

# Professional development for teachers of Grade 1 second language learners<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

*There is a need for professional development (PD) among second language (L2) learners' teachers to bring L2 learners up to the same level as their home language (L1) peers globally and in South Africa. Speech-language therapists (SLTs) can provide PD for teachers on language and literacy development of L2 learners. Within the bioecological framework, a mixed method design was used to determine teachers' PD needs through a questionnaire and dyadic interviews. The bioecological framework illuminated the personal characteristics, context, and time factors that inform PD needs. The results indicate a positive impact on teachers and L2 learners when schools prioritise teacher support for L2 learners. Teachers want to be involved in the implementation of PD, but many would prefer support without a coaching element. The findings provide direction for PD programmes to assist teachers with L2 learners in their class.*

**Keywords:** teacher needs, L2 learner, professional development, bioecological framework, speech-language therapist

## INTRODUCTION

Preparing teachers to work effectively with second language learners (L2) is a pressing educational need (Feiman-Nemser, 2018) because L2 learners are increasing globally (Aunio et al., 2019). Acquiring the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) while trying to master academic content is demanding for many learners (Manten et al., 2020). However, acquisition of the LoLT is necessary for literacy attainment, which is integral to effective learning in all learning areas (Govender, 2018).

Speech-language therapists (SLTs) can assist teachers to facilitate progress in language and literacy, as these professionals are the specialists in communication and language development which forms the basis of literacy skills (Wium, Louw & Eloff, 2010). In the past SLTs would have only supported individual learners, but White Paper 6 on inclusive education (Department of Basic Education, 2010) requires a shift to supporting teachers through PD (Wium & Louw, 2015a).

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The focus of this study was on teachers of Grade 1 L2 learners, since learners who do not develop age-appropriate literacy skills during the foundation phase are at high risk for school failure (Snow & Matthews, 2016). In Grade 4, South African L2 learners have poorer reading comprehension than their English L1 peers, despite having had access to English as LoLT throughout the foundation phase (McLeod Palane & Howie, 2019). These figures suggest that L2 learners require a different instructional approach to bring them up to the same language proficiency as their L1 peers (McLeod Palane & Howie, 2019). PD in South Africa should, therefore, equip Grade 1 teachers to teach L2 learners effectively. However, there is a gap in the literature regarding the PD needs, and the factors that influence the PD needs of Grade 1 teachers of L2 learners. It is also unclear what teachers prefer in terms of PD structure.

A mixed method interpretive research design within a phenomenological approach was used to determine the factors that influence Grade 1 teachers' need for PD focused on teaching L2 learners. The ideal structure for a PD programme, according to teachers, was also determined. The paper provides valuable information to schools, districts and outside agencies that provide PD to teachers on the factors that influence their need for PD. It also provides practical solutions on who to target in PD and how to implement PD programmes.

In this article a brief history of the South African educational context is followed by the theoretical framework in which the study was situated. A literature review on the relevant concepts is provided. Thereafter the methods are described, followed by the findings and conclusion.

## BACKGROUND

The political and resultant educational history of South Africa is pertinent to the current classroom context. During Apartheid the South African Language in Education Policy (LiEP) stipulated that each ethnic group be taught in their own language as well as either English or Afrikaans (Graven, 2013). In effect, English and Afrikaans obtained a higher status than the other ethnic languages (Msila, 2011) due to low academic standards of African schools who received less government funding than schools for white learners (Graven, 2013).

After 1994, the South African government sought to give equal status to 11 indigenous languages (Mtsatse & Combrinck, 2018). The LiEP adopted in 1997 allows school governing bodies to determine the LoLT, but recommends the use of the L1 as LoLT until Grade 3 (Department of Education, 1997). Currently, African-language-speaking parents increasingly choose to send their children to schools whose L1 differs from the LoLT (Aunio et al., 2019), thus, teachers need training on how to teach L2 learners (Feiman-Nemser, 2018).

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To ensure that teachers benefit optimally from PD, various influences that affect teachers should be considered. The current study was situated within the bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 2005a) which asserts that human development occurs as a result of the interaction between the individual and his/her context (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). The concepts of 'person characteristics', 'context', and 'time' are particularly useful because teachers' perceived need for PD can be influenced by these. Person characteristics, context, and time influence proximal processes that enhance competency and diminish dysfunction (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

For the purpose of this study, person characteristics refer to age, gender, training, skills, and PD needs. Person characteristics influence and are influenced by the context in which the individual is situated. The context consists of four systems. The microsystem, in the case of a teacher, refers to the teacher's immediate

context, like the classroom and the specific school where she/he works. The mesosystem comprises the interrelations between two or more microsystems. The exosystem refers to settings where the teacher is not an active participant, but in which events occur that affects the teacher, such as the L2 learners' home environments, training institutions, and the Department of Basic Education (DBE). Finally, the macrosystem refers to the shared belief system in which the teacher finds herself/himself.

The increased number of L2 learners in South African classrooms is, from the teachers' perspective, a result of beliefs within society. English is often chosen as LoLT because the shared belief in the macrosystem is that English will give their children social capital (Aunio et al., 2019). Moreover, these parents are aware that learners in English-medium schools generally perform better than learners who have been taught in an African language throughout the foundation phase (McLeod Palane & Howie, 2019).

