

**Exploring the perceptions of English second language
teachers about learner self-assessment in the secondary
school**

by

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DECLARATION STATEMENT

I, Lisemelo Moloi, declare that this work is entirely my own and it is original. All the work of others and sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of references. The material contained in this report has not been previously submitted by at this university or any other educational institution for degree purposes.

STUDENT'S SIGNATURE: ----- DATE: -----

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study was to investigate English second language (ESL) teachers' perceptions about learner self-assessment in the secondary school. The study also examined the factors that might influence the perceptions that teachers hold about self-assessment. The participants of this study were 163 ESL teachers who are teaching at secondary schools in Gauteng Province; they were from 94 randomly selected schools. The data was collected through questionnaires and the response rate was approximately 53%.

The literature review was utilized to identify the main perceptions. The studies led to a 57-item teacher's perceptions of learner self-assessment questionnaire based on the following main perceptions: the value of self-assessment in the teaching and learning processes, the use of self-assessment as an alternative assessment technique in English second language learning, the accuracy and reliability of self-assessment and the role of teachers in the effective implementation of self-assessment in their classrooms.

The data for the study were analysed using quantitative techniques. The findings for the study showed that teachers have a strong feeling about the value of learner self-assessment; they showed that it helps in the improvement of teaching and learning. The results also indicated that teachers agree that self-assessment should be used in English second language teaching as an alternative form of assessment as it enhances learners' linguistic skills. Teachers perceive that they have an important role to play in ensuring that the implementation of self-assessment becomes successful in their classrooms. However, some have indicated that learners are not objective enough when assessing themselves and therefore the results derived from self-assessment cannot be accurate and reliable.

Teachers' perceptions correspond with their classroom self-assessment practice because most of them also indicated that they employ self-

assessment to enhance learners' performance. Majority of teachers also indicated that factors such as class size, availability of materials, teacher professional training and development, formal teacher training, years of experience, classroom experience with self-assessment, and time available for self-assessment played a significant role in influencing their perceptions.

The conclusions were drawn from the results and the recommendations were made for further research. The limitations of the study were also discussed.

Keywords: assessment, self-assessment, perceptions, teachers' perceptions, English second language, second language, second language learning, teaching and learning

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ABBREVIATIONS

ESL:	English as a Second Language
C2005:	Curriculum 2005
CTC:	Communicative Language Teaching
OBE:	Outcomes-Based Education
L2:	Second Language

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

This investigation focused on the exploration of perceptions of English second language (ESL) teachers about learner self-assessment in the secondary school. It highlighted the factors that contributed to the investigation and provided the main aim and key objectives to the study. It was of great importance to undertake this study as classroom assessment has changed significantly. Traditional methods of assessment are now being replaced or complemented by alternative forms of assessment where learners are more involved in the assessment of their own learning. Dragemark (2006:2) explains that “the most radical form of this alternative view is that the primary role of assessment is not about grading at all, but about learning, and that assessment practices should be developed and refined so that they assist the learner to learn effectively and efficiently.” This is compatible with constructivist learning pedagogy which advocates the full engagement of learners in their own learning through the construction of their own knowledge. Therefore understanding teachers’ perceptions about self-assessment is crucial, as these perceptions may have a great impact on the manner in which they implement it in their classrooms.

For the purpose of understanding ESL teachers’ perceptions and practices with regard to learner self-assessment, it is important to briefly address the education transition that took place in South Africa recently. In the past, the South African education system was racially organised. This changed after the 1994 democratic general elections where a non-racial education system based on the principles of equity was implemented, providing for central as well as provincial and local organisation of education (Van Wyk and Mothata,

1998:1). The Department of Education implemented a new curriculum (Curriculum 2005) and Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) has been introduced as a new teaching approach into South African schools in 1998. Kilfoil and Van der Walt (1997), as cited in Schlebusch and Thobedi (2004:35), state that OBE paradigm encourages the effective use and integration of various teaching and learning strategies involving the teacher and the learners. They further mention that Curriculum 2005 provides for eight learning areas in the senior phase (Grade 7 to 9), including language, literacy and communication, under which ESL falls. It is expected that learners include at least two of the eleven official languages as fundamental subjects and further languages may be taken as core and/elective subjects (Department of Education, 2003:9). It is argued that the purpose of learning a second additional language is to enable learners to interact effectively with other South Africans. Thus, English is the second additional language to the majority of learners in South African schools. The reason may be that both the government and the public at large realise that English is an important tool to boost the citizens' competency to be a part of the international community, as it will increase the nation's competitiveness and improve its image (Chiang, 2003:6).

Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) as the new approach to teaching and learning should therefore be applied in the learning of English, just like in other learning areas. It is in this regard that Schlebusch and Thobedi (2004:35) assert that the OBE approach is used in teaching English Second Language (ESL) with the purpose of developing learners' competency, as well as the ability to apply English in authentic situations, such as during formal and informal conversations. The assessment of learners in an ESL classroom also needs to be employed in a manner that complies with OBE principles. It is argued that the outcomes-based approach to the curriculum and assessment are strongly linked and this therefore needs the implementation of valid and reliable assessment procedures (Van Rensburg and Twala, 1998:82).

Assessment reform was one issue that was a major element of reform since it is regarded as a powerful educational tool used to improve teaching and learning. According to Vilakazi (2002:1) traditional assessment methods “are characterised as teacher-centred and authoritarian, which promote rote-learning and obsessed with content, show a lack of integration between education and training, rigid divisions, and involve punitive formal examinations designed to yield high levels of failure.” Omelicheva (2005:191) also asserts that these traditional assessment practices are not consistent with the revised ideals of the school education. He further claims that if students are excluded from participating in the evaluation, they become intellectually dependent. However, with the introduction of the Outcomes-Based Education system, attention has been focused on the assessment of learners’ performance to ensure that learners achieved the desired learning outcomes.

It is against this backdrop of educational change that new approaches to assessment, namely alternative assessments, were introduced. Genc (2005:5) adds that these new assessment practices consist of measurement of opportunity, involvement of students in the assessment process, fairness in measurements, and multiple ways of assessment. And therefore teachers are expected to implement these new techniques in their classrooms. In order for teachers to effectively implement these changes they need to be conscious of the importance of these assessments in the teaching and learning process. In particular, self-assessment should be viewed by teachers as an authentic assessment and an opportunity to engage learners more in their own learning, as OBE posits that learning should be more learner-centred. In view of this, Genc (2005:7) observes that if teachers do not realise why alternative assessments are important for education, the expected change in their actual assessment practices is not so straightforward.

It is widely reported that teachers’ beliefs and perceptions play a crucial role in the decisions that they make in their classrooms. Genc (2005:8) claims that teachers still use their existing perspectives when trying to make innovations in current classroom practices. In this regard, it is important to take ESL

teachers' perceptions about learner self-assessment into consideration since their perceptions play a meaningful role in the implementation of such a form of assessment.

1.2 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Researchers have agreed that teachers have certain perceptions and assumptions about how children learn (Flores, 2001:255). He also explains that what happens in the classroom setting is often the result of an individual's educational, social, and economic attainment. Thus, in order to have an understanding of the current social reality, it is important to explore what kinds of perceptions teachers hold about learner self-assessment.

Zacharias (2003:7) states that the study of teachers' perceptions can provide significant insight into many aspects of education. It is in this regard that many researchers have undertaken research on teachers' perceptions on various aspects of the curriculum and how these perceptions influence teachers' practice. Pajares (1992:321) argues that the teachers' and teacher candidates' beliefs should be a focus of educational research as it can provide information to the educational practice in a manner that current research agendas have not and cannot. Taimalu and Oim (2005:177) also observe that researchers' attention has moved from the studies of teachers' external behaviour to the differences in teachers' thinking, beliefs and attitudes. They say that researchers now believe the subjective beliefs have a great influence on a person's behaviour, because a belief in his or her own ability determines how this person thinks or behaves. Exploring teachers' perceptions and integrating them to their classroom actions will therefore give an insight into why and when teachers act in a particular way. It is also essential in improving teachers' professional development and classroom practices. Therefore, the present study would investigate in great depth the ESL teachers' perceptions on learner self-assessment in the secondary school.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Assessment of student learning is regarded as a very important component of the teaching and learning process. The main aim of assessment is to determine learners' academic capabilities, which will enable teachers to improve instruction and give more opportunity for learners' academic development. Hirvena and Pierson (2000:105) state that assessment is best viewed as a means of measuring, at a particular point in time, what students know or can do. It can also be regarded as a process of allowing them to provide a portrait of their own learning through some form of self-assessment. Alternative methods of assessments are now being commonly used in the classroom as teachers focus on using assessment as a means for improving teaching and learning.

Self-assessment is therefore considered to be one of those alternative assessment techniques that assist the learner to learn effectively and efficiently. Ellis (2001:301) suggests that self-assessment enables educators to make learning a more active and participatory process and encourages shared learning. Geeslin (2003:23) also mentions that the implementation of student self-assessment is an important mechanism through which learners interact with the teachers and develop the requisite introspection skills to evaluate their own progress. However, it is argued that the ability to assess one's performance accurately is not a natural gift, but rather a skill that can be learned, improved, and excelled at (Mattheos, Nattestad, Falk-Nilsson and Attstrom, 2004:378).

Even though self-assessment is believed to be in line with current learner-centred education, there are still scepticisms about the validity and dependability of such assessment. It is believed that learner-derived marks cannot be accurate enough and they cannot be relied upon, especially when they are used for summative purposes. The introduction of self-assessment in the classrooms has been faced with some problems due to the fact that their marks could not be used in the formal grading of their performance (Stefani, 1994:19). Omelicheva (2005:201) points out that self-assessment is frequently

used in the summative evaluation of students and this raises some problems with regard to the validity and reliability of this kind of assessment as a means of measuring learners' achievements. The validity of students' self-assessment is also questionable if their marks are different from those of the teacher (Benett, 1993:84). This difference between learner-derived marks and those of the teacher may be due to the learners' lack of experience and expertise in carrying out the assessment process.

Rees and Shepherd (2005:31) suggest that there is evidence that shows that medical students may be poor at self-assessing their own performance and that various factors may be associated with self-assessment inaccuracy, such as gender, learners wanting to present a favourable impression of themselves, and the familiarity of learning and assessment activities. Apart from these, there are also several other factors that might contribute to the inaccurate self-assessment. For example, students may lack awareness concerning what is expected of assessment, and students scoring their potential rather than their actual performance (Evans, Mckenna & Oliver, and 2002:511).

It is also suggested that many learners are not comfortable when asked to assess their own learning. They do not know where to begin and they do not know how to set assessment criteria and choose which aspects of their own performance and understanding to assess. This lack of confidence and comfort in learners when they are supposed to assess their achievements may lead to unreliability of learner self-assessment, because they can make mistakes and therefore come up with incorrect marks in the process. Falchikov (2003:105) contends that students often do not like the idea or the experience of being involved in self-assessment and the reason is that some students lack confidence, doubting their ability to mark fairly. Other students believe that the duty of assessment is the responsibility of the teacher and this contributes to their reluctance when it comes to the assessment of their performance. Learners also see the task of assessment as a difficult one. It is in this regard that Yancey (1998:16) points out that students are not used to providing assessment of their own work, particularly when they are asked to

evaluate or judge the quality of the work. Students also feel that they may not be objective enough when assessing their learning and therefore believe that it is only the teacher who can do the job of assessment fairly, as he or she is the expert in the field (Olina and Sullivan, 2004:20).

Some studies have also shown that weaker students tend to overrate themselves (Evans *et al.*, 2002:513). The reason may be that they want to boost their self-esteem which may otherwise be low due to their lack of ability to perform as expected; they want to feel good about their work and look better in front of the teacher. They also state that high achievers hold themselves to more strict standards and assess themselves against their own potential. With regard to gender it is suggested that male students tend to overestimate their performance, whilst female students tend to underestimate theirs, in spite the fact that female students statistically perform better than male students. In view of this, Widlanski and Courtright-Nash (2004:138), in their study on the factors involved in high student self-assessment, find that differences in accuracy of self-assessment are related to gender and age. They say that older students portray lower self-perception compared to younger students. Male students also show higher self-perception than their female counterparts. With regard to this, these authors suggest that when teachers are using self-assessment to improve teaching and learning, they need to be more aware of the factors that may lead to underestimation and overestimation of skills and knowledge. Better self-assessment needs to be developed.

The problem of self-assessment also lies with the teachers who seem to be reluctant to allow their learners to assess their own learning. Teachers are not used to asking students to assess their own learning. Stefani (1994:74) suggests that teachers express great fear of handing any of the power of assessment over to students. This is generally due to the fact that there is a possibility that student marks will differ significantly from the teacher marks. Teachers may also fear that students lack the necessary experience to do the job, or fear that students will collude and award themselves unnecessarily high marks (Falchikov, 2003:105). He further states that some teachers may

feel uncomfortable with the change of role necessary to allow them to give over some control to students. Teachers therefore believe that encouraging students toward self-assessment abdicates the teachers' responsibility to evaluate learners. Chan (2003:49), in his study on teachers' perspectives on autonomous language learning, reveals that teachers generally seemed to doubt that students are ready to accept responsibility for their own learning and they still assume the main responsibility for the majority of language related decisions, including assessment.

The preceding discussion suggests that the implementation of learner self-assessment in the classroom is still faced with some problems. Self-assessment is still regarded as an inaccurate form of assessment, because the results derived from it cannot be reliable and valid. It is therefore important to determine the perceptions of teachers on self-assessment as well as the factors that might influence these perceptions. In addition, it was also important to establish whether their perceptions have an impact on their classroom application of learner self-assessment. Teachers' perceptions about learners assessing their own learning in ESL education could be one of the barriers affecting what they actually do in classrooms.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS FOR THE STUDY

This investigation is based on the following research questions:

- ❖ What is the nature of English second language teachers' perceptions about learner self-assessment?
- ❖ What are the possible factors that influence English second language teachers' perceptions about learner self-assessment?
- ❖ Do English second language teachers' perceptions influence their classroom application of learner self-assessment in their classrooms?

These questions were addressed through the analysis of the literature as well as the results of the empirical investigation.

1.5 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.5.1 AIM

The aim of this study is to determine how ESL teachers perceive the value and use of learner self-assessment in the secondary school.

1.5.2 OBJECTIVES

The aim above was attained through the realisation of the following objectives:

1. To explore the perceptions of teachers towards the value and use of learner self-assessment in teaching and learning situations.
2. To understand teachers' perceptions about their roles in the successful implementation of self-assessment in their classroom.
3. To determine teachers' perceptions regarding the accuracy and reliability of learner self-assessment.
4. To examine the possible factors that influence and shape teachers' perceptions about learner self-assessment.
5. To establish how teachers' perceptions affect their application of learner self-assessment in their classrooms.

1.6 RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

McMillan and Schumacher (1993:88) describe a hypothesis as “a tentative statement of the expected relationship between two or more variables”. It should then be testable and verifiable. Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh (1990:4) say that the hypothesis is stated only as a suggested solution to the problem, with

the understanding that the investigation that follows may lead either to its retention or to its rejection. They also explain that the hypothesis is a powerful tool in scientific inquiry because it enables researchers to relate theory to observation and observation to theory.

Listing the hypotheses is very important because it states the expected answer to the research question; the use of hypotheses enables the researcher to produce a powerful tool for seeking knowledge (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh, 2002:97). Thus, the researcher formulated the following hypotheses to anticipate what the outcomes of the study might be:

Hypothesis 1: Teachers perceive learner self-assessment as a valuable form of assessment in the teaching and learning processes.

Hypothesis 2: Teachers perceive that learner self-assessment should be used as an alternative form of assessment in ESL.

Hypothesis 3: Teachers perceive that they have a critical role to play in the successful implementation of self-assessment in their classrooms.

Hypothesis 4: Teachers perceive learner self-assessment as a reliable and accurate form of assessment.

The empirical investigation also tested the following null hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5: Teachers do not perceive learner self-assessment as a beneficial method of assessment in the teaching and learning processes.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study explores the perceptions of English second language teachers about learner self-assessment in the secondary school. Teachers are considered to play a crucial role in the successful learning of their learners. It is therefore important that they become aware of the perceptions they are operating from. This kind of awareness may compel them to reflect on their currently held perceptions and consequently decide whether these perceptions are worth maintaining or should be altered in the light of new approaches to assessment that were introduced as a result of education reform. Additionally, by being aware of the results of this study, teachers may develop more positive perceptions and attitudes toward learner self-assessment and therefore engage learners more fully in the assessment process. Again, examining teachers' perceptions about learner self-assessment and how these perceptions influence their classroom practices can help in understanding teachers' behaviour. In this regard, Flores (2001:256) asserts that understanding what drives teachers' behaviour may help to change the social reality created within the classroom. He adds that the research on teachers' beliefs and perceptions may provide some more insight into this social reality.

This study can also be helpful to learners, as it gives them tools to self-assess their own performance. It becomes significant for them because it could let them know at which stage they are in their learning process. This knowledge would enable them to make some improvements in their language learning.

This study also aspires to contribute to a better understanding of current English language teaching, learning and assessment and it will provide curriculum planners with the current condition of second language education.

The researcher therefore hopes that the results of this study will shed light on the belief system of teachers in order to gain some insight as to whether there is awareness on the importance of learner self-assessment and how such awareness impacts on the application self-assessment.

1.8 DEFINITION OF THE BASIC CONCEPTS

1.8.1 ASSESSMENT

“Assessment is the process of gathering and discussing information from multiple and diverse sources in order to develop a deep understanding of what students know, understand, and can do with their knowledge as a result of their educational experiences; the process culminates when assessment results are used to improve subsequent learning” (Mihran, 2007:47). Thus, the goal of assessment is to discover learners’ strengths and weaknesses so that teachers can be able to improve instruction to provide more opportunity for learners’ cognitive growth and educational experience (Strong, Davis, and Hawks, 2001:52). Assessment should therefore also be used as a tool for the improvement of learner performance, rather than only being used for grading.

1.8.2 SELF-ASSESSMENT

Self-assessment is the process of having the learners critically reflect upon, record the progress of, and perhaps suggest grades for, their own learning (Roberts, 2006:3). The very act of self-assessment can be a force pushing students to engage more actively in their own learning. In this regard, learners are regarded as self-regulated individuals who take greater responsibility in their own learning.

1.8.3 PERCEPTIONS

A perception is described by the Hornby as “an idea, belief, or an image that you have as a result of how you see or understand something”. With regard to the current study, the framework for understanding perceptions develop comes from research on beliefs. Thus, beliefs are described as “the information, attitudes, values, expectations, theories, and assumptions about teaching and learning that teachers build up over time and bring with them into the classroom” (Richards, 1998:66 cited in Zacharias, 2003: 54). This

means that perceptions play a significant role in what teachers do in their classrooms.

1.8.4 SECOND LANGUAGE

Second language means any language that is learned after the first language or mother tongue is relatively established (Kingwell and Clarke, 2002:12).

1.8.5 SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Second language learning is the conscious study of a second language (Thurlow, 2004:7).

1.8.6 ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

English is taught in second language learning contexts, which refers to those in which the classroom target language is readily available in everyday life (Thurlow, 2004:7).

1.9 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.9.1 MODE OF INQUIRY

Quantitative research design was used in this study since it enabled the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the beliefs, perceptions, opinions and feelings of the respondents regarding the use of learner self-assessment as an alternative method of assessment in the teaching and learning of English language. According to Page (2005:58) the advantage of quantitative research is that data collected as numbers can be subjected to statistical analysis to prove or disprove the hypothesis.

1.9.2 RESEARCH SAMPLE FOR THE STUDY

Sampling is defined by Rosnow and Rosenthal (1996:413), as cited in Ramolefe (2004:36), as a scheme of action, a design or procedure that indicates how respondents are to be selected in the study. Researchers take a small portion of the population, observe this small group and make generalisations of the findings to a larger population. Population is defined by McMillan and Schumacher (2006:119) as “a group of elements or cases, whether individuals, objects, or events, that conform to specific criteria and to which we generalise the results of the research”. For this study, the population will be teachers drawn from secondary schools in the Gauteng Province. The sample of 300 teachers will then be selected from these schools.

Approximately three hundred teachers who currently teach English as a second language were drawn from 94 schools, which were randomly selected from about 500 secondary schools in Gauteng. The advantage of random sampling is that all members of the population have an equal and independent chance of being included in the random sample (Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh, 2002:165).

1.9.3 DATA COLLECTION STRATEGIES

Mertens (1998:285) explains that “the purpose of data collection is to learn about something about people or things. The focus is on the particular attribute or quality of the person or setting.” In order to achieve this, specific techniques and measuring instruments are employed.

1.9.3.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature review is one of the important research tools since it enables the researcher to gain an insight into the nature and meaning of the problem that has been identified. For this study, relevant literature from text books and journal articles was selected and analysed to determine how self-assessment

has been conceptualised and the value it adds to the learning of English. Attention was also focused on teachers' perceptions in the literature review.

1.9.3.2 QUESTIONNAIRE AS A RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Another method that was used to collect data includes the empirical method through the use of a questionnaire, which was designed for educators. The purpose of the questionnaire is to identify teachers' perceptions in relation to the topic of this study, and the extent to which these perceptions are translated into observable teaching behaviour. Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh (1990:421) note that the questionnaire can guarantee confidentiality and is able to elicit a greater number of truthful responses than would be obtained with other methods such as a personal interview. Therefore, a questionnaire with scaled items was constructed for this study. It consisted of 57 structured questions and one open-ended question. The respondents were expected to respond to the questions by expressing degrees of agreement or disagreement, using a four point scale with descriptors ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree' and those ranging from 'very unlikely' to 'very likely'. The questionnaire was standardised for all the schools. During the design stage, the first draft of the questionnaire was sent to the Department of Statistics of the University of Pretoria for modifications. Arrangements were then made with the principals of the identified schools to administer the questionnaire at their school premises.

1.10 DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES FOLLOWED

In this study, the statistical procedures were followed to analyse data using a computer. The data was processed by statomet (Department of Statistics of the University of Pretoria).

1.11 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF THE STUDY

The validity and reliability issues were seriously taken into consideration throughout the whole process of data collection. In this study content validity was applied to the questionnaire to guarantee its validity. The research questionnaire was also pilot-tested with 10 teachers as a further step in establishing the validity and reliability of the research process.

1.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN THE STUDY

The researcher has to adhere to the ethical standards that guide the research. The guidelines of ethical standards, which include informed voluntary participation, respondents' privacy, confidentiality, anonymity, caring and fairness, and avoidance of harm to participants, were cautiously followed. The Gauteng Department of Education granted permission to conduct the research in the schools identified. Permission was also obtained from school principals to administer questionnaires in their schools. The ethics committee of the University of Pretoria issued a clearance certificate which allows data collection to take place in schools.

1.13 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The researcher acknowledges that there may be some limitations with regard to the study. In the first place, access to schools may be limited because of time restrictions placed on schools by the Department of Education. The second limitation is related to the sample of teachers which was limited to one province in South Africa, in this case Gauteng, and therefore the generalisation of the findings will be unlikely. Additionally, the present study does not take into consideration the opinions of learners about their involvement in self-assessment. Another study could be conducted to investigate the perceptions of learners. Another limitation is that this research is limited to English; it should therefore be expanded into other learning areas.

1.14 ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

This study will consist of seven chapters. The background to the study is provided in **Chapter one**. The chapter also lays the foundation by giving the aims and objectives of the study, as well as the research problem and the significance of the study. It also describes how the research will be carried out.

Chapter two represents a review of literature on the concept of self-assessment and its value and disadvantages in the teaching and learning processes. The chapter also presents the role that teachers could play to ensure the successful implementation of self-assessment in their classrooms.

Chapter three focuses on the review of the existing literature on teaching and learning of ESL and the application of learner self-assessment in the ESL classrooms.

Chapter four deals with the analysis of the existing literature on teachers' perceptions and it also presents the conceptual framework, which was based on the social constructivist perspective on learning and assessment.

Chapter five presents the methodology that was used to carry out the study, highlighting the instruments used and the sample selected for the study. A quantitative survey research was utilized for this study. Approximately 300 teachers from Gauteng secondary schools represented the sample and a questionnaire was used to collect data.

The results and interpretation of the empirical investigation are presented in **Chapter six**.

Chapter seven provides conclusions and recommendations made in this study.

1.15 CONCLUSION

The study was conducted to understand the perceptions of teachers about learner self-assessment and how these perceptions contribute to their application of self-assessment in English language learning. The researcher provided a brief introduction to the study and also identified the problem statement, research questions, aims and objectives, hypothesis, significance of the study, and the concepts basic to the study. Research methodology, research sample, data analysis, reliability and validity, limitations and the organisation of the study were also outlined.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON LEARNER SELF-ASSESSMENT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews the existing literature based to the concept of self-assessment. The concept of self-assessment will be fully deconstructed, that is, it will be explained in detail in order to seek a deeper understanding of the importance of self-assessment as it applies to academic context. My review is guided by research questions in the study which seek to investigate the educational dimensions of self-assessment. This chapter also seeks to locate the historical context of self-assessment as it applies to high school curriculum. In achieving this, self-assessment will be fully defined. I will also examine why there has been a need and current interest for the implementation of self-assessment in the classrooms. The advantages of self-assessment in the teaching and learning process are fully explored, as well as the teachers' role in ensuring effective implementation of self-assessment. The disadvantages of self-assessment are also examined.

2.2 WHAT IS LEARNER SELF-ASSESSMENT?

Self-assessment has been considered as a type of alternative assessment due to the concerns that the traditional type of assessment is not authentic and does not help students develop in knowledge and thinking (El-Koumy, 2001:2). Shepard (2000a:12) states that this new type of assessment reflects the constructivist theory of learning which perceives learners as active participants in the construction and evaluation of their own knowledge and thinking. It is generally observed that self-assessment is the ability of a learner to make judgements about his or her performance; this means making

decisions about one's self and one's abilities. Different definitions of the concept self-assessment have been stated by various authors. For example, Boud (1995:1) defines self-assessment as "the involvement of students in identifying standards and or criteria to apply to their work, and making judgements about the extent to which they have met these criteria and standards". In a similar definition, Dragemark (2006:169) describes self-assessment as the act of monitoring one's own work and how one approaches it in connection to clearly defined criteria. This is done with the purpose of determining whether or not one has met the stated goals for the task at hand. These authors agree that self-assessment does not only mean that learners allocate marks for their work, but it also means the total involvement of learners in their own learning by determining what they perceive as good work in any aspect. This definition suggests that learners make judgements based on set criteria and standards, but also that learners are given the freedom to make decisions about the outcomes of their learning and their own development.

From the point of view of learner performance, Bose, Oliveras and Edson (2001:4) contend that self-assessment is the ability of learners to critically reflect on their strengths and weaknesses in order to identify learning needs, conduct a review of their performance, and reinforce new skills or behaviour with the aim of improving performance. Additionally, Fitzpatrick (2006:26) observes that self-assessment is a means of giving learners an opportunity to evaluate their existing skills in a critical manner and consider how they could develop aspects of this further. This suggest that self-assessment is a tool for enhancing learners' knowledge about their own learning, which includes the effectiveness of their learning strategies, the extent of their learning and the learning strategies to be applied in the following step of learning (Andrade, 1999:4). It can deduced from the above definitions that self-assessment is utilised by learners in assessing and monitoring their own level of knowledge, performance and understanding, and obtaining information about their learning. It is in this regard that Srimavin and Darasawang (2004:1) argue that when learners are enabled to self-monitor their learning practice they are

helped to develop knowledge through conscious control over that knowledge or to develop metacognitive awareness of knowledge and thought.

From the perspective of reflective learning, Roberts (2006:3) defines self-assessment as the process of having learners critically reflect upon, record the progress of, and perhaps suggest grades for their own learning. This view is supported by Carlson (2001:7) who suggests that self-assessment is one of the forms of alternative assessment that enables learners to make judgements on their own learning, as well as reflect upon that learning. Similarly, Marcy (1994:2) observes that self-assessment is a complex, reflective ability focused on the development of judgement. In this sense learners reflect on their practice and gain an understanding that learning is not just an event that happens and finishes, but rather a process that they have to be engaged in on a continuous basis.

