UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

The transition of Grade 4 learners to English as medium of instruction

by

Guida Steyn

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

MAGISTER EDUCATIONIS

Faculty of Education

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

SUPERVISOR: Prof N.C. Phatudi

AUGUST 2017

ETHICAL CLEARANCE

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

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	CLEARANCE NUMBER:	EC 15/04/02
DEGREE AND PROJECT	MEd	
	The transition of Grade 4 learners to English as medium of instruction	
INVESTIGATOR	Ms Guida Steyn	
DEPARTMENT	Early Childhood Education	
APPROVAL TO COMMENCE STUDY	06 July 2015	
DATE OF CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	1 August 2017	

CHAIRPERSON OF ETHICS COMMITTEE: Prof Liesel Ebersöhn

CC

Ms Bronwynne Swarts

Prof Nkidi Phatudi

This Ethics Clearance Certificate should be read in conjunction with the Integrated Declaration Form (D08) which specifies details regarding:
- Compliance with approved research protocol,
- No significant changes,
- Informed consent/assent,
- Adverse experience or undue risk,
- Registered title, and
- Data storage requirements.

DECLARATION

I, Guida Steyn, student number 80192310, hereby declare that this dissertation, "*The transition of Grade 4 learners to English as medium of instruction,*" submitted in accordance with the requirements for the Magister Educationis degree at the University of Pretoria, is my own original work and has not previously been submitted to any other institution of higher learning. All sources cited or quoted in this research paper are indicated and acknowledged through a comprehensive list of references.

_____

Guida Steyn

August 2017

LANGUAGE EDITOR

M.B. BRADLEY

P.O. Box 37326
Faerie Glen
Pretoria 0043

072 369 5149

DECLARATION ON EDITING

Student: Ms G. Steyn	**Date**
Contact:	2017/05/19

Document submitted for editing

Dissertation: The transition of Grade 4 learners to English as medium of instruction

The above dissertation was submitted to me for language editing, which was completed on 19 May 2017.

[signature]

M.B. BRADLEY (MA) - Language editor

Cell no 072 3695 149

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my remarkable parents, Ben and Dawn van Rensburg, for their unconditional love, example and support throughout my life. What a privilege and blessing to still have them in my life!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

On achieving this milestone in my life, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the following people:

- Prof N.C. Phatudi, my research supervisor, for her invaluable advice, guidance and inspiring motivation through difficult times during the research;
- The principal and head of department who were so accommodating at the research site;
- The participants who took time from their busy schedules and shared their personal experiences in order to make this study possible;
- Language editor, Barbara Bradley, and technical arranger, Elize Nagel, for your kindness, patience and hard work in editing my dissertation;
- Phillip and Christi van der Merwe for accommodation and your unprecedented hospitality;
- My incredible children; daughter, Franzel, and son, Henk. Your constant encouragement and love have inspired me to persevere;
- All my family and friends, thank you for your consideration and support; and
- Last, but not the least, my Heavenly Father, who provided me with the strength, knowledge and perseverance to complete this study. All the glory to Him!

ABSTRACT

The South African Language-in-Education Policy (LiEP) states that mother tongue should be the preferred medium of instruction in the Foundation Phase (grade R-3). Primary tuition is therefore currently offered in the 11 South African official languages. The challenge faced in South African schools that offer African languages in the Foundation Phase, is the fact that from grade 4 onwards, education is only available through the medium of English. This results in a vast number of learners having to make a transition in grade 4 to English as medium of instruction. In this qualitative study, I explored the experiences of teachers and learners in this transition.

The context of this case study is a poverty-stricken and underdeveloped rural area. SiSwati is the language commonly spoken in this area and English is spoken, heard and read only in the classroom. Purposive sampling was done, including three grade 3 classes and their teachers, as well as the grade 4 learners and the teachers teaching siSwati, English and Mathematics. Data was collected through interviews, observations, document analysis and field notes. Conventional content analysis was conducted.

Among the theoretical lenses adopted for the study was Krashen's input-interaction-output model of second language learning. This informed the process grade 4 learners undergo in learning English as a second language and medium of instruction.

The findings of this study revealed that the challenge regarding this transition is not the English language per se, but rather a deficient home language foundation and the quality of teaching offered. The learners' age at the time of this transition also plays a significant role, as it affects their readiness to switch to another language.

The implications of this study relate to the necessity of a solid mother tongue foundation and improved quality of teaching. It is suggested that the admission age in grade 1 be seven years and the actual point of transition prolonged.

Key Terms:

Home language/mother tongue, second/target language, English Second Language, English First Additional Language, language proficiency.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANA	Annual National Assessments
AOFE	Age of first exposure
BICS	Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills
CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
CUP	Common Underlying Proficiency
DoE	Department of Education
DBE	Department of Basic Education
EFAL	English First Additional Language
ESL	English Second Language
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
FAL	First Additional Language
HL	Home Language
HOE	Hours of exposure
IIO	Input-interaction-output
LiEP	Language in Education Policy
LoLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
NEEDU	National Education Evaluation and Development Unit
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading and Literacy Study
SASA	South African Schools Act
SIOP	Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF CHARTS

LIST OF TABLES

1. CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF THE ENQUIRY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Worldwide many children are required to become fluent in a second language (L2) to access higher education and enter the labour market (Taylor & von Fintel, 2016). In South Africa, this is no different. South Africa is a very diverse country culturally, socially and linguistically. This poses various challenges regarding education in our country, particularly the issue regarding L2 acquisition.

Since the dawn of democracy in 1994, South Africa has adopted 11 official languages, with English and Afrikaans as the predominant languages of teaching and learning. The Language in Education Policy (LiEP) (Department of Education, 1997) of South Africa recommends mother tongue education in the Foundation Phase, which includes grades R, 1, 2 and 3. Thereafter, from grade 4, learning is only available through the medium of English or Afrikaans. With the result that learners speaking an African language, faces an immense challenge regarding their further tuition.

Grade 4 is a crucial year in the South African schooling system. Up to grade 3 the majority of learners receive fundamental teaching in their mother tongue, with one educator offering all four subjects. Grade 4 encompasses the transition to the Intermediate Phase (grades 4-7) where subject teaching is introduced with different teachers for each of the six subjects offered. This transition in itself poses several challenges to learners to which they have to adapt. Having to change the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) seems to be the most challenging aspect of this transition and is the focus area of this study, hence the relevance of this study for possible causal dynamics of this critical transition from mother tongue education to English as medium of instruction in grade 4.

1.2 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

As a district official in Early Childhood Development I am deeply concerned about the poor academic performance in the majority of our schools in the rural areas. In my experience of visiting classes and observing teachers and learners on a

regular basis, monitoring District and Annual National Assessments frequently, I am overwhelmed by the poor level of performance and work demonstrated.

In the past ten years I have been in only one class where I could honestly compliment the teacher on her teaching and her learners' level of performance. I was so pleasantly surprised! It was a siSwati-speaking grade 1 class in a rural area. The learners were taught through the medium of their home language (HL), siSwati. The teacher did not know that I could understand siSwati fairly well. She received me in a friendly manner in her class and continued with her lesson as usual. As the lesson proceeded, so did my respect and admiration.

Even though the siSwati words for the shapes and numbers she taught were very long and "big" words compared to the equivalent English ones, the learners could read and write them very well. The learners were comfortable with the language and the content taught. It was evident that they understood the concepts. That day, I realised the indispensable value of mother tongue education - it makes knowledge more readily accessible to learners. This teacher had without a doubt laid a solid foundation for successful academic performance in the future.

This led me instinctively to study these learners' transition to English as LoLT and the facilitation thereof. I fully agree with the statement in the National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU) National Report of 2012 that more in-depth studies exploring the complex dynamics of schools would most probably yield more valuable insights into practices that influence compliance with formal policies, hence the relevance of this study into possible causal relations in this crucial transition in grade 4.

Despite having 11 official languages in South Africa, from grade 4 onwards education is only available through the medium of English or Afrikaans. This implies that a vast number of learners need to acquire a new target or L2 through which they have to further their schooling. This target language is English.

Acquiring, mastering and learning an L2 is a reality for the majority of South African learners in order to further their education (Howie, Venter & van Staden, 2008; van der Berg, 2008). Mostly black learners are affected, of whom more than

80% (Howie *et al.*, 2008; van der Berg, 2008) have to change to English as medium of instruction from grade 4 onwards.

The majority of these black learners reside in rural areas, which is the context of my study. Children learn a target language more efficiently from interaction outside the classroom than inside (Makoe, 2014). Learners in the rural areas are faced with immense challenges in learning English. There are no English first language speakers residing in their communities with whom they can interact to support their acquisition of English, neither is there any support at home. At home and in the wider community their indigenous language is spoken. The only exposure to English is in the classroom and probably from television; with the result that the teacher is to a large extent responsible for their English learning.

1.3   PROBLEM STATEMENT

In 2011 the pre-Progress in International Reading and Literacy Study (PIRLS) assessments were conducted for the first time among grade 4 learners in South Africa. This pre-PIRLS assessment was shorter and easier (on par with grade 3) than the international grade 4 PIRLS assessment, yet the mean score obtained (461) was below the international average score of 500. The grade 4 learners tested in English and Afrikaans scored the highest, with a mean score of 530 and 525 respectively. Those tested in the African languages performed very poorly, ranging from the highest mean of 451 in siSwati to the lowest of 388 in Northern Sotho (Howie, van Staden, Tshele, Dowse & Zimmerman, 2012).

These pre-PIRLS assessments were conducted in the language in which the learners received their foundational education up to grade 3, which is their home language (HL). Having to change the LoLT in grade 4 could have a detrimental effect on learners' performance (Van der Berg, Burger, Burger, de Vos, du Rand, Gustafsson, Moses, Shepherd, Spaull & Taylor, 2011). This transition is predictably difficult for English second language (ESL) learners who are learning multiple subjects and content areas simultaneously (Cummins, 2000). They are still acquiring necessary literacy skills in English, yet they are also expected to satisfy the content demands of grade 4.

The fact that most grade 4 teachers are teaching this crucial transitional year in a language other than their HL makes research in this regard a key priority. The teachers' expertise and role in this transition need to be investigated.

1.4   PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

With this study I intend to gain in-depth knowledge and understanding of the experiences of teachers and learners in the transition from mother tongue education to English as LoLT in grade 4. As researchers, we need to explore closely, in specific situated contexts, insights that can transform educational practice to increase the success rate in ESL communities (Hawkins, 2004).

I intend exploring and identifying how learners attain new language skills, as well as their exposure and level of teaching offered to these learners. This research aims at investigating policies and practices regarding a specific case of the transition from mother tongue education to English in grade 4, apprehending the dynamics related to this transition evidently.

1.4.1   Possible contributions of the study

It is envisaged that this study will reveal pedagogical and non-pedagogical practices that could affect grade 3 learners' successful transition from HL education to English as LoLT in grade 4. The research will generate new knowledge, which may empower teachers and parents.

1.5   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.5.1   Primary research question

What are the experiences of teachers and learners in the transition of grade 4 learners to English as medium of instruction?

1.5.2   Secondary research questions

- What are the experiences/challenges of teachers teaching in a medium that is not their mother tongue?
- What are the key factors influencing the transition from mother tongue education to English as LoLT?

1.6   WORKING ASSUMPTIONS

As an interpretivist researcher I enter the field with some prior knowledge and insight regarding the research topic and am fully aware of the volatile and complex nature of what is to be perceived as reality. I entered the field with some expectations about the findings and recorded the situation as it is and as perceived by the participants.

I conducted the study with the assumption that the learners sampled are proficient in their HL and that their teachers are qualified and well equipped for their task. Within the context of the study I assumed that poverty, unemployment and lack of sufficient schooling might have an impact on my findings. I believed that learning in a LoLT which is not your mother tongue will lead to learning difficulties; however teachers are prepared to take on that challenge.

1.7   CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

The following concepts need to be clarified, as they are central to this study:

1.7.1   Home language/mother tongue/first language

HL/mother tongue/first language (L1) is the language used at home as primary means of communication. This is the language children are usually capable of communicating in comfortably and effectively, even before entering formal schooling (Ball, 2010).

1.7.2   Second language

L2 refers to the language being taught at school in addition to the HL. In South Africa, this language is English, which becomes the LoLT from grade 4 onwards (Department of Basic Education, 2011c).

1.7.3   Target language

Target language refers to a language other than the mother tongue that is to be attained, often for academic purposes, to be used as LoLT (Makoe, 2014).

1.7.4   Additive bilingualism/multilingualism

Additive bilingualism/multilingualism entails the gradual acquisition of an additional language or languages while maintaining the HL at the same time. It is important

that the additional language must not replace the home language (Department of Basic Education, 2011c).

1.7.5 Subtractive bilingualism

Subtractive bilingualism occurs when a learners' HL is taught for a few years and completely replaced by another language as medium of instruction. This happens at the expense of a learner's HL and its accompanying competencies (Cummins, 1984).

1.7.6 Grade 3/grade 4 learners

Grade 3/grade 4 learners are learners who are respectively in their third or fourth year of formal schooling.

1.7.7 English second language learners

ESL learners are learners who are taught through the medium of English, which is not their mother tongue (Clark, 2009).

1.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical underpinnings of this study are those of the skill acquisition theory, Krashen's input-interaction-output (IIO) model, Vygotsky's developmental theory, connectionist models and Cummins' cognitive underlying proficiency (CUP) model. These theories and models are briefly explained below.

The skill acquisition theory proposes that L2 learning requires a gradual change from effortful use to a more intuitive use of the acquired (target) language, through exercise and feedback in meaningful situation (Lyster & Sato, 2013). According to Chapelle (2009), this theory falls under the category of general human learning, i.e., it focuses "on language learning as a process of human learning." Skill acquisition theory provides a helpful framework for understanding L2 development in classroom settings, especially the developmental plateaus many learners reportedly reach.

According to Krashen (1985), L2 acquisition is significantly determined by "input." This "input" is influenced by three non-linguistic factors, namely anxiety, motivation and self-confidence. Acquisition (output) occurs through input and meaningful

interaction. Acquisition is achieved when the "output" is understandable (Gass & Mackey, 2015).

In an attempt to understand the internal processes of L2 learning, psycholinguists draw on connectionist models. This model is an integrated model for L1 and L2 acquisition (MacWhinney, 2005). According to this model, L2 acquisition is very similar to L1 acquisition except that L2 is initiated from L1 with more information from the mother tongue. This model is supported by Cummins's CUP model, which emphasises the importance of mother tongue. Cummins' linguistic interdependence hypothesis claims that common underlying skills in the mother tongue can be transferred to an L2; the mother tongue acts as a foundation for L2 learning.

I considered four major teacher competencies: language development, supportive climate, sufficient curriculum knowledge and background and cultural knowledge. I observed to what extent the teachers reflected on their own teaching. The ability to teach effectively requires more than just possessing and applying formal knowledge and methods. Reflective teaching is an indicator of the quality of teachers (Ehlers-Zavala, 2005).

1.9   RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

I used a case study as my research design and sampled one school in a rural area. Case studies have proven particularly useful for studying educational issues. The most defining characteristic of a case study is the exploration of a phenomenon within its context. Case studies allow for detail to be collected that would not normally be obtained by other research designs, thus producing richer data of greater depth than in other designs. Entrenched in real-life situations, case studies provide richer and more holistic accounts of phenomena. It provides understanding and enhanced insight of experiences and phenomena. Case studies allow researchers to study complex relationships between phenomena, contexts and people. A qualitative approach will be used to gather evidence and data. Qualitative research seeks understanding; understanding of people's interpretations of experiences, construction of their worlds and attributed meaning to it (Merriam, 2009). The strength of the qualitative approach is that it accounts

for and includes difference: ideologically, epistemologically, methodologically and most importantly, humanly.

One of the main philosophical tenets underpinning the qualitative research approach is the interpretivist paradigm. Interpretivism entails an approach to social science that holds the view that all knowledge is based on interpretation. As the process of making meaning forms the basis of the interpretivist paradigm (Mack, 2010), I regard this paradigm as appropriate for my research. In my research I explored the meaning people make of a certain experience (Ashworth, 2008), which is the transition of siSwati-speaking grade 3 learners from mother tongue education to English as LoLT in grade 4. I want to explore the multiple truths constructed concerning this transition (Ashworth, 2008; Willig, 2013).

The fundamental principle of interpretivism is that research can never be objectively observed from the outside; it should be observed from within through the direct experience of the people involved. My role as a researcher in the interpretivist paradigm is to "understand, explain, and demystify social reality through the eyes of different participants" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011:19). The interpretivist paradigm will be suitable for my study, as my main aim is to seek better understanding of a certain phenomenon. It also facilitates understanding of the how and why of a phenomenon, allows for complexity and contextual factors and enables the researcher to accommodate changes, should they occur. It encompasses the exploration of the impact of a bounded system, such as the transition from HL education up to grade 3 to English as LoLT in grade 4 in a rural setting.

My case study entailed the observation of three siSwati-speaking grade 3 classes and three grade 4 classes (taught in English) in a rural school. The grade 3 and grade 4 teachers were individually interviewed. Two focus group interviews were envisaged to be conducted; one with all the grade 3 teachers and one with all the grade 4 teachers involved. Even though multiple factors must be taken into consideration during this transition, I focused more strongly on the experiences of teachers and learners in this transition.

1.9.1.1   Potential challenges

Case studies do not typically claim representativeness, therefore their findings should not be over-generalised (Stake, 2005). My aim with this study was not to generalise but to gain in-depth understanding and knowledge of the experiences of teachers and learners in the transition from HL education to English as LoLT in grade 4 in this specific context.

Researchers have often been negligent, not following systematic procedures. In order to minimise the effect of possible disadvantages, the research was planned thoroughly and systematically. As researcher and primary instrument of data collection I attempted to ensure that rich, sufficient data was collected so that the data itself would inform findings and conclusions and not my own biases. I guarded against massive unreadable documents of data.

1.9.2   Target population and sampling

1.9.2.1   Population

The targeted population in this research is a group of African language-speaking teachers and learners in a rural context. These educators and learners are L2 or ESL speakers. The background of the community is that of deprivation and poverty.

1.9.2.2   Sampling

Sampling in qualitative research is customarily intentional, which makes purposive sampling suitable for my study. There is no 'right' sample size in qualitative research. Small samples are typically used in order to obtain rich data on a phenomenon (Creswell, 2011). The number of participants in a sample generally relates to saturation, i.e. when sufficient data has been collected to provide a comprehensive account of the phenomenon studied (Cohen *et al.*, 2011).

I sampled one school in a rural area of Mpumalanga with siSwati-speaking grade 3 learners who have to switch to English as LoLT in grade 4. The school is a Quintile 2 or no-fee paying school. The three grade 3 teachers and three grade 4 teachers were purposively sampled. The grade 4 teachers selected were the teachers

teaching English, Social Science and Mathematics. All the teachers sampled were individually interviewed but the focus interview could not materialise with the cohort.

1.9.3 Data collection

The researcher herself collected and documented the data. My data was collected through observations, interviews, field notes and document analysis. During the data collection processes the participants and I were mutually interdependent and interactive and constructed a collaborative account of what was perceived as reality. Audio recordings of interviews were made. I remained open to new ideas throughout the study and relied on the participants' input.

The following table represents a broad outlay of my data collection strategy:

Table 1.1:   Broad outlay of data collection strategy

Research question	Data collection tool	Participants	The value of the study
What are the experiences of teachers and learners in the transition from mother tongue education to English as LoLT in grade 4?	Researcher's observation and field notes.	Gr 3 and 4 teachers and learners.	To gain first-hand information of the real-life situation of this transition.
	Semi-structured interviews.	Individual Gr 3 and 4 teachers.	Individual personal input and perspective of the teachers.
	Focus groups interviews.	Gr 3 and 4 teacher groups respectively.	Collaborate and share the input of all teachers involved. More in-depth understanding of the situation.
	Learners' books	Gr 3 and 4 learners.	Evidence of work done and possible links or explanation of learner's level of work and/or competency.

Research question	Data collection tool	Participants	The value of the study
	Lesson preparation	Gr 3 and 4 teachers	Indication of teacher's readiness and input.

1.9.3.1 My role as researcher

As qualitative researcher I am solely responsible for all data collected. My professionalism and objectivity are of the utmost importance in order to construct the reality as it truly is. As I am a departmental official, I ensured that my role was purely that of a researcher. My research was conducted in grades and classes which I not usually visit for support.

As facilitator I followed the guidelines of Lichtman (2012) in order to reap the best result from my interviewing, by:

- Establishing rapport: I eased the participants into the main question. Sensitive or threatening questions were avoided at the beginning of the session. I maintained eye contact at all times.
- Listening: The golden rule when interviewing is to listen more than to speak. The aim of an interview is to gather information and if one talks too much one might end up with shallow information.
- Keep it flowing: I made use of prompts, probes and encouraging words such as "uh-huh," "really," "tell me more" and "why" to keep conversation going.
- Open-ended questions: I avoided leading questions as well as close-ended questions demanding "yes" or "no" responses, as this could prevent the acquisition of very useful information.
- Non-verbal cues: I remained alert to the participants' non-verbal cues, which might reveal significant information.

1.9.3.2 Interviews

In qualitative research interviews are the most important tool for collecting data. The general aim of interviews is to attain rich and descriptive information in order to understand the phenomenon and to saturate data (Seabi, 2012). It is important to build in various devices to ensure accurate interpretation of what a respondent tells one.

All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. When conducting interviews I guarded against the following possible challenges pointed out by Wellington (2015):

- Double-barrelled questions, i.e. two or more questions in one sentence;
- Leading questions, i.e. questions that are preceded by a positioning statement;
- Loaded questions, i.e. questions that are emotionally charged;
- Culturally insensitive questions; and
- Unethical questions.

I conducted semi-structured one-on-one interviews with all three grade 3 and grade 4 educators at the sample school. I started with a pre-defined question plan and then followed a conversational style of interviewing. Within this more free style I guarded against being distracted by aspects not related to the study.

After completion of the one-on-one interviews I conducted grade-specific focus group interviews with all the grade 3 teachers involved. I intended to do the same with the grade 4 teachers, but they were unwilling to participate. The purpose of these interviews was to gather exploratory data on issues relevant to the topic. Key issues and ideas from various participants were gathered simultaneously. Although focus group interviews usually produce richer data than other research methods, some participants could find the experience intimidating and thus not contribute to the discussions (Morgan, 2002).

1.9.3.3 Observation

Observation is a systematic process of using a researcher's senses to collect data without communicating with the participants (Seabi, 2012). In qualitative research observations are unstructured, thus categories are not pre-determined by the researcher; they are noted as information is revealed or occurs (Seabi, 2012). As observations are highly subjective, I remained extremely conscious of my own biases. The tools I used to collect my observational data were observation checklists and field notes.

I was physically present but remained uninvolved in the situation. I observed how learners and teachers communicated habitually and most effectively, in their HL and in English. I took note of whether the learners understood what they were instructed to do; how it was presented and to what extent they followed instructions and performed their given tasks. I also observed the level of support the learners needed to perform these tasks. Both grade 3 and grade 4 classes were observed.

1.9.3.4   Field notes

Field notes allow the researcher to review the naturally occurring interactions as often as necessary. When making field notes, one is not only recording data, but also analysing it (Silverman, 2006). As researcher in the field I was very aware of two crucial aspects:

- What I saw (and heard); and
- How I was behaving and being treated.

I recorded everything as it was said or happening and refrained from any biasness.

1.9.3.5   Document analysis

Learners' work books were analysed for evidence of work done. Tests or assessment tasks were also studied. Teachers' lesson preparation was perused and related to what was actually happening in class. Adherence to relevant policy documents was considered.

1.9.4   Data analysis

Qualitative research can result in immense amounts of data, which can be overwhelming. It is thus of the utmost importance to do proper planning of how data will be captured and processed. I started processing and analysing my data as soon as it had been collected to prevent losing information that could be forgotten over time.

Analysis of qualitative data is based on content analysis. In this study I did conventional content analysis where coding categories were resulting from the transcribed data, i.e. following an inductive approach. Inductive analysis implies

coding data without trying to fit it in a pre-existing frame or the researcher's own preconceptions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This process provides a descriptive record of the research but cannot provide explanations. The data have to be sifted and interpreted by the researcher to make sense of it.

1.10 QUALITY CRITERIA

I ensured validity and reliability in my study by adhering to the following principles: Trustworthiness can be described as establishing credibility. The trustworthiness of content analysis results relies on whether appropriate, well-saturated and rich data was collected. The collection of data, analysis and the reporting of results goes hand in hand with ensuring trustworthiness in content analysis. It is the result of thorough initial preparation and descriptors.

1.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

I observed the ethics principles as stated by the University of Pretoria. I firstly applied for permission for my study from the Ethics Committee of the university, then from the Mpumalanga Department of Education and thereafter obtained permission from the relevant school, teachers, parents and learners. As I am a departmental official, I ensured that my role was purely that of a researcher. My research was conducted in grades and classes other than what I normally visit for support.

I considered the following ethical issues closely when conducting my research:

- Protection from harm or deprivation

I ensured that the participants were treated with respect at all times and protected them from any judgement or stigma as a result of my research.

- Voluntary participation

The participants knew that even though they agreed voluntarily to take part in the research, they were permitted to withdraw at any stage without being penalised for it.

- Informed consent

I ensured that all participants understood the nature of the study and had complete information about their role and part therein.

- Confidentiality

I kept all information confidential and was bound to this by an agreement signed by me, the participants and their organisation. Even the recordings made during interviews remained confidential.

- Anonymity

I protected the privacy of the participants by not revealing any particulars or information about them or their institution, either in writing or any other form of communication. I used pseudo-names when referring to specific individuals or their institutions.