The choice of English as LoLT is, however, not the only option. In some cases, African-language speaking learners go to Afrikaans-medium schools (Condy & Blease, 2014). In the Western Cape, Afrikaans is considered important for commerce, especially in smaller towns (Carstens, 2017). In some cases, Afrikaans-medium schools are perceived to provide better quality education and function better than other schools in a given area (Brink, 2016). Challenges arise from the increasing number of learners whose L1 differs from the LoLT. These challenges play themselves out within the teachers' microsystem – the classroom.

A significant challenge in the classroom is that L2 learners often only have basic communication skills in the LoLT (Manten et al., 2020). They struggle to acquire the language of the classroom (Mweli, 2018), which is disadvantageous since language skills acquisition is a strong predictor of literacy skills (Snow & Matthews, 2016). White Paper 6 on inclusive education stipulates that it is the responsibility of the individual teacher to ensure that the LoLT does not become a barrier to learning for L2 learners (Department of Basic Education, 2010). The changes in the classroom context over time, as described in the previous section, necessitates PD for Grade 1 teachers to assist L2 learners with language and literacy through inclusive education.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Bioecological framework*

The bioecological framework was originally developed to explain human development, specifically referring to children and adolescents (Rosa and Tudge, 2013). The framework is often used to examine educational practices for learners with particular developmental needs, like visual and hearing impairments (McLinden et al., 2017). Internationally it has been used to understand the influences on L2 learners' development (Ramírez, López & Ferron, 2019; Murtagh & Seoighe, 2022). In South Africa the bioecological theory has also been used to describe the needs of L2 learners in the foundation phase (Kotzé, Van der Westhuizen & Barnard, 2017). Using this framework, the situation regarding inclusive education has been found to be dire on the micro-, meso- and macrosystems, because the education system is not changing fast enough (Smit, Preston & Hay, 2020).

To effect change, Kern (2022) argues that it is important to focus on adults when using the bioecological framework in examining educational practices, since teachers are responsible for implementing inclusive practices. Placing the teacher at the centre of the bioecological framework, factors that influence South African teachers' implementation of inclusive practices have been researched (Engelbrecht et al., 2015). South African teachers' lack of involvement in PD has also been researched, using this framework (Geldenhuys & Oosthuizen, 2015).

### *Second language learning and teaching*

The bioecological framework has shown that teachers' training, experience and cultural competency affect L2 learners' developmental outcomes (Ramírez et al., 2019). L2 learners fare better in skills that are not language specific, like phonological awareness and decoding skills (Paradis & Kirova, 2014). However, L2 learners often experience difficulties in language and reading (Melby-Lervåg & Lervåg, 2014). Teachers therefore need to ensure that they teach L2 learners effectively.

Various factors influence the effectiveness of L2 teaching and learning. L2 teaching is more effective when teachers provide sufficient exposure time to the LoLT inside and outside the classroom (Dubiner, 2019). Learners learn better when they are expected to provide output in the L2 too, therefore ample opportunities for interaction should be created (Dubiner, 2019). Extralinguistic factors like learner and parent attitude towards the LoLT also affect L2 learning (Dubiner, 2019). To ensure effective L2 teaching and learning, teachers therefore require PD on this subject.

### *Teachers' PD needs*

Learning opportunities focusing on L2 learning and teaching are scarce (Feiman-Nemser, 2018). Teachers in South Africa have indicated that they need more training to adequately teach L2 learners alongside L1 learners (Mfuthwana & Dreyer, 2018). Another South African study has found that foundation phase teachers are unfamiliar with the implementation of curriculum differentiation for diverse learners, yet differentiation is essential for successful inclusive education (Bester & Conway, 2021).

In a South African survey pre-service teachers and qualified teachers perceived their training to be insufficient to teach learners from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Jez & Luneta, 2018). After PD, these teachers still indicated a need for additional training sessions on inclusive practices, language, literacy, and assessment (Jez & Luneta, 2018). South African teachers feel they can offer support to learners on a one-to-one basis but have difficulty adapting the classroom environment for inclusive education (Nel et al., 2016).

Researchers call for PD programmes that provide teachers with knowledge and skills to support L2 learners, instead of focusing on identification and referral to other education contexts (Nel et al., 2016). In the USA, teaching effective strategies to support L2 learners in class has been successful in changing teachers' attitudes toward and expectations of L2 learners (Feiman-Nemser, 2018).

### *Effective teacher training*

A relatively large number of studies have shown that PD programmes for teachers that focus on fostering academic language proficiency have a positive impact on classroom practices (Kalinowski, Gronostaj & Vock, 2019). The Luneta (2012) literature review in South Africa identified prerequisites to the effective implementation of PD programmes. Content should be based on teachers' professional needs, and teachers should participate in the design and implementation of the programmes (Luneta, 2012). Furthermore, such a programme needs to address existing school needs, have long-term engagement, and make use of high-quality instructors (Bayar, 2014).

Teachers in South Africa who had undergone training were reportedly unsure if the new strategies were feasible in their classrooms (Jez & Luneta, 2018). PD programmes for teachers are more effective when they include not only a training component, but also practical coaching (Kalinowski et al., 2019). Pairing coaching with group trainings is associated with improved teaching practices and improved achievement of L2 learners (Kraft, Blazar & Hogan, 2018).

