FOUNDATION PHASE READING AND THE TRANSITION INTO ENGLISH IN GRADE 4: TEACHER EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS

by

NOMAHLUBI SITSHA

11046122

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SUPERVISOR: DR S. VAN STADEN

CO-SUPERVISOR: DR C. COMBRINCK

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I, Nomahlubi Sitsha, student number 11046122, hereby declare that this dissertation, *Foundation phase reading and the transition into English in Grade 4: teacher experiences and perceptions* is submitted in accordance with the requirements for the Magister Educationis degree at the University of Pretoria. I declare that it is my own original work and has not previously been submitted to any other institution of higher learning. All sources cited or quoted in this research paper are indicated and acknowledged in a comprehensive list of references.

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N. Sitsha

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CC

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Dr Surette van Staden
Ms Celeste Combrinck

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Susan Swanepoel
Freelance editor, bibliographer and indexer
BAHons HDipl Library Science
PEG (Professional Editors' Guild) Member No SWA006
www.editors.org.za

338 Snowy Walker St, Garsfontein 0081.
Cell 0728428207
susanswan338@gmail.com

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to my parents, who instilled in me the value of education. I also dedicate this research to the rest of my family: my siblings, cousins, aunts and uncles, as well as my nieces and nephews whom I would like to remind that nothing is ever out of reach. Lastly, I would like to dedicate this research to my friends – may you always strive to be the very best version of yourselves.

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*"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the L*ORD*, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future". – Jeremiah 29:11*

ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the perceptions and experiences of foundation phase and Grade 4 teachers who teach English to learners whose mother tongue is not English, and how their perceptions and experiences assist those learners with the transition from learning in a home language – particularly an African language – to learning in English from Grade 4. Although there has been an increase in enrolments, there seems to be a challenge in producing and providing quality education, especially in disadvantaged communities. Research questions that guide the current study aim at investigating Grade 4 learners' experiences in the transition from learning in their mother tongue to learning in English in Grade 4, foundation phase teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards teaching English reading, and the extent to which teachers view intervention programmes as adequately addressing language problems, also considering the implications of the language in education policy for teacher practice in classrooms. The study uses qualitative methods in the form of focus groups and observations, with the aim of exploring the teachers' perceptions, experiences and values pertaining to learners' reading, inside and outside the classroom, and any current reading interventions that may or may not be in place at the selected schools.

KEYWORDS: Second language learning, reading, reading achievement, foundation phase, English as a LoLT, intervention programmes, teacher perceptions.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ANA	Annual National Assessment
ATP	Annual Teaching Plan
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement
DBE	Department of Education
ESL	English Second Language
FAL	First Additional Language
GDE	Gauteng Department of Education
GET	General Education Training
GPLMS	Gauteng Primary Literacy and Mathematics Strategy
HL	Home Language
IIAL	Incremental Implementation of African Languages
LAD	Language Acquisition Device
LiEP	Language in Education Policy
LoLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
NEPA	National Education Policy Act
PanSALB	Pan South African Language Board
PrePIRLS	PreProgress in International Reading Literacy Study
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
SASA	South African Schools Act
SACMEQ	Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
SES	Socio-Economic Status
SFA	Success For All
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
UG	Universal Grammar
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The study aims to explore the perceptions and experiences of teachers in the foundation and intermediate phases, teaching English in a school where English is not the learners' and teachers' mother tongue. Learners in the selected schools are considered to be at-risk learners. The study highlights how these perceptions and experiences contribute to how the at-risk learners can transition from the foundation phase into Grade 4, where English then becomes the language of learning and teaching (LoLT). The study also shows the implications of language policies in the classroom and how teachers and learners are affected by the implementation of these policies.

For the purpose of this study, at-risk learners are defined as learners who are both socially and academically disadvantaged. According to Kaufman, Bradbury and Owings (1992), at-risk learners refer to learners who are at risk for academic failure, possibly because they are from low socio-economic backgrounds, minority groups or come from homes where there is a lack of support and involvement from parents or guardians regarding the learner's education.

The South African Language in Education Policy (LiEP) was introduced in order to make provision for learners in the foundation phase to be taught in their home language (Makina, 2015). Learners in Grade 1 to Grade 3 are taught in their home language until Grade 4, when they are expected to transfer their basic speaking, listening, reading and writing skills into English, based on the assumption that these skills have been fully developed (Wildsmith-Cromarty & Gounden, 2006; Van Staden & Howie, 2012). Unfortunately, some learners struggle to make that transition because they haven't fully mastered those basic skills in their home language and, as a result, teachers from Grade 4 are expected to orchestrate creative approaches to scaffold learning to improve the development of English from Grade 4 upwards (Makina, 2015).

1.2 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The South African Government of National Unity and the Department of Education aimed to "transform, democratise and eliminate existent inequalities in a post-apartheid education system" (Jansen, 1998). A series of policies on inclusive basic education, with an aim of eradicating exclusivity in the access of quality basic education, was then developed by the above-mentioned organisations. One of the policies developed by these organisations includes the Language in Education Policy (LiEP).

Language in Education Policy

The LiEP was introduced in 1997 as a means to accommodate and not disadvantage any learners, who are part of the education system, because of language. The main aims of the Ministry of Education policy, according to the LiEP (South Africa. Department of Education, 1997), are:

- to promote full participation in society and the economy through equitable and meaningful access to education;
- to pursue the language policy most supportive of general conceptual growth among learners, and hence to establish additive multilingualism as an approach to language in education;
- to promote and develop all the official languages;
- to support the teaching and learning of all other languages required by learners or used by communities in South Africa, including languages used for religious purposes, languages which are important for international trade and communication, and South African Sign Language, as well as Alternative and Augmentative Communication;
- to counter disadvantages resulting from different kinds of mismatches between home languages and languages of learning and teaching; and
- to develop programmes for the redress of previously disadvantaged languages.

Olivier (2009) states that, despite the efforts of education policies to provide equal and quality education, parents send their children to former white schools, also known as former Model-C schools, which are associated with better quality education. Parents have urged that their children learn and be taught in English, despite them not being mother-tongue speakers of the language. However, this movement to English

schooling does not mean that parents are suggesting that their children should only learn English. According to Heugh (2000), a study conducted by the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) in 2000 revealed that 42% of parents alleged that schools should provide opportunities for learners to learn in their mother tongue, as well as in English.

The state of reading in South African schools

South Africa participates in numerous assessments in which educational achievement is measured – both nationally and internationally. The Annual National Assessments (ANAs) are national standardised assessments measuring the achievement and performance in mathematics and literacy for Grades 1 to 6 and 9 learners in the General Education Training (GET) band across South African schools (Spaull, 2013). Table 1.1 shows that learners in the foundation phase (Grades 1–3) achieved literacy results in their home language which were above 50% for three consecutive years (2012–2014). However, a change is noted in the literacy achievements of learners in Grade 4 up to Grade 6, which indicates a decline in the results, with learners across all three grades achieving literacy levels below 50% in 2012 and 2013 – excluding learners in Grade 6, who made a significant improvement by achieving literacy results of 59%. In 2014, learners from Grades 4–6 achieved results which showed an improvement in their literacy achievement; learners in Grades 4–6 achieved above 50%.

Table 1.1 Summary of ANA results 2012, 2013 and 2014

Grade	Home Language 2012	Home Language 2013	Home Language 2014
1	58	61	63
2	55	57	61
3	52	51	56
4	43	49	57
5	40	46	57
6	43	59	63

Internationally, South Africa participates in The Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) project, which aims to "provide policy advice to key decision makers on educational quality issues considered as high priority" (Southern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality, 1995). Through its continental research studies, it has been found that, in SACMEQ III of 2007, 27% of Grade 6 learners in South African schools were functionally illiterate and only 26% had acquired basic reading skills (Spaull, 2013).

South Africa also participates in the Progress on International Reading and Literacy Study (PIRLS). PIRLS is an international comparative study which aims to test the reading achievement and reading literacy levels in Grades 4 and 8 learners. However, only Grade 4 and Grade 5 learners participate in this study in South Africa. In 2011, prePIRLS was introduced for Grade 4 learners, due to a poor performance of South African learners in the PIRLS of 2006. PrePIRLS is considered to be "a less difficult assessment, intended to measure the reading comprehension skills of learners who are still in the process of learning how to read" (Van Staden & Howie, 2012).

Table 1.2. presents a summary of the SACMEQ II and SACMEQ III results. The international reading mean is 500. The Grade 6 learners achieved results below the international reading mean: SACMEQ II shows that learners achieved a reading mean of 492, which is below the international reading mean. In the SACMEQ III, the Grade 6 learners' reading mean showed a slight improvement (495), however, it still remained below the international reading mean of 500.

Table 1.2 Summary of SACMEQ results

Cycle	Grade	Achievement	International Reading Mean
SACMEQ II 2000	6	492	500
SACMEQ III 2007	6	495	500

Table 1.3 illustrates a summary of the PIRLS results of 2006, 2011 and 2016. The PIRLS results show that South African learners in Grades 4 and 5 achieved results which were either below the international benchmark or low on the international benchmark. PIRLS makes use of four international benchmarks which are presented

in Figure 1.1; less than 400 points indicates that learners were not able to reach the lowest international benchmark, suggesting that learners cannot read for meaning. Low indicates that learners are able to read to retrieve explicit information. Intermediate shows that learners are able to interpret and give basic explanations. High shows that learners can make "intricate connections between events in the text". Lastly, advanced indicates that learners can interpret and provide evidence of significant events from the text.

| Did not reach lowest (>400 points) | Low (400–474 points) | Intermediate (475–549 points) | High (550–625 points) | Advanced (625 and above) |
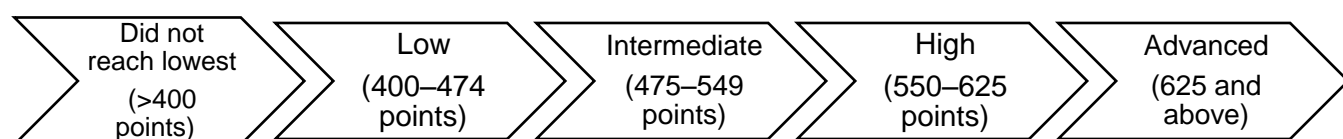
Figure 1.1 PIRLS international benchmarks

With this said, Grade 4 learners' points in 2006, 2011 and 2016 do not place them on the international benchmark scale, as their literacy achievements do not reach the lowest level on the international benchmark. The Grade 5 learners' points are higher than that of the Grade 4 learners, however, they fall in the 'low' category of the international benchmark.

Table 1.3 Summary of PIRLS results

Cycle	Grade	Achievement	International benchmark
2006	4	253	Did not reach lowest
	5	403	Low
2011	4	323	Did not reach lowest
	5	421	Low
2016	4	320	Did not reach lowest
	5	434	Low

Without reservation, the ANA, PIRLS and SACMEQ results prove the existence of a gap in the reading achievement scores in South African classrooms. Reading literacy results show that there are areas of improvement, however the improvement hasn't been a significant one. There are still challenges which need to be addressed by teachers, schools and other stakeholders involved in producing and providing basic quality education (South Africa. Department of Basic Education, 2014).

Howie, Van Staden, Tshele, Dowse and Zimmerman (2012) echo Slavin and Madden (2001) by stating that "reading is the quintessential skill required and without it learners are doomed to struggle through school and drop out when they are unable to master it adequately". Slavin and Madden (2001) believe that reading and language arts form the core of what school success means in the early grades and thus need to be developed at an early age with great emphasis on the quality thereof.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RATIONALE

South Africa has seen an increased percentage of school enrolment of learners between the ages of 7 and 13 since 1994 (UNDP, 2013). Although there has been an increase in enrolments there seems to be a challenge in producing and providing quality education, especially in disadvantaged communities. There has been evidence suggesting that the literacy achievement in South Africa is of a low level. Studies such as the prePIRLS (2011 and 2016) and PIRLS (2006, 2011 and 2016) have highlighted that learners in Grade 4 are unable to apply their thinking and reasoning abilities when doing reading comprehension, when tested across all 11 official languages.

The result of these learners' poor achievement could be that learners struggle to read at a basic level or cannot read at all, mostly in the African languages, which for some is their LoLT in Grades 1–3. The results obtained from the prePIRLS 2011 and prePIRLS 2016 support the above statement.

According to Howie et al. (2012), 29% of Grade 4 South African learners could not reach the low international benchmark level (400–474), with only 6% of learners being able to reach the advanced level (625 and above). The majority of Grade 4 learners managed to reach the low international benchmark, as indicated in Figure 1.2.
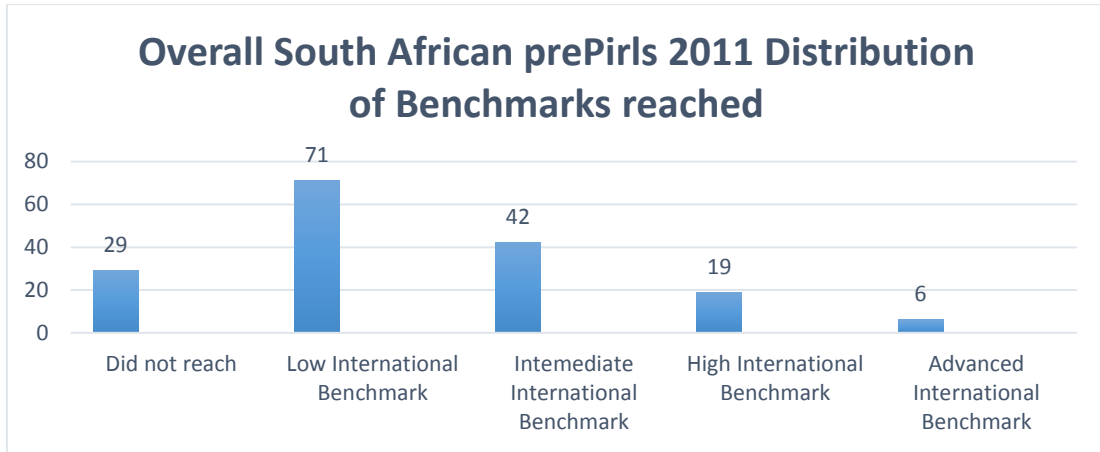
Overall South African prePirls 2011 Distribution of Benchmarks reached

Figure 1.2 Overall South African prePIRLS 2011 distribution of benchmarks reached

Figure 1.3 is a representation of the PIRLS literacy 2016 benchmark attainment. The illustration shows that the majority (78%) of South African learners were not able to reach the lowest benchmark, which is below 400 points, suggesting that these learners do no comprehend what they have read and thus cannot extract basic information from a passage in order to answer context-based questions (Howie, Combrinck, Roux, Tshele, Mokoena & McLeod Palane, 2017).
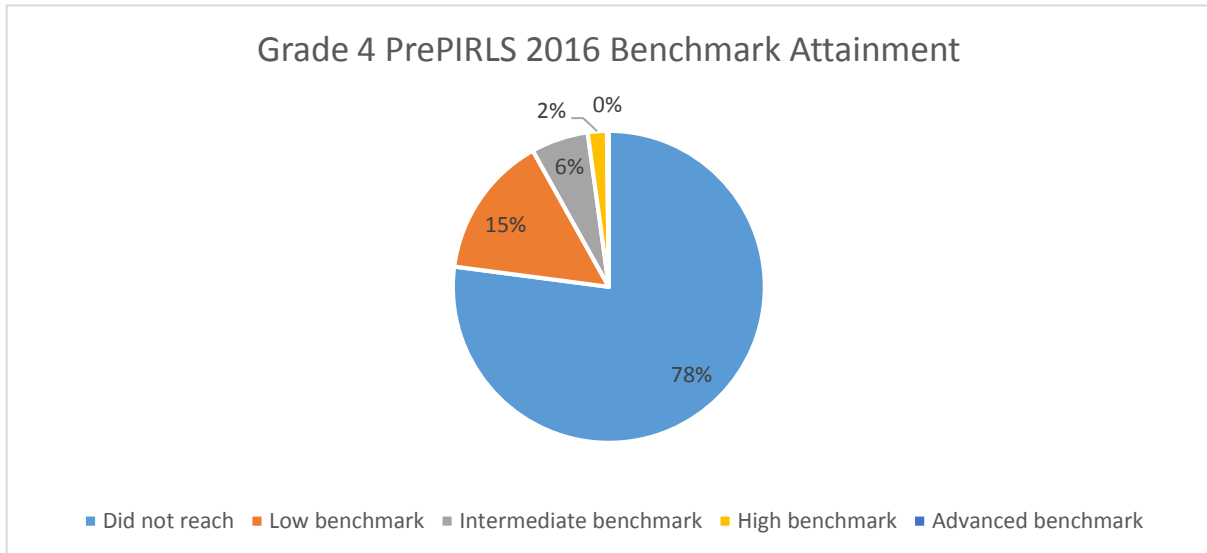
Figure 1.3 Grade 4 prePIRLS 2016 benchmark attainment

Howie et al. (2017, p. 2) further point out that 0.2% of South African learners attained the advanced benchmark (625 and above points), meaning that these learners show a higher level of understanding, allowing them to "integrate ideas as well as evidence across a text to appreciate overall themes, understand the author's stance and interpret significant events".

Learners' inability to achieve a greater percentage in the high benchmark and advanced benchmark could be due to a lack of focus on the transition process from learners' language of learning and teaching (LoLT) being their home language, to English as LoLT – which for some is their third or fourth language (Pretorius, 2014).

In another study, Macdonald (1990) points out that learners who progressed from the foundation phase to the intermediate phase did not have sufficient "English language skills to cope with the switch to English medium teaching and learning in Grade 5". These findings are based on the fact that, by the end of Grade 4, the learners' English vocabulary would only consist of 800 words, whereas their textbooks could include a vocabulary of 5 000 words in Grade 5.

According to Pretorius (2014), there are some challenges which could hinder the smooth transition from Grades 1 to 3, in which children are learning to read, to Grade 4, where children are now expected to read to learn. This transition is particularly challenging when:

- children have reading or learning difficulties;
- the communities where children are from are disadvantaged (high-poverty homes or low-income homes) and as a result the schools in those communities are under-resourced and lack the necessary infrastructure for conducive learning, and
- multilingual education contexts in which children are expected to be bi-literate, suggesting that learners are expected to learn in a language that is not their home language.

The Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, has expressed the need to strengthen English language teaching in schools in order to improve learning outcomes (South Africa. DBE, 2014). In response to addressing the issue of quality, the Department of Education (DoE) has implemented several national and provincial interventions aimed at remediating the system. The 'Drop All and Read', 'Early Grade Reading Assessment', 'Reading Norms' and the '100 Story Books Campaign' are a few of the multiple campaigns that were adopted by the DoE to assist in increasing and stabilising the literacy improvement proportions amongst learners in schools (South Africa. DBE, 2014).

The statistics of other studies and national assessments, such as PIRLS, the ANAs and SACMEQ, suggest that, although various intervention programmes have been implemented in schools by the government or other organisations in previous years, reading literacy in South Africa does not show a significant improvement. According to the Department of Basic Education (South Africa. DBE, 2014), reading comprehension and language literacy need to be corrected in order for learners to produce improved results in Mathematics, Science and language-related subjects.

The Report on the ANAs of 2014 has clearly proven through its emphasis on reading and language literacy interventions to be executed in schools that the South African education system is in need of an intervention programme that displays durability and longevity, preferably one that is self-sustaining and can optionally exist independent of technology (South Africa. DBE, 2014).

1.4 MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

This study is an exploration of ways in which the perceptions and experiences of teachers in the foundation phase and intermediate phase assist at-risk learners in the foundation phase, whose LoLT is not English, with the transition from their current language of learning and teaching into Grade 4, where English becomes their language of learning and teaching. It is against this background that the following question is asked:

How do teachers experience the process of preparing Grade 3 learners for the transition of learning in their home language to learning in English in Grade 4?

The study is also guided by three research sub-questions. These are:

1. What are foundation phase teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards teaching English reading?
2. To what extent do teachers view intervention programmes as adequately addressing language problems?
3. What are the implications of the Language in Education Policy for teacher practice in classrooms?

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this study, the qualitative research method is the most suitable as the study aims to explore the views and perspectives regarding English reading of teachers teaching learners in the foundation phase, where their LoLT in that phase is their mother tongue (Yin, 2016). Qualitative research aims to explore people's everyday behaviours, how and what they are thinking under varying natural situations and how this has an impact on the decisions that they make (Silverman, 2000).

According to Yin (2016), qualitative research allows for the researcher to step into the real-world setting and make use of the contextual richness of that particular setting. Most importantly for the current study, this research method makes use of the contextual conditions, namely a schooling environment with at-risk learners. Contextual conditions assist in highlighting the setting in which data were collected and has an impact on how the data in this study were received and interpreted.

The study took on three qualitative research data collection methods, namely focus group interviews, semi-structured interviews and observations. Making use of focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews, as well as observations, supports one of the advantages of qualitative research, which according to Yin (2016) is having a variety of sources to collect data from in order to enrich the study.

Focus group interviews allow for group interaction in which participants can listen, reflect and comment on what other participants in the group are saying. Therefore, the participants somewhat take up the 'interviewing' role, resulting in it becoming a deeper conversation between the participants, leaving less room for the researcher to influence the participants' responses (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

Focus group interviewing is a suitable research technique as the study aims to explore teachers' perceptions and experiences pertaining to learners' reading, both inside and outside the classroom. The purpose of conducting focus group interviews is to assist in determining what previous reading interventions have been implemented in the schools and what challenges were faced in the implementation. These focus group interviews generate a rich understanding of experiences and beliefs by gathering data on collective views and the significances behind those views (Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008).

Semi-structured interviews are interviews in which participants are required to answer a set of predetermined questions (Maree, 2014). Maree (2014) further elaborates that one of the benefits of conducting semi-structured interviews is that it allows the researcher to ask follow-up questions, based on the participants' responses, which were not initially put on the interview schedule. However, the researcher needs to ensure that the interview does not stray from the topic of the study. Semi-structured interviews are the most relevant for this study as it aims to explore views, perceptions and attitudes of teachers regarding various topics (Van Teijlingen, 2014).

The study made use of participant observations which, according to Bogdan and Biklen (2003), supplement the data collected through the focus group interviews. These observations took place in the teachers' classrooms during an English reading period. Participant observation was an appropriate research technique as it provided evidence for the perceptions, attitudes and experiences teachers verbally express in the focus group interviews. More so, it provided an opportunity to witness the introduction of a reading intervention programme, which indicated the various challenges faced, as well as the successes experienced during the implementation of intervention programmes in schools.

An inductive data analysis technique was used. More specifically, the inductive data analysis approach used is that of thematic content analysis. Inductive data analysis includes transcribing the recordings of the focus group and semi-structured interviews, analysing the transcripts, coding and identifying themes from the data (Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008).

1.6 STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the literature. It focuses on the introduction and the contribution that the Language in Education Policy of 1997 has made, and continues to make, in the education system in South Africa. Furthermore, the literature review elaborates on the state of reading in South African schools in comparison to the performance of other learners internationally, through the analysis of performance results from international studies. The literature review also gives background information on the challenges and success of intervention programmes in South Africa.

Chapter 3 presents the conceptual framework which supports this study. The conceptual framework by Stern (1983) – *Framework for examination of second language learning* – addresses the various factors which contribute towards a learner successfully acquiring a second language.

Chapter 4 outlines the qualitative research design, focusing on focus group interviews, semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. An inductive data analysis was used to answer the research questions through the transcription of the focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews, and through coding and the identification of themes in the data. The study is focused on the perceptions and experiences regarding reading of teachers teaching in the foundation phase and those teaching Grade 4, and how that has had an impact on reading literacy levels and achievements. Ethical clearance was applied for and granted by the University of Pretoria's Research Ethics Committee.

Chapter 5 provides an in-depth analysis of the data collected. This chapter focuses on the individual themes identified from the transcriptions and it also looks at the field notes taken during the classroom observations in relation to the research questions.

Chapter 6 presents a summary of results. Through the data collected, each sub-question is discussed. The discussion of results highlights the role played by language policies, teachers' perceptions and experiences and the introduction of intervention programmes in learners' reading literacy achievements, and how these factors contribute to a successful transition from children learning in their mother tongue to learning in English. Lastly, the chapter is concluded by recommendations and proposals for future studies.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

"It has always been felt by African educationists that the African child's major learning problem is linguistic. Instruction is given in a language that is not normally used in his immediate environment, a language which neither the learner nor the teacher understands and uses well enough" (Obanya, 1980, p.88, as cited in Brock-Utne, 2005).

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The population of countries in sub-Saharan Africa appears to have low literacy levels, which result in societies that are not entirely prepared to conquer developmental challenges and, in addition, struggle to contribute to their countries' economy (South Africa. DoE, 2008). According to Webb (2002), "only 25% of black South Africans were functionally literate in English", the main language for access to education and lucrative jobs in South Africa. Therefore, education has become more of a requirement, as opposed to a privilege, since it is through the acquisition of education that people gain the knowledge and skills they require to succeed in life. As a result, the South African education system should aim to offer and maintain high quality education; more specifically, ensure that the curriculum put in place will produce high standards of literacy. It is the government and other relevant stakeholders' responsibility to ensure that the gap created by the former apartheid government is closed.

Against this background, the literature review aims to explore the relationship between language and education – not only in terms of how content is presented and delivered, but in terms of how English as LoLT is experienced by teachers who teach learners whose mother tongue is not English. It is therefore vital to understand the role that the previous education legislation in South Africa has played, as well as how the current policies of post-apartheid South Africa have contributed to the current state of learning. This chapter briefly discusses what is meant by second language acquisition in section 2.2 and looks at the major theories regarding second language acquisition in section 2.2.1, followed by a discussion of the major theories in section 2.2.2. This chapter delves into a brief history regarding the role that language has played in the South African education system of South Africa during the apartheid era, as well as language

in education in post-apartheid South Africa. With this historical context in mind, the various sections of the chapter are mapped as follows: Sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2 highlight the Bantu Education Act and the South African Schools Act, which have both contributed significantly to language policies in the South African education system. The history of language in the South African education system is followed by a framework illustrating the current language legislation that is shaping the education system. Section 2.4.1 presents an overview of the legislation and section 2.4.2 focuses on the LiEP as it is most pertinent to this study. By understanding the purpose of these policies, an evaluation of whether or not the implementation of this policy is beneficial to English second language learners will be highlighted. The concept and implication of mother-tongue education is elaborated on in section 2.5. Section 2.6 provides a brief discussion of second language learning in South Africa. Thereafter, section 2.7 concentrates on the performance of South African learners in both national and international literacy assessments, in comparison to their counterparts across the world. This chapter is concluded by a summary of points outlined in the chapter.

2.2 SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Second language acquisition refers to a language an individual acquires additional to their first language, also referred to as mother tongue or native language (Van der Walt, Evans & Kilfoil, 2012). There are a number of theories which propose how a second language can be acquired and those most relevant to this study are discussed below. According to the document "Theories of L2 acquisition" (n.d.), an important aspect of a second language acquisition theory is that it needs to be "comprehensible in including as many relevant factors as possible while at the same time it must have a practical application in the real world".

2.2.1 Major theories in second language acquisition

This section provides a brief discussion of the various theories which explain how a second language is acquired. The major theories identified include behaviourism, nativist theories, information processing – formerly known as cognitive theory and – the social-interactionist theories.

2.2.1.1 The behaviourist approach

The behaviourist theory is one of the earliest theories of second language acquisition. It explains that human behaviour is learned through associating human actions with

either positive reinforcement or negative reinforcement as a means of learning a behaviour; which can also be applied to language learning (Macaro, 2005; Malone, 2012). The behaviourist theory is the work of B.F. Skinner, who stated that language can be developed through environmental influences. The theory suggests that children can learn a language through behavioural reinforcement principles, which associate words with meaning.

Skinner's theory proposes that a child should be 'rewarded' for using language in an appropriate and in the correct manner, by those teaching the child how to communicate in that particular language, in order for the child to learn (Saxton, 2010; Lemetyinen, 2012; Van der Walt et al., 2012). In addition, Van der Walt et al. (2012) state that it is the teacher's duty to "direct and control the learners' behaviour". The aforementioned is supported by the idea that, as humans, we learn by imitating a particular behaviour or by repeating the desired action until it is learned (Macaro, 2005).

2.2.1.2 Nativist theories

The nativist theories hold the position that humans are born with an innate ability to learn a language. This opinion is contradictory to that of the behaviourist theory – humans are born with a genetic predisposition which allows them to learn a language and cannot learn a language by imitation (Sokolov & Snow, 1994; Murray & Christison, 2011). The nativist theory is supported by two linguistic theorists, namely Noam Chomsky and Stephen Krashen.