1.12 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

To assure a well-structured research report in which the content flows in a logical order and in which the research aims and questions are addressed, the chapters are outlined as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter describes the rationale and background of the study, as well as the key concepts and research question. It also provides a brief discussion of the research design and methodology, data analysis and trustworthiness of the research.

Chapter 2: Literature review

This chapter provides the literature substantiating the research. In this chapter the role of mother tongue education is highlighted. Challenges regarding second learning and its effect on learners' academic performance are also discussed. This chapter provides the theoretical framework that underpins the study. The chapter is concluded with a summary of findings in literature.

Chapter 3: Research design and methodologies

In this chapter the methodologies, paradigmatic perspective, sampling and data collection procedures and trustworthiness employed in the study are outlined.

Chapter 4: Presentation and analysis of data

This chapter provides feedback on the data collected. The themes emerging from the data are discussed.

Chapter 5: Findings and recommendations

This chapter presents the findings of the research against relevant literature on the topic. The chapter is concluded by the implications and conclusion of findings of the study.

1.13 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The possible limitations of the study are firstly the sample size, which is small. I sampled one school with three grade 3 and 4 classes respectively. I interviewed and observed six teachers and their classes. Secondly, collecting data through interviews and observations leaves room for misinterpretation. The effect of the teachers not being English HL speakers was eased by the fact that the interviewer understands siSwati fairly well. When necessary, the interviewer could explain further or continue the interview in siSwati. The limitations were further minimised by applying member checking and triangulation.

1.14 CONCLUSION

Given the background information of the study in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 will focus on the literature reviewed regarding language acquisitioning and learning and the transition from mother tongue education to English as LoLT. The literature discusses national and international interpretations of EFAL teaching and learning.

2. CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to present empirical literature on the transition from home language education, in this instance an African language, to English as LoLT in grade 4. I will firstly clarify the differentiation between language acquisition and language learning. The different language competencies, mother tongue education and L2 learning, will then be reflected upon. The transition process and challenges it may entail will be discussed. Teaching strategies and the significance of bilingualism and code switching will also be reviewed. The process of second language learning and strategies recommended will be discussed. Studies on L2 learning will be highlighted and situated within the study. Ultimately, the learning and teaching of English First Additional Language (EFAL) towards English as LoLT in the South African context and its related challenges and advantages will conclude this chapter. The chapter will be underpinned by a conceptual framework incorporating concepts of Krashen's IIO model, Vygotsky's developmental theory, skill acquisition theory, connectionist models and Cummins's interdependence model. Key concepts from these theories and models will validate aspects of this transition and the acquisition and learning of languages. This will be illustrated in a diagram to show their interrelatedness and validity for the study.

2.2 LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND LEARNING

The role of language in children's learning is of crucial importance (Nel & Müller, 2010). As language is central to this study, it is necessary to distinguish from the onset between the two modes of language development: language acquisition and language learning. These two concepts are often misinterpreted and could cause confusion.

Language acquisition refers to the natural process of attaining a language through regular communication with others who know the language (Yule, 2016), while language learning is a deliberate act of tuition of a language. The meaning of language acquisitioning and learning is explored further below.

2.2.1   Language acquisition

Language acquisition refers to the natural process of attaining a language through regular communication with others who know the language (Yule, 2016). Acquisition refers to a spontaneous subconscious process whereby a child picks up or develops a language through regular exposure from a young age (Krashen, 1987). A typical example of this process would be the attainment of the HL. Despite the ability to speak the language effectively and meaningfully, the speaker may not know the structures and grammatical rules of the language, which is informally acquired (Makoe, 2014). The speaker only has intuitive knowledge of the syntax of the language. There is a "feel" for the correctness and "sounding right" of the grammatical sense without consciously knowing what rule is being applied or violated. Language acquisition is mostly influenced by assertiveness or motivation (Krashen, 1987). Assertiveness and motivation to learn an L2 enhances the effective acquisition thereof, as it makes the learner more receptive and enthusiastic about acquiring the language.

2.2.2   Language learning

Language learning, on the contrary, is a conscious deliberate process of studying a language other than the HL, for example attaining a second or additional language (Krashen, 1987). This usually takes place in a formal setting such as schools where organised instruction is offered to learners in the pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and structures of the target language. The target language is thus attained through guided instruction, such as by a teacher. Activities related to learning are mostly directed at gaining knowledge "about" the language (as evident in tests) rather than confidence in actually using the language (as demonstrated in social interaction) (Yule, 2016). Language learning is mainly influenced by aptitude or ability (Krashen, 1987).

Regarding an additional language, learners often have very limited exposure to the target language outside the formal teaching situation. This is particularly relevant in the setting of this study, as no English HL speakers reside in the area with whom they can interact. The only English exposure the learners have is in the classroom and perhaps television. As the incidence of poverty and unemployment is very high in this area, the probability of having television sets at home is slim.

Teachers in this context consequently have an even greater responsibility for the learners' English learning.

Acquiring and learning a language entail different competencies. These competencies are now further explained.

2.3   LANGUAGE COMPETENCIES

In order to understand the role of language in education, we need to differentiate between two types of language competencies, namely basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) as conceptualised by (Cummins, 2000).

BICS refer to conversational informal skills that are acquired naturally without formal schooling, for example the initial language learnt by pre-schoolers through day-to-day social interaction. Therefore BICS include basic vocabulary and knowledge of simple syntax. This occurs in a meaningful social situation. It is cognitively not very demanding and not sufficient for academic purposes. English L2 learners would use BICS when on the playground, at parties, taking part in sport and talking on the telephone. Problems arise when it is perceived that a child is proficient in a language, such as English, when they demonstrate good social English i.e. BICS.

For ESL learners BICS is usually acquired within two or three years of exposure to the language (Phatudi, 2014). In the context of my study this is not possible, as there are no English HL speakers residing in the community. The learners speak their HL when socialising at school or in the wider community. Even the teachers at school speak in their HL to each other and to the learners. Thus the only English these learners are exposed to is the little they experience in class. This reality in itself creates a barrier to these learners' acquisition of BICS in English.

CALP is a more developed language competency associated with learning and cognitive development. It is usually learnt through formal teaching and is suitable for academic purposes. This level of language competency is necessary for learners to succeed at school. Learners need support and time to become proficient in CALP. According to Cummins (2000), it usually takes five to seven

years for learners to acquire sufficient CALP skills in English, or any target language, to perform well academically. Recent studies indicate that it takes even longer, seven to ten years to achieve sufficient CALP skills in a second language (Adger, Snow & Christian, 2003). In the context of the current study this could take even longer, considering the dearth of exposure to English in the community.

BICS and CALP are interdependent and interrelated notions. Okeke and Van Wyk (2015) describe CALP or academic English as "an extension of social English" (p.236). This implies that for a learner to be able to use a language for academic purposes he/she should first acquire the BICS of that language and then attain the CALP of that language, hence the policy in South Africa that learners should be taught in their mother tongue in their initial schooling while being introduced to English at the same time. In the context of this study the learners are taught in siSwati as HL and concurrently introduced to English as future LoLT. It is envisaged that they will acquire BICS in English while developing CALP in their mother tongue in order to progress to mastering CALP in English, which is necessary to change to English as LoLT in Grade 4.

The National Education and Evaluation Development Unit (NEEDU) reported in 2012 that the subject knowledge of most of the grade 6 teachers in South Africa (both languages and mathematics) is inadequate (DBE, 2013a). There is no reason to believe that the Foundation Phase teachers are any better skilled in subject knowledge. It is thus very unrealistic to expect that South African ESL learners would have acquired sufficient CALP skills in English within only three years of exposure to inadequate English, far less than the recommended time prescribed by Cummins (2000).

Language proficiency and literacy are interrelated. Consequently the extent to which a learner is proficient and competent in the LoLT determines his/her academic performance, i.e. whether he/she will succeed at school or perform poorly (Cummins, 2000; Makoe, 2014).

2.4 MOTHER TONGUE EDUCATION

Mother tongue refers to the language a child develops from babyhood and brings to school with him/her (Ball, 2010). The role of the mother tongue in learning and

teaching has been researched extensively. Several studies on mother tongue literacy in Africa have proven that language is a fundamental means of effective communication in educational processes (Alidou, Boly, Brock-Utne, Diallo, Heugh & Wolff, 2006; Brock-Utne, 2007; Vorster, Mayet & Taylor, 2013). The ease with which young children learn emergent literacy and content through the mother tongue is evident (Ouane, 2003).

From a cognitive perspective, the mother tongue should be used to construct and sustain a social cultural link between formal teaching and daily language spoken at home to maximally support the educational processes (Chumbow, 1990). People use language to create meaning in their social and cultural environment (Halliday, 2007). Heugh (1999) records that during the years of Bantu Education when mother-tongue instruction was compulsory during primary school, grade 12 pass rates among African learners improved significantly. This clearly demonstrates and supports the importance of prolonged and sustained tuition in the mother tongue and its beneficial outcome for further learning and academic success.

Well-documented empirical studies on mother tongue-based education demonstrated the positive aspects of mother tongue education, such as the Six Year Yoruba Primary Project (Benson, 2009). This project proved unambiguously that a full six-year primary education in the mother tongue with the target language taught concurrently as a subject reaped better results than all English instruction. In South Africa learners are taught in their mother tongue for only three years, an aspect that cannot be overlooked in seeking solutions to the under-performance of these learners.

There is a perspective that negates the mother tongue as fundamental to be proficient in before the introduction of an L2. There are language settings where primary education in the mother tongue might not be desirable (Gupta, 1997). This occurs when children grow up with multiple mother tongues. In the context of this study, siSwati is considered the common local language, but a fusion of Xitsonga and siSwati is spoken in most homes because of the strong influence of Mozambican immigrants in this area. Where such patterns of language use prevail, mother-tongue education might not be desirable for disadvantaged groups (Gupta, 1997). Learners enter school not being fluent in siSwati, which is the LoLT

in the schools. The mother tongue perspective seems not to be beneficial to these learners, but instead acts as a barrier to learning rather than an advantage. Dialectisation of African languages has been identified as one of the major challenges in South African schools (DBE, 2013a).

Research on mother tongue instruction demonstrates its importance; however the reaction to this pedagogy varies (Plessis & Louw, 2008). Although policymakers recommend mother tongue education, English seems to be the first choice for most parents or caregivers as the LoLT for their children (Bosman & van der Merwe, 2000; Mboweni-Marais, 2003). English is globally the dominant language of the academic, business, communication and technological world (Cele, 2001). Most parents and caregivers see English as the path to social and economic empowerment, with the result that a vast number of learners are increasingly being educated in a L2. The avenue of escaping hardship is perceived through education that is offered through the medium of English.

2.4.1 Importance of home language: The role of first language proficiency in second language acquisition

Already in 1993, Akinnaso found that successful literacy attainment and L2 proficiency depended on well-developed L1 aptitude. Studies have shown that proficiency in the mother tongue enhances the learning of a first additional language (FAL) (Cummins, 2000). Shatz and Wilkinson (2010) assert that the mastering and love of reading in the mother tongue has a positive effect on learners' interest in other languages. Heugh (1995) also wrote about the significance of establishing cognitive competency in learners' HL before introducing a new LoLT. It takes longer for ESL learners to become fully proficient in a second language if they are not literate in their HL (Gonzalez, Yawkey & Minaya-Rowe, 2015). Heugh (2012) further recommended that learners should remain in mother tongue tuition for the first six years of their formal schooling before changing to L2 learning. This correlates with the findings of the Six Year Yoruba Project (Benson, 2009).

Longitudinal studies done in the United States investigating the transfer of skills to a L2, to English, revealed that the degree of schooling in the L1 can be linked to improved performance in English learning (August, 2002). The more developed

the literacy skills in the home/native language, the better the performance in English literacy (August, 2002). Across all subjects tested and all grades combined, ESL learners arriving in the United States between the ages of 8 and 11 were the fastest achievers when compared to learners arriving at 5 to 7 or 12 to 15 years. This leads to the consideration of another aspect, namely the role of age of the learner. However in the study referred to, the English language proficiency of teachers was of a good standard. I wanted to investigate whether the same could be said of teachers who according to NEEDU (DBE, 2013a) were inadequately skilled in terms of language proficiency.

Results consistently indicate that where learners had the opportunity to receive their primary education in their mother tongue (L1) for at least six years they reached higher achievement levels than those who had to transit too soon to a second or additional language (L2) in which they lacked the metacognitive skills to understand and use the language effectively for academic purposes (Fiske, 2000; Mothibeli, 2005). Children in the context of this study are exposed to three years of mother tongue teaching. National surveys, such as the Annual National Assessment (ANA) and PIRLS, still suggest that their language use and understanding are poor (DBE, 2014).

A longitudinal immersion study by Ramirez, Yuen, Ramey, Pasta and Billings (1991) compared three types of programmes: English-only immersion, early exit bilingual (transitional bilingual) and late exit bilingual (maintenance bilingual). English-only immersion refers to a context where the teacher and the learners are from an English background. Such contexts provide additional support to L2 learners through interaction with and the modelling of HL speakers. An early exit bilingual (transitional bilingual) programme is a situation where the learners are from a background other than English. In most cases the teachers are also English second or additional language speakers. The learners receive their initial education in their own language and are transposed to English as medium of instruction at a young age. With a late exit bilingual (maintenance bilingual) model the learners are transposed to English at an older age. South Africa follows an early exit bilingual (transitional bilingual) model for African language speakers. In

the context of this study learners receive mother tongue education up to grade 3 and are transposed to English as LoLT in grade 4.

The aim of the longitudinal study was to examine the amount of Spanish (L1) instruction most conducive to English literacy development. After four years in the respective programmes the English-only immersion and early exit programmes demonstrated comparable results. There were differences in the late exit groups. Because of methodological problems the immersion study was not regarded as decisive evidence. However, the National Research Council reported that the achievement of kindergarten and first grade learners who received instruction in Spanish (L1) was higher in reading than that of comparable learners who received instruction in English. It could be concluded that instruction in the native/first language does not impede the acquisition of English.

Posel and Casale (2011) recently confirmed that HL proficiency is one of the most significant determinants of English language proficiency among Africans. The circumstances concerning the learners' and teachers' home language will carefully be observed during the data collecting process.

2.4.2   The transfer of language skills from first to second language

The exploration of language skills transferred from the L1 to an L2 is significant, as it sheds light on what skills can be built on and which skills are needed to acquire English literacy. Below is a brief review found in literature.

Nicholas and Lightbown (2008) explain that the pace of learning an additional language depends on effective tuition and whether the children have developed well in their L1. Children who learn to read in their L1 before transposing to English do as well in reading in their L2. Moreover, it appears that children who had more time to develop their L1 do better at reading in their L2 (August, 2002).

Nicholas and Lightbown (2008) further claim that BICS acquired in one language do not appear to transfer to an L2, while academically mediated skills or strategies, such as reading, do appear to transfer. For example, good meaning-making strategies, rather than the degree of fluency in English, distinguished the better readers from the poorer readers. These findings support Cummins (1984)

interdependence principle of CUP, which enables the transfer of literacy skills across languages. This interdependence principle claims that once a threshold level of proficiency in L2 is acquired, concepts learned in L1 would be accessible to the learner in L2. It can thus be concluded that initial mother tongue education would enhance learners' performance in L2, as learners could develop new concepts more readily by drawing on their existing knowledge acquired in their mother tongue. The skills transferred could vary according to the age and/or level of the L1 literacy development of a child. Skills acquired in the mother tongue could successfully be transferred to a second or additional language (Cummins, 2000).

In a study done in Texas and California on reading comprehension among grade 1 English second language learners in a bilingual setting, Branum-Martin, Foorman, Francis and Mehta (2010) found that time in second language reading teaching was interrelated to L2 but negatively related to L1. This result proposes that cross-linguistic transfer does not happen instantaneously or automatically and that enough time should to be allocated to L2 literacy development. Effective tuition is needed to facilitate this transfer of skills.

2.5   TRANSITIONS

The significance of transitions in elementary, middle, and high school is well documented in the literature (Akos, Shoffner & Ellis, 2007; Sink, Edwards & Weir, 2007). Transitions are ecological changes influenced by the school, government, family and the wider community (Phatudi, 2014). They are consequently context-specific. Transitions are key interims where learners face new and challenging tasks as they move from familiar to unknown and more complex settings.

Transitions have the potential to promote positive development for learners, but, if ill managed, can result in anxiety or stress that may affect learning (Turner, 2007). Transitions must be dealt with very carefully in order to reap results beneficial to the learner and his/her further education. Failure to cope effectively with the demands of the new setting can have adverse consequences with an immediate and long-term impact.

Teachers, as the facilitators of this transition, play a pivotal role in the success or failure of this process. Teachers view transitions in relation to the context they teach and what underpins their role and work. Teachers can support learners by explaining and introducing what is unfamiliar to the learners, such as new routines and responsibilities. For example, in grade 3 the learners are used to one teacher offering all the subjects, but in grade 4 they have a different teacher for each subject.

The transition from HL education to English as medium of instruction is critical to the learners and teachers involved; it is a transition in which some have little or no choice. In the South African context this transition occurs from grade 3 to grade 4, where learners must progress from "learning to read" to "reading to learn" (Sanacore & Palumbo, 2008). The effect of this transition is commonly known as the "fourth-grade slump."

This plunge between the Foundation Phase and Intermediate Phase is by no means a phenomenon unique to SA alone. It is however more prevalent among learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds (Chall & Jacobs, 2003). Sanacore and Palumbo (2008) noted that the decline in some learners' scores occurred because of vocabulary in language learning. Learners from low-income backgrounds' vocabulary and awareness of the world lack some content-specific concepts. What makes this transition even more intense is that learners are introduced to subject teaching and another language of learning simultaneously. If learners are not supported well during this period and have unsuccessful experiences at school, could develop feelings of incompetence, unproductivity or inferiority (Augst & Akos, 2009).

Heugh (1995) postulates that should the transition to L2 learning be made too soon and without CALP having been achieved, the consequences for education could be detrimental. McDonald (1997) also found that learners who switched their medium of instruction before they had adequately mastered the new target language were not doing well. Hakuta, Butler and Witt (2000b) stated that oral English proficiency takes three to five years to develop, and academic English proficiency takes four to seven years. This implies that the average L2 learner in South Africa (after only three years) enters grade 4 with an insufficient level of

English language development. This results in third graders being a year behind their native English-speaking peers in basic reading and reading comprehension; by the fifth grade they are almost two full years behind (August, 2002).

According to Posel and Casale (2011), learners in South Africa transfer to English as language instruction too early during their schooling, before they have developed essential language competency skills in their mother tongue. Probyn, Murray, Botha, Botya, Brooks and Westphal (2002) found that this resulted in the grade 4 learners resorting to rote learning, as they have not developed the language competency necessary to gain actual comprehension of the subject content. Broom's work (2004) also suggests that early transition to L2 education (usually English in South Africa) could prolong the inequities of the past. Her work emphasises the critical role of language instruction in primary school in the successful performance of learners, hence this study to explore the transition from HL education to English as LoLT in grade 4.

2.6   SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

L2 learning occurs when learners are to receive their education through a language other than their HL. Second language learning is a complex process. Currently the learning of a L2 is receiving considerable public as well as scientific attention (Ojima, Matsuba-Kurita, Nakamura, Hoshino & Hagiwara, 2011).

According to Krashen (1987), proficiency and fluency in an L2 is usually attained by acquiring the target language and not by learning. In other words, fluency is acquired by informal social interaction where the focus is on communication in real-life situations and not on the structure of language learning per se, a commodity most learners in the rural areas do not have because there are no English L1 speakers with whom they can socialise or interact.

Yule (2016) clarifies a distinction between a "foreign language" setting (learning in a language not commonly spoken in the immediate community) and a "second language" setting (learning in a language that is spoken in the community). For instance, Spanish learners in an English class in Spain are learning English as a foreign language, while the same learners in an English class in the USA would be learning English as a second language (L2). In whichever case they are trying to

learn an additional language, the term L2 learning is generally used to describe both these scenarios.

The settings in the context of this study can easily be mistaken as a "second language" setting whereas it is actually a "foreign language" setting. Even though the learners are expected to learn in English, which is regarded as their L2, the fact that the language is not commonly spoken in the immediate community changes it to "foreign language" status. This intensifies the level of complexity for the learners.

In South Africa, education from grade 4 onward is only available in English or Afrikaans, which results in more than 80% of South African learners being subjected to L2 learning (Howie *et al.*, 2008; van der Berg, 2008). As with HL learning, there are certain dynamics and circumstances that affect the acquisition and learning of a L2, especially if that language is to become the LoLT. Relevant cognitive, affective and contextual factors that could have a bearing on L2 learning are hence further explained.

2.6.1   Factors prohibiting/promoting second language learning

Outlining optimal conditions for L2 learning is relative; there is no one "best way" to educate L2 learners. In seeking reasons to why some L2 learners are more successful than others, we need to take a more in-depth look at the major role players and factors influencing this process. Optimal conditions for L2 learning for diverse populations vary rendering their specific learning environments, learner characteristics, pedagogical goals, schooling circumstances and the interactions between these circumstantial variables. These factors are interrelated and include affective and cognitive factors.

The two primary role players in this process are the learner and the teacher.

2.6.1.1   Characteristics of a successful second language learner

Aptitude was found to be the strongest predictor of L2 listening, speaking, spelling, reading comprehension and writing for learners who were in a foreign language classroom setting for two years (Sparks, Patton, Ganschow & Humbach, 2009). The role of aptitude varies in younger and older learners (DeKeyser, Alfi-

Shabtay & Ravid, 2010). Studying L2 learners in a foreign language situation, Harley and Hart (1997) found that memory for text was not a key indicator of any of the L2 outcomes regarding late (grade 7) immersion learners; analytic capability was the only significant indicator for this group.

Motivation has been established as an important aspect in L2 learning (Csizer & Dornyei, 2005). Sparks *et al.* (2009), determined that motivation represented 9% of the deviation in L2 reading comprehension and 4% of listening and speaking skills deviation. In one of the most all-encompassing studies done in order to know what establishes motivation in L2 learning, Csizer and Dornyei (2005) explored five facets of motivation: instrumentality, integrativeness, attitudes to L2 speakers, perceived vitality of the L2 community and interest in the L2 ethos. The learners who achieved high scores on integrative motivation also showed interest in putting more effort into learning the L2; thus, motivation was strongly interrelated with anticipated effort. Csizer and Dornyei (2005) further found that interaction with L2 speakers usually contributed to more positive attitudes to the L2 and its ethos; it also contributed to higher learner self-assurance in the use of the second language.

First language/home language skills – The importance of HL skills seems to be overlooked by most parents and teachers. Sparks *et al.* (2009), found that, after two years of L2 learning, the L1 decoding (word-level reading) skills of grade 1-5 learners was the most important indicator of interpreting L2 in grade 10, whereas second language aptitude represented only a small part in the variance of scores. They also suggested that investigations of L2 aptitude may reveal correlation with many of the same fundamental cognitive abilities that contribute to L1 academic skills.

Other factors – Sparks *et al.* (2009), further established that in a foreign language setting, anxiety caused a minor but distinctive amount of deviation in L2 learners' word decoding (11%), spelling (3%), and reading comprehension (3%). Anxiety or fear is a reality in these classes; learners are scared to be laughed at and this hinders their learning.

2.6.1.2 Characteristics of a successful second language teacher

A second language teacher plays a critical role in successful L2 learning. According to Lenyai (2011), the most significant factor in achieving English mastery lies in teacher expertise. It is essential to know the theories, methods and approaches that explain *how* to teach (Hall Haley & Austin, 2004). The following characteristic in a teacher will benefit learners' successful L2 learning:

Second language proficiency – the main prerequisite of a competent L2 teacher is adequate proficiency in the target language (Sešek, 2007). Through interviews, teacher and school reports and observations, Sešek (2007) found that many L2 teachers in a foreign language setting did not have adequate proficiency in the target language, specifically the vocabulary required to teach the learners effectively. Sešek (2007) recorded several cases where teaching was unsuccessful as a result of insufficient teacher proficiency. Teachers themselves stated that they lacked L2 competencies.

Desire to teach well – Akbari and Allvar (2010) conducted the first study that established links between the characteristics of L2 teachers and learner academic achievement. In a province in Iran, multiple regression analysis of data from 30 public schools revealed that "teaching style, teacher reflectivity, and teacher sense of efficacy can significantly predict student achievement outcomes" (p.10). Akbari and Allvar (2010) found that the correlation between teacher reflectivity, self-worth and intellectual excitement could be attributed to one core factor, the desire to teach well.

Classroom organisation – the instructional character of effective L2 teachers is another theme that emerged from literature. Akbari and Allvar (2010) determined that good teachers' classrooms tuition was clearly structured and learners knew exactly what was expected of them. A case study done by Gillanders (2007) supported these findings.

In addition to the organisation of the class, the size of the class is also important. Even though 'large classes' is a relative term, classes in the South African situation are often beyond the recommended limit of 40 learners per teacher,

especially in the rural areas. However, a well-organised and thoroughly prepared teacher can manage such a situation and improve the learning environment.

First language proficiency – having some proficiency in the HL of the learners is also identified as a significant skill for L2 teachers to be more effective (Gillanders, 2007; Sešek, 2007). Teachers in Sešek's (2007) study, who were native speakers of the students' L1, stated the need for improved translation skills and a more thorough understanding of when and how to code switch between L1 and L2 in order to support effective learning. Observations indicated that many novice teachers particularly overused the L2 and consequently confused learners (Sešek, 2007).

2.6.2 Reasonable expectation for speed and accomplishment for second language learners

Realistic expectations should be set for L2 learners in order to succeed academically. Expectations for second language learners in an English-oriented context differ from those of L2 learners in an English-limited classroom setting. In the context of this study the L2 setting is an English-limited setting since the learners and teachers are not from an English background. In an English-limited context, young learners' attainment advantage is not mechanically accomplished; it requires a more conscious effort.

