Academic acculturation is posited to be relevant for academic achievement, while interactive acculturation is vital for social interaction.

Second, teachers had no prior arrangements to address the linguistic concerns of immigrant children in the Foundation Phase. However within the context of this study, one of the teachers devised a means of reaching Chester with the curriculum content by pairing him with another learner from Zimbabwe (Dave) who was in his class. Dave was made to explain curriculum content to Chester in Shona language. The issue was however complicated because Chester was required to present what he had learned in English. At other times Chester's teacher assisted him to copy what was written on the white board directly into his notebook. The last intervention embarked upon by Chester's teacher was the practice of sending him to the resource centre where he was given CDs that assisted him with pronunciation of words.

Third, all of the four parents of Zimbabwean immigrant learners at the two schools discouraged their children from totally imbibing the cultures of South Africa. They did this by attempting to discourage them from forgetting their home languages. However they did not have total control over the extent to which their children could get involved with the South African culture. Their children spoke the indigenous South African languages at the schools. The use of the indigenous South African languages constituted the basis of having positive schooling experiences among the Zimbabwean immigrant learners in the Foundation Phase.

Fourth, it was found that the comprehension of curriculum content was enhanced by the acquisition of the LoLT among three out of the four immigrant learners. Chester's case became a control that absence of the capacity to communicate with the curriculum and experts in the COP could be inhibitory to academic achievement.

Fifth, it was found that outgoingness and sense of belonging among the four immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase assisted them to cross the barrier of discrimination. Outgoingness became cultural capital, expended as the immigrant children participated in communities of practice with stakeholders. It was thus established that issues of discrimination were uncommon among immigrant children and their indigenous peers in the Foundation Phase. This finding was found to agree with the suggestions of French et al. (2006) that discrimination is absent among children. The absence of discrimination at this stage is significant as it spells out the importance of the capacity of children to blend together in a multicultural environment.

## **6.5 GENERATION OF NEW KNOWLEDGE**

First, in this study Chester's experience with his indigenous peers at the school was found as a foundation of new knowledge. This argument is presented in relation to the argument of Yeh et al. (2008):

Acculturation is not only a time to learn new norms and values, and to adopt salient reference groups of the host society, but is a process that includes the ability to grow beyond the original culture and encompass a new culture. Hence, communication is crucial to the adjustment process, and language is the fundamental means of effective communication — an important tool for social interaction and for retrieving information in daily life (Yeh et al., 2008:784)

Chester was found to interact with his peers socially, without verbal exchange of words because he could not speak English or the indigenous South African languages. According to the latter part of Yeh et al. (2008:784), a language of communication is important for "social interaction and for retrieving information in daily life". Chester's experience with his indigenous peers at the school superseded this prior knowledge because he devised his own

way of using body language and outgoingness to decode information from his peers at the school. This is taken as new knowledge that verbal language alone may not be responsible for social engagement among children in the Foundation Phase. The use of body language, catalysed by the character of outgoingness could become a tool for retrieving information on a daily basis among children. This finding therefore limits the finding of Yeh et al. (2008) to adults and not children in the Foundation Phase. It is true that Yeh et al. (2008) conducted a study on Chinese-American immigrant students in the United States. Their findings are asserted as important among adolescent students and not children in the Foundation Phase. Borrowing concepts is not unethical, but the application of borrowed concepts is what matters. One could have used the findings of Yeh et al. (2008) blindly, but the learning that has evolved in this study is that contexts and participants differ across populations.

Second, it was found that all four immigrant parents were liberally disposed to a certain extent that their children could learn the indigenous South African languages. This attitude is not so common in the literature, within the confines of literature searched in conducting this study that immigrant parents attested to their children's learning of the indigenous languages. However the immigrant parents placed limitations on their children that they did not have to learn the cultures of South Africa at the expense of the Zimbabwean culture. What they did not realise was that the adventure of learning the indigenous languages in the society of sojourn leads to the learning of the available cultures on the ground in the mainstream society. As suggested by Yeh et al. (2008) the learning of the language of communication in the target society is an in-road to the available cultures within an environment.