Chomsky's Language Acquisition Device

Chomsky referred to humans' innate ability to acquire a language as the "Language Acquisition Device (LAD)" (Sokolov & Snow, 1994; Malone, 2012). Macaro (2005) points out that the name 'LAD' is based on Chomsky's idea of a structure in the human brain that enables humans to organise input that is received. The ability to organise input in the brain is not limited to a particular type of people, it is applicable to all people despite their mother tongue, which resulted in the development of what is known as 'Universal Grammar' (UG) (Macaro, 2005; Murray & Christison, 2011).

As noted by Murray and Christison (2011), universal grammar is defined by Chomsky (1975, p. 2) as "the system of principles, conditions and rules that are elements or properties of all human language". Saxton (2010, p. 187), further explains that

although "we are all born with the same potential for language", UG is not necessarily present at birth, however, it does develop over time. Chomsky's theory suggests that our individual experiences assist us in developing certain languages.

UG makes it possible that exposure to a particular language will eventually result in the individual learning the language that he/she has been exposed to. Additionally, this theory suggests that learners and teachers need not put too much effort into strategies and methods to acquire a language because humans are born with the ability to acquire a language (Macaro, 2005).

Krashen's Five Hypotheses

Krashen developed his second language acquisition theory based on ideas developed by Chomsky (Malone, 2012). Krashen's five hypotheses theory consists of five main hypotheses, namely:

The Acquisition – Learning hypothesis

This hypothesis suggests that there are two ways in which an individual could develop a second language – acquisition or learning. Acquisition refers to learning a second language subconsciously, similarly to how children would learn their first language – through natural communication. According to Macaro (2005), as well as Murray and Christison (2011), acquisition is determined by comprehensible input into the brain over time. Acquisition does not focus on grammar and structural rules; however, the speaker has a sense of what sounds correct (Krashen, 1982, 2009; Macaro, 2005; Malone, 2012; Schütz, 2017; "Theories of L2 acquisition", n.d.). In contrast, the second way in which a second language can be developed is by language learning. Language learning requires consciously exposing the learner to the language through formal learning. Language learning places great emphasis on grammar and structural rules, which results in gaining explicit knowledge about the language (Krashen, 1985, 2009; Macaro, 2005; Malone, 2012; Schütz, 2017; "Theories of L2 acquisition", n.d.).

The Monitor hypothesis

The monitor hypothesis contends that the ability to produce utterances is due to language acquisition, and the language learning function then aims to control the development in second language learning by playing the role of an editor. The monitor hypothesis is applicable to language learning. The monitor is activated once the learner has learned grammar and structural rules. As a result, the monitor helps the

learner make corrections to any errors that may occur during communication, in order to make the speech more appropriate. In order for monitoring to take place effectively, the following conditions need to be applied:

- Adequate time
- Focus on form (correctness)
- Knowledge of language rules

Monitoring can take place before writing and speaking or it can take place thereafter – this is known as self-correction (Krashen, 1985, 2009; Macaro, 2005; Malone, 2012, Schütz, 2017; "Theories of L2 acquisition", n.d.). Schütz (2017) states that, in the development of a second language, the role of the monitor should be minimal.

The Natural Order hypothesis

According to Krashen (1985, 2009), the natural order hypothesis suggests that there is a predetermined order related to grammatical structures. This means that learners developing a second language acquire the language rules in a predictable order (Macaro, 2005). However, it is important to note that grammatical structures occur at different stages in individuals' lives. Some grammatical structures will be acquired earlier than other structures, and age, language background and how a language is developed are irrelevant to when particular grammatical structures are acquired (Krashen, 1985, 2009; Schütz, 2017).

The Input hypothesis

The Input hypothesis, also commonly known as the 'Comprehensible Input Hypothesis', is associated with language acquisition (Macaro, 2005) and suggests that humans acquire language mainly by "understanding messages or by receiving comprehensible input" (Krashen,1985). According to Malone (2012) and Murray and Christison (2011), comprehensible input is all that is required in second language acquisition and teachers of a second language should focus on input. "Theories of L2 acquisition" (n.d.) explains comprehensible input as input that a learner has heard and understood; once the learner cannot make sense of what is being said then the input is deemed useless.

The input hypothesis is based on the idea that, through natural order, learners are able to improve their level of competence in a language and once those learners "receive second language input they are a step beyond their current stage of linguistic

competence" (Schütz, 2017). Krashen (1985) simplifies the aforementioned as (i + 1), in which 'i' represents stage and '1' represents the stage at which the learner is one step beyond their current linguistic stage. According to Krashen (1985, 2009), it is at this level (i + 1) that the learner has reached maximum acquisition.

The Affective Filter hypothesis

Krashen (1985, 2009) proposes that motivation, self-confidence and anxiety play a significant role in second language acquisition; this forms the basis of the affective filter hypothesis. The affective filter hypothesis states that a learner who has a combination of high motivation, self-confidence and low anxiety is more likely to successfully acquire a second language, in comparison with a learner who has low motivation, no self-confidence and experiences high levels of anxiety, who is less likely to acquire a second language successfully (Krashen, 1985, 2009; Macaro, 2005; Malone, 2012).

2.2.1.3 Information Processing Model

Information processing is contradictory to the beliefs of the nativist theorists; information processing considers language learning as a cognitive process, whereas nativist theorists proposed that developing a language can happen spontaneously (Ozawa, 1997; Macaro, 2005). In addition, Macaro (2005) points out that cognitive theorists make use of the computer analogy when discussing how the brain works and acquires new knowledge. Therefore, these theorists elaborate on that idea that, in order for an individual to develop a new language, they need to do so actively, constructively and perceptively.

McLaughlin (1987) suggests that there are three processes required in the development of a language: automatic processing, controlled processing and restructuring (Ozawa, 1997). Ozawa (1997) further explains that automatic processing refers to the ability for an individual to process information at a rapid speed and thus allowing the individual to manage a large amount of information simultaneously. According to McLaughlin (1987, pp. 134-135) as cited in Ozawa (1997), once automatic processing takes place it becomes relatively permanent and therefore it becomes hard to suppress or change.

Ozawa (1997) defines controlled processes as processes used when an individual applies attentive control while learning. These processes are temporary and are

applied when acquiring new knowledge. Lastly, restructuring is the process in which "information is simplified, generalized and associated with something else or reorganised to be stored in the long-term memory".

2.2.1.4 Social Interactionist Theories

According to Cook (1981), the interactionist theory suggests that developing a new language could require a balance between the nativist theory as well as the behaviourist theory. Cook (1981) further explains that interactionism places "equal weight on both the learner and the situation". Interactionism states that language acquisition is dependent on the learner's ability to learn a new language as well as the environment the learner finds himself/herself in at the time, and in which the language must be learned (Cook, 1981). The social interactionists are of the opinion that a learner's social environment contributes to how a learner learns a language (Malone, 2012). Lev Vygotsky and Jerome Burner are the most prominent interactionist theorists as their theories lead to the contribution of two profound concepts in language acquisition, namely zone of proximal development (Vygotsky) and scaffolding (Burner).

Zone of proximal development (ZPD)

The ZPD was based on the idea that, in order for children to develop a language, they would need to be exposed to the language in their environment; the child would need to communicate with others in his/her environment in that particular language, more specifically, with an adult. The ZPD is centred around the interactions of a child and an adult in order for language development to take place effectively. Vygotsky (1978, p. 86, as cited in Khaliliaqdam, 2014) defined ZPD as "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers". Simplified, this means that the ZPD is the gap between what the learner is capable of doing independently and what the learner is capable of doing with assistance and motivation, usually from an adult; this is the point in which learning takes place.

Scaffolding

Scaffolding operates in conjunction with ZPD. The concept of scaffolding was introduced in 1976 by Jerome Burner as a metaphor based on the idea of a building which is being built and is in need of support to keep it up and, as the building becomes

firmer, the scaffolding is removed bit by bit until the building can stand on its own (Liang, 2007). In relation to language, scaffolding is defined as "the interactional support provided to learners to enable them to acquire linguistic structures which are beyond their capacity" (Van der Walt et al., 2012). The scaffolding metaphor is applicable to the learning environment as the idea suggests facilitating a learner until such a point that the learner is able to do the given task on his/her own.

2.2.2 Discussion of major theories

An outline of the major theories in second language acquisition is illustrated in Table 2.1. The table outlines the viewpoints of the major theories as well as critique formulated against the major theories in relation to this study.

Table 2.1 Overview of major theories

SLA Theory	Theorist	Main viewpoint	Critique
Behaviourist	Skinner	- Human behaviour is learned. - Language is developed through environmental influence. - Language is learned through behavioural reinforcement.	- South African learners come from diverse backgrounds. - Focused on conditioning. - Excludes learner characteristics.
Nativist	Chomsky	- Humans have an innate ability to learn a language. - Born with a Language Acquisition Device (LAD). - Universal Grammar.	- African language structures differ from European language structures. - Learners of lower socioeconomic status (SES) are disadvantaged.
	Krashen	Acquisition-learning hypothesis - Acquisition: learning language subconsciously. - Learning: learning language consciously through formal learning. Monitor hypothesis - Self-correction before or after writing and speaking. Natural order hypothesis - Predetermined order related to grammatical structures. - Acquire language rules in a predictable order. Input hypothesis - Comprehensible input is required. - Input refers to something one has heard and understood.	Acquisition-learning hypothesis - Lack of exposure results in a disadvantage. - Learning ignores other factors such as social context. Monitor hypothesis - Focuses mainly on feedback. Natural order hypothesis - Different languages result in different language structures. - African languages and European languages' syntax is not the same. Input hypothesis - Lack of exposure results in a disadvantage. - South African learners are expected to transition without maximum exposure.

		Affective Filter hypothesis	Affective Filter hypothesis
		- Motivation, self-confidence and anxiety influence language acquisition. - High motivation + high confidence + low anxiety = successful acquisition. - Low motivation + low confidence + high anxiety = unsuccessful acquisition.	- Ignores other factors such as social context and learning conditions.
Information Processing Model	McLaughlin	- Language learning is a cognitive process. - Human brain is a computer. - Three processes required in language development: automatic processing, controlled processing and restructuring.	- Human brain is more complex than a computer system. - Ignores factors related to human learning.
Social Constructionist	Vygotsky	- Zone of proximal development (ZPD). - Communication between child and adult.	- Balanced theory - Considers social context, learning conditions and learners' characteristics. - More applicable in South Africa.
	Burner	- Scaffolding. - Support the learner. - Gradually reduce the support given to the learner as the learner improves.	- Limited execution due to policy and curriculum documents. - Harder for teachers to support if they are not native speakers of English.

The behaviourist approach focuses mainly on environmental influences in ensuring that the learner acquires a second language. This theory is unlikely to be successfully applied in the South African context because learners come from diverse backgrounds, which include a variety of languages that have their individual language structures. 'Rewarding' a child for using language in the correct manner may become challenging since language structures of African languages and that of European languages are significantly different (Manyike & Lemmer, 2014). African languages may follow a certain type of syntax – rules of grammar in sentences – that is different from that of European languages, more specifically English.

This multilingual nature of South African society questions the theory of 'Universal Grammar' by Chomsky, which states that, as humans, we are born with a set of structural rules which formulate the basis of all language acquisition (Macaro, 2005; Murray & Christison, 2011). If this theory were true, South African learners having to make a switch from home language learning to English would not find the transition as challenging as it appears to be. The behaviourist theory focuses merely on conditioning as a form of second language acquisition, without taking into consideration other factors, such as learners' characteristics and the learning conditions in which the language is acquired.

In contrast to the behaviourist theory, nativists may not see the environment as pivotally important. Instead, nativists are of the opinion that humans are born with the innate ability to acquire a language, leading to the theory pertaining to UG. Similarly, Krashen's natural order hypothesis also suggests that there is a pre-set order in which grammatical structures are set out. Chomsky suggests that, because humans are born with the innate ability to acquire a language, learners can easily acquire a language if their environment exposes them to that particular language (Macaro, 2005).

However, these theories do not accommodate the fact that South Africa is a heterogeneous environment and learners come from diverse backgrounds and, as a result, are exposed to different realities and various languages within their communities (Chikovore, Makusha, Muzvidziwa & Richter, 2012). Anecdotal evidence points to the fact that English is one of the languages spoken in South Africa yet is seldom spoken in South African townships. Consequently, a learner raised in a township with a lower socioeconomic status, who has little to no exposure to the

second language, either through reading material or by being in an environment that does not immerse itself in the culture of reading – in this case English – will unlikely be able to adequately learn the language.

One of the five hypotheses by Krashen – the acquisition–learning hypothesis – concurs with Chomsky's theory. The acquisition–learning hypothesis supports the theory that humans are born with the natural ability to acquire a language (Macaro, 2005). However, Krashen takes his explanation a step further by suggesting that learning a second language can also be accomplished by formally exposing a learner to the grammatical and structural rules of a language, also known as language learning. In the South African context, this exposure is how English as a second language is taught in schools. A standardised linguistic structure is followed: learners are first taught phonetics and phonology, followed by morphology and syntax, but whether or not learners adequately reach the stages of semantics and pragmatics is questionable, due to the learners' inability to effectively answer higher-order comprehension questions when put to them in English (Lumen, n.d.; Pretorius, 2014).

Krashen's five hypotheses theory also consists of the monitor hypothesis which is questionable as it requires the learner to be able to self-correct. Self-correction can only take place if the learner has learned the grammatical and structural rules and is able to note when he or she has made an error, which can be quite challenging for a learner who has limited knowledge of language rules (Krashen, 1985, 2009). It could also be found that learners will most likely speak the way individuals in their environment speak, as suggested by the behaviourists' and Chomsky's theories. These theories imply that it is more challenging for a learner to self-correct if they are not aware of the fact that they have made an error, simply because they are imitating what they have been exposed to in their home and schooling environments (Macaro, 2005).

Furthermore, Krashen suggests – through the Input-order hypothesis, which works in correlation with the Natural Order hypothesis – that, once a learner receives second language input, he/she has reached maximum acquisition. This theory highlights the importance of exposure to the second language; maximum exposure to English as a second language would be to the benefit of learners.

However, learners in Grade 3, who are learning English as a second language, are expected to transition to Grade 4, where they will learn in English, without the maximum input from their current learning environment, possibly due to a lack of exposure. Heugh (2000) states that, in order for learners to have a second language as a LoLT, they would have had to learn and be exposed to the language for six to eight years. However, this scenario is not the case with South African learners, as most of them formally learn their second language, which becomes the LoLT from Grade 4 onwards, for only three years (Grades 1–3), which is far less than the suggested number of years. On the other hand, the information process model shifts completely from the importance of exposure, the environment and that of the innate ability, and instead addresses acquiring a second language as an entirely cognitive process. This theory ignores the factors involved in human learning. The theory is limited as it suggests that the human brain functions similarly to that of a computer, however, the human brain is a lot more complex.

In light of the abovementioned theories, the social interactionist theory accommodates both the behaviourist and nativist theories, as it allows for a balance between the learner and the environment, a balance that is possibly most effective in a South African context. The social interactionist theory views environmental factors and the role of the learner in second language acquisition as equally important (Cook, 1981). The social interactionist theory highlights the importance of the ZPD and that of scaffolding in learners acquiring a second language; it takes into account the learner's social context, which contributes to the amount of exposure a learner has to the English language. The ZPD and scaffolding require adult assistance in order for the learner to adequately learn a language since it encourages communication between an adult and a child (Van der Walt et al., 2012).

Here, the role of the teacher becomes significant because they are the adults in this ZPD equation. Teachers must be able to adequately assist learners in learning English as a second language. However, the challenge arises if teachers themselves are not adequately trained to teach English as a second language or if they themselves cannot communicate fluently in English. This deficit could result in learners not being able to reach their full language competency in English. Teachers can hardly assist learners when English is also not their native language (Barnard, 2010).

However, the teachers are not the only adults in this ZPD equation. A second level of involvement is the role of parents, who, especially from the lower SES backgrounds, are often not actively involved in their children's academic pursuits. The exposure to the English language in these communities is limited as these communities are often multilingual with English being the less dominant language in that social context (Howie, Combrinck, Roux, Tshele, Mokoena & McLeod Palane, 2017).

Therefore, for the purpose of this study and to properly understand second language acquisition in South Africa, a more holistic conceptual framework was required, one which does not consider factors in isolation but takes into account the complexities of the South African education system, the social context, the learner's characteristics and learning conditions. For the purpose of this study, a model by Stern (1983), which is presented in Chapter 3, was selected to best describe second language acquisition in South Africa. This model accommodates the complexities of the South African education system and the influence that policies, such as the LiEP, have on the education system (UNICEF, 2016).

The following section provides a brief background regarding the history of language in the South African education system.

2.3 THE HISTORY OF LANGUAGE IN SOUTH AFRICA'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

Language has played a momentous role in South Africa's education system. Over the years – dating back to British colonial education, right through the apartheid era of Bantu Education, until today (post-apartheid era) – there have been a significant number of acts, policies and debates at all levels regarding the language(s) that should be implemented in schools in relation to learning and teaching (Hlatshwayo, 2000).

2.3.1 Bantu Education Act 47 of 1953

The Bantu Education Act, also known as the Black Education Act of 1953, was introduced by the apartheid government as a means to bring African education under its control. At that time, African education was run by the missionaries who received state subsidies for teacher salaries and school supplies. The missionaries saw the takeover of African education as the government's way of extending racial discrimination into black schools (Clark & Worger, 2011).

One of the prevalent inequalities of Bantu Education, implemented by Michiel C. Botha, the newly appointed Minister of Bantu Education, was the instating of the Afrikaans Medium Decree of 1974, which stated that from 1976 all black schools were to be forced to have Afrikaans and English as the LoLT (Clark & Worger, 2011), with the instruction that half of all high school classes must be taught in Afrikaans (US Library of Congress, n.d.). This instruction was met with resistance in black schools with one of the reasons being the fact that there were no qualified teachers to use Afrikaans as a medium of instruction.

The issue regarding the lack of qualified teachers to teach in the recommended medium of instruction is one which is still faced in a number of South African schools. There are currently not enough qualified teachers to teach or accommodate the demand of African languages, used as the home language, in which learners are taught. Foley (2010) goes as far as stating that there is "a real crisis in African language teacher supply". However, the idea of teaching learners in the foundation phase in the selected home language is still supported. The reason could pertain to the idea that it is often assumed that, if teachers speak that particular language, they would be qualified to teach in that language, whether or not they have been adequately trained to do so.

From 1976 until South Africa's new democracy, various solutions were proposed to rectify the inequalities of Bantu Education and the impact it had on South African learners, as well as on the South African economy (Kallaway, 2002). A report titled "Report on Education Provision in the Republic of South Africa", popularly known as "The De Lange Report", made recommendations aimed at "the provision of equal opportunities and the equal standards in education, freedom of choice for parents, and shared state and private sector responsibility for formal and informal education" (Hlatshwayo, 2000, p. 91). Additionally, Kallaway (2002) states that, in order to replace the Bantu Education Act of 1953 and the Bantu Special Education Act of 1964, the Education and Training Bill was released and passed in 1979, with minor amendments being made to the bill later that year.

There were many conversations about various ways in which to balance the inequalities of the past education systems. There were various proposals for alternative education and discussions towards a unified education structure, as well

as efforts to develop new goals for education (Hlatshwayo, 2000). These conversations led to the implementation of acts in the South African legislation dealing specifically with education: The National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996, the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, the National Norms and Standards for School Funding and the Language in Education Policy 1997. The following section briefly considers the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996.

2.3.2 South African Schools Act 84 of 1996

The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (SASA) aims "to provide for a uniform system for the organization, governance and funding of schools; to amend and repeal certain laws relating to schools; and to provide for matters connected therewith" (Joubert & Bray, 2007). The Act was put in place as a means of establishing a new national schooling system. Joubert and Bray (2007) further explain that the intentions of the Act are mainly to "redress the injustices of the past, support the rights of learners and parents and set out the duties and responsibilities of the state".

The Act constitutes various sections, one of these being 'general laws', which includes a number of regulations. Among these general laws is the Language Policy of Public Schools which states that, regarding language in public schools, the Minister of Education sets the norms and standards to be followed by schools. Therefore, the school governing body has to ensure that they abide by these norms and standards when setting their individual school's language policy. The Language Policy of Public Schools ensures that there is no racial discrimination in the process of setting language polices in schools and it allows for the recognition of Sign Language as an official LoLT.

Although the introduction of the SASA was to redress the injustices of the past, currently some of the problems remain in place, especially for lower economic schools where there does not seem to be much of a difference as the conditions of schools against which learners were protesting in the past (Barnard, 2010). According to Manyike & Lemmer, (2014), government-run schools are still overcrowded, have a lack of resources, a lack of adequate facilities, and a lack of proper infrastructure, among many other challenges. So much emphasis has been placed on language being the equaliser of the past injustices, with little or no attention being paid to allocating funding fairly and equally, and to ensuring that schools have qualified

teachers and enough resources, which all form part of redressing past injustices. Although the implementation of the LiEP may benefit learners academically in the first three years of their schooling, without the relevant resources and qualified teachers for effective learning to take place from Grade 4 to matric, not much progress is being made (Manyike & Lemmer, 2014).

2.4 LEGISLATION SHAPING THE CURRENT EDUCATION SYSTEM

As previously mentioned, there have been various educational policies introduced in the education system of the new democratic South Africa. For the purpose of this study, Table 2.2 highlights the policies and acts relevant to language in education. These include: The Constitution, the National Education Policy Act (NEPA), the South African Schools Act, the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement and, lastly, the LiEP, which forms the main discussion, since the understanding of this policy contributes significantly to this study.

Table 2.2 Legislation governing language in education

Legislation and policies	Year implemented	Impact on language in education
The Constitution	1997	States that everyone has the right to receive education in the official language(s) of their choice in public educational institutions where that education is reasonably practicable.
The NEPA	1996	According to the NEPA of 1996, the right of every person to use the language and participate in the cultural life of his or her choice within an education institution.
The SASA	1996	The governing body of a public school may determine the language policy of the school subject to the constitution. A recognised sign language has the status of an official language for the purpose of learning at a public school.
CAPS	2005	Schools are expected to provide two compulsory official languages; one at home language level and the other at first additional level.
LiEP	1997	Develop programmes for the redress of previously disadvantaged languages. Promote multilingualism as an approach to language in education.

2.4.1 Language in Education Policy (LiEP)

The LiEP, which replaced the Bantu Education Act No. 47 of 1953, was centred around ensuring that black learners were taught in their mother tongue (May, 2007). Therefore, the introduction of the LiEP allowed for South Africa's 11 official languages to be introduced in schools as the LoLT in order to promote multilingualism in schools and across the education system. Multilingualism is promoted in schools by allowing schools to teach learners in their mother tongue up to the end of Grade 3 (May, 2007).

According to Foley (2010) and Churr (2013), it is easier for learner to acquire the English language if the learner has solid insight, knowledge and a "firm grasp of his/her home language". Additionally, Churr (2013) mentions that one of the advantages of mother-tongue education is that a child learns best when his/her mother tongue is used as the primary medium of instruction. The notion that a learner's ability to perform well academically is due to the solid foundation he/she has acquired through their mother tongue is supported by a report by UNESCO (2014, p. 283), which states that "a bilingual approach that ensures continued teaching in a child's mother tongue alongside the introduction of a second language – ideally throughout the primary grades – can improve performance in the second language as well as in other subjects".

On the contrary, Heugh (2000) points out that, although it may be scientifically confirmed that a solid foundation of one's mother tongue will result in a sound foundation for learning additional languages, the fact that children need to have been exposed to their mother tongue for a minimum of 12 years should not be ignored. With this said, the LiEP faces some criticism as it only makes provision for learners to be taught in their home language until the end of Grade 3, which for most South African learners will mean that they only have (on average) 9–10 years' exposure to their mother tongue, which does not corroborate the scientific research presented by Heugh.

In addition, mother-tongue education works to the benefit of the learner if the language which the school has selected to be the home language in Grades 1–3 is the language which the learner speaks at home, because he/she would have had the exposure needed for a longer period of time, as argued by Heugh (2000). Consequently, this is a limitation, as learners whose mother tongue is different from the home language

selected by the school could be more at a disadvantage because they will be learning in a language with which they are unfamiliar. It is important to note that the reference to home language is not necessarily the learner's mother tongue. It is often assumed that home language equals mother tongue when, in fact, the home language is a language selected by the school, based on their school language policy. In most cases the language selected for home language is the language commonly spoken by residents in that particular community where the school is located.

Nevertheless, the aim of the LiEP is to promote the ideology of learners having their mother tongue as their LoLT, whilst also making provision for learners to have an opportunity to learn another language (first additional language) which, in the case of South African schools, is English. Additionally, it gives the parents the right to choose a school that offers a LoLT of their choosing (Sookrajh & Joshua, 2009). It is therefore the schools' responsibility to ensure that the LiEP framework is utilised, which allows them to develop their own school's language policy in line with the LiEP. Sookrajh and Joshua (2009) highlight the guidelines which are included in the framework:

- to maintain home language(s),
- while providing effective acquisition of additional language(s), and
- to promote multilingualism.

Despite schools welcoming multilingualism, there have been a number of challenges in successfully instilling the policy in such a manner that all learners benefit effectively from it. The idea of multilingualism in schools is supported by many but is also deemed problematic, due to varied cultural perspectives from which its contribution and benefits are viewed, by whom and at what level (Liddicoat, Heugh, Curnow & Scarino, 2014).

According to Foley (2010), Kruger, (2009), Beukes (2009) and Sookrajh and Joshua (2009), concern regarding the contribution and success of the LiEP is due to the fact that there is a gap between the policy itself and the comprehensive implementation thereof. Hence this suggested fault has resulted in what researchers have deemed an 'educational crisis' (Heugh, 1999, p. 301, as cited in Kruger, 2009).

The challenge in understanding and successfully implementing the LiEP is due to the fact that a language policy, as mentioned by Plüddemann (2015), is a complex and multi-layered ideology – much like the onion metaphor developed by Ricento and Hornberger (1996) in order to describe the complexity and the process around the concept, as illustrated by the Language Planning and Policy (LPP) in Figure 2.1:
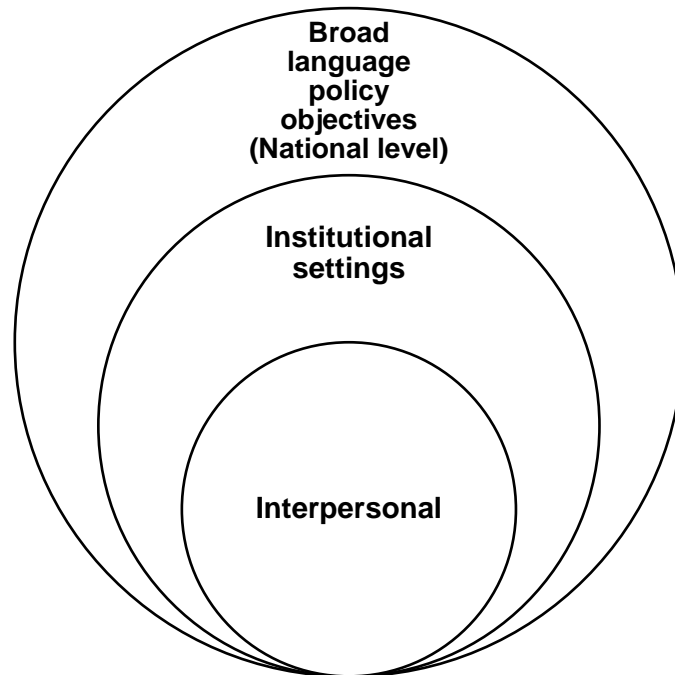
Figure 2.1 LPP onion metaphor (Source: Ricento & Hornberger, 1996)

The broad language policy objectives refer to the legislation which is put in place by the government (national level). In the case of South Africa, it refers to the laws, acts and rights found in the Constitution; more specifically, it refers to the South African Schools Act (SASA) and the LiEP. Those in institutional settings – government offices (Department of Basic Education), businesses and schools – are then expected to analyse these objectives, interpret them and then implement the objectives in their individual spheres.

The inner layer consists of the interpersonal, namely the individuals from the various institutions and how their "diverse backgrounds, experiences and communities" influence how they accept and interact with the language policy (Ricento & Hornberger, 1996). According to Ricento and Hornberger (1996), the inner layer of the LLP onion is where teachers (classroom practitioners) are placed, as it is their

responsibility to implement in their classrooms what the 'experts' above them have concluded and passed down to the teachers.