*Speech-language therapy*

South African teachers need support from specialists (Nel et al., 2016). SLTs have expertise in language and literacy assessment, diagnosis and intervention, making them integral to the educational team (McLean, Snow & Serry, 2021). SLTs can provide support with specific reference to language issues (Lindner & Schwab, 2020), sentence structure and comprehension (Powell, 2018), acquisition of vocabulary and phonological awareness (Wium & Louw, 2013). Their specialised knowledge of linguistics and language development also positions them to support all learners learning to read (Powell, 2018). Supporting L2 learners in a culturally sensitive way to promote both the mastery of L2 and the retention of L1 is also specifically within the SLTs scope of practice (Wium & Louw, 2015b). SLTs and teachers need to work together to meet learners' academic and communication needs (Olszewski, Diamond & Bingham, 2018). For adequate support, SLTs need to engage in data collection and analyses to identify regional needs (Wium & Louw, 2015b). Teacher support through PD can be used to develop interventions and train teachers (Wium & Louw, 2015b; Powell, 2018). SLTs are encouraged to utilise collaborative research designs to enhance the acquisition of language, literacy and communication skills (Wium & Louw, 2015b). By training teachers on phonological awareness, morphology, vocabulary, and comprehension, SLTs provide support to all learners (Powell, 2018).

**MOTIVATION FOR STUDY**

It is evident that there is a pressing need for South African Grade 1 teachers to be trained with regard to effective approaches and strategies when working with the increasing number of L2 learners. South African teachers have a need for support from specialists (Nel et al., 2016) and inclusive practices with specific reference to language issues can therefore be enhanced through collaboration with SLTs (Lindner & Schwab, 2020). Meeting the needs of teachers is essential to ensure that L2 learners achieve their academic potential and have the same opportunities in life as their L1 peers. We therefore investigated how SLTs can meet the PD needs of Grade 1 teachers who teach L2 learners alongside L1 learners in the Western Cape.

The study is part of a broader project focusing on support provided by SLTs for teachers who teach Grade 1 L2 learners alongside L1 learners. The present article aims to determine the PD needs of Grade 1 teachers. The specific research questions (RQ) were as follows:

- RQ 1: What person characteristics influence Grade 1 teachers' need for PD focused on teaching L2 learners?
- RQ 2: What factors in Grade 1 teachers' context influence their need for PD focused on teaching L2 learners?
- RQ 3: What do teachers consider to be the ideal structure for a PD programme?

**METHOD**

In this section, the methods used in the study are described. Ethical considerations are mentioned, followed by the design of the study, participant selection and participant description. Procedures and materials are described, and finally, data analysis, validity and reliability are discussed, with some notes on the limitations of the method.

*Ethical considerations*

All procedures were reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Pretoria (HUM040/1019).

### *Design*

A mixed method interpretive research design within a phenomenological approach was used. Within the phenomenological approach the researcher attempts to understand participants' interpretations, perspectives and impressions of a specific situation (Brink, Van der Walt & Rensburg, 2012). Various types of questions related to the aim of the study were used to answer the research questions (Bengtsson, 2016). The interpretive design allows for a deep understanding of the needs of the participants through thematic analysis (Lan, 2018). The phenomenological approach emphasises lived experiences of participants and is in line with the bioecological framework.

The study was conducted in two phases. During Phase 1, Grade 1 teachers completed a questionnaire regarding their PD needs and perceptions concerning L2 learners. Phase 2 consisted of two dyadic interviews. In dyadic interviews two participants interact in response to open-ended questions (Morgan et al., 2013). The dyadic interviews provided qualitative data, which allowed for a more in-depth understanding of teachers' PD needs.

### *Participant selection*

For Phase 1 schools in the Western Cape that accommodate L2 learners alongside L1 learners were approached and Grade 1 teachers were invited to participate in the study. Participants were recruited through purposive sampling and had to meet a clear set of inclusion criteria: an appropriate foundation phase teaching degree (Bachelor of Education degree or Postgraduate Certificate in Education), South African Council of Educators (SACE) registration, and experience in teaching L2 learners alongside L1 learners. Eligibility was determined through the basic information section of the questionnaire. All participants from Phase 1 were invited to participate in Phase 2. Four participants agreed to be participants in Phase 2 and were thus also purposively sampled.

### *Participant description*

Fifty-six participants met the inclusion criteria for Phase 1. Participants taught at schools with varying socio-economic status (SES) as indicated by the schools' Quintile rankings (a Quintile 1 ranking indicates a school serving a poor community, and a Quintile 5 ranking or independent school serves a predominantly wealthy community (Van Dyk & White, 2019)). All of the schools followed the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). All participants were female, as is fairly typical for Grade 1 teachers in South Africa (Bhana & Moosa, 2016). Participant demographics are displayed in Table 1.

*Table 1:  
Participant demographics*

	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent of cases (%)</b>
<b>Age</b>		
20-29	12	21,4
30-39	25	44,6
40-49	3	5,4
50-59	12	21,4
60+	4	7,1

	N	Percent of cases (%)
<b>Home Language</b>		
Afrikaans	51	83,9
English	5	8,9
Same as LoLT	52	92,9
Fully bilingual (English and Afrikaans)	56	100
<b>Teaching qualification</b>		
University	44	78,6
College	12	21,4
<b>Post level</b>		
1	27	49,1
Head of department or grade	27	49,1
Principal	1	1,8
No option selected	1	1,8
<b>Quintile</b>		
1	13	25,5
2	12	23,5
3	7	13,7
4	7	13,7
5 or independent school	12	23,5

The participants taught Grade 1 learners for a mean period of 9,18 ( $SD = 8,778$ ) years, ranging from one to 31 years. The mean number of learners in a class was 32,55 ( $SD = 7,422$ ), ranging from 16 to 46 learners. The mean number of L2 learners for the current year was 4,84 ( $SD = 5,047$ ) ranging from zero to 32 learners. The participant who did not have an L2 learner at the time of completing the questionnaire indicated previous experience in teaching L2 learners.