## **6.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Firstly, this study is capable of informing the decisions to embark upon when immigrant children are admitted to both public and private primary institutions of South Africa. Issues that emerged in the study in terms of the importance of language could inform policy makers to institute the importance of introducing special English classes for immigrant children in South Africa since it is inevitable to stop the process of immigration of people into South Africa. This study opens up a platform of further investigation in diverse schools in the Foundation Phase where immigrant children are admitted. This is because contexts differ from one another.

Secondly, the study is significant because it has exposed the ingenuity of having children from similar sociocultural backgrounds together in the school. The fact that Dave assisted Chester in comprehending curriculum content was significant and it exposed the possibility of pairing up children from similar sociocultural backgrounds together to assist children who are linguistically challenged. This could help immigrant children because they would identify with

their peers from similar sociocultural milieu. For example Dave spoke English and Shona, as well as the South African languages. Dave was found to teach Chester in class because he could communicate with Chester in Shona, and at the same time he was resourceful in translating what he taught Chester in English. An important knowledge that teachers could pair up linguistically challenged immigrant learners and this could become a practice in the Foundation Phase.

Thirdly, this study has uncovered the significance of parents of immigrant children to consciously communicate with them in English on the home front. The practice of this becomes an indispensable asset for the immigrant children to acculturate into the school community where the LoLT is the English language. It also facilitates their penetration into the core of the COP.

## **6.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

First, the sample size of this study was a limitation. I could not find many immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the two peri-urban schools that were utilized for this study. If there were more respondents, different perspectives of experiences could have been afforded in making more concrete evidence available in the study. An associated limitation was in the area that some of the parents contacted possibly did not have valid residence permits. When they were contacted to give their consent to include their children in the study, they misconstrued this idea for evaluating their immigration status in South Africa. Consequently they turned down the invitation to participate in the study with their immigrant children.

Second, the study was limited to immigrant children from Zimbabwe. If the study had encompassed immigrant children from the different African countries studying in South African primary schools, a more comprehensive evaluation of how acculturation impacted on the academic experiences of immigrant children in the Foundation Phase could have been obtained.

Third, the four children were males. If there were female immigrant children from Zimbabwe, the effect of gender could have been incorporated to see how it could impact on the acculturation experiences of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase in relation to their academic performance.

## **6.8 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE**

Based on the findings of this study it is recommended that private and public schools embark on a practice that ascertains the linguistic compliance of children in the Foundation Phase



before they are admitted to study. A remedial programme could be fostered by creating special classes aimed at linguistically empowering immigrant children to cope with academic matters before being introduced to mainstream learning programmes. In addition programmes should be incorporated into the school curriculum to train teachers in the Foundation Phase on how to manage the multicultural classroom with its attendant challenges and how to manage them. Furthermore immigrant parents should be educated on allowing their children to learn the indigenous languages of the host country to enhance integration of their children into the novel culture. Parents should be made to realise that allowing their children to learn the indigenous language does not necessarily mean the children will relinquish the home language.

## **6.9 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

A number of research topics have been identified for further study in line with the experience gathered from this study. These are subsequently presented:

- Parental participation and academic performance among Grade 3 learners; comparison between immigrants and native children.
- Effect of immigrant parents' involvement in school activities on their children's academic performance.
- Impact of parents' ethnic differences on immigrant children's academic performance in the Foundation Phase.

## **6.10 COMPREHENSIVE SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

This chapter has presented a summary of the findings obtained from this study. It was found that language was the fulcrum of all the experiences negotiated by the immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase. Language was found to determine entrance to the academic stipulations at the schools among the immigrant children because English was used for the transaction of academic matters. The indigenous South African languages became useful for social interaction and acculturation to the school environment. The ability of the immigrant children to interact with their indigenous peers was important to the point that they were not discriminated against at the school.



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11 May 2012

Dear Principal

### APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL

I am a student of the University of Pretoria. I am studying for my Masters degree in Early Childhood Education. In fulfilment of my Master's degree, I am required to complete a relevant research project. The purpose of my research project is to explore the acculturation of immigrant children in the Foundation Phase and the influence of this on their academic performance. I will specifically be focusing on immigrant children from Zimbabwe.

In an attempt to collect data, I would like to interview 6 Zimbabwean learners, their parents and 6 teachers. The interview will be conducted during the months of May and June, 2012. Observation of the 6 Zimbabwean learners will be done during their normal class lessons, on the playfield, and on their way home using a video camera. Some other parts of the school, like the hall, playfield, etc may appear in the video. No pictures of the school, learners or teachers will appear in the research report. The district office has already been contacted for permission to do the research. I still await their response. After I received possible permission from the district and the school, I will write a letter informing the parents/guardians about the proposed research and ask for their consent to interview their children/wards. The learners will also be informed to get their assent to participate in the research.