Based on the onion metaphor, it is evident that the success of the LiEP is not solely dependent on the government; it is the responsibility of all the stakeholders in the 'onion' – the interaction and communication between all three layers. Additionally, Deacon, Osman and Buchler (2010) agree with other research in saying that the LiEP has a number of challenges, however, they suggest that it is not entirely government's fault. Teachers, schools and parents are often quick to shift the blame to the Department of Education. Deacon et al. further mention that the parents (interpersonal – inner layer of the onion) have contributed to the challenges faced in the implementation of the LiEP. Parents and learners, for whom the LiEP was supposedly developed, "frequently overturn official policy that stipulates mother-tongue instruction for the first three grades of school" (Taylor, 2006, p. 534, as cited in Deacon et al., 2010).

2.5 MOTHER-TONGUE EDUCATION

According to UNESCO (2011), 'mother tongue' can be defined as "the language(s) that one has to learn first; the language(s) one identifies with or is identified as a native speaker of by others; the language(s) one knows best and the language one uses the most".

The concept of mother-tongue education in the first years of primary school in South Africa was first introduced during the apartheid regime. Initially, this introduction was done to create segregation and oppression among South Africans (Hays, 2009). However, across the world, the support for mother-tongue education was on the basis that children are exposed to their mother tongue from birth and within the communities in which they live. For this reason, it was deemed important for learners "to be taught and instructed in their mother tongue" (Churr, 2013).

Despite the benefits of mother-tongue education, evidence exists that points to parents in South Africa who have opted for their children to be taught and instructed in English. A study was conducted by Evans and Cleghorn (2014) in a school in South Africa with 600 parents/caregivers, whose foundation phase children attended a former

Afrikaans-medium primary school where English is now the sole medium of instruction, although it was neither the children's nor the teachers' mother tongue.

Parents who have 'rejected' the idea of mother-tongue education are of the opinion that, in order for their children to be successful in their education and in the labour force, or to compete globally in the 21st century, they need to have access to international languages – which to most is predominantly English – from the early schooling grades (UNESCO, 2011). However, the study was limited to one school and consequently these findings could not be generalised across South Africa. Table 2.3 shows the results of the summary of questionnaire key findings. For the purpose of this study, the focus will be on the findings dealing with language.

Table 2.3 Adapted summary of questionnaire key findings (language section)

Parental Profile	
Report multilingualism	100.0%
Speak English well	24.0%
Speak English every day	89.5%
School choice: Medium of instruction	
Want English as primary language of instruction	95.0%
Want English only	47.0%
Want mother tongue at least 1 hour per day (Grades 1 and 2 parents)	43.3%
Want mother tongue at least 1 hour per day (Grade 3 parents)	36.0%

(Source: Evans & Cleghorne, 2014)

All the respondents stated that they were multilingual, with 89.5% of the respondents declaring that they spoke English every day, and with only 24% speaking English well. The parents' or caregivers' inadequacy in English suggests that they want their children to attend schools where they have access to the English language in order to have better opportunities in future – access to Universities and better employment opportunities, resulting in, for example, economic freedom (Churr, 2013). This viewpoint can be supported by the fact that the majority of textbooks in tertiary institutions, and formal documentation such as employment offers, contracts, codes of conducts, among many others, are in English. Furthermore, Barnard (2010)

highlights the fact that, although there is support for home language education, it is important to note that there is limited curriculum material in home languages and reminds us that matric examinations in South Africa do not accommodate home languages.

Additionally, Heugh (2000) mentions that another reason why parents and caregivers of African learners prefer English, as opposed to their mother tongue, is because little value has been placed on African languages in the educational and professional spheres. Churr (2013) further points out that most South Africans would prefer their children to be taught in the English language, as supported by findings from Evans and Cleghorn (2014), with 95% of the respondents in their study stating that they wanted English to be the primary language of instruction.

However, Evans and Cleghorn (2014) state that academic research has shown that English as a primary language of instruction can hinder learning, which also results in poor English and mother tongue acquisition (Banda, 2000). The ideology of academics and researchers of mother-tongue instruction being at the centre of bilingual or multilingual programmes is supported by 47% of the respondents, mentioning that they wanted English to be the only language of instruction in schools. This finding highlights the fact that there are parents or caregivers that are in support of the LiEP and mother-tongue education (Banda, 2000; Evans & Cleghorn, 2014).

It could be argued that the challenge with multilingualism in schools, especially from an early age, is that learners are expected to be able to make a smooth and rapid transition between languages (mother tongue and LoLT). Assessments such as SACMEQ, the ANAs, PIRLS and PIRLS Literacy have not supported this opinion. In addition, expecting learners in primary school to learn in a second language, which they are unfamiliar with, is one of the contributing factors to poor academic achievements (Heugh, 2000). In contrast, Kerfoot and Simon-Vandenbergen (2014) found the idea of having English as the only LoLT as being beneficial and that multilingualism in the classroom is seen to have cognitive and socio-emotional advantages.

2.6 SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Second language learning is considered to be any language learned after the first language (Van der Walt et al., 2009). The majority of South African learners acquire English as a first or second additional language, which means that for some learners English can be considered as a third language, as many of the learners are exposed to more than two languages. According to Van der Walt et al. (2009), a second additional language is a language to which a learner has limited exposure outside a particular setting. In the case of most at-risk South African learners, it is in the classroom. This is most likely true, considering that in most South African townships people speak mainly African languages (local languages and languages from across the borders, for example, Shona or Portuguese) and therefore learners in those lower SES have minimal exposure to the English language.

According to Nieman and Hugo (2010), in South Africa only seven percent of the population are considered to be English home language speakers, with the remaining population acquiring English as a second or third language for educational purposes, as it is the LoLT in many South African schools and tertiary institutions. Some children are not exposed to the English language before starting school and, as a result, struggle to comprehend content taught in English when they start in schools that have English as a LoLT. In agreement, Heugh, as cited in Fleisch (2008, p. 105), is quoted stating that "… unless children have a deep understanding of their first language, particularly a proficiency in the complex decontextualised discourse of educational subject material, they cannot transfer that understanding to the second language".

Furthermore, August, Snow, Carlo, Proctor, Rolla de San Francisco, Duursma and Szuber (2006) concur that it is important to ensure that learners' reading comprehension is of a high standard in order for them to "access grade-appropriate content". This recommendation suggests that learners who do not perform well in reading comprehension in the foundation phase could possibly struggle to understand content in other subject areas. An inability to read with comprehension in the early grades makes it challenging for a learner to excel in further grades, as well as in secondary and tertiary education, as the foundation in English comprehension is not sound, and because English is the language used when assessing learners' learning and measuring their progress in the majority of schools (August et al., 2006). Therefore, ensuring that learners are able to perform adequately in reading

comprehension contributes to an easier transition from Grade 3 to Grade 4. Learners who struggle with reading comprehension in Grade 3 will most likely find the transition from home language to English as a LoLT more challenging.

Heugh (cited in Fleisch, 2008, p. 105) provides a theoretical explanation as to what contributes to this reading comprehension failure, namely, two language policy models, subjective bilingualism and transitional bilingualism. These two language policy models are prevalent in disadvantaged schools in South Africa. Subjective bilingualism refers to learners whose mother tongue is not English, but their first LoLT is English, whereas transitional bilingualism refers to learners who are taught in their mother tongue in their earlier years and then make an early exit from mother-tongue learning to second language learning.

2.6.1. Challenges with a second language

Heugh (1999) points out that a large number of primary teachers, who taught in schools with learners who were African language speakers after 1976, also did not have English as their first language. These teachers were only trained to teach in their mother tongue and thus were not equipped to deliver the content confidently in English. However, they had to adapt to their circumstances. Some of these teachers are still in the classroom today, teaching in similar circumstances; they are still second or third language English speakers, and are likely to be employed in under-resourced schools. The lack of adequately trained teachers in under-resourced schools results in a more difficult transition between the foundation phase and the intermediate phase, as well as between the home language and English as a LoLT.

Figure 2.2 presents some of the challenges identified by teachers through a pilot study conducted by Hugo and Nieman (2010), where 84 teachers were provided with a questionnaire with questions related to why they faced problems as English Second Language (ESL) teachers.
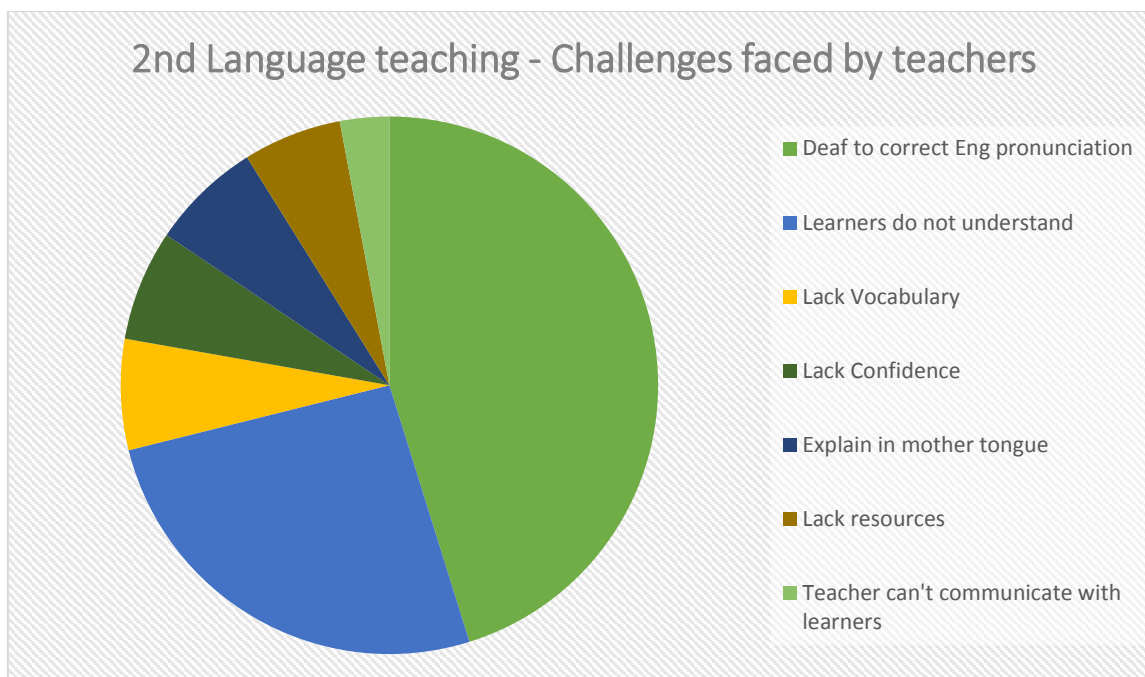
Figure 2.2 Second language teaching – challenges faced by teachers

The results obtained from this study indicated that a significant number of challenges faced by the teachers teaching English as a second language were mainly learner-centred. The biggest challenge indicated by a number of teachers was that learners are deaf to the correct English pronunciation – this challenge also means that learners write the way they hear. Learners therefore write words the way in which they are being pronounced either by themselves or the teacher, rather than how they are spelled (Hugo & Nieman, 2010).

Pronunciation may hinder the learners' ability to comprehend the content that is delivered to them during the lesson. The learners' inability to understand what the teacher says in the second language contributes to a large portion of the challenges faced in second language learning.

Thus, teachers often resort to explaining various concepts in the learners' mother tongue in the hope that learners will understand the content better (Probyn, 2001; Krog, Mohangi, Nel & Stephens, 2016). This occurrence is a challenge prevalent in a number of black schools in South Africa, and was formerly known as code-switching, although in Figure 2.2 'explaining in mother tongue' is presented as a smaller challenge in comparison to the other challenges. Code-switching refers to

"... a change by a speaker from one language or language variety to another. Code switching can take place in a conversation when one speaker uses one language and the other speaker answers in a different language. A person may also start speaking in one language and change to another in the middle of the speech, or sometimes in the middle of a sentence" (Van der Walt et al., 2012, p. 368).

Often teachers and learners make use of code-switching due to the fact that they have a limited or a lack of English vocabulary. The challenge with a lack of vocabulary stems from the fact that the majority of teachers are also second language speakers and therefore have a limited vocabulary. Similarly, the learners are also second language speakers with a limited vocabulary, thus making it a challenge for both parties to express themselves and explain subject matter adequately, since they have fewer words with which to do so (Barnard, 2010).

Alternatively, Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982, pp. 265, 269), as cited in Van der Walt et al. (2012), propose that learners in the early stages should not be forced to communicate in the 'target language' (English) but should be allowed to ask or respond to questions in their mother tongue until such a point that they feel confident to speak in English. However, this strategy is only applicable to learners, as it is recommended that the teacher should communicate and facilitate all lessons in the appropriate LoLT. Kerfoot and Simon-Vandenbergen (2015), in support of the previous statement, emphasise that when teaching in a second language context, the LoLT should be the most prominent language, with minimal to no use of the mother tongue or any other language apart from the LoLT – in this case English.

Consequently, if learners are not able to understand what is taught, they are not able to keep up and, as a result, fall behind. Another, perhaps unintended result of learners' inability to understand the second language, is the difficulty learners face in attempting to answer questions in tests and assessment situations, due to their inability to express themselves adequately in English (Probyn, 2001).

2.7 THE ROLE OF NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ASSESSMENTS

2.7.1 National literacy assessments

South African primary schools participate in a number of assessments, both on a national and international level, which measure literacy levels. A number of these assessments have shown that South African primary schools produce literacy levels that are significantly low – in most cases the literacy levels reflect a high level of failure. Fleisch (2008) points out that learners who are taught in English, and those who have it as their second or third language, struggle to master the fundamentals of literacy in primary school, hence the poor performance levels achieved in literacy assessments.

2.7.1.1 Annual National Assessment (ANA)

The literacy study commonly known as the ANAs has shown that one of the underlying reasons for these poor results may be the lack of a good literacy foundation in the learner's early grades, thus resulting in a weakening or a lack of improvement in performance as the learner progresses to the next phase. This conclusion is evident in Figure 2.3, which shows the ANA national average percentage marks for Grades 1 to 6 and 9 from 2012 up to 2014. Learners who wrote the tests in English Home Language showed a decrease in average percentage from Grade 1 until Grade 6, with a slight average increase in 2013 and 2014. However, in Grade 9 the average percentage decreased, despite the overall annual increase in performance.
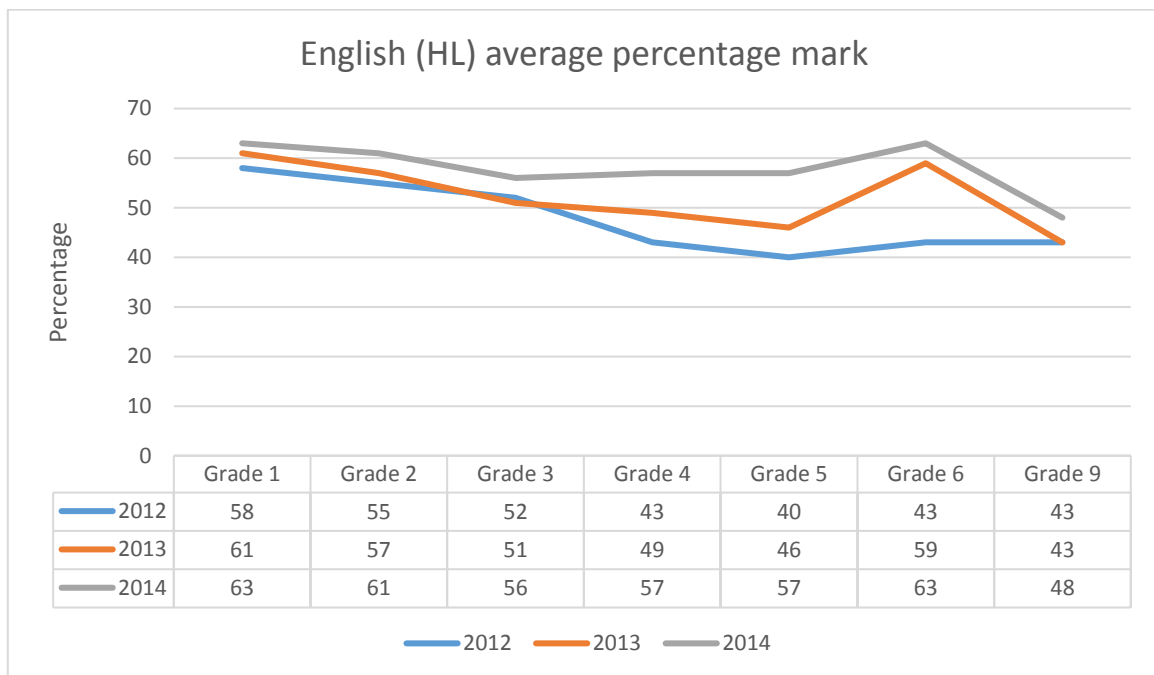
Figure 2.3 National average percentage marks for English (HL) in 2012, 2013 and 2014 (Source: South Africa. DBE, 2014)

In Figure 2.4 it is evident that learners who have English as a First Additional Language are producing considerably lower results from Grade 4, with no evidence of improvement in results from grade to grade. The national average percentage marks for English (FAL) has remained below 50% since 2012. Apart from other factors that could contribute to this poor performance, such as a lack of resources, the results also suggest that, since English is the learners' second, third or sometimes fourth language, a solid literacy foundation is lacking in schools that have English as a FAL (South Africa. DBE, 2014).
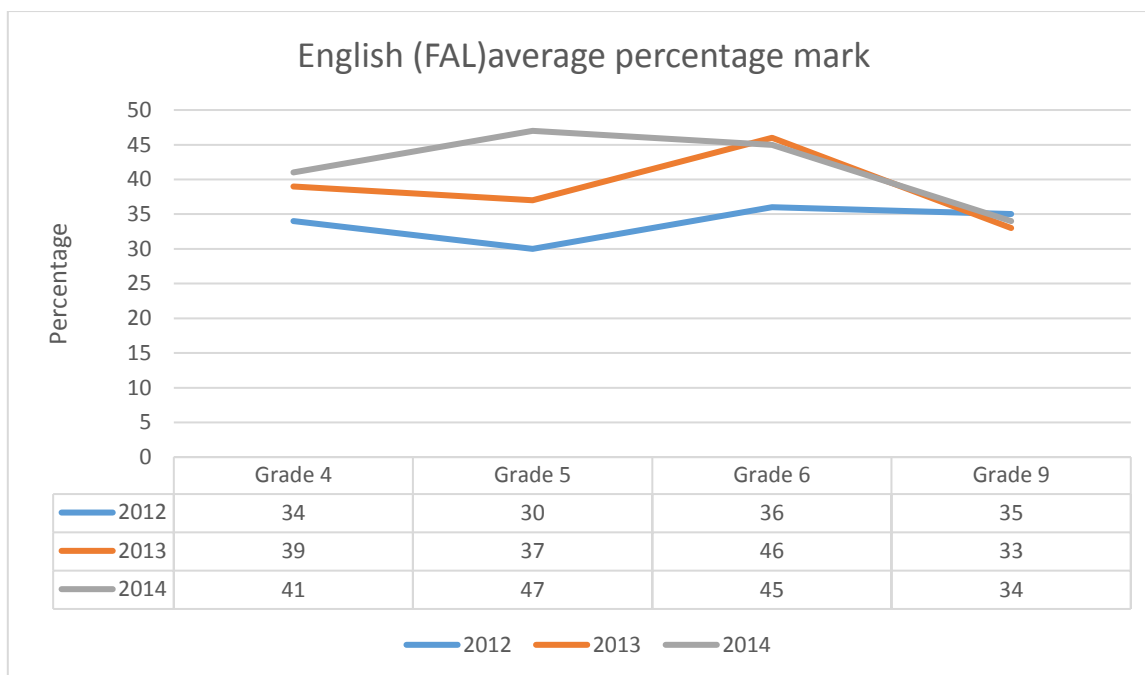
Figure 2.4 National average percentage marks for English (FAL) in 2012, 2013 and 2014 (Source: South Africa. DBE, 2014)

The ANAs further reported on the individual components that were tested, namely reading and viewing, language structure and convention, and writing. The results obtained in each category was below 50%, evidently highlighting the need for improvement in second language learning. These results also show that FAL learners in Grade 4 were struggling with grasping and applying the basics of the English language (South Africa. DBE, 2014). One of the reasons could be that the foundation which was meant to be developed and moulded in Grade 3 did not happen efficiently, hence the learners struggled to produce a better set of results the following year.

It has to be noted that one of the limitations of the ANAs is that the results were not directly comparable from year to year and, for that reason, these results may be misleading (Spaull, 2012). Consequently, results from the ANAs are not a reliable measure as to whether or not learners' literacy achievement is improving or not. Yet, it still provides indications of learner achievement in the early grades. The study's limitation makes it challenging for schools and teachers to take the necessary steps in assisting learners to improve their literacy. Despite these challenges, the figure above illustrates that learners are still failing to "master foundational numeracy and literacy skills in primary school, which then spills over into secondary schools" (Spaull, 2012). Overall, the ANAs indicate a decrease in learner averages between Grade 3 and

Grade 4, suggesting that learners perhaps experience difficulties with the transition between Grade 3 and Grade 4. It is thus important for government, schools and teachers to research and formulate new methods and intervention programmes which can be utilised in South African schools to ensure that learners are adequately prepared for the academic transition between the two grades.

2.7.2. International literacy assessments

On an international scale, South Africa participated in the SACMEQ II (2000), SACMEQ III (2007) and SACMEQ IV (2013), as well as the PIRLS 2006, prePIRLS 2011 and, most recently, the PIRLS Literacy 2016 studies. The results obtained from these assessments illustrate that South Africa is ranked among some of the poorest performing countries.

2.7.2.1 Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality

SACMEQ aims to examine the conditions of schooling in relation to the quality of education in schools in the southern and eastern parts of Africa (SACMEQ, 2010–2017), with the focus on mathematics and literacy achievement levels of Grade 6 learners (Spaull, 2013). There are fifteen countries which participate in this study, namely, Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Mauritius, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania (Mainland), Tanzania (Zanzibar), Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe, known as SACMEQ Ministries of Education (SACMEQ, 2010–2017).

Table 2.4 SACMEQ III and SACMEQ IV reading scores

Ranking	Country	SACMEQ III Reading Score	Ranking	Country	SACMEQ IV Reading Score[1]	Increase or decrease
1.	Tanzania[2]	578	1.	Seychelles	602	⇧ 27
2.	Seychelles	575	2.	Kenya	601	⇧ 58
3.	Mauritius	574	3.	Namibia	599	⇧ 102
4.	Swaziland	549	4.	Mauritius	597	⇧ 23
5.	Kenya	543	5.	Swaziland	590	⇧ 41
6.	Botswana	535	6.	Botswana	582	⇧ 47
7.	Zanzibar	534	7.	Zanzibar	562	⇧ 28
8.	Zimbabwe	508	8.	South Africa	558	⇧ 63
9.	Namibia	497	9.	Uganda	554	⇧ 75
10.	South Africa	495	10.	Lesotho	531	⇧ 63
11.	Uganda	479	11.	Zimbabwe	527	⇧ 20
12.	Mozambique	476	12.	Mozambique	519	⇧ 43
13.	Lesotho	468	13.	Zambia	494	⇧ 60
14.	Malawi	434	14.	Malawi	492	⇧ 58
15.	Zambia	434	15.			

(Source: South Africa. Parliament, 2016)

The third column in Table 2.4 illustrates the results from the SACMEQ III reading scores in which South Africa was ranked 10th out of the 15 countries that participated in the study. South Africa achieved a mean score of 495, which is below the SACMEQ centre point of 500 (established in the SACMEQ II), suggesting that South African Grade 6 learners produced results that were below average in comparison with some

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[1] According to Spaull (2016), the results obtained in the SACMEQ IV do not allow for comparability as there were technical issues that were identified regarding the different methodologies used to calculate the test scores between SACMEQ III and SACMEQ IV. Additionally, weaker learners' test scores were not included in the final results process.

[2] Tanzania's reading score from SACMEQ IV was not recorded in any of the SACMEQ IV data reports. Hence, a score has not been included in this table. According to the DoE (South Africa. DoE, 2016) it is with this in mind that South Africa's ranking in the SACMEQ IV is 8th.

of their counterparts. The sixth column in the table represents the results from the SACMEQ IV reading scores, where South Africa achieved a mean score of 558, which is above the centre point of 500 – an improvement from SACMEQ III with a difference of 63. The improved reading score moved South Africa up the ranks to 8th position out of 14. Although there is evidence of improvement, South Africa is still 44 points away from closing the gap between itself and the Seychelles, which had a mean score of 575 in the SACMEQ III and 602 in the SACMEQ IV.

These results indicate that there is a limitation in schools that does not allow for a significant improvement. Despite government's introduction of intervention programmes in schools, such as the DBE books, they do not seem to be improving the literacy levels significantly (Khosa, 2013). Perhaps Heugh's (2000) findings need to be taken into account that learners require a minimum of six years (equivalent to Grade 6) of learning in and being exposed to their mother tongue in order for them to be able to form a sound basis in their mother tongue. This exposure would likely enable them to successfully acquire English as a second language, which they will then use as a LoLT (Barnard, 2010).

2.7.2.2 PIRLS 2006, prePIRLS 2011 and PIRLS Literacy 2016
According to the PIRLS 2006 results, South Africa performed below average and was ranked last of the participating countries. This poor performance was evident despite the fact that South African learners who participated in the study have had five years of formal schooling and were older (almost 12 years old) in comparison to their counterparts, of whom the majority had four years of formal schooling and were 9.4–11 years old.

Countries	Reading Achievement Distribution		Average Scale Score	Years of Formal Schooling*	Average Age	Human Development Index**
[2a] Russian Federation		○	565 (3.4)	4	10.8	0.797
Hong Kong SAR		○	564 (2.4)	4	10.0	0.927
[2a] Canada, Alberta		○	560 (2.4)	4	9.9	0.950
Singapore		○	558 (2.9)	4	10.4	0.916
[2a] Canada, British Columbia		○	558 (2.6)	4	9.8	0.950
Luxembourg		○	557 (1.1)	5	11.4	0.945
[2a] Canada, Ontario		○	555 (2.7)	4	9.8	0.950
Italy		○	551 (2.9)	4	9.7	0.940
Hungary		○	551 (3.0)	4	10.7	0.869
Sweden		○	549 (2.3)	4	10.9	0.951
Germany		○	548 (2.2)	4	10.5	0.932
† Netherlands		○	547 (1.5)	4	10.3	0.947
†[2a] Belgium (Flemish)		○	547 (2.0)	4	10.0	0.945
[2a] Bulgaria		○	547 (4.4)	4	10.9	0.816
[2a] Denmark		○	546 (2.3)	4	10.9	0.943
Canada, Nova Scotia		○	542 (2.2)	4	10.0	0.950
Latvia		○	541 (2.3)	4	11.0	0.845
†[2a] United States		○	540 (3.5)	4	10.1	0.948
England		○	539 (2.6)	5	10.3	0.940
Austria		○	538 (2.2)	4	10.3	0.944
Lithuania		○	537 (1.6)	4	10.7	0.857
Chinese Taipei		○	535 (2.0)	4	10.1	0.910
Canada, Quebec		○	533 (2.8)	4	10.1	0.950
New Zealand		○	532 (2.0)	4.5 - 5.5	10.0	0.936
Slovak Republic		○	531 (2.8)	4	10.4	0.856
† Scotland		○	527 (2.8)	5	9.9	0.940
France		○	522 (2.1)	4	10.0	0.942
Slovenia		○	522 (2.1)	3 or 4	9.9	0.910
Poland		○	519 (2.4)	4	9.9	0.862
Spain		○	513 (2.5)	4	9.9	0.938
[2b] Israel		○	512 (3.3)	4	10.1	0.927
Iceland		○	511 (1.3)	4	9.8	0.960
PIRLS Scale Avg.			**500**	–	–	–
Moldova, Rep. of			500 (3.0)	4	10.9	0.694
Belgium (French)			500 (2.6)	4	9.9	0.945
‡ Norway			498 (2.6)	4	9.8	0.965
Romania		⊕	489 (5.0)	4	10.9	0.805
[2a] Georgia		⊕	471 (3.1)	4	10.1	0.743
Macedonia, Rep. of		⊕	442 (4.1)	4	10.6	0.796
Trinidad and Tobago		⊕	436 (4.9)	5	10.1	0.809
Iran, Islamic Rep. of		⊕	421 (3.1)	4	10.2	0.746
Indonesia		⊕	405 (4.1)	4	10.4	0.711
Qatar		⊕	353 (1.1)	4	9.8	0.844
Kuwait		⊕	330 (4.2)	4	9.8	0.871
Morocco		⊕	323 (5.9)	4	10.8	0.640
South Africa		⊕	302 (5.6)	5	11.9	0.653

100   200   300   400   500   600   700

Figure 2.5 PIRLS 2006 distribution of reading achievement (Source: Mullis, Martin, Kennedy & Foy, 2007)

Consequently, in the PIRLS 2011 study, South Africa opted to participate in prePIRLS 2011 in order to see where South Africa's Grade 4 learners would be placed in comparison to some of their counterparts across the world. According to Van Staden and Howie (2012), prePIRLS 2011 is considered to be "a less difficult assessment, intended to measure the reading comprehension skills of learners who are still in the process of learning how to read", whereas PIRLS assesses learners who are in the process of adapting to 'reading to learn'.