Two dyadic interviews were conducted during Phase 2. All four of the participants also participated in Phase 1. The dyadic interview participants represented knowledgeable and experienced teachers. Their profiles are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2:  
Dyadic interviews: Participant profiles

Code	Age group	Highest qualification	Years' experience teaching Grade 1 learners	School type	LoLT
AA	30-39	Honours Degree	5	Quintile 3	Afrikaans
AB	20-29	Honours Degree	5	Quintile 1	Afrikaans

Code	Age group	Highest qualification	Years' experience teaching Grade 1 learners	School type	LoLT
EA	30-39	Postgraduate Certificate in Education	5	Independent school	English
EB	60+	Bachelor's Degree	30	Independent school	English

### *Materials*

During Phase 1 of this study, a self-administered questionnaire based on the surveys used by Jez (2018), Nomlomo, Stofile and Sivasubramaniam (2018), and O'Connor and Geiger (2009), was used. This allowed the researcher to obtain quantitative and qualitative information about the research questions from a large sample of people who have experience in teaching Grade 1 L2 learners. Participants could complete the questionnaire in Afrikaans or English.

A pilot study was conducted to trial the Afrikaans questionnaire and to improve the validity and reliability of the instrument. Redundant questions were deleted, and confusing questions were reworded. The final questionnaire was translated to English and shortened so that it could be completed in 20 minutes. The final questionnaire consisted of the following sections: background information, the needs of L2 learners, the needs of teachers, content of a teacher training programme and the structure of a teacher training programme. The questionnaire had closed-ended questions, five-level scaled response, checklists, and open-ended questions. Open-ended questions were included at the end of each section and at the end of the questionnaire to allow participants to qualify and clarify responses. Participants indicated on the questionnaire whether they were willing to participate in Phase 2.

During Phase 2 these pre-determined questions guided the dyadic interviews: (1) What are the strengths and weaknesses of the L2 learners in your class? (2) What type of support do the struggling L2 learners receive? (3) Why do you think many teachers do not feel equipped to teach L2 learners? (4) What support do you receive to teach L2 learners? (5) Which aspects of language, literacy and reading do teachers have difficulty with? (6) What does the ideal teacher training look like? The dyadic interviews were audio-recorded with a smartphone.

### *Data collection*

For Phase 1, links to the online questionnaires were mailed to participating schools, which were then forwarded to participants for completion, as guided by Jez (2018). In Phase 2, participants reacted in response to open-ended research questions in dyadic interviews. The interviews were conducted after school and lasted one hour each. Two participants attended the interview via video conferencing, and two at the school premises where they worked. A secure, end-to-end encrypted platform (Zoom) was used for the videoconference.

### *Data analysis*

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27 was used to analyse the data from Phase 1. Descriptive statistics were employed to analyse the data obtained from the closed-ended questions and scaled items on the questionnaires. Spearman correlation was used to determine the degree of association between two ordinal variables or an ordinal and a continuous variable (Field, 2018). Point-biserial correlation was used when one variable was binary and the other either ordinal or continuous (Field, 2018). The Phi coefficient was used to determine the strength of association between two binary variables (Field, 2018). Statistical significance was set at p-value less than or equal to 0,05.



During Phase 2 the data were analysed employing theoretical thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The bioecological framework guided the thematic analysis. First the data were transcribed and read multiple times, then initial codes were developed. Themes were identified and then reviewed and adjusted until they adequately represented the data. Lastly, themes were grouped to fit into the bioecological framework.

#### *Validity, reliability and trustworthiness*

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using Promax Rotation and Principal Component Analysis extraction was conducted using the Likert-type items. It should be noted that, although the sample size of the current study was not extremely large, De Winter, Dodou and Wieringa (2009) have pointed out that EFA can be conducted with small sample sizes. Promax rotation was applied as it allows for correlations between the constructs which were evident in this case from the component correlation matrix. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO = 0.711) and Bartlett's test of sphericity ( $p < 0.001$ ) showed the data to be suitable for dimension reduction (Hutcheson & Sofroniou, 1999). Items with communalities less than 0.4 (Eaton et al., 2019) and loadings less than 0.6 (Guadagnoli & Velicer, 1988) were dropped. Four constructs were extracted using the criteria of eigenvalues being greater than 1, and the Cronbach's alpha values for each of the constructs were computed with a Cronbach's alpha value greater than 0.7 being acceptable (Field, 2018). Construct 1 (Relevance of PD programmes), Construct 2 (Expertise and resources for teaching L2 learners), Construct 3 (Available support for teaching L2 learners) and Construct 4 (PD needs on teaching L2 learners) had Cronbach's alpha values of 0.860, 0.711, 0.784 and 0.866, respectively. Accordingly, reliability and internal consistency of the instrument was established. Construct validity is established when there is convergent and discriminant validity (Garson, 2013). In the questionnaire all items loading on the same construct load highly (establishing convergent validity) and correlations between items of different constructs do not correlate as strongly as correlations of items on the same construct (establishing discriminant validity).