There has been an argument as to whether self-assessment can be used for summative purposes. Boud and Falchikov (1989:529) maintain that self-assessment can be used for both formative and summative purposes. They say that it is formative because it contributes to the learning process and provides assistance to the learners to enable them to direct their efforts to areas of improvement. They further mention that self-assessment can also be summative, either in the sense that learners can decide when they have learned as much as they wished to in a given area or, in formal institutional settings, it may contribute to the grade awarded to students. Bose *et al.* (2001:6) add that a formative evaluation in an internal evaluation serves to improve the product being developed, while summative evaluation is an independent assessment of an outcome. However, Boud (1999:122) warns that if self-assessment is to be used for formal assessment great care needs to be taken to make sure that the circumstances under which it is carried out is appropriate. He says that the use of self-assessment for summative purposes raises the question of the reliability of learner self-assessment. Though it is agreed that self-assessment can be useful for formative purposes, the use of self-assessment for summative purposes is still questionable. It is believed that learners can not be trusted in this task as

most of them tend to cheat and this may result in the unreliability and inaccuracy of self-assessment.

In summary, self-assessment gives the learner the opportunity to review and judge the work that was done, how it was done, and how it is related to the learning process and product. The learner is enabled to critically review his or her developing self as a learner. On the other hand, it is believed that learners cannot be trusted to carry out self-assessment because they tend to cheat and this may result in the unreliability and inaccuracy of this form of assessment. Ross (2006:1) mentions that a large proportion of teachers report using self-assessment at least part of the time, even though they express doubt about the value and accuracy of learner appraisals. Thus the current study sought to investigate the nature of teachers' perceptions towards learner self-assessment and how these perceptions influence their classroom application of self-assessment.

2.3 HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SELF-ASSESSMENT

Boud (1995:50) mentions that while self-assessment might seem to be a new concept in the education system, it has long been used. Examples of the use of self-assessment in its present form date back at least 60 years. Brew (1995), as cited in Tan (2008:15), asserts that some work on student self-assessment was reported as early as 1930 and much of it was based in the United States of America, although most of this early work focused mainly on comparisons between students' and teachers' grades. However, he claims that there has been a significantly greater interest in the idea of engaging learners in the assessment process for the past 15 years. Thus self-assessment became popular as the need for strategies that would encourage learners to take a more active role in their own learning increased.

There was also much interest in self-assessment in the early 1970s, especially in the professional schools of medicine and education. There was a great need to develop ways in which learners could appraise their own work.

Brew (1995) as cited in Tan (2008:15) also claims that by the late 1970s self-assessment was given more recognition, which is something that has been stressed by many great authors over the last decade. Bose *et al.* (2001:4) add that self-assessment gained interest in the United States in the beginning of the 1970s and disciplines such as education, health, industrial psychology and management utilised self-assessment in large corporations, banks, factories, colleges and elementary schools. This was prompted by the need for continued self-learning throughout one's career.

It is argued that self-assessment has traditionally not been part of the courses, but it has had an important role to play in the learning process (Boud, 1995:11). He mentions that students were always the assessors of their work. For example, before they hand in an essay or report, they may have formed their own opinions of how well or bad they think the piece of work is. Boud (1989), cited in Carlson (2001:15), suggests that the literature on self-assessment dates back more than 50 years but that it is only in the past few decades that it has been seriously studied and used for both learning and grading purposes. It is thus surprising that no major work in the area of self-assessment was done until Boud and Falchikov's 1989 analysis of quantitative studies. Carlson (2001:15) adds that studies on self-assessment that were undertaken before Boud and Falchikov's study of 1989 had widely varied results and little cross-referencing between them.

It is evident that self-assessment is not a new concept in teaching and learning in the education system. It has been implemented in various settings as a result of the need to move from teacher-centred methods of assessment to more learner-centred approaches.

2.4 THE NEED FOR SELF-ASSESSMENT IMPLEMENTATION

Coronado-Aliego (2000:23) mentions that over the past years self-assessment was gradually accepted as an alternative approach to assessment and it has been implemented in an increasing number of settings.

The reason is that there has been a shift from teacher-centred systems of assessment to a more student-centred approach. He also states that the implementation of self-assessment has been influenced by the need to introduce reflection and reflective practices in a variety of settings, ranging from schools to colleges to the workplace. Geeslin (2003:859) argues that the implementation of student self-assessment is an important mechanism through which learners interact with teachers and develop the requisite introspective skills to evaluate their own progress. Boud and Falchikov (1989:529) also suggest that there has been a lot of interest in self-assessment in the past 10 years as the role of self-assessment both in learning generally and in the development of professional competence has been recognised. It is argued that one of the characteristics of effective learners is that they have a realistic sense of their own strengths and weaknesses and that they can use knowledge of their own achievements to direct their studying into more productive directions. Thus self-assessment is regarded as one of the means through which learners can realise this. In view of this Ellis (1999), cited in Coronado-Aliego (2000:21), suggests that knowing one's strengths and weaknesses can make a difference in the real world.

Boud and Falchikov (1989:530) point out that the move toward promoting student self-assessment by teachers appears to be motivated by at least two factors. The first one is considered to be educational and the second one is expedient. They argue that there has been a principled desire on the part of the teachers for learners to take more responsibility for their own learning. In the second place there has been a need to develop assessment procedures which are a more effective use of resources by using students more and teachers less in assessment activities. Powell (2000:38) states that in the United Kingdom, in all phases of education, different models of self-assessment were being introduced. She claims that teachers using self-assessment are compelled to look at their professional role in a new light. Self-assessment is also increasingly being used across different occupational sectors and is an increasingly powerful tool for organisational learning.

Self-assessment is also widely recognised as an essential requisite for effective adult learning, and the development and maintenance of professional competence (Jansen, Grol, Crebolder & Rethans, 1998:145). An individual's ability to assess his or her own learning is seen as a necessary real world skill that the learners in the 21st century should possess (Carlson, 2001:7). It is therefore believed that educators both in the classroom and in the field should construct the curriculum in a manner that students are encouraged to develop skills in self-assessment (Ellis, 2001:298). Learners' self-assessment ability is very fundamental in the enhancement of teaching and learning and therefore the inclusion of the opportunities for self-assessment in the education system is so apparent. Weiss, Koller, Hess and Wasser (2005:445) also suggest that self-assessment is widely recognised by medical educators to be an important part training for future physicians. They further say that self-assessment helps in the decision-making process to bring in a consulting physician or to advise a referral; it is therefore an important part of providing quality service to patients. Self-assessment was developed as a tool to encourage learners to critically review their personal and professional development with others as a means of means of promoting transformative learning (Fitzpatrick, 2006:24).

Boud (1995:20-21) observes that there are various factors that led to the current high level of acceptance of self-assessment when it was relatively unusual only 10 years ago. He says that there are different levels at which these factors can be explained, namely macro-level and micro-level. Some of the macro factors include:

- ❖ A shift to individualism and market forces in education.
- ❖ Democratic changes that took place in organisations.
- ❖ Organisational structures were flattened to enable those who are lower in the hierarchy much greater levels of responsibility.
- ❖ Reductions of resources; strategies that require less staff time and effort are considered as favourable.
- ❖ There is a need to better prepare students to take responsibility for their own learning.

- ❖ Shifts from traditional curriculum structure in which expertise in the discipline is the pre-eminent criterion for judgement, to a competency-based or problem-based one, where success is measured by solving the problem or meeting explicit criteria.

In the micro level there have been other factors that led to the interest and acceptance of self-assessment:

- ❖ Today there is an increasing number and diversity of students enrolling in schools and this makes it impossible to assume students will have a common range of often context-specific skills required to be able to judge their own knowledge.
- ❖ Courses are now less likely to cover well-trodden knowledge in the traditional discipline-combined degrees. Modular structures and increasing options mean that different paths are followed by different students
- ❖ Classes are now becoming large and this has led to a decrease in a number of separate items of coursework which are marked and an overall reduction in feedback at the early stages of the course. Opportunities are now very few for students to discuss their specific work in more details with the teacher and the need to pick up the cues and clues which can prompt the development of their own judgements and their work.

It can be inferred from the above discussion that there has been an increasing interest in strategies that motivate learners to be fully engaged in their own learning. Researchers have realised that there is a need for learners to be engaged in the activities that would encourage them to assess their own learning, since this will give them and the teacher an indication of how well they are learning. Thus self-assessment is one of the alternative forms of assessment that involve learners in making important decisions about their own learning. However, it would be interesting to know whether teachers who are expected to implement self-assessment in their classrooms would share the same perceptions about the benefits of self-assessment in the teaching and learning situations.

2.5 THE BENEFITS OF USING SELF-ASSESSMENT IN TEACHING AND LEARNING SITUATIONS

It is suggested that when teachers get learners involved in the assessment process there are numerous educational benefits that can be reaped. Those benefits are fully explained below.

2.5.1 SELF-ASSESSMENT ENHANCES REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Reflection is considered to be an important part of self-assessment that enables students to make informed and refined judgements about their own performance. Boud (1985:87) argues that reflection is about providing intellectual and effective activities for learners to explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciations. It encourages the learner to critically examine his or her work so that he or she will be able to recognise the weaknesses and the strengths and then make some improvements. The capacity to reflect relates directly to how individuals effectively learn from their personal experiences. Rodges (2002:101) even claims that reflection is the meaning-making process that takes the learner from one experience into the next with a deeper understanding of its relationships to other experiences and ideas.

Kusnic and Finley (1993), as cited in Marcy (1994:1), argue that students always reflect on what they have learned; describing it in qualitative terms, synthesising it, making sense of it, and evaluating it. They contend that reflection is analytical because it occurs when one is thinking about how one did something. It could also be evaluative when one is thinking about how well one has done something. Reflection is thus part of learning where learners critically evaluate their practice as one step in an interactive process of exploring effectiveness (Baldwin, 2000:452). It is thus an exploratory activity which might take place at any stage of learning.

Thus, in order to become reflective practitioners, students need to be able to assess their own work. One way to do this is with self-assessment materials

(Khan & Pinyana, 2004:3). Reflection and self-assessment are seen to be linked because self-assessment is regarded as a useful tool to help students reflect on their practice and understand that learning is a process, not just an event that happens and finishes (Baldwin, 2000:453). Learners should therefore be encouraged to use self-assessment as a means to expand their self-awareness and capacity for critical reflection on the skills acquisition to meet their professional competencies and pursue ongoing professional development (Fitzpatrick, 2006:25). Thus, self-assessment as a tool for reflection can promote the acquisition and development of higher order thinking skills (Teh, 2006:1).

Roberts (2006:4) also supports the view that reflection is an essential component of self-assessment. He says that it provides students with an opportunity to consider not only their own learning, but also how they have learned, including any problems encountered along the way. This kind of reflection helps self-awareness and can give valuable feedback to guide future learning. Carlson (2001:16) adds that self-assessment has a direct and positive impact on learners' ability to learn from experience, reflect on those experiences, make a stronger commitment to workplace competence, and make a better evaluation of their performance. In the process of self-assessment students thus reflect on their learning on a continuous basis and they also progress as they work towards achieving their set objectives. It is in view of this that Gardener and Miller (1999), cited in Srimavin and Darasawang (2004:1), encourage the use of self-assessment in self-access learning because it enables learners to reflect on their progress and this kind of reflection enables them to take more control of their learning and be responsible.

The preceding discussions suggest that learner self-assessment helps learners to develop habits of self-reflection. Learner reflection is an essential learning strategy that brings some valuable insights into the process of learning that will benefit both the teacher and the learners. Thus, by encouraging reflection, self-assessment encourages learners to observe their

work in personal terms and it can also help learners achieve better learning outcomes.

2.5.2 SELF-ASSESSMENT PROMOTES AUTONOMOUS AND INDEPENDENT LEARNING

Self-assessment is said to play an essential role in encouraging learners to be autonomous in their learning and this, in turn, makes learners actively involved in their learning. Learner autonomy is thus seen as the process where students take greater control over their own learning (Chan, 2003:34). Chan also says that autonomous learning grows out of an individual's acceptance of his or her own responsibility for learning. Delon (1996), cited in Dragemark (2006:170), claims that autonomous learning and the ability to evaluate one's own learning has become an educational aim in many European school systems. This is seen in many national modern-language syllabi and curricula in European language policy in general. He says that this is done to prepare young people for life-long learning, as well as to prepare them for increased work mobility in Europe. With autonomous learning the learner is regarded as a decision maker who is willing to develop the capacity to choose from available tools and resources to create what is needed for the task at hand (Chan, 2003:34). It is thus important for teachers develop a positive attitude toward learner autonomy and instil in learners the necessary skills that are considered as crucial to the success of the development of learner autonomy.

Self-assessment also promotes independent learning by leading students to tackle the class tasks without the teacher's intervention. The teacher only serves to provide guidance and assistance if the need arises. Cotton (2001), cited in Cassidy (2006:170), suggests that independent learning has become a priority in both educational and employment contexts. It is realised that students need to develop as independent learners to enable them to cope with the demands of the changing curriculum and structure of higher education and to meet the expectations of employers. The students' ability to

engage in self-assessment is thus regarded as central to the concept of independent learning.

Boud (1995:27) argues that it is essential to higher education that students learn to become independent of their teachers and that they should be exposed to situations in which they are expected to make decisions about what and how they learn more often than is commonly the case at present. Thus, when learners become more independent it is neither possible nor desirable for teachers to be the ones to assess the students' learning in all areas (Dragemark, 2006:170). Self-assessment is therefore regarded as a main issue in autonomous learning as it gives learners the opportunity to set learning goals and enables learners to monitor and evaluate their own learning (Srimavin and Darasawang, 2004:1). It has been associated with a move towards developing greater student autonomy, intellectual independence and responsibility for their own learning (Boud & Falchikov, 1989:530; Omelicheva, 2005:200). When learners are encouraged to critically assess their own learning they are afforded the opportunity to take control of their learning and this creates an arena for independence and ownership of the learning process (Liebovich, 2000:238). Learners should thus be helped to develop skills that are essential to professional practices, such as the ability to function as independent and autonomous learners (Ellis, 2001:300).

Orsmond, Merry, and Reiling (1997:358) mention that many tutors are now willing to encourage their students to take a more active role in their own learning and develop more autonomy and responsibility in their study. When students feel the ownership of the learning process and believe that they can make a difference they become more engaged in their own learning. Thus when learners are asked what they have learnt and how they have learnt it, it fosters evaluative attitudes in the learners and improves goal orientations because learners are aware of the learning objectives and they are therefore in control of their learning situation (Srimavin & Darasawang, 2004:1).

It is apparent from the above discussion that the concepts of autonomy and independence in learning should be given increased attention due to the fact

that they promote a situation where the learners' ability to learn is improved. It is in this regard that learners need to be provided with the opportunity to assess their own progress, as this will enable them to become independent and autonomous learners.

2.5.3 SELF-ASSESSMENT ENCOURAGES SELF-DIRECTED AND SELF-REGULATED LEARNING

Self-assessment is considered as an essential method of assessment that ensures that students become self-directed and self-regulated learners. "Self-directed learning is any increase in knowledge, skill, accomplishment, or personal development that a person selects and brings about by his or her own efforts using any method in any circumstances at any time" (Gibbons, 2002:2). With self-directed learning students willingly set their learning goals and they are actively involved in their learning by planning their studies. Self-directed learning is thus associated with learning characteristics such as consciousness of goals, planning abilities, performance and evaluation skills, and the ability for an individual to be open to new challenges (Lasonen, 1995:201). Self-directed learning is regarded as the dominant mode of learning for professionals after graduating. It is the process in which learners take more responsibility for identifying their learning needs (Jansen, Grol, Crebolder, and Rethans, 1998:145). It is argued that emphasis in university education has switched from teaching to learning, and from the teacher to the management of student self-direction (Hanrahan & Isaacs, 2001:54). Interest has therefore intensified in the educational benefits of learners assessing their work. Self-assessment is the major tool that will enable students to set goals and learn for themselves.

It is thus advisable that teachers are able to empower their learners to be successful self-directed learners who are capable of setting goals for themselves and monitoring their own learning (Mok, Lung, Cheng, Cheung, & Ng 2006:416). Therefore, to empower learners to be self-directed learners, teachers need to provide them with self-assessment tools and techniques that

will help them to identify their learning and measure their progress. Regehr, Hodges, Tiberius and Lofely (1996:S52) claim that the ability to engage in the assessment of one's strengths and weaknesses is the first step in self-directed learning, which has recently been considered as one of the most desirable educational models in an adult learning setting. Self-directed learning is more essential in professions and its self-regulatory autonomy is based on the competent exercise of self-assessment.

The current paradigm of education is considered as a constructivist model, which considers learners as building their own knowledge (Landendyk, 2006:173). Landendyk adds that at the centre of this is a self-regulated learner, who perceives learning as something they do for themselves. The ability to self-assess is therefore one of the skills that a learner needs to have if he or she is to become a self-regulatory learner. Learners have to be able to judge what they know and what they do not know. When students are engaged in the evaluation of their own learning during the process of learning, they are afforded the opportunity to become self-regulated learners. Andrade (1999:16) describes self-regulated learning as follows:

Self-regulated learning is engaging with the tasks in which students exercise a suite of powerful skills including setting goals for upgrading knowledge; deliberating about strategies; and selecting those that balance progress toward goals against unwanted costs; monitoring the accumulating effects of their engagement; adjusting and even abandoning initial goals; managing motivation; and occasionally even inventing tactics for making progress.

It is evident from the above discussion that with the effective use of self-assessment learners are encouraged to fully engage themselves in self-regulated and self-directed learning. As a result they acquire skills that enable them to excel in their learning. It is in this regard that Knowles (1990), as cited in Dungan and Mundhenk (2006:56), claims that learners learn best and become more engaged in their learning when they create their own learning

goals determined by their own needs and desires to know. It can therefore be concluded that self-assessment acts as a motivator which provides learners with the opportunity to take control of and the responsibility for their own learning

2.5.4 SELF-ASSESSMENT IMPROVES LEARNERS' METACOGNITION

When learners are actively involved in their learning through self-assessment, their metacognition improves which can, in turn, lead to better thinking and better learning. Metacognition is thus regarded as the conscious control and regulation of one's own knowledge and skills acquisition (Lasonen, 1995:201). He also mentions that the aspect of consciousness in metacognition indicates the learners' knowledge of three variables concerning persons, tasks, and strategies which influence performance and the learners' ability to cope with various situations. He says that consciousness of personal variables occur when one has knowledge of one's cognitive performance. With knowledge of task variables learners get information that enables them to assess the difficulty of their assignments and the requirement levels of such assignments. Strategy variables deal with learners' knowledge of skills in problem solving methods and how they are applied.

The ability of learners to engage in the assessment of their own learning is a way in which students develop metacognition, authentic learning competencies (Carlson, 2001:7). Thus enabling students to self-assess their work helps them to develop knowledge through conscious control over that knowledge, or to develop metacognitive awareness of knowledge and thought. When the learners' metacognition is enhanced, they are in a good position to acquire higher order critical thinking skills and as a result their learning will be improved, which is the most essential goal of education. Allwood and Jonsson (2001), as cited in Dragemark (2006:181), also maintain that metacognitive function plays a valuable role in the learners' construction of new knowledge, as it has to do with planning, understanding and the control of learning. It is in this respect that Gipps (1994:132) contends that students can only gain access to metacognitive processes through a process

of guided or negotiated self-assessment, in which students gain awareness of their own learning strategies and efficiency. In view of this, Lasonen (1995:210) argues that students must become conscious of their own thinking if they are to recognise their thinking habits and master the learning objectives. It is argued that learners' success in life depends on their personal decisions, irrespective of how well they are taught or trained. He further notes that if students assess their own learning in view of long-term goals they could consciously train metacognition and this would result in learners becoming self-aware, active and thoughtful performers, rather than passive observers of their learning.

Mok *et al.* (2006:416) point out that metacognition has been seen in recent studies as one of the factors that most affects learning. It is the major contributing factor to effective learning. When learners are engaged in the self-assessment process, their thinking is made conscious and explicit and their level of awareness is enhanced. Mok *et al.* (2006:429) also mention that it is through systematic self-assessment, using the Know-Want-Learn method, that learners become metacognitive about their own learning.

It can be concluded that learner self-assessment is a metacognitive skill that is very important for students' learning. It is therefore crucial for learners to engage in the assessment of their own learning in order to improve their metacognition.

2.5.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT IS A USEFUL TOOL FOR LEARNING

Learning is described by Benett (1993:86) as a process that involves adapting to one's environment by accommodating ideas, assimilating experience, reflecting and acting. Learning is regarded as an essential element of educational effectiveness and quality (Lasonen, 1995:199). Learning is thus the function of both teaching and the context in which it occurs. Boud (1995:40) contends that learning is not only a matter of learners interacting with a body of knowledge to which they have been introduced, but it is also how this knowledge is interpreted by them and what actions they take as a

result of these interpretations. It is thus through self-assessment that learners can actively engage in the interpretation of this knowledge. Roberts (2006:3) adds that the act of self-assessment can be a great force pushing students to engage more actively in their learning. Lasonen (1995:201) suggests that student self-assessment serves as a starting point for examining various kinds of learning. It can encourage more active involvement with the subject matter than simply sitting back and awaiting grades from the teacher.

It is also argued that self-assessment promotes learning because it stimulates reflection and acts as a tool to engender a deeper approach to learning (Larres, Ballantine, and Whittington, 2003:100). Larres *et al.* further mention that when students are deeply involved in their learning they become more critical and perceptive in their studies and engage more effectively in self-monitoring, thereby promoting positive attitudes to life-long learning. In this regard self-assessment deepens learners' learning experiences and as a result learners' acquisition and the development of higher-order learning skills are facilitated.

Sadler (1998), as cited in McDonald and Boud (2003:211), maintains that students' ability to assess their own work contributes both to improving learning in the course being studied and it also provides a foundation for life-long learning. Jacob (1999:3) also says that deeper involvement of learners in assessment is bound to enhance learning and it is also critical in the student learning process in the content area. It is believed that if self-assessment is included in the courses, students' desire for learning will be encouraged. It is in this regard that Carlson (2001:16) states that self-assessment promotes learning by leading learners to engage in the reflection of their work and thereby setting higher standard for their work.

Mok *et al.* (2006:416) claim that the importance of self-assessment in the learning process is recognised by many professions. They say that self-assessment has been highlighted as a crucial component for professional teacher education. It has unique significance for teachers in this knowledge sphere for two reasons. In the first place, teachers are supposed to engage in

life-long learning to keep themselves up to date with new knowledge in their areas of expertise. Secondly, teachers must empower their learners to become self-directed learners who are capable of goal setting, self-monitoring, self-assessment and self-correction. Srimavin and Darasawang (2004:1) feel that self-assessment is important to learning in the sense that it provides learners with training in evaluation, which is essential to autonomous learning. It is a tool that involves students in their learning.

Boud (1995:41) asserts that the use of self-assessment activities sends a message to learners that these kinds of activities are seen as a valuable aspect of learning and that it is worth spending valuable time on them. However, he cautions that how powerful this message is depends greatly on how well designed the self-assessment tasks are and how closely they fit the courses of which they are part. If students interpret them as an optional extra the importance of self-assessment will not be communicated successfully.

To conclude, it is worth mentioning that through self-assessment learners are not just passive recipients of knowledge from the teacher, but rather they learn how to facilitate their own learning by getting insight into how they learn. Dungan and Mundhenk (2006:70) even claim that self-assessment enables learners to set the learning goals, establish criteria, reflect on their learning and determine the need for further learning. It can then be said that self-assessment acts as a motivator that stimulates learners' interest in the teaching and learning situations.

2.5.6 SELF-ASSESSMENT CAN BE USED TO IDENTIFY LEARNING NEEDS

When learners are aware of their learning needs they are in a position to realise their strengths and weaknesses, and as a result they apply more effort in the areas that need to be improved. It is in view of this that Dragemark (2006:173) suggests that learners who are involved in self-assessment become more aware of their learning needs. When they are aware of this they are in a good position to notice what they need to concentrate on in their learning. As a result they are motivated and their sense of responsibility is

enhanced, and this will then lead to better learning results. Bose *et al.* (2001:19) also observe that it is through self-assessment that students can delineate where they believe they need to improve their understanding or require further training. This kind of information guides the learner to seek more information or training, or it can be used by the teacher to plan the lesson accordingly. Self-assessment plays an essential role in giving a message to learners about what they should be learning and how they should approach that kind of learning.

Self-assessment thus helps learners to determine what is important to learn. As Mok *et al.* (2006:416) put it; it is a tool for enhancing learners' knowledge about their own learning, and this includes the effectiveness of their learning strategies, the extent of their learning, and the learning strategies to be used in the next stage of learning. Self-assessment thus determines what skills the learner thinks he or she needs to improve in the next learning process. It guides the learner to an important decision about what he or she already knows and what he or she needs to learn, which influences the tasks they will deal with next. Roberts (2006:5) also maintains that self-assessment strategies allow learners to focus more effort on studying those areas where they need more time. It therefore serves as a valuable guide and assistant to learners if it is used appropriately.

Self-assessment helps learners to be critical of their performance and to recognise their drawbacks and assets and, as a consequence, they will be able to act accordingly (Coronado-Aliego, 2000:21). Self-assessment is seen as the most effective way of developing self-awareness of what is to be learned and the skills required to learn how to learn (Ekbatini, 2000:2). He says that it is a powerful learner-directed tool that heightens learners' personal awareness of strengths and weaknesses.

It is thus important to conclude that self-assessment is very essential in the teaching and learning process because it is only when learners are aware of what they already know that the areas that need to be focused on for further learning will be clearly understood. Thus self-assessment should always be

used by learners to check how they have performed and to guide revision. In this way self-assessment will improve their grades as well as the quality of their work.

2.5.7 SELF-ASSESSMENT ALLEVIATES TEACHERS' ASSESSMENT BURDEN

The responsibility for learning and assessment no longer lies entirely with the teacher. Learning is now seen as a shared practice where learners are expected to assume a major role in the assessment of their own learning. In so doing they enable their teachers to concentrate less on assessment and more on other areas of learning. In this way self-assessment can be seen as challenging the issue of power where the teacher no longer solely carries the burden of assessment, but as gives some of the power to his or her students. Blue (1988), as cited in Wei and Chen (2004:2), point out that when learners are deeply involved in the assessment teachers will be free to concentrate on developing learning materials and giving help in other parts of the learning process. Self-assessment thus provides the means to reduce teacher workload. Shameen (2002:133) also sees self-assessment as instilling a higher sense of responsibility and involvement in the learners and consequently easing the administration burden for the teacher. Anderson (1998), as cited in Carlson (2001:16), adds that implementing self-assessment may decrease the time-investment that teachers would otherwise need to make in more frequent assessments.

Ekbatini (2000:2) claims that in self-instructional programs that involve many learners the demands of assessment made by the students are heavy, and self-assessment is one of the methods of assessment that alleviate the teacher's assessment burden. It is clear that self-assessment is worth practicing because it reduces the burden of marking for teachers and as a result they would be able to concentrate on other things that would help in the improvement of student learning.

2.5.8 SELF-ASSESSMENT ENCOURAGES COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE

Shepard (2000a:12) observes that self-assessment encourages a collaborative relationship between the teacher and the learner. It provides the means through which the learner and the teacher engage in the communication of the learning process, which is considered as the most valuable educational aspect in improving learners' performance and developing the learner and the teacher's mutual understanding towards each other. It is in this regard that Dearnley and Meddings (2006:436) argue that self-assessment is the popular practice that increases dialogue between students and teachers. Burges, Baldwin, Dalrymple and Thomas (1999:133) are also of the opinion that self-assessment is a way of improving learning by facilitating discussion and communication between learners and facilitators. Communication between the learner and the teacher is increased because learners and the teacher independently assess and then meet to reconcile their differences of opinion (Bose *et al.*, 2001:12). In this regard, the final mark is a kind of mutual agreement between the teacher and the learner. This can be achieved by making assessment criteria more explicit and encouraging students to understand, discuss and use criteria to make qualitative judgements about their performance. In this way self-assessment allows the learner and the teacher to become partners in the learning process and gives both parties the opportunity to develop goals for the individual learner (Liebovich, 2000:12). However, Shepard (2000a:12) maintains that sharing does not mean that the teacher gives up responsibility but rather, by sharing it, he or she gains greater student ownership and the trust between him or her and the learners is developed.