The results attained by the Grade 5 learner in the PIRLS 2006 provided evidence that South Africa's Grade 4's would struggle to 'compete' adequately with other Grade 4 learners from other countries in the PIRLS study.

In prePIRLS 2011, South African Grade 4 learners yet again obtained the lowest scores of the participating countries in the study. These results highlight a reading literacy problem across the various languages in South Africa, since the Grade 4 learners were assessed in their LoLT. The prePIRLS 2011 were translated from English into the 11 official languages used in South Africa for schools whose LoLT is not English. A further analysis of the results suggests that South African learners may not necessarily be struggling with English as a second language only, but in fact struggle with reading and with showing understanding, regardless of the language of testing (Spaull, 2016).

Figure 2.6 illustrates the achievement of the PIRLS Literacy 2016 study, of which the most recent results were released at the end of 2017. The PIRLS Literacy 2016 results resembled a similar position to that of the prePIRLS 2011, as once again South Africa scored the lowest out of the six countries that took part in the PIRLS 2016 survey. Although South Africa was placed last and below the PIRLS Scale centre point of 500, the overall average improved from 302 in the prePIRLS 2011 to 320 in the prePIRLS 2016.
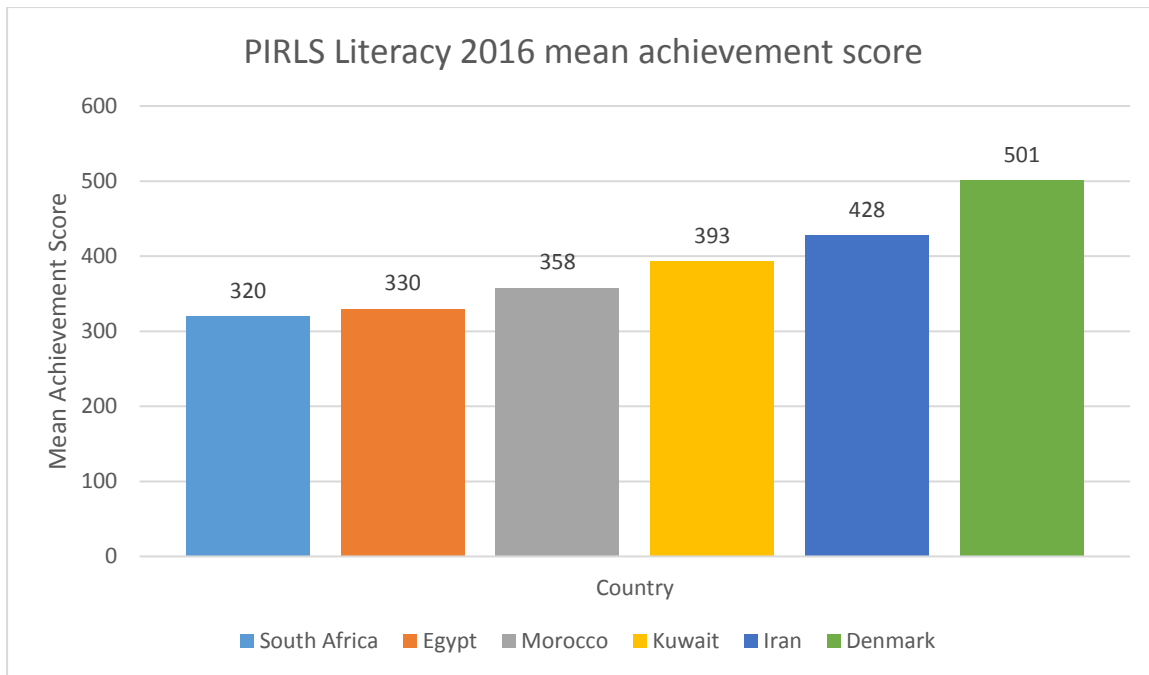
Figure 2.6 PIRLS Literacy 2016 mean achievement score (Source: Howie et al., 2017)

Van Staden and Bosker (2014) point out that international comparative studies, such as PIRLS, TIMSS and SACMEQ, indicate that South Africa is one of the poorest performing countries. The results obtained in these international studies – more specifically prePIRLS 2011, PIRLS Literacy 2016 and SACMEQ – together with the results obtained in national studies such as the ANAs, highlight the importance to find solutions through various intervention programmes to improve the literacy performance in schools. The results of these assessments indicate that more work needs to be done in the foundation phase with regard to literacy as a whole and more specifically in English literacy, with which learners in Grade 4 are evidently having problems.

The reasons for poor performance in Grade 4, as evidenced by a number of assessments, could be related to a number of factors. This study therefore aims to identify the perceptions and the experiences of the teachers who are teaching both Grade 3 and Grade 4 learners, by exploring their current experiences in their classrooms, which they feel could be contributing to these poor results. It is through identifying and understanding the perceptions of these teachers, who are aware of their own teaching practices, and witnesses of the learners' practices in and outside the classroom, that contributing reasons for Grade 4 learners' low literacy results could be identified and addressed.

According to Pretorius (2014), there are some challenges which could hinder the smooth transition from Grades 1 to 3, when children convert from learning to read in Grades 1 to 3 to reading to learn in Grade 4. This transition is particularly challenging when children have reading or learning difficulties, when their communities are disadvantaged (high-poverty homes or low-income homes) and, as a result, when their schools are under-resourced and lack the necessary infrastructure for conducive learning. These issues, coupled with multilingual education contexts in which children are subject to being bi-literate, suggest a potentially disabling system, where learners are expected to learn in a language that is not their home language (Pretorius, 2014).

2.8 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the literature review aimed to present content that addresses the fundamental concepts in this study's research questions. By doing so, the literature presented sought to highlight the relationship between previous literature sources and the problem presented in this research study. This chapter started by introducing the major theories related to second language acquisition, followed by an in-depth discussion in which the major theories were critiqued on the basis of their ability to address the current problem. Chapter 2 also explored the historical context of education in South Africa, together with the legislation that had an impact on language in schools. In this way the significance of these acts and policies on the current education system was highlighted. Additionally, the chapter discussed the consequences of the legislation, mother-tongue learning, second language learning, as well as multilingualism, and the effect it has had on the literacy performance of South African learners. The chapter further explored and evaluated second language learners' international and national performance in literacy assessments.

The following chapter presents the conceptual framework selected for this study. The chapter explores the various factors which contribute to second language acquisition and their relation to the current study.

CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The conceptual framework selected for this study provides a map to guide the way in which the study is conducted, pertaining to the manner in which data are analysed and interpreted, as well as to the final conclusions drawn from the results. Among the vast number of second language learning theories and conceptual frameworks, the most suitable conceptual framework is Stern's *Framework for examination of second language learning* (Stern, 1983; Kazeroni, 1993).

Section 3.2 provides an overview of Stern's conceptual framework, as well as the rationale behind selecting this framework. Thereafter follows a detailed discussion of each of the factors which form part of Stern's *Framework for examination of second language learning*, which is the selected framework for this study. Lastly, section 3.3 provides a summary of this chapter.

3.2 STERN'S CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Stern (1983) states that a conceptual framework is required when discussing language teaching. The conceptual framework serves as a guideline in which various factors are used to guide the discussion and provide an overview of factors that contribute to the interpretation of second language learning. The selected conceptual framework illustrates how the various factors in second language learning interact.

3.2.1 Rationale for selected conceptual framework

Stern's *Framework for examination of second language learning* is a relatively old conceptual framework which, however, encompasses factors that are relevant in second language learning, especially in South African schools. The conceptual framework does not see learners and their environment as two separate factors, which can allow for second language learning to take place. Instead, the framework identifies factors that are directly related to the learner – taking into consideration learners' individual differences – as well as factors related to the setting where the learners learn the second language (Troncoso, 2005).

The selected framework suggests that no one factor operates in isolation, but that these factors are interrelated and through their relationship allow for second language learning to take place.

3.3 FRAMEWORK FOR EXAMINATION OF SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

According to Stern (1983), the process of (language) learning in itself is difficult to outline because it is indefinable. Therefore, researchers, practitioners and theorists have encountered challenges with regard to identifying crucial factors that contribute to second language learning. While some of the factors have been identified, such as proficiency, language learning context, aptitude and motivation, these are considered to be 'ambiguous' (Stern, 1983).

The aforementioned factors are ambiguous since they are context-based and are open to interpretation, depending on the particular context or on the individuals to whom these factors are applicable. Stern (1983) comments that it is essential to comprehend how the crucial factors that have been identified interact in order to achieve second language learning outcomes.

Figure 3.1 presents Stern's *Framework for examination of second language learning* (1983). The figure includes the factors which were identified by Stern as those effectively contributing to second language learning.

2. Learner characteristics
Age
Cognitive characteristics
Affective characteristics
Personality characteristics

5. Learning outcomes
L2 competence/proficiency
Theoretically-based schemes
Impressionistic ratings
Test performance
Interlanguage

4. Learning process
Strategies, techniques and mental operations

1. Social context
Sociolinguistic, sociocultural, socio-economic factors

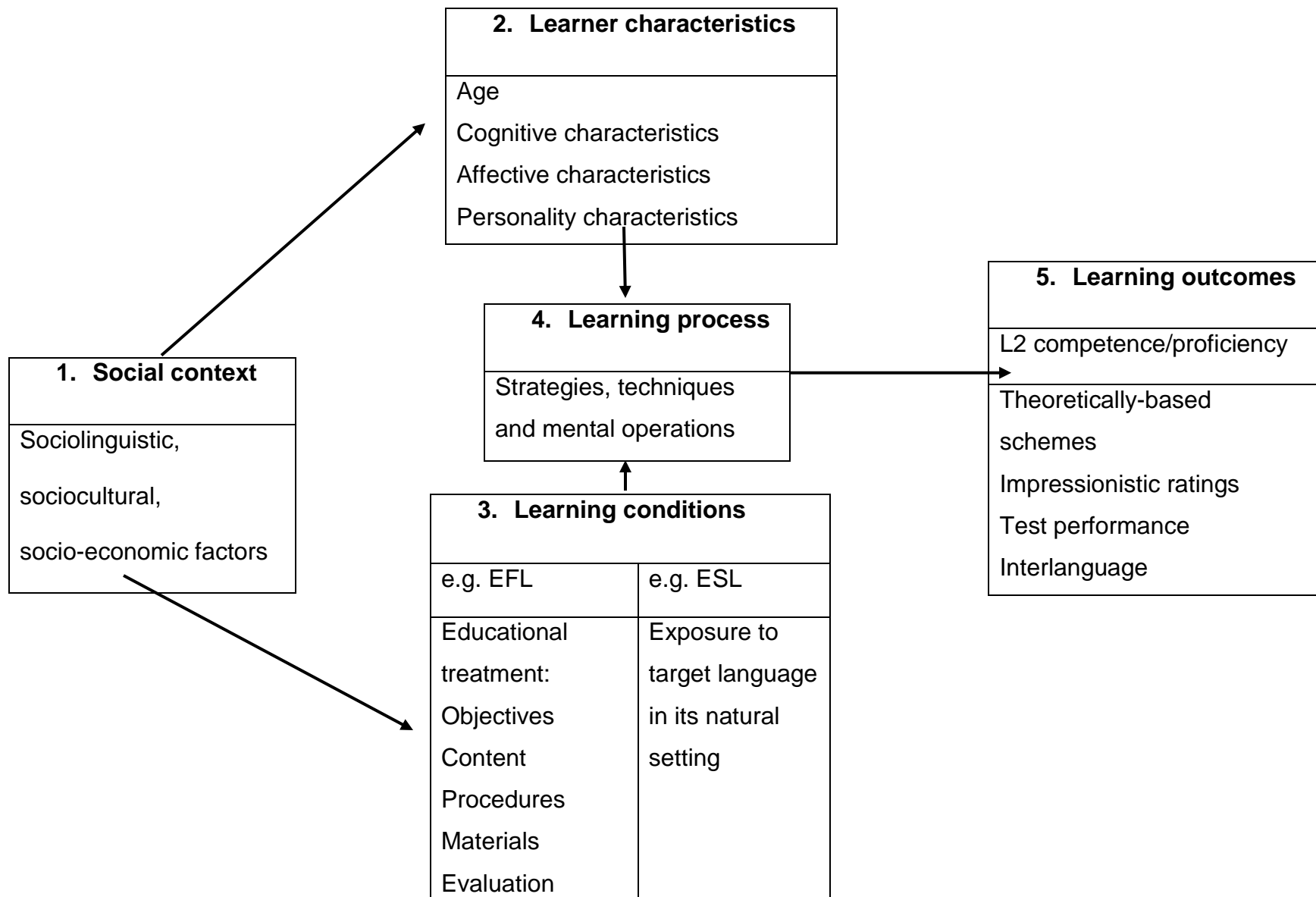| 3. Learning conditions	
e.g. EFL	e.g. ESL
Educational treatment: Objectives Content Procedures Materials Evaluation	Exposure to target language in its natural setting

Figure 3.1 Framework for examination of second language learning (Stern, 1983, p. 338)

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The current study focuses on discovering how teachers experience the teaching process when teaching a second language, in preparation of that language becoming the learners' LoLT the following year. The study addresses the most suitable or best way in which learners can learn English, from the perspective of their teachers. The framework encompasses factors that are relevant in addressing the main research question and sub-questions, such as understanding the sociocultural factors that help shape the perspectives and attitudes of these teachers. In attempting to understand the role of intervention programmes and the impact of the LiEP on teaching practices, it becomes evident that these contribute to the learning conditions and learning processes which are significant in second language learning in South African schools.

3.3.1 Social context

According to Stern (1983), the social context refers to environmental factors that play a role in influencing language learning. In relation to Figure 3.1, these include sociolinguistic and sociocultural factors which are closely related, as they have to do with how various communities are organised and divided according to language usage, as well as the differences in cultural makeup in a particular community, which have an impact on which language is predominant in that particular area (Stern, 1983). Another factor is the socio-economic factor, which has an impact on which language(s) are perceived as important, due to the status associated with that particular language group. Stern (1983) makes mention of the fact that it is imperative that social factors that could play a significant role in language learning should not be side-lined.

Stern (1983) points out that the social context of language learning has a significant impact on how a language is taught and learned. In South Africa, the social context has always contributed to how a language is acquired by individuals, especially during the apartheid era, which had an impact on the current social context which, in turn, plays a role in how languages are acquired.

This study was conducted in a South African township in which the learners and their teachers reside. A township refers to an informal residential area, which is found on the border of urban areas. Due to the apartheid regime, townships in South Africa are multicultural, meaning that there is a vast number of languages spoken in the township; no one township is restricted to a singular language (Webb, Lafon, Pare & Ramagoshi, 2007).

Views regarding the choice of language predominantly spoken within a community are determined by what the community deems appropriate (Stern, 1983). Stern's opinion is supported by Pretorius and Naudé (2002), as they point out that "language development and enrichment is in essence a socially mediated process". Therefore, the environment in which learners live either hinders or promotes the learners' ability to adequately acquire a new language.

Learners and teachers are exposed to the attitudes and views of community members towards a particular language and that could influence the manner in which a language is taught and learned in schools. Stern (1983) is in agreement with this opinion as he mentions that "students therefore come to language learning with positive or negative attitudes derived from the society in which they live, and these attitudes in turn play a role in their motivation to learn the second language".

The community context also contributes to the home environment, which inevitably plays a role in the manner in which the learner perceives a particular language (Stern, 1983; Pretorius & Naudé, 2002). The learner's home environment includes parental involvement, academic resources at home which are relevant to the second language being taught at school, as well as exposure to the second language in the home. According to Morrison and Cooney (2002), a learner's home background is determinant in their academic achievement and development, because learners whose parents show interest and are actively involved in their children's academic pursuits are more likely to produce higher results (Pretorius & Naudé, 2002; Combrinck, Van Staden & Roux, 2014).

3.3.2 Learner characteristics

Stern (1983) highlights that the learners' characteristics mentioned in the framework are not the only characteristics that could have an impact on language learning; other characteristics such as gender, previous language learning experiences, learning aptitude and learning styles are considered to be the most influential, based on the questions most frequently asked in academic debates. The learner characteristics mentioned in the framework include:

- *Age*: this factor refers to the most optimal age at which a learner could adequately and successfully learn a second language.

- *Cognitive characteristics*: the way in which a learner's individual cognitive style affects how she/he learns a second language. A cognitive style refers to the manner in which an individual prefers to process information (Culatta, 2015).
- *Affective characteristics*: these characteristics are related to learners' attitudes and motivation towards learning a second language.
- *Personality characteristics*: it is mentioned that there could be certain personality characteristics "which are helpful and detrimental to successful language learning" (Stern, 1983).

For the purpose of this study, the learners' age and their cognitive characteristics will be discussed from the perspective of their teachers. The learners' age refers to the learners' school-age; the learners who are identified in this study are between the ages of 9 and 11 years old, which is the appropriate school age for learners in Grade 3 and Grade 4.

Learners' cognitive characteristics are presented as they are viewed by their teachers – learners' cognitive characteristics are neither tested nor measured in this study. It has been noted that there is a relationship between learners' cognitive characteristics and their attitudes and motivation towards learning. Barry (2002) explains that if learners are presented with a text that is beyond their cognitive abilities, they are likely to be demotivated and discouraged to carry on engaging with the text. Barry's (2002) work suggests that, if the learner is not on the cognitive level required to learn a new language, she/he is presumably going to struggle and will eventually lose interest in acquiring that particular language.

In this study, learner characteristics also include the learners' language background – what is the learners' mother tongue and which language do learners speak predominantly outside the school environment? The learners' language background refers to the language(s) that they have been exposed to and speak regularly in their community environment and in their home environment.

There is a relationship between learners' language background and the social context since the learners' language background is built from the languages they are exposed to in the various environments of which they form part (Malone, 2012). Therefore, there is a relationship between the social context, learner characteristics and the learning

process. Learner characteristics play a role in determining which learning processes are implemented that will result in achieving the relevant learning outcomes.

3.3.3 Learning conditions

The social context contributes to learning conditions. Stern (1983) proposes that the learner's learning condition also contributes to second language learning. Learning conditions are related to how learners are exposed to second language learning in the classroom; learners could be exposed to the second language in a supportive learning environment, which usually takes place in a natural setting, or they could be exposed to the second language in a non-supportive environment, resulting in instruction being the only major input?

Stern (1983) makes mention of learning conditions, however, for the purpose of this study, learning conditions will be interpreted from the teachers' perspectives. It is important to note that learning conditions cannot be separated from teaching conditions – teaching conditions have an impact on learning conditions and vice versa. It is with this notion – that learning conditions cannot be seen in isolation from teaching conditions – that this study focuses on teaching conditions, as these work harmoniously with learning conditions.

The implementation of the LiEP across South African schools is one of the factors which plays a significant role in the teaching conditions in South Africa, which has had an impact on second language learning in South African schools. The LiEP was discussed in detail in the literature review – Chapter 2. The purpose of discussing it in relation to the conceptual framework is to highlight the role the LiEP plays in the school context and how its implementation affects teaching conditions in the process of learners learning a second language.

Learners in schools across South Africa were previously expected to learn two languages throughout their schooling years – their home language and a first additional language (FAL). However, this policy has recently changed to include a third language – an African language, which will be offered as a second FAL, which learners are expected to take from Grade 1 until Grade 12 (South Africa. DBE, 2013). The implementation of the Incremental Implementation of African Languages (IIAL) policy will have an impact on current teaching conditions as schools will have to make provision for added teaching time, the acquiring of adequate teaching resources, as

well as the training of new or current teachers, who will be teaching the selected African languages (South Africa. DBE, 2013). The schools that participated in this study have not implemented the IIAL and currently have a home language and English as their FAL which, according to the conceptual framework, is the second language that learners need to acquire.

Another major factor contributing to the current teaching conditions in South Africa, more specifically in second language learning, is the availability of resources in schools. Howie et al. (2016) highlighted in a discussion of the PIRLS Literacy and PIRLS 2016 results (as well as the PIRLS results from 2006 and 2011) that the way in which learners are taught can be affected by a lack of resources, in turn affecting their achievements. Letompa (2014) points out that, in the majority of primary schools, a lack of resources and poor infrastructure play a role in poor performance in English. Teachers are not able to facilitate learners without the resources that are needed to present a successful lesson. Consequently, teachers experience teaching a second language slightly frustrating because they feel they can only do the bare minimum for the learners in their classrooms, as a result of a lack of adequate second language resources in their school (Letompa, 2014).

In addition, a lack of resources in the learners' home environment also plays a role in how well a learner develops a second language. According to Van Steensel (2006), learners need to have the relevant resources at home in order to assist with their language development. In agreement, Kotzé, Van der Westhuizen and Barnard (2017) add that, if learners do not have resources within their communities that expose them to the second language, they are deprived of an opportunity to practise using that particular second language.

Lastly, teaching conditions are affected by the amount of time allocated for teaching a second language. The South African curriculum allocates 2–3 hours per week for the teaching of the second language (English) in Grades 1–2 and 3–4 hours in Grade 3 (South Africa. DBE, 2011, p. 8). The amount of time allocated to teaching a second language plays a significant role as it determines the amount of exposure a learner has to the second language in a formal setting. In the time allocated, teachers are expected to adequately cover listening and speaking, reading and phonics, writing and language usage in each week.

3.3.4 Learning process

Stern (1983) suggests that the learning process is determined by the social context, the learning conditions, as well as the specific learner characteristics. The learning process consists of different strategies and techniques used by the learner to learn the second language (Stern,1983). The challenge with the learning process factor is that learners make use of various learning processes, which could have an impact on the efficiency and accuracy in which they learn the second language (McLaughlin, 1987; Ozawa, 1997; Macaro, 2005).

The learning process in this framework is interpreted from the teacher's perspective, meaning that the teacher is responsible for deciding which strategies and techniques he/she uses to develop a learning process which is inclusive of all learners and will ensure that they reach the language learning outcomes. In order for a learning process to be effective, the teacher needs to understand his/her learners and their individual learning characteristics, as well as take into consideration what the teaching conditions in his/her school are (Stern,1983).

3.3.5 Learning outcomes

According to Stern (1983), the learning outcome in the context of this framework, being language proficiency, is considered to be the main objective of second language learning. Considering the abovementioned, all other factors (social context, learner characteristics, learning conditions and the learning process) in this framework contribute to language proficiency.

Stern (1983) further points out that those who are interested in learning a second language – either through formal schooling or in an environment in which the second language dominates – often face similar challenges, namely, "… inadequate knowledge and frequent failure". Stern (1983) places emphasis on the idea that when learning a second language, success should not be the main focus, instead, second language learners should aim for competence and proficiency. In relation to this study, the aim of teaching learners a second language should be to ensure that learners are able to understand and speak the language without making a conscious effort in remembering the language rules (Van der Walt et al., 2012). Their ability to do so contributes to language proficiency, which will allow learners the ability to read and write.

A learner can achieve the second language outcomes through formal instruction or through acquisition. Formal instruction is when a learner is taught a language and emphasis is placed on learning and implementing the correct language structure and rules. Language acquisition refers to "picking up another language almost subconsciously" (Van der Walt et al., 2012, p. 8). Van der Walt et al. (2012) further explain that, once a learner has acquired a language, they are then able to communicate effectively in that particular language without consciously learning the rules of the language through formal instruction.

In a study by Probyn (2001), similar conclusions were made, suggesting that learners did not have the necessary skills to cope with English being their LoLT, after having English as a subject for three years. Consequently, according to Combrinck et al. (2014), the lack of adequate language skills is one of the reasons why learners drop out of school.

For this reason, teachers in the foundation phase should aim at ensuring that when their learners leave at the end of Grade 3, they have reached a high level of competence in the English language, which will become their LoLT in Grade 4 (South Africa. DBE, 2011). Ensuring that learners are highly competent in the English language by the end of Grade 3 should be considered an imperative learning outcome, which could assist learners with the transition to Grade 4, in which English becomes the LoLT.

3.4 SUMMARY

Stern's *Framework for examination of second language learning* was used to point out various factors which play a role in second language learning. In the discussion of the framework, it was highlighted that learning and teaching cannot be seen in isolation and therefore the selected framework is applicable to this study. The chapter briefly discussed the five factors identified by Stern (1983), namely, sociocultural factors, learning characteristics, learning conditions, learning process and learning outcomes. It was concluded that the factors are interrelated and thus all contribute to a learner successfully learning a second language. Although all factors contribute to second language learning, the most important factor in this framework is the sociocultural factor because it forms the basis of this study, considering that teachers' perceptions and attitudes derive from the social context. The following chapter presents a detailed discussion of the selected research design and methodology used to gather and analyse the data in this study.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

"*The value of the case study approach is that it deals directly with the individual case in its actual context*" (Yin, 2016).

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The research in this study comprised focus group interviews, semi-structured interviews and non-participant observations, in order to explore the ways in which teachers experience the transition from learners learning in their mother tongue in the foundation phase to learning in English in Grade 4. The use of focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews assisted in providing in-depth knowledge about the teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards teaching English reading in both the foundation phase and in the intermediate phase, more specifically in Grade 4, and what impact this has on the learners' transition. Additionally, the systematic observations serve as an indication whether or not what the teachers say they practise and experience, correspond with what is actually happening in practice in the classrooms.

This chapter serves to discuss the research design and methodology that was followed in this study. An elaboration on the qualitative research approach – concentrating on focus group interviews, semi-structured interviews and non-participant observations – is presented in this chapter. Furthermore, the research paradigm from which this research was conducted is also included. Information regarding the sample of the study, the data collection strategies and the data analysis used is provided. Lastly, this chapter also aims to highlight the ethical considerations related to the study, as well as the limitations of the study.

4.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

The research approach can be defined as a plan for research which begins with broad assumptions and narrows down to detailed methods of how data will be collected, analysed and interpreted (Creswell, 2014). The research approach followed in this study is qualitative in nature. According to Creswell (2014), the qualitative research approach is suitable for a study such as this one, which aims to explore and understand social and human problems. However, Yin (2016) suggests that qualitative

research cannot simply be defined by one solid definition – the definition, however, identifies five distinct features that distinguish qualitative research from other research approaches. Firstly, qualitative research involves studying the meaning of people's lives, in their real-world roles, meaning that the participants are not expected to change how they go about their daily lives. Participants are expected to proceed with how they would normally live, despite knowing that they are part of a research study. In qualitative research, the researcher aims to understand phenomena within a naturalistic context. Hence, participants are observed in their natural environment and are not expected to behave or respond to questions in a manner that has been predetermined by the researcher (Creswell, 2014; Nieuwenhuis, 2014; Yin, 2016).

Secondly, qualitative research represents the views and perspectives of participants in a study which highlights the importance of the participants' experiences and voice in the study (Yin, 2016). Qualitative research places great emphasis on "seeing through the eyes of the participants", therefore not allowing the researcher's preconceptions to overshadow the participants' expressions of their real-world experiences (Nieuwenhuis, 2014).

Thirdly, Yin (2016) further explains that this research approach aims to explicitly attend to and account for real-world contextual conditions, embracing all contexts of the participants' lives and what impact these have on their experiences and perspectives. Various contextual conditions include the participants' social, institutional, cultural and environmental conditions, which contribute to the authenticity of each participant's reality.

The fourth feature of qualitative research supports the contribution of insights from existing or new concepts that may help explain social behaviour and thinking, suggesting that, through existing or emerging concepts, qualitative research intends to explain social behaviour and thinking (Yin, 2016).

Lastly, qualitative research acknowledges the significance of using multiple sources of evidence rather than relying on a single source.

4.3 PHILOSOPHICAL VIEW

This study is seen from an interpretivist perspective which has its roots in hermeneutics – the study of the theory and practice of interpretation. According to Nieuwenhuis (2014), interpretivism is considered to be a theory of meaning, understanding and literary interpretation. Consequently, the objective of interpretivism is to understand phenomena by aiming to understand and construct meaning of what people say regarding those particular phenomena.