Trustworthiness of the data obtained from the dyadic interviews was established by asking the interviewees to comment on the findings (Nieuwenhuis, 2019). All interviewees agreed that the findings are an accurate representation of the dyadic interviews. Triangulation of the results were obtained by using two different forms of data collection, namely the questionnaire and the dyadic interviews (Maree, 2019). Responses from the questionnaire were compared to that of the dyadic interviews to ensure that the results accurately reflect teachers' PD needs.

#### *Limitations*

Data were collected during the Covid-19 pandemic, which resulted in limited access to teachers. As such, the initially planned focus groups were changed to dyadic interviews.

## **FINDINGS**

In this section the research findings from the two phases of the study are discussed. To support research findings from Phase 1, direct quotations from the transcriptions of Phase 2 are included. An alphabetical classification has been used to refer to each teacher to ensure anonymity (see Table 2). CA and CB represent the teachers from dyadic interview A. Their L2 learners were African-language speaking learners from Sub-Saharan Africa. Participants CC and CD took part in dyadic interview B. Their L2 learners were either Afrikaans-speaking or learners who speak an African language at home.

In dyadic interview B the Afrikaans learners and the African-language speaking learners were not perceived to have similar needs. The teachers did not experience the Afrikaans learners as facing a barrier to learning due to language. From here on, where reference is made to L2 learners in dyadic interview B, these references will be to African-language speaking learners, unless stated otherwise. This is

because the L2 learners from dyadic interview A and the African-language speaking learners from dyadic interview B seem to be homogenous in terms of academic needs. The results are discussed under these subheadings: Person characteristics that influence the need for PD, the influence of context on PD needs, and preferred PD programme structure.

#### *Person characteristics that influence the need for PD*

All participants were female, therefore differences in PD needs due to gender differences could not be determined. Participant age had an influence on how confident teachers felt in teaching, with older participants being more confident than younger participants ( $p < 0,001$ ). However, participant age did not have a statistically significant effect on PD needs.

Participants' training and skills played an important role in PD needs. In Phase 1 adequate undergraduate training was associated with the perception that L2 learners are academically on par with the rest of the class by the end of the year ( $p < 0,001$ ). Although inclusive education is part of all undergraduate education programmes, not all undergraduates feel that what they learn prepares them to work with diverse learners in practice (Walton, 2017). Inadequate undergraduate training in our study was associated with the feeling that the LoLT creates a barrier to learning for L2 learners ( $p = 0,029$ ). If they perceived the LoLT to be a barrier to learning they also felt that they are not giving enough attention to their L2 learners ( $p = 0,004$ ). These participants indicated a need for training on multilingualism ( $p = 0,035$ ) to better equip them to help L2 learners.

Participants' experience is the second person characteristic to influence PD needs. In Phase 2 participants felt that newly graduated teachers who had only done the undergraduate course were not equipped to teach L2 learners. The participants felt that inexperienced teachers or those who did not specifically qualify themselves further would benefit from specific PD focusing on teaching L2 learners, as one AB stated:

Just your B. Ed degree is not going to give you the knowledge to help children with learner support.  
(AB)

Participants who either felt adequately prepared by their undergraduate training or had attended subsequent PD courses that equipped them to work with L2 learners were more likely to feel that they could provide enough academic support for their L2 learners ( $p = 0,040$  and  $p = 0,005$  respectively). Through either experience or training the participants in Phase 1 had a range of skills at their disposal. Table 3 displays strategies that are used most often in the classroom.

Table 3:  
*Strategies used to teach L2 learners*

Strategy	N	Percent of cases (%)
Repeat instructions	47	83,9
Repeat new vocabulary	43	76,8
Use other children as translators	40	71,4
Simplify or rephrase instructions or explanations	39	69,6
Decrease rate of speech	37	66,1
Stories, songs and rhymes	37	66,1

Strategy	N	Percent of cases (%)
Emphasise keywords	34	60,7
Additional visual material	34	60,7
Expand on learner's utterances	34	50
Involve parents to assist at home	23	41,1
Gestures	23	41,1
Dramatise	21	37,5
Translate to L1	17	30,4
Repeat the learner's utterance	16	28,6

The strategies used in the classroom were further elucidated in Phase 2 when participants explained how they simplify or rephrase instructions or explanations and repeat instructions and vocabulary. EA stated that:

...we adjust our teaching all the time to include them... (EA)

EA elaborated further:

So we talk about it all the time, every single word. What does this mean? Especially with my reading - with my reading I do every single word we read. (EA)

These types of strategies are effective for teaching L2 learners (Lyster, Saito & Sato, 2013). Participants EA and EB felt that the techniques and strategies they use come naturally with their level of experience. Personally, they were therefore uncertain about the importance of PD focusing on teaching L2 learners but saw the need for it in others, as can be seen in this dialogue between EA and EB:

...we receive a lot of training, but I don't think we've ever received training, specifically for L2 learners... (EA)

But I think at our level it's so elementary...you know what I mean? (EB)

I think it comes easily to us, but there's lots of teachers that doesn't... (EA)

I just think that comes with experience. (EB)