The two major traits influencing the accomplishment of L2 learners are the age of first exposure (AOFE) and hours of exposure (HOE) to the second language. The myth that "younger is better" should be overruled; research results show quite robustly that older learners perform better in L2 proficiency than younger learners (Dixon, Zhao, Shin, Wu, Su, Burgess-Brigham, Gezer & Snow, 2012). An early start could be beneficial but significant additional input is required in such a setting.

2.6.2.1 The age of first exposure

In a classic well-known study on college students learning a foreign language, the role of the amount of exposure was emphasised over that of the age of first exposure (Carroll & White, 1973). In general, longer exposure leads to higher levels of attainment in a foreign language. There is a phase during childhood when

the human brain is most receptive to learning a language. This period is often referred to as the "sensitive period" or critical period for language attainment (Yule, 2016). Though evidence indicates that it may well start in the womb, the common understanding is that it is from birth till adolescence.

According to Yule (2016), the optimum age for learning a language is between the ages of 10 and 16 years. Firstly because of maturation of cognitive skills permitting more effective analysis of the structures and features of the L2 learned and secondly, before the inherent capacity of flexibility has been lost. Late L2 learners seem to overtake younger learners in the display of cognitive maturity (Cenoz, 2002; Miralpeix, 2007). There is one exception, namely pronunciation. Younger children appear to achieve a native-like pronunciation more easily than older learners (Gonzalez *et al.*, 2015). This may be due to fossilisation of motor neurophysiologic mechanism/patterns of the L1, which are hard to adapt after a certain age.

In a ground-breaking study by Ojima *et al.* (2011), the semantic processing of 350 Japanese primary-school children's oral English was examined. It is one of few event-related brain potential (ERP) studies measuring neural activities by electroencephalograms. ERP studies can envisage language processing as it is taking place; they provide data of linguistic processes well before a decision is made. The data collected in the above-mentioned study accentuated the significant role of HOE in foreign language learning, and cast doubt on the view that AOFE always yields better results. No evidence of advantages of early age of first exposure in the children's foreign language learning was found in this study.

In a large-scale project undertaken among children in Spain, it was established that learners who were exposed to English from age 11 outperformed those who were introduced to English at the age of 8 years (Muñoz, 2006). Support for this claim is found in studies by Celaya, Torras and Pérez-Vidal (2001), Cenoz (2003) and Navés, Torras and Celaya (2003), who all concluded that older learners seemed to have an advantage. They found that late learners (age 11) outdid early beginners (age 8) in the following writing areas: vocabulary, fluency, accuracy and syntactic complexity (Celaya *et al.*, 2001; Cenoz, 2003; Navés *et al.*, 2003).

There is a widespread misconception that young children can attain an additional or L2 more easily than older children. Cummins already noted in 1981 that older school children attained L2 literacy skills at a higher speed than younger children (MacSwan & Pray, 2005). As Lightbown (2008) indicated, becoming fluent in a language is not 'easy as pie' but takes quite a few years. It is incorrect to believe that providing children with day care or a pre-school programme in an L2 is enough to prepare them to be scholarly successful in that language. Learners who had this exposure might be better prepared for school, but will still need ongoing support to attain adequate proficiency in the L2 to succeed academically. They also need continuous support in developing their HL (Makoe, 2014).

Cook and Singleton (2014) conclude that improving the conditions under which teaching and learning take place is a greater determinant of successful L2 acquisition than the mere age factor.

2.6.2.2   Hours of exposure

Longer hours of exposure (HOE) consistently resulted in greater proficiency scores (Ojima *et al.*, 2011). Barón and Celaya (2010) found that children's applied language skills, such as the ability to use strategies and procedures, to change focus and to respond in time, enhanced as their L2 instruction time was increased, even without direct teaching, thus through more exposure.

2.6.2.3   Other factors

The quality and quantity of effort (Marsden & David, 2008; Ojima *et al.*, 2011), as well as the quality of teaching (Djigunović, Nikolov & Ottó, 2008), play significant roles in determining L2 results in foreign language contexts.

Teachers should consider ESL learners' L1 skills, which could affect the pace at which the learners acquire L2 (Block, 2003). Learners whose HL is more distant from the target language, such as Korean and English, generally take longer to attain the L2 than learners whose L1 and L2 are more closely related. The morphology and language structures of the African languages are unrelated from those of English (Lenyai, 2011), thus learners could take longer attaining English.

The effects of "culturally accommodating instruction" are uncertain (Goldenberg, 2008). Some researchers and educators believe that because different cultural groups interact and behave differently or might have diverse learning styles, their instructional approaches should be compatible with learners' cultural characteristics (i.e. adapt to or complement interactional and behavioural patterns learners learn at home). Surprisingly, the National Literacy Panel (NLP) concluded that there is little proof to support the claim that culturally compatible instruction improves the achievement of ESL learners (Goldenberg, 2008). In fact, a study reviewed by the NLP found that a direct instruction approach or mastery learning had better effects in Mexican-American learners' reading comprehension than an approach tailored to their sociocultural characteristics (August, Shanahan & Escamilla, 2009). It seems that lessons with solid content and clearly structured instruction produce greater improvements in terms of learners' learning. It goes without saying that teachers should respect and take the cultural backgrounds of their learners into consideration, but this should not be used as an excuse for underperforming.

Taking affective, cognitive and contextual factors (age of first exposure and introduction, quality and quantity of effort, L1 proficiency, poverty and lack of exposure) into consideration, this study will investigate the effect of the factors mentioned above on the ability of learners to make a smooth transition from mother tongue instruction to English as a medium of instruction.

2.7   TEACHING STRATEGIES/APPROACHES

According to the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), learning a second or additional language follows the same path as attaining a HL, except that it occurs later in a child's life (Department of Basic Education, 2011c). Nevertheless, an additional language requires a more cognisant effort than the HL and therefore necessitates different and specific methodologies. CAPS (DBE, 2011c) recommend the additive bilingual approach for teaching an additional language. This approach assumes that learners who start school are competent in their HL and that they can use their HL to learn an additional language. English is taught to facilitate assimilation into the English language and culture. This

transition is no seamless process and believed to be the greatest challenge in the South African schooling system.

In order to master a language successfully, a range of approaches, methodologies and strategies must be used. The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) is a content-based ESL model designed by Chamot and O'Malley as a "bridge to the mainstream" (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). This instructional programme assists learners with limited English proficiency in the transition to mainstream instruction in English (Chamot & O'Malley, 1986) by making content comprehensible through the use of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) strategies and teaching learners how to handle content area material with success.

2.7.1   Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA)

CALLA is an American programme that was developed to provide transitional instruction to further academic language development in English through content area instruction in science, mathematics and social studies. Instead of teaching English in isolation, CALLA uses English as a tool to learn subject matter. The objective of this model is to develop the academic language skills of learners with limited English proficiency (Chamot & O'Malley, 1986). CALLA integrates language development, explicit instruction and content area instruction in learning strategies (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994). This approach relies strongly on scaffolding, i.e. the provision of instructional support with the first introduction of concepts and skills and the gradual removal of this support as students develop greater proficiency, knowledge and skills of content introduced. CALLA can help Intermediate Phase learners in understanding and retaining content material while they are increasing their English language skills.

The CALLA programme proposes a different order for introducing content-based instruction: firstly science, secondly mathematics and then social studies. The reasoning is that science entails the use of objects and equipment to illustrate concepts and principles and that working in co-operative groups will develop the language naturally. Mathematics content is assisted by the use of concrete objects and numeric symbols to decode the language. Social studies require more literacy skills and are thus introduced last.

In the South African context science is incorporated in Life Skills (social studies), which relies heavily on language skills. If CALLA should be implemented in the South African context, the order of introduction would have to be altered to mathematics first, followed by science and then social sciences. Because of difficulties experienced in teaching mathematics in siSwati (DBE, 2013a) learners would acquire terminology more readily, as numerical symbols and concrete objects are used in mathematics to decode language. Introducing science second would further support their English language development, as science also relies heavily on using concrete objects and practical experiments. Once the learners have internalised and embraced the language associated with mathematics and science, social sciences, which rely heavily on language, can be introduced. The Grade 3 Assessment Guide of the *integrated* Louisiana Educational Assessment Program follows the same order of mathematics, science and then social studies (Louisiana Department of Education, 2012).

2.7.2   Scaffolding and code switching

The term scaffolding was first used by Wood, Bruner and Ross in 1976 (McCabe, 2013). Scaffolding refers to support or assistance provided to young children, which enables them to reach higher levels of performance than they could reach independently. The most effective way is using varied strategies guided by how the child is doing. Once the child is doing well, less support and help is provided. When the child struggles, more specific instructions are given until the child starts progressing again.

Scaffolding relates to the concept of zone of proximal development (ZPD) of Lev Vygotsky's model of social learning. His theory implies that all learning builds on existing skills and knowledge and that there is a zone in which new knowledge and skills are being developed utilising existing fundamentals (Vygotsky, 1978). He proposes that teachers use co-operative learning practices whereby less competent learners develop with the help of a more skilful person, whether the educator or a peer learner. Vygotsky believes that with the appropriate assistance the learner, within his/her ZPD, could get the necessary "boost" to fulfil the task. This appropriate assistance or support enables the child to achieve success in something he/she would not have been able to do single-handedly; support by a

more skilful/knowledgeable person is needed. In the literature, ZPD has become synonymous with the term scaffolding. However, Vygotsky never used this term in his writings.

Scaffolding is a key aspect of effective teaching and entails modelling of a skill, providing hints or clues and adapting material or an activity (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009) in order to achieve the desired goal. Scaffolding or assistance is most efficient when the assistance corresponds with the learners' needs.

2.7.2.1   Code switching as a form of scaffolding

Code switching is used as a form of scaffolding (Salami, 2008). Although no or little empirical evidence is currently available, Akinnaso noted the significant borrowing and code switching between English and the local/indigenous language in teaching processes in Nigeria (Fafunwa, 1982). Code switching is general practice in many South African classrooms despite the past 'official' opposition to it (Auerbach, 1993; Bot, 1993; McCabe, 1996); possibly as a result of over-utilisation of the L1, resulting in no attempt to use the target language. During the nineties the approach to code-switching changed to what was referred to as translanguaging (McCabe, 2013) which was perceived more positively. Code switching lowers the affective filter (Krashen, 1985). Krashen postulates that learners need less stressful environments to learn successfully. Blocking the use of the HL and limiting instructional adaptations for ESL learners is simply not based on solid scientific evidence (Goldenberg, 2008). It merely makes the already challenging task of the ESL teacher more challenging. Code switching can be a very successful mode of scaffolding.

2.7.3   Significance of bilingualism

Bilingualism is nowadays not an exception but has become the norm in several countries (Ojima *et al.*, 2011). This is particularly important in a country such as South Africa, which has 11 official languages, namely Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda and Xitsonga. There has always been the assumption that the number of languages a child learns, whether through natural exposure or scholastic intervention, has

consequences for his/her development (Barac & Bialystok, 2011). The assumption existed that these consequences could be detrimental.

Research has revealed that bilingual learners develop a certain cognitive flexibility and metalinguistic awareness superior to those of their monolingual peers (King & Mackey, 2007). The Department of Education supports this view in its LiEP (1997), which stipulates that the desired way to introduce an additional language is to sustain the mother tongue (additive bilingualism). Bilingual advantage in structural sensitivity may arise from learners' constant focus on language structures in an attempt to overcome interlingual interference. Research also alludes to the fact that bilingualism is beneficial to many facets of children's development. Bilingual education, especially two-way programmes, are supported by various studies (Dixon *et al.*, 2012). Senesac (2002) found that L2 learners of English who had been in such programmes for at least five years performed above the grade level of learners in monolingual programmes on standardised tests on L2 reading.

Transitional bilingual programmes entail that education originates in the first language but is at a later stage transferred to the L2. When comparing learners in two-way bilingual programmes to English L2 learners in a transitional bilingual programme, after a period of four to five years, no difference could be found in the learners' English reading proficiency (López & Tashakkori, 2006). However, the two-way bilingual learners met oral English proficiency criteria more swiftly than the transitional bilingual learners.

Not all experimental studies have been able to validate that bilingual learners performed significantly better than non-bilingual learners owing to basic requirements not being met; for example the unfeasibility of controlling all the social, cultural and logistical variables, and/or to testing the learners only in the L2 before they have been sufficiently exposed to that language (August, 2002). Nevertheless, most studies were able to agree on the following: that learners were not disadvantaged by bilingual tuition and secondly that the learners' competence in the L2 was insufficient to use the language as medium of instruction (Williams, 1998).

Most African learners in South Africa, as in the context of this study, are subjected to a transitional bilingual schooling system. They transfer to English as LoLT in grade 4 and continue with an African language as subject up to grade 12. The bilingualism of the teacher as facilitator of success or failure in learning is an aspect that should be taken into consideration. However, the transition to L2 as medium of instruction should not be made too soon. The age of the learner and his/her HL development should also be considered. Some research has unfortunately supported additive forms of bilingualism too soon as a "shortcut" transition programme that requires learners to cope with academic content in the target language before they have developed academic proficiency in the L1 (Benson, 2009).

Many schools choose English as LoLT in the early grades of primary schooling with little maintenance of HL. Because of the lack of support of the HL, this transition results in learners experiencing subtractive bilingualism with negative consequences for their literacy development. Bilingual reading research has found that decoding skills can transfer across languages, as it is uniform across languages (Geva & Yaghoub Zadeh, 2006; Lipka & Siegel, 2007).

2.8   THE SOUTH AFRICAN LANGUAGE POLICY LANDSCAPE

Language education in South Africa is a complex issue. It is affected by various interacting dynamics regarding the language experiences of both learners and teachers that have an impact on the performance of the learners (Broom, 2004).

The landscape of English use in South African classrooms can be divided into two main contexts. The first context is an environment where English home language speakers share a classroom with learners who do not speak English as their L1. In these instances the teacher is usually also an English L1 speaker. The second, more common, context is that of learners who do not speak English at home. The teachers themselves are usually also English second or additional language speakers. In an evaluation report of the Foundation Phase curriculum in South Africa, Kenya, Singapore and Canada, Hoadley, Murray, Drew and Setati (2010) identified two distinct systems in English teaching in South Africa.

In one system, English is offered as LoLT at HL level, even though for many of the learners it is not their mother tongue. In the second system (the majority of South African schools), the LoLT in the Foundation Phase is an African language and EFAL is taught as a subject from grade 1-3 (Department of Basic Education, 2011c). In these schools the English curriculum offered is at additional language level, yet from grade 4 onward the LoLT becomes English, which is at HL level. In these two systems teachers must cope with teaching learners English at different levels, but with the same expectations in learner performance and results, leading to a very imbalanced situation. Needless to say, the performance in the context of ESLs is far below that of the L1 speakers. This raises the question whether the language issue per se is the main determining factor in South African learners' poor academic performance in grade 4.

2.8.1   English as additional language in an English-orientated context

English L2 learners in this context receive additional support from the English background of their fellow learners and teachers. English can be learnt with greater ease. Learning is not confined to formal teaching only; a great deal is informally acquired outside the classroom, on the playground and through social interaction on a daily basis.

2.8.2   English as additional language in an English-limited context

Learners in an English-limited context come from backgrounds where a language other than English is spoken at home. In most instances the teachers are also English second or additional language speakers. The teacher is the main source of English learning. The only time learners communicate in English is in class, thus they have limited opportunities to engage with the language. Even though the teachers in such a context can communicate in English, their proficiency and status as role models for the learners cannot be trusted (Fleisch, 2008). Continued exposure to a target language is the best way to acquire mastery of the language (Phatudi, 2014); this is an opportunity learners in an English-limited context do not have.

Education in South Africa has undergone vast changes since democracy in 1994 and the enactment of the new Constitution in 1996 (Sailors, Hoffman, Pearson,

Beretvas & Matthee, 2010); especially for Foundation Phase learners (grade 1-3). According to Section 29 of the Constitution of 1996 all learners have the right to a basic education, as well as the right to be educated in the official language of their choice in public educational institutions where reasonably feasible. South Africa has 11 official languages but education in nine of them is only available up to grade 3. From grade 4 onward education is only available in English or Afrikaans, hence the vast number of learners who have to make a transition to English in grade 4.

The Language in Education Policy (LiEP) of South Africa of 1997 is based on the principle of additive multi-lingualism and promotes the utilisation of the HL alongside an additional language. This policy endorses a multilanguage society with the objective of elevating the eminence and use of indigenous languages. Once an additional language is introduced as a subject, the HL should be used alongside it for "as long as possible" (Department of Basic Education, 2011c). In South Africa, this language is English.

The National Curriculum Statement (NCS) gives school governing bodies (SGBs) the responsibility of selecting a school language policy that is suitable for their circumstances and in accordance with the policy of additive multilingualism (p.4). Under this language policy, learning in the Foundation Phase (grade R-3) should occur in the learners' HL. Thereafter, as from grade 4, tuition is only available through the medium of English or Afrikaans. This has resulted in more than 80% of black South African learners having to change to English as medium of instruction (Howie *et al.*, 2008; van der Berg, 2008).

In the South African multilingual and multicultural society the dominant language spoken at home might not be the only language spoken in a community. Children might have knowledge of and speak another language(s) other than their HL. This results in many children entering school knowing more than one language other than their HL without being proficient in those languages. As there are no English HL speakers in the rural areas, English is not one of those possible additional languages they might know on entering school for the first time. Rural areas happen to be monolingual, whereas urban areas are being flooded by job seekers and immigrants, thus resulting in their multicultural and multilingual nature.

South Africa follows a so-called early exit policy from mother tongue education, which is at the age of 8 years or the end of grade 3. The newly implemented CAPS of South Africa prescribes, in accordance with the LiEP, the introduction of EFAL from grade 1 in schools that use an indigenous language as LoLT (Department of Basic Education, 2011c). The objective thereof is to introduce English to these learners and to prepare them for the transition to English as LoLT in grade 4. This LiEP has had opposing consequences, not only for English language acquisition, but also for learners' overall academic achievement and cognitive development (Posel & Casale, 2011). The magnitude of the problem is reflected in nationwide data on educational results.

The most striking weakness in the Diagnostic Report ANA 2012 is the "inability of learners to read with understanding" (DBE, 2012:5). Referring to a study conducted by Theron and Nel (2005), 55% of the educators indicated that learners could not converse in English, let alone perform academically. According to the ANA 2014 Diagnostic Report First Additional Language and Home Language (DBE, 2015), the overall performance of the sampled grade 4 EFAL learners was at the elementary achievement level (average of 37%). The modal score (score most frequently attained) was 16%. With such a low score in English which is the future medium of instruction, this is cause for great concern. It seems very unlikely that learners would be successful in handling content knowledge using a language in which they obtained an average score of 16%. The transition to English as LoLT seems to be at the core of this low score and needs to be explored to determine how it is negotiated by both learners and teachers.

One unique aspect of the CAPS system, which was introduced in 2010 in an attempt to address this challenging transition, is the minimum and/or maximum language time allocation or provisioning (Department of Basic Education, 2011c). This grant schools the opportunity for more flexibility regarding language time allocation to suit the needs of their learners. For example, the 10 hours per week allocated for languages in grade 1 and 2 classes could be allocated as follows: seven (7) hours for HL and three (3) hours for English or eight (8) hours for HL and two (2) hours for English, depending on what would be more beneficial to the learners. This provides ESL learners the opportunity to get more English exposure

in order to reduce the backlog they could have without sacrificing their HL. However additional time only does not seem to be enough, as proven by the ANA 2014 results, hence the need to investigate this transition to English more closely.

2.9   LEARNING ENGLISH FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

In South Africa, most learners are formally introduced to English as a first additional language only when entering formal schooling in grade 1. According to CAPS the acquisition of an additional language occurs through the same processes as the acquisition of an HL, except that it occurs at a later stage in a child's life (Department of Basic Education, 2011c). However, the acquisition of an additional language necessitates a more conscious effort than that for an HL. The EFAL curriculum is based on the same principles of language development but requires specific methodologies when teaching (see par. 2.7).

Language skills are interrelated and consist of four related systems: phonology (sounds), semantics (meaning), syntax (sentence construction) and pragmatics (application). All four systems must be developed in order to become proficient in a language (Cox, 2005). These four systems are fundamental to language acquisition and are built into CAPS as listening (sounds), speaking (using vocabulary), reading and writing (syntax and language use) (Department of Basic Education, 2011c). Even though languages are basically acquired in the same way, the pace and context of language acquisition of the L1 and L2 differ. L2 acquisition is characterised by repetition, practical engagement and a composed, warm and accommodating setting (Phatudi, 2014).

The process of learning EFAL successfully is influenced by individual and environmental factors. These factors can further be described as affective, cognitive and contextual factors within and around the learner.

2.9.1   Affective factors

Affective factors relate to a learner's personality (such as his/her attitude and level of confidence) and emotional state (how he/she feels). These are key predictors of whether one learner in the same class might be more successful in learning EFAL than another learner. Furthermore, these factors also predetermine differential accomplishment of the target language; how swiftly of slowly EFAL will be learnt.

This reasoning is in line with Krashen's (1987) affective filter hypothesis. This hypothesis claims that negative attitudes and emotions may be barriers preventing learners from attaining the target language. For example, it is unlikely that an anxious or stressed learner who lacks self-confidence and motivation will attain competence in EFAL, since his/her affective filter is high. A low affective filter boosts a learner's willpower to engage in discourse in the target language, as he/she is more relaxed and inspired.

2.9.2   Cognitive factors

Cognition refers to the ability to process and apply knowledge in an effective and meaningful way (Kembo, 2000). A learner's intellectual ability plays a role in language learning; however attainment or failure is determined by the interaction of several dynamics and cannot be attributed to cognition only (Makoe, 2014). Therefore, the fact that a learner might be regarded as highly intelligent does not necessarily imply successful attainment of a target language. A confident or motivated learner may successfully attain a target language despite having average intellectual ability. This is because a confident or motivated learner will more readily engage in social interaction and take up opportunities to speak the target language than a shy, reserved learner, irrespective of the shy learner's possibly superior intellectual ability.

2.9.3   Contextual factors

Contextual or circumstantial factors play a major role in the acquisitioning of an L2. The conditions affecting EFAL learning differ significantly from those affecting HL acquisitioning. In the context of my study, learning EFAL occurs in a formal situation of a classroom through explicit instruction by a teacher. The context of this study is a rural setting of deprived development. Poverty has rippling effects on these learners' circumstances. The following factors within this setting affect the acquisition of EFAL:

2.9.3.1   Lack of English reading material at home and at school

Families can hardly provide in their basic needs for food and clothing, let alone magazines and newspapers. Children have little or no access to resources such as magazines, newspapers, TV and radio. In households where there are

televisions or radios these are mostly used to watch/listen to sport and drama series in their HL, not English. Mkhize (2013) also reported that, as in the case of magazines and newspapers, the probability of finding any books in these households is almost non-existent. In a household where parents cannot read themselves, it is evident that they would not be able to introduce their children to books. Many of the learners grow up with their grandparents, which enlarges the lack of exposure to any English and subsequent support, as most grandparents are unschooled and do not know English at all.

At schools, it is the exception to the rule to find libraries or books in classes, let alone sufficient reading material available to the learners. This school does not have a library and the number of books in the grade 3 classes was far too few for the number of learners. In the grade 4 classes there were no books at all.

2.9.3.2   Lack of exposure to spoken English

The opportunity of using an L2 in informal situations was found to have the greatest effect on L2 oral proficiency (Carhill, Suárez-Orozco & Páez, 2008). Learners in rural areas do not come into contact with English HL speakers, as such speakers do not live there and socialise with them. The learners are only exposed to their HL (siSwati) or another African language, such as Xitsonga, that is spoken in the area.

2.9.3.3   Quality of English teaching

Brock-Utne and Holmarsdottir (2004) and Brock-Utne (2007) state that language instruction in primary schools is critical if learners are to be successful. Well-implemented specialised teaching of L2 learners, such as the sheltered instruction observation protocol (SIOP) is a key optimal condition for L2 acquisition (Echevarria, Gersten & Jiménez, 1998; McIntyre, Kyle, Chen, Muñoz & Beldon, 2010).

The SIOP model was designed to increase academic achievement of language minority learners in the United States. The SIOP model integrates best practices for teaching academic English and offers teachers a comprehensible method for improving learner achievement (Short, Fidelman & Louguit, 2012). The model comprises of eight components, namely building background, preparation,

comprehensible input, interaction, strategies, practice/application, lesson delivery and review/assessment (McIntyre *et al.*, 2010). Its purpose is twofold: to make grade-level academic content more accessible to learners and to guide teachers toward teaching content for learners and simultaneously assist ESL learners in developing literacy skills. The efficiency of components of the SIOP model is confirmed in the Developing Literacy in Second-Language Learners: Report of the National Literacy Panel and Language Minority and Youth (August & Shanahan, 2006).

The quality of English teaching will be discussed further once the field work and data collection have been completed.

2.9.3.4 English proficiency of teachers

This is one of the major influences on the learners' acquisition and learning of language. The majority of ESL teachers' own proficiency in English is far from what is desired (Cantoni, 2007). This is confirmed by Fleisch (2008), who states that even though teachers in such contexts can communicate in English, their proficiency and status as role models for the learners cannot be trusted. From my own experience in working with teachers on a daily basis, I find that they usually switch to their HL once they realise I can understand and speak siSwati fairly well. They struggle to express themselves comfortably and well in English. This could perhaps be the reason why educators resort to ad hoc bilingual language practices in class.