It would therefore be appropriate to conclude that self-assessment encourages a positive relationship between the teacher and learners when learners begin to realise that they are partners in the assessment process; they are not victims of assessment, but rather they are responsible for their learning and assessment in the classroom. Thus teaching learners to evaluate themselves can be seen as an effective way for educators who wish to work in partnership with their learners to improve learning.

2.6 OTHER ADVANTAGES OF SELF-ASSESSMENT

Various studies show that self-assessment can be effective in improving learners' performance. Marcy (1994:1) asserts that self-assessment helps learners realise that their work is part of the ongoing process of learning and its product. It has now become an important source of students' commitment to improve. Bose *et al.* (2001:19) consider self-assessment as valuable in causing desirable behaviour change. Marcy (1994:1) mentions that learners can learn to understand and evaluate their performance, relate it to their knowledge and abilities in all their complexity, and take the responsibility for improving their learning in an informed way. Taking charge of their learning in this way helps them to make their own control processes explicit and therefore accessible. These processes would normally be regarded as inaccessible because they are unconscious and automatic (Taras, 2001:612).

Stefani (1998:340) contends that today the nature of the business environment is ever-changing and this calls for learners to be equipped with necessary skills that will enable them to be flexible, adaptable, and prepared to take responsibility for their own learning and their own continuous personal and professional development. It is in view of this that Fitzpatrick (2006:33) argues that self-assessment can provide a useful background to stimulate learners' simultaneous engagement with personal and professional knowledge, which extends their critical perspective on their developing practice. When learners are engaged in their knowledge development they become aware of their learning styles and strategies, and their confidence and self-esteem is enhanced; these all impact on the quality of learning achieved (Teh, 2006:2).

Strong, Davis and Hawks (2001:53) suggest that an effective self-assessment program allows students to compare their success against their classmates' success in a meaningful manner. He says that it also encourages academic honesty and yet still gives each student considerable latitude when assigning their own grades. Strong-Krause (2000:49) agrees that when self-assessment is used more efficiently problems of cheating, as well as test security issues,

are eliminated. He also says that less time is spent in completing self-assessment instruments than with traditional tests.

Wells (1998:32) also suggests that educational benefits are many when teachers allow students to be involved in assessing their own work. He says that self-assessment provides the means through which learners evaluate their own growth and set goals for the future. When learners assess themselves teachers get a meaningful indication of what students have learned and provide information for improving instruction and assigning grades.

In conclusion, we can say that the direct involvement by students in the assessment of their own work is highly effective in enhancing learning and achievement. Self-assessment has the potential to motivate learners to be involved in reflective practices, autonomous learning and critical thinking. However, Peatling (2000:2) warns that self-assessment is far from a panacea for all the problems in the education system and should not be viewed as such. It is in this regard that the following section will concentrate on the problems that are associated with the use of learner self-assessment in the teaching and learning processes.

2.7 DISADVANTAGES OF SELF-ASSESSMENT

Even though self-assessment is believed to be in line with current learner-centred education, there are still some flaws that are associated with this method of assessment. In the first place self-assessment is considered as an unreliable measure of thinking and learning, especially when it is used for summative purposes (El-Koumy, 2001:2). There are two main reasons that are perceived to be the cause of the unreliability of self-assessment: Firstly, students may underestimate or overestimate their own knowledge and thinking. Secondly, students may not be honest enough when assessing their own work. In support of these views, El-Koumy (2001:2) mentions that students may be more concerned with the grade than the learning process.

Learners tend to be obsessed with the mark they can give themselves rather than assessing their actual performance, and in this way self-assessment does not serve the purpose of ensuring the learners' commitment in their own learning.

There is also a concern that learners' marks always differ significantly from their teachers and this raises the question of the validity of self-assessment. Martin (1998), as cited in Bose *et al.* (2001:6), brings forward three general reasons for the low correlation between self-ratings and teachers' ratings:

- ❖ People assess themselves on different dimensions of performance than do experts.
- ❖ Different individuals may view the same score in a different light.
- ❖ Learners may use different benchmarks for quality than their teachers because they have not seen the full range of competence

It is also observed that there are various factors that can influence the accuracy of self-assessment. The more specific factors, according to Bose *et al.* (2001:7), are the following:

- ❖ Explicit criteria for the procedures to be evaluated
- ❖ Experience in self-evaluation
- ❖ Expectation of self-assessment validation

Blue (1994:18) also observes that it may be difficult for learners to be objective about their performance, or they may lack the necessary experience and expertise to make judgements of this sort. In this regard self-assessment may be quite difficult to some student types and few students engage in it. This is normally the case in younger learners who are used to more traditional assessment methods; they may not be well-equipped to maximise the potential of self-assessment. In this regard Liang (2006:1) suggests that poor learner attitude and motivation leads to learner resistance when it comes to self-assessment. Another argument that is put forward is that some of the students' culture would not accommodate the use of self-assessment due to

the fact that assessment is regarded as the duty of the teacher. In this case self-assessment would tend to be less accurate, and therefore less useful. Learners may also see self-assessment as an extra burden for them and they may resist that. Gardner (2000:54) asserts that learners may lose respect for their teachers if they perceive self-assessment as a way of offloading part of teachers' burden on them.

Another disadvantage recognised is that self-assessment deprives teachers of one of their main responsibilities, which is to make professional judgements about students' learning progress and tell students how well they are performing (El-Koumy, 2001:2). This is due to the fact that teachers are considered as the ones who have more expertise in carrying out the assessment of student learning.

It is clear from the above discussion that problems with inaccuracy associated with learner self-assessment cannot be ignored. Thus it is argued that this makes it difficult for teachers to decide whether to allow students to take part in the assessment of their own knowledge and thinking or not (El-Koumy, 2001:3). However, Peatling (2000:4) argues that the potential of self-assessment for improving student learning may be considerable if it is implemented with sufficient preparation, care and a willingness to change. Research needs to be undertaken to help teachers in the decision that they make about including self-assessment in their classrooms. Thus it is important to examine the role that teachers need to play to ensure the effective application of learner self-assessment in their classrooms.

2.8 THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER IN THE SELF-ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Fitzpatrick (2006:27) cautions that learners who are not familiar with self-assessment need to be properly guided in working with this form of assessment. Teh (2006:4) also claims that the teacher has to facilitate the process of self-assessment by providing advice and guidance and working

closely with the learners. Learners cannot work on their own; they need to be taught, coached and supported through proper structures and resources. It is in this regard that Gardner (2000:55) maintains that self-assessment is not about leaving learners to fend for themselves. It is about teachers creating opportunities for students to make responsible choices which individualise assessments to their own needs. Bose *et al.* (2001:19) is of the opinion that self-assessment improves with practice; it is a skill that needs to be learned and honed over time. If teachers engage students more often in self-assessment, they will be more accurate. Brookhart, Andolina and Zuza (2004:226) point out that self-assessment is not a magic bullet that will generate learners' learning and involvement but rather, like other all learning strategies, it is a skill that needs to be instilled in learners. He further continues that self-assessment works better where the behaviours targeted are more specific rather than general, and where criteria for evaluation are clearly delineated, defined and discussed beforehand.

We have realised that the reliability of learners' judgement is due to variables whose influence on the learner is difficult to establish (Coombe, 2002:2). Appropriate use of self-assessment may be affected by factors such as parental expectations, career aspirations, age, past experience, learner confidence, and/or a lack of training in self-assessment. These factors must be accounted for in some way. Widlanski and Courtright-Nash (2004:138) observe that if self-assessment is to be used for improving teaching and learning, it is of great importance that teachers become aware and understand these factors as they play a crucial role in self-assessment outcomes and they may influence overestimation and underestimation of skills and knowledge.

Gardner (2000:55) argues that teachers have to raise awareness among learners of the benefits of self-assessment especially when self-assessment is a new experience to the students. It is the duty of the teacher to explain to them why they should self-assess, why assessment is not only the teacher's job, and how self-assessment complements other assessments (Kosel, 2006:202). He says that it is of great importance to explain that self-

assessment means involvement in the learning process and that it plays a role in raising students' innermost awareness in a way no teacher can emulate. Dragemark (2006:185), however, contends that the development of awareness does not come by itself; learners need to be provided with proper training to enable them to reflect and become independent when it comes to the assessment of learning results. Thus teachers need to talk to students about their results and their own assessment in order to increase awareness and become autonomous learners. As they become more autonomous and become more skilled in self-assessment, they are likely to be more inventive in their assessment and require less support.

Kosel (2006:203) suggests some useful ideas that could be used by teachers when undertaking self-assessment activities in their classrooms:

- ❖ Learners need to be fully trained in self-assessment, as it is only through repeated experience they will develop the ability to reflect on their own learning.
- ❖ Teachers should make the whole assessment framework clear to students at the beginning.
- ❖ Self-assessment increases the amount of organizational work for the teacher; it takes a long time to carry out, so students need to be guided properly at the beginning.
- ❖ Self-assessment questionnaires should be kept as short as possible, otherwise students will consider it to be too much paperwork.
- ❖ Self-assessment should be done at least twice, as this will enable students to effectively judge their progress; once at the beginning and once in the middle or towards the end of the course.
- ❖ Teachers should make self-assessment a natural part of their classroom practise. By so doing, teachers will gradually change the attitude of their students to their own learning.

Peatling (2000:78) also suggests that in teaching learners to become active life-long learners teachers have to encourage them in self-reflection and assist them to gain expertise and confidence in the process. He thus

recommends ways in which teachers can help learners to become involved in the self-assessment process:

- ❖ Teachers need to help students to see the value of self-assessment
- ❖ They should begin slowly, simply, and in a manner that does not threaten the learners
- ❖ The self-assessment process should be made useful and doable
- ❖ The teacher and learners need to develop the whole criteria together. In this regard Gronlund and Cameron (2004), as cited in Noonan and Duncan (2005:6), are of the opinion that this cooperative approach may result in greater understanding of the criteria by the learners and have a positive influence on their motivation to complete assignments.
- ❖ It must be ensured that these criteria are constructive and affirming, meaning that they should focus on strengths
- ❖ There should be an integration of self, peer and teacher assessment
- ❖ The teacher must give self-assessment status by regularly taking time to share and affirm learning

It can be concluded that the teacher plays a very critical role in ensuring that learner self-assessment becomes more effective and efficient in their classrooms. However, Noonan and Duncan (2005:7) argue that the role of the teacher in self-assessment should be clear. They mention that teachers should be helped to acquire skills to develop and use self-assessment strategy with learners. Thus it is important that teachers are provided with training and professional development in order to assist them to better understand and implement self-assessment. The teachers' responsibility for the classroom practices is regarded as essential for effective learning; learners can succeed in self-assessment if teachers have knowledge and skill in instructional planning and delivery. Thus teachers who are fully committed to learning about the skills of self-assessment and passing these skills to their learners can expect improved student performance, enhanced motivation and confidence. Therefore, it is the purpose of the present study to determine whether teachers perceive learner self-assessment as a beneficial assessment technique for collecting information about students' performance.

2.9 CONCLUSION

The literature reviewed on self-assessment provided an insight into how various scholars have conceptualised self-assessment. We have seen that learner self-assessment is preferred as one of the alternative forms of assessment due to the fact that learners are no longer viewed as empty vessels to be filled with knowledge. They are now perceived as active participants in the learning process. Peatling (2000:7) notes that research in constructivist learning theory suggests that meaningful learning takes place when learners are actively involved in constructing and expanding their knowledge, and working out how to apply their knowledge to solve problems. Thus engaging learners in the assessment of their own work is one way to produce autonomous, metacognitive and self-regulated learners.

Despite the benefits associated with learner self-assessment, there has been concern about the accuracy of this form of assessment. Questions have been raised as to whether learners are able to accurately and fairly engage in self-assessment. In this regard, Noonan and Duncan (2005:6) suggest that the use of self-assessment ought to be limited and not used for summative student assessment. However, it is argued that there should not be any excuse for not using self-assessment, but rather an improvisation of some means to make self-assessment more appropriate and useful to the learning process. Ross (2006:10) even claims that there is evidence that when self-assessment is properly implemented it produces valid and reliable information about student achievement.

The literature examined also suggests that teachers are regarded as playing an important role in ensuring that self-assessment is successfully implemented in their classrooms. The question is whether or not teachers can invest time and energy to share assessment work with their learners to enhance their learning experience (Noonan & Duncan, 2005:7). Hence the study proposed to better understand teachers' perceptions about learner self-assessment and the factors that can play a role on their perceptions.

CHAPTER THREE

SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The first section of this chapter will examine the literature on the learning of English as a second language (ESL). Knowledge of a second language is regarded as essential as the world has become more globalised. The chapter also discusses how self-assessment can be applied in ESL learning with the purpose of assisting learners to effectively master linguistic skills. Finally, the analysis of second language learning models and theories are presented in this chapter.

3.2 SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

The term second language means a language that is learned after the first language is relatively established (Kingwell and Clarke, 2002:12). When children reach the age of five they have control over most of their first language grammar. Any language that they learn subsequently is filtered through their previously learned language. In this way, as Kingwell and Clarke (2002:12) observe, second language learning is qualitatively different from the first language learning processes. Nonetheless, both first and second language learning are developmental processes in which the learner is actively testing the hypothesis about the new system being learned.

Thurlow (2004:7) describes second language acquisition as the body of research into language acquisition by non-native speakers. He says that the field of second language acquisition research investigates the influences on, and the rate of, second language development. Second language acquisition is not regarded as a uniform and predictable phenomenon. It is argued that

there is no single way in which learners acquire a working knowledge of a second language. Thurlow (2004:7) mentions that second language acquisition is influenced by many factors pertaining to the learner on one hand and to the learning situation on the other. Thus the result of these two sets of factors results in complexity and diversity. Sidman-Taveau (2005:2) notes that there are various contexts that second language acquisition encompasses and these contexts have diverse goals, linguistic opportunities, learner needs, and issues. He says all these contexts share the issue of how to enable learners to effectively acquire a language that is not their native language.

Thurlow (2004:7) observes that English is taught in second language learning contexts, which refer to those in which the classroom target language is readily available in everyday life. He also claims that English as a second language occurs within the culture of the English language or within an individual's own native culture where English is an accepted language used for education, government, or business within the country. Kingwell and Clarke (2002:12) mention that students who learn English as a second language come into the classroom with an already established first language for communication.

3.2.1 THE NEED FOR SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

There has been an increasing demand for second language learning around the world today. Thurlow (2004:106) points out that in the developed as well as developing countries the reasons for learning a second language include the influx of immigrants and the expansion of international trade. There is also a need to provide an educated populace with a shared national language for the purpose of national development and social harmony. Another need is to include the minority ethnic groups that are often excluded from traditional educational institutions. In addition to this, Archibald, Roy, Harmel and Jesney (2004:4) state that an increasing number of children and adults are becoming multilingual for personal, aesthetic, academic and economic reasons. They say that it has been acknowledged that learning about other peoples, other cultures, and other languages broadens the mind. Thus exposure to other

languages improves the way an individual views other people's culture; students learn that cultural practices vary around the world. In this way they learn to tolerate and respect other people's culture and speakers of other languages. Layne and Lepeintre (1996), as cited in Thurlow (2004:106), also argue that industrialised countries face increased demands for second language instruction in order to assimilate a large number of immigrants and provide foreign language instruction for students planning careers in the international arena.

Kingwell and Clarke (2002:11) claim that students who learn English as a second language do not have the luxury of learning a language out of interest or in anticipation of future career advantages. They believe that learners are learning English out of an immediate need to communicate, learn and participate in a society that in most cases is as new to them as the language itself. Students who are learning to communicate in English feel that what they are learning is relevant and applicable in their everyday lives. Kingwell and Clarke (2002:11) also mention that the importance of learning English provides students with strong motivation, as well as a rich context for learning. In this regard their learning is purposeful and directed. Students thus learn English so that they can be able to function in society, establish and maintain relationships, communicate, and explore concepts.

English is thus becoming a greater priority for various nations including Africa, the Middle East, South America and Europe, as leaders work to shore up prospects or international commerce and diplomacy (Manzo and Zehr, 2006:32). They continue that these countries feel that this is necessary for them to be competitive globally. Joseph Hung, professor of English and international studies at Dongseo University in Pusan, South Korea, mentions that companies in his country are becoming very competitive globally and that they live in a global society where people can travel from one place to another in a day. Thus communication is vital in order to be competitive. English is therefore a communication method in a global village.

It is in this regard that Manzo and Zehr (2006:33) contend that many countries including Korea are beefing up English classes for students as young as six years of age. They are also recruiting native speakers of the language to teach in primary schools, and they are using technology to expand offerings and help students build language proficiency. A similar situation is happening in China and Japan, where school officials and private companies are trying hard to meet the rapidly growing demand of English instruction for children, teenagers and adults. Kohonen (1997:1), however, argues that in preparing language learners for life in a changing world, it is useful to take into consideration what kinds of demands the developments in society might pose for the future.

Manzo and Zehr (2006:1) point out that in 1997, several years after the end of apartheid, the South African government elevated nine indigenous languages to the same official status as English and Afrikaans. Schools can now use one of the official languages as a medium of instruction. Starting in the first grade, a second language must also be used. Even though the government is doing its best to promote the use of indigenous languages at the primary level, parents choose English. They say that they are not looking down on their own languages, but they are recognising that English is an international language and people are creating more opportunities than they have up to now.

English is widely recognised as an international language and people find it essential to learn it for personal, economic and academic growth. People also need to broaden their minds and create their career opportunities internationally. They will therefore achieve this by learning about other people's cultures and languages. Thus communication has to be there as people travel from one place to another. Countries have now realised that English is important for international trade as well as diplomacy, meaning that companies from another country can expand their trade to foreign countries and manage to compete globally.

3.2.2 ENGLISH LANGUAGE AS A MEDIUM OF LEARNING

Second languages are mostly used in the education system as mediums of instruction and learning. This is due to the fact that classrooms are becoming more multilingual and multicultural. Mohan (2001:109) points out that language as a medium of learning raises a question of the relationship between language learning and the learning of content and culture. He further suggests that second language learning regards the concerns of the second language classroom as important, where language as a medium of learning put more focus on issues that are shared by all classrooms. Educational systems have a duty to deliver educational services to the students and since language is a medium of learning, they also have the further responsibility to support language as a medium of learning to ensure that students become successful academically. This applies to students whose first language is English as well as learners who learn English as a second language.

It is argued that second language learners need not only to be exposed to content classrooms, but they should also get support with language as a medium of learning. Vacca (1993:43) states that students should be supported in reading across the content areas and writing across the curriculum. Mohan (2001:109) also suggests that the approaches to language as a medium of learning must explicitly incorporate content goals. He says that it is of great importance to go beyond the perspectives of the language specialist, and address interdisciplinary concerns. If the kind of approaches used do not effectively address the goals of content, they are likely to be rejected by learners. It is in this regard that Langer and Applebee (1987:22) claim that teachers are reluctant to devote more time to writing as a means of learning if they see such approaches as a means of promoting the work of the language teacher instead of fostering learning of the teacher's own subject. It is therefore essential that approaches integrate language goals and content goals in an explicit manner.

Mohan (2001:109) contends that verbal language is not the only mode of language as a medium of learning. Learners, especially the young ones, have

a way of expressing themselves through other media such as drawing and text. Early (1989:13) mentions that graphic presentations and the connections across different modes should be used in the later years for the benefit of limited English proficiency students.

It is important to conclude that the process of classroom education mostly depends on language and therefore one essential requirement for the success of that process is that everyone involved should have a good understanding of English, or whichever language is used for instruction in the classroom.

3.2.3 LANGUAGE AS A SOCIAL AND CULTURAL PHENOMENON

Language is considered to be a social and cultural phenomenon because of its relationship with social and cultural values. In view of this, Cakir (2000:1) notes that understanding language does not only involve the knowledge of grammar, phonology and lexis, but also certain features and characteristics of the culture. He says that to communicate internationally inevitably involves communicating interculturally as well, which probably leads to people to encounter factors of cultural differences. Kohonen (1997:1) adds that internationalisation and mobility of labour, connected with the current integration process in Europe, will increase cross-cultural contacts in future. Developments of this kind will demand global communication and tolerance of cultural diversity. It is in this regard that Brown (1994:164) argues that language and culture are so closely connected that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture.

Language learning is thus an important part of learner's preparation to responsible citizenship in society (Kohonen, 1997:3). In this regard language learning plays a significant role in connecting people from various cultural backgrounds, as well as increasing the tolerance for diversity and ambiguity. Cakir (2000:3) agrees that if language learners are to communicate at a personal level with individuals from other cultural backgrounds, they will need not only to understand the cultural influences at work in the behaviour of others, but also be aware of the major influence patterns of their own culture

over their thoughts, their activities, and their forms of linguistic expressions. There is therefore a great need for second and foreign language teaching to help the learner to develop his or her individual identity and enhance his or her personal growth beyond the boundaries of his or her own culture (Kohonen, 1997:3). It is thus the duty of the teacher to make students realise that there are differences in culture; therefore they should not judge these differences.

Lachat and Spruce (1998:98) mention that American schools are becoming more diverse and students who do not speak English as a first language are the fastest growing school population. While the group of students known as English learners is made up of children from many different language and cultural backgrounds, these children have to learn English while responding to the subject matter demands of schools. Lustig and Koester (1993:8) suggest that intercultural learning is necessary in terms of what they call “imperatives” for intercultural competence. They observe that there is a growing need to understand the role of culture in interpersonal communication. They also claim that there are various factors that contribute to the need of intercultural competence in managing intercultural differences in communication. They provide the following summary of these imperatives:

- ❖ A learner should have a deeper understanding of his or her own cultural identity and this should be strengthened.
- ❖ There should be the existence and increase of multiculturalism in society.
- ❖ International cooperation should be increased.
- ❖ Contacts such as tourism, study, work, and business should be increased.
- ❖ People need to come to terms with racism and ethnocentrism.
- ❖ There is a need for global responsibilities and this includes taking care of natural resources, and being aware of environmental issues.

Cakir (2000:3) mentions that learning to understand a foreign culture should help students of another language to use words and expressions more skilfully and authentically, to understand levels of language, to act naturally with the people of the other culture while recognising and accepting their

different reactions, and to help speakers of other languages feel welcomed in the students' own culture. Kohonen (1997:3) also agrees that professional success and personal satisfaction will highly depend on the ability to communicate competently with people from other cultures. Lustig and Koester (1993:13) introduce the concept of "intercultural communication competence" as the goal for teaching communication between people from different cultural backgrounds. This intercultural communication is defined as the symbolic, interpretive, transactional, and contextual process in which people from different cultures create shared meaning. People from different cultures are different, which gives rise to dissimilar interpretations about communication behaviours (Kohonen, 1997:3). Establishing shared meaning is thus a matter of negotiation and tolerance for ambiguity in the process. He claims that intercultural competence is contextual, with regard to both a specific relational context and a particular situational context. In this regard, Lustig and Koester (1993:66-73) suggest some components of intercultural competence:

- ❖ Respect: when one is able to show respect and positive regard for another person.
- ❖ Orientation and knowledge: what terms people use to describe themselves and the world in which they live.
- ❖ Empathy: when one has the capacity to behave as though one has an understanding of the world as others do.
- ❖ Interaction management: showing skill in regulating conversation.
- ❖ Task role behaviour: initiating ideas that are related to group problem solving.
- ❖ Tolerance for ambiguity: being able to react to new or ambiguous situations with little visible discomfort.
- ❖ Interaction posture: have the ability to respond to others in a descriptive, non-evaluative and non-judgemental manner.

Intercultural competence thus improves the idea of communicative competence. Communicative competence relates mainly to the person's knowledge and skills in communicative situations, while intercultural competence pays attention to the learner's personal and social abilities

(Kohonen, 1997:3). It is thus important for people to relate to one another in human encounters, and to tolerate ambiguity and respect diversity in intercultural contacts. Caskir (2000:5) is also of the opinion that if learners are to master another language they need to be assisted to become communicatively competent in that language as much as possible. He states that speaking successfully is not just a matter of knowing grammatically correct words and forms, but also knowing when to use them and under what situations or circumstances. Communicative competence should therefore include competence in grammar and discourse competence, as well as sociolinguistic competence. This means that if the goal of language is to ensure that students reach a level of communicative competence, then all three components are essential.

Most learners may indeed find positive benefits in cross-cultural living from learning experiences. However, some people experience certain psychological blocks and other inhibiting effects of the second language culture (Cakir, 2000:4). In this regard, teachers can assist students to turn such an experience into one of increased cultural self-awareness. Cakir (2004:5) also says that it is likely that learners may feel alienated in the process of learning a second language; alienated from people in their home culture, the target culture, and from themselves. There is thus a need for teachers to be more sensitive to the fragility of students when teaching a second or language by using techniques that would promote cultural understanding. It is suggested by Rivers (1991:315) that while teaching culture through language teaching; students should be in a position to demonstrate that they have really acquired certain understandings, abilities, and attitudes.

We have seen from the above discussion that language and culture are closely connected in the sense that when a person learns a second language he or she is enabled to learn about a different culture. Knowing about a foreign culture encourages people to tolerate and not to judge that culture. This therefore connects people from various cultures, which is important as the need for global communication has increased significantly.

3.2.4 THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER IN SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Teachers play the most important role in their students' language acquisition. Mohan (2001:122) mentions that teachers have an essential role to play in how their students experience foreign language learning. They are expected to provide resources that will enable self-directed, reflected learning, with the purpose of encouraging student autonomy. Mohan also points out that developing autonomy in second or foreign language learning is a complex process that requires time, commitment, expertise and explicit pedagogical guidance. Kohonen (1997:5) also observes that instructional decisions can be made so as to combine language learning aims and the educational goals in the learning process. Thus the manner in which the teacher organises learning depends on his or her professional thinking, competence, and resources. He believes that when the learners' awareness is enhanced in the areas mentioned above, it is connected with the teacher's pedagogical choices. This will depend on the cultural context of the school and the national traditions of teaching and teacher education.

Davidson (2001:37) points out that there is a need for teachers to be aware of sociocultural, linguistic, and educational differences, as well as the similarities between learners, and to emphasise the ability to incorporate linguistic objectives systematically into curricula content and use appropriate methodology. It is in this regard that Derewinka and Hammond (1991:55) recommend that the teacher should have:

- ❖ A thorough knowledge of how to adjust classroom practices to cater for the needs of students who have no English speaking background.
- ❖ An awareness of the characteristics of non-speaking background learners.
- ❖ An understanding of the implications of bilingualism and the role that bilingual education plays in the learning process.
- ❖ An awareness of the nature and significance of attitudinal and effective factors in language learning.
- ❖ Knowledge about which strategies to utilise to cope with new arrivals in the mainstream classroom.

- ❖ A familiarity with the principles of multiculturalism.

Davidson (2001:36) states that in the Australia's state of Victoria the definition of the role and the responsibilities of teachers is promulgated in the guidelines for "The Teaching of English as a Second Language", which divide the role of teachers of English as a second language into two separate but interrelated components. These are cross-curricular support and direct instruction, and the schools were established in relation to this. Here the teacher's role is to properly deal with the assessment of learners' needs and provide advice to other teachers within schools. He further states that an ESL teacher is expected to be involved in and inform the planning, implementation, and evaluation of all key learning areas. The teacher will however need the supportive administrative structures and policies at the school level and a positive, collaborative teaching and learning environment.

It is argued that an important part of language learning will obviously take place in informal contexts, outside the classroom environment organised by the teacher (Kohonen, 1997:5). When the teacher designs the learning tasks, however, he or she needs to take into consideration both (1) the content, that is he or she should be knowledgeable about the kinds of tasks and materials the learner works with, and (2) the learning process, that is how the learner is required to work on these tasks.

Davidson (2001:38) suggests that there is a need to prepare all teachers to be able to deal with linguistic and cultural diversity in their language classrooms. At in-service level, the teachers should be trained to:

- ❖ have an understanding of the needs of the students and ways of meeting their needs;
- ❖ develop awareness and teaching approaches which take into account the diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences of students in all the classes;

- ❖ further develop the collaborative working relationships between classroom or subject teachers and teachers of English as a second language in schools; and
- ❖ increase teacher's awareness of the needs of English second language programs.

The teacher has an influential role to play in his or her learners' acquisition of a second language. Such a teacher should have a thorough knowledge and understanding of the target language to ensure that his or her learners acquire the language successfully. Thus, the teacher is responsible for providing the resources and materials that will enable cooperation in learning, reflection, and autonomous learning habits.