The findings show individual differences regarding PD needs. The majority of participants (61,8%; n = 34) from Phase 1 have attended courses or workshops that have equipped them to work with L2 learners. However, the participants in Phase 2 had not received training specifically on teaching L2 learners. AB explained that:

...the training is mainly focused on the curriculum... But the teachers...haven't received much support on how you support children that struggle. (AB)

It is unclear whether the training referred to in Phase 1 was specifically on the topic of L2 learners, or whether participants simply felt that what they learned could be applied to L2 learners. Even EA and EB

who feel that PD focused on teaching L2 learners would be 'so elementary', felt ill-equipped to determine whether L2 learners experienced a language barrier or had additional difficulties. EA noted that:

...it's hard to know. Is there not a concentration (problem)? Is there not another problem? Is it just the language? (EA)

Other common PD needs expressed during Phase 1 are set out in Table 4. The majority of participants in Phase 1 (83,3%; n = 45) felt that they could do more to improve their L2 learners' language skills. Many participants (81,5%; n = 44) indicated the need to learn more about the facilitation of language in the classroom and 86,3% (n = 48) wanted ideas on how to improve L2 learners' language and literacy.

Table 4:  
Areas identified for training

Area	N	Percent of cases (%)
How to equip L2 learners' parents to help their children	38	67,9
Reading	36	64,3
Specific strategies for teaching L2 learners	34	60,7
Assessment of L2 learners	28	50,0
Vocabulary expansion	26	46,4
Spelling	25	44,6
Phonological awareness	21	37,5
What research says about teaching L2 learners	21	37,5
How to complete the curriculum effectively	21	37,5
Following instructions	21	37,5
Differentiated learning	19	33,9
Multilingualism	18	32,1
Vocabulary for Mathematics	18	32,1
Language and culture	17	30,4

A minority of participants (33,3%; n = 18) from our study felt entirely comfortable differentiating the curriculum for their learners, while very few did not feel comfortable at all (7,4%; n = 4). Participants are therefore mostly not unfamiliar with curriculum differentiation, but most feel that it is an area in which they could improve. Successful differentiation of the curriculum was associated with the perception that the L2 learners in their class were academically on par by the end of the year ( $p = 0,003$ ).

Participants in Phase 2 felt strongly that if they were able to speak the L2 learners' home language, it would benefit the learners greatly and help with their own confidence in teaching L2 learners. Dixon et al., (2012) found that learning L2 learners' home languages can assist teachers to help learners more efficiently. However, in a multilingual country like South Africa very few teachers are able to speak all of the learners' home languages, as AA explained:

I have very limited isiXhosa vocabulary. I can literally say, "sit", "stand", "come to me"... but that is not going to equip me to help that child progress because I don't have that vocabulary. That is my biggest problem. (AA)

#### *The influence of context on PD needs*

The influence of context on the teachers' professional development refers to the microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems and macrosystems that have an impact on the teacher. Each system influences and is influenced by every other system.

#### *PD needs: Microsystem and Mesosystem*

The majority of participants (60%,  $n = 33$ ) say that their school provides specific support to L2 learners and referral protocols are in place for struggling L2 learners (65,5%;  $n = 36$ ). The more affluent the school, the more participants felt the school found practical ways to help teachers accommodate L2 learners ( $p = 0,039$ ) and had adequate referral protocols in place ( $p = 0,041$ ).

In Phase 1, teachers reported that workshops hosted by the school increased their confidence ( $p = 0,021$ ). Increased workshop attendance was associated with less need for training in teaching phonological awareness ( $p = 0,002$ ) and differentiated learning ( $p = 0,008$ ), which agrees with the findings of Dixon et al. (2014). Schools that found practical ways to accommodate L2 learners had teachers who perceived their L2 learners to be on par with their L1 peers by the end of the year ( $p = 0,006$ ).

Schools that provide specific support to L2 learners were more likely to have teachers who felt competent in teaching L2 learners ( $p = 0,005$ ), who felt that they had sufficient resources to teach L2 learners ( $p = 0,020$ ), were comfortable in differentiating the curriculum ( $p = 0,002$ ), were satisfied with the number of training sessions they received from the Department of Basic Education and were in general confident teachers ( $p = 0,017$ ). They were also the participants who felt that they were able to develop their L2 learners' skills to the appropriate level by the end of Grade 1 ( $p = 0,002$ ). Gu and Day (2013) found that support within the workplace increases resilience of teachers, which impacts positively on their willingness to continue teaching to the best of their ability.

Rather surprisingly, the more school-based workshops participants had attended, the more likely they were to feel that they could do more to improve L2 learners' language skills ( $p = 0,006$ ). Dixon et al. (2014) found that PD hours predicted teachers' confidence in their ability to promote learning. If workshops only consist of a two-hour presentation after school, teachers do not have the necessary knowledge to implement strategies in class (Dixon et al., 2014). Increased training time has been recommended for PD for South African teachers (Jez & Luneta, 2018). In the current study it is likely that most school-based workshops were short, theory-based workshops that did not include a coaching element, as advocated for in the literature (Kalinowski et al., 2019).

Our results show that if a school supports teachers with L2 learners, proximal processes are created that increase teacher competence and reduce dysfunction (Bronfenbrenner, 2005b). For most participants the microsystems aided them in teaching L2 learners. If the school environment was supportive participants were generally more positive about other microsystems, namely learners in their class. Positive attitudes to L2 learners have been shown to improve L2 learners' academic outcomes (Ramírez et al., 2019).