2.9.3.5 Maternal education and parental English skills

The level of parents' education also seems to have an effect on L2 development (Páez & Rinaldi, 2006). According to Sanacore and Palumbo (2008), learner's vocabulary and reading development are related to the economic and educational position of their families. Learners from low-income households usually do less well than learners from middle-income households (Chall, 2000). Hart and Risley (1995) established that, before entering school, learners from low-income families are exposed to half the number of words as learners from more affluent families. These vocabulary variances are often overlooked, as they do not impede initial literacy attainment. At the primary level, low-income learners attain basic literacy

skills parallel to other learners, but their word awareness might be inadequate for the increased content demands of informational text in the fourth grade (Chall, Jacobs, Baldwin & Chall, 2009). Carhill *et al.* (2008), established that parental education and maternal L2 English skills were significant indictors of teenage children's oral academic L2 proficiency. Parents with low or no English proficiency may not provide their children with quality English input to assist them in L2 development. I agree with Hakuta, Butler and Witt (2000b) who stated that children from low social economic families were found to attain English proficiency at a slower pace than more privileged children. Many of the learners in this study live with their grandparents who are uneducated and have no knowledge of English. This enlarges the impact of maternal education and English language skills on these learners' vocabulary development.

2.9.3.6   Age of introduction to English

The age of introducing the learner to second language learning is most probably the greatest determining factor in the success of L2 learning. Broom's (2004) assessment of reading performance of learners at the end of grade 3 suggests that early transition to L2 (usually English in South Africa) could sustain the inequities of South Africa's past. Nevertheless, internationally the trend is to exit from mother tongue-based education early and to "fast track" transition to English or another dominant language (Broom, 2004).

Studies have revealed that children between 9 and 12 years make quicker cognitive and academic progress in literacy acquisition in both the HL and L2 than children between 5 and 8 years of age (Akinnaso, 1993). In South Africa learners make the transition to English as LoLT in grade 4 (8-9 years of age). Dzinyela and Miskey, in Salami (2008), reported that early exit to English, as observed in Ghana, resulted in learners performing poorly, as they had mastered neither English nor the key concepts they should have in their mother tongue sufficiently.

2.9.3.7   Mastering of mother tongue

Another contextual factor is inadequate mastering of the mother tongue (Roodt, 2002; Stadler, 2002). Parents and caregivers have the strongest influence on a child's L1 acquisition in the early years. The manner of verbal interaction between

children and mothers/caregivers of working class and middle-class backgrounds contributes to the children's mental dispositions (Hasan, 2002).

The acquisition of a second language is often underpinned by the level of development of the mother tongue, which serves as springboard of further language development (Roodt, 2002). In the context of this study the mastering of the mother tongue is further undermined, as the learners are not exposed to a single HL but a combination of two languages, siSwati and Xitsonga, resulting in poor mastering of both languages.

It is evident that there are a great number of contextual factors influencing a learner's successful or inadequate acquisition of EFAL. These factors will be closely considered in this study.

2.10   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Second language learning in English has increased vastly, as English is regarded as the doorway to economic and social wellbeing. This phenomenon mostly affects language minority groups, which have no other choice, as further education is not available in their HL. Significant research has been done on L2 acquisition, yet no single model or theory can elucidate this phenomenon unequivocally. L2 acquisition is a multivariable, which can be best understood by drawing on aspects of various theories and models, such as the skill acquisition theory, IIO model, Vygotsky's developmental theory, connectionist model and Cummins's CUP (Cummins, 1981). These relevant theories and models are subsequently discussed.

2.10.1   Skill acquisition theory

The skill acquisition theory provides understanding of the transitional process of acquiring a target or L2. It is a neo-Piagetian philosophy that fuses elements of both cognitive and behaviouristic theories (Fischer, 2009). This theory proposes effortul to more automated utilisation of a target language through exercise and feedback in a meaningful context such as a classroom (Lyster & Sato, 2013).

The skill acquisition theory postulates two interrelated systems, namely declarative and procedural knowledge. Declarative knowledge is fixed information similar to

geographical or historical facts set in memory. Procedural knowledge involves the skill of how to do things, i.e. the skill to apply rule-based knowledge to intellectual as well as mechanical operations. Regarding language, declarative knowledge refers to fixed aspects of language such as word descriptions and grammar rules, while procedural knowledge refers to knowledge of how to execute cognitive operations like producing language with less or no effort by accessing items stored in long-term memory.

According to the skill acquisition theory declarative knowledge can be transformed into procedural knowledge through meaningful practice over many trails (Anderson, 2015; DeKeyser, 2015). Repeated practice with feedback at significant moments promotes the acceleration of meaningful learning rather than the acquisition of mechanical skill (Anderson, Greeno, Kline & Neves, 1981) and thereby contributes to automatisation.

Anderson and Schunn (2013) emphasised that this theory places a premium on the practice required to learn the desired competencies permanently. This is where the role of the teacher and the nature and quality of practice he/she exercises come in. Chapelle (2009) categorised this theory as a theory of overall human learning, i.e. it focuses "on language learning as a process of human learning."

2.10.2   Input-interaction-output

According to this theory developed by Krashen (1985), language acquisition does not necessitate widespread use of cognisant grammatical rules or tedious drill. Second language acquisition is significantly determined by "input". Gass (in Bailey, 2006:65) describes this input as "… the language to which the learner is exposed, both orally and visually …," in other words, the language which "surrounds learners living in a L2 environment" (Bailey, 2006). Krashen (1985) identified three non-linguistic factors that influence this "input" in the acquisition of L2: anxiety, motivation and self-confidence.

The most significant element in L2 attainment is comprehensible input through teacher talk. Interaction facilitates acquisition as a result of the conversational and linguistic adaptations that occur in such discourse (Long, 1996). Through this

interaction, learners have the opportunity to understand and use the language that was previously incomprehensible. Acquisition follows when understanding of messages takes place and the learner is not "on the defence" (anxious).

According to Chomsky (Myles & Mitchell, 2004), the challenge in language learning is the result of messy and fragmentary input; abstract concepts are made based on inadequate language practice. Teachers are responsible for insufficient language input as a result of their own limited English proficiency. Where teachers' own L2 understanding of English is not of acceptable standard, their poor utilisation of and acquaintance with the language is transferred to the learners (Stander, 2001).

Acquisition is achieved when one understands language that contains structure that is "a little beyond" where one is at the moment. It does not occur overnight, but gradually when the acquirer is "ready," one should realise that the progress occurs through delivering fluent and comprehensible input and not from forced and correcting delivery. Interaction offers learners critical response on whether their output was comprehensible (Gass & Mackey, 2015).

The relevancy of Krashen's input-interaction-output theory to this study is that it enables one to understand the wider "input" and processes concerning the learners' successful acquisition of English as a L2. This theory includes the language(s) and conditions affecting the learner while learning an L2. It incorporates the role of the teacher in the learners' learning.

2.10.3   Vygotsky's developmental theory

Sociocultural researchers emphasise the importance of the learning environment. This view stems from Vygotsky's developmental theory, which argues that all human cognitive processes are initiated from social interaction, once internalised individual cognitive processing (learning) has been achieved (Eun, 2011).

Vygotsky claims that learners reach new heights of development through the mediation from others who have already mastered a certain skill (Thorne & Lantolf, 2007). Vygotsky suggests a close "reciprocal/interfunctional" relation amid thought and language (Vygotsky, 2012), as well as a critical affiliation amid talking and

thinking. He claims that understanding occurs through dialogue and social interaction (Renshaw & Brown, 2007) in a cultural setting. When learning a language, a child does not merely learn labels to recall and describe significant items and features of his physical and social environment, but rather finds ways to construct his/the world (Wood, 1998). This "constructing" process occurs in the ZPD where a child's spontaneous disorganised concepts "meet" the logic and systematic thinking of adult reasoning (Kozulin, 2011). The rural, poverty-stricken environment and type of mediation to which the learners in my study are exposed have a profound effect on their language development.

Vygotsky's developmental theory complements Krashen's theory by emphasising the role of the learning environment and interaction that takes place in the learning process. Vygotsky quantifies the "interaction" in Krashen's theory further as a "construction" process taking place in the ZPD, comparable to the structures "a little beyond" that of the learner of Krashen's theory. Understanding and internalising content results in learning. Vygotsky's theory incorporates the wider role of a child's socio-economic and socio-cultural environment on his/her learning.

2.10.4   Cummins' cognitive underlying proficiency model

Cummins' cognitive-linguistic model highlights the significance of a HL. According to this model there are common underlying knowledge and skills across languages. Based on his model, Cummins formulated his linguistic interdependence hypothesis, which claims that these underlying skills and knowledge can be transferred from one language to another, hence the importance of a HL being the springboard for L2 skills and competences.

In support of Cummins' linguistic interdependence hypothesis of L1 and L2, Taylor and von Fintel (2016) found that mother tongue instruction in the early grades significantly improved English acquisition in grades 4, 5 and 6. Pedagogics seems to be in favour of using L1 as language of instruction until a certain level of academic proficiency has been attained (which could take three to six years) rather than using L2 from the start of schooling (Hakuta *et al.*, 2000b).

The learning of a second language has become more than mere linguistic acquisition; L2 teaching is redirected to assist learners in finding their own way of

effective application of L2 in various contexts (Dixon *et al.*, 2012). What makes the transition in South African rural schools so challenging is that the learners must make meaning of new content while not having sufficient CALP of English yet.

Cummins' cognitive underlying proficiency model is central in this study as it emphasises the crucial role of mother tongue. Cummins postulates a linguistic interdependence between mother tongue and a second language whereby certain competencies acquired in the mother tongue can be successfully transferred to a second or additional language.

2.10.5   Connectionist model

Psycholinguistics seeks to clarify the internal processes that result in successful (or unsuccessful) L2 learning. Most psycholinguists use connectionist models in their research. MacWhinney (2005) suggests an integrated model for both L1 and L2 acquisition. According to this model, L2 acquisition processes are very similar to the L1 acquisition, except that L2 acquisition is initiated with more information drawn from the L1.

Prominent psycholinguistic research done on L2 remains approaches rather than rules; developments rather than results. Psycholinguists traditionally focused on adult L2 acquisition, but are nowadays studying L2 acquisition in children (Paradis, 2008). Psycholinguists have now joined neuropsychologists in processing techniques (Dixon *et al.,* 2012). They are now exploring word-level language construction and comprehension, as well as sentence-level processing instruments (Hagoort & Brown, 2000). To date most work using these neurocognitive technologies has been done on monolinguals, especially English-speaking monolinguals, rather than on any other language or bilinguals.

L2 learners have to attain new mappings of sound based on the meaning of the existing HL system (Dixon *et al.,* 2012). This strengthens the importance of a strong HL basis once more. As learners' L2 ability increases, the dependency on HL decreases. Although connectionist frameworks are extensively used by psycholinguists in L2 acquisition research, it has been criticised for the lack of supporting empirical evidence (VanPatten & Benati, 2010) and its insensitivity to

significance and related context (Gennari, MacDonald, Postle & Seidenberg, 2007).

Connectionist models focus on the internal processes of language learning. The value of this model in my research is that it reflects the importance of the mother tongue in the acquisition of new mappings of sound based on prevailing mother tongue competences. This model supports Cummins' cognitive interdependence model regarding the importance of the learner's own HL proficiency as springboard for L2 learning.

2.11   SUMMARY

The interrelatedness of Krashen's input-interaction-output theory, Vygotsky's developmental theory, Cummins' cognitive underlying proficiency model and connectionist model is represented in the following diagram:
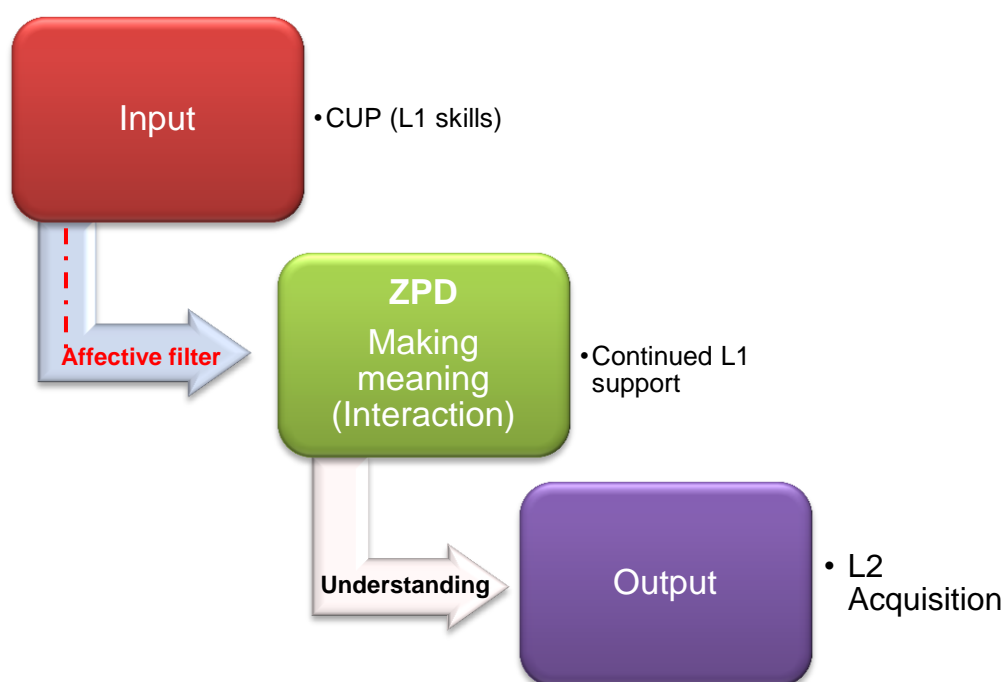
Figure 2.1:   Diagrammatic representation of the second language learning process

The process of L2 learning is significantly determined by "input." This "input" encompasses the elements with which the child enters school, such as HL skills and the type of oral discourse and engagement the child received from parents/caregivers. Well-developed L1 skills form the base of the acquisition of L2 skills. Contextual factors form part of the collective input. A low affective filter

boosts a learner's disposition to participate in discourse in the target language since he/she is more relaxed and motivated.

The key determinant of the successful or unsuccessful acquisition of EFAL is the linguistically comprehensible input of the teacher within the learner's ZPD. In the ZPD new mappings of sound and meaning are acquired based on the existing HL system (Dixon *et al.*, 2012). This meaning-making is at the core of successful acquisition of the targeted language. It is strengthened by continued HL (L1) support. Once understanding has taken place, L2 acquisition (output) has been achieved.

2.12   CONCLUSION

The aforesaid literature portrays that the acquisition of a L2 is a complex process with several dynamics and challenges influencing and determining the successful or unsuccessful attainment thereof. Using this L2 as the LoLT adds another dimension to the level of language skills required for further academic work. Drawing on local and international studies, I discussed how these dynamics interact in the context of a black rural school.

The inevitable significance of a solid mother tongue foundation, the quality of teaching offered to learners and the role of age and time are key determinants for successful learning and the transition the learners in this study are facing. In the following chapter I will discuss the research design and methodology applied in this study.

3. CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter 2, relevant literature that had been consulted was discussed. This chapter portrays the paradigm, research design and methodology applied in this study. I conducted a qualitative research study using interviews, observations and document analysis to collect data. Ethical considerations and limitations of the study conclude this chapter.

Table 3.1:   Summary of research design

RESEARCH PARADIGMS		
Epistemology	Interpretivism	
Research methodology	Qualitative research approach	
RESEARCH DESIGN		
Narrative inquiry and single case study		
SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS		
Purposeful sampling	Three grade 3 and three grade 4 teachers and their learners at one rural school in Mpumalanga.	
DATA COLLECTION		
Data collection method	Observation, semi-structured interviews, document analysis and field notes.	
RESEARCH QUESTION	**METHODOLOGY**	**VALUE**
What are the experiences of teachers and learners in the transition of grade 4 learners to English as medium of instruction?	Semi-structured interviews with grade 3 and 4 teachers; observations in the classroom; field notes and document analysis.	To obtain the participants' views on their experiences in the transition from mother tongue education to English as LoLT in grade 4.
DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION		
Content analysis: coding, formation of themes and categories and document analysis.		
QUALITY CRITERIA OF RESEARCH		
Validity and reliability		
ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF RESEARCH		
Informed consent, anonymity, prevention from harm, confidentiality		

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

A paradigm refers to an overall theoretical research framework or meta-theory. I regard the interpretivist paradigm as an appropriate epistemological stance for my study. The fundamental principle of interpretivism is that inquiry can certainly not be impartially observed from the outside; it should be observed from within through the direct experience of the people involved. The meaning-making process forms the basis of the interpretivist paradigm (Ernest, 1994).

An interpretivist approach permits the researcher to reach understanding of participants' experiences by communicating and interacting with them, using interviews and observations to understand and experience another's point of view (Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2004). This approach recognises that individual experiences and understandings may differ outright, even though all are valid and relevant (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2004).

The role of the researcher in the interpretivist paradigm is to "understand, explain, and demystify social reality through the eyes of different participants" (Cohen *et al.*, 2011:19). Researchers in this paradigm pursue understanding rather than to explain. As a researcher I intend to gain in-depth understanding of the experiences of teachers and learners in the transition from mother tongue education to English as medium of instruction in grade 4 in a rural context. The interpretivist paradigm is suitable for my study, as this paradigm allows good understanding of social processes and facilitates understanding of how and why these occur. It further allows for complexity and contextual factors and accommodates changes, should they occur.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

As my intended study falls within the interpretivist paradigm, which is one of the main philosophical tenets underpinning the qualitative research approach, my research will be conducted following the qualitative approach.

3.3.1 Qualitative research

Qualitative research is interested in understanding how people construct their worlds and interpret their experiences and the meaning they assign to these

(Merriam, 2009). It aims to bring thorough understanding of social experiences (Lichtman, 2010). As qualitative research takes place in real-life situations (Nieuwenhuis, 2010b), it can disclose information that is unique to a particular situation. This type of approach allows a researcher to investigate a phenomenon holistically, taking a number of variables into consideration (Lichtman, 2010). These characteristics make it a suitable approach to use in an educational setting where participants are observed in their natural environment.

In my research I would like to explore the meaning people give to a certain experience (Ashworth, 2008) and the multiple truths (Ashworth, 2008; Willig, 2013) they construct around it.

3.3.1.1 Case study

I decided on a case study as the appropriate design for my research. The defining feature of a case study is that it explores a phenomenon that has a bounded system (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2005). The rural context of deprived development of my study is a very confined setting. Case studies allow researchers to study the complex relationship between phenomena, context and people. Anchored in real-life situations, case study results provide a richer and more comprehensive interpretation of a phenomenon. Case studies allow for detail to be collected that would not normally be obtained by other research designs. It provides insight and illuminates meaning of greater depth than in other designs. Case studies have proven particularly useful for studying educational issues.

Another distinguishing aspect of case study research is that various methods of data collection may be utilised (Nieuwenhuis 2010c). In this study four data collection tools were utilised: observation, field notes, interviews and document analysis.

The greatest concern regarding case research is the lack of rigour. Researchers have often been negligent, not following systematic procedures. As a measure to minimise the effect of these possible disadvantages, I intend to plan my research thoroughly and systematically. As researcher and primary instrument of data collection I will ensure that rich, sufficient data is collected in order for the data itself to inform findings and conclusions and not my own biases. I will guard

against massive unreadable documents of data. Insufficient information can lead to inappropriate results.

The main criticism against case study research is that the data collected cannot necessarily be generalised to the broader population. The aim of my study is not to generalise but to apprehend the experiences of teachers and learners in the transition from mother tongue education to English as medium of instruction in grade 4 in a specific context.

My study is a single case study. It includes one school in a rural area of deprived development and grade 3 and 4 learners and their teachers.

3.4   CONTEXT OF STUDY

The sampled school is situated in a rural area characterised by deprived development in Mpumalanga, South Africa. The school population comprises only of black learners. They travel to school from the nearby informal settlements and communities. It is a combined school, meaning it includes learners from grade R (prior to grade 1) up to grade 12. Most classes are overcrowded and above the prescribed 1:40 teacher–learner ratio (DBE, 2013). The school is included in the nutrition programme, which provides a meal a day to most of the learners.

The LoLT of the school is siSwati in the Foundation Phase (grades R to 3) and English from grade 4 onwards. This is in accordance with the LiEP of South Africa, which promotes mother tongue education in the Foundation Phase and the transition to English as medium of instruction from grade 4 onwards. English is introduced to the learners as an additional language from grade 1.

The most prevalent language spoken in this area is siSwati. The village is near the Mozambican border, with the result that many immigrants from Mozambique reside there. These immigrants speak Xitsonga. This has resulted in the speaking of a mixture of Xitsonga and siSwati in homes. Unemployment is very high in this area and many parents are insufficiently educated.

3.5   SAMPLING

I targeted a sample that could possibly provide most information on my topic, thus the sample is chosen purposively and cannot be generalised (Merriam, 2009).

I selected one school, which has three grade 3 classes and three grade 4 classes. All three grade 3 teachers were included in the sample. Three grade 4 teachers were selected: the English, Mathematics and Social Sciences teachers. The selection of the grade 4 teachers was based on the subjects they teach, which are more directly affected by the transition. One of the grade 4 classes is perceived as an inclusive class; the learners in that class are mostly repeating grade 4 and are experiencing barriers to learning. All the teachers, except for one, are siSwati HL speakers. One teacher is a Xitsonga home language speaker.

3.6   DATA COLLECTION

Data collection was done through observations, interviews, document analysis and field notes. Triangulation was applied in the study to enhance the accuracy of data. This was done by evaluating whether what the teachers stated in their interviews correlated with their teaching as well as the learners' responses or performance.

While engaging with the data, I asked myself key questions in order to determine whether the data collected was indeed useful and addressing the research question:

- What are the main units emerging from the data and how do they relate to one another? Identifying these units or themes and possible linkages as I proceeded kept me focused and directed my path forward.
- Which categories are arising from interaction with the participants? I further refined the emerging themes into categories or sub-themes.
- What are the context and consequences of the participants' categories used? This concerns the 'how' and 'what' questions asked.
- How do challenges in the field provide further research topics? Qualitative research provides the opportunity to topicalise such challenges instead of treating them merely as methodological constraints.

- These questions enabled me to make amendments and collect more data where necessary.

3.6.1 Interviews

Interviews are said to be neither subjective nor objective, rather inter-subjective (Silverman, 2013). Interviewees expressed their own experiences and their interpretation of the world they live in, in their own unique way. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. The teachers were informed that this would be done prior to the interviews and gave their consent. Through pre-visits to the classes and teachers, trust and rapport were established prior to commencing with the actual interviews (Johnson & Christensen, 2012).

Qualitative interviews consist of open-ended questions. I used semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews involve some predetermined questions aimed at addressing the research topic as well as allowing room for other questions arising from this conversational, two-way communication. Five open-ended questions were prepared. These questions allowed the teachers to share and express their views. At times, additional questions were posed to the educators with the purpose of clarifying answers or obtaining more information on the research topic. The unique flexibility of semi-structured interviews allow for the exploration of complex issues in need of contextualisation (Galetta, 2013). This technique allows for the unfolding and collection of rich and meaningful data.

I took care to create a relaxed and positive atmosphere during the interviews by remaining courteous and open-minded throughout the sessions. A neutral stance was adopted regarding any information shared and communicated by interviewees (Merriam, 2009).

3.6.1.1 One-on-one interviews

One-on-one interviews are effective data collection tools to elicit and understand each teacher's previous experiences and frame of mind (Merriam, 2009).

The interviews were conducted after teaching hours in the deputy principal's office. There were slight interruptions but these were accommodated for the sake of the relaxed and positive atmosphere I wanted to create. During the one-on-one

interviews, one of the grade 3 teachers requested permission to change to speaking siSwati. I granted her that opportunity as I can speak and understand siSwati fairly well. She was much more at ease expressing herself in siSwati.

3.6.1.2 Focus group interviews

After the one-on-one interviews, I planned to conduct focus group interviews with the three grade 3 teachers and the three grade 4 teachers respectively. In a focus group interview the researcher facilitates the proceedings, keeping the group on the topic; otherwise it is non-directive allowing the group to explore the topic from as many perspectives they please. Focus group interviews provide insights into behavior (Krueger & Casey, 2014).

The purpose of these interviews was to gather exploratory data, as the interaction among the participants might trigger thoughts and ideas that did not emerge during their individual interviews (Lichtman, 2012). Contrary to that, some participants could find this experience intimidating and thus not contribute to the discussions (Morgan, 2002).

The focus group interviews took place in one of the teachers' classrooms after teaching hours. One of the grade 3 teachers, who has a very outgoing personality, initially seemed to overshadow the other two participants. However, her lead was possibly just what they needed and they eventually participated freely. The grade 4 focus group interview did not take place, as the teachers were reluctant to participate in it - however they all participated in individual interviews.

3.6.2 Observation

Observation is watching peoples' behaviour in a particular situation in order to collect information on a phenomenon (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). As observations can be highly subjective, I was extremely conscious of my own biases.

I used an observation checklist and made field notes as information was revealed or occurred. I applied a non-participatory observation approach; I was present in class but remained uninvolved in the situation (Creswell, 2015). I observed the

language usage of the teacher, content taught, discipline and interaction with learners, preparation, resources used and teaching approach/strategy applied. These observations occurred on a weekly basis for an hour per class for a period of six weeks.

A few challenges were encountered regarding observations over a number of sessions, such as agreeing on a suitable time for both researcher and teacher, disruptions due to protest action in the community or mass union meetings causing the absence of teachers and learners from school. At the time the research was taking place, the school was preparing for the common district assessments and preparation for those took up much of the teachers' time. This resulted in extending the observation period and an overall delay in data collection.

3.6.3 Field notes

Merriam (2009:28) describes field notes as "… analogues to the interview transcript." In addition to observation notes, field notes are recorded during fieldwork sessions. Field notes are any additional information noted as relevant in obtaining enriched data related to the research topic. Field notes are not planned in advance; they are recorded as they occur.