The interpretivist perspective is the most suitable for this study because it supports the idea that individuals develop independent meanings of their own individual experiences and, as a result, their ideas of reality is moulded by those experiences (Creswell, 2014). Therefore, the interpretivist perspective allows for reality to be interpreted through the meaning that the participants give to their lives by interpreting, creating, giving meaning, defining, justifying and rationalising their daily actions (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport, 2011).

The use of structured observations allowed me to step into the participants' world of teaching in order to understand how teachers and learners interpret and interact within their English classroom environment. It is suggested by Nieuwenhuis (2014) that one of the assumptions on which interpretivism is based, is being aware of the fact that human life can only be understood from within (see Figure 4.1). Therefore, it was important for me to go through these daily experiences first-hand with the participants.
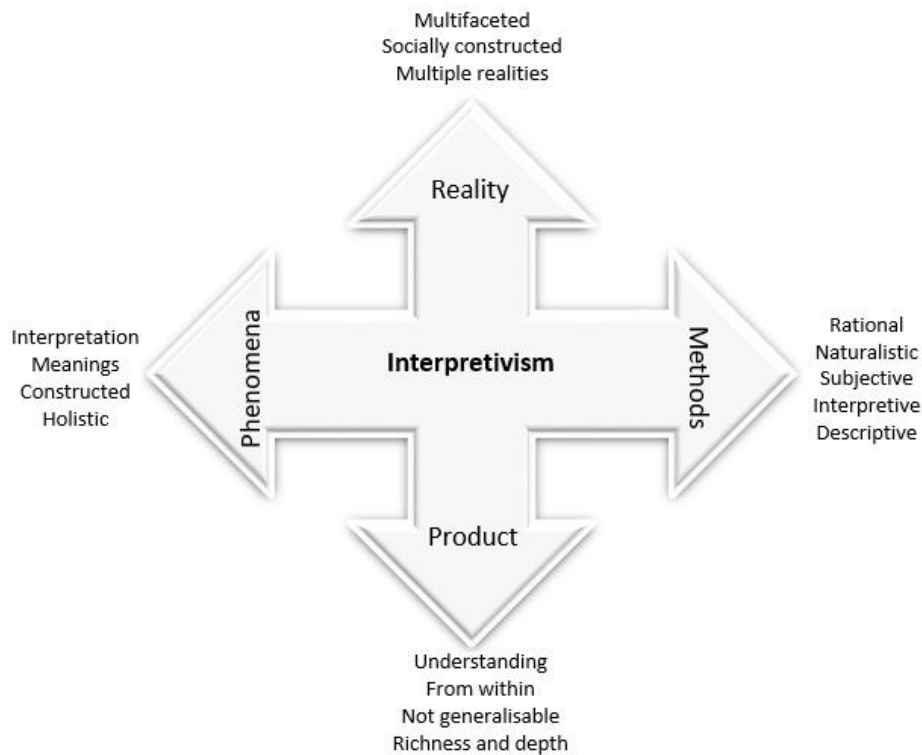
Figure 4.1 Representation of interpretivism (Nieuwenhuis, 2014, p. 61)

Figure 4.1 provides a visual representation of the fundamental aspects that contribute to interpretivism. The illustration shows that interpretivism is not limited to one idea of reality; it allows the researcher to experience and construct multiple realities through individual participants' or a group's social constructs (Nieuwenhuis, 2014). Therefore, the methods used to expose the researcher to these socially constructed realities required the teachers to be in their natural environments and conducting themselves in their most natural way, without any influence from the researcher. The teachers and learners were expected to carry on as they would normally do during their English lessons. The natural setting gave participants an opportunity to share their subjective perspectives during the semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews, ensuring that the participants were very descriptive when sharing their experiences.

The value of the participants giving descriptive responses was in gaining an in-depth understanding about what it is they were experiencing as teachers during their English lessons and the role of various intervention programmes in supporting the implementation of the LiEP in the school. Nieuwenhuis (2014, p. 59) mentions that "by exploring the richness, depth and complexity of phenomena we can begin to develop

a sense of understanding of the meanings imparted by people to phenomena and their social context".

4.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.4.1 Research design: Case study

According to Nieuwenhuis (2014), the research design is the blueprint or strategy which the researcher chooses, based on his/her research assumptions, research skills and research practices. A research design is a type of inquiry within a qualitative, quantitative and mixed-methods approach, which provides the study with an explicit direction to follow in order to collect the relevant data required to answer the proposed research question and sub-questions (Creswell, 2014). In addition, Nieuwenhuis (2014) further mentions that a research design lays the foundation for the specification and selection of participants, the techniques which will be used to collect data and the techniques used for the analysis of the data collected.

This study made use of the case study research design, because it needed to explore ways in which learners in the foundation phase can be assisted with the LoLT transition in Grade 4, which required me to gain in-depth understanding of the experiences and perspectives of teachers teaching those learners. In order to do so, I needed to get as close as possible to my subject of interest, which was achieved through direct observation in the teachers' natural settings (Yin, 2016).

The notion of a case study does not have one single definition; however, various researchers have – through their own individual experiences – provided varying definitions for the case study. However, researchers seem to have found a common denominator which allows one to define case study as "a detailed inquiry into a bounded entity or unit" (Salkind, 2010, p. 115), or "a systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events" (Nieuwenhuis, 2014, p. 75). The researcher's intention is "examining a relevant issue or reveal phenomena through the process of examining the entity within its social and cultural context" (Salkind, 2010, p. 115), and to "describe and explain the phenomena of interest" (Nieuwenhuis, 2014, p. 75). Furthermore, Nieuwenhuis (2014) explains that, from an interpretivist perspective, a case study's typical characteristic is that it "strives towards a comprehensive (holistic)

understanding of how participants relate and interact with each other in a specific situation and how they make meaning of a phenomenon under study".

The rationale for using the case study research design was to focus on a group of individuals and seek to understand their perceptions through the collection of rich and vivid descriptions of their experiences relevant to the case (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). This design assisted in gaining in-depth answers regarding the 'why' and 'how' questions. Case study research allows for a multiple perspective analysis, which means that I was able to interact and collect data from a number of different teachers that are affected by the LiEP, as well as those affected by the transition of learners from the foundation phase to Grade 4 – not merely one or two teachers – allowing for more voices to be heard, which is the impact aspect of a case study (Nieuwenhuis, 2014).

Case study research takes the researcher out of the equation in the sense that the researcher has little to no control over the behaviour and responses of the participants. All the data collection took place in the participants' natural setting; thus, the researcher could not manipulate the participants' behaviour. This design allows the researcher to make use of multiple data collection methods. In this study, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, as well as observations in classrooms of both the foundation phase as well as the intermediate phase (Grade 4 only) were used (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013).

4.5 THE RESEARCH PROCESS

4.5.1 Focus group interviews

This study made use of focus group interviews (Appendix A) which can be defined as "a form of data collection whereby the researcher convenes a small group of people having similar attributes, experiences, or focus and leads the group in a nondirective manner" (Yin, 2016). A focus group does not resemble a typical question-and-answer interview where the researcher poses a question and someone in the group responds with a direct answer to that question; focus groups are centred around interaction within a group in which the researcher poses a question and the participants respond collectively through a discussion among themselves, with the researcher playing the role of 'moderator' (Salkind, 2010; Cohen et al., 2011; Nieuwenhuis, 2014). This

method of data collection allows for the participants' perspectives to emerge rather than the researcher leading the participants in a direction which supports his/her personal agenda. Accordingly, Yin (2016) proposes that the objective of focus group interviews is to highlight the perspectives and views of the participants in the study rather than that of the researcher, suggesting that the researcher must have minimal influence on the group, therefore the researcher is referred to as the moderator. Consequently, Nieuwenhuis (2014) emphasises that allowing the participants to direct the conversation facilitates the collection of data which is rich in detail.

In addition, it should be noted that focus group interviews are dependent on group interaction. All participants are encouraged to share their views and opinions and through this process the participants may activate other thoughts and experiences within the group, which certain participants perhaps may have forgotten, thus resulting in the collection of a wider range of responses in comparison with individual interviews (Salkind, 2010; Nieuwenhuis, 2014). Focus group interviews allow for participants to feel more comfortable sharing and defending their opinions and experiences within the group, as they do not feel intimidated by the researcher (Nieuwenhuis, 2014).

According to Cohen et al. (2011), focus group interviews are useful for gathering data on attitudes, values and opinions. Therefore, focus group interviews were the most suitable method of collecting data because the study aimed to collect information which would reflect the experiences, attitudes and perspectives of teachers teaching English in the foundation phase, as well as those that teach learners in their transitional phase, more specifically Grade 4.

4.5.2 Semi-structured interviews

Together with focus group interviews, the researcher made use of semi-structured interviews, which can be defined as a two-way conversation between the researcher and the participant in which the researcher asks the participant questions from a list of predetermined questions, to which the participant is expected to respond with an answer he/she sees fit (Nieuwenhuis, 2014). Unlike the structured interview, Nieuwenhuis (2014) points out that a semi-structured interview makes provision for the researcher to ask the participant follow-up questions based on the participant's response, however, a list of predetermined questions is established to prevent the researcher from deviating from the topic at hand. The interview schedule is included

in Appendix B. The semi-structured interviews were used to engage privately with the two teachers whose lessons were being observed, in order to corroborate the data that the teachers presented as individuals, to see whether or not what they said matched with their actual teaching practices in the classroom.

4.5.3 Systematic observations

Yin (2016) suggests that observations are considered a form of primary data – data collected directly from the participants. In this case, the data were collected directly from the teachers' classrooms and were not based on reported information. Collecting data this way ensured that the data were not filtered.

It is imperative that the researcher outlines what he/she is looking for during the observations – there must be a clear focus and purpose when making that observation (Nieuwenhuis, 2014). Systematic observational studies allow the researcher to make use of a predesigned observational instrument, known as an observation schedule (Cohen et al., 2011; Yin, 2016). I used an observation schedule (included as Appendix C) on which to make notes and comments regarding specific behaviours that I focused on and identified in the classroom. In this study, the observations were conducted in the English reading lesson of the Grade 2 and 3 teachers and in the English lesson of the Grade 4 teacher.

4.6 SAMPLING AND SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

4.6.1 Site selection

The sites for this study were selected on the notion that qualitative research studies take place in a naturalistic context, meaning that the participants should be in an environment with which they are familiar (Creswell, 2014; Nieuwenhuis, 2014). In the case of this study, the research sites were the schools in which the teachers were teaching at the time. The two schools were purposefully selected as they matched the criteria (see Figure 4.2). The two schools that were selected are public schools situated in two townships in Pretoria. One of the schools (School A) is situated in Olievenhoutbosch, a township in Centurion, which is on the outskirts of Pretoria. The second school (School B) is in Mamelodi – a township in the northeast of Pretoria, which falls under the Tshwane district (D4) in the Gauteng Province.
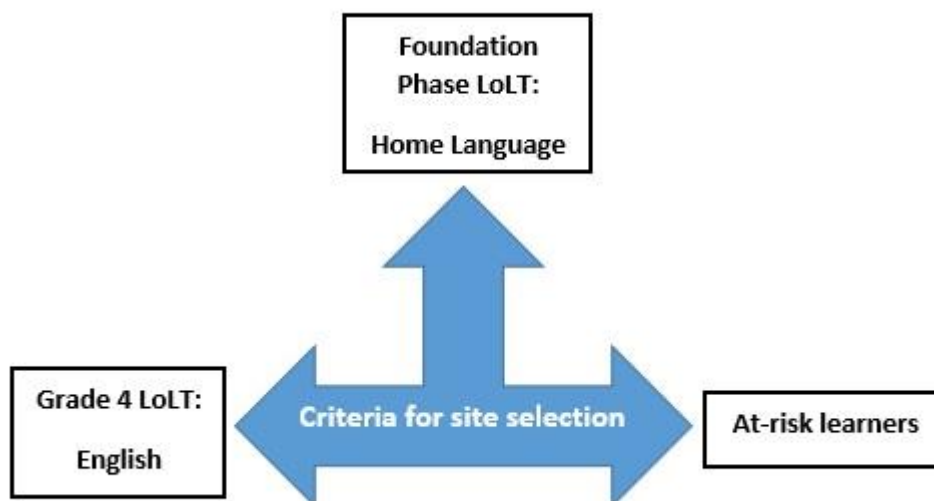
Figure 4.2. Criteria for site selection

The LoLT in the foundation phase (Grades 1–3) in School A is Sepedi and in School B isiZulu. Learners in the foundation phase in both schools have four subjects – HL (either Sepedi/isiZulu), FAL (English), mathematics and life skills – of which three out of the four are taught in the school's home language (English being the exception). Once learners have completed Grade 3, they then move on to Grade 4 where their LoLT becomes English. This progress to Grade 4 means that all the subjects that the learners are taught are presented in English only. Lastly, both schools comprise at-risk learners – learners who are from academically, socially and economically disadvantaged communities. The communities are characterised by poverty, unemployment, absent parents and a lack of resources.

4.6.2 Selection of participants for this study

The participants that took part in this study were purposefully selected because they possessed some features which were of interest to the study (Silverman, 2014). Cohen et al. (2011) point out that purposive sampling allows the researcher to choose the participants for a study, based on the researcher's specific needs. In addition, Yin (2016) mentions that participants who have been purposefully selected are intended to be information-rich sources, meaning they can provide relevant and profound data regarding the topic of the study.
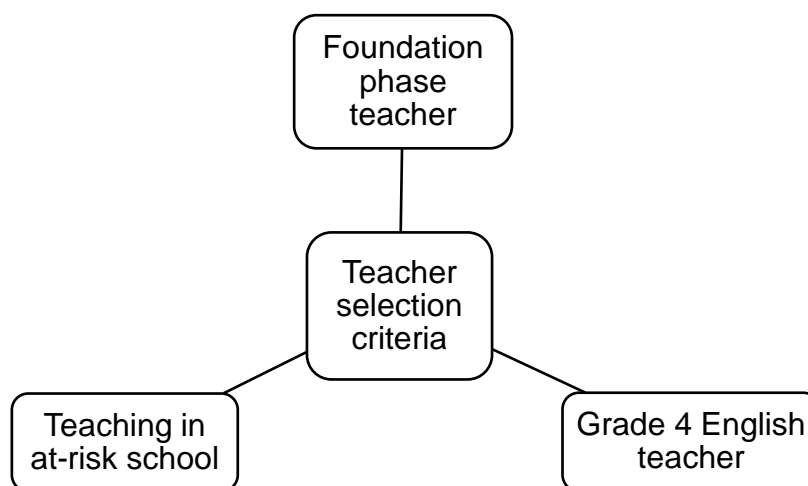
Figure 4.3 Teacher selection criteria

As illustrated in Figure 4.3, for this study, the teachers had to be foundation phase and Grade 4 teachers teaching in a school with at-risk learners, whose LoLT in the foundation phase differs from that in Grade 4 (English). This type of sample is chosen for a particular reason: the teachers chosen are the ones currently experiencing the transition with Grade 4 learners or preparing learners for the transition. The schools that were chosen consisted of only female teachers in the foundation phase and the Grade 4 English teacher was also female. The number of participants per data collection method is indicated in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Summary of sample

Sample – School A					
Data collection method	Focus group interview 1	Focus group interview 2	Classroom observations 1	Classroom observations 2	Semi-structured interviews
No. of participants	7/13	3/13	1 teacher 42 learners	N/A	N/A
Teaching phase of participants	Foundation phase (Grades 1–3)	Foundation phase (Grades 1–3)	Foundation phase (Grade 2)	N/A	N/A
Sample – School B					
Data collection method	Focus group interview 1	Focus group interview 2	Classroom observations 1	Classroom observations 2	Semi-structured interviews
No. of participants	4/4	4/4	1 teacher 40–45 learners	1 teacher 40–45 learners 1 teacher 40–45 learners	2/4
Teaching phase of participants	Foundation phase (Grades 1–3)	Foundation phase (Grades 1–3)	Foundation phase (Grade 3)	Foundation phase (Grade 3) Intermediate phase (Grade 4 English)	Foundation phase (Grade 3) and Intermediate phase (Grade 4)
Total no. of participants				**11**	

Table 4.1 displays a summary of the sample that was selected for this study. School A had a total of 13 teachers in the foundation phase; five Grade 1 teachers, three Grade 2 teachers and five Grade 3 teachers. However, due to various reasons, the focus group consisted of seven teachers out of thirteen, and the second focus group consisted of three teachers out of thirteen. Only one observation was conducted in

School A, which was a Grade 2 reading lesson with approximately 42 learners in the classroom.

School B is a much smaller school in comparison to School A. There are two teachers per grade in the foundation phase. The sample which participated in the focus group interviews consisted of two Grade 1 teachers, a Grade 2 teacher, a Grade 3 teacher and the Grade 4 English teacher. The classroom observations were conducted twice with the same Grade 3 teacher in different English reading lessons and one classroom observation was conducted with the Grade 4 teacher during the English lesson. Once again, both lessons consisted of one teacher and approximately 40–45 learners. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with the two teachers whose lessons were observed. Overall, the total number of participants was eleven: ten being foundation phase teachers and one being a Grade 4 English teacher.

4.7 DATA ANALYSIS

> *"Qualitative data analysis tends to be an ongoing and non-linear process, implying that data collection, processing, analysis and reporting are intertwined, and not merely a number of successive steps"* (Nieuwenhuis, 2014, p. 100).

However, as a novice researcher, having a guideline or steps to follow made the data analysis process much easier. The steps ensured that the analysing of data was carried out in a manner that did not leave chunks of information outside of the presentation of results.
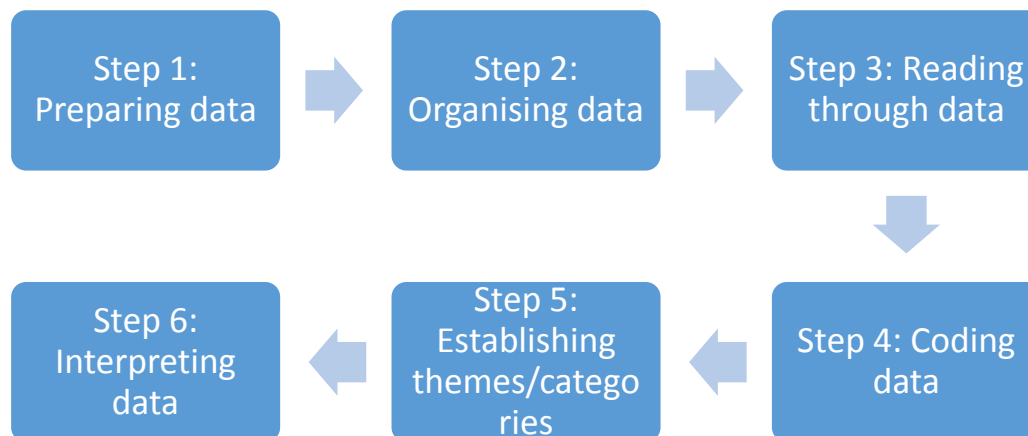
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┌─────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────┐
│    Step 1:      │ ──▷  │    Step 2:      │ ──▷  │ Step 3: Reading │
│  Preparing data │      │ Organising data │      │  through data   │
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                                                            │
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│    Step 6:      │      │    Step 5:      │      │                 │
│  Interpreting   │ ◁──  │  Establishing   │ ◁──  │ Step 4: Coding  │
│     data        │      │ themes/catego   │      │     data        │
│                 │      │     ries        │      │                 │
└─────────────────┘      └─────────────────┘      └─────────────────┘
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Figure 4.4 Steps used in data analysis

The steps illustrated in Figure 4.4 were used to analyse the data collected from the focus group interviews, semi-structured interviews, as well as from the observations. Firstly, I had to prepare the data by ensuring that all the information gathered during the focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews was transcribed as accurately as possible. The transcripts had to be typed verbatim to capture what each participant and the researcher mentioned during the interviews.

The classroom observations were handled in a similar manner as the interviews, however, the data collected from the classroom observations did not include transcripts. The comments made on the observation sheet were used in a similar manner as the transcripts. To ensure accuracy, the transcripts as well as the field notes from the classroom observations were handled by me (Nieuwenhuis, 2014).

Secondly, once the data were prepared and the transcripts were ready, it then had to be organised in such a way that it could be used effectively to make an analysis. This step required the arrangement of data into different types, based on the source of the information (Creswell 2014). Therefore, I had to separate the transcripts from the observation sheets – in this case keeping the foundation phase and Grade 4 observation sheets separate. Nieuwenhuis (2014) suggests that, allocating each participant with a pseudonym (teacher a, teacher b, etc), will make handling the large volume of information slightly more manageable.

Once the data had been prepared and organised, I then had to read through the data (step 3). In order for me to make a good analysis and interpretation of the data collected, I had to familiarise myself with the data, which meant that I had to read and reread the transcripts and listen to the audio recordings repeatedly. Creswell (2014) and Nieuwenhuis (2014) indicate that in this step, researchers can start processing the data as they familiarise themselves with it – they can write down their general thoughts and impressions as they move along the transcripts.

The fourth step is coding, which "is the process of reading carefully through your transcribed data, line by line, and dividing it into meaningful analytical units … marking the segments of data with symbols, descriptive words or unique identifying names" (Nieuwenhuis, 2014, p. 105). Coding can either be done manually or with the use of computer programs. According to Yin (2016), the process of coding allows the researcher to start making meaning of the data and enable the researcher to start thinking on "a slightly higher conceptual level". I preferred to code the data manually, which allowed me to interact with the data and gain more insight on the data collected, simultaneously facilitating the identification of themes and sub-themes.

Coding results in the establishment of categories/themes through organising and combining related codes (Nieuwenhuis, 2014). The themes recognised bring the major findings in the data collection process to the surface – these are what I used to create the headings in the findings section of my study (Creswell, 2014). It was important to verify the categories by rereading the initial transcripts to ensure that I did not leave out any essentials and that I did not deviate from what the participants were actually saying. The categories also had to be organised in such a way that it shows how they are interconnected.

Lastly, the data were interpreted – the process of making sense of the data and drawing conclusions from the data collected. Interpreting the data meant that I had to take the data which I had analysed and apply it to the "context with existing theory to reveal how it corroborates existing knowledge or brings new understanding to the body of knowledge" (Nieuwenhuis, 2014, p. 111). Interpretation of data leads to the drawing of findings and conclusions, which in a qualitative study cannot be generalised to a broader audience.

4.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

"When we report our observations or interviews, it is common-sense to protect the identities of the people we have researched and to ensure that they understand and consent to our research" (Silverman, 2014, p. 145).

The study was conducted according to the ethical guidelines of the University of Pretoria (University of Pretoria. Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education, 2008). An ethics application to conduct research in the selected schools in Pretoria was submitted to the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) as well as the University of Pretoria, Faculty of Education Ethics Committee.

Permission was requested from the schools' principals via a consent letter (Appendix D), which invited the staff to participate in the study, to which permission was granted to carry out the study in each respective school. The participants each received an informed consent letter (Appendix E), which clearly highlighted their rights as participants in this study, what they would be involved in and why, which they all signed in agreement. The consent letter stated the aims and objectives of the study, also making mention of the fact that their participation was voluntary and that, if at any point they felt they did not want to be a part of the study, they were more than welcome to withdraw without any repercussions.

The ethical concept related to volunteerism and the opportunity to withdrew from the study at any point, resulted in one of the schools withdrawing from the study thus limiting the number of participants by the end of the study. The withdrawal of school B halfway through the study was frustrating as the limited number of participants had a negative effect on the data obtained from Grade 4 English teachers regarding their perceptions and experiences with the transition of Grade 4 learners. Their withdrawal resulted in having one Grade 4 English teacher participating in the study which did not allow for a broader understanding of these perceptions and experiences.

During the focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews with the teachers, I presented the teachers with the letter of consent and also read and explained it to them. The teachers were asked once again whether they were willing to participate in the study. The participants' right to privacy and confidentiality was maintained at all times. No participants' names were mentioned in the dissemination of information; pseudonyms were used instead of participants' names, as well as the schools' names.

All folders in which the data collected (audio recordings, transcripts and observation sheets) are stored, are password protected and therefore can only be accessed by me and my supervisor. Raw data collected throughout the study will not be made available to anyone outside the study at any point.

Consequently, all participants were treated equally, with respect and dignity. Participants did not experience any form of deception or intimidation. Once the study had been concluded, the participants and the principals were given a brief summary of the findings obtained in the study.

4.9 CREDIBILITY, VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Creswell (2014) defines qualitative validity as a method that the researcher applies to check for the accuracy of the findings obtained in the study. Winter (as cited in Cohen et al., 2011, p. 179) mentions that validity in qualitative research should be focused on honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data collected, the participants' approach, the extent of triangulation and the objectiveness of the researcher. Additionally, Creswell (2014) recommends the use of multiple strategies to check and measure validity. Table 4.2 presents the strategies chosen to check and measure validity for this study, which include triangulation, member checking, and rich and thick descriptions.

Table 4.2 Strategies to check and measure validity in this study

Primary strategy	Explanation
Triangulation	Qualitative approach Multiple data collection methods • Focus group interviews and structured observations. Fixed point/hypothesis • Accepted/rejected by triangulation.
Crystallisation	Qualitative approach Multiple data collection and data analysis techniques • Focus group interviews, semi-structured interviews and systematic observations. Multiple realities • Various emerging themes and patterns.
Member checking	Respondent validation • Findings taken back to participants. • Correct factual errors. • Determine accuracy of themes.
Rich, thick descriptions	Vivid description of setting Share the experience Multiple perspectives of themes

The process of triangulation at times requires the researcher to make a comparison of various kinds of research (quantitative and qualitative), as well as multiple data collection methods (Cohen et al., 2011; Silverman, 2014; Creswell, 2014), as was done in this study. Although I followed a qualitative research approach, I combined focus group interviews, semi-structured interviews and systematic observations in order to note whether there was a correlation between the three. Richardson (as cited in Maree, 2014) points out that triangulation is most suitable for a quantitative study that requires the researcher to assume a fixed point or develop a hypothesis, which can either be accepted or rejected through triangulation.

Although Maree and van der Westhuizen (2014) concur with the fact that triangulation is a traditional way of ensuring validity and reliability in research, they however argue that the term 'triangulation' is not appropriate for a qualitative study and that it should be 'replaced' with the term *crystallisation.* Crystallisation requires the researcher to see and understand multiple facets of the results obtained, instead of focusing on one

fixed result. Nieuwenhuis (2014, p. 81) goes on to state that "crystallisation therefore provides us with a complex and deeper understanding of the phenomenon". In essence, crystallisation required of me to make use of various data gathering and data analysis techniques, which would result in a presentation of a reinterpreted understanding of the phenomenon. It also meant that the various themes and patterns had to be consistent throughout the study, as crystallisation can be achieved through ensuring that readers of the findings in the study can identify the emerging patterns which crystallise from the data.

Member checking, also familiarly known as respondent validation, is when the researcher takes back parts of the findings to the participants to see whether or not the information that was deduced from the transcripts corresponds with what the participants had initially said. It was therefore the responsibility of the researcher to go back to the participants once the various themes had been identified, in order for the participants to correct factual errors, to clarify certain remarks and to determine the accuracy of the themes discovered from their focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews (Cohen et al., 2011; Silverman, 2014; Creswell, 2014).

Lastly, Creswell (2014) suggests that using rich and thick descriptions when presenting the findings in the study contributes to its validity. As a researcher I had to use clear and vivid descriptions of the setting in order for the reader to be able to visualise the context in which data were collected. Producing a vivid image of the context brings the selected site and sample to the reader and it thus becomes a shared experience. It is also crucial to provide multiple perspectives of the themes identified in the effort of making it relatable to potential readers. I had to ensure that the reader is able to follow the journey and feel as though they were a part of the study and that there are certain themes that they could relate to, resulting in the study becoming more realistic and thus valid and credible.

4.10 THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

In qualitative research, the researcher is considered to be a major research instrument due to the fact that everything presented is seen through the researcher's research lens. Direct observation and interaction with the participants in their environments are experienced first-hand by the researcher and such experiences cannot be measured

by external instruments (Yin, 2016). Therefore, those who are exposed to the final study are reliant on the inferences made by the researcher while the latter is out in the field, observing behaviour and conversing with the participants (Yin, 2016).

Therefore, my role as a researcher required me to collect data. For that purpose, I had to organise focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews, meaning that I had to put together a list of questions that would carry the discussion for the allocated time, whilst still collecting data that are relevant and rich in information. However, it was important for me to remember, while setting up these questions, that some other questions would arise from the discussion, based on how the teachers respond to the opening question.