All the required measures concerning the research have been taken. All issues about ethical considerations have been carefully put in place in order to avoid any unfair or unethical practice. Absolute confidentiality will be observed in disseminating information regarding the research. The interviews with the learners and teachers will be recorded and transcribed for reference purposes and names of school and participants will not be revealed in my research report. Fictitious names will be used instead.

I would be grateful if permission is granted for me to conduct the research at your school.

Thank you for your attention.

Yours sincerely

**O.T. Adebajji**  
Researcher

**Dr. Nkidi Phatudi**  
**Prof. Cycil Hartell**  
Supervisors



11 May 2012

Dear Parent / Guardian

**LETTER OF INFORMATION REGARDING RESEARCH TO BE CONDUCTED AT YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL**

This is to inform you that research will be conducted at your child's school. The research will form part of the requirement for my Masters degree in Early Childhood Education. The purpose of my study is to explore the acculturation of immigrant children in the Foundation Phase and the influence on their academic performance.

Teachers and learners at the school will be interviewed and observed. The interview and observation will take place within the school premises at a time when lessons will not be obstructed. Observation will centre on how learners relate to their peers in the classroom and on the playfield. Data collection will take place in the months of May and June, 2012. This research is being conducted with the permission of the ethical committee of the University of Pretoria and the Department of Education.

Your child has been selected to participate in the research. Interviews and observations will be recorded and transcribed. This is only for future reference purposes. Your child's name will not appear in the research report. You will also be required to answer short questions relating to your child's experiences at school and at home. No information supplied will be used against them in any way and neither will they be made to face any consequence from the school authority. All ethical procedures are being followed and any unfair or unethical practices will be avoided. All information will be handled in strict confidence. Your child will not be at risk during the research. Please note that participation in this research is voluntary. Your child will not be penalized for not taking part in this research. Your child has the choice of withdrawing from the research at any stage should he/she feel uncomfortable.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely

**ADEBANJI O.T  
RESEARCHER**

✕-----

I, \_\_\_\_\_ parent/guardian of \_\_\_\_\_ in Grade \_\_\_\_\_ hereby give permission for him/her to take part in the research on the acculturation of immigrant children in the Foundation Phase being conducted at the school.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



**Letter of Informed Consent**

**11 May 2012**

Dear SGB,

We would like to learn more about the acculturation of immigrant children in the Foundation Phase and its influence on academic performance in South African schools. It is envisaged that this study will be beneficial in helping us gain better insight into the experiences of immigrant children and how they adjust to the South African school environment. We also believe that the result of this study will generate recommendations that will be useful to the school administration.

Teachers and learners at the school will be interviewed and observed. The interview and observation will take place within the school premises at a time that lessons will not be obstructed. Observation will centre on how learners relate together with their peers in the classroom and on the playfield. Data collection will take place in the months of May and June, 2012. This research is being conducted with the permission of the ethical committee of the University of Pretoria and the Department of Education.

Please note that real names of learners, teachers and the school will not appear in the report. Fictitious names will be used instead. We will adhere to ethical principles of confidentiality and anonymity. Measures are also in place to protect all participants in this study from any probable risk. All information gathered from participants will only be used for research purposes. No aspect of the information provided will be used against any of the participants, now or in future.

Participation in this research is voluntary. This means that participants are at liberty to discontinue at any point should they feel uncomfortable. There are no penalties for non-participation.

Yours faithfully

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Adebanji O.T**

**Researcher**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
**SGB Chairman/Chairperson**

**SGB Chairman/Chairperson**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



11 May 2012

Dear Learner

### LETTER OF ASSENT

This letter is to inform you about the research that is being conducted in your school. The research will form part of my Master's degree program. The topic of the research is: "The acculturation of immigrant children in the Foundation Phase: influence on academic performance". The research focus is on how immigrant children adjust to the South African society in general and the school community in particular. The research will also explore the impact of this adjustment on academic achievement of immigrant learners.