The challenge regarding field notes is that the researcher is restricted to the format in which they were made at the time (Silverman, 2013). They are only available in the format the researcher recorded events. Silverman (2013) highlights two important issues to consider when making field notes: what you see (and hear) and how you are treated/behaving. Such information can make a significant contribution to derive more substantial conclusions, especially regarding any aspect of relevance as these occur. I recorded my field notes manually in a notebook as unobtrusively as possible.

3.6.4 Document analysis

The previous year's academic records of the present grade 4 learners were obtained to compare these with their present performance in order to determine any variances in their performance. The 2015 ANA was not written at this school and could not be used as another yardstick of performance.

The grade 3 learners' EFAL workbooks were monitored for evidence of written work done. As for the grade 4 learners, their English, Mathematics and Social Sciences workbooks and activities were viewed.

Table 3.2: English, Mathematics and Social Sciences workbooks and activities

Name of document	Importance
Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), 2011c	Current prescribed curriculum in South Africa.
Language in Education Policy (LiEP), 1997	To determine the directives of language teaching in South Africa.
Language policy of sample school	Check adherence to the LiEP of South Africa.
English First Additional Language (EFAL)	Standard policy setting by the Department of Basic Education.
Lesson preparation	Indication of teaches' readiness and input.
Gr 3 and 4 departmental workbooks and learners' workbooks	Evidence of work done by learners.
Assessment records	Level of learners' performance.

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The following table provides a summary of the ethical aspects considered in this study:

Table 3.3: Ethical issues

Category	Researcher's responsibility
Protection from harm or deprivation	I ensured that my participants were treated with respect at all times and protected them from any judgement or stigma as a result of my research.
Voluntary participation	My participants knew that even though they had agreed voluntarily to take part in the research, they were free to withdraw at any time without being penalised for it.
Informed consent	I ensured that all participants understood the nature of the study and had full information about their role and part therein.
Confidentiality	I kept all information confidential and undertook to do this through an agreement signed by me, the participants and their organisation. Even the recordings made during interviews remained confidential.
Anonymity	I protected the privacy of the participants by not revealing any particulars or information about them or their institution, in writing or any other form of communication. In all documents emanating from the research I used pseudo-names when referring to specific individuals or their institutions.

As soon as clearance had been granted by the University of Pretoria Ethics Committee, I applied for permission from the Mpumalanga Department of Education to conduct research at the sampled school. Once permission had been given by the Mpumalanga Department of Education, I made an appointment with the principal. The principal was very keen, but had to discuss the matter with the senior management team and SGB. After receiving their positive feedback, a briefing session with the parents of the grade 3 and grade 4 learners was held, followed by a meeting with the relevant teachers. Proper briefing sessions were convened on the purpose and value of the intended research. An agreement with the three grade 3 and three grade 4 teachers involved was signed. Consent letters were drafted in both English and siSwati. After receiving permission from the parents of the learners involved, assent from the learners themselves was obtained.

The confidentiality of all participants was ensured by anonymity. No personal information about the educators or the school was revealed and information shared during interviews was also kept confidential (Lichtman, 2012). The sampled school was not indicated anywhere and pseudonyms were used when referring to teachers.

Throughout my research I adhered to the following ethical principles:

3.7.1   Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a critical element to any research in order to produce meaningful findings and results (Maree & van der Westhuizen, 2009). Trustworthiness encompasses the manner in which data is collected, organised and categorised (Peräkylä, 1997). As the researcher is the data-gathering instrument in qualitative research, the researcher must at all times be credible and trustworthy in order to ensure reliable and valid results (Nieuwenhuis, 2010c). The criteria for evaluating the reliability of qualitative data collection are credibility (truth value), dependability (consistency), transferability (applicability) and conformability (neutrality) (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Credibility refers to the significance of results. This is achieved by clearly depicting theoretical orientations, the research process and reporting on everything that could influence the data collected. Member or participant checking (validation) of preliminary analysis was conducted.

Transferability denotes the degree to which results can be "exported" or generalised to other contexts (Mertens, 2014). As this research is a single-case study, the intention was not to generalise findings but to gain in-depth understanding of a particular case.

Consistency refers to the permanence of the research process over time and the degree of control in a study (Maxwell, 2013). In order to strengthen consistency in the research process I monitored the quality of recordings and transcriptions and adhered to professionalism during observations and interviews.

Confirmability sustains to the objectivity of the researcher during the entire research process, data collection and analysis. Prior to engaging in this research I reflected on my personal feelings, values and beliefs concerning the study topic and the people involved. Keeping notes, recordings and transcripts meticulously has assisted me in minimising my own biasness as far as possible. I remained self-aware throughout the entire process to avoid biasness.

3.7.2   Triangulation

According to Johnson and Christensen (2012) the use of various data collection methods strengthens data triangulation, which increases trustworthiness. When collecting data I used a variety of methods: one-on-one interviews, document analysis, observation, field notes and focus group interviews, in order to increase reliability. The guidance of my supervisor reduced the element of my own biasness and enhanced the trustworthiness of my findings.

3.8   CONCLUSION

In this chapter I presented the research design and methodology applied in this study. The paradigmatic perspectives and context of the case study were explained. Sampling, data collection strategies and tools were elaborated upon. The chapter was concluded with the ethical considerations relevant to this study.

In the following chapter the data analysis process and results are discussed and presented. Themes and sub-themes emanating from the data will be discussed.

4. CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 3 described the methodology and research design applied in investigating the transition from HL education to English as medium of instruction in grade 4. Chapter 4 will focus on the representation and interpretation of the data collected and observations made during this study.

In this qualitative research I explored the above-mentioned phenomenon through one-on-one interviews, document analysis, focus group interviews, observations and field notes. The utilisation of interviews and observations allowed for in-depth understanding of this complex issue, as well as for validation of findings. Three grade 3 classes were observed and one-on-one interviews were conducted with their respective class teachers. A focus group interview with the three grade 3 teachers was also convened. Three grade 4 classes were observed during their English, Mathematics and Social Science lessons. A grade 4 focus group interview did not take place.

The table below provides a profile of the participants participating in this study:

Table 4.1: Profile of the participants

Classes/ learners	Teacher's pseudonyms	Teacher's Home language	Teaching Experience
Gr 3 (34 learners)	Ruth	siSwati	2 years Novice teacher
Gr 3 (43 learners)	Queen	siSwati	1 year (12 years Gr 1)
Gr 3 (42 learners)	Sylvia	siSwati (Zulu schooling)	20 years
Gr 4 classes			
(34 learners) Stronger class	English teacher Gladys	Xitsonga (Zulu schooling up to Gr 7)	9 years (21 years Senior Phase)
(56 learners) Inclusive class	Mathematics teacher Joyce	siSwati (Zulu schooling)	10 years Mathematics (23 years in total)
(45 learners) Average group	Social Sciences Teacher Agnes	siSwati	1 year (28 yrs. in Foundation Phase)

All three grade 3 and 4 classes were sampled. Pseudonyms were assigned to the teachers to protect their privacy. All the teachers are siSwati HL speakers except for one, who is Xitsonga-speaking. All the teachers have long teaching experience ranging from 12 – 28 years, except for one grade 3 teacher who has two years teaching experience.

Three grade 4 teachers were purposively selected: the teachers teaching English, Social Science and Mathematics. Mathematics is a subject that is profoundly affected by this transition. The teachers and learners experience serious challenges regarding the number names and mathematical terminology in siSwati as opposed to English. Social Sciences rely heavily on language utilisation and would therefore reflect the impact of this transition in the LoLT. The grade 4 classes are to a great extent grouped according to ability: the stronger class, average group and the inclusive class. The learners with barriers to learning and most repeaters are in the inclusive class. The teachers find teaching the inclusive class challenging.

> *"… in grade 4 we've got a full class of 56 learners with barriers to learning. And you need to **attend** to those learners."* – Agnes
> *"Aayi we are not comfortable with those learners."* – Gladys

This class is the biggest grade 4 class with 56 learners, a situation that is not conducive to effective teaching and learning, even for learners not experiencing barriers to learning.

4.2   FINDINGS

The data was analysed by assigning codes to phrases and segments in the text. Themes were then extracted from the data by grouping similar codes together (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The coding process resulted in discounting some of the data. Supporting teacher perspectives were added to each code. Themes were arrived at inductively.

The following table provides an overview of the themes emerging from the data that was collected.

Table 4.2:   Themes emerging from collected data

Themes	Categories	Participants' perspectives/ Observation
Theme 1 Challenges regarding home language	• The use of non-standard siSwati	*"… the siSwati that they are talking is not the original siSwati"* Gladys *"… it's not the real siSwati. It's a mix"* Joyce
	• Utilisation of siSwati for teaching and learning	*"But for siSwati … it seems as if our learners are going nowhere"* Joyce *"… what they speak at home does not correspond to what they have to learn in their books"* Joyce
	• Laying of a solid foundation in siSwati	*"… teach them those alphabet correctly in grade one … they can flow"* Sylvia
Theme 2 Perspectives of English as LoLT	• Preference to use English as LoLT	*"… English is very better than ihome language"* Queen
	• The English proficiency of teachers	*"I am comfortable, ja"* Gladys. *"I've got no problem"* Joyce
	• Proper introduction of English as imminent language of learning	*"… they didn't get the foundation proper; foundation of the language, that is English …"* Agnes
Theme 3 Systemic/policy matters	• Misinterpretation of policies	*"… grade 1, they are just taught English in term 4 and with a few words and no written work …"* Agnes
	• Transition from siSwati to English as LoLT	*"… the switching from siSwati to English really it affects a lot …"* Agnes
	• Progression of learners within a phase	*"This progress system is not good"* Gladys *"… number of years in the phase it is a big problem"* Joyce
	• Average age of learners	*"… now maybe they are too young"* Joyce *"… when they are a little bit matured maybe they can do better then …"* Agnes
	• Overcrowding in classrooms	Observation

Themes	Categories	Participants' perspectives/ Observation
Theme 4 Socio-economic dynamics	• Lack of parental involvement	*"… parent is not serious with their learner's education"* Gladys "… most learners are not staying with their parents" Sylvia
	• Lack of resources in the home	

Each theme with its related categories will subsequently be discussed.

4.2.1 Discussion of themes and categories

4.2.1.1 Theme 1: Challenges regarding home language

Benson (2009) states that the benefits of HL education are well documented and demonstrated by several studies, of which The Six Year Yoruba Primary Project yielded the most significant results regarding the education of second-language learners. This project substantiated unambiguously that six years primary tuition in the HL with the target language taught concurrently as a subject reaped better results than all English tuition. August (2002) strengthens the utilisation of HL by postulating that instruction in a native or HL does not inhibit the acquisition of English. During the course of the data collection process, some unexpected realities regarding the common language spoken in the area where the study was conducted emerged.

• **The use of non-standard siSwati**

Of the 11 official languages in South Africa, siSwati is regarded as the communal language in the area where the study was conducted and is offered as HL in schools. As the research process progressed, an astounding fact concerning the siSwati spoken in this area emanated. Despite the fact that the area is very close to Swaziland, the siSwati spoken here is actually far from the standardised pure siSwati.

The communal language spoken in the area is a fusion of siSwati and Xitsonga. This is due to the profound influence of Xitsonga or *Shangaan* on siSwati. As the community is geographically close to the Mozambican border, great numbers of refugees fled during the Mozambican wars to this area. The refugees' attempts to

speak siSwati and communicate with the people in the community caused a fusion of the two languages. This fused impure siSwati became the norm and is generally spoken in the area. Most households in this area do not speak regular siSwati, but rather a "*mix of siSwati and Tsonga*'' - Joyce.

As the teachers related during their interviews:

> *"… we do not speak true siSwati …."* – Joyce
> *"… what we are talking is not real siSwati … our kids … are mixing siSwati and Tsonga …. That is the main problem that we are facing with our kids. We don't have a language that we are perfect in it."* – Gladys

All the teachers were unanimous in their account of the customary siSwati spoken at homes in this area. This brought about a new perspective on the learners' performance in siSwati as HL. The impure siSwati spoken at home poses serious challenges to education in this area.

At school, original or pure siSwati is taught.

> *"… what we teach them is not their talking at home. They read, but they*
> *… pronounce like they talk at home.*
> *… the pronunciation, it's a little bit not the same."* – Ruth
> *"… since at home they do not speak it properly it's difficult."* – Joyce

Whereas mother tongue education is supposed to be beneficial to learners, HL education is in this case rather perceived as a barrier to learning than an advantage. The teachers stated that they themselves did not speak proper siSwati.

> *"Even us we are born here but we do not speak true siSwati as we have to write it. … even myself I do not speak proper."* – Joyce

It is evident that the issue regarding mother tongue is unusual and problematic for the teachers and learners in this context. This poses serious challenges to the recommended utilisation of siSwati as medium of instruction.

- **Utilisation of siSwati for teaching and learning**

The non-standard siSwati spoken in this area results in an inadequate level of siSwati development of the learners. This leads to the inevitable question of the utilisation of siSwati for learning.

Five of the six teachers felt strongly that siSwati should only to be taught as a subject and not used as the LoLT. All the teachers interviewed felt that specifically Mathematics should be taught in English from the onset in grade 1. SiSwati is perceived as inappropriate for Mathematics learning.

> *"Number one … changes maths to be taught in English."* - Joyce
> *"… maths yentwe ngeEnglish."* – Queen
> (maths should be taught in English)
> *"… maths in English … I think if we can do this subject in English from grade one it will be easy for them."* – Ruth

The validation of their perspective is that despite living in a rural area, English numbers and amounts are commonly used; even by the less-educated members of the community. No siSwati or Xitsonga terminology is used in shops or by vendors.

> *"go to the shops … there is no amashumi there …."* – Joyce
> *"Even the parent who is not learned he can say 2 kg, you see?"* – Gladys

Initially they only specified Mathematics to be taught in English, but ended up saying that everything should be taught in English, except for siSwati, which should only be taught as a subject/language. Their perspective has some merit, though the argument is far from simple. Since the learners cannot read and write English at this stage, having to learn to read and write English and siSwati simultaneously could confuse novice readers and prevent them from mastering sufficient content as well. The value of the ease with which young children acquire emergent literacy and content through their HL(Ouane, 2003) seems to be overlooked.

- **Laying of a solid foundation in siSwati**

The learners enter school speaking an impure siSwati. The teachers have an overwhelming preference for English and a rather negative perception of siSwati as LoLT. As motivation is one of the primary role players in L2 learning (Csizer & Dornyei, 2005), the prospect of laying a solid foundation in siSwati seems gloomy.

The teachers' lack of interest in siSwati is evident. Only one of the grade 3 teachers stated that her mother tongue is siSwati and that she loves teaching it.

> *"… siSwati is my mother tongue. That's why I enjoy siSwati very much."*
> – Queen

Only two teachers mentioned the fact that siSwati should be taught diligently as from grade 1.

> *"I think is in grade 1 … grade 2, the learners they did not find well the sound."* – Queen
> *"… teach them those alphabet correctly in grade one … they can flow."*
> – Sylvia

The educational will to instil a solid foundation of siSwati in the learners is almost non-existent. The subject of impure siSwati seems to have become teachers' justification for its poor implementation.

> *"I-I don`t think the teachers have to be blamed …. So you see it's the learners."* – Gladys

Not establishing a solid siSwati foundation seriously hampers the learners' further academic success.

Establishing a solid foundation in siSwati or any other subject/content requires sufficient activities and work. The amount of work done in workbooks and exercise books was very little. The following table provides a summary of the activities done in grade 3 in HL (siSwati), Mathematics and EFAL.

Table 4.3:   Summary of activities done in grade 3

Gr 3	SiSwati	Mathematics	English
Term 1 (10 weeks)	13 class tasks 4 home tasks	24 class tasks 17 home tasks	11 class tasks No home tasks
Term 2 (10 weeks)	10 class tasks 1 home tasks	21 class tasks 6 home tasks	8 class tasks 1 home task
Term 3 (10 weeks)	9 class tasks 1 home task	20 class tasks 6 home tasks	8 class tasks No home tasks
Term 4 (8 weeks)	5 class tasks No home tasks	21 class tasks 1 home task	3 class tasks 1 home task

Considering the number of class tasks and homework in siSwati (HL), there is a dramatic decline from term 1 to term 4. It is evident that with so few activities completed throughout the year; no solid foundation in the mother tongue can be achieved.

When analysing the learners' books I found that some activities were not marked. Little attention was paid to letter formation and spacing of words in the exercise books. A basic aspect such as writing the date using a capital letter was not corrected. Attention to corrections is cause for concern. In one book the learner's work was not marked for the period from 22 April to 22 July. The Departmental workbooks were last marked on 21 October and no work had been done after p. 98 of 127 pages. It would be fair to say that findings like these cast serious doubt on the quality of teaching and effort/input from the teachers' side. The evidence of work done in English and Mathematics will be discussed under the following theme.

4.2.1.2   Theme 2: Perspectives on English as LoLT

- **Preference for English as LoLT**

The most prominent aspect that emerged from the data is the absolute overwhelming preference for English as medium of instruction and virtual dismantling of siSwati as LoLT by five of the six teachers interviewed.

With the exception of one grade 3 teacher, all the teachers interviewed favoured English as LoLT from grade 1 and siSwati being taught as a subject. The teachers seemed to be fixated on changing the LoLT to English rather than considering or investigating any other factors that might be at the root of this challenging

transition.

> *"I think English is very better than ihome language."* - Queen
> *"If you can take English in our school, learners will flow."* - Sylvia

The history of the school might offer some understanding of the teacher's preference for English. The school was previously an English-medium school. The learners apparently performed very well but when learners would transfer to neighbouring schools they complained that the learners from the sampled school did not cope well with siSwati. The transfer of learners between schools is common because of the domestic dynamics in families or the availability of work.

After the democratic government was elected in 1994, the school's medium of instruction was changed according to the present Language in Education Policy (LiEP) (Department of Basic Education, 1997) which promotes mother tongue education up to grade 3 and the transition to English in grade 4. The teachers' preference for English is so strong that they display a kind of aloofness towards siSwati as LoLT. This could possibly explain the insufficient amount of work and effort put into siSwati.

When analysing the grade 3 learners' performance in siSwati and English at the end of the year, the following data was found:

Table 4.4:   Analysis of grade 3 learner's performance in siSwati and English

	siSwati HL	EFAL
Performance level	No of learners	No of learners
7 (80-100 %)	1	2
6 (70-79 %)	14	25
5 (60-69 %)	28	35
4 (50-59 %)	27	24
3 (40-49 %)	11	15
2 (30-39 %)	20	14
1 (0-29 %)	23	9
Total	124	124
Average	3 (49%)	4 (56%)
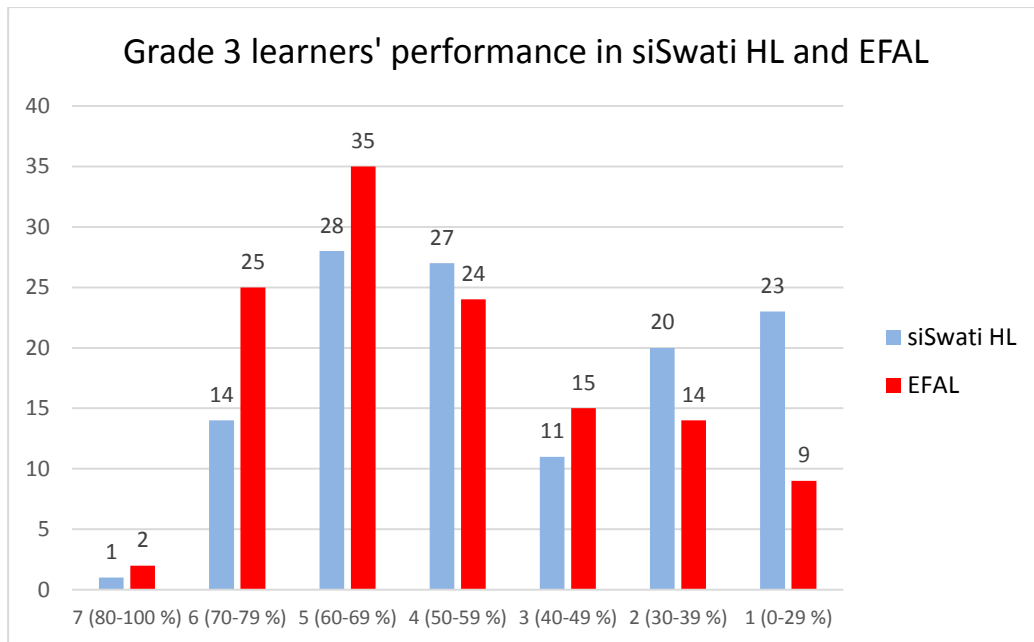
Chart 4.1: Grade 3 learners' performance in siSwati HL and EFAL

The learners' overall performance in siSwati is below that of their performance in EFAL. The average HL score for the grade is level 3, which is below the required level 4 for progression. These findings correlate and confirm the insufficient foundation in siSwati. As a solid foundation in the mother tongue is a prerequisite for successful further learning, this is cause for great concern regarding these learners' future schooling, since they have to transpose to English as LoLT in grade 4.

When following up on the language performance of the grade 3 learners after progressing to grade 4, the following was found:

Table 4.5: Language performance of grade 3 learners after progressing to grade 4

Performance level	siSwati HL			English FAL		
	End of Gr 3	Gr 4 Term1	Gr 4 Term 2	End of Gr 3	Gr 4 Term 1	Gr 4 Term 2
7 (80-100 %)	1	0	0	2	0	0
6 (70-79 %)	14	8	8	25	1	2
5 (60-69 %)	28	22	25	35	2	5
4 (50-59 %)	27	25	24	24	11	15
3 (40-49 %)	11	28	23	15	27	30
2 (30-39 %)	20	11	18	14	39	29
1 (0-29 %)	23	33	29	9	47	46
No of learners	124	127	127	124	127	127
Average	3	3	4	4	2	2
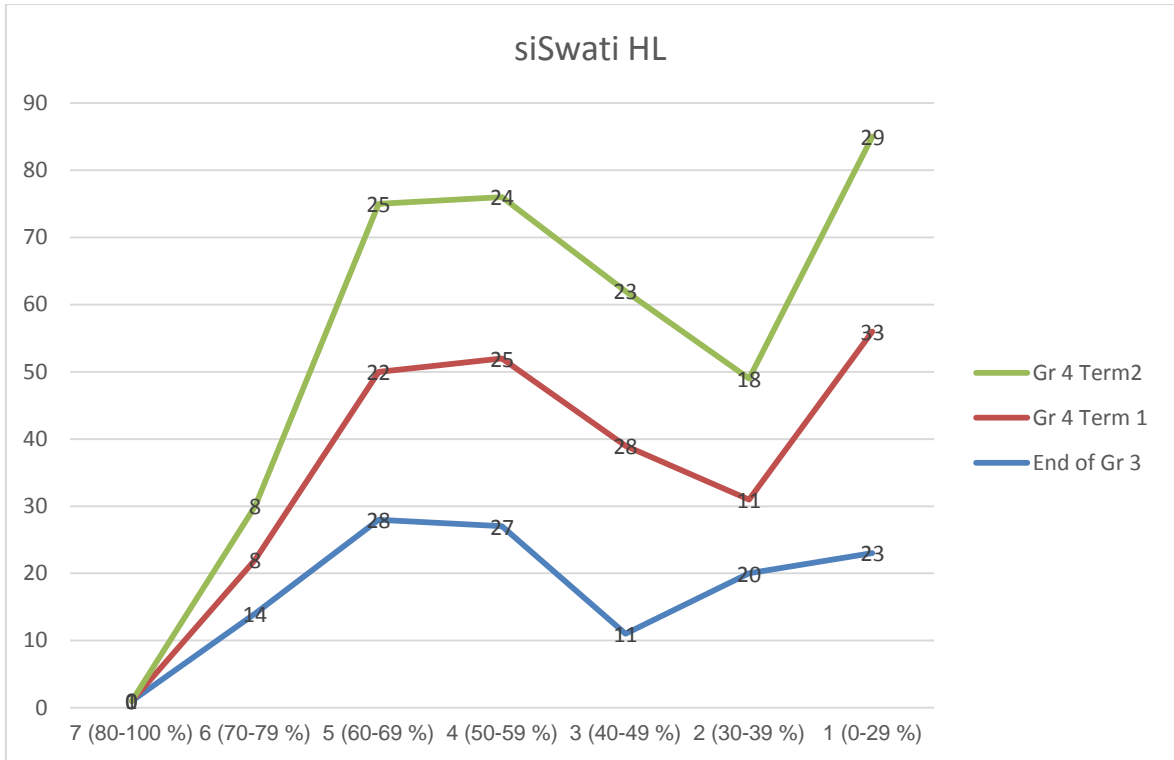
Chart 4.2:   siSwati HL
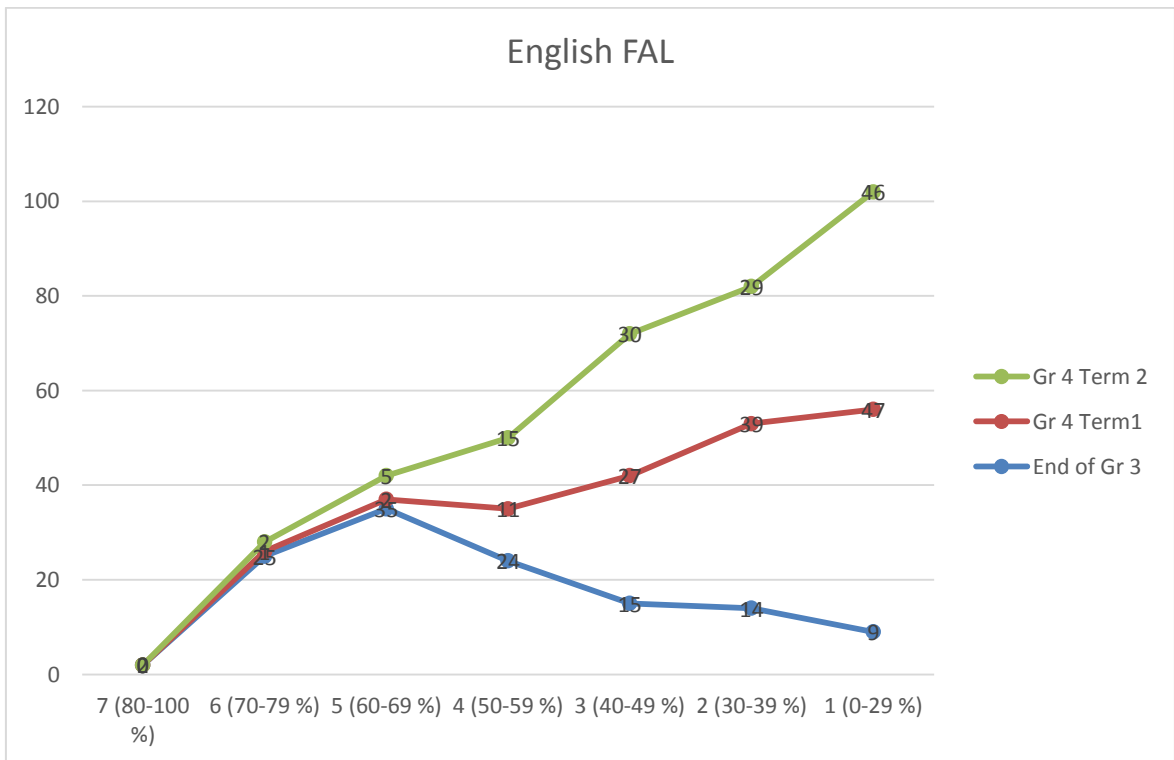
Chart 4.3:   English FAL

The siSwati performance portrays a realistic picture. At the end of grade 3 and term 1 in grade 4, it remained the same. There was gradual progression in term 2. The learners' siSwati proficiency seemed to reach a satisfactory level towards the

end of grade 4. Continued schooling in siSwati would be beneficial for these learners as they had only at that stage, towards the end of grade 4, managed to overcome their insufficient level of siSwati proficiency. The average English performance, on the other hand, dropped drastically from the end of grade 3 to term 1 in grade 4. It dropped from level 4 to level 2. It remained at the same low level 2 with no progression. This confirms the inadequate implementation of English as imminent language of learning. It is my opinion/observation that the English scores in grade 3 are not a true indication of the learners' actual level of English proficiency.