My other role as a researcher was that of facilitating the focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews. Facilitating these interviews included asking the predetermined questions, listening attentively to the participants and asking follow-up questions, based on their responses and, lastly, ensuring that all participants who participated in the focus group interviews contributed effectively to the discussion and did not feel intimidated or restricted by their colleagues – encouraging them to share their experiences openly and honestly. The recordings taken during the focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews needed to be transcribed.

As a researcher, I also had to do classroom observations with three of the teachers; two Grade 3 teachers and one Grade 4 teacher. I made use of an observation sheet to guide my observations. I observed the teachers during their English lessons and indicated on the observation sheet the things they did or did not do, either before reading, during reading or after reading.

The process of collecting data in a qualitative study can result in subjectivity by the researcher. Hence, I constantly had to remind myself to remain as objective as possible when asking questions. During the process of collecting data, it was important to note that my role as a teacher had to remain in the background. Therefore, I could not react nor respond in a manner that a teacher naturally would. I had to play the role of a researcher, which meant that my sole purpose was to gather information. Naturally, when coming into a study, one has preconceived ideas and views and thus I had to ensure that it did not hinder my ability to collect data that are representative of the participants, their experiences and their perspectives.

Lastly, I had to analyse the data which I had collected. The process of analysing data included coding the data, identifying recurring themes, structuring the analysed data, interpreting the data and lastly ensuring trustworthiness. This process required the same type of objectivity as that applied when collecting data. I had to analyse the data for what it was and not look for what I wanted to deduce from the data.

4.11 SUMMARY

In this chapter I discussed the research approach which was implemented in this study, followed by an outline of the philosophical view of the study. I then highlighted the research design and research process that was followed and which research instruments were used to collect the data. This description was followed by an outline about how I went about analysing the collected data – the steps that I followed to interpret the data, which will lead to the development and construction of results, findings and interpretations. I also detailed the ethical considerations that had to be followed during data collection. This chapter also highlighted my role as a researcher in ensuring objectivity as far as possible during data collection, with the purpose to report as true a reflection as possible of the teachers' experiences.

CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to explore ways in which at-risk learners in the foundation phase, whose LoLT is not English, can be assisted with the transition from their current LoLT to Grade 4, where English becomes their LoLT. By gaining an understanding of various practices, beliefs and policies that currently guide the transition, methods to assist with the transition could emerge from the data gathered.

This research study made use of case study research which is a "systematic inquiry into an event … which aims to describe and explain the phenomenon of interest" (Maree, 2014, p. 75). Focus group interviews, semi-structured interviews and observations were used to collect the qualitative data needed to address the research question and sub-questions. The research sub-questions were used to design the interview schedule for the semi-structured interviews. The data were organised and coded and then themes were identified, based on the information that emerged from the data.

In this chapter, an analysis and interpretation of the data collected, using the abovementioned data collection methods, are presented under the emerging themes. Before highlighting the emerging themes, background information pertaining to the relevant schools selected for the study is presented in the following section.

5.2 BACKGROUND OF SELECTED SCHOOLS

A brief background of the selected schools is provided in order to give context to the data collected. According to Maree (2014), it is imperative to understand the context in which the study was done, as understanding the context will contribute to a better understanding of the perceptions and realities of the participants' rendering of their individual environments. Information pertaining to the background was gathered through focus group interviews, semi-structured interviews and field notes taken during observations.

Table 5.1 provides a summary of the background of the two selected schools, referred to as School A and School B.

Table 5.1 Background of selected schools

School	Location	LoLT – Foundation Phase	LoLT – Grade 4
School A	Township	Sepedi	English
School B	Township	IsiZulu	English

SCHOOL A

The school is situated in a township in Centurion, which is on the outskirts of the City of Tshwane. The school shares its premises with the high school, separated by a gate which is inside the school. The primary school is well barricaded, which does not allow for easy access by community members during school hours. Through observations, the area around the school and the school itself appeared clean and well looked after. However, the premises appear to be small for the number of learners in the school. The school does not have a typical school building image, instead the school is made up of what is known as 'container classrooms' which the government has used as a cheaper alternative to increase the number of schools or classrooms in a school. The container classrooms are made of marine-grade shipping containers – these are considered to be uncomfortable as they are extremely hot in summer and freezing cold in winter.

The challenge with the shipping containers is that they are not entirely soundproof and thus noise from the surrounding classrooms can easily be heard in each container. The school caters for learners from Grade R up to Grade 7. The school is very noisy because the premises are small and everyone seems to be in one block (containers are not spaced out).

The staff is made up of a mix of both young and old teachers, who are all black South Africans. Although the school is considered to be an English-medium school, teachers and learners could be heard speaking in a variety of African languages – mainly isiZulu, Setswana and Sepedi.

The LoLT in this school is Sepedi for the foundation phase (Grades R–3) and English for the intermediate phase (Grades 4–6) and senior phase (Grade 7). Sepedi and

English are, however, not mother-tongue languages for some of the learners and teachers in this school. The school also has learners who come from outside the country, mainly from Zimbabwe and Lesotho. Despite the fact that the languages used in this school are second or third languages for some learners, they are still expected to comply with the school's language policy.

SCHOOL B

The school is situated deep inside a busy township in a sub-district of Tshwane. Entry into the school is monitored by a security guard who opens and closes the gate for any persons entering the school grounds. This security measure is due to high criminal activity in the area. Despite the activity in the township, the school maintains discipline within its gates. The school grounds and buildings are well taken care of. The school caters for learners from Grade R to Grade 7, and all classes in each grade have decent classrooms that can accommodate the allocated number of learners per class, without a shortage of desks or chairs.

The staff is balanced with young and older teachers. The principal and teachers are equally accountable for learner discipline, as a result, classes start on time, thus making the schooling environment conducive for learning. However, due to the large number of learners in the classrooms, noise levels are difficult to control. Consequently, staff members are expected to move from class to class to teach their individual subjects.

The LoLT in this school is isiZulu for the foundation phase (Grades R–3) and English for the intermediate phase (Grades 4–6) and senior phase (Grade 7). Although both these languages are not mother-tongue languages for the majority of learners in the school (some learners come from Mozambique and Zimbabwe, but reside in that particular township), they are all expected to learn in the selected languages.

School B is considered to be an English-medium school; however, teachers and learners could be heard speaking in other South African languages such as isiZulu and Setswana, outside and inside the classroom.

5.3 THEMES EMERGING FROM THE DATA

In this section, Table 5.2 presents the research questions together with the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data, which are related to the research questions and the conceptual framework.

Table 5.2 Research questions and themes linked to the conceptual framework

Research questions	Theme and sub-themes	Conceptual framework	Data source
What are foundation phase teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards teaching English reading?	*Theme 1: English as a LoLT* 1. Teachers' perceptions. 2. Learners' perceptions as viewed by the teacher. 3. Parents' perceptions as viewed by the teacher. *Theme 3: Addressing language problems* 1. Teacher and learner language backgrounds.	Teacher perceptions. Social context. Learner characteristics.	Observations. Focus group interviews. Semi-structured interviews.
To what extent do teachers view intervention programmes as adequately addressing language problems?	*Theme 2: Language policy vs teaching practices* 2. Impediments. 3. Curriculum's impact on teaching practices. *Theme 3: Addressing language problems* 2. Current Interventions.	Teaching conditions. Learning process.	Focus group interviews. Semi-structured interviews.
What are the implications of the language in education policy for teacher practice in classrooms?	*Theme 2: Language policy vs teaching practices* 1. Criticism of the language policy. 2. Impediments. 3. Curriculum's impact on teaching practices.	Teaching conditions. Learning process. Learning outcomes.	Observations. Focus group interviews. Semi-structured interviews

5.3.1 THEME 1: English as a LoLT

One of the prevalent themes to emerge from the data is that of English as a LoLT. The theme addresses the perceptions and experiences of teachers, learners and parents regarding English as a LoLT. This theme highlights the role that individual perceptions of teachers, learners and parents plays in the way in which learning English takes place in and outside the classroom. The sub-themes include the teachers' perceptions, learners' perceptions and parents' perceptions, as viewed by the teachers.

Sub-theme: Teachers' perceptions

According to Lenyai (2011), as supported by Myers-Scotton (2006, p. 9), Pence and Justice (2008, p. 304-313) and Schmitt (2008), it is imperative that teachers who are assigned with the task of teaching English, especially to learners in the foundation phase, understand the reasoning behind why learners are being taught English literacy. With that said, it is important to draw attention to the perceptions of teachers who are teaching English literacy to learners in the foundation phase and those teaching Grade 4 learners, which affect the manner in which they teach literacy in their classrooms.

When teachers were asked whether or not they enjoyed teaching English, more specifically English reading, a large majority of them indicated that they did enjoy teaching the language. A general consensus was shared among the younger teachers, that when they came across 'English/reading' on their timetables, there was a feeling of excitement. It could easily be concluded that this excitement was as a result of the fact that they felt comfortable and confident speaking the English language. Teachers were in agreement that part of the reason why they enjoy teaching English is because teaching their learners how to read in English is 'for their own advantage', as it exposes them to a world of knowledge.

Teachers were then asked if they felt that it was important for learners in the foundation phase to learn English and, once again, they all agreed. A teacher from School B summarised what the other teachers said by stating that, in her opinion,

> *"It is very important. First thing for communication and second thing for educational purposes."* She also pointed out that *"… most newspapers are written in English; most books are written in English …"*

Another teacher from School B mentioned that learning English in the foundation phase was also important for the transition from the home language being the LoLT in the foundation phase, to English becoming the LoLT from Grade 4:

> *"Yes, it is, especially when they get to Grade 4. There's a language shift. Suddenly they have to do every single subject in English, so without a basic foundation, they lose it when they get to Grade 4."*

However, a young teacher from School B commented that, although she had positive feelings regarding English reading, it was not significantly important in the foundation phase, "… the emphasis should be on the Zulu and the English not so much … So, it is 50/50". She felt that the learners were more comfortable learning in isiZulu since learning in isiZulu is considered more beneficial to the learners because "English sometimes confuses the learners a bit".

Despite the overall enthusiasm of the younger teachers, there was an attitude of slight indifference among the older teachers. The indifference was noted by their hesitance in answering the questions about how they felt about teaching English reading and the importance thereof, allowing the younger teachers to respond to those two questions. This observation is supported by the response given by one of the older teachers in School A regarding their understanding of reading comprehensions: "… it's just a short story …". This type of attitude could affect learners in a negative manner, as they will fail to comprehend the importance of ensuring that they learn not just how to read but how to read every text with understanding.

A teacher in School B added that the challenge is not only in the English lessons, but also in other subjects such as social science and mathematics. She stated that teachers did not encourage learners to speak English, nor did they ensure that they were using the correct terminology and grammatical terms. Teachers have reached a point where they are celebrating 'small victories' such as the learner being able to answer a question, despite the fact that their spelling and grammar are both incorrect. The teacher felt that her colleagues were of the opinion that it is only the English teacher's responsibility to ensure that learners are speaking and writing accordingly.

Sub-theme: Learners' perceptions as viewed by teachers

Teachers spend a significant amount of time with learners and thus the learners' perceptions regarding English as a LoLT, and also regarding English reading, could be deciphered through the lens of the teachers. In spite of the teachers' excitement towards English as a LoLT and the teaching of reading, learners usually do not entirely share the same sentiment. The teachers in both schools pointed out that learners enjoyed the reading lessons because they enjoyed listening to the teacher reading the stories to them. However, one of the teachers in School B noted that the learners seemed to enjoy the reading lessons because they saw it as "… playtime in[a] way because we are not writing. So, it's like we are reading for fun …".

As a consequence, according to the information gathered from teachers, learners come across as not particularly enjoying speaking or writing in English. A teacher in School B made mention of the fact that, through observation she had noted that her learners often felt frustrated during English lessons because they struggled with writing the language. The learners in her class can read but when it comes to writing "… they can't put the words together". This observation was supported by one of the teachers in School A who stated that her learners often lost interest when they had finished reading the story and learners were then required to write.

Learners are also not interested in speaking English because a teacher in School B mentioned that during the English period she usually encourages her learners to speak English, but they insist on speaking isiZulu. Similarly, one of the other teachers in School B stated that English confuses the learners, therefore they are more comfortable speaking isiZulu. Another teacher in School B described an experience she had with a learner in her class:

> "I had a learner in my class, every day, why don't we do circle time? Because circle time was right after English, to say what did you learn. She would start crying before we even get to her. I would say 'circle time, what did you learn?' she would already be crying. So, they will have to sit down and listen word for word. So, they ended up not enjoying because it was torture for them."

The opinions of the teacher in School B are corroborated in the classroom observation during one of the Grade 3 lessons, where the teacher in School B was presenting a

lesson on phonics. The learners were expected to identify words that start with the letter 'b', however, doing so proved to be a challenge for the majority of the class. In a classroom of 40 learners, there were only five learners who were actively participating in the lesson; even after the teacher tried to encourage the rest of the class to participate, the remaining 35 learners sat quietly and did not contribute to the lesson.

Through the classroom observations it can be concluded that perhaps the learners enjoy reading more than they do speaking and writing. In the second classroom observation with the Grade 3 teacher in School B, the learners seemed more enthusiastic. The learners took turns reading the pages of the story with a number of learners volunteering to read, which is contradictory to the phonics lessons in which learners had to speak and instead opted to sit quietly. Interestingly, learners in this classroom were able to assist or correct the learners who were reading when they mispronounced a word.

In contrast, a teacher in School A brought up the fact that her learners are generally excited for the English lesson to start because that is the only opportunity they have to speak English in class, since most of the time they speak Sepedi. However, the classroom observation in School A with the Grade 2 teacher illustrated otherwise. When learners were given an opportunity to share their opinions on the story they had just read, they merely said the story was 'nice' without elaborating as to why they thought so.

In addition, the Grade 4 English teacher in School B mentioned that the learners usually enjoy reading lessons because they enjoy listening to the teacher reading. During her classroom observation the learners showed a lot of excitement at the idea of reading a story. Similar to the Grade 3 lesson, the Grade 4 learners volunteered to read the story with each learner getting an opportunity to read. The learners showed a lot of enthusiasm and excitement. Once again, learners and the teacher assisted a learner who struggled with a difficult word or with the mispronunciation of a word. However, not all the learners were willing to help, as a lot of the confident readers became impatient with the learners who were struggling to read. Despite the frustration of the other learners, the teacher encouraged the learners who struggled to keep reading.

Sub-theme: Parents' perceptions as viewed by teachers

Although research by Ball (2011), Evans and Cleghorn (2014) and Heugh (2000) indicates that parents and caregivers, whose children are in their early stages of schooling, prefer their children to be taught in English from Grade1, due to the educational and future opportunities in the corporate sector their children will gain access to, parents from School B represent a fraction of those parents who do not see the importance of having English in the foundation phase – this evidence presents itself in the teachers' interviews.

When teachers were asked to comment on whether or not they perceived the attitudes of parents to reflect the importance of learning English in the foundation phase, there were contradictory responses. Two teachers stated that, although parents did not entirely understand "… why we are doing this in school still … they feel it is very important to learn English". On the contrary, another teacher mentioned that "… parents feel that they should learn home language and they don't care, it doesn't matter to them …". The same teacher mentioned that in her previous school parents were also not open to English as a LoLT and felt that their children were already speaking too much English, therefore they needed to focus on their home language. The teacher quoted a sentiment shared by the majority of parents:

> *"It's not important. Our learners, we're not white. Abantwanabethu mele bakhulume isiZulu (our children must speak isiZulu) … it doesn't benefit them. It doesn't benefit us."*

Teachers in School A and B indicated that a lack of involvement by parents in their children's academic activities and schoolwork gives teachers the impression that the parents are not interested in whether or not their child is succeeding or failing at the English language. Teachers in School B mentioned that parents are invited to come to school to discuss their children's marks in English but they never show up. The teacher mentioned that the parents felt that,

> *"English is not important, you must pass isiZulu, it's your home language, you must be proud … Oh, you passed it [English]? But when they see isiZulu; you're getting 50% for your home language, when we speak it at home."*

Consequently, this perception gives teachers the idea that parents only care about their children's performance in their home language and that English is merely another subject that the child has to take in order to progress to the next academic year.

5.3.2 THEME 2: Language policy vs teaching practices

The theme regarding language policy versus teaching practices aims to highlight what it is that teachers know regarding the LiEP and what exactly is expected of them in the classroom. For that reason, this theme aims to compare what the teachers say they know about the LiEP versus what their current teaching practices in the classroom are. Sub-themes include the criticism of the language policy by teachers, current challenges that teachers are facing with regard to the implementation of the LiEP and, lastly, the impact the curriculum has on teaching practices – the manner in which language learning takes place in the classroom as a result of the LiEP being incorporated in the curriculum.

Sub-theme: Criticism of the language policy

The Language in Education Policy was introduced in 1997 as a means to promote multilingualism in schools, accommodate and not disadvantage any learners because of language and, in so doing, develop programmes for the redress of previously disadvantaged languages, among other things (South Africa. DoE, 1997). Consequently, according to Taylor and Coetzee (2013), the introduction of this policy has resulted in various debates regarding the language of instruction (LoLT) used in South African schools.

A large number of South African schools make the transition from home language being the LoLT in the foundation phase to English becoming the LoLT from Grade 4 up until the learners' final year of basic education – Grade 12. The data collected from the two schools accentuate the debate, with some teachers in favour of the LiEP and others against it.

A teacher from School B mentioned that she felt that the introduction of the LiEP in schools made teaching easier. She is of the opinion that the LiEP allows her and the learners to code-switch during lessons, which in turn makes the transition to English easier for Grade 4 learners. Her response as to why the LiEP made it easier to teach was:

> *"Yeah, it becomes easier because sometimes they understand in English and they want to explain in Zulu and when they explain you correct them. So, when you explain, you explain in English and Zulu. And that eases the transition."*

The abovementioned occurrence was witnessed in both the Grade 3 and Grade 4 classroom observations in School B. Whenever learners struggled to articulate themselves in English, they asked their teachers whether or not they could speak in their home language, which the teachers allowed. In response, the Grade 3 teacher often responded in the home language, whereas the Grade 4 teacher responded in English. Although both teachers tried their level best to speak English throughout the lesson, learners were often reprimanded in their home language.

The Grade 3 teacher in School B also mentioned that she found that the introduction of the LiEP has put learners more at an advantage than a disadvantage, due to the fact that she did not see the point of learning in a language which you did not understand and in which you were not able to express yourself. She questioned it as follows:

> *"… what's the point of learning in English only, when you don't fully understand, can't comprehend questions and you're thinking in Zulu and now someone is standing in front of you speaking in English and you can't even hear?"*

This teacher's opinion was once again corroborated by the classroom observations. During the reading lesson with the Grade 3s, the teacher used the home language to get the learners to settle down and focus on what they were about to do. The teacher also gave the outline of the lesson in the home language, together with the instructions that learners had to follow: sit up straight, open your book etc. During the lesson the teacher alternated between their home language and English.

On the other hand, one of the older teachers in School B mentioned that the implementation of the LiEP should not be a problem for a qualified English teacher. She stated that, "an English teacher should not be perplexed by the fact that learners speak a different language. An English teacher can and should teach with less code-switching". Therefore, pointing out that despite what the school's LoLT is, the English teacher must still be able to teach English without the pressure of code-switching.

However, the same teacher highlighted that the LiEP makes the classroom more diverse in terms of language. If the teacher decides to code-switch, it then becomes his/her responsibility to learn all the languages that the learners speak in order for him/her to teach 'effectively' and to ensure that all learners are accommodated.

Challenging the abovementioned, the majority of teachers felt that the LiEP made teaching more challenging for them. One of the reasons that was highlighted was that teachers themselves were not comfortable teaching in that school's particular LoLT because it was not their mother tongue, they were not trained to teach in that LoLT or they felt teaching in that particular LoLT was challenging. A teacher in School A mentioned that,

> *"Where I'm from the-the medium language of teaching was English. So, it was easier for me to-to-to communicate with them. The comprehension was just simple as that; it was just flowing. But unlike the Sepedi, the Sepedi one it's a bit of a challenge."*

Another teacher in School B stated that,

> *"Sometimes in Grade 4 they get a teacher who doesn't know isiZulu and that teacher just gets surprised that these learners can't say the shapes and they know those shapes but they can't say them in English."*

A teacher in School A was of the opinion that learners are more at a disadvantage due to the implementation of the LiEP because she felt that it was not giving the learners enough exposure to English. Furthermore, she stated that by following the LiEP, the learners in schools who are taught in their mother tongue (excluding English) were "limited … and their performance is not there anymore, their confidence, they are not up to standard with the learners who receive their education in English".

Teachers in both schools suggested that it would be more beneficial if the government implemented English as a LoLT across all schools in the nation as doing so would assist with the standardisation of content and opportunities. When teachers were asked which practical solutions they would recommend to government regarding the LiEP, they said:

> *"Make English a language of learning and teaching in all schools and home language as a second language."*

"I prefer English as home language, it was much easier especially when coming to other subjects. Like mathematics and life skills."

"I'm not saying Zulu is not important but we can separate, let Zulu be Zulu and then let everything else we are going to continue doing be in English from the get go."

Sub-theme: Impediments

The South African education system, just like any other education system, has its fair share of challenges. The challenges highlighted in this section are from the teachers' personal perspectives, based on their experiences and observations. The most commonly identified challenges include a lack of (adequate) resources, a lack of support and limited teaching time.

Lack of educational resource materials in schools

Teachers in both schools were asked about the teaching strategies and resources they used to teach English reading. On the list of good teaching strategies, flashcards, posters, CDs and CD players were mentioned. However, the teachers pointed out that a number of good teaching strategies required them to have particular resources and "we don't have the resources, in fact, we improvise".

On the contrary, School B reported that they had resources – various books were donated to their school for Grades 1, 2 and 3. All the books that were donated were in English, although the school's LoLT is not English in the foundation phase. The Grade 4 teacher in School B felt that it was a privilege having those books because it exposed their learners to English content and in essence prepare them for that transition to Grade 4. However, she mentioned that the books were not well received and consequently were not used to assist learners because some of the older teachers felt it was too much work.

> *"Yes, our teachers are not willing, foundation phase teachers are not willing to accommodate us as intermediate phase teachers because we're saying introduce, 'sit down', 'stand up', 'write', 'keep quiet', 'don't do that', 'pick up the paper'. And because they are not willing we end up suffering because when you get in there and you say today we are going to write, please take out your books, they are all stunned to say what are you saying."*

The aforementioned contradicts what teachers suggested is contributing to learners not grasping the English language. When teachers were asked why they did not create their own resources, such as posters, flashcards etc., they disclosed that they did not have the time to create the relevant resources and thus they simply used "body language and various voice projections". Teachers in both schools highlighted that posters, videos, DVDs, etc. were all "luxurious things" that "we don't possess".

One of the teachers in School A suggested that all schools should at least have whiteboards as a teaching aid, which will allow teachers to draw pictures for leaners on the board and erase them easily. She also said:

> *"... things that we can use for learning like for example white board marker, white boards for learners to practise a certain [word], because we learn new phonics every week so if we would have a period where we ask them to write this specific word for me then they write then pick it up and then can you see it encourages them to learn and then they correct each other. I wish could have such resources."*

Additionally, it was pointed out by a teacher in School B that it was "challenging getting a variety of books". Teachers consequently make copies of stories to ensure that the learners in their classes are reading, including both HL and FAL reading material. Although the implementation of the LiEP is meant to accommodate all learners and promote equality, it becomes a challenge when learners who are learning in their mother tongue do not have adequate resources to learn. There are limited resources for languages other than English, for example, isiZulu posters, worksheets and even reading books.

Lack of support outside the school environment

Teachers is School A and B pointed out that learners struggled with English, especially with reading, because outside the classroom the majority of learners did not get any form of support or encouragement to make an effort in learning the language. The teachers in both schools noted that the parents of learners in those schools were not involved in their children's learning and did not provide any support to the learners or the teachers, therefore making teaching challenging for the teachers.

The reason for the lack of parental involvement and support could be a result of various predicaments. A teacher in School A said, "…parents don't have time, they are

working, coming back late". Apart from the parents not having time for their children, it was pointed out that "some are illiterate". Hence, it makes it difficult for parents to try to assist their children with their homework. As a result, the majority of learners are exposed to English only when they are at school, in the English lesson. In agreement, a teacher in School B disclosed that "they are never going to hear it (English) from their parents, they are never going to hear it at home, they are never going to hear it outside on the street".

A teacher in School A also remarked that the learners' home environments (which are closely linked to their parents) also contribute to the learners' attitudes and indifference to the English language. She was of the opinion that in some of the learners' homes, the environment is not conducive to learning. The same teacher mentioned that, "when they (learners) get home they just relax or watch TV the whole day or the whole afternoon. Then they go to bed".

Additionally, a teacher in School A suggested that parents should be encouraged to get their children to read more at home. She suggested that,

> *"… maybe reading just before bedtime. Even if it's a Bible story, you know, the learner will be able to listen and to respond but the ... if the learning is one-sided only, it's not helping at all."*

Furthermore, the teachers in both schools mentioned that, through observation, they noted that learners whose parents helped them with their schoolwork at home did exceptionally well, especially in English (reading). Reinforcement at home gives learners an advantage in comparison with their peers who receive no assistance.

Limited teaching time

The majority of teachers felt that there isn't enough time to focus on FAL. They said that the curriculum does not allow teachers to cover all the required learning areas and thus they focus on what they can. One of the teachers in School B was of the opinion that teachers in the foundation phase spend too much time on HL, forgetting that learners will have to adapt from their mother tongue being the LoLT to English becoming the LoLT. The challenge is that "some learners come to the grade (Grade 3) without knowledge from the previous grade". She goes on to say:

> *"They don't know the phonics, the sounds. Even basic words like 'boy' others don't know those words. Even the sound 'Buh' ... others, they don't know what it looks like."*

In their defence, the foundation phase teachers in both schools stated that the annual teaching plan did not allocate enough time to teach English as a FAL. They felt that,

> *"…if it's 30 minutes reading and then afterwards 30 minutes writing or something, then already they have lost interest, the following day when you continue with the work, they already forgot … they've forgotten …"*

> *"Then the second thing is the lesson plans that we are using, there is a lot that we have to do on the same day and we don't spend enough time on the comprehension so that we are sure that the kids understand what we are doing, instead we quickly rush to do something else. Like I'm supposed to do a comprehension on Friday that they must answer and write in their books and at the same time I have to do a spelling test at the same time as reading individually, so it is a lot. And the learners are very slow and if I want those who are able, if I want them to do the right thing I have to give them enough time but if I am rushing them that is when they are getting everything wrong because I didn't give them enough time because I just wanted to rush to cover all the work."*

A teacher in School A said they would like to have more time to focus on English as a FAL, especially reading time, which they felt should be extended to an hour, instead of 30 minutes a day. Through the classroom observations with the Grade 2 teacher in School A, it was evident that the allocated time (30 minutes) was not enough, since the introduction of the story itself takes 30 minutes on average. After 30 minutes the teacher had only been able to ask some background questions pertaining to the story, use flashcards to explain difficult words and to help learners with pronouncing the words on the flashcards.

Sub-theme: Curriculum impact on teaching practices

The current South African curriculum is known as the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) and "the general aim of CAPS is inclusivity" (South Africa. DBE, 2010). The objective of CAPS, namely to accommodate all learners throughout their basic education, is intended at bettering the education standard and the way in which content is delivered by teachers in government schools. The policy provides an outline of the content to be covered and the amount of time spent on each topic in the curriculum. Providing schools and teachers with a standard curriculum is meant to make teaching easier, however, teachers feel that the curriculum hinders effective teaching practices.

A teacher in School B stated that, although CAPS has been put in place to facilitate learning across South African schools, by providing assessment and planning guidelines, it does not allow time for teachers to address the challenges that arise in their classrooms. Teachers from both School A and B highlighted the fact that the CAPS curriculum has a large amount of content which teachers are expected to cover within the year, as it is outlined in the Annual Teaching Plan (ATP). However, the amount of time allocated for the amount of content in the curriculum does not match.

As a result, teachers felt that their main task is to "… cover the curriculum … just push the curriculum … Do what is supposed to be done". Consequently, teachers are more concerned with completing the curriculum than ensuring that their learners are actually learning and are making academic progress – stemming from the pressure put on teachers by the Department of Education to ensure that the content set out in the curriculum is covered, despite whether learners have acquired the necessary skills and knowledge or not.