3.3 ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING IN SOUTH AFRICA

Learning of English as a second language in South Africa is in line with Outcomes-Based Education, a new approach to education that was introduced by the post apartheid South African government after the 1994 democratic elections. Thus OBE forms the foundation of the curriculum in South Africa (Department of Education, 2002:1). It is said that OBE makes it possible for learners to achieve to their maximum ability. Du Plessis, Hansen and Rau (2002:3) argue that this new model is built around seven critical outcomes. They say these underpin a holistic approach to learning and teaching and are cross-curricular, broad outcomes that inform all teaching and learning.

As for language learning, OBE means that classrooms should be multilingual and learners also need to be encouraged to express ideas in different languages. Language is regarded as a useful tool that can be used for thought and communication (Department of Education, 2003:9). Language enables the proper expression and construction of cultural and social relations. When used effectively, language allows learners to think and acquire knowledge to express their identity, feelings and ideas, to interact with others, and to

manage their world. South Africa is a country which is linguistically and culturally diverse, for this reason its citizens should be able to communicate across language barriers and foster cultural and linguistic respect and understanding (Department of Education, 2003:9). Learners are therefore obliged to include at least two official languages as fundamental subjects and further languages may be taken as core and/or elective subjects.

It is argued that the purpose of learning a second additional language is to enable learners to interact effectively with other South Africans (Department of Education, 2002:9). Thus part of being a good South African is being multilingual. The learners therefore needs to feel confident about using the language, especially in oral communication, so that he or she enjoys being able to switch from one language to another. What they have learned should assist them in communicating with other South Africans who speak the second additional language. It is also mentioned that the schools should create the environment where multilingualism is encouraged, promoted and valued. Martin (1997:136) suggests that the other reason for promoting multilingual approach in education in South Africa is to maintain and raise standards of achieving among all learners and particularly among the most disadvantaged, who have traditionally been the black learners. This can be done by integrating multilingual language policy with other educational policies which seek to raise achievement.

The Department of Education (2002:5) mentions that languages serve various purposes, which are reflected in the Languages Learning Area Statement and listed below:

- ❖ **Personal:** to sustain, develop and transform identities; to sustain relationships in a family and community; and for personal growth and pleasure.
- ❖ **Communicative:** to communicate appropriately and effectively in a variety of social contexts.
- ❖ **Educational:** to develop tools for thinking and reasoning, and to provide access to information.

- ❖ **Aesthetic:** to create, interpret and play imaginatively with oral, visual and written texts.
- ❖ **Cultural:** to understand and appreciate languages and cultures, and the heritage they carry.
- ❖ **Political:** to assert oneself and challenge others; to persuade others of a particular point of view; to position oneself and others; and to sustain, develop and transform identities.
- ❖ **Critical:** to understand the relationships between language, power, and identity, and to challenge uses of these where necessary; to understand the dynamic nature of culture; and to resist persuasion and positioning where necessary.

There are six main language learning outcomes which give specific focus to particular kinds of knowledge and skills, and make them clear and understandable (Department of Education, 2002:6). It is, however, indicated that when language is used the knowledge, skills and values are integrated. It is further mentioned that a central principle of the Languages Learning Area is the integration of these aspects of language through the creation and interpretation of texts. The Department of Education (2002:6) outlines languages learning outcomes as follows:

- ❖ **Learning outcome 1:** Listening – the learner will be able to listen for information and enjoyment, and respond appropriately and critically in a wide range of situations.
- ❖ **Learning outcome 2:** Speaking – the learner will be able to communicate confidently and effectively in spoken language in a wide range of situations.
- ❖ **Learning outcome 3:** Reading and viewing – the learner will be able to read and view for information and enjoyment, and respond critically to the aesthetic, cultural and emotional values in texts.
- ❖ **Learning outcome 4:** Writing – the learner will be able to write different kinds of factual and imaginative texts for a wide range of purposes.

- ❖ **Learning outcome 5:** Thinking and reasoning – the learner will be able to use language to think and reason, as well as to access, process and use language for learning.
- ❖ **Learning outcome 6:** Language structure and use – the learner will be able to know and use sounds, words, and grammar of the language to create and interpret texts.

However, Schlebusch and Thobedi (2004:34) contend that most learners from previously disadvantaged schools have difficulty with English second language communication related activities because they are not proficient in English. Martin (1997:137) observes that most teachers in South Africa still use a teacher-centred approach, which relies heavily on a transmission model of teaching and learning and this makes the learner passive. He says it also relies on the teacher and learners sharing the same language which inhibits multilingual approaches to the curriculum. Thus Schelebusch and Thobedi (2004:34) assert that English teachers have to change their teaching from a teacher-centred approach to a learner-centred approach, which involves teachers developing interactive teaching styles and collaborative learning strategies in the classroom. This is considered as a major premise of the new trend in education which posits that learners need to be actively involved in their own learning and in the construction and development of knowledge and ideas. Martin (1997:137) explains that this approach lends itself to a multilingual approach to the curriculum, as both teacher and learners need not share the same language for all learning.

It is appropriate to conclude that English language learning and teaching in South Africa is in line with the changes that have taken place in the South African Education system recently. As South Africa is a multilingual country, classrooms should be multilingual in order to enable learners to express themselves confidently and effectively in different languages. It is in this respect that learners should learn an additional language such as English in order to be able to interact with fellow South Africans. And it is imperative that teachers need to be prepared in a multilingual approach to a learner-centred curriculum.

3.4 THEORIES AND MODELS OF SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Thurlow (2004:83) suggests that second language acquisition theories were developed along the lines of the first language acquisition theories. He adds that studies in linguistics concentrated on the acquisition of second language; finding out how people acquire second language, describing different stages of development and assessing whether there are similarities between second language acquisition and first language acquisition. In this regard, theories of language acquisition and research in the second language classroom were developed. Newby (2003:34) points out that these theories emanate from different sources. Certain sources of disciplines have for many years fed into the second language teaching and learning practices. These are the following:

- ❖ Theories of language – a suitable description of how language works provided by linguistics
- ❖ Theories of second language acquisition – from applied linguistics as well as cognitive psychologists
- ❖ Theories of instruction – methodologies

Newby (2003:34) argues that these theories can be linked to form a coherent approach or they might give rise to sets of principles upon which certain aims or classroom activities are based.

3.4.1 ACCULTURATION/PIDGINISATION THEORY

Schulz (1991:18) mentions that this theory, developed by Schumann (1978), views language acquisition as the component of an acculturation process and the degree to which learners become proficient is greatly determined by the degree to which a learner acculturates to the target language group. In this regard, social and psychological distance between the learner and target language culture affects second language acquisition. The social and psychological variables determine the effort that language learners will make

to come into contact with speakers of the target language, the degree to which they speak, and the degree to which they are open to the input they get.

Social distance refers to the learner as belonging to a social group that is in contact with another social group whose members speak a different language. Psychological distance is the result of a number of different affective factors that concern the learner as an individual, such as language shock and culture stress. Positive psychological distance is thus developed if learners do not encounter language and culture shock or culture stress and if they bring high motivation and ego permeability to the task. Acculturation theory contends that if the social and psychological distance is great then acculturation is impeded and the learner will encounter some difficulties in progressing beyond the early stages in language acquisition. As a result his or her target language will stay pidginised. Pidginisation is characterised by simplifications and reductions occurring in the learner's interlanguage which lead to fossilisation when the learner's interlanguage system does not progress in the direction of the target language.

Acculturation accounts mainly for naturalistic second language acquisition. However, Schulz (1991:18-19) argues that the importance of attitudes and motivation in the second language acquisition process should be kept in mind. He further states that it is difficult to reject the idea that effective factors determine the effort a student makes in and out of the classroom to obtain input and to use the language for communicative purposes.

Ellis (1994:234) criticises Schumann's theory of acculturation by suggesting that social factors are thought to have a direct impact on second language learning, while they are more likely to have an indirect one. Again, pidginisation is a group of phenomenon, while the acquisition of language is an individual phenomenon. He finally mentions that the acculturation model does not explain how the social factors influence the quality of contact the learners' experience.

Regarding acculturation theory, the teacher has to create a teaching and learning environment that would enable the learner to effectively acquire second language without any social or psychological hindrance. Learners need to be taught how to overcome their fears when they come into contact with the target language for the first time so that they can learn it successfully.

3.4.2 LINGUISTIC UNIVERSAL THEORY

Thurlow (2004:90) explains that the theory of linguistic universals, which is also referred to as the universal grammar theory, is based on Chomsky's claim that there are certain principles that form the basis in which knowledge of language develops. These principles are biologically determined and specialised for language learning. Schulz (1991:19) also suggests that this theory tries to explain language acquisition by hypothesising shared linguistic features. He says that the theory of universal grammar is of the view that the child starts with all the principles of universal grammar in place and that the right environmental input at the right time enhances the acquisition process. The theory suggests that universal grammar becomes effective in both first language and second language learning, and in child language learning as well as in that of adults. Thurlow (2004:90) adds that there was evidence put forward that adults have a way of accessing the knowledge of universal grammar, and this knowledge is utilised in the development of foreign language competence. Schulz (1991:19) also mentions that various studies show that there are no qualitative differences between the adult and the child learner, except in pronunciation ability. He notes that adults – because of increased channel capacity due to maturational factors – might be more efficient foreign language learners, particularly if exposure time and input are limited to that of a traditional language course.

Hillies (1986:45) mentions that the universal grammar theory was used with the purpose of giving explanations for the existence of developmental sequences in interlanguage and to support the view of interlanguage as a natural language, which is subject to the constraints of the universal grammar theory. In this regard, Schulz (1991:19) claims that if natural languages are

constrained by universal principles inherent in our genetic make-up, and if these principles can be arranged in a certain accessibility hierarchy, it follows that the first and second language learners should make similar errors at similar stages in the process of acquisition. He further explains that this assumption got support from various studies which involved several different languages, examining the interlanguage of various learners both in naturalistic settings and in classroom learning situations. Schulz (1991:19) also contends that studies have indicated a tendency for some errors to occur at particular stages of acquisition, regardless of the learner's mother tongue or age or the way the language was acquired. This means that the kinds of errors made by second and foreign language learners are constrained by their universal grammar. Universal grammar thus interfaces with interlanguage theory.

The linguistic universal theory implies that learners should be fully equipped with the principles of the first language learning before they can start learning a second language. This would make it easier for them to learn a second language as it is suggested that the mother tongue can determine the magnitude of the second language learning. Thus learners should first be taught in their mother tongue in their initial years of schooling.

3.4.3 INTERLANGUAGE THEORY

Thurlow (2004:88) notes that the interlanguage theory was first introduced by Selinker (1969) to describe a linguistic stage second language learners go through during the process of learning the target language. It is a separate linguistic system constructed by the learner as the result of five central cognitive processes:

- ❖ **Language transfer** – some of the rules in the interlanguage system may be the result of a transfer from the learners' mother tongue.
- ❖ **Transfer of training** – this may result from the special features of instruction.

- ❖ **Second language learning strategies** – some of the rules in the learner’s interlanguage may result from the application of language learning strategies as a tendency on the part of the learner to reduce the target language to a simpler system.
- ❖ **Second language communication strategies** – the rules of interlanguage may result from strategies employed by the learners in their attempt to engage in communication with native speakers of the target language.
- ❖ **Overgeneralization** – some of the rules of the interlanguage system may be the result of the overgeneralization of the specific rules of the target language.

Schulz (1991:19) points out that through the error analysis of speech and writing samples of learners at various stages, researchers have found that interlanguages reflect systematic patterns of error and communication strategies. Most of these errors are developmental and will eventually disappear if the learner receives sufficient appropriate input. Thurlow (2004:89) agrees that the interlanguage theory was inductively derived from studies following the error analysis theory, which states that by analysing learner’s errors people can predict the learner’s the linguistic stage. However, it is argued that error analysis as a mode of inquiry is limited in its scope and concentrates on what learners do wrong rather than on what makes them successful (Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1991:61). For the above reason, it is concluded that interlanguage is limited in its explanatory power.

In terms of ESL teaching the interlanguage theory implies that the teacher has to provide comprehensible input that would help learners to effectively progress towards the target language grammar.

3.4.4 COGNITIVE THEORY

Cognitive theory views second language learning as a mental process, leading through the structured practice of various components of sub-skills to automatization and integration of linguistic patterns (Schulz, 1991:20). According to this theory, skills become automatic or routinized only after analytical processes. McLaughlin (1987:21) argues that the controlled analytical processes, which include structured practice, are perceived as stepping stones for automatic processes. Thurlow (2004:92) adds that during this process of automatization the learner organizes and restructures new information that is acquired. Thus through this process of restructuring the learner links the new information to old information and achieves increasing degrees of mastery in the second language (McLaughlin, 1987:21).

Schulz (1991:20) claims that cognitive theory suggests a hierarchy of complexity of cognitive sub-skills which lead from controlled practice to an automatic processing of language, rather than positing a hierarchical development of linguistic structures. Thus as the learner's degree of mastery increases, he or she engages in an ongoing process of restructuring to integrate new structures with those previously acquired. In this regard, cognitive learning is considered as consisting of many phases where the learning tasks become refined, restructured and consolidated.

The idea that the analysis and structured practice encourage the automatic processing of language and are essential for foreign language development in a classroom setting is not new (Schulz, 1991:20). Researchers, however, question whether a second language is a skill that can be mastered exclusively through controlled options of sub-skills which lead eventually to their automatic processing. Cognitive theory seems to account most closely for what foreign language teachers and current text-books try to accomplish in classroom instruction. The existing grammatical syllabus tries to lead students through analysis and explanation to automatic processing practice, though it is limited. Schulz (1991:21) points out that cognitive theory is no different than other theories which try to account for second language acquisition. It

recognises a certain spiral or cyclical development of language skills, where the interim language of the students allows continuing refinement and closer approximation to the target language.

Cognitive theory of second language acquisition views language acquisition as the gradual automatising of skills through stages of restructuring and linking new information to prior knowledge. However, Thurlow (2004:93) observes that the differences between the various cognitive models make it impossible to construct a comprehensive cognitive theory of second language acquisition. Schmidt (1992), as cited in Thurlow (2004:93), adds that there is not enough theoretical support from psychology on the common belief that the development of fluency in a second language is almost exclusively a matter of the increasingly skilful application of rules.

It is evident that learners come to the classroom with previously acquired linguistic knowledge. Thus the adoption of cognitive theory in ESL teaching and learning would mean that teachers would use this prior interim language to help the learner to an increasingly closer approximation of the target language.

3.4.5 THE MONITOR MODEL

The monitor model of second language acquisition was developed by Krashen in the late 1970s. It is regarded as the most influential and widely known theory which attempts to account for second and foreign language acquisition. Schulz (1991:21) claims that this theory is also the only one from which direct pedagogical extrapolations have been made in the so-called natural approach. There are five central hypotheses underlying the monitor model which have been put forward by Krashen (1985):

- ❖ **The acquisition/learning hypothesis** asserts that language learners develop language fluency through two processes, which are acquisition and learning. Acquisition is subconscious and takes place through natural language interactions; this is much like first language acquisition. Learning,

on the other hand, requires conscious thought and analysis and usually takes place in formal environments.

- ❖ **The natural order hypothesis** suggests that people acquire second language rules in the predictable natural order not determined by the order in which they are taught.
- ❖ **The input hypothesis** states that there is only one way to acquire a second language, and that is through comprehensible input.
- ❖ **The monitor hypothesis** suggests that formal learning does not affect acquisition in any way except that it has the function of monitoring and editing the utterances produced through the acquisition process.
- ❖ **The affective filter hypothesis** states that if there is a mental block, that is the effective filter which acts as a barrier to the acquisition process, comprehensible input will not be fully utilised.

Like other models or theories, the monitor model has not gone without criticism. Schulz (1991:21) notes that Krashen's acquisition/learning dichotomy and his view of comprehensible input as sole explanatory factor for second language acquisition has been questioned. Adding to this, Gregg (1994), as cited in Thurlow (2004:85), argues that under normal circumstances the monitor model cannot be utilised and since it is the only way in which language can be used, there is no need to talk about different ways of gaining competence in a second language.

Thurlow (2004:85-86), however, claims that Krashen's monitor model of second language acquisition has impacted greatly on the way in which second language learning is perceived and has initiated research towards the discovery of order of acquisition regardless of the various criticisms levied against it.

This model would mean that the teacher has to take into account all the factors that are involved in second language acquisition. These factors include age, personality traits, classroom instruction, environmental influences and input. Thus it is important to consider these factors when teaching a second

language as learners come into the classroom with different backgrounds and learning styles.

3.4.6 COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING THEORY

Communicative language teaching (CLT) began in the late 1970s and gained momentum in the early 1980s (Hu, 2002:94). Since then it has taken hold and acquired the status of a new dogma. He says that CLT has drawn extensively on the developments in sociolinguistics, discourse theory, psycholinguistics, applied linguistics, and second language research acquisition that have occurred largely in the West. It is consequently based on the set of beliefs about the nature of language and language teaching. Savignon (1991:263) notes that the language needs of a rapidly growing group of immigrants and guest workers, and a rich British linguistic tradition that included social as well as linguistic context in description of language behaviour during the 1970s in Europe, has prompted the Council of Europe development to develop a syllabus for learners based on functional-notional concepts of language use. As derived from functional linguistics that regards language as meaning potential and maintains that the context of a situation should be certain in understanding language systems and how they work, the threshold level of language ability was described for each of the languages in Europe in terms of what learners are supposed to do with the language.

Kim (2005:165) contends that over many years CLT has been accepted as the most promising approach to English language teaching and learning. Celce-Murcia, Dornyei and Thurrell (1997:144) observe that CLT was introduced as a result of dissatisfaction with previous methods that concentrated on the conscious presentation of grammatical forms and structures or lexical items and did not adequately prepare learners for the effective and appropriate use of language in natural communication. Thus CLT aims for linguistic fluency – not just accuracy – in real-life communication both inside and outside the classroom, by providing learners with tools that will enable them to generate unrehearsed language.

Brown (2001), as cited in Hu (2002:95), argues that CLT is distinguished from the more traditional language teaching methodologies because of its conception of communicative competence, rather than linguistic competence alone, as the main goal of language teaching and learning. Kim (2005:165) agrees that CLT is different from other methods because it probes the social and pragmatic features of language, going beyond the grammatical and discourse elements in communication. Hall (2002), as cited in Kim (2005:165), says that at the centre of this theory is communicative competence which is defined as the learners' ability to use well-formed language that is more socially and contextually appropriate and culturally feasible in communicative contexts consisting of different groups and communities to which individuals belong. Thus communicative competence consists of grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence (Hu, 2002:95). Supporting this view, Richards and Rodgers (1986), as cited in Hu (2002:95), suggest that the primary units of language are not merely its grammatical and structural characteristics, but categories of functional and communicative meaning as exemplified in discourse. The interdependence between form and meaning is stressed, and both functional and structural aspects of learning are attended to.

Thurlow (2004:75) observes that CLT views language as a system for the expansion of meaning with its main function being interaction and communication. He further explains that when language is perceived as a system it is possible to move away from traditional grammar translation methodology towards meaningful tasks that involve real communication in authentic contexts. Thus when thinking from the communicative model point of view, the objectives of learning will reflect the needs of the learner and will include functional skills as well as linguistic objectives. The target language learned should be meaningful to the learner. Savignon (1991:265) adds that CLT's main focus has been to elaborate and implement programs and methodologies that encourage the development of second language functional competence through active learner involvement in communicative events.

Communicative language teaching encourages learner-centred classrooms in language teaching where the understanding is that communicative proficiency is of great importance. Nonkukhetkhong, Baldauf and Noni (2006:3) mention that the learner-centred approach is based on the notion that learners can learn better when they are aware of their own goals. They also say that the learner-centred classroom consists of two key components. Firstly, more responsibility is placed in the hands of the learners to manage their own learning and secondly, teachers assume the roles of facilitators of knowledge to help students learn rather than being the source of information as was traditionally the case. Harworth (1995:5) says that “teachers are no longer the centre stage protagonists, but are demoted to the position of stagehand in the wings.” Teachers are now the coaches who have a duty to stimulate their students to be able to learn by themselves. They need to understand that this new paradigm encourages students to do more for themselves. As a result they will learn more.

Nonkukhetkhong *et al.* (2006:3) maintain that the teacher can foster learner autonomy by creating and maintaining the learning environment through communicative tasks through which students can develop their language and learning skills to become autonomous learners. Kohonen (1997:4) points out that autonomous language learning suggests a holistic, experiential learning approach. Thus this approach stresses the importance of autonomy and responsibility in the learning process and places more value on the learners’ experience and knowledge in the classroom. Kohonen (1997:4) mentions that as far as conception of man is concerned, the learner has to be seen as a self-directed, intentional person who can be guided to develop his or her competences in three interrelated areas of knowledge, skills and awareness:

- ❖ **Personal and social awareness:** this includes self-concept, self-esteem and self-direction, involving the willingness and skills for collaboration.
- ❖ **Awareness of the learning processes:** process management which includes the metacognitive skills for increasingly self-organised language learning and self-assessment.

- ❖ **Task awareness:** knowledge of language and communication: the meta-knowledge of language at various levels of linguistic description, providing an unfolding map of the whole language learning enterprise.

Nonkukhetkhong *et al.* (2006:3), however, suggest that it is unrealistic to make the assumption that all learners will be able to make their own choices about their learning process, particularly young learners or those at the beginning levels. In this regard, negotiations between the teacher and learners in developing a language program are essential. Hu (2002:96) adds that opportunities for negotiation and interaction between the teacher and learners, and among students themselves, can be maximised by extensively exposing learners to the target language through the large quantities of input to and output from learners. He claims that such negotiation and interaction are seen as important processes in the acquisition of a target language. In addition to this, Kohonen (1997:5) explains that negotiation brings together the experience and the intentions of the participants into a shared learning intent that is carried out. Boomer (1992), as cited in Kohonen (1997:5), notes that the process includes the following broad stages:

- ❖ Joint planning and negotiation
- ❖ Setting the aims (the intentions of the teacher and learners)
- ❖ Collaborative exploration (shared intentions under constraints)
- ❖ Achievements (core learning and products)
- ❖ Evaluation (shared reflection)

Kohonen (1997:5) points out that negotiating curriculum entails inviting learners to make a personal contribution to their educational program; this will enable them to have a real investment in the journey of their learning as well as in the outcomes. Nunan and Lamb (1996), as cited in Nonkukhetkhong *et al.* (2006:3), warns that the continuum in which levels and degrees of communication vary depend on the characteristics of the learners. They suggest that it is in situations like these that teachers need to be familiar with a wide range of teaching methodologies, learning materials, and study options, and that they also have to be flexible and adaptable. School

CHAPTER FOUR

EXPLORING TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS REGARDING LEARNER SELF-ASSESSMENT

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Bandura (1986), as cited in Genc (2005:19), explains that social learning theories propound that teaching, like any other behaviour, is mediated by personal beliefs and external dynamics. Pajares (1992:316) also points out that it has been similarly argued by organisational and educational theories that individual and organisational belief systems influence the ability of organisations and its people to learn. This is to say that clearly establishing one's perceptions about something such as teaching could have a direct influence on teaching practices. For instance, the perceptions that teachers hold about students would influence how they design instruction, teach, react to students' actions, assess students' understanding, and engage professional development (Genc, 2005:20). Chiang (2003:24) contends that in language teaching the influence of teachers' cognitive processing on classroom practice and education has just begun to gain attention.

This chapter explores aspects that are critical for a better understanding of perceptions such as the definition of teacher perceptions, the relationship between teachers' perceptions and their classroom practice with regard to teaching, learning and assessment on both education in general and English language learning (ESL), and factors that influence teachers' perceptions. The conceptual framework which was based on constructivist learning pedagogy was also developed. This theory provided a valid lens through which the study looked at self-assessment in ESL and teachers' perceptions on the use of self-assessment in their classrooms.

4.2 DEFINITION OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS

I mentioned in chapter one that the study on teachers' perceptions will be grounded on the research on beliefs. In order to understand the role of teachers' beliefs in innovation education as Castro, Sercu and Mendez (2004:93) suggest, it is important to define the concept itself. It is, however, argued that the concept of belief does not have an agreed upon definition among educators in general, even though there are many studies in the literature about teacher beliefs (Yalaki, 2004:6). Pajares (1992) adds that belief is a concept that has different meanings attached to it and people referred to it in many other words such as values, opinions, judgements, dispositions, personal theories, and perceptions. Several researchers have thus found it difficult to come up with a definition of belief. Therefore Pajares (1992:310) argues that any researcher who wishes to study people's beliefs should be clear about the definition of beliefs and design his or her research accordingly. The following definitions of belief are derived from the literature and they will therefore provide an insight into teachers' beliefs about learner self-assessment.

Richards, Gallo and Renandya (2001:42) argue that the study of teachers' beliefs constitutes the process of understanding how teachers conceptualise their work. They say that it is important to understand the beliefs and principles teachers operate from in order to understand how they approach their work. Block and Hazelip (1994), as cited in Chiang (2003:25), state that the beliefs differ in terms of strength and kind, and develop constantly over time into a system or network which then becomes resistant to change. It is in this regard that Genc (2005:21) describes beliefs as socially constructed representational systems. He says that these systems are used to interpret and act upon the world. Beliefs are also described as "personal convictions, philosophies, tenets, or opinions about teaching and learning" (Thomas & Pederson, 2003:319). In another definition, Rimm-Kaufman and Sawyer (2004:322) state that beliefs are a subset of a group of constructs that name, define, and describe the structure and content of mental states that are

thought to drive a person's actions. Beliefs are also seen as "a form of knowledge that is personally viable in a sense that it enables a person to meet his or her goals that can be undertaken only in a social setting" (Tobin *et al.*, 1994:55).

When one looks at various explanations and definitions of beliefs, it is possible to find common elements that guide research related to beliefs. These common elements are outlined by Pajares (1992:314):

- ❖ Beliefs are personal constructs.
- ❖ Beliefs are held to be true inferences about self, surroundings, and circumstances.
- ❖ Beliefs influence behaviour more than knowledge.
- ❖ Beliefs are not always related to reality.
- ❖ Beliefs are not consensus driven.
- ❖ Beliefs are less open to discussion or critical examination compared to knowledge.
- ❖ Beliefs are more rigid and less likely to change compared to knowledge.
- ❖ Beliefs may become more or less strongly held over time.
- ❖ Beliefs that are more central to a person are more difficult to change.
- ❖ Beliefs are learned through enculturation and social construction.

Various definitions of beliefs were presented above. Thus it can be concluded that belief systems, like all cognitive processes, must be inferred from behaviour (Rueda & Garcia, 1996:313). This definition underpins the present study regarding the teachers' perceptions vis-à-vis the aim of this research, which is to get an understanding of English second language teachers' perceptions about learner self-assessment. Therefore it would be valuable to examine the relationship between teachers' perceptions and practices in the context of education.

4.3 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND CLASSROOM PRACTICE

Barcelos (2000:67) shows that some studies reveal that language teachers' perceptions may influence their actions in the classroom. Adding to this, Genc (2005:25) argues that teachers' beliefs influence the way they generally interpret the classroom environment. These beliefs play a critical role when they are faced with a particular challenge, problem or dilemma, such as the implementation of standard-based teaching and assessment strategies. Johnson (1994:443) also indicates that some researchers have argued that not only do language teachers' beliefs influence their practice, but their beliefs also assist in shaping the nature of classroom interaction. Pederson (2003:60) observes that the study of the educational beliefs of teachers has been strongly advocated for the simple but powerful reason that teachers' beliefs guide the decisions they make and the actions they take in the classroom. This in turn has a great impact on students. This means that perceptions that teachers hold are one basis for the decisions teachers make at the classroom level of the education system. Zacharias (2005:25) points out that teachers' beliefs cannot be observed directly, but that they can be inferred from teachers' behaviours in the classroom. Therefore there is a strong connection between teachers' perceptions and their classroom behaviours and practices.