You are hereby informed that you have been chosen to be a participant in this research. Your parents and the school have also been informed and they have agreed to your taking part in the study. However, you have to give your assent as participation in this study is voluntary. Please note that all ethical procedures have been put in place to avoid doing things that are not right or unfair. Be assured that you will not be subject to any form of harm or harassment. You are free to discontinue at any time if you no longer feel comfortable to continue with the research. This will not result in any form of punishment.

Your participation will be in the form of answering short questions after school hours. The purpose of this is to collect data (information) that will be analysed to write a report for the study. This report will be useful to the school, the Department of Education and other educational institutions both locally and internationally. You will also be observed on the playfield during break and on the way home after school. The purpose of this is to learn more about how you relate with your friends in school. I will also interview your teachers and your parents to better understand your experience with other children from South Africa. I will be requesting for your academic records. To protect you from any embarrassment, I have asked that your name not be disclosed. False names will be used instead of your real names when I write the research report.

If you have any questions or problems you are welcome to contact me. Thank you for agreeing to be part of this research.

Yours sincerely

**O.T . ADEBANJI**  
**RESEARCHER**  
**0714152041**



✂-----

I, \_\_\_\_\_ in Grade \_\_\_\_\_ hereby agree to take part in the research that will be conducted at the school regarding the educational and socio-cultural experiences of immigrant students in South African schools.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Learner's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



11 May 2012

Gauteng Department of Education  
Gauteng Province

### LETTER OF APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am a Master's student in the department of Early Childhood Education in the University of Pretoria. In fulfilment of my degree, I am expected to conduct an authentic research. The topic of my research project is: "The acculturation of immigrant children in the Foundation Phase: influence on academic performance". My main research question is: "How does acculturation influence the academic performance of immigrant children from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase?" It is believed that this study will be of great value in giving insight into the experiences of immigrant children in the Foundation Phase. It will also enable us to learn about how immigrant children adapt to the South African school community. It is envisaged that findings from the proposed study may further influence policies that will positively affect the administration of Foundation Phase classrooms.

My proposed research site is Bronkhorstspuit Primary School, Bronkhorstspuit. My data collection process will involve interviewing 6 Zimbabwean learners, 3 teachers and 6 parents. The data collection will take place between May and June 2012. The 6 Zimbabwean learners participating in the study will also be observed in the classroom, on the playfield and on their way home. During the observation, I will make use of a video camera during normal classes and during break on the playfield for about 45minutes to 1 hour. I will also make use of audio tape, journal entries and field notes. The school principal and school governing body will be informed about the research. Their consent will be sought in writing before proceeding with the research. The learners' assent and parents' consent will also be sought in writing after this application is granted.

Participation in this research is voluntary. All research participants are at liberty to withdraw their participation at any stage of the research if they feel uncomfortable to continue. Real names of learners, teachers and the school will not appear in the report. Fictitious names will be used instead. I will adhere to ethical principles of confidentiality and anonymity. Measures are also in place to protect all participants in this study from any probable risk. All information gathered from participants will only be used for research purposes. No aspect of the information provided will be used against any of the participants, now or in future.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely

---

**O.T. Adebajji**  
**Researcher**  
**0714152041**



Dear teacher

**INFORMATION CONCERNING RESEARCH BEING CONDUCTED AT YOUR SCHOOL**

We would like to learn more about the acculturation of immigrant children in the Foundation Phase: impact on academic performance in South African schools. It is envisaged that this study will be beneficial in helping us gain better insight into the experiences of immigrant children and how they adjust to the South African school environment. We also believe that the result of this study will generate recommendations that will be useful to the school administration.

You will be required to answer short interview questions and learners will be observed in the classroom and on the playfield in order to collect data. The observation is aimed at exploring immigrant children's adjustment to the school environment. The research will be conducted between May and June 2012. Data collection will also include audio and video recording of learners' activities inside the classroom, on the playfield, on their way home, and so on. We will interpret data, that is, make sense of what we think it means, to write the research report. Your name will not be mentioned in the research report, fictitious names will be used in place of your real name. Your confidentiality is assured as no information given will be traceable to you. No information given will be used against you, now or in future. Measures are also in place to protect all participants in this study from any probable risk. Apart from the permission of the ethical committee of the University of Pretoria, the approval of the Department of Education is being sought to proceed with this study. All information gathered from participants will be used for research purposes only.