#### *PD needs: Exosystem*

Teacher perceptions in foundation phase classes in South Africa are that high learner-teacher ratios cause teacher negativity, discipline problems, didactical neglect and a greater need for PD (West & Meier, 2020). This was reflected in Phase 2, when EB stated that

...in the small classes...we can actually help those children with language more so, whereas in a big group those that have the potential are actually lost... (EB)

In Phase 1, however, class size did not result in a greater need for PD. In fact, participants with fewer L2 learners in their class had a greater need for training on language and literacy ( $p = 0,032$ ), assessment of L2 learners ( $p = 0,030$ ), phonological awareness ( $p = 0,006$ ), spelling ( $p = 0,019$ ), following instructions ( $p = 0,004$ ) and vocabulary expansion ( $p = 0,049$ ).

These findings show the resilience of teachers and do not agree with the perceived didactical neglect found by West and Meier (2020). Our findings are similar to that of Gu and Day (2013) who found that adverse circumstances can increase teachers' resilience if they have a strong sense of vocation and a disposition suited to working with pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. Schools with a lower socioeconomic status, which in South Africa is strongly linked to class size (Köhler, 2020), have a more pronounced effect on learner outcomes than class size as such (Köhler, 2020; Wills & Hofmeyer, 2018).

Interestingly, support from the district resulted in a greater need for training on assessment of L2 learners ( $p = 0,026$ ), use of themes in the class ( $p = 0,013$ ) and how to complete the curriculum effectively ( $p = 0,009$ ). PD provided by the district therefore needs to address the specific needs of teachers if it is to be efficient. Our findings on the exosystem therefore indicate that teachers are resilient enough to provide support to L2 learners, even in schools where the exosystem enforces large class sizes. Their PD needs are rather influenced by the relevance of the support and training provided by the broader school structures.

#### *PD needs: Macrosystem*

PD needs influenced by the macrosystem are more implicit in nature, since these needs originate from shared beliefs and the broader culture. At the time of the study, no known previous studies have compared the beliefs of Afrikaans and English Grade 1 teachers, who represent different cultures. There were no statistically significant differences between teachers at Afrikaans and English schools with regard to their perceptions of themselves, support that they have received for teaching L2 learners, or the need for PD.

Beliefs and the culture surrounding inclusive education in South Africa influence teachers' PD needs. Teachers in South Africa tend to be quick to refer, instead of addressing diverse needs within the class (Bester & Conway, 2021). In Phase 1, teachers indicated that they felt more confident if referral protocols for struggling L2 learners were in place ( $p = 0,012$ ). This was also reflected in dyadic interview B. Their perceptions were in line with an individual deficit model of difference, where expert assessment and treatment are needed. EA indicated the following:

Their issues are so vast and it's often beyond the teacher's scope of practice. (EA)

EB agreed:

(They need) more specialised help than we can give. We can give so much and not more. (EB)

Such opinions concur with opinions often held by South African teachers, notably when schools have therapy support available (Andrews, Walton & Osman, 2019), as was the case at EA and EB's school. In contrast, the schools where dyadic interview A's participants worked did not have the same support.

The teachers who participated in dyadic interview A took full responsibility for the L2 learners. This is contrary to most findings concerning inclusive education in South Africa, but agrees with Andrews et al. (2019), who found a positive correlation between low SES and inclusive practices. A potential reason for

Quintile 1 to 3 schools being more open to supporting L2 learners in class is that training provided on supporting L2 learners is perceived to benefit all the learners in the class, since L1 and L2 learners often experience the same challenges. As AA stated aptly:

My learners who are L2 learners have exactly the same problems as my children who are L1 learners. (AA)

In contrast, dyadic interview B's participants perceived their L1 and L2 learners to be on vastly different levels, which makes implementing class-wide strategies challenging. EA explained:

...for our (learners) some are at a high level, and some are at a low level. It really is worlds apart. (EA)

Inclusive thinking in affluent schools therefore needs to be evaluated and challenged to align to international views that inclusive practices should enhance the learning outcomes of all learners (Malinen et al., 2013). Our findings indicate that the macrosystem plays an important role in teachers' perceived PD needs. Their beliefs about L2 learners and whether they are responsible for assisting them influence how willing they are to participate in PD on teaching L2 learners.

#### *PD programme structure*

Participants in Phase 1 want to be actively involved in the implementation of PD. Most participants (81,1%;  $n = 43$ ) would like to be able to discuss specific cases and get appropriate advice. On the whole, participants (81,5%;  $n = 44$ ) want to brainstorm together to find solutions to language and literacy problems, and 73,6% ( $n = 39$ ) want feedback on how their skills have improved.

Despite wanting feedback on how their skills improved, many participants do not want to be observed and receive feedback on how they teach (68%;  $n = 36$ ). Participant AB cast some light on teachers' unwillingness for an in-class presence:

I think many teachers get very anxious when someone comes to their class. (AB)

This perceived intrusiveness of a coach and the anxiety that goes with it has been described elsewhere (Shernoff et al., 2017). Coaching in South African Grade 1 classes has been found to have a large and statistically significant impact on Grade 1 reading proficiency, more than double the impact of teacher training alone (Cilliers et al., 2020). This yields important questions with regard to if and how coaching should be implemented. Shernoff et al. (2017) suggested that longer term support can result in a trusting relationship between the teacher and the coach, resulting in the desired outcome. PD programmes should therefore involve teachers in the implementation of PD and the presenters of the programme should make an effort to win the trust of the teachers.