Pajares (1992:309) asserts that people fall back on their beliefs to guide the decisions they make when confronted by novel situations in which they lack knowledge structures and cognitive strategies. He further states that clusters of beliefs around a particular situation form attitudes and these attitudes ultimately become causative agents; meaning that people act upon what they believe. This is also true with the formulation of the new education policy. Eisenhart, Cuthbert, Shrum and Harding (2001:137) claim that evidence suggests that educational policies that are incompatible with teacher beliefs are not implemented as intended. Thus teachers' perceptions may guide them to behave, purposely or unconsciously, in ways that alter or undermine the programs proposed by policy makers. But if teachers regard policies to be

compatible with their perceptions, there is a great chance that they will take ownership of the change and feel more positive about their work. Teachers' perceptions should therefore be important to policy makers.

Yalaki (2004:4) observes that the obvious reason why more emphasis is put on teachers' beliefs is that beliefs mainly determine the way prospective and in-service teachers behave. If change is desired in their behaviours, based on the reform documents, the nature of their beliefs must be understood. Feiman-Nemser and Remillard (1996:80-81), as cited in Barcelos (2000:33), point out that even though beliefs can serve as obstacles to change, they also help people to interpret and assess new ideas and potentially conflicting information. They further explain that these beliefs from previous experiences make it difficult for teachers and students to learn new information.

Pajares (1992:323) suggests that teacher education programs should be designed in such a way that encourages change in teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning. He says that teacher preparation programs cannot afford to ignore the entering beliefs of pre-service teachers. Additionally, Wilkins and Brand (2004:226) note that if teacher education programs hope to influence the development of sound instruction practices, an important part of the program should focus on the development of teacher beliefs. Pajares (1992:323) also refers to the research that found pre-service teachers have unrealistic optimism and self-efficacy beliefs before they start teaching. When they do start teaching, they face an unexpected reality. To avoid problems and to achieve a needed change in teacher beliefs, he suggests that it is important to place more emphasis on beliefs in teacher education programs, since such change may be more difficult later on. Thus, since teachers possess beliefs regarding professional practices and these beliefs have a great impact on their decisions, Cuban (1990), as cited in Ballone and Czerniak (2001:8), suggests that careful examination be given to the role of teacher beliefs so that the problems and past failures in educational reform can be identified and remedied. In this regard Ballone and Czerniak (2001:8) illustrate that beliefs play a critical role in defining behaviour and organising knowledge and information. It is therefore crucial to understand the belief

structures of educators in order to improve teaching practices, as they ultimately affect the behaviour of the teacher in the classroom.

We realise that there is a common agreement in the literature that teachers come to the classroom with their own belief systems and these determine how they carry out their classroom practices. Thus the study of teachers' perceptions about learner self-assessment is important, as evidence exists that teachers' perceptions about teaching and learning influence how they teach and what students learn.

4.4 SOURCES OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS

It is also important to look at the ways in which teachers actually develop their perceptions. Research reveals a number of factors that influence the perceptions of teachers. Kajinga (2006:14) points out that there is a view that states that teachers' lived experiences are significant as an influence on practice. In this regard, Lumpe, Haney and Czerniak (2000), as cited in Yalaki (2004:4), argue that prospective teachers and in-service teachers develop their perceptions about teaching from years of experience as students and teachers, and that their beliefs seem to be stable and resistant to change. Castro *et al.* (2004:93) add that beliefs appear to persevere, meaning that once they are formed they are hard to change.

McGilliludy-DeLisi and Subrananian (1996), as cited in Chiang (2003:31), suggest three processes by which people develop beliefs: "some beliefs are directly adopted from culture. Some are shaped by experiences framed by culture, for instance, each individual shares similar experiences as a child, as a member of a family, and as a parent or a teacher. Lastly, personal beliefs are constructed in the course of transactions between changing individuals and changing cultures." In his study on the beliefs of pre-service teachers, Johnson (1994:444) found out that teachers' beliefs emerged from the images (1) of their formal language learning experiences, (2) of their informal language learning experience, (3) of themselves as language teachers, and

(4) of the teacher preparation program. Richards and Lockhart (1996), as cited in Chiang (2003:32), provide a summary of the existing research which states that the sources of second language teachers' beliefs may be drawn from "their own experience as language learners, experience of what works best, established practice, personality factors, educationally based or research-based principles, and principles derived from an approach or method."

Similarly, Zacharias (2003:14) reports that teaching experience can be the primary source of teachers' beliefs. By witnessing how a method works for a certain group of learners might lead to the beliefs about such a method. He also mentions expectations from the school, parents, the government and the local society as another source of teachers' beliefs. He says that within a school or a community, particular teaching styles or methods may be preferred. Genc (2005:22) claims that beliefs can be derived from individual previous and special experiences, or a succession of events, or coincidences. These beliefs may vary from person to person even if they live in the same society, work in the same school and encounter same kinds of problems everyday. For example, a teacher may perceive that learners' performance can not be improved using any kind of teaching method if they are not willing to learn. On the other hand, another teacher perceives that students' learning can be enhanced using various types of teaching strategies. He says that such beliefs are perceived as absolute beliefs and they are not easily convertible.

Summing up from the literature, various sources of teachers' beliefs are recognisable and they include teaching experiences, learning experiences, personality factors, teacher professional development, and formal teacher training. And it has been established that the earlier a belief becomes imbedded into the belief structure the more difficult it becomes to alter (Pajares, 1992).

It is of great importance that teachers' beliefs are explored in the educational context in order to encourage teachers to critically reflect on their perceptions

of their teaching and assessment of learners. The research on teachers' perceptions would provide an in-depth understanding of teachers' perceptions on self-assessment, as this would enable them recognise their own perceptions. Genc (2005:28) argues that determining teachers' belief patterns and making links between beliefs and classroom practices may reveal the current status of assessment in classrooms and reflect on where we are and where we are headed.

4.5 UNDERSTANDING TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON ASSESSMENT

From the literature reviewed above on teachers' perceptions, it has become quite clear that the perceptions that teachers have about particular aspects of their teaching job are shaped or influenced by certain factors, and these perceptions in turn have an influence on their actual teaching practice. Yalaki (2004:5) notes that there is no doubt that a teacher's beliefs play a significant role in what a teacher does in the classroom in terms of teaching and assessment of students' learning. In this section the focus will be on the literature on teachers' perceptions regarding assessment in English language learning.

It is argued that teachers' perceptions about educational assessment vary. Hirvena and Pierson (2000:105) contend that the process of assessment requires two core beliefs. Firstly, teachers should believe in their learners' capability to meaningfully measure their own progress. Secondly, they should also understand that self-assessment exists as a viable form of assessment especially in such complex domains as language learning. But it would be interesting to find out whether or not teachers always have strong perceptions in engaging learners in the assessment of their own learning.

In a study of learner-centeredness in English teaching as a foreign language, Nonkukhetkhong, Baldauf and Noni (2006:5) found that all teachers who took part in the research agreed with the policy of applying a learner-centred

approach in English classes. This means that they all understood it is only through a learner-centred approach to learning and assessment that learners can be enabled to take more responsibility for their own learning. However, the same authors say that teachers believed that it was not possible for their students to learn everything by themselves, and that teachers still played the main role in preparing the lesson plans, presenting the content, and assessing the students.

Similarly, Dragemark (2006:181-182) found in her study on learning English for technical purposes that teachers found and accepted that their role in the teaching and learning of English has changed and become less demanding as students themselves could take more responsibility for their own work. Teachers had views that the majority of the students became aware of their own language learning development and more motivated for their language studies. Teachers who participated in the project developed a new teacher role where some of the responsibility for assessment shifted from them to the students themselves. The author agrees that towards the end of the project all teachers of English felt that students could self-assess their English skills fairly well. She also indicates that teachers believed that students became better at assessing their own language learning and became more aware of their own language learning needs. However, teachers felt that some students tended to underestimate their language ability in English, while others with lesser language skills tended to overestimate their language abilities.

Chan (2003:49) studied the perceptions of teachers on autonomous learning. His research showed that there were indications that teachers view themselves as mainly responsible for the majority of language related decisions, though they assert that they regarded students as capable of making some decisions. Teachers mainly preferred to take on these responsibilities themselves, rather than handing such responsibilities over to students. He says that teachers realise that it was one of their responsibilities to engage students in assessment. However, he realised that there was a less positive teacher attitude to students' readiness to accept responsibility for their own learning. He continues that this might be the reason why the power for

the majority of language related decisions still lies with the teachers. Teachers were not comfortable asking students to decide such matters as choosing materials, activities or learning objectives, and assessment tasks.

Yerrick, Parke and Nugent (1997), as cited in Genc (2005:27), argue that some teachers still use traditional paper-pencil type of assessments, which are parallel to objective tests mandated by the state, while others focus on employing authentic assessment tools since they agree that authentic or performance-based assessments play a crucial role in students' learning and understanding. Quilter and Gallini (2000:118) notes that if pre-service teachers develop negative attitudes toward certain methods of assessment, there is a high possibility that they will not understand or use those methods in the future. Genc (2005:27) mentions that most teachers hold on to their beliefs that instruction and assessment are two separate processes and that their assessment was controlled by traditional rules. He further says that these teachers have a feeling that assessment provides objective information and they therefore prefer assessments that are more objective, rather than interpretative forms of assessment. Quilter and Gallini (2000:127) claim that there is a strong relationship between teachers' past experiences with educational assessment and their current attitudes towards assessment. It is in view of this that Genc (2005:23) asserts that a clear illustration with regard to teachers' beliefs about assessment practices may be based on teachers' prior experiences gained as students.

Bliem and Davinroy (1997:1) assert that teachers' evaluative practices are influenced by their conceptions of what constitutes proper classroom assessment. They say that the precise way in which teachers implement new forms of assessment and whether the reform succeeds or fails will depend largely on their beliefs and knowledge concerning measurement and its relation to instruction. This shows that teachers' perceptions often have an influence on how they assess their learners' performance. In this regard Genc (2005:22) mentions that although teachers may know the positive effects of alternative forms of assessments such as self-assessment on the students' learning and how to implement these techniques practically, they may still use

traditional forms of assessment since they believe that learners need to be well-prepared for standardised tests. Therefore Bliem and Davinroy (1997:1) caution that if researchers aim to improve education by altering assessment practices, they must have an understanding of the belief systems underlying teachers' ways of assessing learners' learning. Thus, if teachers' perceptions are not taken into consideration, changes in their assessment and instruction methods are likely to be superficial and fleeting. This research therefore aims to investigate teachers' existing perceptions about learner self-assessment. This is particularly important considering the paradigm shift entailed in the recognition of self-assessment as one of the authentic assessment methods that afford learners the opportunity to be more engaged in their own learning.

4.6 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: PEDAGOGICAL SHIFT ON ESL LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

Behaviourist pedagogy was the dominant theory of learning, and it shaped learning for the larger part of the 20th century (Shepard, 2000a:9). It perceives learning as a process of changing or conditioning observable behaviour as a result of the selective reinforcement of an individual's response to events that occur in the environment (Von Glaserfeld, undated, <http://www.cdli/~elmurphy/emurphy/cle2b.html:1>). In this perspective, learners are seen as passive individuals who accumulate knowledge transmitted by teachers. Shepard (2000a:11) claims that behaviourist pedagogy also makes interesting assumptions about motivation to learn. It perceives that individuals are motivated by the pursuit of rewards and avoidance of punishments. The purpose is to keep the learner motivated by staging the instruction in such a manner that it ensures great success with little or no negative feedback.

Behaviourist pedagogy also has implications for assessment. Adams (1998:6) argues that behaviourism employs traditional assessment techniques which provide little information about learners' learning. These techniques make it difficult to make inferences about students' learning, and consequently new

ideas about how to improve students' learning are less likely. Rueda and Garcia (1996:315) agree that these assessments focus on precise, usually quantitative, measurement of discrete skills or curriculum. They are mainly based on multiple-choice and other short-answer formats. They exclude learners from participation in the assessment process and consequently perpetuate learners' intellectual dependency.

However, a growing number of scholars started to question this behaviourist theory based on the epistemological, political and moral reasons around the second half of the 20th century (Aydeniz, 2007:24). Thus, in the light of the new insights about how students learn, it was argued that the behaviourist paradigm does not encourage learners' creativity. Instead it emphasises classroom control and, as a result, structures curriculum in a way that limits learning to the mastery of basic skills (Shepard, 2000a:11). It is further argued the growing recognition for alternative theories of students' learning resulted in a shift in educators' thinking about teaching and learning. Thus this shift gave rise to the constructivist learning theory (Aydeniz, 2007:24).

4.6.1 CONSTRUCTIVIST PEDAGOGY AND ESL LEARNING

The foundation of constructivist pedagogy comes from the work of John Dewey (1933) and Jean Piaget (Bond, 2006:5). It challenges the behaviourist assumptions about how students learn and advocates for alternative approaches to learning (Shepard, 2000a:6). Jonassen, (1991:21), as cited in Ruschoff and Ritter (2001:223), suggests that constructivist learning theory is based on the view that learning is an active, creative and socially interactive process, and knowledge is perceived as something learners must construct rather than being something that can be transferred. This implies that learning based on constructivist pedagogy gives learners the opportunity to fully utilise resources available to them and to acquire knowledge, rather than forcing them to function as recipients of information.

Learners are viewed as actively engaged in constructing their meaning from their learning experiences; actively making sense of new knowledge and

deciding how to integrate it with previously learned concepts and information (Elwood and Klenowski, 2002:246). In this case, learners are able to achieve deep learning as teachers provide contexts and opportunities within their assessment practice for students to be more aware of their learning strategies and to take responsibility for them. Supporting this view, Van Hattum-Janssen and Pimenta (2006:65) assert that learners are in charge of their learning because they are seen as constructing knowledge themselves. Responsibility for learning no longer lies in the hands of the teacher, but also in large part with the learners. Thus when learners are enabled to be responsible for their own learning it means a change in the role of teachers and learners in many factors that have an influence on the learning process, such as curriculum design, materials used, and the assessment of students.

Rushoff and Lund (undated, www.ecml.at/projects/voll/rationale_and_help/theory/menu_theory.html. 15-08-2007) note that constructivist paradigm is considered as a valuable methodology basis for real innovation in second language learning. Language learning is viewed as an interactive, dynamic process, in which new knowledge is acquired most fruitfully when learners are placed in a situation where they can explore resources rather than in a context of mere formal instruction (Ruschoff and Ritter, 2001:225). They see this as a process-oriented approach to learning which will not only lead to a better understanding of linguistic facts and more effective acquisition of language proficiency, but it will also lead to more learning competence and learning awareness. This awareness must be developed on communicative, linguistic, and strategic levels. Thus the following constructivist principles with regard to language learning are brought forward (Ruschoff and Ritter, 2001:224):

- ❖ Learning should be considered as an active and collaborative process of knowledge instruction.
- ❖ Learning is an autonomous process, to be regulated by learners' expectations, goals, existing schemata and intentions.
- ❖ Learning is the process of experimentation based on previous knowledge and experience.
- ❖ Learning is the process of socially negotiated construction of meaning.

- ❖ Learning is a process which must be supported by a rich learning environment rooted in real-life and authentic situations.

Jacobs and Farrell (2001:4) state that the paradigm shift in language education led to many suggested changes as to how language teaching should be conducted and conceived, and they outline them as follows:

- ❖ **Learner autonomy:** the concept of learner autonomy implies that learners collaborate with peers, moving away from dependence on the teacher. These group activities enable learners to harness that power and in the process they build their pool of learning resources because they can receive assistance from their peers, as well as from the teacher.
- ❖ **Cooperative learning:** a range of concepts and techniques are used to foster the value of student interaction. Students engage in group activities which offer them one means of taking on more rights and responsibilities in their own learning.
- ❖ **Curricular interaction:** when a variety of subject areas is taught jointly, learners have more opportunities to see the links between subject areas. Thus, when they appreciate these links, they develop stronger understanding of subject matter, deeper purpose for learning and greater ability to analyse situations in a holistic manner.
- ❖ **Focus on meaning:** people learn best when they connect and store information in meaningful chunks. Long-term learning and the extension of the learning needs students to pay attention to the meaning of the language they are using. In second language learning meaning is emphasised and the projects are used as a means of implementing communicative language teaching where the focus lies in using language, not in language usage.
- ❖ **Diversity:** in second language learning diversity involves the mix of learners in the classroom in terms of their backgrounds, for example, ethnic, religious, social class and first language, sex, achievement levels, learning styles, intelligence and learning strategies. In this regard each and every learner is considered as different and teaching needs to take into

account these differences. Diversity among learners is not seen as an obstacle, but as strength.

- ❖ **Thinking skills:** thinking skills are seen as an important component of education in a sense that information is easily obtained. The essential task is now to use that information wisely. Group activities provide a useful venue for second language learners to gain and use thinking skills, as they need to teach peers, to give each other constructive criticism, to challenge each other's views and to formulate plans for their group.
- ❖ **Teachers as co-learners:** teachers are seen as learning along with learners. Due to the complexity of the world and its constantly changing nature, life-long learning is essential.

The preceding discussion reveals that the educational practices for English language education are in the transitional state. The literature shows that the constructivist pedagogy is now being adopted to facilitate the active involvement of learners in their own learning. Dewey (1964), as cited in Bond (2006:7), advocated the idea of putting the learner at the centre of the experiences, and he also sees the teacher and the learner as collaborative partners in the learning process.

4.6.2 CONSTRUCTIVIST PEDAGOGY AND SELF-ASSESSMENT

It is argued that this same shift in theoretical models found in instruction is evident in assessment as well (Rueda & Garcia, 1996:315). Herman (1992), as cited in Bond (2006:6), claims that a constructivist approach to learning supports the need to integrate assessment methodologies with instructional outcomes and curriculum content. This means that assessment as an integral part of learning is deeply rooted in a constructivist theory that views learning as a process of taking in information, interpreting it, connecting it to existing knowledge and beliefs and, if necessary, reorganising understanding to accommodate that information (Shepard, 1991, as cited in Bond, 2006:6).

Shepard (2000b:60) argues that to be consistent with the social constructivist pedagogy, assessment must be redefined to reflect recent understanding

about how students learn. Teachers need to reconceptualise their understanding and knowledge of assessment, moving from assessment for record keeping to assessment for the improvement of students' learning. He also claims that it is essential that classroom assessments be congruent with important learning goals. In order to achieve this, the content of assessment must be in line with challenging subject matter standards and be connected to context of application.

Rueda and Garcia (1996:315) note that this shift toward constructivism is reflected in the application of alternative forms of assessment such as performance-based assessments, portfolios, and other means designed to be better indicators of performance in more authentic contexts. They further argue that measures developed from this perspective are based on the notion that assessment is more context specific and emphasise monitoring and observation of whole and presumably authentic classroom learning activities. Rather than focusing on quantifiable scores, performance measures are more often descriptive and tend to focus on meaning-making and changes in student performance over time. Shepard (2000b:31) adds that the aim of assessment in classrooms must be changed fundamentally so that it is used to assist learners learn and to improve teaching, instead of being used only to rank learners or certify the end products of learning. Principles of classroom assessment require that expectations and intermediate steps for improvement to be made visible to students and that students be involved in evaluating their own work.

Shepard (2000b:61) states that self-assessment has to be a part of more pervasive cultural shifts in the classroom so that the intended benefits of assessment can be realised. He also mentions that involving learners in the debates about standards and in reflecting on their own learning can increase their responsibility for their own learning and redistribute power, encouraging the collaborative relationship between the teacher and the learners. Shapiro (2003:329), as cited in Noonan and Duncan (2005:6), argues that self-assessment is grounded in constructivist philosophy which claims that whatever a person discovers himself is what he really knows. This suggests

that learners learn and understand the subject matter very well when they are allowed to identify their strengths and weaknesses and they can use the knowledge of their own achievements apply more effort in their studying for positive results. Shepard (2000b:61) also observes that self-assessment does not mean that the teacher gives over responsibility, but shares it to gain more student ownership, less distrust, and more appreciation that standards are not capricious or arbitrary.

Shepard (2000b:31), however, mentions that the constructivist view about assessment is an ideal; it is rarely put into practice by teachers. Aydeniz (2007:27) claims that most prospective teachers graduate from the teacher education programs without having experienced constructivist assessment practices. Teachers still hold on to traditional methods and techniques of assessment that are based on once-off examinations on tasks that may have little connection to the curriculum, and on scores that compare learners with each other (Rueda and Garcia, 1996:315). In this regard, Shepard (2000b:31) states that all of the changes called for by constructivist theory need new knowledge and profound changes in teaching practices. There should also be an understanding of teachers' beliefs about assessment, especially in an era in which teachers receive different messages about the role of assessment in students' learning (Aydeniz, 2007:39).

However, Ellwein and Graue (1996), as cited in Shepard (2000b:31), argue that the change in assessment practices is very difficult because of the continued influence of external standardised tests and because teachers have received little training beyond objective writing and familiarity with traditional formats to help them know how to assess their learners' knowledge. In view of this, Aydeniz (2007:27) recommends that prospective teachers need to have constructivist assessment experiences in their own repertoire before they can start teaching assessment practices that are consistent with social constructivist pedagogy.

It is evident from the above discussion that teachers should move from traditional assessment practices that exclude learners from participation in the

assessment process. Classroom assessment should be changed in a manner that improves learner performance and helps attainment of learning goals. This means that alternative assessment strategies such as peer assessment, portfolios, observations, journals, essays and self-assessment should be utilised in order to encourage intellectual independence and the acquisition of higher order thinking skills. These techniques are also seen as providing a more comprehensive picture of the learner and more authentic information about learner achievement. In this regard, Omelicheva (2005:191) asserts that the notion of learning as active involvement needs teachers to share the responsibility for participation in the assessment of their work with their learners. Thus self-assessment would allow learners to be responsible for their own learning and they would also develop metacognitive skills as they apply the standards that define quality work in a field to their own work (Shepard, 2000:67).

4.6.3 CONSTRUCTIVIST PEDAGOGY AND TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS

Teachers' perceptions can be viewed from a constructivist perspective because they are seen as knowing, meaning-making beings whose knowledge and meaning influence their actions (Rueda & Garcia, 1996:312). They further claim that teachers' perceptions are situation specific and action oriented and they include teachers' perceptions about their work and the ways in which they give meaning to these perceptions by their behaviour in the classroom. It follows that these perceptions play an important role in how teachers interpret pedagogical knowledge, conceptualise teaching and scaffold instruction (Bryan, 2003 as cited in Ayideniz, 2007:9). It is also argued by Pajares (1992:318) that beliefs act as a framework through which a teacher views, interprets, and interacts with various aspects of the classroom practices.

It can also be learned from constructivist theory that existing knowledge structures and beliefs work to enable or hinder new learning (Shepard,

2000b:65). It is important to provide a comprehensive understanding of teachers' perceptions about self-assessment, because teachers' pedagogical conceptions may have an effect on the implementation of self-assessment in their classrooms.

4.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter has looked at the definition of perceptions in terms of the term beliefs, the relationship between perceptions and classroom practice, and sources of teachers' perceptions. The chapter also explained that constructivist pedagogy as an emergent paradigm has a great influence on the literature on English second language learning and assessment. It was presented that teaching and assessment should change fundamentally in order to be compatible with and support the constructivist model of teaching and learning. These changes also represent a paradigm shift or change in underlying teacher belief systems, rather than simply a shift from one set of practices to another (Rueda and Garcia, 1997:316).

programs need to be resource rich to develop a successful learner-centred curriculum that caters for a wide range of students needs.

It is clearly apparent that the use of communicative language teaching in ESL classrooms is beneficial as it goes beyond the teaching of discrete elements, rules and patterns of the target language and develops learners' ability to take part in spontaneous and meaningful communication in different contexts, with different people, which helps to develop learners' communicative competence.

The theories of second language learning examined in this section have focused on the various views of the process of acquiring a second language and all of the theories perceive second language learning as a gradual process. These theories are all concerned with giving explanations of how a second language is acquired, but none of the theories offer a complete and coherent explanation. Schulz (1991:22) notes that "a more complete theory of L2 acquisition will have to account for the biological/innate, the social/interactive, the cognitive, and the behaviourist aspects of language learning. And a sound pedagogy will, in addition, have to keep in mind the many possible individual learner factors which facilitate or inhibit second language development in a classroom setting."

The knowledge of second language learning theories and models is essential when trying to integrate second language learning and self-assessment. This kind of understanding influences the capacity to provide better self-assessment techniques in the learning of English as a second language.

3.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

In recent years, many practitioners and assessment specialists have sought ways to encourage the active participation of learners in the process of language assessment. Ekbatini (2000:1) also notes that in order to enable learners to be active participants in the learning process, learner-centred English was implemented as a second language curriculum and remained the

primary goal for English language training and the majority of classrooms. It is in this respect that alternative assessment approaches were introduced in the learning of English as a second language. Ross (2005:334) even claims that there is empirical evidence that these alternative assessment approaches actually yield value added outcomes for both foreign and second language learners.

Dragemark (2006:170) contends that autonomous learning and learners' ability to assess their own learning has become the main aim of education in many European school systems. He states that this is reflected in the range of modern language syllabi and curricula and in the language policy in general. Khan and Pinyana (2004:13) support the view that autonomy is now a major factor in the context of language learning. They further claim that in communicative language learning the teacher's responsibility has shifted to the learners and this is probably the result of a series of changes to the curriculum towards a more learner-centred approach. Now learners are expected to take more responsibility in the language learning process, as the power and authority in the traditional classroom have been redistributed. Thus the purpose of giving learners more power in their learning is to prepare them for life-long learning. In view of this, Dragemark (2006:170) argues that a central aspect of the life-long learning concept is for learners to be able to assess their own progress and attained results and, on the basis of this, make judgements of learning goals.

Language assessment has become increasingly more authentic and direct and it involves learners in tasks in which they would normally be involved in their daily lives (Dragemark, 2006:170). Assessment in situations like this tends to be formative and process-focused, rather than summative and product-driven. Kohonen (1997:5) also stresses that language assessment should be authentic. This means that the procedures for evaluating learner performance using activities and tasks that represent classroom goals, curricula and instruction in a realistic conditions of language use as possible. He further points out that authentic language assessment put emphasis on the communicative meaningfulness of evaluation and the commitment to measure

that which is valuable in education. Thus it employs forms of assessment that reflect student learning, achievement, motivation and attitudes on instructionally – relevant classroom activities. Hart (1994:9) states that authentic language assessment corresponds and mirrors good classroom practices; its results can be used to improve instruction, based on the knowledge of the learner progress. Authentic assessment stresses the importance of the teacher's professional judgement and commitment to improving student learning. O'Malley and Valdez-Pierce (1996:4) add that authentic language assessment includes communicative performance assessment, language portfolios, and various forms of self-assessment by the learner. They argue that the use of self-assessment in language learning promotes the learners' direct involvement in the learning and the integration of cognitive abilities with effective learning.

Thus it is widely accepted that self-assessment is a key learning strategy for autonomous language learning, enabling students to monitor their own progress and relate learning to individual needs (Harris, 1997:19). He also claims that self-assessment produces learners who are more active and focused, and are placed in a better position to assess their own progress in terms of communication. Ross (2005:329) adds that self-assessment has been used extensively in language testing research and it has produced viable results. He says that in many settings self-assessment is considered a viable alternative to formal second language learning assessment for placement and criterion-referenced interpretations. Wei and Chen (2004:10) mention that self-assessment techniques provide the means to reduce teacher workload and it also improves learning efficiency in terms of writing. It encourages learners to examine their writing critically and analytically and to take more responsibility for whatever they write.

Self-assessment is also regarded as an ongoing process and serves to enable learners at an intermediate level in a language learning program to think about their present level in relation to both their starting level and target level (Blue, 1994:20). Thus the aim of self-assessment is to measure learners' current level of competence in different language skills and compare it with

CHAPTER FIVE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY APPLIED DURING THE INVESTIGATION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the design, methods and procedures followed in the investigation are discussed and justified. The rationale for using quantitative research design will be presented first, followed by the description of the sample, data collection instruments, and data analysis procedures. The issues of validity and reliability are also outlined, as well as ethical considerations applied in this study.

The research focus in this study is about exploring the kinds of perceptions that English second language teachers hold about learner self-assessment. The factors that influence these perceptions, teachers' perceptions about their role in ensuring the successful implementation of self-assessment, and their perceptions about the reliability and accuracy of learner self-assessment were the focus of the study. It is argued that perceptions are essential to understand perceptions that teachers operate from in order to have an understanding of how they approach their work. Thus, in order to understand perceptions, it is important to look at classroom context.