Therefore, the foundation phase teachers in School A and B do not particularly devote themselves to ensuring that learners speak, read and write the FAL (English) proficiently, as the department is more concerned with how much work has been covered in the ATP, rather than how much knowledge the learners have acquired. The teachers in both schools shared the concern that "there isn't a lot of time to be dwelling". A teacher in School B supported the above-mentioned by stating that,

> *"I'm not going to remediate a Thabo when I still need to cover maths, cover life skills, still need to take them outside for PE, I still need to read stories nge 'siZulu. I can't, there's not enough time."*

> *"The department of education they've given me a curriculum, I've completed my curriculum, when they come in and check the learners' books, the learners did the activities. Whether the learner passed them, I did the corrections."*

Teachers in both schools mentioned that they were often so consumed with work – marking, setting assessments, lesson preparation, etc – that they did not have time to sit together and devise strategies that would assist them in improving their teaching practices, which would, in turn, benefit their learners, especially with regard to English and the improvement of literacy achievements.

Some of the older teachers in School A highlighted that their teaching practices were affected by the frequent changing of the curriculum and other educational policies. A teacher said that,

> *"And this thing of changing the system all the time once you learn a new system then after two years or three years then it changes, you know it is always changing … then we get tired so when will we get the expertise of the subjects, because you change curriculum every time. If you are not used to this method the other new method will come. We don't even know what we are doing now."*

5.3.3 THEME 3: Addressing language problems

The final theme identified looks at addressing language problems. The first sub-theme discusses the language backgrounds of the teachers and learners in order to understand the context in which language learning is taking place. The second sub-theme points out the current interventions that have been introduced in schools and how these have been effective in addressing language problems.

Sub-theme: Teacher and learner language backgrounds

The teachers and learners in both schools were integrated in term of language and did not all speak the LoLT of that particular school. One of the teachers in School A mentioned that she often struggled to teach in the LoLT used in the foundation phase, which is Sepedi, because she had previously been in a school in which English was

the LoLT. The other teachers stated that, although their home language was not Sepedi, they were able to use it as a LoLT.

Similarly, most teachers in School B did not have the school's LoLT, which is isiZulu, as their home language. The Grade 4 English teacher mentioned that she often struggled to assist learners in their home language during the English lesson if and when they did not understand the work in English, because her home language was Venda and therefore her Zulu vocabulary was limited. She mentioned that she would often have to call one of the foundation phase teachers to come and explain a concept to the learners in isiZulu.

With regard to the learners in School A, a teacher mentioned that, although the LoLT is Sepedi, there are children who struggle with the LoLT due to the fact that their home language is not Sepedi. The learners who are at a bigger disadvantage are those who are not South African nationals, mainly from Lesotho, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. One of the teachers said:

> *"I am teaching in Sepedi. I am teaching a Zimbabwean learner. The child doesn't even know a single word in Sepedi. So, the learner doesn't understand."*

In addition, another teacher in School A stated that even some of the learners whose home language is Sepedi find Sepedi as a LoLT slightly challenging at times, due to the fact that the dialects are different. For example, the Sepedi spoken in Limpopo is different from that spoken in Pretoria, thus causing a further language barrier in the classroom.

Furthermore, the teachers also experienced the same challenges regarding the learners and their home language versus that of their LoLT. The LoLT in School B is isiZulu, but although the majority of learners' home language is isiZulu, there are also a few learners who have Sesotho as a home language. The school also has learners of foreign descent – learners particularly from Zimbabwe, whose home language is Shona and those from Mozambique whose home language is Portuguese. Therefore, to some of those foreign learners "English is a foreign language", and in the foundation phase so is the LoLT, namely isiZulu. As a result, learners experience a double deficit because they do not know the LoLT that is used in the foundation phase and these learners encounter the same challenge in Grade 4 when they are expected to learn in

another LoLT, with which they are most likely unfamiliar. The change in LoLT in a short period of time can put learners at a disadvantage as they could struggle to develop the necessary vocabulary for them to learn adequately.

Sub-theme: Current interventions

Van Staden and Bosker (2014) point out that international comparative studies, such as PIRLS, TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) and SACMEQ, prove that South Africa is one of the poorest performing countries. The results obtained in these international studies – more specifically prePIRLS 2011 and SACMEQ – together with the results obtained in national studies such as the ANAs, highlighted the importance for the DoE to find solutions through various intervention programmes to improve the literacy performance in schools.

The two schools involved in this study mentioned various intervention programmes that were and are currently running in their schools. One of the interventions introduced by the government is known as the Gauteng Primary Literacy and Mathematics Strategy (GPLMS). This intervention was introduced in Gauteng schools as a means to improve the teaching of language and mathematics in the selected schools. GPLMS aimed to ensure that 60% of learners in the province attained 50% and above for both literacy and numeracy (South Africa. Gauteng Provincial Government, 2013).

According to the Gauteng Department of Basic Education (DBE) (South Africa. Gauteng Provincial Government, 2013), GPLMS provided schools with standardised lesson plans and assessments which they should follow strictly – no other lesson plans and assessments should be used. By providing teachers with a strict programme to follow, it would assist teachers in improving the pace at which they cover the curriculum which, in turn, should allow learners to learn better. The success of the GPLMS would be measured by standardised assessments such as the ANAs.

The 2012 ANA results, presented by the Gauteng DBE, suggested that the implementation of the GPLMS had contributed to the improved literacy achievements. In support of these results, one of the teachers in School B stated that "GPLMS had a good phonic approach but there was no consolidation because the programme was too loaded". Another teacher mentioned that she used the GPLMS posters during English lessons. She further commented as follows:

"... the GPLMS posters, they are very good with tenses; the plurals, everything, they can show you a picture: 'the granny waits', 'yesterday the granny waited' the same picture and the same words they get used to it and it becomes much easier for them."

The GPLMS was designed to work hand-in-hand with another intervention know as DBE books. GPLMS forms the basis of the content included in the DBE workbooks (South Africa. Gauteng Provincial Government, 2013).

Both schools are currently using DBE workbooks – formally known as *Rainbow Workbooks* – in their classrooms, as a form of intervention. These are additional workbooks provided by the Department of Basic Education "aimed at improving the performance of South African learners in the first six grades" (South Africa. DBE, 2018). The workbooks focus on literacy and numeracy and allow learners to practise the skills they have been taught in class. The literacy workbooks are aligned with CAPS and thus the exercises included in the workbooks cover listening, reading and writing skills (South Africa. DBE, 2018).

A teacher in School A stated that she used the DBE books in her Grade 3 classroom – the learners find the stories in the books interesting. Apart from the stories being interesting, she normally uses the DBE book in literacy because it focuses on asking the WH-questions (who, what, when, where, why and how) on different levels, which gives learners an opportunity to test their comprehension, as they are expected to answer the questions once the story has been read.

The Grade 3 teacher in School B mentioned that, because the book is colourful and exciting, she gives homework from the book in order to encourage the learners to do it at home. She believed the book was best used for homework, instead of in the classroom. However, the teachers did add that they felt that the DBE books were a waste of time, with one of the teachers further stating that she found the DBE books to be "useless, to say the least". She mentioned that she felt there was nothing beneficial coming from the DBE books, compared to what they were already doing. She communicated that her tasks included teaching concepts, teaching language, and teaching comprehension and reading skills. She thereby suggested that the DBE books were simply adding an unnecessary workload on teachers.

A teacher in School B commented on the fact that the DBE books were difficult to use because they do not focus on one specific concept or topic at a time but tend to alternate between various topics with each new day. This opinion was supported by another teacher who stated that "they jump from one topic to another, one concept to another, one theme to another, you understand? It's not grounded". Teachers feel that they should not be forced to use the DBE books but should be encouraged to use them as they see fit in their individual classrooms.

The teachers also felt that their learners found it frustrating because the content in the DBE books is not relevant to them – the stories are placed in foreign contexts.

> *"I was reading a Grade 5 DBE book and they were talking about a sailor and him getting lost at sea and the ship sinking and now there's something underneath. What are you talking about? And you are talking about submarines? And you are asking me to take out the prefix? […] the learners just feel very, very, very frustrated. We do English to pass."*

Another challenge pointed out by teachers is that the DBE books have a number of errors in them. A teacher in School B mentioned that a parent of a Grade 2 learner expressed her concern in a meeting and was quoted saying:

> *"The Setswana DBE workbook in Grade 2 is mixed with Sepedi words and Sesotho words and it's got L instead of D … I've never seen this in my life, never. So how do I explain to my child?"*

Teachers from both schools mentioned that it was their opinion that the intervention programmes introduced in schools to assist learners with literacy – which should assist them with the transition to Grade 4 – were not school and context specific, but that the intervention programmes were generic. The intervention programmes currently being designed for schools are expected to work in all schools, despite the context of the school.

Teachers in School B mentioned other interventions that have been introduced in the school, such as Success for All (SFA), and an initiative by the Read to Lead organisation. Success for All is an international intervention programme aimed at improving literacy, focusing on teaching and learning methods for disadvantaged schools and learners (Success for All Foundation, 2015). Although the teacher in School B was of the opinion that SFA was a good intervention, she mentioned that it

was not well received by the teachers and the school, hence the programme was discontinued. She stated that,

> *"… it was going to work because they focus a lot on the minor things, the things that we tend to overlook, they really focus on that and spend a lot of time on that and I think once kids grasp that they can do anything. I have been here for nine months and the teachers were not implementing it, I was not properly workshopped, the teachers didn't have interest so I could not ask anyone. And when the facilitator came she also become frustrated because now she's been doing this thing for years and years with no progress."*

Another teacher in School B mentioned that an attempt to assist with the learners' literacy performance was made by 'Readers are Leaders'. The initiative was not a success due to the fact that the organisation contacted the school about a possible intervention programme, but instead came to the school, took a few photographs and never returned. The suggested intervention was meant to encourage reading throughout the school. Thirty minutes was meant to be allocated in the school daily, strictly for reading purposes – all activity in the school was expected to stop and everyone (learners, teachers, ground staff, administrative staff) was expected to be reading in those 30 minutes. The teacher found this intervention "ineffective and not beneficial" for the learners.

Examples of interventions that have been introduced nationwide to improve literacy levels include:

- The National Reading Strategy
- 100 Storybooks project
- Drop all and read campaign
- Ithuba Writing Project

Despite the efforts of the DoE to initiate different interventions at the foundation phase level, studies such as prePIRLS and PIRLS 2006, 2011 and 2015 have highlighted that learners in Grade 4 are unable to apply their thinking and reasoning abilities when doing reading comprehension exercises in English.

5.4 SUMMARY

This chapter presented the analysis and interpretation of data collected. From the data collected and analysed, themes and sub-themes were identified in relation to the research questions presented. In this chapter, various perceptions regarding English as a LoLT were presented from the viewpoints of the teachers. Findings regarding the language policy and how it affects teaching practices were highlighted and, lastly, different intervention programmes implemented to address language problems in schools were evaluated through the teachers' experiences.

The final chapter, Chapter 6, concludes the study by providing a summary of the findings, presenting conclusions, addressing the limitations of this study and providing recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter provided an analysis of data and themes that emerged from this research. This final chapter intends to consolidate the research questions, the research processes, the results obtained from the study, as well as to present the conclusions and recommendations of this study. This study aimed to explore the ways in which perceptions and experiences of teachers in the foundation phase and intermediate phase assist at-risk learners in the foundation phase, whose LoLT is not English, with the transition from their current LoLT to Grade 4, where English becomes their LoLT. The main research question for this study was:

> **How do teachers experience the process of preparing Grade 3 learners for the transition of learning in their home language to learning in English in Grade 4?**

The main research question was further divided into the following sub-questions:

1. *What are foundation phase teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards teaching English reading?*
2. *To what extent do teachers view intervention programmes as adequately addressing language problems?*
3. *What are the implications of the language in education policy for teacher practice in classrooms?*

This final chapter presents a summary of the findings and conclusions relating to the main research question as well as the sub-questions. Section 6.2 provides a summary of the research and briefly discusses the background that led to the framing of the main research question. Thereafter, based on the relevant literature and sub-questions, a summary of the main results is presented in section 6.3, followed in section 6.4 by a reflection on the conceptual framework by Stern (1983), which was selected for this study. In section 6.5, reflections on the research design and methodology implemented in this study are presented. Limitations of the study are discussed in section 6.6, followed by section 6.7 which makes future research recommendations. This chapter is concluded in section 6.8.

6.2 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH

This study aimed to explore the perceptions and experiences of foundation phase and Grade 4 teachers who teach English to learners whose mother tongue is not English, and how their perceptions and experiences assist those learners with the transition from learning in a home language – particularly an African language – to learning in English from Grade 4.

Chapter 1 presented a brief introduction to the research by providing an overview of content encompassed in the study. In Chapter 1, the context and background in which this study was formulated were presented. Thereafter, the problem statement, highlighting the problem that this study aimed to address, as well as the reasons why this study was conducted, were presented under the rationale. The problem statement and rationale pointed out that the literacy achievement in South Africa is of a low level, more specifically highlighting that with regard to English reading comprehension, Grade 4 learners in particular cannot apply their thinking and reasoning skills, as identified in studies such as the prePIRLS (2011 and 2016) and PIRLS (2006, 2011 and 2016) assessments. Thereafter the main research questions and sub-questions that guided this study were also provided. The research methodology included a brief overview of the research designs and data analysis methods used in the study. Lastly, a preview of the structure of the dissertation was presented.

In Chapter 2 the review of literature related to this study was presented. The chapter highlighted the major theories in second language acquisition and presented a critical discussion on how these theories are related to one another and in which aspects they oppose one another. In that discussion the theories were critiqued in relation to the current study, and their appropriateness to the South African context was evaluated. Chapter 2 also looked at the acts and legislation in South Africa before and after 1994 and the implications these policies have had on the education system, briefly debating whether or not the injustices of the past have been redressed adequately. Thereafter, the current implications of the relevant legislations were briefly discussed, referring to mother-tongue language and second language learning. Lastly, current national and international assessments administered in South Africa to measure literacy achievements and performance were discussed. The section on these assessments

also presented a few results with a brief analysis on what these results actually imply. The chapter was then concluded with a summary of the main points addressed.

Thereafter, Chapter 3 presented the conceptual framework which guided this study. Stern's *Framework for examination of second language learning* (1983) was the most suitable conceptual framework for this study. The selected model was relevant because it includes, among other factors, a factor addressing the 'social context' which is imperative when discussing language in South African schools. It is important to understand that the culture in which learners live, in which they are educated, and the people with whom learners interact contribute to their ability to learn a particular language or could play a role in the attitude they have towards learning that particular language (University of South Africa. Department of Adult Basic Education and Youth Development, 2015).

The framework included factors such as the learners' characteristics (age and cognitive characteristics) which contribute to how a learner acquires a new language. However, for the purpose of this study, the personality and affective characteristics were not discussed since the teachers were not questioned on these aspects. The model also included learning conditions, more specifically for acquiring a second language, and the learning process – strategies and methods used by teachers in the classroom to assist learners in acquiring a second language – which all contribute to the overall learning outcomes. With reference to this study, the learning outcomes are focused on assisting learners with acquiring a second language to a point where they will be able to successfully learn in English from Grade 4.

Chapter 4 presented a discussion on the research methodology and paradigm applied in this study. The study followed a qualitative research approach in order to seek better understanding of the subject matter (Maree, 2014; Silverman, 2014). The most suitable research design for the study was the case study design. A case study design aims to "investigate a phenomenon in its real-world setting" (Salkind, 2010). In Chapter 4, it is pointed out that the sample was purposefully selected from two schools and consisted of ten participants from the foundation phase and one Grade 4 teacher. Focus group interviews, semi-structured interviews and observations were the data collection methods used in the study. All interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed. A brief discussion regarding ethical considerations, credibility, validity and

reliability was included in this chapter. The interpretive paradigm was applied in the study as the aim was to "understand the subjective world of human experience" (Cohen et al., 2011).

In Chapter 5, a detailed report on the analysis and interpretation of data collected was provided. A thematic data analysis approach was utilised to identify emerging themes from the focus group interviews, semi-structured interviews, as well as the observational data. Thereafter, the most prominent themes and sub-themes were identified and discussed.

This final chapter presents an overview of the research. The chapter highlights and discusses the important findings identified in the literature review and those identified in the data analysis. A brief reflection on the conceptual framework and its relation to the study is included. Lastly, this chapter provides a discussion of the main conclusions, a reflection on the research design and methodology, the limitations of the study and recommendations for further research, based on the findings of the study.

6.3 THE MAIN RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

In the following section, the data collected through focus group interviews, semi-structured interviews and observations are summarised in order to provide an answer to the main research question, through the evidence gathered and used to answer the sub-questions.

Main research question: How do teachers experience the process of preparing Grade 3 learners for the transition of learning in their home language to learning in English in Grade 4?

The main research question aimed to explore the experiences that teachers in the foundation phase – more specifically those teaching Grade 3 learners – currently encounter in preparing learners in Grade 3 for the language transition to Grade 4. The teachers who are currently teaching in the foundation phase are teaching their learners using the home languages selected by the schools, which in the case of this study, are African languages, mainly isiZulu and Sepedi. The teachers shared their perceptions and experiences, as well as the challenges they faced in the process of preparing learners for the transition to Grade 4, where English will become their LoLT.

The three sub-questions used to address the main research question will now be discussed separately, based on the data collected.

6.3.1 Foundation phase teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards teaching English reading

In the literature, linguists have stated that, in order for a learner to acquire a language, one of the contributing factors is their attitude towards learning that particular language. Similarly, the perceptions and attitudes of the teachers teaching English reading are factors that play a role in how the learners experience English reading.

The study found that there are mixed emotions with regard to teaching English reading. Overall, the study showed that teachers were excited about and enjoyed teaching English reading to their learners. The teachers viewed English reading as an important life skill that learners needed to acquire. One of the supporting reasons as to why teachers felt that English reading is an important life skill is the fact that most documents and printed matter, such as newspapers, contracts, reports and codes of conduct are in English. With this said, it is important to note that English reading is not a mere recognition of words, which is what some teachers highlighted. They pointed out that their learners think they are reading when they are only recognising words, not aware of the fact that reading also entails understanding and interpretation.

The study revealed that teachers valued English reading and wanted their learners to immerse themselves in the culture of English reading because they understood that, from Grade 4 until tertiary level, learners are most likely to carry on learning in English, meaning that all reading material will be in English and that it is important for learners to be able to read with understanding in English.

In contrast to the positive perceptions and attitudes expressed by the teachers, the study also indicated that some teachers occasionally felt frustrated when teaching English reading. The frustration stemmed mostly from the challenges they experienced to successfully present an English reading lesson. The teachers expressed their concern that the learners did not take the English reading lessons seriously as they felt that it was a time for them to relax or play around. As a result, teachers felt that the English reading lessons were not as productive as they should be and thus did not always look forward to those lessons.

The teachers pointed out that another frustration was teaching English reading to learners who were not interested in participating in the lessons. The study showed that learners often fidgeted or looked around while the teacher was presenting the English reading lesson. The teachers reported that the learners' lack of interest in the lessons often discouraged them from teaching English reading. Thus, implying that learners paid more attention and showed more interest in the lesson when their teacher is teaching in the home language.

6.3.2 The extent to which teachers view intervention programmes as adequately addressing language problems

The findings revealed that there are a number of intervention programmes that are introduced in the schools for learners who are underachieving, in order to improve the learners' academic achievements, more specifically in literacy and English. The study showed that, over the years, several intervention programmes have been implemented in the schools by the government, as well as by independent organisations.

The teachers pointed out that, although intervention programmes had been introduced in their schools, they were not effective. One of the reasons revealed in the study why the previously implemented intervention programmes were not effective is because, from the very beginning, these intervention programmes had not been well received by the teachers who are expected to implement them in their classrooms. The teachers stated that they often felt that some intervention programmes were adding more work to their already heavy workload.

The study revealed that some intervention programmes are not well executed by the relevant organisations. Organisations reach out to schools but do not follow through on whatever was agreed between them and the schools, or when they do, it is months after the proposed starting date. Consequently, the intervention programmes cannot be successfully implemented in the schools if the organisations heading the programmes are not forthcoming in ensuring that the schools have been provided with the relevant training and guidance to start with the programmes. Additionally, the teachers pointed out that some organisations do it for publicity only. There is typically a conversation and agreement between the school and the organisation about what academic assistance is needed in the school and how it will be addressed, however,

the organisation comes back to take pictures with the learners and staff and moves on to the next school, without having done anything that they agreed to do.

Additionally, the study found that the intervention programmes that are implemented are too generic and are not always suitable to the particular school's context. One of the intervention programmes which the schools felt was too generic includes the DBE book. The teachers pointed out that the DBE book consists of too many sections, which are assumed to be dealing with the challenges that the learners are facing, however, the teachers are of the opinion that intervention programmes should be case-specific. Alternatively, teachers should be given the freedom to choose which parts of the DBE book they will use, based on their learners' individual academic needs. The study also revealed that teachers felt that the intervention programmes should serve as assistance and should not be compulsory activities that must be completed. Currently, teachers have to split their teaching time between the curriculum and the intervention programme.

6.3.3 Implications of the language in education policy for teacher practice in classrooms.

The study found that the teachers in the foundation phase confirmed that the implementation of the LiEP made teaching easier in the sense that learners were being taught in a language they were frequently exposed to in their homes and in the community. The teachers pointed out that teaching in a language that both learners and teachers were familiar with made teaching in the foundation phase a lot easier. It was reported that the learners were able to understand the work and express their opinions freely because they were confident in the language which they used in the classroom.

On the contrary, some of the other teachers highlighted that teaching learners in a LoLT that is not English – another South African language – proved to be more of a learning barrier for some learners since all learners were not of South African descent. Therefore, teachers who have learners who do not speak or are not familiar with the LoLT in the school will have to find a way to assist those learners in learning that language well enough to be able to learn in it. Consequently, teachers with learners who do not speak that LoLT are spending more time in class trying to assist those learners, instead of teaching the syllabus.

The study found that there are teachers who would prefer teaching subjects such as mathematics in English due to the fact that learners will be taught mathematics in English from Grade 4 and therefore it would be beneficial for learners to learn mathematics (in English) from the beginning of their formal schooling. The study revealed that Grade 4 learners struggled in their other subjects, such as social science and mathematics, because they were not familiar with basic terminology or had a limited vocabulary.

In addition, the study showed that the LiEP allows for code-switching in the classroom, especially when learners progress to Grade 4. The teachers stated that the learners who learnt in a LoLT other than English in the foundation phase had a limited vocabulary and often struggled with learning in Grade 4. As a result, teachers in the intermediate phase who are able to speak the home language of the learners end up code-switching in their classrooms to ensure that learning takes place. The teachers mentioned that they often had to explain certain sections of the work using the learners' home language because learners did not understand what was being taught in English. The study also provided evidence that the learners were able to understand when the teacher asked them questions in English, however, they were not able to respond in English and would ask the teacher if they could answer the question in their home language.

6.4 REFLECTIONS ON THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework of this study served as a guideline according to which to analyse and interpret the outcomes of the data collected. This study made use of Stern's (1983) *Framework for examination of second language learning,* which illustrates the relationship between various factors relevant to language learning.

6.4.1 Stern's framework for examination of second language learning

According to Główka (2015, p. 244), Stern's model was developed on the notion that "language learning is a product of its components". This model suggests that, in order for an individual to acquire a second language, there are various factors that must be present and must work in relation to one another. More specifically, Główka (2015) refers to these components as social factors that contribute to second language learning. Stern's model proved to be the most suitable because the first language

learning component, namely 'social context', is of the utmost importance when discussing language in the South African education system. The social context being the first component in Stern's model, highlights that the social context forms the basis of language acquisition. The framework was used in this study to identify prominent factors that contribute to successful second language acquisition.

6.4.2 Stern's model as envisioned for this study

Over the years a number of researchers, theorists and practitioners have identified various factors that contribute to language learning, but they all measured the impact and importance that these factors have on language learning differently. With this information, Stern (1983, p. 338) developed an "uncontroversial synthesis representing the consensus among the different investigators on the main factors that play a role in language learning", as illustrated in Figure 6.1.
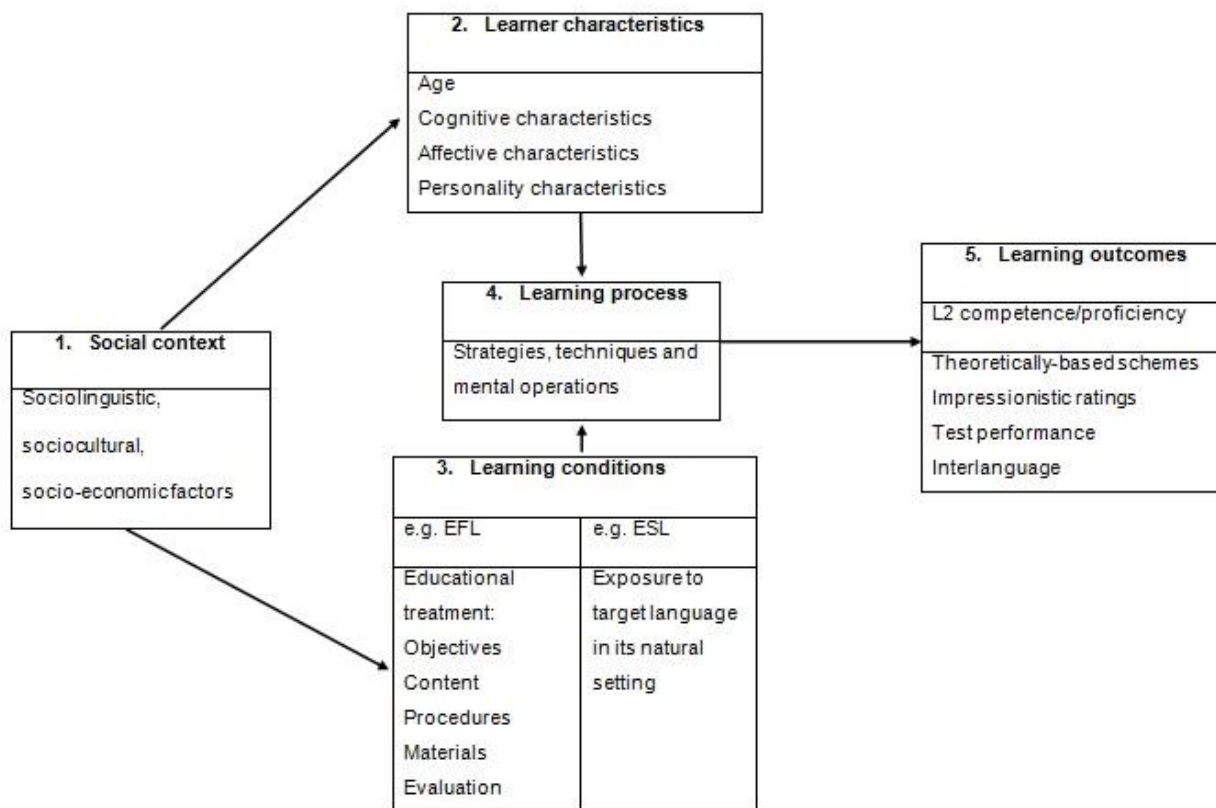

Figure 6.1 The original framework used in the study

Figure 6.1 illustrates Stern's original framework for examination of a second language, as discussed in Chapter 3 of this study. In the original model, the social context refers to the sociolinguistic, sociocultural and socio-economic factors which are linked to the

learner characteristics, namely, age, cognitive characteristics, affective characteristics and personality characteristics. The social context is also linked to the learning conditions, which could be related to either English as first language or English as a second language, each with its own components contributing to the learning conditions. The learner characteristics and learning conditions are both associated with the learning process, which includes strategies, techniques and mental operations. Lastly, the framework illustrates a relationship between the learning process and the learning outcomes, which refer to the L2 competence/proficiency.