The following graph represents the grade 4 learners' performance in siSwati and English at the end of term 1 and term 2.
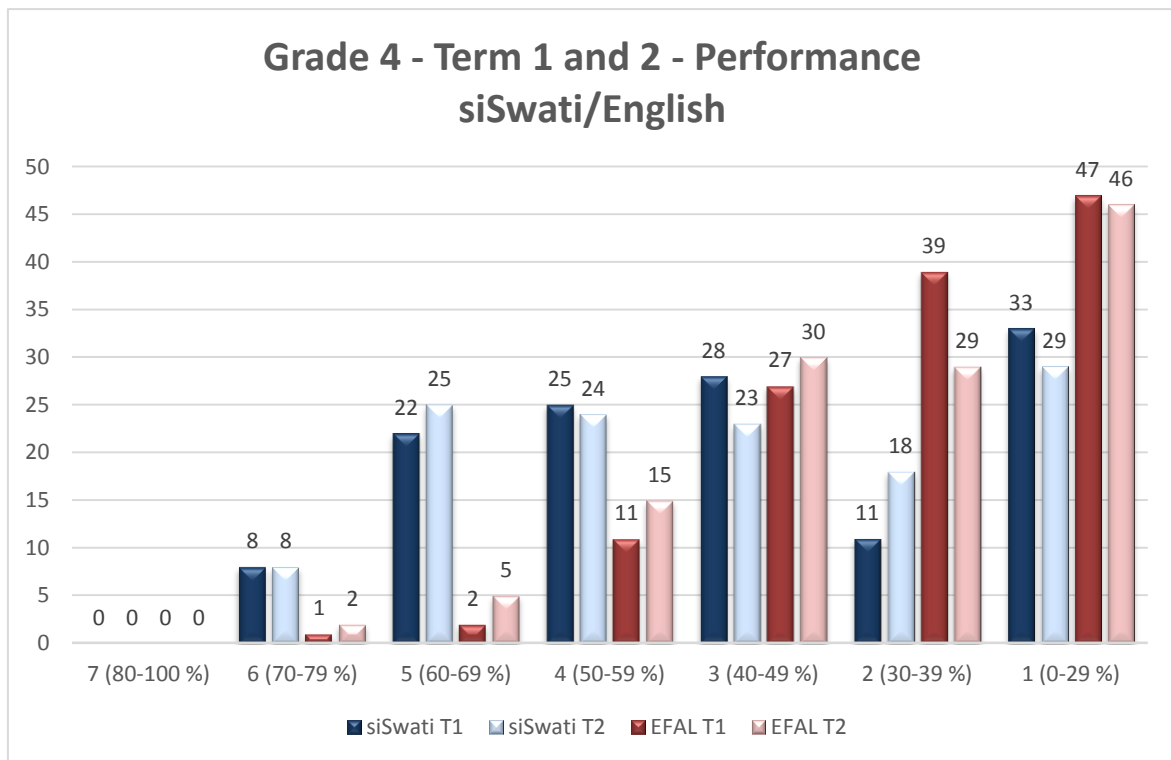
Chart 4.4: **Performance siSwati/English grade 4 – term one and two**

- **The English proficiency of teachers**

When working through the transcribed interviews and during lesson observations, it became evident that the teachers' English sentence construction, articulation and vocabulary were rather limited. The English proficiency of teachers has a

profound impact on the preparation of learners for the challenging transition in grade 4. Learning and language proficiency in the LoLT cannot be separated (Makoe, 2014). In the context of this study, the teachers are virtually the learners' only source of English. Their role and example are crucial.

Having a class of ESL of varying abilities is challenging. When adding a second language teacher, the situation becomes exceptionally complex. The English language may not always be modelled correctly. The learners could easily pick up incorrect sentence construction or pronunciation of words, as they do not have an English background. During my observations, I noted that teachers were often not modelling the correct pronunciation of words. In order to improve the learners' English vocabulary, it is crucial that the teachers' vocabulary should be vast. The impact of EFAL teachers on the learners they are teaching is significant.

To the question on whether they were comfortable in teaching in a language that was not their own, teaching in English, the teachers responded as follows:

> *"Yes, I am. I am comfortable … ja"* – Agnes
> *"I've got no problem"* – Joyce
> *"I'm comfortable …."* – Gladys

These statements do not correspond with the English language proficiency demonstrated by the teachers in class and during the interviews. The interviews were conducted in English and the teachers had difficulty in expressing themselves accurately. They often applied code switching. One teacher indicated that her English proficiency might not be sufficient. During the course of the interview she requested to continue her interview in siSwati. The successful implementation of English as LoLT is at risk when the teachers' own proficiency is not at the desired level.

- **Proper introduction of English as imminent language of learning**

Despite the teachers' preference for English, the language is not effectively introduced to the learners. As two teachers related:

> *"I think kutsi in Grade 1 iEnglish ayi introduseki kahle until to Grade 3.*
> *(I think English is not well introduced in grade 1 up to grade 3).*

Then now … the scale … the teaching ….” – Queen

“… it's like they're starting from scratch.” – Ruth

The insufficient amount of classwork and homework done does not correlate with the teachers' preference for English. One would expect much greater effort and input from the teachers' side. The quality of teaching and effort is again cause for great concern. Only one teacher acknowledged that the learners did not receive the required level of teaching. Based on the learners' performance and grade 3 teachers' account of events, the implementation of EFAL seems insufficient as from grade 1.

EFAL is not taken into account for progression purposes and this could contribute to the relaxed implementation thereof. Lesson preparation for EFAL is provided to the teachers by their subject advisor; they only have to implement it. The last activity in the exercise books was dated 29 October and was not marked. The last marked activity took place on 27 October. There was little evidence of corrections done. The activities were generally short, usually for five marks. There was no progression in the length of the activities towards the end of the year. Most teaching and activities were done classically, in a chorusing style. Mere repetition with little evidence of meaningful comprehension took place. Little opportunity for skilful group work and individual attention to learners was observed. I found English not successfully introduced as imminent medium of instruction. Learners cannot demonstrate and apply what they were not taught.

The ineffective introduction of English as imminent language of learning has a direct impact on the learners' future teaching and learning. It disadvantages the learners immensely and imposes an enormous task on the grade 3 teachers. They are expected to prepare the grade 3 learners for this transition without the necessary foundation they should have received in grades 1 and 2.

4.2.1.3   Theme 3: Systemic/policy matters

- **Misinterpretation of policies**

During the data collection process it became evident that the teachers either did not know or did not understand some policies properly. They would promptly refer

to or denounce the departmental system/policies in their defence, for example:

> *"… this democracy they change us to siSwati.*
> *… nothing that we are going to do to solve the problem."* – Gladys

The perception that siSwati as LoLT in the Foundation Phase is being forced upon them is incorrect. The LiEP (1995) makes provision for governing bodies having the right to determine the LoLT of a school to suit its needs best. Such statements are misinterpretations of the LiEP in order to create the impression that this situation is forced upon them and that there is nothing they can do about it.

One teacher related about the introduction to English:

> *"… because now … in grade 1, they are just taught English in term 4 …*
> *and no written work."* – Agnes

This is a gross misinterpretation of the EFAL policy. According to CAPS, English is introduced in grade 1, and "... they begin to write in their First Additional Language in the third term of grade 1" (DBE, 2011c: 16). If an instruction as clear as this is not correctly implemented, it raises concern about the accountability and quality of the tuition offered to the learners. The effect of misinterpretation of policies can have detrimental consequences for a school's effective functioning and reflects negatively on management.

- **Transition from siSwati to English as LoLT**

The whole subject of transition from mother tongue education to English as LoLT as an idea does not seem widely debated or thought of; in general it is rather simply overruled, with an overwhelming preference for English. Only one teacher mentioned the possibility of considering siSwati as a LoLT.

> *"As I have said, that if it is siSwati, let it be siSwati from the foundation*
> *phase until in the tertiary or secondary level. If it is English, let it be*
> *English from the foundation phase until tertiary level."* – Agnes.

Little or no consideration is given to methods of making this transition more successful or smooth; people propose simply doing away with it and having the

system changed.

The teachers' first response to what the LoLT was during their schooling years was that they did everything in English. Rephrasing the question or giving them time to rethink carefully revealed that they were taught in isiZulu during their primary schooling and transposed to English as medium of instruction in grade 8. This is an aspect totally overlooked or not considered in their reasoning. They are as fixated on English as the ultimate solution that successful transition to it seems irrelevant. They simply want to do away with the transition and have the medium of instruction English from grade 1, even from grade R.

When asking the teachers whether they regarded the system applied when they were at school as better than what is applied now, their response was:

> *"I can say so because I'm a product of it."* - Gladys

Another replied that the transition then *"was simple"* (Queen). Both these teachers received isiZulu schooling up to grade 7. Even though they had first-hand experience of being transposed themselves in grade 8 to English as LoLT and regarded that system as better than the present policy, they failed to consider it for their present learners. The ease with which they made their transition illustrates the benefit of prolonged time in order to acquire the necessary English proficiency for successful further learning.

- **Progression of learners within a phase**

Another systemic challenge raised by the teachers is the fact that learners could only be held back once during a phase.

> *"This progress system is not good"* – Gladys.
> *"… number of years in the phase it is a big problem"* – Joyce

According to CAPS learners should not remain in the Foundation Phase for more than four years. This implies that a learner may repeat a grade only once during a phase. It is known that this rule creates an approach of not being serious about academic work on the part of the teacher as well of the learner. Should a learner not reach the required level of performance in a certain grade, the system would in

any case see to it that he/she progresses to the next year.

Once a learner has been promoted in spite of not being at the expected level academically, a snowball effect often ensues and the learner falls behind even further, knowing that the system will come to his/her rescue somehow. From analysis of the grade 3 results, 23 learners were progressed on the basis of their age cohort, without considering the progression requirements.

- **Average age of learners**

According to the South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1996 and the admission policy of the school, learners are to be admitted to grade 1 in the year they turn seven. In practice this does not happen. Learners are being admitted in the year they turn six. This is permitted though. According to an amendment published in December 2001 in the Government Gazette No. 22928, learners are permitted to enter grade 1 in the year they turn six.

Until recently learners were admitted to grade 1 with little control regarding their ages. As a result of the Department's demand for a birth certificate for entry into a school, this practice has been significantly curtailed. However, the requirement for birth certificates gave birth to another malpractice, stemming from the influx of refugees from Mozambique and Swaziland. As related by the teachers interviewed, parents obtain false birth certificates in order to enrol their children at school. They buy or borrow someone else's birth certificate to register their children in South Africa. After the lapse of some time, the surname or name is then changed to what it should be. The parents use whatever means or opportunity they can to obtain birth certificates for their children; correctness of detail is not a priority. This has resulted in many children not being in their correct age cohort despite having a birth certificate. This practice still prevails.

The effect of the subject of age is apparently overlooked during grade 1-3, but comes to the foreground when the learners are transposed to English in grade 4.

> "… *after a year or when they failed when they are repeating they are our excellent learners" – Gladys*

Teachers perceive this "repeating" year as an opportunity for "more English" and not for mere maturation of the learner to the grade-appropriate age. Their focus is merely on teaching through the medium of English; they do not realise that they themselves had three more years of mother tongue schooling before they transposed to English as medium of instruction. The room they had for maturation is totally overlooked. According to Heugh (1999), during schooling when mother-tongue education throughout primary school was compulsory, the grade 12 results among African learners improved significantly.

4.2.1.4 Theme 4: Socio-economic dynamics

According to Chall (2000), children from socio-economically deprived households perform less well than children from more affluent homes. One teacher in particular expressed great understanding of the learners' situation at their homes.

> *"There are many problems outside for our kids."* - Sylvia

Poverty, lack of support and resources are the main issues faced by these learners.

- **Poverty in the wider community**

The incidence of unemployment and consequently poverty is very high in this community. Poverty affects education in various ways. When children come from impoverished backgrounds they often lack the basic needs for their well-being, such as food, sanitation, security etc. Even though the nutrition programme functions well at school, it is not sufficient to ensure the well-being of learners. For some learners this is their main or only meal for the day.

> *"Sometimes … we sleep without food."* – Sylvia

They are not in a stimulating environment with exposure to books, educational toys and informed parents that could inspire them towards accomplishment of all their developmental goals. The possibility of finding any books in these homes is virtually non-existent (Mkhize, 2013). Hart and Risley (1995) have found that children from low-income households are exposed to half the vocabulary of children from middle-income families. Being exposed to an impure HL intensifies the effect of this. These learners enter school with a constraint.

- **Lack of parental involvement**

The lack of parental support is extremely prevalent in schools in South Africa. There are various reasons for this:

> *"Most learners are not staying with their parents. They are staying with*
> *their grandmothers, their sisters. They don't get love from their parents.*
> *My mother is not at home."* – Sylvia

Not having someone at home to assist and support them has an extremely negative impact on the learners. For a young L2 learner this is an exceptionally unfavourable situation to be in. It also discourages teachers. The fact that many parents are insufficiently educated makes them unable to assist their children in their education.

> *"… the parent is not serious with their learner's education."* – Gladys

This is only true to a certain extent. In the case of an uneducated parent, the parent can only offer and support a learner with what he/she is capable of. The responsibility for furthering the learners' education depends on the teachers' effort and input.

- **Lack of resources in the home/at school**

When it is a daily struggle to cope with the bare necessities of life, having children's books in the house is simply not important. Having discussed the poverty in this area, it is evident that there is no money in these households for books and educational toys. Children grow up without access to resources that could stimulate their holistic development. At school the situation is not much better.

The physical condition and appearance of the grade 4 classrooms were not conducive to effective teaching and learning. The furniture was insufficient; dilapidated, dirty and broken. There was Foundation Phase furniture in the grade 4 classes, inappropriately combined (dissimilar desks and chairs). There was a proper teacher's table in only one grade 4 class. This was mostly due to lack of space and overcrowding.

Besides three old, small posters high up on the wall in a grade 4 class, there were no resources to support teaching and learning or to create a stimulating setting for learning. The teachers were teaching without supporting resources. The classroom lacked the feeling of a warm and inviting setting for learning. The grade 4 teachers move around between classes; they did not have or "own" a class. They simple "delivered" their lesson and left. This could explain the poor condition of the classes.

The grade 3 classes on the other hand, were spacious, fairly print-rich and had proper teacher's tables. None of the classes had a carpet in the reading corner. The discipline in the grade 3 classes was generally good, except for one learner who demonstrated extremely disruptive behaviour.

The general discipline in the grade 4 classes was not very good. The learners in grade 4 did not change classes but remained in the same classroom the whole day. The teachers moved between the classes. This is common practice in rural schools; mainly as a measure of maintaining order more readily. My observation was that the learners were very restless and seemed bored. One of the teachers, Agnes, who was more soft-spoken, managed the grade 4 learners more effectively. She managed to create a calm and caring atmosphere in the classroom. She was in control of the learning situation and the learners were cooperating well.

4.3   CONCLUSION

Educators teaching ESL face numerous challenges (O'Connor & Geiger, 2009). These challenges are experienced not only by the teachers but by the learners as well. The challenges range from linguistic, academic, cultural, social and economic ones, all influencing the learners' achievement at school. It is unfortunate that, except for one teacher, the value of mother tongue education is not acknowledged in the lower grades.

The general perspective is that "… the department should review the system" and that all subjects, except siSwati, should be taught in English. There is an overwhelming preference for English as LoLT and any other aspects/factors seem

to be overlooked. The following chapter will address the research questions based on the findings and the associated literature.

5. CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 4, the data collected was presented. Themes and categories emerging from the interviews, document analysis, observations and field notes were identified and briefly analysed. In this final chapter the data collected in this study will be discussed in relation to the relevant literature presented in Chapter 2. Agreement and disagreement between the literature and data collected will contribute to answering the research questions posed in Chapter 1. Gaps in the literature in relation to findings and new knowledge will be identified.

I will begin by relating the findings of my research against the literature, followed by a discussion of the primary and secondary findings. The research question will subsequently be answered. The chapter will be concluded with a discussion on the implications of the findings of the study.

5.2 FINDINGS AGAINST THE LITERATURE

The themes and categories emerging from the data, in conjunction with the relevant literature, will assist in answering the secondary research questions and ultimately the primary research question.

The primary research question is:

- **What are the experiences of teachers and learners in the transition of Grade 4 learners to English as medium of instruction?**

The secondary research questions are:

- What are the experiences/challenges of teachers teaching in a medium that is not their mother tongue?
- What are the key factors influencing the transition from mother tongue education to English as LoLT?

The following table presents a summary of the categories and themes that emerged from the data against the literature consulted.

Table 5.1:   Summary of categories and themes which emerged from the data

Theme/category	Author and year	Relevant literature	Findings
1. Challenges regarding home language	Akinnaso, 1993 Roodt, 2002 Block, 2003 Nicholas & Lightbrown, 2008	The effective learning of an additional language and the pace thereof depends on a well-developed HL.	Disagreement of learners' HL and the siSwati taught at school.
• The use of non-standard siSwati	DBE, 2013a	Dialectisation of African languages is one of the major challenges encountered in South African schools.	Non-standard siSwati is spoken by the learners as well as the teachers.
	Posel & Casale, 2011	HL proficiency is one of the most significant determinants of English proficiency among Africans.	Non-standard siSwati prohibits well-developed HL proficiency.
• Use of siSwati for teaching and learning	Krashen, 1987 Csizer & Dornyei, 2005	Language acquisition is mostly influenced by assertiveness/ motivation.	The teachers have an adverse attitude to siSwati as LoLT.
	Gupta, 1997	There are settings where primary education in the HL might not be desirable.	The siSwati language setting in this study is not desirable.
	Cummins, 2000	Skills acquired in the HL can be transferred successfully to a second language.	HL skills are undesirable.
• Teachers regard siSwati as inappropriate for teaching Mathematics			"Number one, I can change Maths to be taught in English" – Joyce "You will never ever in a shop get something written in siSwati" - Gladys
• Laying of a solid foundation in siSwati	Cummins, 2000	Proficiency in HL enhances learning a second language.	The learners' siSwati proficiency is not well developed.

Theme/category	Author and year	Relevant literature	Findings
	Heugh, 2012	Endorses tuition of first six years in HL.	Primary education in mother tongue is for only three years.
	Taylor & von Fintel, 2016	Mother tongue instruction in the early grades significantly improved English acquisition, as measured in grades 4, 5 and 6.	Teachers seem to overlook the importance and benefits of mother tongue education.
	Gonzalez, Yawkey & Minaya-Rowe, 2015	ESL learners need prolonged time to become proficient in a second language if they are not literate in their HL.	Learners are transposed after only three years of exposure to English without being significantly proficient in their HL.
	August, 2002	The degree of schooling in the L1 can be linked to improved performance in English learning.	Insufficient HL skills relate to poor English performance.
2. Perspectives of English as LoLT			
• Preference for using English as LoLT	Bosman & Van der Merwe, 2000 Mboweni-Marais, 2003	English seems to be the first choice for most parents or caregivers as the LoLT for their children.	There is an overwhelming preference for English by the teachers.
	Cele, 2001	English is globally the dominant language in the academic, business and technological world.	English is perceived as the doorway to success.
• The English proficiency of teachers	Fleisch, 2008	Even though teachers in an English-limited context can communicate in English, their proficiency and status as role models for the learners cannot be trusted.	The teachers can communicate in English though their proficiency is limited.

Theme/category	Author and year	Relevant literature	Findings
	Sešek, 2007	Adequate proficiency in the target language is the key prerequisite of a competent teacher.	The teachers' English proficiency is limited.
	DBE, 2013a	Teachers are inadequately skilled in terms of language proficiency.	The teachers speak non-standard siSwati and their English proficiency is limited.
• Proper introduction of English as imminent language of learning	Lenyai, 2011	Teacher expertise is the most significant factor in achieving English mastery.	Lack of skilled expertise noted.
	Akbari and Allvar, 2010	"… teaching style, teacher reflectivity, and teacher sense of efficiency can significantly predict student achievement outcomes" (p.10)	Little evidence of teacher reflection and sense of efficiency was noted.
	Sešek, 2007	Novice teachers often overused the L2 and so confused learners.	Teachers need improved translation skills; how and where to code switch.
	Djigunovic, Nikolov & Otto, 2008 Ojima et al, 2011	The quality of teaching plays a significant role in determining L2 results in foreign language contexts.	"… they didn't get the foundation proper; foundation of the language, that is English" - Agnes The quality of teaching needs improvement.
3. Systemic/ policy matters			
• Misinterpretation of policies	LiEP, 1997	The LoLT of a school is determined by the SGB.	"…this democracy they change us to siSwati" - Gladys

Theme/category	Author and year	Relevant literature	Findings
	DBE, 2011c : 16	"... they begin to write in their First Additional Language in the third term of Grade 1."	"… now in the foundation phase, especially grade 1, they are just taught English in term four and with a few words and no written work ..." - Agnes
• Transition from siSwati to English as LoLT	Fiske, 2000 Mothibeli, 2005	HL education for at least six years leads to higher achievement levels than transposing learners too soon to an L2 in which they lack the metacognitive skills for academic purposes.	HL education for only three years. Learners still lack metacognitive skills in the HL let alone English. "… maybe when they are a little bit matured maybe they can do better then" - Agnes
	Probyn, Murray, Botha, Botya, Brooks & Westphal, 2002 Benson, 2009 Posel & Casale, 2011	Learners are transferred too early; they resort to rote learning because of demonstrated underdeveloped language competency to understand subject content.	Rote learning with little understanding.
	Yule, 2016	The optimum age of learning a language is between the ages of 10 and 16 years.	The transition in South African schools takes place at the average age of nine years.
	Broom, 2004	Early transition could prolong the inequalities of the past.	South Africa's early exit model transposes learners from mother tongue education at the age of eight years or at the end of Grade 3.

Theme/category	Author and year	Relevant literature	Findings
	August & Akos, 2009	Effective support is crucial to prevent learners from feeling inferior, incompetent and unproductive.	Insufficient support to learners observed.
• Progression of learners within a phase	CAPS, 2011c	Learners should not spend more than four years in a phase.	"This progress system is not good. They failed grade one, promoted to grade two, failed, promoted" - Gladys
• Average age of learners	Celaya *et al.*, 2001 Cenoz, 2003 Navés *et al.*, 2003 MacSwan & Pray, 2005	Late learners (age 11) outperformed early beginners (age eight) in vocabulary, accuracy and syntactic complexity.	Learners in South African schools are introduced to English at an average age of six years.
	Muñoz, 2006	Children who were exposed to English from age 11 outperformed those who were introduced to English at the age of 8 years.	Learners in South African schools are introduced to English at the average age of six years.
	SASA regulation 5(4) (1), 2002	The amended age of admission in Grade 1 is now five years, turning to six in the year of admission.	"At my time we go to school at seven years. But now maybe they are too young. You find someone is in grade 4, this one must be in grade 2 if you look at his face and age" - Joyce
• Classroom setting	DoE, 2013	No set rule of rotation of learners between classes; traditionally done in former model C schools.	Grade 4 learners remain in their classes; teachers rotate between classes.
	DBE, 2013	Learner-teacher ratio 40:1	Learner-teacher ratio far beyond prescribed ratio.