The quantitative research approach was used in order to effectively answer the research questions identified. This approach was conducted through the formulation and application of the questionnaire during the investigation.

5.2 RESEARCH DESIGN SELECTED FOR THE STUDY

Research design is described by McMillan and Schumacher (1993:31) as “the plan and the structure of the investigation used to obtain evidence to answer research questions”. Mertens (1998:70) notes that research design can be thought of as answering the question of who gets what, and when? This design can thus be seen as describing the procedures for carrying out the study; this includes when, from whom, and under what conditions the data will be obtained. The purpose of research design is to assist the researcher to ensure that evidence gathered is valid and accurate, and that it addresses the research questions in the study. McMillan and Schumacher (1993:31) contend that research design is a crucial part of an investigation due to the fact that certain limitations and cautions in interpreting the results are related to each design. The other reason is that the research design determines how the data should be analysed.

The research design is therefore classified into two major types, which are qualitative and quantitative research designs. These two designs are often used to identify different approaches to research. For the purpose of this study quantitative survey research was used to respond to the questions, because it is the best way of describing people’s perceptions about a particular phenomenon.

5.2.1 QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH FOLLOWED DURING THE INVESTIGATION

In this study the quantitative research approach was used with the purpose of properly answering the research questions identified. Gall, Gall and Borg (2003), as cited in Mertens and McLaughlin (2004:52), mention that quantitative research is rooted in the positivist paradigm, which propounds that the purpose of the research is to develop people’s confidence that a certain knowledge claim about educational or psychological phenomena is true or false by collecting evidence in the form of objective observations of relevant phenomena. It is described by Cresswell (2005:39) as “a type of

educational research in which the researcher decides what to study, asks specific, narrow questions, collects numeric (numbered) data from participants, analyses these numbers using statistics, and conducts the inquiry in an unbiased manner.” Page (2005:58) contends that the advantage of quantitative research is that data collected as numbers can be subjected to statistical analysis to prove or disprove the hypothesis. Thus the results will be valid if a rigorous quantitative research design has been used. Payne and Payne (2004:181-182) outline the following features of quantitative research:

- ❖ Quantitative research is mainly concerned with describing and accounting for regularities in social behaviour, rather than trying to find and interpret the meanings that people bring to their own actions.
- ❖ Behavioural patterns can be separated out into variables and represented by numbers.
- ❖ Explanations are stated as associations between variables and this is ideally done in a way that allows prediction of outcomes from known regularities.
- ❖ Social phenomena are examined by introducing stimuli like survey questions, and data is collected through systematic, repeated, and controlled measurements.
- ❖ It is established on the assumption that social processes occur outside of an individual’s understanding, restricting what individual does, accessible to researchers by virtue of their previous theoretical and empirical knowledge.

In this study, quantitative research was used because it enabled the researcher to objectively measure and statistically analyse the numerical data in order to understand what kind of perceptions teacher hold about learner self-assessment.

5.3 SAMPLING PROCEDURES FOLLOWED IN THE INVESTIGATION

Sampling is defined by Rosnow and Rosenthal (1996:413), as cited in Ramolefe (2004:36), as a scheme of action, a design or procedure that indicates how respondents are to be selected in the study. Vockell (1983:103) also describes sampling as the strategies which make it possible for one to pick a subgroup from a larger group and thereafter use this subgroup as a basis for making judgements about the larger group. He says that it is very important that the subgroup resemble the larger group as closely as possible in order to effectively use the subgroup to make decisions about the larger group. Researchers thus take a small portion of the population, observe this small group and then make generalisations of the findings to the larger population (Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh, 1990:169). They further argue that sampling is essential to the researcher because the time, money, accessibility, and effort involved do not allow a researcher to study all possible members of a population. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000:92) suggest that researchers should make sampling decisions in the early stages of the overall planning of the research process.

5.3.1 RESEARCH POPULATION AND SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

It is important to first define the population, because the sample is drawn from the population. McMillan and Schumacher (2006:119) define the population as “a group of elements or cases, whether individuals, objects, or events, that conform to specific criteria and to which we intend generalise the results of the research”. The target population in this study consisted of secondary school teachers who are currently teaching English as a second language in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. The information about the secondary schools in Gauteng was extracted from the website of Gauteng Department of Education at <http://www.education.gpg.gov.za>. It was discovered from the website that the Province has approximately 500 secondary schools, of which the majority are located in the urban areas. The accessible population was the English second language teachers who were randomly selected for this study

with the assistance of the Department of Statistics of the University of Pretoria.

In this study researcher used random sampling to select the participants. With random sampling, each member of the population under study has an equal chance of being selected into the sample (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000:100). The intention is to choose units to be sampled that will be representative of the larger population (Creswell, 2002:165). The schools were first stratified by locality/area (urban and rural) and the medium of instruction (Afrikaans and English medium). In this case three lists consisting of English medium, Afrikaans medium and rural schools in Gauteng were compiled and attached into the Excel file. After that 94 schools were randomly selected from the three groups: two rural English medium, 69 urban English medium, and 23 urban Afrikaans medium. In the 94 schools approximately 300 teachers were teaching English as a second language. The survey questionnaire was then distributed to all 300 teachers. The questionnaire was completed and returned by 163 teachers; this means that just over half of the sample returned the questionnaire.

5.4 DATA COLLECTION STRATEGIES

Mertens (1998:285) explains that “the purpose of data collection is to learn about something about people or things. The focus is on the particular attribute or quality of the person or setting.” In order to achieve this, the literature review and the questionnaire techniques will be employed

5.4.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

This is the technique of data collection that deals with the data that is already in existence. Page (2005:58) argues that the literature review plays an essential role in quantitative research due to the fact that it enables the researcher to identify previous research done in the field of interest and the

methods used, as well as the results obtained. Creswell (2003:31) adds that quantitative research includes a huge amount of literature at the beginning of the study to provide major direction for the research questions or hypothesis and to introduce a problem. Literature review thus adds much to an understanding of the selected problem and helps place the results of a study in a historical perspective, provided it is carefully conducted and well presented (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006:108). Therefore the aim of the literature review is to contribute towards an understanding of the nature and meaning of the problem that has been identified by the researcher. The literature review enables the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the study and build a body of knowledge that is acceptable for use in the construction of the questionnaire. The absence of the literature review makes it difficult to build a body of accepted knowledge on an educational topic.

McMillan and Schumacher (2006:76) identify the several benefits of a literature review as follows:

- ❖ It helps to define and limit the problem to a subtopic within a larger body of prior theory, knowledge, or practice and stated in the appropriate terms.
- ❖ It places the study in a historical and associational perspective in a sense that researchers add to the knowledge in any subfield by analysing the way their studies will relate to existing knowledge.
- ❖ A thorough literature review enables the researcher to avoid unintentional and unnecessary replication of previous studies and to choose a different research problem.
- ❖ Previous literature search allows the researcher to select promising methods and measures, that is, it provides a rationale and insight for the research design.
- ❖ The study of related literature enables the researcher to relate the findings to prior knowledge and give recommendations for further research.

In this study the literature review and conceptual framework together guided the design of questions that were included in the questionnaire.

5.4.2 THE QUESTIONNAIRE AS A RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The questionnaire was designed for educators as the main research instrument to be used in the collection of data. McMillan and Schumacher (1993:238) suggest that a questionnaire is the data collection technique that is mostly used for getting information from respondents for various good reasons. They say that a questionnaire is economical, has standardised questions, and can ensure anonymity, and questions can be constructed for specific purposes. Questionnaire as a data collection instrument is quite useful for collecting quantitative data that provide statistical descriptions, relationships, and analysis. It is argued that the main advantage of questionnaires is their ability to cover a large part of the population in a relatively short time. The questionnaire is also an efficient and practical tool for collecting data because the participants are expected to respond immediately to questions asked. Delport (2005: 166) contend that the questionnaire is probably the most generally used method of all and its basic objective is to obtain facts and opinions about a phenomenon from individuals who have thorough information on a subject of interest. The researcher can avoid the thread of sensitivity and a possible invasion of privacy. The questionnaire was used in this study to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents, which can hardly be achieved through the use of other techniques such as interviews. In this regard it is highly unlikely that the data would be affected by the element of subjectivity or personal biases.

The questionnaire therefore was designed for English second language teachers based on their perceptions about learner self-assessment, since it is the best instrument to elicit reactions, beliefs, opinions, perceptions and attitudes through written answers from the respondents. It is in view of this that Gay and Airasian (2000:280) contend that the information provided by the respondents is converted into data and this information allows the researcher to measure what respondents think. The questionnaire was then distributed to schools identified as the population sample.

5.4.2.1 CONSTRUCTION AND CONTENT VALIDATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

It is important for the researcher to take issues of validity into consideration when constructing a questionnaire. Mertens and McLaughlin (2004:173) refer to validity as the extent to which it measures what it was constructed to measure. If the questionnaire does not adhere to validity standards it can have negative impacts on the respondents. This is referred to as the validity of the questions. Wolf (1999), as cited in Mokoena (2004:82), adds that educational studies that use measures lacking in validity are likely to produce worthless results irrespective of how well sampling, data collection and analysis are done. It is therefore important for the researcher to consider the validity of the research instruments no matter what methodology one applies. Taking this into account, content validity was applied to make sure that the instrument used in this study is valid.

There are various types of validity, but for this study content validity is of main importance since the quantitative questionnaire is employed. Babbie and Mouton (2001:22) suggest that content validity refers to “how much a measure covers the range of meanings included within a concept”. In support of this view, Delport (2005:160-161) notes that content validity “is concerned with the representativeness or sampling adequacy of the content of an instrument”. In regard of this, the quantitative instrument used in this study was content validated.

The questions included in the questionnaire are related to the topic with the aim of measuring what it was supposed to measure. I structured a variety of questions in order to achieve that purpose and they were categorised in accordance with the kind of information they were supposed to elicit from the participants. Thus the questionnaire with scaled items was used to evaluate English second language teachers’ perceptions about learner self-assessment. This final version of the questionnaire comprised of 57 items. It consisted of two main sections: A and B.

Demographic information

Section A of the questionnaire consisted of eleven items corresponding to V2 through V12. It was designed to obtain personal information about the surveyed population. This demographic data were collected through asking teachers about their gender, age, marital status, home language, highest education qualification, current level of post, number of years in the teaching profession, largest number of learners in class, English teaching experience, locality of the school, and English medium of the school. This biographical information is important for the researcher because it provides the researcher with the respondents' background and it helps to explore the differences in participants' sub-groups. This kind of information is also necessary because it has an influence on teachers' classroom practices and assessment implementation.

With regard to section B of the questionnaire, 46 items corresponding to V13 through V59 were constructed based on the content from Chapter two and three concerning English second language teachers' perceptions about learner self-assessment. The questions were constructed with regard to five broad themes from the literature and theoretical framework and these are as follows: perceptions about value of self-assessment in the teaching and learning process, perceptions about the use of self-assessment as an alternative method of assessment in English second language education, teachers' perceptions about their role in learner self-assessment, perceptions about the reliability and accuracy of learner self-assessment, and possible factors that influence teachers' perceptions about self-assessment. The section is further sub-divided into Sections B(a), B(b), B(c), B(d), B(e) and B(f).

Perceptions on the value of learner self-assessment

Section B(a) of the questionnaire consisted of 14 items which were designed to establish teachers' perceptions about the value of learner self-assessment in their classrooms. Ideas for the construction of these questions are

borrowed from the works of Boud (1995); Baldwin (2000); Khan and Pinyana (2004); Jansen, Grol, Crebolder and Rethan (1998); Hanrahan and Isaacs (2001); Roberts (2006); Carlson (2001); Srimavin and Darasawang (2004); Chan (2003); Dragemark (2006); Cassidy (2006); Boud and Falchikov (1989); Omelicheva (2005); Liebovich (2000); Ellis (2001;300); Orsmond, Merry and Reiling (1997); Gibbons (2002); Lasonen (1995); and Shepard (2000). These authors all agree that successful learning can be achieved when learners engage in the assessment of their learning through self-assessment.

Perceptions on the use of learner self-assessment as an alternative method of assessment

Section B(b) of the questionnaire consists of 11 items which attempted to determine how teachers feel about the use of learner self-assessment as an alternative method of assessment in language education. With regard to these questions, relevant information was drawn from the studies of Ekbatini (2001), Ross (2005), Kohonen (1997), Hart (1994), O'Malley and Valdez Pierce (1996), Harris (1997), Wei and Chen (2004), Blue (1994), and Shameen (2002). These authors have put forward the argument that learning and assessment of the English language has shifted from a teacher-centred to a learner-centred approach. Authentic methods of assessment such as self-assessment are now being employed.

Teachers' perceptions about their roles in learner self-assessment

Section B(c) of the questionnaire was made up of six items which were formulated with the purpose of determining how teachers perceive their role in the successful implementation of self-assessment in their classrooms from studies of Fitzpatrick (2006); Bose *et al.* (2001); Brookhart, Andolina and Zuza (2004); Widasanki and Courtright-Nash (2004); Teh (2006:4); and Kosel (2006). Their studies show that self-assessment can be successful only when teachers provide proper guidance and support for their learners. The literature review also reveals that teachers should have faith in their students as this

would result in students showing interest and determination in engaging in the assessment of their own learning.

Perceptions about reliability and accuracy of learner self-assessment

Section B(d) consists of six items which deal with the perceptions of teachers with regard to the reliability and accuracy of learner self-assessment in their classrooms. Relevant information was drawn from the works of El-Koumy (2001:2), Blue (1994), and Martin (1998) as cited in Boud (1999). The said authors suggest that there is scepticism about learner self-assessment. They note that some teachers feel that self-assessment is not a reliable and accurate means of assessment as learners may cheat or they may not have the necessary skills and expertise to do assessment.

Factors influencing teachers' perceptions

Section B(e) of the questionnaire consists of eight items which were designed to determine the factors that may shape teachers' perceptions about self-assessment and these are drawn from the studies of Lumpe, Haney and Czerniak (2000) as cited in Yalaki (2004); Castro *et al.* (2004); Pajares (1992); Chiang (2003); and Johnson (1994).

Teachers' reasons for using or not using self-assessment

Section B(f) requested the respondents to indicate whether or not they apply learner self-assessment in their classrooms. The question was then followed by an open-ended question item where teachers were supposed to provide the reasons for their choices.

5.4.2.2 CONSTRUCTING THE INITIAL QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS

The questionnaire items can be generated in various ways. Devellis (2003:64), as cited in Genc (2005:60), mentions that items for an instrument

can be constructed based on literature review or theory, using existing tests or inventory, observation and conversations. For this study, the researcher conducted an extensive literature review about teachers' perceptions with specific focus on learner self-assessment. The researcher then analysed all the existing information given by the previous research and constructed statements that were to be used in the questionnaire. In total 54 items were generated as the first draft of the questionnaire. To establish the content validity of the questionnaire, the draft was sent to the statistician at the Department of Statistics of the University of Pretoria who reviewed the items to judge whether the items are relevant in each scale. Each item's clarity and wording was also evaluated and rated and thereafter some modifications were made. Some of the following guidelines were taken into consideration when constructing the instrument items, as provided by McMillan and Schumacher (1993:240-241):

- ❖ **Item's clarity:** the item is said to be clear when all respondents interpret it in the same way.
- ❖ **Avoid double-barrelled questions:** a question should be limited to only one idea or concept.
- ❖ **Respondents must be competent to answer:** the respondents must be able to provide reliable information.
- ❖ **Questions should be relevant:** the respondents should be asked questions that are important to them in order to avoid careless responses that will result in misleading results.
- ❖ **Items should be simple:** items should not be long and complicated because they are more difficult to understand, and respondents may not make an effort to try to understand them.
- ❖ **Avoid negative items:** items which are negatively stated should be avoided because they are easy to misinterpret.
- ❖ **Avoid biased items or terms:** the way in which items are worded, or the inclusion of certain terms, may encourage particular responses more than others.

5.4.2.3 SCALING OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire consisted of 57 items which the respondent was expected to respond to by expressing degrees of agreement or disagreement. The items on a perception scale are on a four-point Likert scale with descriptors ranging from ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’. Respondents were requested to give their perceptions with regard to the use of learner self-assessment in their classrooms. Responses ranged from 1 referring to “strongly disagree”, 2 referring to “disagree”, 3 referring to “agree” and 4 referring to “strongly agree”.

Respondents were also requested to indicate what influence their self-assessment perceptions on a four-point scale. Response items options for items on this scale were 1 referring to “highly unlikely”, 2 referring to “unlikely”, 3 referring to “likely”, and 4 referring to “very likely”. All the respondents received the same questionnaire containing the same four-point rating scale in order to ensure the validity and reliability of the instrument.

The last part of the question consisted of the “yes” or “no” question where respondents were expected to indicate whether they practice learner self-assessment in their classrooms or not.

The Likert scale is advantageous to use because it builds in the degree of sensitivity and differentiation of response whilst still generating numbers (Cohen, Lawrence and Manion, 2000:253).

TABLE 5.1: EXAMPLE OF A FOUR-POINT SCALE QUESTIONNAIRE

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4

5.4.2.4 APPLICATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The researcher applied to the Gauteng Department of Education to obtain permission to conduct the research in Gauteng secondary schools and the permission was granted. The University of Pretoria's ethics committee also issued an ethical clearance certificate in order for data collection to take place in the identified schools. Additionally, the principals were consulted to administer questionnaires in their school premises. This was done with written letters of permission to gain access in their schools. They were also informed about the permissions arranged for the study.

The questionnaire was then presented to the teachers accompanied by a cover letter, an informed consent form, and a prepaid return envelope. The cover letter requested teachers to participate in the study and explained the purpose of the study. It also contained information about the researcher and the researcher's supervisor. The informed consent served to guarantee the confidentiality and anonymity of responses. Thus teachers were not supposed to write their names on the questionnaire, in order to maintain anonymity throughout the study.

The researcher then mailed the questionnaires to the schools identified for the study. Creswell (2002:403) notes that "a mailed questionnaire is a convenient way to reach geographically dispersed sample of the population". The mailed questionnaires made it possible for the researcher to collect the data quickly throughout the entire Gauteng. The researcher also personally handed out the questionnaires in some of the schools which are within the proximity of the researcher and they were collected as soon as they were completed. The advantage of administering the questionnaires personally is that it minimises chances of non-return. The questionnaire was complete by 163 teachers in total.

5.5 RELIABILITY OF THE STUDY

According to Delpont (2005:162), “reliability of a measurement procedure is the stability or consistency of the measurement”. That is, the measurement is considered reliable if it produces identical measurements when the same variable is measured under the same conditions.

5.5.1 PRE-TESTING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

After the completion of the questionnaire construction, the researcher conducted a pilot study in order to verify the questionnaire and identify possible mistakes. Mertens (1998:117) notes that pilot testing a questionnaire means that the researcher tries it out with a small sample similar to the researcher’s intended group of respondents. Tuckman (1988: 233) argues that it is desirable to conduct a pilot test on a questionnaire and to do revisions on a questionnaire based on the results of the test. He further notes that a pilot study attempts to determine whether the questionnaire items have the desired qualities of measurement and discriminability. This argument is supported by Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh (1990:109) who suggest that it helps the researcher to decide whether the study is feasible and whether it is worthwhile to continue. It affords the researcher with the opportunity to assess whether the data collection instruments are appropriate and practical. Huysamen (1993:205), as cited in Strydom (2005:206), states that the pilot study enables the researcher to bring possible deficiencies in the measurement procedure to the fore. In this regard presence of weaknesses such as ambiguity of questions, poor wording, and the length of the questionnaire are identified and rectified.

The researcher therefore paid attention to these considerations when conducting a pilot survey. The researcher purposefully selected 10 teachers within the identified areas. The questionnaire was distributed to all the identified teachers who were teaching English as a second language in selected Gauteng secondary schools. The questionnaires were sent to the teachers and were returned on an agreed date.

After studying the responses from the pilot questionnaire, the researcher made minor amendments, which included removing ambiguity in the items and discarding items that were found to be repetitive. The pilot questionnaire helped to reduce the error rate in the responses.

5.6 JUSTIFICATION OF THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODS APPLICABLE TO THEM

TABLE 5.2: SUB-QUESTIONS

	SUB QUESTIONS	PURPOSE	KIND OF DATA USED	RATIONALE
1.	What is the nature of English second language teachers' perceptions about learner self-assessment?	To establish the perceptions that teachers hold with regard to the use of learner self-assessment in the teaching and learning situations	The questionnaire provided information about teachers' perceptions on the use of learner self-assessment in their classrooms. The perception scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" was used to evaluate teachers' perceptions	The questionnaire is the best and most appropriate way to elicit people's perceptions, views and opinions about a particular phenomenon
2.	What are the possible factors that influence English second language teachers' perceptions about learner self-assessment?	To determine the possible factors that might affect the way teachers perceive learner self-assessment	The questionnaire was applied to answer this question. Teachers had to indicate what factors might influence their perceptions on a four-point scale ranging from "highly unlikely" to "very likely".	The questionnaire helped the researcher to understand the extent to which certain factors can shape the way teachers perceive learner self-assessment.
3.	Do English second language teachers' perceptions about learner self-assessment influence their classroom application of self-assessment in their classrooms?	To establish whether teachers' perceptions determine their use of learner self-assessment in their classrooms	The respondents had to answer "yes" or "no" in the questionnaire to indicate whether or not they practice self-assessment in their classrooms.	It was imperative to use the questionnaire to see whether teachers' perceptions relate to their self-reported learner self-assessment practices

5.7 STATISTICAL PROCEDURES APPLIED IN THE INVESTIGATION

Kruger, De Vos, Fouche and Venter (2005:218) explain that in professional research quantitative data can be analysed manually or by a computer. In this regard, statistical procedures were used to make quantitative data more meaningful. These statistics helped the researcher to organise, summarise and analyse the data. According to McMillan and Schumacher (1993:191), these methods are tools designed to enable the researcher organise and interpret numbers derived from measuring a trait or variable. These tools are called descriptive statistics and they help to determine how reliably researchers can infer that those phenomena observed in a sample will also occur in an unobserved larger population of concern from which the sample was drawn (Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh, 2002:118). The inferential statistics are employed to enable the researcher to achieve this goal. Thus, after the completion of data collection, the questionnaire was taken to the Department of Statistics of the University of Pretoria for statistical analysis and recommendations were provided on which specific data analysis techniques could be used. The Likert scale frequency analysis was used.

Factor analysis was also used to analyse data. The researcher formed two constructs in order to cluster variables which showed commonalities, and they are as follows:

- ❖ Teachers' perceptions about the value of learner self-assessment in the teaching and learning processes.
- ❖ Teachers' perceptions about the use of learner self-assessment as an alternative form of assessment in English second language learning.

The above stated constructs were then subjected to confirmatory factor analysis with the purpose of confirming and identifying that these variables belonged to these factors. Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh (2002:365) explain that factor analysis procedure provides an analysis of intercorrelations among a

large set of measures to identify a smaller number of common factors. They say that these factors are hypothetical constructs assumed to underlie different types of psychological measures, such as intelligence, aptitude, achievement, personality and attitude.

The researcher regarded it as important to study the perceptions of teachers on both the value and use of learner self-assessment in the teaching and learning processes. This was done to determine whether teachers not only perceive learner self-assessment as valuable for teaching and learning, but also perceive that it should be use in their classrooms. Since this study concentrated on English second language teachers' perceptions, it is also essential to examine whether they agree with the use of learner self-assessment as an alternative form of assessment in their English second language classrooms.

5.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is the responsibility of the researcher to adhere to ethical standards that guide the research to ensure that the rights of participants in the study are protected. It is in view of this that McMillan and Schumacher (1993:181) argue that it is necessary to have a thorough understanding of the ethical and legal responsibilities of conducting a research. Mertens (1998:23) argues that ethics in research should be an essential part of the research planning and implementation process; it should not be perceived as an afterthought or burden. Ethics are generally deal with beliefs about what is right or wrong, proper or improper, good or bad. Researchers must therefore take this into consideration by making sure that the subjects are not exposed to risks that are greater than the gains they might derive. The researcher will use the following guidelines in this study:

5.8.1 INFORMED CONSENT AND VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Bogdan and Biklen (2007:49) suggest that informed consent ensures that participants take part in the study voluntarily and understand the nature of the

study and the dangers and obligations that are involved. Supporting this view Williams *et al.* (1995:30), as cited in Strydom (2005:59), contend that “obtaining informed consent implies that all possible advantages, disadvantages and dangers to which respondents may be exposed, as well as the credibility of the researcher, be rendered to potential subjects or the legal representatives.” In this case informed consent is a necessity rather than a luxury. It is important that accuracy and thorough information is emphasised so that the respondents fully understand the study and as a result are able to voluntarily participate in the study. Participants should not be forced to participate in the study, as participation should be voluntary.

In this study the informed consent for the questionnaire was obtained after the researcher explained the essence and potential benefits of the study to the participants. Their consent was obtained by asking them to sign the letter of informed consent as a declaration of their willingness to voluntarily participate in the study.

5.8.2 RESPONDENTS’ RIGHT TO PRIVACY

Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh (1990:480) maintain that “there is a broad professional agreement that all subjects have an inherent right to privacy”. Singleton *et al.* (1988:454), as cited in Strydom (2005:61), indicate that the right to privacy is when the individual has the right to decide when, where, to whom, and to what extent his or her attitudes, beliefs and behaviour will be disclosed. This argument is supported by Tuckman (1988:15), who notes that the right to privacy refers to the right of subjects in the study not reveal to the public certain information about themselves. To avoid violating this principle, the researcher has to safeguard the privacy and identity of respondents, and act with sensitivity where the privacy of participants is relevant (Strydom, 2005:61). He further suggests that the privacy of respondents can be safeguarded when proper, scientific sampling is applied. In this way, no participant is engaged in the study merely because the researcher knows or does not know the person, or merely because it is convenient for the researcher to include or exclude certain individuals.

5.8.3 CONFIDENTIALITY OF RESPONSES

Babbie and Mouton (2001:523) explain that “in a confidential survey, the researcher can identify a given person’s responses but essentially promises not to so publicly”. In regard of this, McMillan and Schumacher (2006:334) note that researchers have the responsibility to protect the participants’ confidence from other persons in the setting and to protect the informants from the general reading public. Babbie and Mouton (2001:523) also argue that the main concern in the protection of respondents’ interests and well-being is the protection of their identity, particularly in survey research. Additionally, Ary, Jacobs and Razevieh (1990:480) explain that the researcher is responsible for providing secure storage for any information obtained from the participants and he or she is entitled to control access to it. Adherence to this norm becomes more important if revealing their survey responses would injure them in any way.

In this study the participants were informed of their right to confidentiality, clearly explaining to them and assuring them that the information provided will be kept as confidential as possible. No one had access to data or names of the participants except the researcher.

5.8.4 RESPONDENTS’ RIGHT TO ANONYMITY

Anonymity posits that the subjects should not be identifiable to anyone, including the researcher. This idea is supported by Babbie (2005:64), who mentions that a respondent may be anonymous when the researcher and the general public cannot identify a given response with a respondent. It is therefore the right of the respondents in human research to remain anonymous, meaning that their individual identities not be a salient feature of the research (Tuckman, 1988:15). He also notes that before starting a test it is important to explain to the respondents that they have not been singled out as individuals for study, but rather that they have been chosen randomly in an effort to study the population of which they are representatives. In this way the

participants will not fear that the researcher would compromise their right to anonymity.

In order to ensure anonymity in this study the respondents to the questionnaire were not required to give their names. Again, respondents were identified by number rather than by name.

5.8.5 CARING AND FAIRNESS

Researchers should develop a sense of caring and fairness as part of the researcher's thinking, actions, and personal morality (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006:334). Open discussions and negotiations normally encourage fairness to the participants and to the research inquiry.

In this investigation the researcher explained all the necessary details in terms of the aims and objective of the study to the participants. They were also given the opportunity to raise their views about the whole process as a way of ensuring that they fully understood what they were expected to do and that they do so with informed consent.

5.8.6 NO HARM TO PARTICIPANTS

Strydom (2005:58) says respondents can be harmed in a physical and/or emotional manner. Researchers are therefore ethically obliged to protect the participants from any form of harm. This view is supported by Babbie (2005) who claims that subjects can be harmed psychologically during the research process. The researcher should therefore look for the subtlest dangers and guard against them.