Participation in this research is voluntary. This means that participants are at liberty to discontinue at any point should they feel uncomfortable. There are no penalties for non participation.

Yours faithfully

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Adebanji O.T**

**Researcher**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Teacher's signature**

Date\_\_\_\_\_

**Semistructured interview protocol for teachers of immigrant learners**

**Research topic: The acculturation of immigrant children in the Foundation Phase:  
Influence on academic performance**

**Interviewer:** Good morning/afternoon sir/madam. You are welcome to this interview session. Thank you for agreeing to be a part of this study.

1. Can you please tell me your name? Where are you from?
2. How long have you been teaching in this school?
3. How long have you been teaching the Foundation Phase?
4. What can you say about the presence of immigrant children in the Foundation Phase in the last two years? Has the number of immigrant children increased or decreased?
5. What challenges can you say are confronted by immigrant learners?
  - Do immigrant children get accepted by their peers?
  - Do they experience any difficulty in getting registered in the school?
  - Can you recollect your first experience with immigrant children in your class?
6. What is the language of learning and teaching (LOLT) in this school?
  - How do immigrant learners cope with the LOLT?
  - Do you sometimes code-switch, that is switch from the LOLT to any other language, during lessons?
  - (If yes to the above). What other language do you usually switch to?
  - How do immigrant learners cope when this happens?
  - Does the school have any policy in place with regard to immigrant learners?
  - (If yes). Can you briefly state what these policies are?
7. Has the presence of immigrant children changed the culture of the school? How?
8. What are the challenges confronted by teachers with respect to immigrant learners?
9. What can you say about the academic performance of immigrant learners as compared to that of indigenous learners?
10. Were there circumstances in which immigrant learners were subjected to any form of discrimination by their peers?
11. Do other children notice that the immigrant children are different from them?
12. Do you have class representatives? What criteria do you use in choosing class representatives?
13. Are there opportunities to discuss other cultures, religion or race in your class?
14. How can you classify the reactions of indigenous children at such times? For example is it friendly, welcoming or repulsive?
15. Are there other issues you wish to discuss about immigrant learners that we have not yet touched in this interview?

Thank you very much for your time. It's been a pleasure talking to you.

**Semistructured interview protocol for immigrant learners from Zimbabwe**

**Research topic: The acculturation of immigrant learners in the Foundation Phase:  
Influence on academic performance**

**Interviewer: You are welcome to this interview session. Thank you for agreeing to talk to me. I'm going to be asking you very short questions. I hope you are willing to talk to me?**

**1. Background information**

- How are you?
- What is your name?
- How old are you?
- Do you have brothers and sisters? Are they older/younger than you?
- Where do you come from?
- Who brought you to South Africa (SA)? Your parents, aunt or uncle?
- How long have you been in SA?
- What languages do you speak? (At home and at school?)

**2. School Experiences**

- How long have you been attending this school?
- Do you like this school?
- What are the things you like about this school?
- Are there things you do not like about this school?
- (If yes), what are they?
- Do you have friends in this school? How many friends do you have?
- Which countries are your friends from?
- What grades are your friends in?
- How do your friends treat you?
- Do you like your teacher?
- Do you have a feeling of acceptance in this school?
- Which learning area (subject) do you like most?
- Which learning area (subject) do you find difficult?
- Were you helped? By whom? How?
- Can you tell me one thing that happened to you in this school that you didn't like?

### 3. Identity

- What do you know about your culture? For example songs, play or food in your culture.
- Have you tried to teach your classmates about your culture? (If yes) what was their response?
- What do you know about the South African culture?
- Is there anything more you would like to know about the South African culture?
- How do your classmates see you? Do they see you as different?
- How do you see yourself? Do you see yourself as different?
- Would you want to be called a “South African”?
- Who do you like to play with during break time?
- What game/s do you do during play time at school?
- Do you have South African friends? Do you go to their homes?
- How do your friends treat you when you go to their homes?
- Do your friends come to your house to visit you?
- How often? (Anytime or only when you have a party?)
- Do you do any sporting activity? (if yes) which one/s? (if no), why not?
- What was the most pleasant experience you had during a sporting event?
- What was the most unpleasant experience you had during a sporting event?
- Is there anything more you would like to tell me or is there any question you would want to ask?

Thank you very for speaking to me.