## **CONCLUSION**

Grade 1 teachers in the Western Cape have taken on the task of teaching L2 learners alongside L1 learners. Our results clearly show the benefit when schools prioritise support for teachers and L2 learners, by involving SLT's, for example. Teachers are more motivated within their microsystem and exosystem, with improved L2 learner outcomes, teacher confidence, resilience, and positivity towards the school and the Department of Basic Education. The positive interaction between the different microsystems and exosystems has a positive impact both on the teacher and the L2 learners' academic outcomes.

The implicit needs that this study has pointed out are within the macrosystem, namely shared beliefs about inclusive education. Some teachers felt that L2 learners' needs were beyond their scope of practice, which

is not in line with White Paper 6 on inclusive education (Department of Basic Education, 2010). Research shows that teachers' attitudes toward and expectations of L2 learners can change as they learn more effective strategies to support their learning (Feiman-Nemser, 2018).

To our knowledge, our study is the first in South Africa to ascertain what teachers are willing to do in a PD programme. Although they want to be active participants in the training, they prefer not to be observed while teaching, thus limiting the coaching element. Our study adds the important finding of teacher anxiety to the literature on PD in South Africa. Teacher motivation during PD programmes is important (Geldenhuys & Oosthuizen, 2015), therefore the coaching element of PD will have to be approached with compassion, nurturing and mentoring.

#### *Implications for PD*

This study has shown that person characteristics and context, as conceptualised in the bioecological framework, influences Grade 1 teachers' need for PD focused on teaching L2 learners. The person characteristics of age, training and experience increase teachers' confidence in teaching L2 learners. The participants in our study had a lot of skills and strategies at their disposal, however, they still had a great need for more PD on various areas related to L2 learners. Schools, districts, and the Department of Basic Education should therefore prioritise PD focusing on teaching L2 learners.

In the microsystem, schools that provide support to teachers who teach L2 learners have a positive impact on teachers' confidence and perceived L2 learner outcomes. Increased support in the microsystem can therefore reduce the need for PD. PD provided on district level, unfortunately does not seem to reduce the need for PD, which questions the effectiveness of these PD programmes. PD provided by the exosystem, or any outside agencies should therefore be provided in collaboration with teachers, ensuring that teachers' specific PD needs are met.

PD may also be more successful if teachers are supported in the implementation of new strategies. The PD structure should therefore be designed in collaboration with teachers, teachers should be involved in the implementation thereof, and PD presenters should have long-term engagement with the teachers to enable coaching. Table 5 provides strategic and practical solutions for the provision of PD for teachers:

*Table 5:  
Solutions for the provision of PD, within the bioecological framework*

	<b>Factors influencing PD needs</b>	<b>Practical implication for PD provision</b>
Person characteristic	Teacher's age, skills experience and perceived PD needs.	Determine context-specific needs of teachers prior to PD planning.
Microsystem	Level of support provided by individual school.	Focus PD on teachers with less school support. Equip schools to be more supportive of their teachers.
Exosystem	Relevance of training provided by the school district.	Ensure relevance by involving teachers in the planning and implementation of PD.
Macrosystem	Inclusive education culture	Equip teachers to take responsibility for all learners in their class. Address attitudes toward inclusive education in PD.

This study has succeeded in giving a voice to Grade 1 teachers, from schools with various socioeconomic statuses, who have L2 learners in their class. The findings show that teacher education at the undergraduate



level as well as continuous PD should include training on how to teach L2 learners, regardless of LoLT. Teachers realise that they need to use L2 learners' home languages to support them academically. PD programmes should therefore train teachers on practical ways to use the learners' L1 despite the teacher not necessarily being proficient in the L1. In addition, the study has shown that the needs of Grade 1 teachers with L2 learners in their class are of such a nature that they can be met by SLTs. Providing PD on communication skills, language, literacy, reading, writing, phonological awareness, learner assessment and inclusive education are within SLTs' scope of practice (Wium & Louw, 2015).

#### *Limitations and future research recommendations*

A limitation to the study was the small sample size. We would have preferred to have more participants for Phase 2 of the study in order to obtain a wider range of qualitative input. However, the dyadic interviews were effective in acquiring in-depth responses from participants. Future studies could have more dyadic interviews with a wider range of participants, to be able to compare the views of different participants from the same type of schools.

The teacher and learner outcomes of PD designed and implemented via collaboration between SLTs and teachers could be a significant topic for future research. Furthermore, it should be ascertained whether a teacher PD programme focusing on the needs of L2 learners does, in fact, also benefit L1 learners, given that inclusive education should benefit all.

This paper used the bioecological framework to organise and conceptualise teachers' needs and perceptions regarding PD for teaching L2 learners. The bioecological framework has shed light on the person characteristics, context, and time factors that inform Grade 1 teachers' PD needs and was successful in revealing expressed and implied PD needs of teachers. The findings provide direction for planned PD programmes to assist teachers with L2 learners in their class and show that SLTs can meet the PD needs of teachers. Importantly, this is a first step in allowing teachers to have input in the content and design of a PD programme. Such a PD programme should enable teachers to continue to provide high-quality instruction in the midst of a changing classroom environment.

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