In the present study proper care was taken to ensure prevention of any possible risk or harm that might emerge during the investigation. The respondents were fully informed of the purpose and outcomes of the study to ensure that they have a thorough understanding about the possible impact of the investigation. With this kind of information, the participants can decide to

withdraw from the study if they so wish. Again, personal information provided by the respondents was kept as confidential and private as possible and their identity remained anonymous throughout the course of the investigation.

5.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on the on the research design and methodology applied in the investigation. The researcher has argued that quantitative survey research is adequate to investigate teachers' perceptions, because it stresses participants' perspectives about a phenomenon under investigation. The researcher has also described the population and sample and explained the reasons for the sampling procedures used for the investigation. The construction, content validation and administration of the questionnaire were described to the respondents. The pilot study was also described and after the responses were studied, some modifications were made. The discussion about how data would be analysed was put forward and the researcher indicated that the statistical procedures would be followed during the analysis. Lastly, the researcher discussed how ethical issues were taken into consideration. Chapter six discusses data analysis and interpretation of the empirical research.

CHAPTER SIX

THE RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter four focused on the research methodology applicable to the study. The purpose of Chapter four was to explain all the necessary steps followed in the data collection process, which included research design, sampling procedures, content validation of the questionnaire, application of the questionnaire, and the way in which empirical analysis would be done for this investigation.

This chapter presents the analysis of teachers' responses to the questionnaire. The assistance of the statistician from the University of Pretoria made it possible to obtain the statistical results tabled below for analysis and interpretation. The chapter begins with the discussion of the biographical data of the respondents and then continues with the frequency analysis of the responses. The confirmatory factor analysis was used with the purpose of confirming and identifying variables that belong to various factors.

6.2 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE EMPIRICAL DATA

6.2.1 INTERPRETATION OF THE BIOGRAPHICAL DATA OF RESPONDENTS

The data were collected using the questionnaire as discussed in Chapter five. The researcher sent approximately 300 questionnaires to 94 secondary schools in Gauteng and 163 were returned. This implies that over half (54.3%) of the questionnaires were received for computation and analysis and the researcher considered this as a good response rate.

TABLE 6.1: GENDER OF THE RESPONDENTS

GENDER	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
MALE	65	40.12
FEMALE	97	59.88
TOTAL	162	100

Frequency missing = 1

Table 6.1 shows that 65 (40.12%) of the respondents who participated in the study were male, while 97 (59.88%) were female. The above results indicate that female English teachers form the majority of the sample in the province. It can be assumed that the reason for this is that female teachers generally teach language subjects, while male teachers teach subjects such as mathematics.

TABLE 6.2: AGE OF THE RESPONDENTS

AGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
20-29	13	10.24
30-39	39	30.71
40-49	55	43.31
50+	20	15.75
TOTAL	127	100.01

Frequency missing = 36

Table 6.2 reveals that only thirteen (10.24%) of the respondents were between 20 and 29 years old. It can also be reported that 39 (30.71%) of the respondents who participated in the study were between 30 and 39 years old, while 55 (43.31%) of the respondents indicated that their age as between 40 and 49. It can also be noted that 20 (15.75%) of the respondents were 50 years and above. These percentages indicate that the majority of teachers who are currently in the teaching profession are relatively young. It should also be noticed that quite a number of frequencies regarding this variable are missing. This could be attributed to the fact that most people are not comfortable disclosing their age.

TABLE 6.3: MARITAL STATUS OF THE RESPONDENTS

MARITAL STATUS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
MARRIED	88	54.66
SINGLE	44	27.33
DIVORCED	21	13.04
WIDOWED	8	4.97
TOTAL	161	100

Frequency missing = 2

The researcher wanted to establish the marital status of the respondents. Table 6.3 indicates that 88 (54.66%) of the respondents were married, while 44 (27.33%) were single. The results also show that 13.04% of the respondents were divorced and only 4.97% were widowed.

TABLE 6.4: HOME LANGUAGE OF THE RESPONDENTS

HOME LANGUAGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
AFRIKAANS	20	12.35
ENGLISH	5	3.09
ISINDEBELE	9	5.56
ISIXHOSA	13	8.02
ISIZULU	19	11.73
SEPEDI	34	20.99
SESOThO	10	6.17
SETSWANA	28	17.28
SISWATI	6	3.70
TSHIVENDA	6	3.70
XITSONGA	9	5.56
OTHER	3	1.85
TOTAL	162	100

Frequency missing = 1

Table 6.4 indicates that most of the respondents (20.99%) who returned the questionnaire are Sepedi speaking. This is understandable because most of

these Sepedi speaking teachers teach in the schools around the Tshwane region, the area where the researcher personally administered the questionnaires. Thus it is likely to get a higher response rate through self-administration than through a mailed questionnaire. The figures also indicate that teachers whose home languages are SiSwati, Tshivenda and Xitsonga make a smaller percentage of the respondents (between 3.70% and 5.56%). This can be attributed to the fact that these languages are not spoken much in Gauteng Province.

TABLE 6.5: HIGHEST QUALIFICATION OF THE RESPONDENTS

QUALIFICATION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
POST-SCHOOL DIPLOMA	34	21.12
JUNIOUR DEGREE(BEd,BA)	67	41.61
BEd HONOURS DEGREE	42	26.09
MASTERS DEGREE	17	10.56
TOTAL	160	99.38

Frequency missing = 2

It can be noted from Table 6.5 that 67 (41.61%) of the respondents reported to have a Junior degree as their highest qualification. Forty two (29.09%) of the respondents have an Honours degree, and 34 (21.12%) hold a Post-school diploma, whereas only 17 (10.56%) reported that they have a Masters degree. This indicates that the majority of the respondents are fairly qualified. Teachers' academic qualifications play a crucial role in the teaching and learning situations because their classroom performance is determined by the level of qualification that they have.

TABLE 6.6: CURRENT LEVEL OF POST OF THE RESPONDENTS

POST LEVEL	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
TEACHER/EDUCATOR	126	78.26
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT	25	15.53
DEPUTY PRINCIPAL	6	3.73
PRINCIPAL	3	1.86
OTHER	1	0.62
TOTAL	161	100

Frequency missing = 2

The teachers' post levels were also investigated and Table 6.6 indicates that the majority of the respondents (78.26%) are ordinary educators, a further 15.53% hold the position of head of department, 3.73% are deputy principals, and 1.86% are principals. This indicates that the principals as managers of schools have a lot of administrative work to do and they barely have time to teach learners.

TABLE 6.7: RESPONDENTS' NUMBER OF YEARS IN THE TEACHING PROFESSION

TEACHING EXPERIENCE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1-9	39	23.93
10-19	66	40.49
20-29	50	30.67
30+	8	4.91
TOTAL	163	100

Table 6.7 indicates that 39 (23.93%) of the respondents have teaching experience between one and nine years. It also indicates that 66 (40.59%) have been in the teaching profession for 10 to 19 years, while 50 (30.67%) have 20 to 29 years of teaching experience between them. It can also be noted that only eight (4.91%) of the respondents have been teaching for 30 years and above. The figures reflect that the majority of the respondents have been in the teaching profession for quite some time. It was essential to

investigate teachers' teaching experience because this experience plays a significant role in the teaching and learning contexts.

TABLE 6.8: RESPONDENTS' LARGEST NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN ONE CLASS

NUMBER OF STUDENTS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
20-29	3	1.88
30-39	15	9.38
40-49	67	41.88
50-59	56	35.00
60+	19	11.88
TOTAL	160	100.02

Frequency missing = 3

Table 6.8 indicates that only three (1.88%) of the respondents have between 20 and 29 learners in one class, while 15 (9.38%) respondents have between 30 and 39 learners. The results also reflect that 67 (41.88%) of the respondents teach between 40 and 49 learners in one class, 56 (35%) teach between 50 and 59 learners and 19 (11.88%) respondents have 60 learners and above in their classrooms. Class size is a very important factor in teaching and learning situations, because it is believed that smaller sized classes allow the teacher to individualise instruction to every learner's needs.

TABLE 6.9: RESPONDENTS' ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING EXPERIENCE

ENGLISH EXPERIENCE	PERCENTAGE	FREQUENCY
1-9	55	34.59
10-19	67	42.14
20-29	30	18.87
30+	7	4.40
TOTAL	159	100

Frequency missing = 4

It was essential to investigate teachers' English teaching experience as the purpose of this study was to explore teachers' beliefs on self-assessment in English second language learning. Table 6.9 shows that 55 (34.59%) of the respondents have English teaching experience of between 1 and 9 years, while 67 (42.14%) have an experience of 10 to 19 years between them, 30 (18.87%) respondents have between 20 and 29 years English teaching experience and only seven (4.40%) of the respondents have been teaching English for 30 years or more. The results reflect that the majority of teachers have been teaching English for quite some time. This is good for teaching and learning as this means that the experience would enable teachers to present quality English language teaching to learners.

TABLE 6.10: LOCALITY/AREA OF THE SCHOOLS WHERE RESPONDENTS TEACH

LOCALITY/AREA	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
URBAN	151	92.64
RURAL	12	7.36
TOTAL	163	100

It can be observed from Table 6.10 that 92.64% of the respondents teach in the urban areas while only 7.36% teach in rural schools. This could be attributed to the fact that Gauteng, where the sample was drawn, is a mostly an urban province.

TABLE 6.11: MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION AT THE SCHOOLS OF THE RESPONDENTS

MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
AFRIKAANS	26	16.05
ENGLISH	136	83.95
TOTAL	162	100

Frequency missing = 1

It was also important to investigate the medium of instruction of the schools where the respondents taught. In this case Table 6.11 shows that 83.95% of the respondents teach in the English medium schools, while only 16.05% teach in the Afrikaans medium schools.

6.2.2 RESULTS OF THE FREQUENCY ANALYSIS

This section discusses question items from variable 13 to variable 59 of the questionnaire, which explored teachers' perceptions about learner self-assessment in the teaching and learning situations. With the help of the professional statistician, the data collected was statistically analysed and the frequency results were produced.

The frequency results, as presented in tables below, give the number of respondents who reacted to each variable. These frequency tables present the variable and its four-point scale (Likert scale) and the frequency results for each scale are presented in numbers and percentages. Scale 1 indicates "strongly disagree", scale 2 represents "disagree", scale 3 shows "agree", and scale "4 represents "strongly agree". In another sub-section of the questionnaire the respondents were required to answer "yes or "no" to the question asked. The last question was an open-ended question where the respondents were requested to provide reasons why they apply learner self-assessment in their classrooms.

TABLE 6.12: FREQUENCY ANALYSIS OF ITEMS INVESTIGATING TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS REGARDING THE VALUE OF LEARNER SELF-ASSESSMENT IN THE TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESSES

Statement (variables)	Responses: (Frequency) percentage			
	1	2	3	4
(frequency missing = 2) 13. Self-assessment is an authentic assessment strategy in which learners actively construct knowledge	(5) 3.11%	(37) 22.98%	(87) 54.04%	(32) 19.88%
14. Self-assessment directly involves learners in their own destiny	(7) 4.29%	(32) 19.63%	(82) 50.31%	(42) 25.77%
15. Self-assessment honours learners' input in the assessment process	(3) 1.84%	(24) 14.72%	(94) 57.67%	(42) 25.77%
16. Through self-assessment learners evaluate their inputs and compare them with their peers	(3) 1.84%	(24) 14.72%	(86) 52.76%	(50) 30.67%
17. Self-assessment encourages learners to critically reflect on their own learning	(6) 3.68%	(25) 15.34%	(77) 47.24%	(55) 33.74%
18. Self-assessment empowers learners to take full responsibility for their own learning	(13) 7.98%	(26) 15.95%	(65) 39.88%	(59) 36.20%
19. Self-assessment enables learners to be more aware of their learning needs and thus enhances motivation	(10) 6.13%	(25) 15.34%	(81) 49.69%	(47) 28.83%
20. Self-assessment increases learners' knowledge of their learning goals	(4) 2.45%	(28) 17.18%	(82) 50.31%	(49) 30.06%
(Frequency missing = 1) 21. Self-assessment promotes collaborative learning	(6) 3.70%	(24) 14.81%	(84) 51.85%	(48) 29.63%
22. Self-assessment provides a venue for learners to convey their depth of comprehension	(5) 3.07%	(25) 15.34%	(93) 57.06%	(40) 24.54%
(Frequency missing = 2) 23. Self-assessment encourages life-long learning	(6) 3.73%	(31) 19.25%	(69) 42.86%	(55) 34.16%
24. Self-assessment encourages the creation of a shared set of expectations between the teacher and learners	(3) 1.84%	(26) 15.95%	(88) 53.99%	(46) 28.22%
25. Self-assessment assists learners to set realistic goals based on their accomplishments	(5) 3.07%	(26) 15.95%	(88) 53.99%	(44) 26.99%
26. Self-assessment reduces teachers' workload	(40) 24.54%	(46) 28.22%	(46) 28.22%	(31) 19.02%

Table 6.12 reveals that respondents are aware of the importance of learner self-assessment in the teaching and learning situations. This is an indication that teachers understand that assessment needs to be more learner-centred, rather teacher-dominated as is usually the case. Eaton and O'Brien (2004:2) explain that "self-assessment involves seeking the learners' judgement about how well they their work documents learning outcomes, often including clear expectations or criterion frameworks as the guides for making these judgements." This shows that teachers acknowledge that through self-assessment learners are actively involved in their own learning as they critically reflect on what they have learned, as well as thinking about how they have learned it. In this case Harris (1997), as cited in Finch (2003:66), states that self-assessment can help learners to become more active, to locate their own strengths and weaknesses, and to realise that they have ultimate responsibility for their own learning.

The percentage in almost all the variables regarding agreed and strongly agreed scales is above 70%. This indicates that teachers consider learner self-assessment to play an important role in enhancing learners' performance in the classroom. Thus teachers' opinions confirm that learner self-assessment is an important element of assessment in teaching and learning processes. It is in this regard that Peatling (2000:5) asserts that teachers are aware that engaging learners in the assessment of their own learning will improve their learning because they will be involved in making decisions that affect their learning, such as what will be assessed and the criteria that they should follow. This is illustrated in the teachers' response to V15 where most of them (57.67%) indicated that "self-assessment honours learners' input in the assessment process".

It can therefore be concluded that teachers perceive learner self-assessment as a valuable technique which would directly inform learners of their strengths and weaknesses and, as a consequence, enable them to make decisions about their own learning.

TABLE 6.13: FREQUENCY ANALYSIS OF ITEMS INVESTIGATING THE PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS WITH REGARD TO THE USE OF LEARNER SELF-ASSESSMENT IN ESL AS AN ALTERNATIVE FORM OF ASSESSMENT

Statement (Variables)	Responses: (Frequency) Percentage			
	1	2	3	4
(Frequency missing = 3) 27. Self-assessment promotes learner autonomy in language learning	(5) 3.13%	(36) 22.50%	(91) 55.83%	(28) 17.50%
(Frequency missing = 1) 28. Self-assessment yields desirable outcomes for English language learners	(5) 3.09%	(42) 25.93%	(78) 48.15%	(37) 22.84%
(Frequency missing = 1) 29. Self-assessment helps to determine to what degree the desired language outcomes are achieved	(9) 5.56%	(31) 19.14%	(80) 49.38%	(42) 25.93%
30. Self-assessment facilitates learners' English language learning	(5) 3.07%	(35) 21.47%	(89) 54.60%	(34) 20.86%
31. Self-assessment enhances the quality of English language learning	(7) 4.29%	(44) 26.99%	(79) 48.47%	(33) 20.25%
32. Self-assessment stimulates learners' interest in English language learning	(5) 3.07%	(35) 21.47%	(74) 45.40%	(49) 30.06%
33. Self-assessment develops learners' higher order thinking skills in English language learning	(11) 6.75%	(31) 19.02%	(83) 50.92%	(38) 23.31%
34. Self-assessment helps in the development of learners' listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills	(5) 3.07%	(31) 19.02%	(78) 47.85%	(49) 30.06%
35. Self-assessment enables learners to critically reflect on their vocabulary skills	(8) 4.91%	(22) 13.50%	(91) 55.83%	(42) 25.77%
36. Self-assessment fosters learners' understanding and application of English grammatical structures	(5) 3.07%	(35) 21.47%	(88) 53.99%	(35) 21.47%
37. Self-assessment develops English language learners' skills in literary analysis	(9) 5.52%	(31) 19.2%	(76) 46.63%	(47) 28.83%

The researcher also investigated the perceptions of teachers with regard to the use of learner self-assessment as an alternative method of assessment in the learning of English as a second language. Thus Table 6.13 above

indicates that high number of the respondents (above 80%) reacted on scales which agreed and strongly agreed with this idea. This shows that teachers realise that enhancing learners' learning requires the use of various assessment techniques in the learning context. In this case, Adams (1998:4) contends that teachers should develop not only appropriate assessment techniques, but also a variety of assessment techniques if learning is to be improved. Thus teachers are aware that the use of alternative assessment techniques such as self-assessment in the English second language classroom encourages independent and self-directed learning that can enable learners to become more efficient and effective learners. In this regard, Finch (2003:72) argues that "self-assessment is a powerful tool in the educational armoury of the language teacher, since it involves the students in the language course by raising awareness of the language learning process and by giving them responsibility for assessment." This view is supported by Taras (2001:605) who suggests that teachers should allow learners to take responsibility for their own learning by engaging them in self-assessment.

Again, when considering the high percentage in terms of agreed and strongly agreed scales, Table 6.13 indicates that teachers understand that self-assessment enables learners to reflect on their language learning tasks, which will also help to foster autonomy in learning. This can be observed from their response to V27 and V35 where the majority of them (56.88%) reported that self-assessment promotes learner autonomy in English language learning and it enables learners to critically reflect on their vocabulary skills. Nonkukhetkhong, Baldauf and Moni (2006:3) assert that more responsibility should be placed in the hands of learners to manage their own learning. Teachers can foster learner autonomy by creating the learning environment in which learners can develop their language and learning skills to become autonomous learners.

Based on the figures in Table 6.13, it can be concluded that teachers strongly perceive that the use learner self-assessment as an alternative assessment technique can have a positive impact in English second language learning, as

learners who feel the ownership of the subject matter can make a difference and become more engaged in their own learning process.

TABLE 6.14: FREQUENCY ANALYSIS OF ITEMS INVESTIGATING TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS REGARDING THEIR ROLE IN THE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF SELF-ASSESSMENT

Statement (Variables)	Responses: (Frequency) Percentage			
	1	2	3	4
(Frequency missing = 1) 38. Effective self-assessment will take place if the teacher provides learners with efficient support and guidance	(1) 0.62%	(16) 9.88%	(70) 43.21%	(75) 46.30%
39. The teacher should engage learners more often in self-assessment	(2) 1.23%	(28) 17.28%	(83) 51.23%	(49) 30.25%
(Frequency missing = 1) 40. It is the responsibility of the teacher to create opportunities for learners to make use of self-assessment	(5) 3.09%	(13) 8.02%	(87) 53.70%	(57) 35.19%
(Frequency missing = 1) 41. Self-assessment will be successful when the teacher provides appropriate tools and materials for conducting self-assessment	(3) 1.85%	(12) 7.41%	(75) 46.30%	(72) 44.44%
(Frequency missing = 1) 42. Making learners aware of the benefits of self-assessment helps them understand the significance of self-assessment	(4) 2.47%	(10) 6.17%	(87) 53.70%	(61) 37.65%
(Frequency missing = 1) 43. Learners' self-assessment skills improve if the teacher has faith in them	(3) 1.85%	(19) 11.73%	(85) 52.47%	(55) 33.95%

As indicated in Table 6.14, the majority of respondents reacted between the three point scale and the four point scale. This means that the percentage with regard to "agreed" and "strongly agreed" scales have accumulated above 80%. This reveals that teachers are aware that they have a critical role to play in ensuring that learner self-assessment is effectively implemented in their classrooms. In view of this, Ross (2006:9) maintains that there is evidence

that self-assessment contributes positively to students learning and the effects grow larger with direct instruction on self-assessment procedures by teachers. He further asserts that the strengths of self-assessment can be enhanced through specific learner training and each of the weaknesses of the approach, including inflation of grades, can be minimised through teacher action. Thus, if self-assessment strategy is to be successful, the teacher should adopt a coaching role by discussing and deciding on learning goals, and demonstrating assessment criteria which will be used to assess attainment of these goals. Boud (1994:4) asserts that self-assessment requires a change of focus in teacher activity away from the structuring of examinations and marking of assignments towards the setting of assessment tasks and management of assessment processes.

Again, teachers' perceptions confirm that self-assessment is not something that learners can do on their own without assistance or collaboration with the teacher. Klenowski (1995), as cited in Ross (2006:2), maintains that the benefits of self-assessment are likely to accrue when the teacher and learners negotiate assessment criteria and when teacher-student dialogue pays attention to evidence for judgements. Additionally, Boud (1994:4) maintains that the success of self-assessment is not just a function of the interest and commitment of teachers. He says that a suitable environment for learners requires that teachers operate in a context in which there can be open and vigorous discussions of educational issues.

Consequently, it can be concluded that teachers realise that the benefits of self-assessment can only be realised when they are willing to share control of assessment by allowing learners to play a role in influencing the process, and when learners are involved in determining the assessment criteria.

TABLE 6.15: FREQUENCY ANALYSIS OF THE ITEMS INVESTIGATING TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS REGARDING THE RELIABILITY AND ACCURACY OF SELF-ASSESSMENT

Statement (Variables)	Responses: (Frequency) Percentage			
	1	2	3	4
44. Marks derived from self-assessment cannot be reliable, fair, and valid	(13) 7.98%	(19) 11.73%	(67) 41.10%	(30) 18.40%
45. Learners are not honest and objective enough when doing self-assessment	(11) 6.75%	(49) 30.06%	(69) 42.33%	(34) 20.86%
46. Learners lack necessary experience and skills in self-assessment	(10) 6.13%	(47) 28.83%	(77) 47.24%	(29) 17.79%
47. Self-assessment deprives teachers of their assessment responsibilities	(31) 19.02%	(88) 53.99%	(35) 21.47%	(9) 5.52%
48. Learners perceive assessment as the sole responsibility of the teacher and are therefore reluctant to do it	(15) 9.20%	(66) 40.49%	(62) 38.04%	(20) 12.27%
(Frequency missing = 1) 49. Learners see self-assessment as an extra burden to them	(15) 9.26%	(70) 43.21%	(59) 36.42%	(18) 11.11%

It was pointed out in the literature that learner self-assessment should not be considered as a solution to all education problems. Its inaccuracy cannot be ignored as there is a possibility of dishonesty among learners when engaging in self-assessment. Consequently teachers were asked to express their perceptions about the reliability and accuracy of learner self-assessment in their classrooms. Thus Table 6.15 shows that the majority of teachers reacted on 3 point scale, meaning that they have some reservations about the application of learner self-assessment in the classrooms. For example, most teachers (above 70%) reported that learners lack the necessary skill and experience in self-assessment. This shows that teachers still feel that they are the source of knowledge and should take all the assessment responsibilities in the classroom. This idea is supported by Nonkukhetkhong *et al.* (2006:2)

who claim that “teachers who are the products of the old educational system may find it difficult to manage the role reversal required in the new classroom where learners are the main players.”

On the other hand, there are variables 47, 48, and 49 in Table 6.11 where the respondents disagreed that learner self-assessment can be disadvantageous to the teaching and learning processes. For example, above 80% of the respondents “strongly disagreed” and “disagreed” with the statement that self-assessment deprives them of their assessment responsibilities. It can be further argued that some teachers understood that they should allow their learners to take more responsibility in their learning through learner self-assessment.

On this issue, Shameen (2002:49) contends that despite the acknowledgement of positive contribution that self-assessment makes to teaching and learning situations, there are different perceptions regarding the validity of self-assessment. Some people have argued that there is lack of objectivity among learners, that learners are not capable and that they will rate themselves too highly or cheat. On the other hand, Adams (2001:9) argued that self-assessment can be supported through a development of trust between students and teachers when learners engage in self-assessment. The issue of dishonesty can therefore be dealt with as the trust is developed and as learners develop responsibility for their learning and assessment in the classroom. Thus it is crucial that the teacher involve learners in the discussion concerning the importance of assessing their performance.

TABLE 6.16: FREQUENCY ANALYSIS OF ITEMS INVESTIGATING FACTORS THAT MIGHT INFLUENCE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT SELF-ASSESSMENT

Statement (Variables)	Responses: (Frequency) Percentage			
	1	2	3	4
(Frequency missing = 1) 50. Your years of experience as a teacher	(9) 5.565	(38) 23.46%	(73) 45.06%	(42) 25.93%
(Frequency missing = 1) 51. The formal teacher training you received	(11) 6.79%	(46) 28.40%	(72) 44.44%	(33) 20.37%
(Frequency missing = 1) 52. Your classroom experience with self-assessment	(4) 2.475	(30) 18.52%	(86) 53.09%	(42) 25.93%
(Frequency missing = 2) 53. Class size	(12) 7.45%	(39) 24.22%	(61) 37.89%	(49) 30.43%
(Frequency missing = 1) 54. Availability of training materials for self-assessment	(9) 5.56%	(34) 20.99%	(72) 44.44%	(47) 29.01%
(Frequency missing = 1) 55. Your professional development training in self-assessment (such as courses, workshops, and conferences)	(9) 5.56%	(29) 17.90%	(71) 43.83%	(53) 32.72%
(Frequency missing = 1) 56. Your personality	(31) 19.14%	(48) 29.63%	(51) 31.48%	(32) 19.75%
(Frequency missing = 6) 57. Time available for self-assessment	(7) 4.46%	(32) 20.38%	(73) 46.50%	(45) 28.66%

Teachers were also presented with eight possible factors and were asked to indicate how likely certain factors were to influence their perceptions on self-assessment. They rated those items on a four-point Likert scale ranging from “very unlikely” to “very likely”. Teachers’ responses to each factor are displayed in Table 6.16 above.

Teachers reported that the most influential factors on their perceptions as classroom experience with self-assessment and availability of materials for self-assessment; the percentage in these variables regarding likely and very likely is above 90%. Teachers indicated that years of experience as teachers,

formal teacher training, professional development training in self-assessment, and class size could also influence their perceptions on self-assessment. The percentage in all these variables regarding “likely” and “very likely” is above 60%. Thus the results indicated that teachers believe that it is very likely that their perceptions about learner self-assessment are influenced by certain factors. For example, Genc (2005:141) mentions that the effect of class size on the quality of education has been one of the popular topics in the field of education. It has been reported several times that the smaller sized class allows teachers to devote more time to each student so as to improve learning.

Time available for self-assessment was the other important factor that has been reported by teachers (above 60%) to influence their perceptions. This is interesting because the analysis of the open-ended question revealed a consistent finding with this outcome. Most teachers indicated that self-assessment should be done minimally as it consumes a lot of time. In this regard Peatling (2000:6) argues that self-assessment takes a great deal of teacher time and energy, especially in the early stages of discussing and deciding on learning goals, the subsequent criteria which will be used to assess attainment of these goals, and the scoring of rubrics which will be used as tools.

TABLE 6.17: FREQUENCY ANALYSIS OF ITEMS INVESTIGATING TEACHERS’ PRACTICE OF SELF-ASSESSMENT IN THEIR CLASSROOMS

V58	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
YES	132	85.16
NO	23	14.84
TOTAL	155	100

Frequency missing = 8

Table 6.17 shows that 85.16% of the respondents reported that they apply learner self-assessment in their classrooms, while only 14.84% indicated that

they don't practice self-assessment in their classrooms. This shows that teachers realise that it will benefit both the teacher and learners to encourage learners to take a more active role in and responsibility for their own learning.