**Semistructured interview protocol for parents of immigrant learners**

**Research topic: The acculturation of immigrant learners in the Foundation Phase:  
Influence on academic performance**

**Interviewer: You are welcome to this interview session. Thank you for agreeing to be a part of this research.**

**1. Background information**

- What is your name sir/madam?
- How long have you been in South Africa?
- Where was the first place you lived in South Africa?
- Why did you immigrate to South Africa?
- What are the things you like best about the South African society?
- What are the things that you experienced that you did not like very much?

**2. Identity**

- What position does culture occupy in your life?
- Do you speak any South African language?
- How do you see yourself? As different?
- Do you understand what “xenophobia” means?
- Have ever experienced any form discrimination from your neighbours or from anyone?
- What is the language of communication in the house?
- Does your child speak any South African language?
- Do you like this and do you encourage him/her?
- What do you tell your child about your culture?
- Which culture would you prefer your child to follow?
- How would you want your child to be addressed? A South African or a Zimbabwean? Why?

**3. Child’s school experiences**

- How many schools has your child attended since you have been in South Africa?
- (If more than one), can you briefly discuss reason/s for the change?
- What were some of your experiences you had while trying to get your child admitted at the school?
- Did your child ever come home with any report of discrimination or unfair treatment?
- (If yes), what steps did you take to follow up such report?



- Can you discuss, briefly, what actions were taken by the school?
- How do you feel about the school's intervention?
- How long did it take your child to adjust to the school?
- Can you rate your child's academic performance?
- Who helps your child with his homework?
- What are your academic expectations for your child?
- How do you hope to help him achieve this?
- Are there some other issues you would like discussed in this interview?

Thank you very much for your time.

**OBSERVATION SCHEDULE**

**Research topic: The acculturation of immigrant learners in the Foundation Phase:  
Influence on academic performance**

*This observation schedule is aimed at gaining insight into the real-life experiences of immigrant learners from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase. I will observe the classroom atmosphere and non-verbal communication among the immigrant learners, their teachers and their peers, within the classroom. I will also observe their interactions with their peers outside the classroom, on the play field.*

*I will document my findings in my field notes and interpret these documented observations in order to enhance my understanding of the experiences of immigrant learners from Zimbabwe in the Foundation Phase in the South African school environment.*

**A) CLASSROOM SETTING**

1. Seating arrangements/group formations
2. Diversity of learners in the classroom
3. Classroom milieu. Is it warm and welcoming?
4. Does the classroom environment promote active learning?

**B) INTERACTION BETWEEN THE TEACHER AND LEARNERS**

1. What role did the teacher play in the class?
2. How was the lesson introduced?
3. What language was used most frequently by the teacher during the lesson?
4. Did the teacher give room for learners to ask questions?
5. How were the questions answered?
6. Was there interaction between the teacher and learners?
7. How well did the immigrant learners understand the language of teaching and learning?

**C) INTERACTION AMONG LEARNERS**

1. What is the level of interaction among the learners?
2. Do learners separate into groups on the play field?
3. What is the most predominant language used during play/break?
4. How comfortable are the immigrant learners in the midst of the indigenous children?

Ethics Clearance Certificate



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA  
Faculty of Education

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

**CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE**

**CLEARANCE NUMBER:**

EC 11/04/01

**DEGREE AND PROJECT**

M.Ed

The acculturation of immigrant children in the Foundation Phase

**INVESTIGATOR(S)**

Opeyemi Temilola Adebajji

**DEPARTMENT**

Early Childhood Education

**DATE CONSIDERED**

15 August 2013

**DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE**

APPROVED

Please note:

*For Masters applications, ethical clearance is valid for 2 years*

*For PhD applications, ethical clearance is valid for 3 years.*

**CHAIRPERSON OF ETHICS  
COMMITTEE**

Prof Liesel Ebersöhn

DATE

15 August 2013

CC

Jeannie Beukes

Liesel Ebersöhn

Dr NC Phatudi

Prof CG Hartell

This ethical clearance certificate is issued subject to the following conditions:

1. A signed personal declaration of responsibility
2. If the research question changes significantly so as to alter the nature of the study, a new application for ethical clearance must be submitted
3. It remains the students' responsibility to ensure that all the necessary forms for informed consent are kept for future queries.

Please quote the clearance number in all enquiries.

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