Theme/category	Author and year	Relevant literature	Findings
	Cook & Singleton, 2014	Improving the circumstances under which teaching and learning takes place is a greater determinant of successful L2 acquisition than the age factor.	The overcrowding, poor furniture and resources in the classroom are far from desired.
4. Socio-economic dynamics			
• Lack of parental involvement/ education	Chall, 2000	Children from low socio-economic settings usually do less well than children from middle-income households.	The community is of deprived development and poverty-stricken.
	Hart and Risely, 1995	Before entering school, children from low socio-economic families are exposed to half the vocabulary learnt by children from more affluent families.	The learners come from families in a rural area of low socio-economic development.
	Hakuta, Butler & Witt, 2000b	Learners from low socio-economic families attain English proficiency at a slower pace than more privileged children.	The learners are from families in a rural area of deprived development.
	Hasan, 2002	The manner of oral interaction between mothers/care givers and children of working class and middle class families contributes to the children's 'mental dispositions'.	The level of education in the area varies from not very high to uneducated.
• Lack of resources in the home	Mkhize, 2013	The likelihood of finding any books in these households is almost non-existent.	The community is of deprived development and poverty-stricken.

5.2.1 Primary findings

5.2.1.1 Challenges regarding home language

As the data collection process progressed, challenges regarding HL in this area unfolded. The most prominent challenge is the disagreement of the learners' HL and the HL taught at school. This disagreement is a result of the non-standard siSwati spoken at homes and in the wider community. Even though the communal language and thus HL of the learners in the area is regarded as siSwati, the findings revealed that the actual language spoken there is not pure siSwati. It is a fusion of siSwati and Xitsonga. This fused language became the norm.

For general communication in the community this phenomenon posed no threats, as community members could communicate effectively with one another. For scholastic and educational purposes this resulted in a great challenge, as the siSwati expected/taught at school varies from the communal siSwati spoken. The teachers related that they themselves also speak this non-standard siSwati:

> "… *what we are talking is not a pure siSwati, it is a mix.*" - Gladys
> (par. 4.2.1.1).
> "… *even us. What we speak is not real siSwati."* - Joyce

This non-standard siSwati spoken in the community prohibits well-developed home language proficiency required at school which is one of the most significant determinants of English proficiency among Africans (Posel & Casale, 2011).

The challenge regarding siSwati as HL is deepened by the teachers' adverse attitude to siSwati as LoLT. They regard siSwati as an inappropriate medium of instruction, especially for Mathematics. Even though the teachers claim that they know proper siSwati, only one of them received primary education through the medium of siSwati. Most received their schooling through the medium of isiZulu. It was quite distressing when Gladys related: "… we were willing to learn that language (isiZulu)" which is not traditionally spoken in the area the study was conducted. This underlined the adversative stance of the teachers towards siSwati, a language much closer to their hearts. Of the six teachers interviewed, only one stated that she loved siSwati and that she was passionate about teaching it. As the teachers were bluntly opposed to the utilisation of siSwati as medium of instruction,

their attitude was found a definite bearing on their teaching thereof and the degree of effort and schooling offered to the learners regarding siSwati (par. 4.2.1.2).

Considering the number of activities and homework done in siSwati, it is evident that the amount of work done falls short of the expected quantity. Even though a particular number of activities is not prescribed in the CAPS documents, at least three written activities per week should be recorded, according to the Foundation Phase exemplar draft Reading Norms HL and FAL (Second draft, 11 June 2015). The poor attention to corrections and detail such as punctuation reflects the teachers' effort and attitude to siSwati. No evidence of instilling a solid foundation of siSwati in the learners could be found.

The circumstances regarding siSwati in this context is a typical example of dialectisation as mentioned in the NEEDU 2012 report (DBE, 2013a). The dialectisation of African languages has been identified as one of the major challenges in South African schools. In such language settings primary education is often not desirable (Gupta, 1997) but in this case mother tongue education would be to the learners' benefit.

The learners in this context are deprived of one of the most significant benefits which a solid home language provides in the springboard for the effective acquisition of a second language (Akinnaso, 1993; Block, 2003; Nicholas & Lightbown, 2008; Posel & Casale, 2011). Since language acquisition is mostly influenced by assertiveness and motivation (Krashen, 1987; Csizer & Dornyei, 2005) the teachers' lack of motivation regarding siSwati plays a crucial role in the performance of the learners. The teachers seem to overlook or ignore the benefits of mother tongue education despite the privilege they had of receiving such. The degree of schooling in the mother tongue can be related to improved performance in English learning (August, 2002). Confirmed by more resent research, Taylor and von Fintel (2016) established that a solid mother tongue base is essential for improved English acquisition in grades 4, 5 and 6.

5.2.1.2 Perspectives of English as LoLT

A key finding emanating from the data is the teachers' overwhelming preference of English as medium of instruction rather than siSwati. This is in agreement with

most parents' choice of English for their children's' education (Bosman & van der Merwe, 2000; Mboweni-Marais, 2003). Since English has become the dominant language in the academic, business and technological world (Cele, 2001) English is perceived as the doorway to success, a perspective I find untrue for the learners in this context. Despite being exposed to non-standard siSwati, English would not be the most beneficial medium of instruction for these learners.

The teachers stated that they were "*comfortable*" and had "*no problem*" teaching in English, but it became evident that their English language proficiency was not at the desired level. Even though teachers in such an English-limited setting can communicate in English, their English language proficiency and eminence as role models for the learners cannot necessarily be relied upon (Fleisch, 2008). Because adequate proficiency in a target language (English) is a key prerequisite for a competent teacher (Sešek, 2007), effective introduction of English as imminent LoLT in this school is unlikely. It is to no surprise that the grade 3 teachers reported they receive learners at the beginning of grade 3 knowing hardly any English.

> *"… here they know nothing these kids."* - Queen
> "*… they didn`t get the foundation proper; foundation of the language, that is English…*" - Agnes

The quality of teaching is at stake since teacher expertise plays a fundamental role in achieving second language results (Djigunovic, Nikolov & Otto, 2008; Ojima *et al.,* 2011) especially in a foreign language setting such as in this study. During classroom observations lack of skilled expertise was noted. Teacher expertise is the most significant factor in achieving English mastery (Lenyai, 2011). Little evidence could be found of teacher reflection and sense of efficiency which are significant predictors of learner achievement (Akbari & Allvar, 2010). It was disturbing to hear comments like "I-I don`t think the teachers have to be blamed … so you see it's the learners" (Gladys). The learners are not at fault here.

5.2.1.3   Systemic/policy matters

The interpretation of policies can result in misunderstandings and poor implementation. The policy matter annoying the teachers the most is the issue

concerning the medium of intruction at school, specifically in the Foundation Phase (grades R-3).

The present language policy followed in the sample school is mother tongue education up to grade 3 and thereafter transition to English as medium of instruction in grade 4. This is in accordance with the Constitution of South Africa (1996) to acknowledge and promote indigenous languages and their speakers. The teachers do not agree on this and has a strong preference for English as LoLT instead of HL. The 'policy' or 'system' is being blamed instead of taking responsibility for the academic performance at school. "… *this democracy they change us to siSwati*" (Gladys), yet the SGB has the authority to determine the LoLT of a school (SASA, 1996). The medium of instruction is not enforced upon them by "this democracy," it is in accordance with the language in education policy (LiEP, 1997), determined by the management of the school. In the past the LoLT of the school was apparently English but was changed to siSwati as a result of learners not coping with siSwati when they moved to neighbouring schools.

Secondly, when a teacher says "… *now in the foundation phase, especially grade 1, they are just taught English in term 4 and with a few words and no written work* …" (Agnes), it is evident that the language policy is neither well understood nor correctly implemented (par. 4.2.1.3). According to the EFAL policy English is already introduced in term 1 and learners begin to write in term 3. This raises concern about the teachers' professionalism and knowledge of policies. I found the teachers' knowledge and interpretation of policies negligible. This results in misunderstandings which could have been prevented and causes negativity.

Another systemic issue with far reaching implications is the fact that learners are required to have a South African identity document (ID) in order to be accepted at school. With the implementation of the South African School Administration and Management System (SA-SAMS) it became a compulsary requirement for learners to have a South African ID in order to be captured on the system. As many parents in this area are illegal immigrants from Mozambique, they do not have South African IDs. This has led to the unfortunate custom of obtaining fraudulent birth certificates to enable their children to be accepted at school.

> *"Another problem come from their parents … some parents took someone's certificate and come with it to register the child. As times go by they change the name, then surname. It's a big story"* - Grade 3 focus group.

The reality of this practice is that the true birth date of the child is often not revealed. Names and surnames are changed at a later stage but the birth date, mostly incorrect, remains and is used. There seems to be great variances in the actual ages of some learners in these classes. This complicates the teacher's task of accommodating all the learners at their various levels and ages.

An additional policy issue regarding the children's ages are contradictions in the admission policy and requirements. The admission policy of the school is in line with the SASA of 1996, which stipulates that a learner must be admitted to grade 1 in the year he/she turns seven. An amendment published in Government Gazette No. 22928 in December 2001 now allows learners to enter grade 1 in the year they turn six. Even though the admission policy of the school states that a grade 1 learner should turn seven during the year of admission, this is not implemented. They are following the amended age requirements issued in December 2001. The Department of Mpumalanga issued a circular on the age of admission of grade R learners. The circular states that learners aged four and a half years, turning five before 30 June of the year of reception, may be admitted to grade R. Learners will thus subsequently turn six in grade 1.

A third policy issue raised by the teachers is the restriction of a learner not to spend more than four years in a phase. This created a form of laid-back or careless attitude towards academic performance; among teachers and learners. The worst scenario could only result in being retained once in a grade during a cycle of four years; the system would carry you through/forward despite not meeting the minimum passing requirements.

> *"This progress system is not good.*
> *They failed grade one, promoted to grade two, failed, promoted."* - Gladys

This creates a vicious cycle; once a learner has not met the minimum requirements he/she finds it hard to catch up with the demands to be met and more than often remains behind his/her peers.

The central policy or systemic issue in this study is the transition to English as medium of instruction in grade 4. Learners enter school and are exposed to English at the age of six years. In South Africa the learners receive only three years of mother tongue tuition before transposing to English in grade 4. They consequently make this transition to English as LoLT at the age of 9 years.

Considering the optimal time (10 to 16 years) for language learning as established by Yule (2016) are the learners in South Africa making this transition too soon. Research confirmed that children who were introduced to English at a later stage, being 11 years old, outperformed learners who were introduced to English at 8 years old (Celaya *et al.*, 2001; Cenoz, 2003; Navés *et al.*, 2003; MacSwan & Pray, 2005 and Munoz, 2006). The teachers interviewed themselves made this transition to English in grade 8, at an average age of 14 years, since they entered school at the age of 7 years. This corresponds with Yule's "sensitive period" and offers an explanation why the teachers found their transition "very simple" (Queen) (par. 4.2.1.3). They were subjected to a more favourable system than that of these learners, yet it is not reflected in their reasoning and point of view.

Bearing in mind that these learners are English second language learners (ESL) they need prolonged time to achieve adequate English proficiency. I find this transition being made too soon and unfair to the learners, especially for the learners in the context of this study. This correlates with Heugh's (1999) finding that when home language tuition was compulsory during primary school, the grade 12 results among African learners improved.

5.2.1.4 Socio-economic dynamics

The socio-economic context of this community has a definite bearing on the learners' scholastic performance. The quite obvious socio-economic circumstances in this community were confirmed by the teachers in statements such as.

"There are many problems outside for our kids.

… most learners are not staying with their parents.

Most of them (parents) they are not working. They are using the money for the grant.

… we sleep without food." – Sylvia

One of the foremost effects noticed is the under-developed language skills with which these learners enter school. The insufficient level of schooling of most parents and the consequent manner of oral interaction contributes to the children's mental disposition (Hasan, 2002). This manner of interaction results in children from low socio-economic families being exposed to half the vocabulary of children in more affluent families (Hart & Risley, 1995).

Another bearing is that the probability of finding any books in these households is virtually non-existent. The role of time in second language acquisition is often mentioned. My findings are in agreement with Hakuta *et al.* (2000a) that learners from low socio-economic households needs more time to attain English proficiency than more privileged learners; a commodity these learners are deprived of.

5.2.2 Secondary findings

5.2.2.1 Gaps noted in literature

Table 5.2: Gaps in literature

Trend in literature	Finding
Fixation on English as norm for language of learning.	Limited research on South African indigenous languages and their significance.

Ample literature could be found on English as language of learning, but I found literature on the nine African languages in South Africa very scant. This is rather sad in view of the large portion of the South African population speaking those languages.

5.2.2.2 New knowledge

During the data collection process the following new knowledge emerged:

Table 5.3:   New knowledge

Themes and categories	Interpretation	New insights
Challenges regarding HL	I entered the study assuming that the learners' HL (siSwati) would be well-established.	The learners do not have a solid standardised siSwati HL foundation.
The stance of English	Being a qualified teacher does not necessarily imply being adequately proficient in English.	The teachers' English language proficiency is inadequate.

I entered the field assuming that the learners' home language would be well-established by the time they entered school. Findings revealed that neither the learners nor the teachers in the area spoke pure standardised siSwati. The learners entered school without a solid HL foundation established. This in itself is a barrier to learning.

Even though all the participating teachers were qualified teachers, it became evident that their English proficiency was not at the expected level.

5.2.3   Summary of findings

The aim of this study was to gain deeper understanding of the experiences of teachers and learners in the transition of grade 4 learners to English as medium of instruction at a sampled school. A summary of the findings will assist in answering the secondary and primary research questions. The findings that emerged from the study are presented below.

The teachers participating in this study are all English second language speakers in a rural disadvantaged community. Even though they can communicate fairly well in English, their English proficiency is limited. The teachers have an adverse attitude to the language policy at school, which prescribes mother tongue education from grade 1 to grade 3 and then a transfer to English as medium of instruction in grade 4. They are in favour of English being the medium of instruction from grade 1. English is perceived as the doorway to academic and economic success. What they overlook is that the key to success does not lie in a language itself, but in the language and thinking skills mastered. Mastering

thinking and reasoning skills in one's mother tongue comes with much greater ease than by means of a second language.

One of the most significant challenges that emerged from the data is the status of the communal language spoken in this area. Despite the community being known as siSwati-speaking, the actual language spoken is a fusion of siSwati and Xitsonga. In my opinion is the home language issue and the quality of teaching at the core of these learners' scant academic performance. Non-standard siSwati is spoken not only by the learners but by the teachers as well. The benefits of mother tongue education are overlooked and the teachers are only fixated on English. No solid foundation in the mother tongue is laid, nor is English as imminent LoLT successfully introduced. Both languages, siSwati and English, which are the vessels of learning, are inadequately implemented.

5.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The secondary and primary research questions are answered by referring to the six teachers' responses during the one-on-one and focus group interviews conducted, observations made, documents analysed and literature consulted. Lingual, socio-economic and policy factors affecting this transition are presented below.

5.3.1 What are the experiences/challenges of teachers teaching in a medium that is not their mother tongue?

5.3.1.1 English language proficiency of teachers

The teachers' response to the question on teaching in a language other than their home language was that they were "*comfortable*" (Gladys) and had "*no problem*" (Joyce). Only one grade 3 teacher acknowledged her inadequate English language proficiency. During the interviews, focus group discussions and classroom observations, it became evident that their English language proficiency was not at the desired level. They had difficulty expressing themselves with ease and confidence. Their English sentence construction, articulation and vocabulary were rather restricted. I found that even though the teachers, with the exception of one grade 3 teacher, could communicate fairly in English, their proficiency and eminence as role models for the learners was inadequate (DBE, 2013a). This

finding is in accordance with Fleisch's (2008) finding that teachers, in an English-limited context, proficiency and eminence as role models could not be trusted. The teachers themselves seem to believe otherwise. The lack of exposure to English might explain the teachers' perception of their own proficiency; in their circumstances their English is never challenged or questioned and thus seems sufficient.

I found the teachers reluctant to engage in reflectivity and their own sense of efficiency; the blame was rather shifted to the learners, parents or the system/Department.

> *"I-I don`t think the teachers have to be blamed ....*
> *So you see it's the learners. …*
> *… the problem is in the background.*
> *The problem is in the foundation phase.*
> *… the parents don't take care of the learner's education."* – Gladys

5.3.1.2 Proper introduction of English as imminent LoLT

Despite an overwhelming preference to English as medium of instruction I found it strange that English as imminent language of learning and teaching (LoLT) was not well implemented.

All the grade 3 teachers reported that they received learners who knew hardly any English:

> *"… they didn't get the foundation proper; foundation of the language,*
> *that is English."* – Agnes
> **"***I think kutsi (that) in grade 1 English ayi introduseki kahle (English is*
> *not well introduced) until to grade 3."* – Queen
> *"… it's like they're starting from scratch."* – Ruth (par. 4.2.1.2)

Since English is introduced as first additional language (FAL) from grade 1 in order to prepare the learners for the transition to English as LoLT in grade 4 it raises concern about the quality of teaching offered to the learners when a teacher relates *"… here they know nothing these kids"* (Queen). Even though the grade 1 and 2 classes were not observed, it is evident that EFAL is not

implemented at a satisfactory level. Since the EFAL scores are not taken into consideration for promotion, the teachers feel that the grade 1 and 2 teachers are "relaxed" and not doing the learners justice. The teachers are disheartened by the lack of support they experience from their grade 1 and 2 colleagues. This places an immense burden on the grade 3 teachers and is very discouraging and frustrating for them. They feel as if *"…they're starting from scratch"* (Ruth).

5.3.1.3   Contextual factors

The teachers experience difficulties in their teaching due to some contextual factors at school. The following circumstances are prevalent:

The teacher-learner ratio is beyond the recommended ratio of 1:40, which makes it more challenging to meet each learner's individual needs at his/her required level particularly when preparing learners and facilitating the transition to a second language as medium of instruction.

The physical condition of a classroom can create an inviting and stimulating learning space or contribute to a hostile and messy environment. Two of the three grade 3 classes are quite spacious and print rich. The third class is overcrowded and confined. The condition of the grade 4 classes is quite distressing. They are even more overcrowded and very confined, with insufficient furniture and resources. Dilapidated furniture with odd desks and chairs (Foundation and Intermediate Phase) are used together. At some desks three learners are cramped together. Holes in the ceilings, broken fans and windows create a messy, uninviting learning space. Most windows and doors cannot shut properly. It is quite discouraging.

The fact that the grade 4 learners remain in their classes for the duration of the day and the teachers rotate between the classes resulted in the teachers not taking "ownership" of a class, hence the poor condition the classes. The learners rather than the teachers seem to have taken ownership of these classes. The discipline in the classes is very poor. These circumstances are discouraging for the teachers and encumber effective teaching and learning to a great extent.

The teachers are disheartened as a result of a complete lack of support from the parents' side. The majority of the parents are illiterate or/and unemployed and regard the education of their children as the responsibility of the school. There is no culture of co-operative collaboration between teachers and parents.

5.3.2   What are the key factors influencing this transition from mother tongue education to English as LoLT?

The key factors influencing the transition from mother tongue education to English as medium of instruction in grade 4 are challenges regarding HL, the role of time and the age of the learners, as well as teachers' expertise and effort. These factors are discussed below.

5.3.2.1   Challenges regarding home language

The circumstances regarding home language (HL) are unusual in this case study. What would be perceived as typical regarding HL does not apply in this scenario. The communal language, siSwati, spoken in the area is not customary siSwati. As the area is geographically very close to the Mozambican border, a great number of Mozambican immigrants reside there. This has resulted in the siSwati spoken there being heavily infused with Xitsonga. The teachers confirmed that they themselves speak this fused non-standard siSwati. The learners thus enter school without being proficient in their language of learning and teaching (LoLT), siSwati.

In addition to the non-standard siSwati they grow up with, their language skills are further disadvantaged by their circumstances at home. As many of their parents are illiterate or/and unemployed, the vocabulary the learners are exposed to is half of that of children coming from more affluent households (Hart & Risley, 1995). These learners enter formal schooling experiencing a language barrier. An additional constraint regarding HL is the teachers' adverse attitude to siSwati as LoLT. Their overwhelming preference for English affects the effort and quality invested in home language teaching.

In South Africa learners are transposed to English as LoLT after only three years of mother tongue tuition. In the context of this study most learners are by the end of grade 3 not fluent in siSwati yet. Posel and Casale (2011) declare HL as one of the most significant fundamentals of English proficiency among Africans. Its

significance lies in the transfer of skills acquired in the HL (Cummins, 2000). As no solid foundation in the mother tongue is established in this case, little transfer of language skills can take place to English. Taylor and von Fintel (2016) confirm that HL tuition in the early grades significantly improves English attainment in grades 4, 5 and 6.

5.3.2.2   The role of time and the age of the learners

Time encompasses the period of mother tongue tuition as well the stage or age at which the transition takes place. Since the learners are exposed to half of the vocabulary compared to more affluent learners (Harley & Hart, 1997) and situated in a non-standard language setting, the role of time and age plays a crucial role in these learners' successful learning.

The school's admission policy is still according to the SASA regulations of 1996, which stipulates that a learner should be admitted to school in the year he/she turns seven (before 30 June of that year). It has not been amended according to section 1 of Act 50 of 2002, even though learners are being admitted in accordance with the amended Act. The new regulation permits learners aged five, turning six by 30 June of the year of admission, to enter grade 1. The learners now enter school a year younger. Entering school at six years, the learners make this transition at nine years old. Considering the background and circumstances of these learners, by the end of grade 3 most of them have not achieved sufficient CALP in siSwati, let alone in English.

It usually takes five to seven years to acquire adequate CALP in any target language in order to perform well academically (Cummins, 2000). The Six Year Yoruba Primary Project proved unambiguously that six years' primary education in the mother tongue with the target language taught as a subject simultaneously yielded better results than all English instruction (Benson, 2009) which the teacher preferred. Learners from low socio-economic families takes longer to achieve English proficiency than learners from more privileged homes (Hakuta *et al.,* 2000b). As observed many of these learners were not fluent in siSwati by the end of grade 3 and need additional time to become proficient in a second language (Gonzalez *et al.,* 2006). It is thus evident that the learners in the context of this study would benefit from prolonged time in order to attain adequate English

proficiency to successfully utilise English as language of learning and teaching (LoLT) (par. 4.2.1.3).

In a large-scale research project conducted in Spain, it was established that children who were exposed to English from age 11 outperformed those who were introduced to English at the age of eight years (Muñoz, 2006). Learners who are transposed too early resort to rote learning with little demonstration of understanding (Benson, 2009; Posel & Casale, 2011; Probyn *et al.*, 2002). This correlates with my findings as observed during class visits.

According to Yule (2016), the optimum age of learning a language is between 10 and 16 years. In South Africa learners are transposed at the age of nine years. Considering all the literature discussed above, I find the present time allowed for mother tongue tuition, the age of the learners and the time allowed for sufficient establishment of CALP in English not serving the learners to their best advantage.

5.3.2.3 Teacher expertise and effort

Even though the learners enter school with scant HL proficiency, it is the teacher who plays the most important role in a learner's success or failure. The quality of teacher expertise is the most significant determinant of successful English mastery (Djigunović *et al.*, 2008; Lenyai, 2011; Ojima *et al.*, 2011).

I found the following statement made by a grade 4 teacher very disturbing:

> *"I-I don`t think the teachers have to be blamed .... So you see it's the learners"* – Gladys (par. 4.2.1.1).

Teachers voiced opposing opinions on causal factors in this challenging transition. Others related:

> *"… teacher has to put more effort to teach something that they should have done in grade 1."* - Joyce
> *"… now the teachers are lazy. The level of teaching is different."* - Queen

During the grade 3 focus group interview one teacher stated:

> *"How can a learner not write his name in grade 2? They (teachers) not doing justice."*

One teacher was brave enough to state:

> *"… you end up found yourself not doing justice to the learners."* – Agnes

Based on evidence of work done, classroom observations and the level of performance of the learners, I cannot but question the expertise and effort of the teachers. I found the grade 4 teachers more reluctant to reflect on their own sense of efficiency.

Primary research question: What are the experiences of teachers and learners in the transition of Grade 4 learners to English as medium of instruction?

The teachers' responses summarised their experiences of this transition in a nutshell:

> *"… the switching from siSwati to English really it affects a lot; it affects the learners and also affects us because you end up found yourself not doing justice to the learners."* - Agnes
> *"… it seems as if our learners are going nowhere."* – Joyce
> *"… they are struggling."* – Ruth
> *"There is nothing that we are going to do to solve the problem …."*
> - Gladys

The foremost experiences at the core of this transition is that it is "very difficult" (Queen), "really a problem" (Agnes), "frustrating" (Joyce) and "tough" (Joyce). It is a dire experience for teachers and learners. Learners "are struggling" (Ruth), their academic performance shows a sharp decline and teachers become despondent. Teachers feel captured in a system in which they do not believe in and cannot do much about. It is unfortunate that the teachers have come to a point where they are not seeking answers or solutions to address this problem anymore; rather merely trying to cope with the situation. My findings are in disagreement with the view that "… the problem is the English, the language" (Ruth). My findings revealed other truths. It is unfortunate that the teachers rather blame others for this

difficult situation instead of pursuing solutions and demonstrating accountability and professionalism.

5.4 IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this case study have disclosed certain challenges regarding the transition from mother tongue education to English as LoLT in grade 4. Based on the results of the data collected and literature consulted, the following implications are relevant:

5.4.1 Laying a solid foundation in the mother tongue

The value and advantages of mother tongue education have long been established and researched, but seem to be totally ignored by the teachers interviewed. The fact that non-standard siSwati is spoken in the area is the primary justification offered not to offer siSwati as the LoLT in this school.

If learners cannot read and write a language of which "… the pronunciation, it's a little bit not the same" (Ruth), what are the prospects of doing so in a language very distant from their own language? (par. 4.2.1.1). The quality of teaching offered and the educational will is the greatest challenge in this regard. Learners need to establish CALP in their mother tongue first in order to transfer these language skills to a L2, English. The learners, especially in this context, should be granted the benefit of the ease with which young children learn emergent literacy and content through their mother tongue (Ouane, 2003).