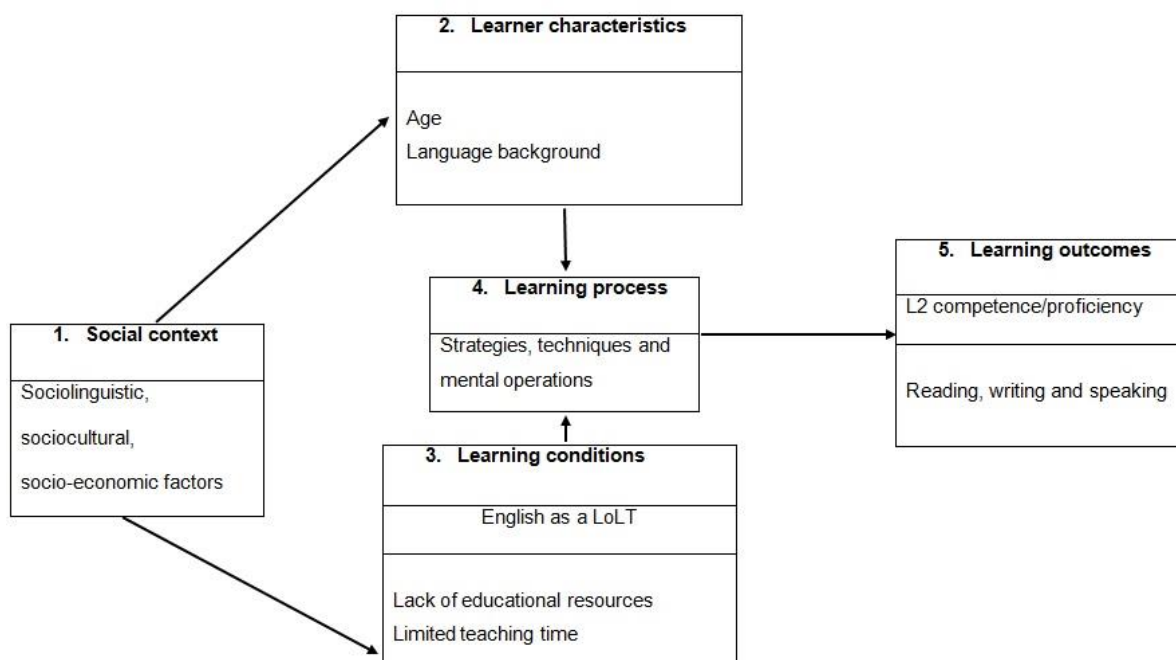Figure 6.2 illustrates the conceptual framework in terms of the themes which emerged from the collected data.

Figure 6.2 The conceptual framework that emerged as a result of the data collected

Although the main factors highlighted in the conceptual framework – social context, learner characteristics, learning conditions, learning process and learning outcomes – remained the same after the data were collected and themes were identified, the sub-factors within the main factors were adapted according to the emerging themes.

With regard to the social context, the themes which emerged from the data held the position that sociolinguistic, sociocultural and socio-economic factors play a role in second language acquisition and it was evident from the data that the environment in which the learners and teachers live did affect the way in which they perceived English

as a second language. The learner characteristics in the initial conceptual framework compromised age, cognitive characteristics, affective characteristics and personality characteristics, however, through the data collection the themes that emerged identified age and the learner's language background, thus eliminating cognitive, affective and personality characteristics. The cognitive, affective and personality characteristics cannot be commented on because the learners were not included in the sample.

The learning conditions initially included the examples of English as a first language and English as a second language. For the purpose of this study, the sub-factors were adapted to English as a LoLT, compromising teacher and learner perceptions, the lack of educational resources and the limited amount of teaching time. It is followed by the learning process, which includes strategies and techniques, however, additional factors such as the LiEP, the CAPS curriculum and the various intervention programmes by government were added, as these were identified in the themes that emerged from the data.

Lastly, the learning outcomes are incorporated in the framework, which included second language competence and/or proficiency. The data collection highlighted that the sub-factors include the learners' ability to read, write and speak English.

The following section presents the research findings in terms of the conceptual framework factors, as presented in Figure 6.2.

6.4.2.1 Social context
Similar to Stern's initial model, the factors which comprise the social context include sociolinguistic, sociocultural and socio-economic factors.

Sociolinguistic, sociocultural and socio-economic factors
Through the observation when arriving in the community in which the schools are situated, it was evident that these communities looked like every other South African township: underdeveloped, poor infrastructure, lacking in resources, adults and youth walking and sitting outside, implying unemployment. This observation was confirmed by the teachers during the interviews. The findings confirmed that the lack of morale and the disinterest in acquiring the English language in the community or in the learners' home environment (particularly referring to their parents and guardians) had an impact on how learners responded to learning the English language in school. This

proved that the views regarding the choice of language predominantly spoken in a community are determined by what the community deems appropriate (Stern, 1983). The teachers pointed out that the majority of residents in their communities seldomly spoke English.

In addition, it could be mentioned that the manner in which a language is taught and learned in schools is related to how the community perceives that particular language. Stern (1983) is in agreement with this view as he mentions that "students therefore come to language learning with positive or negative attitudes derived from the society in which they live, and these attitudes in turn influence their motivation to learn the second language".

6.4.2.2 Learner characteristics

The data pertaining to the learners' characteristics were obtained from their teachers during the interviews, as learners did not form part of the sample for this study. Although classroom observations were conducted, there was not a lot that could be concluded merely from the observations.

Age

Although the study did not collect data related to each learner's age, through observation and confirmation from the teachers, it was noted that the majority of learners were the correct age for their grade. However, the teachers did point out that there are some learners who are either a year younger or a year older than the recommended grade age. The age factor is an important factor as it is one of the factors that determine how well a learner acquires a second language.

Learners' language background

The findings revealed that learners in these schools had different language backgrounds. Not only do the learners' language backgrounds comprise the 11 official South African languages (excluding Afrikaans and English), the teachers also mentioned that some of the learners are not South African citizens and come from neighbouring countries. These learners are mainly from Zimbabwe and Mozambique and, as a result, speak other African languages such as Portuguese and Shona. The teachers mentioned that a large number of the learners in the school were only exposed to English when they entered school in Grade R; the only other exposure learners had to English before school was occasionally on television.

6.4.2.3 Learning conditions

The findings regarding the learning conditions emerged from the observations made, as well as from the focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews conducted with the teachers. The themes that emerged from the data regarding the learning conditions will be discussed with reference to English being the LoLT.

Lack of educational resources

The schools that participated in the study resulted in contrasting findings with regard to educational resources. It was found that the one school did not have a problem with resources as they received resources from the government. However, although the school had access to additional educational resources, they were not well utilised, if used at all. Through my observations, I could see that there were posters on the walls in the classrooms but some teachers mentioned that they seldomly made reference to those posters. It can be concluded that not all resources given to schools by the government are entirely relevant to the content being taught in class.

On the contrary, other evidence revealed that teachers did not receive any additional educational resources from the government. It was pointed out that teachers had to get their own resources or make their own teaching aids, such as flashcards and posters, for their classrooms. Teachers having to find their own resources proved to be a challenge for the teachers as they do not have enough time and the finances to make the relevant learning resources for each English lesson.

Upon observing the classrooms, I noted that there was no reading material for the learners to use freely in the classroom, apart from their set books, which are handed addition out at the start of the lesson and then handed in again at the end of the lesson. The additional exposure learners have to the English language in class is therefore limited due to a lack of additional resources that they can use.

Limited teaching time

The curriculum determines the amount of time allocated for teaching English as a FAL. Grade 3 learners who are expected to transition to English as a LoLT the following year are allocated a maximum of four hours and a minimum of three hours per week, in which teachers are expected to cover reading and phonics, writing, and listening and speaking (South Africa. DBE, 2011, p. 8). This study provided evidence that the amount of teaching time allocated for English as a FAL is not enough as it does not

allow teachers to provide adequate feedback and to assist learners who are experiencing challenges. Therefore, the learners who do not grasp the fundamentals fall behind and will most probably not be assisted by their teachers during school time.

6.4.2.4 Learning process

The study resulted in a number of additional themes that contribute to the learning process. The learning processes identified are subject to the findings that emerged from the data.

Strategies and techniques

The learning process is reliant on the strategies and techniques implemented in the classroom that allow for second language learning to take place. The findings derived from the data indicated that the teachers made use of various strategies and techniques in their classrooms to assist learners during their English lessons. The observations revealed that, during English lessons, teachers made use of flashcards and posters, which the learners enjoyed.

The flashcards or posters were used in the beginning of the lesson to expose learners to some of the objects or animals mentioned in the story or comprehension that was being read to ensure that all leaners were familiar with the appearance of the objects and/or animals and characters in the story. Consequently, learners were able to enjoy the content better, especially for those learners who had never seen some of the objects and/or animals mentioned in the stories. The use of such learning and teaching material brings the English lesson to life and creates much excitement in the classroom.

In contrast, some teachers mentioned that, because they did not have access to various resources that would enhance their teaching strategies and give them a variety of strategies, they had to improvise; they made use of dramatisation to illustrate certain actions, characters and emotions to the learners from what was read.

The evidence illustrated that the strategies and techniques used by teachers in the classroom to teach English as a second language were dependent on the learners' characteristics. Therefore, teachers had to ensure that they had a variety of strategies as all learners will not learn effectively if one strategy is used throughout. Therefore, teachers need to take the learners' cognitive abilities and language backgrounds into account.

Curriculum

It was noted that a large number of older teachers – those who had taught with previous curriculums – opted to go back to the curriculum(s) which had been implemented several years ago. The teachers who had been exposed to Outcomes Based Education felt that it was a much better curriculum than the current CAPS curriculum because it sets out clear outcomes that learners need to achieve. Some of the older teachers went as far as saying that perhaps some aspects should have been

taken from the Bantu Education system. Overall, there was consensus that government should not be quick to completely disregard curriculums; government should rather take the negative aspects of a curriculum and work on improving those aspects, instead of replacing the entire curriculum.

The findings also pointed out the fact that teachers felt that government was making decisions regarding education curriculums and classroom practices without consulting with the teachers, who actually need to deliver the content of the curriculum in their classrooms. In addition, teachers commented that the government should come down to ground level to fully understand what it is that teachers experience daily, before designing new curriculums and policies, because they need to understand the teaching context, as well as the cognitive and behavioural characteristics of the learners.

It was evident from the findings that the teachers found the current curriculum overloaded, as they stated that there is too much content that needs to be delivered, yet the amount of time allocated in which to deliver all this content is limited. Consequently, teachers are teaching to ensure that the content in the curriculum has been covered, which they are aware will be evident when learners are assessed. It therefore seems that teachers are teaching for assessments and not necessarily to provide learners with lasting knowledge or to be sure that firm foundations are in place to ensure future success.

Intervention programmes
Intervention programmes by government and other educational organisations are usually well received by schools, however, the challenge identified in the findings is that these intervention programmes are often time-consuming. The government presents schools with intervention programmes which they are meant to implement during school time, yet teachers also have to cover the curriculum, making it difficult to successfully implement the intervention programme which could help improve the overall learning process and learning outcomes. The intervention programmes that have been implemented in the schools provide teachers with assistance regarding certain strategies and techniques that could help improve current classroom practices. Intervention programmes assist teachers with strategies that they can use in their classrooms to improve reading lessons, such as methods on how to teach phonics

effectively, among other strategies. Some interventions provide guidelines on how teachers should facilitate comprehension and writing tasks in their classrooms. Other interventions are aimed at promoting the culture of reading among learners and within the schooling community.

The findings confirmed that teachers showed great concern regarding their learners' ability to read, write and speak English.

The findings revealed that learners in the foundation phase experienced challenges reading texts which are on their reading level. It was determined that learners in the foundation phase do not necessarily read the words or the sentences in the text in front of them, instead learners memorise and cram the words on each page, as opposed to actually reading. The findings also showed that learners read and pronounce words similarly to the way in which their teachers pronounce and sound words.

Teacher data showed that the majority of learners struggle to put words on paper. Learners write the way they speak or based on what they continuously hear around them. Consequently, learners whose teachers mispronounce certain words and certain sounds are also likely to spell those words incorrectly.

It also emerged from the data that teachers do not communicate with their learners in English all the time during the English lessons; instead, there is a lot of code-switching taking place in the classroom. The learners' English vocabulary does not grow, due to the fact that teachers allow learners to speak in their home language (Sepedi and isiZulu) when they cannot articulate themselves in English, instead of encouraging learners to keep trying or to ask learners to assist one another.

The challenges experienced in reading, writing and speaking determine the learners' competence and proficiency in English, which in turn determines whether the learning outcome has been reached or not. The learners' inability to read, write and speak makes the transition to having English as a LoLT a lot more challenging because their vocabulary is limited and their confidence in speaking English is low. The data from the Grade 4 English teachers revealed that learners often do not understand what their teachers are when they speak English. In such instances Grade 4 teachers call on the foundation phase teacher to assist. This means that the learners were not yet properly equipped to learn in English in the foundation phase as required in Grade 4. Overall, if the learners cannot read, write and speak the learning outcomes have not been

achieved, and by implication make it is unlikely that learning outcomes will be achieved in the intermediate phase.

The following section reflects on the research design and methodology used in this study.

6.5 REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The study followed a qualitative research approach which made use of a case study research design. In order to gain thorough insight, an interpretive paradigm was followed. The sample for the study was purposefully selected. The schools were chosen purposefully to match the criteria of the type of school needed in order to relate to the topic of the study. The two schools selected were both schools with at-risk learners whose LOLT was their home language in the foundation phase and then became English in Grade 4. The teachers in these schools were also purposefully selected, using the criteria needed by the researcher in the study – foundation phase teachers and Grade 4 English teachers. The function of a purposive sample is to select a sample that will be suitable in addressing the main research question and the sub-questions.

The data collection methods used in the study included focus group interviews, semi-structured interviews and observations. The use of multiple data collection methods in this study meant that interviews, focus groups and observation data were triangulated and crystallised to result in the identified themes. Throughout, member checking was done to ensure that participants were understood.

A qualitative research approach considers the researcher as a research instrument; my role was to organise and analyse the data, using the thematic data analysis approach.

6.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The sample of this study was small as it consisted of teachers from only two schools in Pretoria in the Gauteng Province. Thus, the results obtained in this study cannot be generalised to all South African schools with similar features. Consequently, if the research had been conducted on a broader spectrum, it could have yielded other perceptions and attitudes, depending on the context of the schools and experiences of the teachers in those schools.

The learners in the selected schools are taught in English across all subjects from Grade 4, therefore, all teachers teaching learners in Grade 4 could have been included in the sample. The teachers would have been able to share their experiences regarding teaching various subjects in English to the Grade 4 learners, who had previously been taught in other languages. Extending the sample to other subject teachers might have highlighted whether the perceptions and experiences of language teachers were similar to that of teachers teaching other subjects.

The letters of consent distributed to all schools and teachers made mention of the fact that participating in the study was voluntary and that participants were welcome to withdraw from the study at any point. Therefore, one of the major limitations was that one of the schools withdrew prematurely from the study before the data collection was completed. This attrition resulted in less data being collected and consequently in having a smaller range of perceptions and experiences to present in the findings.

Organising the classroom observations and final round of focus group interviews with the remaining school proved to be difficult. The school was not ready for the classroom observations or focus group interviews on the initial date scheduled and as a result another date had to be set. Upon rescheduling, some of the teachers no longer wanted to participate in the focus group interviews and thus semi-structured interviews had to be conducted with the teachers who were still willing to participate. The teachers who withdrew from the study stated that they were busy with exam preparations. This withdrawal perhaps reflects teacher complaints during data collection that a heavy workload allows teachers little time to engage in other activities.

6.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Recognition of the importance of English as a LoLT

The LiEP follows a balanced approach to Foundation Phase instruction, with the simultaneous development of home language and English FAL. However, the current evidence seems to place great emphasis on the use of African languages as LoLT in the foundation phase while neglecting the role of the English language in education. Considering the abovementioned, perhaps the Department of Education should look into incorporating English more in the current foundation phase curriculum, creating a fair combination between the use of African languages in education, without disregarding the importance and role English plays as a LoLT from the intermediate phase onwards. In order for the LiEP to be more beneficial to the education system, great emphasis should be placed on training teachers to handle English appropriately and effectively.

Recommendation 2: More time for and exposure to English

The data collected revealed that teachers were of the opinion that there was not enough time allocated to teaching English in the foundation phase, more specifically in Grade 3, considering that learners will be moving to Grade 4 where English becomes their LoLT for the remainder of their academic careers.

The Grade 3 learners are allocated 3–4 hours per week for English. This limited amount of time means that teachers need to utilise code-switching in order for learning to take place in the classroom.

Teachers and schools need to find ways in which to expose their learners more to English. A recommendation could be that schools make use of affordable and easily attainable yet effective resources that English teachers can use in their classrooms. Schools can encourage staff, learners as well as the community to provide the school with resources that are in English, such as newspapers, advertisements, food and cleaning packaging. Additional exposure to English content will boost their confidence in the classroom when having to read and write in English.

Recommendation 3: Training of Grade 3 teachers

Teachers teaching learners in Grade 3 should be adequately trained by higher institutions to teach English on the level at which the learners are to be taught the following year (Grade 4). Higher institutions should ensure that by the time students start their teaching practice they are able to communicate adequately and confidently in English to avoid the temptation of code-switching. Teachers should be trained to prepare their learners for the language transition by ensuring that the learners are familiar with the fundamentals required in order to be taught in English. Grade 3 teachers should aim at ensuring that learners are able to communicate adequately in English to make it easier for them to understand their teachers the following year.

Recommendation 4: Increased role of parents

Schools could look into creating more awareness around the importance of reading in their schools and communities. Schools should start by ensuring that they have the support and involvement of the parents of learners in their schools. Increased parental involvement will allow for schools and parents to form a strong relationship and therefore they could work together to encourage learners to read more both at school and at home. Involving parents will show learners that the schools do not work in isolation but that their parents also value reading. Although, this recommendation may be ideal, the bigger challenge is that for many learners increased parental involvement may not materialise due to parents being either uninvolved, illiterate or absent.

6.8 SUMMARY

This study aimed to discover the experiences that teachers in the foundation phase have in the process of preparing learners, more specifically Grade 3 learners, for the transition to Grade 4. The transition entails learners making a switch from learning in their home language to learning in English in Grade 4, which means ultimately preparing Grade 3 learners to proceed from learning to read to reading to learn. Understanding the perceptions and attitudes of the teachers who are facilitating this change is important to determine the role their perceptions and attitudes play in successfully executing that process. It is also imperative to note and make sense of their current experiences in facilitating this transition in order for the relevant stakeholders to know how teachers and learners can best be assisted to make this a smooth transition. On a small scale, this study highlighted the significance of the perceptions of those involved in the transitioning process and its role in the process itself. Teacher perceptions and experience and their learners must encourage and facilitate a positive and successful transition that will allow learners not to feel intimated or discouraged when entering Grade 4.

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Faculty of Education
Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

BASELINE DATA COLLECTION: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (FOCUS GROUPS)

1. What is the official language of learning and teaching in grades R to 3 (FP) at your school?

2. What is the official language of learning and teaching in grades 4 to 6 (IP) at your school?

3. What teaching strategies do you use to prepare Grade 3 learners for the transition from mother-tongue education to a different medium of instruction in Grade 4? What do you understand by the term reading comprehension?

4. Can you give examples of reading comprehension strategies that you use in your class?

5. Which reading comprehension strategies do you use before, during and after reading?

6. Which strategies do you like to use and why?

7. How do you teach and model the correct use of reading comprehension strategies to the learners?

8. What in your opinion are the main reasons for the problems regarding the teaching of reading comprehension in the foundation phase?

9. How do you think the problem regarding the teaching of reading comprehension can be resolved?

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Sub-question 1: What are foundation phase teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards teaching English reading?

1. When you see "English/Reading" on your timetable, how does that make you feel? Do you feel anxious, excited, etc. (positive vs negative emotions)?
2. Is it important for learners in the foundation phase to learn English?
3. From your experience, do the learners and their parents agree that it is important for learners to learn English?
4. Do your learners enjoy the English/reading lesson? Why do you say so?
5. Do you enjoy teaching reading?
6. What are some of the challenges you face during that lesson?
7. Do teachers in the foundation phase share reading strategies with each other or does each person have to figure it out on their own?
8. To what extent do you go out of your way to ensure that your learners are enjoying English/reading? Do you use only the resources given to you by the school or do you look for external resources?

The following questions are addressed more to the Grade 4 teachers:

1. Did you apply for an English teaching post or were you not given a choice?
2. Do you enjoy teaching English?
3. Would you have preferred teaching another subject?
4. How do you think the above mentioned affect your attitude towards teaching English?
5. Would you say the set books that learners have to read are relevant to the learners?
   A) Are they age-appropriate?
   B) Do the learners enjoy the stories?
   C) Can the learners relate to the characters in the stories?
   D) Would you change some of the set books and why?

Sub-question 2: To what extent do teachers view intervention programmes as adequately addressing language problems?

Over the years, there have been a number of intervention programmes introduced in schools to help underachieving schools perform better.

1. What interventions have been introduced in your school?
2. Were they effective? How so?
3. Have the interventions been practical?
4. What were some of the challenges? How were these challenges addressed?
5. Are the intervention programmes introduced relevant to the school's context or are they generic?
6. What do you wish you could have learnt before becoming an educator about teaching English?
7. How would you suggested universities or colleges prepare foundation phase and intermediate phase teachers that do not have English as their Home Language?

Sub-question 3: What are the implications of the language in education policy for teacher practice in classrooms?

Are you familiar with the language in education policy? For those that aren't, the language in education policy was introduced in 1997 as a means to accommodate and not disadvantage any learners, who are part of the education system, because of language.

1. What is your home language?
2. When you were in teaching college/university, what was your LoLT?
3. Did you study for the phase you are currently teaching?
4. How many years have you been teaching in the foundation phase?
5. The majority of the learners in your class speak which language?
6. Does the introduction of the language in education policy make teaching easier or more difficult for you? Please explain.

7. In which phase do you think learners should be introduced to English as the LoLT?

8. Do you think the introduction of this policy has put learners and teachers at an advantage or a disadvantage? Why?

9. What practical solutions or recommendations would you suggest the Department of Education introduce in order to address the challenges faced because of this policy?

OBSERVATION SHEET

Name of school:

Date:

Lesson:

	Yes	No	Comment
Preparation:			
1. Classroom environment is conducive for learning			
2. Learners are quiet and ready to learn.			
3. Learners are all seated on a chair and at a desk.			
4. Teacher and all learners have all the necessary material			
5. Teacher and learners are focused on the task at hand.			
6. The teacher has selected a text appropriate for the learners' reading and comprehension level.			
Before Reading:			
1. Ask learners questions related to the theme or topic of the book to find out their background knowledge.			
2. Introduction and background information about the book is given to the learners.			
3. The teacher makes use of other resources to make the learners more interested in the text e.g. pictures, posters etc.			

4.	The teacher explains unfamiliar words and/or concepts to learners.			
5.	A reading strategy is mentioned and explained to the learners.			
6.	The teacher has captured all the learners' attention.			
During Reading:				
1.	The teacher reads the text with confidence (the teacher is familiar with the text).			
2.	The teacher does all the reading.			
3.	The teacher reads with emotion, expression, the correct tone etc.			
4.	Learners are following their own copy of the text.			
5.	Learners are in engaged in the text and show an increased interest as the text goes on.			
6.	The teacher made use of various reading comprehension teaching strategies. E.g. predicting, summarizing, questioning etc.			
After Reading:				
	1. Follow-up questions/comments about the text.			
	2. Learners and teacher engage in a conversation about the text.			
	3. Learners ask questions that show critical thinking.			
	4. All learners understood the text.			
	5. The teacher discusses the comprehension questions with the learners.			

CONSENT LETTER FOR PRINCIPALS

Faculty of Education

Letter of Consent

Dear Dr/Mr/Mrs/Ms

I am currently busy with my master's degree titled:

An exploration into assisting at-risk learners in the foundation phase for the transition into Grade 4.

The aim of the study is to explore ways in which at-risk learners in the foundation phase whose language of learning and teaching is not English can be assisted with the transition from their current language of learning and teaching into grade 4, where English becomes their language of learning and teaching.

The ethics and research statement that is provided by the Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria will be followed closely in order to ensure that a high ethical standard will be maintained. The anonymity of this primary school and all teachers participating in this study will be ensured at all times.

The foundation and intermediate phase teachers from this primary school will be selected based on the following pre-determined criteria:

- The teachers in the foundation phase must currently be teaching learners in Grade 1, 2 or 3.
- The teachers in the intermediate phase must be currently teaching Grade 4 English.
- The teachers must indicate their willingness to voluntarily participate in the research project.

The data will be collected mainly through the use of a focus group interviews as well as classroom observations. The focus group interviews will be conducted based on each teachers' willingness to participate in the study. There will be two focus groups; one for the

foundation phase teachers and one for the intermediate phase (Grade 4) teachers. An appropriate time after teaching hours will be scheduled with the teachers. Each interview should not take longer than 30– 45min. The interviews will take place at the school, as not to inconvenience the participating teachers in any way. All interviews will be audio recorded, with consent from the participating teachers (to make transcription of data easier and more accurate). Only I (the researcher) and my supervisor will have access to the audio recordings.

One day will be allocated for classroom observations – one English lesson in the foundation phase and one English lesson in the intermediate phase. The classroom observations will be scheduled by the voluntary teachers' convenience. An observation sheet will be used.

All data collected will only be used for academic purposes.

If permission is granted, please sign your consent with full knowledge of the nature, purpose and procedures that will be followed during this research project.

Kind regards

_____

Miss N. Sitsha

Email address: nomahlubi.sitsha@gmail.com

Contact number: 071 361 1969

_____

Supervisor: Dr S. van Staden

Email address: surette.vanstaden@up.ac.za

PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH
I, _____, hereby give permission to Nomahlubi Sitsha to conduct her research with Foundation Phase teachers (Grade 1 to Grade 3) and Intermediate Phase teachers (Grade 4) at_____ (name of school). Signature: _____ Date: _____

CONSENT LETTERS FOR PARTICIPANTS

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education

Teachers'/Participants' letter of consent

An exploration into assisting at-risk learners in the foundation phase for the transition into grade 4.

Name of participant: _____

Name of researcher: Miss Nomahlubi Sitsha

Dear foundation phase/intermediate phase teacher

You are kindly invited to participate in a study aimed at exploring ways in which at-risk learners in the foundation phase whose language of learning and teaching is not English can be assisted with the transition from their current language of learning and teaching into Grade 4, where English becomes their language of learning and teaching. This research will be reported on in my master's dissertation at the University of Pretoria.

It is proposed that you form part of the data collection phase of this study by taking part in the classroom observation. The classroom observation will be scheduled according to your English lesson of choice and will take place at the school. The classroom observation will only be for one full English lesson.

Your participation in this study is absolutely voluntary and confidential. Furthermore, it is your right to withdraw at any point during the research study without any consequences or explanations. You can be assured that your decision will be respected. Confidentiality and anonymity will be guaranteed at all times by using pseudonyms for all participants. No participant names or personal information will be reported in my findings.

If you are willing to participate in this research study you will be asked for consent by the researcher to make use of the observation sheet designed for this study. My supervisor and I will have access to these observation sheets. All data will only be used for academic purposes.

You may ask questions before or during the time of participation. If you have any concerns regarding the data collection procedures, please notify me or my supervisor. Please sign to indicate full comprehension of the nature, purpose and procedures of the research and to give your consent to participate.

Kind regards

_____

Miss N. Sitsha

Email address: nomahlubi.sitsha@gmail.com

Contact number: 071 361 1969

_____

Supervisor: Dr S. van Staden

Email address: surette.vanstaden@up.ac.za

PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH

I, _____, hereby give permission to Nomahlubi Sitsha to include me as a participant in her research with Foundation Phase teachers (Grade 1 to Grade 3) and Intermediate Phase teachers (Grade 4) at_____ (name of school).

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Faculty of Education

Teachers'/Participants' letter of consent

An exploration into assisting at-risk learners in the foundation phase for the transition into Grade 4.

Name of participant: _____

Name of researcher: Miss Nomahlubi Sitsha

Dear foundation phase/intermediate phase teacher

You are kindly invited to participate in a study aimed at exploring ways in which at-risk learners in the foundation phase whose language of learning and teaching is not English can be assisted with the transition from their current language of learning and teaching into Grade 4, where English becomes their language of learning and teaching. This research will be reported on in my master's dissertation at the University of Pretoria.

It is proposed that you form part of the data collection phase of this study by taking part in a focus group interview. The focus group interview will be scheduled according to your availability and will take place at the school. The focus group interview should not take longer than 30-45 minutes.

Your participation in this study is absolutely voluntary and confidential. Furthermore, it is your right to withdraw at any point during the research study without any consequences or explanations. You can be assured that your decision will be respected. Confidentiality and anonymity will be guaranteed at all times by using pseudonyms for all participants. No participant names or personal information will be reported in my findings.

If you are willing to participate in this research study you will be asked for consent by the researcher to make audio recordings of the focus group interview (to make transcription of data easier and more accurate). The recording will be securely stored. My supervisor and I will have access to the audio recordings. All data will only be used for academic purposes.

You may ask questions before or during the time of participation. If you have any concerns regarding the data collection procedures, please notify me or my supervisor. Each foundation phase/intermediate phase teacher will have the opportunity to verify the expressed views and the transcriptions of interviews made by me.

Please sign to indicate full comprehension of the nature, purpose and procedures of the research and to give your consent to participate.

Kind regards

_____

Miss N. Sitsha

Email address: nomahlubi.sitsha@gmail.com

Contact number: 071 361 1969

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Supervisor: Dr S. van Staden

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