TABLE 6.18: FREQUENCY ANALYSIS OF ITEMS INVESTIGATING THE REASONS WHY TEACHERS PRACTICE OR NOT PRACTICE SELF-ASSESSMENT IN THEIR CLASSROOMS

V59A-D	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Self-assessment encourages healthy competition	7	3.32
Improvement of learner performance	45	21.33
Self-assessment is unreliable	29	13.74
Reduces teacher workload	11	5.21
Encourages reflective learning	19	9.00
Builds learner confidence	39	18.48
Learners are able to identify and correct mistakes	30	14.22
Self-assessment must be done minimally	18	8.53
Helps to determine learners' level of understanding	13	6.16
TOTAL	211	100

Teachers were asked to provide the reasons for applying or not applying learner self-assessment in their classrooms with the open-ended question. A total of 118 teachers responded to this question. Thus Table 6.18 shows responses that teachers have provided regarding their application of learner self-assessment. In all there were 211 responses provided by teachers for this question. These responses were extracted from each respondent's data and then collected in a separate sheet in order to develop codes and categories. All of the responses were compiled and grouped together in two categories, namely the reasons for using self-assessment and the reasons for not using self-assessment. There were 150 responses where teachers expressed why they practice learner self-assessment in their classrooms.

Teachers reported that learner self-assessment encourages healthy competition among learners. This idea is well demonstrated in the following responses:

“Everyone wants to be a winner and thus will make sure that he or she put more effort on his or her work.”

“I do practice self-assessment because learners are enabled to compare their capabilities with their peers.”

Another common reason for practising self-assessment given by teachers was that it engages learners more in their own learning and as a result their performance improves. It can be noted that this is the most common idea mentioned by the respondents with the frequency of 45. Teachers reported that learner self-assessment motivates learners to work harder for a better performance.

Another reason reported by teachers was that learner self-assessment saves time. Teachers showed that when learners engage in the assessment of their own learning teachers could devote their time to other things that are also important in the teaching and learning processes.

Teachers also reported that they apply self-assessment because it encourages learners to engage in reflective practices. This critical reflection helps learners to document what they have learned and think about how they have learned it.

Another common reason provided by teachers is that learner self-assessment builds learner confidence. This idea has the frequency of 39, which makes it one of the common ideas mentioned by teachers. This can be illustrated in the respondents' own words as follows:

“Self-assessment instils confidence in learners as they feel that they own the lesson, they participate with pride.”

“I practice self-assessment to enable learners to trust in themselves and be in the position to express themselves.”

Teachers also indicated that learner self-assessment helps learners to identify and rectify their mistakes. This idea is illustrated in the following responses:

“Learners would be able to assess their own work so as to gauge their strengths and weaknesses.”

“It is good for students’ learning because they realise and correct their mistakes.”

“It gives learners the opportunity to realise their shortcomings when measured against a certain criteria.”

Others have agreed that self-assessment is a good assessment strategy but it should be done minimally. They also indicated that it should only be done for formative purposes, because learners cannot be fully trusted to engage in self-assessment as honestly as possible.

Lastly, the other reason for using self-assessment reported by teachers is that it helps to determine learners’ level of understanding.

A reason was also given why teachers do not apply self-assessment in their classrooms. The idea mentioned by teachers was that self-assessment learners are not honest and objective in self-assessment and therefore it cannot be accurate and reliable.

6.2.2.1 SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS OF THE FREQUENCY ANALYSIS

The study sought to investigate the perceptions that English second language teachers hold about learner self-assessment. The study also investigated whether certain factors could have an effect on the perceptions that they have about learner self-assessment. It was anticipated that the study would give an insight into teachers’ currently held perceptions on self-assessment and whether or not there is a need to alter them. Having conducted the research

and analysed the data, various findings emerged from the study and the researcher has drawn the following conclusion.

The results of the analysis provided information on the nature of teachers' perceptions regarding the value of learner self-assessment in the teaching and learning processes. Thus teachers' responses in this study clearly show that most teachers perceive learner self-assessment as having a positive impact on instructional practices. It has come to light that teachers are aware of the role of self-assessment in assisting learners to develop skills that are essential to professional practice, such as the ability to function as independent learners, to exercise judgement, and to transfer learning from one context to another (Ellis, 2001:300).

Teachers have reported that the use of learner self-assessment as an alternative form of assessment in English second language learning would be beneficial to the learning and processes in various ways. This idea is supported by Strong, Davis and Hawks (2001:52) who suggest that alternative techniques of assessment for assessing students' performance are becoming more common in the classroom as teachers focus on using assessment as a tool for improving teaching and learning. Thus teachers should develop appropriate assessment techniques as well as a variety of assessment techniques such as self-assessment for the better attainment of learning outcomes.

Being aware of the importance of self-assessment, teachers understood that they should be playing an effective role in making sure that the implementation of self-assessment becomes a success in their classrooms. Through their knowledge and expertise, they are in a good position to make learners aware of the value of self-assessment as well as providing guidance on this form of assessment.

With regard to scepticism associated with the use of learner self-assessment, teachers have expressed different feelings. For instance, many teachers have indicated that results derived from learner self-assessment can not be reliable

because learners are not always honest and objective when assessing their own work. Learners' grades tend to be modestly higher than teacher judgements, particularly if self-assessment contributes to student grades (Boud and Falchikov, 1989:530). However, the discrepancies between teacher and student grades can be minimised by increasing student understanding of criteria (Ross and Starling, 2008:184).

On the other hand, only few teachers have shown less concern on the perceived inaccuracy of self-assessment. They seem to understand that self-assessment is a skill that needs to be instilled in learners so that they can do it properly and that, with proper guidance, learners can eventually realise the importance of honesty and trust in the process of assessment.

The study also investigated how teachers develop or generate their perceptions, and the results have revealed that certain mediating factors such as class size, time available for self-assessment, class room experience, and professional development training in self-assessment have an influence on their self-assessment beliefs.

It has also been discovered that the majority of teachers practice learner self-assessment in their classrooms. The teachers provided some reasons why they apply it. For instance, they have indicated that self-assessment improves learner performance and enables learners to identify and rectify their mistakes. This indicates that teachers not only perceive self-assessment to be beneficial for teaching and learning, but also that they actually apply it in their classrooms.

6.2.3 RESULTS OF THE FACTOR ANALYSIS

The factor analysis in this study was designed to help the researcher support or refute the hypothetical theory in this investigation. The statement of hypotheses for this study is:

Hypothesis 1: Teachers perceive learner self-assessment as a valuable method of assessment in the teaching and learning processes.

Hypothesis 2: Teachers perceive that learner self-assessment should be used as an alternative form of assessment in English second language learning.

It can be noted that only hypotheses one and two are dealt with in the factor analysis. The rest of the hypotheses, including one and two, are dealt with in the summary of the main findings.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:560) explain that “factor analysis is a process which enables the researcher to take set of variables and reduce them to a smaller number of underlying factors which account for as many variables as possible.” They further note that factor analysis detects structures and commonalities in the relationships between variables and this allows the researcher to identify where different variables are addressing the same underlying concept. For this study, the confirmatory factor analysis was used with the purpose of grouping and identifying the relationships between variables.

6.2.3.1 RESULTS OF ROTATED FACTOR PATTERN OF ITEMS ASSESSING TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE VALUE OF SELF-ASSESSMENT IN TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESSES

TABLE 6.19: VARIABLES REPRESENTED BY FACTOR ONE

	VARIABLE NUMBER AND DISCRIPTION	FACTOR LOADINGS
V23	Self-assessment encourages life-long learning	0.864
V25	Self-assessment assists learners in setting realistic goals based on their accomplishments	0.854
V22	Self-assessment provides a venue for learners to convey their depth of comprehension	0.850
V24	Self-assessment encourages the creation of a shared set of expectations between the teacher and learners	0.848
V19	Self-assessment enables learners to be more aware of their learning needs and thus enhances motivation	0.833
V20	Self-assessment increases learners' knowledge of their learning goals	0.826
V14	Self-assessment directly involves learners in their own destiny	0.822
V17	Self-assessment encourages learners to critically reflect on their own learning	0.821
V21	Self-assessment promotes collaborative learning	0.816
V18	Self-assessment empowers learners to take full responsibility for their own learning	0.809
V13	Self-assessment is an authentic assessment strategy in which learners actively construct knowledge	0.807
V15	Self-assessment honours learners' input in the assessment process	0.802
V16	Through self-assessment learners evaluate their inputs and compare them with their peers	0.801
V26	Self-assessment reduces teacher workload	0.439
	Variance explained by the factor	9.093
	Eigenvalue	9.41666
	Final communality estimates	16.632
	Total variance explained by factors	64.95%
	Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient	0.9611

The factor identified and illustrated in Table 6.19 consists of fourteen items and was named “teachers’ perceptions of the value of self-assessment in the teaching and learning processes”, with an alpha reliability coefficient of 0.9611. This factor was meant to assess the reaction of teachers towards the value of self-assessment.

It can be noted that almost all the variables have factor loadings equal to or greater than 0.80. This indicates that the respondents responded highly to these variables. The reason for this can be attributed to the fact that teaching and learning is now based on constructivist pedagogy, which propounds that learners should take full responsibility for their learning and learner self-assessment is seen as a form of assessment that would enable learners to do this and consequently improve their learning. This is backed by the literature as Coronado-Aliego (2006:7) contends that self-assessment comes from the realisation that effective learning can best be attained if learners are actively engaged in all phases of the learning process. The literature reviewed in Chapter two also confirms that learner self-assessment in the teaching and learning processes helps learners to be more engaged in their own learning and it also motivates them in reflective practice, autonomous learning and critical thinking. In this regard Adams (1998:1) asserts that the ability to assess one’s learning is an important element in most forms of learning and it is an ability that must be cultivated if learners are to engage effectively in life-long learning.

There is only one variable with a factor loading of 0.439. This variable corresponds to V26 which states that self-assessment reduces teacher workload. This shows that this variable received lower inputs from the respondents. This means that teachers do not perceive that self-assessment alleviates their assessment responsibilities. The reason may be due to the fact that teachers still need to guide learners through the process of self-assessment by providing criteria and by informing them about what is meant by assessment, especially those who are not used to self-assessment. This is illustrated in the literature as Gardner (2000:55) points out that self-assessment is not about leaving learners to fend for themselves. It is about

teachers creating opportunities for learners to make responsible choices which individualise assessments to their needs.

It is evident that in this factor there is a high positive factor loadings of 0.80 and above. For this reason, the following hypothesis in this study is supported:

Hypothesis 1: Teachers perceive self-assessment as a valuable method of assessment in the teaching and learning processes.

6.2.3.2 RESULTS OF ROTATED FACTOR PATTERN OF ITEMS ASSESSING TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE USE OF SELF-ASSESSMENT AS AN ALTERNATIVE FORM OF ASSESSMENT IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

TABLE 6.20: VARIABLES REPRESENTED BY FACTOR TWO

	VARIABLE NUMBER AND DESCRIPTION	FACTOR LOADINGS
V31	Self-assessment enhances the quality of English language learning	0.867
V34	Self-assessment helps in the development of learners' listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills	0.860
V35	Self-assessment enables learners to critically reflect on their vocabulary skills	0.858
V37	Self-assessment develops English language learners' skills in literary analysis	0.855
V30	Self-assessment facilitates learners' English language learning	0.853
V33	Self-assessment develops learners' higher order thinking skills in English language learning	0.842
V32	Self-assessment stimulates learners' interest in English language learning	0.824
V36	Self-assessment fosters learners' understanding and application of English grammatical structures	0.820
V28	Self-assessment yields desirable outcomes for English language learners	0.810
V29	Self-assessment helps to determine to what degree the desired language outcomes are achieved	0.782
V27	Self-assessment promotes learner autonomy in English language learning	0.723
	Variance explained by the factor	7.539
	Eigenvalue	7.85107
	Final communality estimates	16.632
	Total variance explained by factors	68.54%
	Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient	0.9597

Table 6.20 gives a summary of the rotated factor pattern of the assessed teachers' perceptions regarding the use of self-assessment as an alternative method of assessment in English language learning. This factor consists of

eleven items and has the Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.9597. This table reveals that this factor is strongly correlated to all the variables. These variables (V31-V28) have the values (factor loadings) of or greater than 0.80. This indicates that these variables received high responses from the respondents.

The reason for these high positive factor loadings may be that teachers have realised that English language teaching and learning has shifted significantly from a teacher-centred approach to a learner-centred approach. This implies that teachers should employ alternative assessment techniques that allow learners to actively construct their own knowledge. Implementation of these techniques is valuable when assessment information is used to improve students' learning (Adams, 1998:3). This means that assessment information should be used to change curriculum and instruction so that what is taught and how it is taught enhances what and how students learn.

In this regard self-assessment is considered as one of the alternative techniques that can be applied in English language learning to help learners acquire linguistic skills efficiently. Oscarson (1997), as cited in Coronado-Aliego (2006:36), argues that the field of self-assessment of language proficiency is concerned with knowing how, under what circumstances and with what effects learners judge their own ability in language learning. The literature supports the notion that self-assessment helps teachers to gain insight into their learners' learning and their own teaching, as they watch learners identify their own strengths and weaknesses and those of their peers (Peatling, 2000:4). Thus teachers may be in a position to find out how learners think of themselves in the learning context.

There are two subsequent variables (V29 and V27) in this factor which also have high values (factor loadings) of 0.782 and 0.723 respectively. This also shows that these variables received higher inputs from the respondents. This is supported by the literature review which, according to Coronado-Aliego (2006:36), indicates that self-assessment promotes learning autonomy and positively affects motivation and outcomes of learning, especially when self-

assessment becomes part of day-to-day teaching and when it is used for monitoring progress and improvement, and not for grade or placement.

It can be noted that these values (factor loadings) correlate with the factor loadings from factor one (see Table 6.19), which also have the factor loadings equal or greater than 0.80. This shows that respondents reacted similarly to variables in factor one and two. It was assumed that the respondents might have been influenced by the fact that self-assessment can also be a valuable assessment method to use in English language learning.

The fact that this factor consists of items with high values (factor loadings) ranging between 0.723 and 0.867 and there is great support from the literature allows the researcher to accept the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Teachers perceive that learner self-assessment should be used as an alternative form of assessment in English second language learning.

6.2.3.3 SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS OF THE FACTOR ANALYSIS

The factor analysis was used to extract factors of this investigation. Each factor was extracted with its own eigenvalue. Then the analysis of the statistic of the factor loadings of variables of the factors was made in order to determine how they contribute to the significance of this study. This was followed by the empirical explanations to support the statistical results. The factors extracted and their eigenvalues, as well as the empirical explanations supported the statistical results and the hypotheses of this investigation. The two principal component factors extracted were as follows:

- ❖ Questions assessing the perceptions of teachers regarding the value of learner self-assessment in the teaching and learning processes.

- ❖ Questions assessing perceptions of teachers regarding the use of learner self-assessment as an alternative form of assessment in English second language learning.

6.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter concentrated on the presentation and interpretation of the quantitative results. The next chapter will focus on the summary of the main findings, conclusion, implications and recommendation for further research.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

You are kindly requested to complete the questionnaire as accurately as possible. Any information provided by you will remain confidential and your name should not be written on the questionnaire.

Please complete the questionnaire by marking appropriate number with an **X** symbol in the space provided and provide additional information where requested to do so.

		FOR OFFICE USE ONLY																											
RESPONDENT NUMBER		V1	<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> 1-3																										
SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION																													
Please tick appropriate box that applies to your situation																													
1. Your gender		V2	<input type="text"/> 4																										
<table border="1"><tr><td>Male</td><td>1</td></tr><tr><td>Female</td><td>2</td></tr></table>	Male	1	Female	2																									
Male	1																												
Female	2																												
2. Your age in years		V3	<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> 5-6																										
<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>																													
3. Marital status		V4	<input type="text"/> 7																										
<table border="1"><tr><td>Married</td><td>1</td></tr><tr><td>Single</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td>Divorced</td><td>3</td></tr><tr><td>Widowed</td><td>4</td></tr><tr><td>Other (please specify)</td><td>5</td></tr><tr><td>_____</td><td></td></tr></table>	Married	1	Single	2	Divorced	3	Widowed	4	Other (please specify)	5	_____																		
Married	1																												
Single	2																												
Divorced	3																												
Widowed	4																												
Other (please specify)	5																												

4. Your home language		V5	<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> 8-9																										
<table border="1"><tr><td>Afrikaans</td><td>1</td></tr><tr><td>English</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td>IsiNdebele</td><td>3</td></tr><tr><td>IsiXhosa</td><td>4</td></tr><tr><td>IsiZulu</td><td>5</td></tr><tr><td>Sepedi</td><td>6</td></tr><tr><td>Sesotho</td><td>7</td></tr><tr><td>Setswana</td><td>8</td></tr><tr><td>SiSwati</td><td>9</td></tr><tr><td>Tshivenda</td><td>10</td></tr><tr><td>Xitsonga</td><td>11</td></tr><tr><td>Other (please specify)</td><td>12</td></tr><tr><td>_____</td><td></td></tr></table>	Afrikaans	1	English	2	IsiNdebele	3	IsiXhosa	4	IsiZulu	5	Sepedi	6	Sesotho	7	Setswana	8	SiSwati	9	Tshivenda	10	Xitsonga	11	Other (please specify)	12	_____				
Afrikaans	1																												
English	2																												
IsiNdebele	3																												
IsiXhosa	4																												
IsiZulu	5																												
Sepedi	6																												
Sesotho	7																												
Setswana	8																												
SiSwati	9																												
Tshivenda	10																												
Xitsonga	11																												
Other (please specify)	12																												



5. Your highest qualification			
Post-school diploma	1		
Junior degree (BEd, BA)	2		
BEd Honours degree	3		
Masters degree	4		
Other (please specify)	5		
		V6	<input type="checkbox"/> 10
6. Current level of your post			
Teacher/educator	1		
Head of department	2		
Deputy principal	3		
Principal	4		
Other (please specify)	5		
		V7	<input type="checkbox"/> 11
7. Number of years in teaching profession			
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	V8	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 12-13
8. Largest number of students you teach in one class			
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	V9	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 14-15
9. Your English teaching experience in years			
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	V10	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 16-17
10. Locality/area of the school in which you are teaching			
Urban	1		
Rural	2		
		V11	<input type="checkbox"/> 18
11. Medium of instruction in your school			
Afrikaans	1		
English	2		
		V12	<input type="checkbox"/> 19

SECTION B:

In this section you are required to cross **ONLY ONE** appropriate number on the scale provided for each question.

Please respond to each statement by crossing the number on the scale provided in order to express your perceptions regarding the **VALUE OF LEARNER SELF-ASSESSMENT IN THE TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESS.**

Please cross ONE of the following codes when responding to each question.

strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree
1	2	3	4

12. Self-assessment is an authentic assessment strategy in which learners actively construct knowledge		Official use
	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4	V13 <input type="checkbox"/> 20



13. Self-assessment directly involves learners in their own destiny	1 2 3 4	V14	<input type="text"/>	21
14. Self- assessment honours learners' input in the assessment process	1 2 3 4	V15	<input type="text"/>	22
15. Through self-assessment learners evaluate their inputs and compare them with their peers	1 2 3 4	V16	<input type="text"/>	23
16. Self-assessment encourages learners to critically reflect on their own learning	1 2 3 4	V17	<input type="text"/>	24
17. Self-assessment empowers learners to take full responsibility for their own learning	1 2 3 4	V18	<input type="text"/>	25
18. Self-assessment enables learners to be more aware of their learning needs and thus enhances their motivation	1 2 3 4	V19	<input type="text"/>	26
19. Self-assessment increases learners' knowledge of their learning goals	1 2 3 4	V20	<input type="text"/>	27
20. Self-assessment promotes collaborative learning	1 2 3 4	V21	<input type="text"/>	28
21. Self-assessment provides a venue for learners to convey their depth of comprehension	1 2 3 4	V22	<input type="text"/>	29
22. Self-assessment encourages life-long learning	1 2 3 4	V23	<input type="text"/>	30
23. Self-assessment encourages the creation of a shared set of expectations between the teacher and learners	1 2 3 4	V24	<input type="text"/>	31
24. Self-assessment assists learners set realistic goals based on their accomplishments	1 2 3 4	V25	<input type="text"/>	32
25. Self-assessment reduces teachers' workload	1 2 3 4	V26	<input type="text"/>	33

Please respond to each statement by crossing the number on the scale provided in order to express your perceptions regarding the **USE OF SELF-ASSESSMENT IN ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING AS AN ALTERNATIVE METHOD OF ASSESSMENT**

Please cross ONE of the following codes when responding to each question

Strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree
1	2	3	4

26. Self-assessment promotes learner autonomy in language learning	1 2 3 4	Official use V27	<input type="text"/>	34
27. Self-assessment yields desirable outcomes for English language learners	1 2 3 4	V28	<input type="text"/>	35
28. Self-assessment helps to determine to what degree the desired language outcomes are achieved	1 2 3 4	V29	<input type="text"/>	36



29. Self-assessment facilitates learners' English language learning	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4	V30	<input type="checkbox"/>	37
30. Self-assessment enhances the quality of English language learning	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4	V31	<input type="checkbox"/>	38
31. Self-assessment stimulates learners' interest in English language learning	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4	V32	<input type="checkbox"/>	39
32. Self-assessment develops learners' higher order thinking skills in English language learning	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4	V33	<input type="checkbox"/>	40
33. Self-assessment helps in the development of learners' listening, speaking, reading and writing skills	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4	V34	<input type="checkbox"/>	41
34. Self-assessment enables learners to critically reflect on their vocabulary skills	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4	V35	<input type="checkbox"/>	42
35. Self-assessment fosters learners' understanding and application of English language grammatical structures	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4	V36	<input type="checkbox"/>	43
36. Self-assessment develops English language learners' skills in literary analysis	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4	V37	<input type="checkbox"/>	44

Please respond to each statement by crossing the number on the scale provided in order to express your perceptions with regard to **TEACHERS' ROLE IN THE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF LEARNER SELF-ASSESSMENT**

Please cross **ONE** of the following codes when responding to each question

strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly disagree
1	2	3	4

37. Effective self-assessment will take place if a teacher provides learners with efficient support and guidance	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4	Official use V38	<input type="checkbox"/>	45
38. A teacher should engage learners more often in self-assessment	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4	V39	<input type="checkbox"/>	46
39. It is the responsibility of the teacher to create opportunities for learners to make use of self-assessment	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4	V40	<input type="checkbox"/>	47
40. Self-assessment will be successful when a teacher provides appropriate tools and materials for conducting self-assessment	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4	V41	<input type="checkbox"/>	48
41. Making learners aware of the benefits of self-assessment helps them understand the significance of self-assessment	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4	V42	<input type="checkbox"/>	49
42. Learners' self-assessment skills improve if a teacher have faith in them	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4	V43	<input type="checkbox"/>	50

Please respond to each statement by crossing the number on the scale provided in order to express your perceptions with regard to the **RELIABILITY AND ACCURACY OF LEARNER SELF-ASSESSMENT**.

Please cross ONE of the following codes when responding to each question

strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree
1	2	3	4

<p>43. Marks derived from self-assessment cannot be reliable, fair and valid</p> <p>44. Learners are not honest and objective enough when doing self-assessment</p> <p>45. Learners lack necessary experience and skills in self-assessment</p> <p>46. Self-assessment deprives teachers of their assessment responsibilities</p> <p>47. Learners perceive assessment as the sole responsibility of the teacher and are therefore reluctant to do it</p> <p>48. Learners see self-assessment as an extra burden to them</p>	<table border="1"> <tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td></tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	Official use V44 <input type="checkbox"/> 51
	1	2	3	4		
	<table border="1"> <tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td></tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	V45 <input type="checkbox"/> 52
	1	2	3	4		
	<table border="1"> <tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td></tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	V46 <input type="checkbox"/> 53
	1	2	3	4		
<table border="1"> <tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td></tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	V47 <input type="checkbox"/> 54	
1	2	3	4			
<table border="1"> <tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td></tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	V48 <input type="checkbox"/> 55	
1	2	3	4			
<table border="1"> <tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td></tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	V49 <input type="checkbox"/> 56	
1	2	3	4			

Please indicate **HOW LIKELY** the following factors are to influence your perceptions with regard to learner self-assessment

Please cross ONE of the following codes when responding to each question

highly unlikely	unlikely	likely	very likely
1	2	3	4

<p>49. Your years of experience as a teacher</p> <p>50. The formal teacher training you received</p> <p>51. Your classroom experience with self-assessment</p> <p>52. Class size</p> <p>53. Availability of training materials for self-assessment</p> <p>54. Your professional development training in self-assessment (such as courses, workshops, and conferences)</p> <p>55. Your personality</p>	<table border="1"> <tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td></tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	Official use V50 <input type="checkbox"/> 57
	1	2	3	4		
	<table border="1"> <tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td></tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	V51 <input type="checkbox"/> 58
	1	2	3	4		
	<table border="1"> <tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td></tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	V52 <input type="checkbox"/> 59
	1	2	3	4		
	<table border="1"> <tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td></tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	V53 <input type="checkbox"/> 60
1	2	3	4			
<table border="1"> <tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td></tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	V54 <input type="checkbox"/> 61	
1	2	3	4			
<table border="1"> <tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td></tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	V55 <input type="checkbox"/> 62	
1	2	3	4			
<table border="1"> <tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td></tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	V56 <input type="checkbox"/> 63	
1	2	3	4			

APPENDIX 2

Enq: Moloji L
Cell: 073 315 2420
Email: lismoloji@yahoo.com

2-24 House Jakaranda
478 Festival Street
Hatfield 0083

08 May 2008

The Principal

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL

As part of my MEd research with the University of Pretoria, I need to explore the perceptions of English second language teachers towards learner self-assessment in the secondary school. Therefore, I kindly request to gather data at your school in order to fulfil this requirement. The questionnaire containing various variables that the English second language teachers have to express their perceptions on has been compiled. They are expected to spare 20-25 minutes of their time to complete the questionnaire.

The Gauteng Department of Education has granted me permission to have the questionnaire circulated among teachers and I have sent a copy of the letter of approval to the district office as required. I have also been granted ethical clearance by the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria to conduct research in schools.

Hoping for a positive response.

Yours Faithfully
Lisemelo Moloji

APPENDIX 3

2-24 House Jakaranda
478 Festival Street
Hatfield
0083

Dear Respondent

As part of my MEd research, I need to explore English second language teachers' perceptions about learner self-assessment in the secondary school. The questionnaire containing various variables that you have to express your perceptions on has been compiled. You are therefore kindly requested to spare 20-25 minutes of your time to complete the questionnaire. I believe that this research is of great importance to teaching and learning because it could be useful in informing teachers of their belief systems from which they operate from in as far as learner self-assessment is concerned.

The Gauteng Department of Education has granted me permission to have the questionnaire circulated among teachers. I have also been granted ethical clearance by Research Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria to conduct this research in schools. The responses will be dealt with in strict confidentiality and your participation in this study is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time.

I thank you in advance for your help and cooperation in this endeavour. If you agree to participate, please sign the attached consent form and return it with the completed questionnaire as requested.

Kind regards
Lisemelo Moloji

APPENDIX 4

CONSENT FORM

I understand that the purpose of this research is to determine the perceptions of English second language teachers about learner self-assessment in the secondary school.

I understand and confirm that my participation is completely voluntary and I was not forced or coerced in any manner to take part in this study.

I understand that all my responses to the questions will remain anonymous. My name or identity will not be revealed and it will not appear on any of the results.

I understand that there are no foreseeable risks or discomforts if I agree to take part in the study.

I give my voluntary cooperation as a participant.

Any questions I have regarding this study will be answered by Lisemelo Moloji at 073 315 2420, or Email: lismoloji@yahoo.com. I may also contact Professor W.J. Fraser, the supervisor of Lisemelo Moloji at the University of Pretoria at 012 420 2207 or Email at William.fraser@up.ac.za.

Name: -----

Signature: -----

Date: -----

APPENDIX 5

Enq: Moloji L
Cell No: 073 315 2420
Email: lismoloi@yahoo.com

2-24 House Jakaranda
478 Festival Street
Hatfield 0083

The Deputy Director General
Gauteng Department of Education
111 Commissioner Street
P. O. Box 7710
Johannesburg

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN YOUR PROVINCE

I am currently doing my MEd research with the University of Pretoria. I am investigating English second language teachers' perceptions about learner self-assessment in the secondary school. Therefore, I kindly request your permission for English language teachers in your province to participate in this investigation. They will be expected to spare 20-25 minutes of their time complete a questionnaire. Their participation will be invaluable in providing information regarding the perceptions that they hold about self-assessment. This will not disrupt the day to day running of the schools as they will complete the questionnaire during their spare time.

Your assistance in this study will be very helpful in making it a success.

I would like to thank you in anticipation for your cooperation

Yours faithfully
Lisemelo Moloji