5.4.2 Ensuring the correct age of admission of learners

It would be advisable to adhere strictly to the age of admission requirements as set by the schools' admission policy and SASA. This will allow learners more time to develop their linguistic skills and maturation towards the age of transition and. One year makes a significant difference at this stage of a young child's life. This would bring the age of transition to at least 10 years; the minimum of Yule's optimum age (10-16 years) for learning a language (Yule, 2016).

5.4.3 Proper introduction of English as imminent language of learning and teaching

Despite teachers favouring English as LoLT, the introduction of English as imminent LoLT is not adequately done. The grade 3 teachers reported that they received learners knowing hardly any English. As English is introduced from grade 1 the learners should after two years of English exposure have developed some understanding and vocabulary of English and not "know nothing" (Queen). The fact that the grade 2 teacher is the Foundation Phase head of department reflects negatively on the proper supervision of curriculum implementation. One would expect that the head of department would ensure that the grade 2 learners would comply with proper implementation of the EFAL policy. A noticeable improvement in effort of input towards adhering to the EFAL policy requirements is a key priority.

5.4.4 Parallel introduction of Mathematics in mother tongue and English

One of the main challenges the teachers mentioned was the utilisation of siSwati for teaching Mathematics.

"If I were the government I should put maths in English …." – Joyce

Expressing numbers and amounts in siSwati is long-winded and a very valid challenge. No siSwati numbers or amounts are used in their day-to-day living. Even in their rural community English is commonly used by vendors and in shops. Parallel introduction of Mathematics in siSwati and English would be very beneficial for the learners. Initial introduction of numbers and concepts in siSwati and concurrently in English would contribute significantly to a smoother transition in grade 4.

5.4.5 Parent/caregiver education

There is a prevailing culture of lack of involvement of the parents in school activities. As the majority of the parents/caregivers are insufficiently educated or illiterate, in my opinion it is a matter of not knowing better rather than not being interested in their children's education at all. This is all the more reason for an initiative to educate and empower parents/caregivers in assisting their children to ensure successful schooling.

Advocating the importance of a solid mother tongue foundation and their indigenous language rather than perceiving English as the only doorway to success is necessary to achieve their cooperation. The teachers and school have the responsibility as leading agents of education and change to embark on such initiatives. The school and teachers often mislead parents in this regard and are responsible for misconceptions. The parents are unschooled, not necessarily ignorant.

5.4.6   Recommendations for future research

This study has highlighted topics that could inspire further research, such as:

- The role of age in the transition from mother tongue education to English as LoLT in the South African context.
- The actual stance and bearing of indigenous languages as LoLT in specific/rural areas in South Africa.

5.5   CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the findings from the research on *The transition of Grade 4 learners to English as medium of instruction.* The findings of this study revealed challenges experienced in preparing the learners and facilitating this transition. Contextual factors and prevailing practices were explored in the light of relevant literature. Implications of the study were elaborated upon. The important role of mother tongue education as springboard for the successful transition to English as LoLT was clear from the research.

6.   REFERENCES

Adger, C.T., Snow, C.E. & Christian, D. 2003. *What Teachers Need To Know About Language*. Washington DC: Center for Applied Linguistics, Carnegie Corp.

Akbari, R. & Allvar, N.K. 2010. L2 Teacher Characteristics as Predictors of Students' Academic Achievement. *Tesl-Ej,* 13(4):4.

Akinnaso, F.N. 1993. Policy and experiment in mother tongue literacy in Nigeria. *International Review of Education,* 39(4):255-285.

Akos, P., Shoffner, M. & Ellis, M. 2007. Mathematics Placement and the Transition to Middle School. *Professional School Counseling,* 10(3):238-244.

Alidou, H., Boly, A., Brock-Utne, B., Diallo, Y.S., Heugh, K. & Wolff, H.E. 2006. *Optimizing Learning and Education in Africa – the Language Factor*. Paris: ADEA.

Anderson, J.R. & Schunn, C. 2013. Implications of the ACT-R learning theory: No magic bullets. In *Advances in Instructional Psychology, Volume 5: Educational Design and Cognitive Science.* Edited by R. Glaser. Mahwah, New Jersey: Routledge, pp.1-33.

Anderson, J.R. 2015. *Cognitive Psychology and its Implications.* 8th ed. New York: Worth Publications.

Anderson, J.R., Greeno, J.G., Kline, P.J. & Neves, D.M. 1981. Acquisition of problem-solving skill. In *Cognitive Skills and Their Acquisition.* Edited by J. R. Anderson. Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, pp.191-230.

Ashworth, P. 2008. Conceptual foundations of qualitative psychology. In *Qualitative Psychology: A Practical Guide to Research Methods.* Edited by J.A. Smith. 2nd ed. London: SAGE, pp.4-25.

Auerbach, E.R. 1993. Re-examining English Only in the ESL Classroom. *Tesol Quarterly,* 27(1):9-32.

Augst, K. & Akos, P. 2009. Primary Transitions: How Elementary School Counsellors Promote Optimal Transitions. *Journal of School Counselling,* 7(3):3.

August, D. 2002. T*ransitional Programs for English Language Learners*. Baltimore: CRESPAR Publications Department.

August, D., Shanahan, T. & Escamilla, K. 2009. English language learners: Developing literacy in second-language learners—Report of the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth. *Journal of Literacy Research*, *41*(4):432-452.

Bailey, K.M. 2006. *Language Teacher Supervision: A Case-Based Approach.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Ball, J. 2010. *Enhancing learning of children from diverse language backgrounds: Mother tongue-based bilingual or multilingual education in early childhood and early primary school years.* Victoria, Canada: University of Victoria.

Barac, R. & Bialystok, E. 2011. Cognitive development of bilingual children. *Language Teaching,* 44(1):36-54.

Barón, J. & Celaya, M.L. 2010. Developing pragmatic fluency in an EFL context. *Eurosla Yearbook,* 10(1):38-61.

Benson, C. 2009. Designing effective schooling in multilingual contexts: Going beyond bilingual models. In *Social justice through multilingual education Volume 7.* Edited by T. Skutnabb-Kangas and R. Phillipson. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd., pp.63-81.

Block, D. 2003. *The Social Turn in Second Language Acquisition*. Washington DC: Georgetown University Press.

Bosman, N. & Van der Merwe, E. 2000. South Africa's culture of non-learning: A by-product of non-mother tongue education? *Journal for Language Teaching,* 34(3):221-228.

Bot, M. 1993. Language use in schools: A survey of teachers' opinions. *Edu Source Data News,* 3:1-9.

Branum-Martin, L., Foorman, B.R., Francis, D.J. & Mehta, P.D. 2010. Contextual effects of bilingual programs on beginning reading. *Journal of Educational Psychology,* 102(2):341.

Braun, V. & Clarke, V. 2006. Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology,* 3(2):77-101.

Brock-Utne, B. & Holmarsdottir, H.B. 2004. Language policies and practices in Tanzania and South Africa: Problems and challenges. *International Journal of Educational Development,* 24(1):67-83.

Brock-Utne, B. 2007. Language of instruction and student performance: New insights from research in Tanzania and South Africa. *International Review of Education,* 53(5-6):509-530.

Broom, Y. 2004. Reading English in multilingual South African primary schools. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism,* 7(6):506-528.

Cantoni, M. 2007. What role does the language of instruction play for a successful education? A case study of the impact of language choice in a Namibian school. Independent Bachelor degree thesis. Växjö, Sweden: Linnaeus University.

Carhill, A., Suárez-Orozco, C. & Páez, M. 2008. Explaining English language proficiency among adolescent immigrant students. *American Educational Research Journal,* 45(4):1155-1179.

Carroll, J.B. & White, M.N. 1973. Age-of-acquisition norms for 220 picturable nouns. *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behaviour,* 12(5):563-576.

Celaya, M.L., Torras, M.R. & Pérez-Vidal, C. 2001. Short and mid-term effects of an earlier start: An analysis of EFL written production. *Eurosla Yearbook,* 1(1):195-209.

Cele, N. 2001. Oppressing the oppressed through language liberation: Repositioning English for meaningful education: Conversations about research. *Perspectives in Education,* 19(1):181-194.

Cenoz, J. 2002. Age differences in foreign language learning. *ITL-International Journal of Applied Linguistics, 135*(1):125-142.

Cenoz, J. 2003. The influence of age on the acquisition of English: General proficiency, attitudes and code mixing. In *Age and the acquisition of English as a foreign language.* Edited by M.G. Mayo & M.L.G. Lecumberri. Toronto: Multilingual Matters Ltd., pp.77-93.

Chall, J.S. & Jacobs, V.A. 2003. The classic study on poor children's fourth-grade slump. *American Educator,* 27(1):14-15.

Chall, J.S. 2000. *The Academic Achievement Challenge: What Really Works in the Classroom?* New York: Guilford Publications.

Chall, J.S., Jacobs, V.A., Baldwin, L.E. & Chall, J.S. 2009. *The Reading Crisis: Why Poor Children Fall Behind.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Chamot, A.U. & O'Malley, J.M. 1986. *A cognitive academic language learning approach: An ESL content-based curriculum.* Washington DC: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education.

Chamot, A.U. & O'Malley, J.M. 1994. *The CALLA handbook: Implementing the cognitive academic language learning approach.* Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.

Chapelle, C.A. 2009. The relationship between second language acquisition theory and computer-assisted language learning. *The Modern Language Journal,* 93(1):741-753.

Chumbow, B.S. 1990. The place of the mother tongue in the National Policy on Education. In *Multilingualism, minority languages and language policy in Nigeria.* Edited by E.N. Emenanjo. Agbor, Nigeria: Central Books Limited and Linguistic Association of Nigeria, pp.61-72.

Clark, E.V. 2009. *First Language Acquisition.* 2nd ed. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. 2011. *Research Methods in Education.* 7th ed. Abingdon: Routledge.

Cook, V. & Singleton, D. 2014. *Key Topics in Second Language Acquisition.* Bristol: Multilingual Matters Ltd.

Copple, C. & Bredekamp, S. 2009. *Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs serving children from birth through age 8.* Washington DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Cox, C. 2005. *Teaching language arts: A student-and-and teacher-centered classroom.* [Online] Available from: http://proceedings.icsai.org/6iclei/6iclei-076.pdf. (Accessed on 21 January 2017).

Creswell, J.W. & Poth, C.N. 2017. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches.* 4th ed. California: SAGE.

Creswell, J.W. 2011. Controversies in Mixed Methods Research. In *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* 4. Edited by N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln. California: SAGE, pp.269-284.

Creswell, J.W. 2015. *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research.* 5th ed. New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc.

Csizer, K. & Dornyei, Z. 2005. Language learners' motivational profiles and their motivated learning behavior. *Language Learning,* 55(4):613-659.

Cummins, J. 1981. Empirical and theoretical underpinnings of bilingual education. *Journal of Education*, 163(1):16-29.

Cummins, J. 1984. Language proficiency and academic achievement revisited: A response. Edited by C. Rivera. *Multilingual Matters 10(*400):90.

Cummins, J. 2000. *Language, Power, and Pedagogy: Bilingual Children in the Crossfire.* Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

DeKeyser, R. 2015. Skill Acquisition Theory. In *Theories in Second Language Acquisition: An Introduction.* 2nd ed. Edited by B. VanPatten & J. Williams. New York: Routledge.

DeKeyser, R., Alfi-Shabtay, I. & Ravid, D. 2010. Cross-linguistic evidence for the nature of age effects in second language acquisition. *Applied Psycholinguistics,* 31(03):413-438.

DeKeyser, R.M. (ed.) 2007. *Practice in a Second Language: Perspectives from Applied Linguistics and Cognitive Psychology*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Department of Basic Education. 2012. *Annual National Assessment 2012*: *Diagnostic Report.* Retrieved from: http://www.education.gov.za.

Department of Basic Education. 2013a. National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU). *National Report 2012*: *The State of Literacy Teaching and Learning in the Foundation Phase*. Pretoria: DBE.

Department of Basic Education. 2013. The National Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for School Infrastructure: 12 September 2013. *Government Notice* No. 36837, Vol. 579.

Department of Basic Education. 2015. *Annual National Assessment 2014*: *Diagnostic Report - First Additional Language and Home Language*. Retrieved from: http://www.education.gov.za.

Department of Basic Education. 2015. Foundation Phase Exemplar Draft. *Reading Norms HL and FAL* (Second draft, 11 June 2015).

Department of Basic Education. Republic of South Africa. 2011c. *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement Grades 1-3: English First Additional Language*. Pretoria: Government Printing Works.

Department of Basic Education. Republic of South Africa. 2014. *Report on the Annual National Assessments of 2014*. Pretoria: DBE.

Department of Education. 1997. Language in Education Policy: 14 July 1997. *Government Notice* No. 383, Vol. 17997.

Dixon, L.Q., Zhao, J., Shin, J.Y., Wu, S., Su, J.H., Burgess-Brigham, R., Gezer, M.U. & Snow, C. 2012. What we know about second language acquisition: A synthesis from four perspectives. *Review of Educational Research,* 82(1):5-60.

Djigunović, J.M., Nikolov, M. & Ottó, I. 2008. A comparative study of Croatian and Hungarian EFL students. *Language Teaching Research,* 12(3):433-452.

Echevarria, J., Gersten, R.M. & Jiménez, R.T. 1998. *Promoting Learning for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students: Classroom Applications from Contemporary Research*. Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Ehlers-Zavala, F. 2005. Bilingual reading from a dual coding perspective. In *Proceedings of the 4th International Symposium on Bilingualism*. Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Press, pp. 656-662.

Eloff, I. & Ebersöhn, L. (eds.) 2004. *Keys to Educational Psychology*. Cape Town: UCT Press.

Ernest, P. 1994. *An introduction to research methodology and paradigms*. Exeter: University of Exeter.

Eun, B. 2011. A Vygotskian theory-based professional development: Implications for culturally diverse classrooms. *Professional Development in Education,* 37(3):319-333.

Fafunwa, A.B. 1982. African Education in Perspective. In *Education in Africa: A comparative survey.* Edited by A.B. Fafunwa and J.U. Aisiku. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., pp.14-22.

Fischer, K.W. 2009. Mind, brain, and education: Building a scientific groundwork for learning and teaching 1. *Mind, Brain, and Education,* 3(1):3-16.

Fiske, E.B. 2000. Education for all: Status and trends 2000. Assessing Learning Achievement. Paris: UNESCO.

Fleisch, B. 2008. *Primary Education in Crisis: Why South African schoolchildren underachieve in reading and mathematics.* Cape Town: Juta and Company Ltd.

Galletta, A. 2013. *Mastering the Semi-Structured Interview and Beyond: From Research Design to Analysis and Publication.* New York: New York University Press.

Gass, S.M. & Mackey, A. 2015. Input, interaction, and output in second language acquisition. *Theories in Second Language Acquisition: An Introduction.* 2nd ed. Edited by B. VanPatten & J. Williams. New York: Routledge.

Gennari, S.P., MacDonald, M.C., Postle, B.R. & Seidenberg, M.S. 2007. Context-dependent interpretation of words: Evidence for interactive neural processes. *Neuroimage,* 35(3):1278-1286.

Geva, E. & Yaghoub Zadeh, Z. 2006. Reading efficiency in native English-speaking and English-as-a-second-language children: The role of oral proficiency and underlying cognitive-linguistic processes. *Scientific Studies of Reading,* 10(1):31-57.

Gillanders, C. 2007. An English-speaking prekindergarten teacher for young Latino children: Implications of the teacher–child relationship on second language learning. *Early Childhood Education Journal,* 35(1):47-54.

Goldenberg, C. 2008. Teaching English language learners. *American Educator,* 32(2):8-44.

Gonzalez, V., Yawkey, T. & Minaya-Rowe, L. 2015. English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) Teaching and Learning: Pre-K-12 Classroom Applications for Students' Academic Achievement and Development. *Education Review, 0.* [Online] Available from: doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.14507/er.v0.755.

Gupta, A.F. 1997. When mother-tongue education is not preferred. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development,* 18(6):496-506.

Hagoort, P. & Brown, C.M. 2000. ERP effects of listening to speech: Semantic ERP effects. *Neuropsychologia,* 38(11):1518-1530.

Hakuta, K., Butler, Y.G. & Witt, D. 2000b. How long does it take English learners to attain proficiency? Berkeley: University of California Linguistic Minority Research Institute.

Hall Haley, M. & Austin, T.Y. 2004. *Content-based second language teaching and learning: an interactive approach.* Boston: Pearson/Allyn and Bacon.

Halliday, M.A.K. 2007. *Language and Education.* Edited by J.J. Webster. London: Continuum.

Harley, B. & Hart, D. 1997. Language aptitude and second language proficiency in classroom learners of different starting ages. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition,* 19(03):379-400.

Hart, B. & Risley, T.R. 1995. *Meaningful differences in the everyday experience of young American children.* Baltimore: Paul H Brookes Publishing.

Hasan, R. 2002. Ways of meaning, ways of learning: Code as an explanatory concept. *British Journal of Sociology of Education,* 23(4):537-548.

Hawkins, M.R. 2004. Researching English language and literacy development in schools. *Educational Researcher,* 33(3):14-25.

Heugh, K. 1995. Trading power. *Bua!,* 10(1):22-24.

Heugh, K. 1999. Languages, development and reconstructing education in South Africa. *International Journal of Educational Development,* 19(4-5):301-313.

Heugh, K. 2012. Theory and practice - language education models in Africa: Research, design, decision-making and outcomes. In *Optimising learning, education and publishing in Africa: the language factor: a review and analysis of theory and practice in mother-tongue and bilingual education in sub-Saharan Africa.* Edited by A. Ouane and C. Glanz. Hamburg: UNESCO, pp. 105-156.

Hoadley, U., Murray, S., Drew, S. & Setati, M. 2010. *Comparing the learning bases: An evaluation of foundation phase curricula in South Africa, Canada (British Columbia), Singapore, and Kenya.* Pretoria: Umalusi Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training.

Howie, S., Van Staden, S., Tshele, M., Dowse, C. & Zimmerman, L. 2012. PIRLS 2011: South African children's reading literacy achievement summary report. Pretoria: University of Pretoria.

Howie, S., Venter, E. & Van Staden, S. 2008. The effect of multilingual policies on performance and progression in reading literacy in South African primary schools. *Educational Research and Evaluation,* 14(6):551-560.

Johnson, B. & Christensen, L.B. 2012. *Educational research: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed approaches.* 4th ed. California: SAGE.

Kembo, J. 2000. Language in education and language learning in Africa. In *African Voices: An Introduction to the Languages and Linguistics of Africa.* Edited by V. N. Webb and J. Kembo-Sure. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

King, K.A. & Mackey, A. 2007. *The bilingual edge: Why, when, and how to teach your child a second language.* New York: Collins.

Kozulin, A. 2011. Introduction to Vygotsky's. "The Dynamics of the Schoolchild's Mental Development in Relation to Teaching and Learning." *Journal of Cognitive Education and Psychology*, 10(2):195.

Krashen, S.D. 1985. *The input hypothesis: issues and implications.* London: Addison-Wesley Longman Ltd.

Krashen, S.D. 1987. *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition.* New York: Oxford.

Krueger, R.A. & Casey, M.A. 2015. *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research.* 5th ed. New Delhi: SAGE.

Lenyai, E. 2011. First additional language teaching in the foundation phase of schools in disadvantaged areas. *South African Journal of Childhood Education,* 1(1):68-81.

Lichtman, M. 2012. *Qualitative Research in Education: A User's Guide.* Los Angeles: SAGE.

Lightbown, P. 2008. Easy as pie? Children learning languages. *Concordia Working Papers in Applied Linguistics*, *1*:5-29.

Lipka, O. & Siegel, L.S. 2007. The development of reading skills in children with English as a second language. *Scientific Studies of Reading,* 11(2):105-131.

Long, M.H. 1996. The role of the linguistic environment in second language acquisition. *Handbook of Second Language Acquisition,* 2(2):413-468.

López, M.G. & Tashakkori, A. 2006. Differential outcomes of two bilingual education programs on English language learners. *Bilingual Research Journal,* 30(1):123-145.

Louisiana Department of Education. 2012. iLEAP (Integrated Louisiana Educational Assessment Program) *Assessment Guide Grade 3.* Los Angeles: State Printers.

Lyster, R. & Sato, M. 2013. Skill Acquisition Theory and the role of practice in L2 development. In *Contemporary Approaches to Second Language Acquisition.* Edited by M. del Pilar Garcia Mayo, M. J. Gutierrez Mangado and M. Martinez Adrian. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Mack, L. 2010. *The philosophical underpinnings of educational research.* [Online] Available from: http://en.apu.ac.jp/rcaps/uploads/fckeditor/publications/polyglossia/Polyglossia_V19_Lindsay.pdf. (Accessed on: 21 January 2017).

MacSwan, J. & Pray, L. 2005. Learning English bilingually: Age of onset of exposure and rate of acquisition among English language learners in a bilingual education program. *Bilingual Research Journal,* 29(3):653-678.

MacWhinney, B. 2005. A unified model of language acquisition. In *Handbook of Bilingualism: Psycholinguistic Approaches*. Edited by J.F. Kroll and A.M.B. de Groot. New York: Oxford University Press.

Makoe, P. 2014. Language acquisition and language learning. In *Introducing English as First Additional Language in the Early Years.* Edited by N. Phatudi. Cape Town: Pearson Holdings.

Maree, K. & van der Westhuizen, C. 2009. Head Start in Designing Research Proposals in the Social Sciences. Cape Town: Juta.

Marsden, E. & David, A. 2008. Vocabulary use during conversation: A cross-sectional study of development from year 9 to year 13 among learners of Spanish and French. *Language Learning Journal,* 36(2):181-198.

Maxwell, J.A. 2013. *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach.* California: SAGE.

Mboweni-Marais, K. 2003. Moerdertaal vuurpyl vir uitmunt in 'pynvakke'. *Beeld,* 15 June.

McCabe, R. V. 1996. *The implementation of the English-medium of instruction policy in certain black schools.* MEd thesis. Potchefstroom: North-West University.

McCabe, R.M. 2013. Scaffolded Code-switching: A resource for achieving academic literacy? *Journal for Language Teaching,* 47(2):159-192.

McDonald, J.L. 1997. Language acquisition: The acquisition of linguistic structure in normal and special populations. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 48:215-241.

McIntyre, E., Kyle, D., Chen, C.T., Muñoz, M. & Beldon, S. 2010. Teacher learning and ELL reading achievement in sheltered instruction classrooms: Linking professional development to student development. *Literacy Research and Instruction,* 49(4):334-351.

Merriam, S.B. 2009. *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation: Revised and expanded from qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Mertens, D.M. 2014. *Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology: Integrating Diversity with Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methods.* California: SAGE.

Miles, M.B. & Huberman, A.M. 1994. *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook.* California: SAGE.

Miralpeix, I. 2007. Lexical knowledge in instructed language learning: The effects of age and exposure. *International Journal of English Studies,* 7(2):61-84.

Mkhize, D.N. 2013. *The nested contexts of language use and literacy learning in a South African fourth grade class: Understanding the dynamics of language and literacy practices.* PhD thesis. Ann Arbor: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Morgan, D.L. 2002. Focus Group Interviewing. In *Handbook of Interview Research: Context and Method.* Edited by J.F. Gubrium and J.A. Holstein. London: SAGE.

Mothibeli, A. 2005. Cross-Country achievement results from the SACMEQ 11 Project–2000 to 2002. A quantitative analysis of education systems in Southern and Eastern Africa. *Edusource Data News,* 49:1-9.

Muñoz, C. 2006. The Effects of Age on Foreign Language Learning: The BAF Project. In *Age and the Rate of Foreign Language Learning (Vol. 19).* Edited by C. Muñoz. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Myles, F. & Mitchell, R. 2004. Using information technology to support empirical SLA research. *Journal of Applied Linguistics,* 1(2): 169-196.

Navés, T., Torras, M.R. & Celaya, M.L. 2003. Long-term effects of an earlier start: An analysis of EFL written production. *Eurosla Yearbook,* 3(1):103-129.

Nel, N. & Müller, H. 2010. The impact of teachers' limited English proficiency on English second language learners in South African schools. *South African Journal of Education,* 30:635-650.

Nicholas, H. & Lightbown, P.M. 2008. Defining child second language acquisition, defining roles for L2 instruction. In *Second Language Acquisition and the Younger Learner: Child's play*? Edited by J. Philp, R. Oliver and A. Mackey. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Co.

Nieuwenhuis, J. 2010b. Introducing qualitative research. In *First Steps in Research*. K. Maree. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Nieuwenhuis, J. 2010c. Qualitative research designs and data gathering techniques. In *First Steps in Research*. K. Maree. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

O'Connor, J. & Geiger, M. 2009. Challenges facing primary school educators of English Second (or Other) Language learners in the Western Cape. *South African Journal of Education*, 27:419-429.

Ojima, S., Matsuba-Kurita, H., Nakamura, N., Hoshino, T. & Hagiwara, H. 2011. Age and amount of exposure to a foreign language during childhood: Behavioral and ERP data on the semantic comprehension of spoken English by Japanese children. *Neuroscience Research,* 70(2):197-205.

Okeke, C. & Van Wyk, M. 2015. *Educational research: An African approach*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press Southern Africa.

O'Malley, J.M. & Chamot, A.U. 1990. *Learning strategies in second language acquisition.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ouane, A. (ed.) 2003. *Towards a Multilingual Culture of Education*. Hamburg: UNESCO Institute for Education.

Páez, M. & Rinaldi, C. 2006. Predicting English word reading skills for Spanish-speaking students in first grade. *Topics in Language Disorders,* 26(4):338.

Paradis, J. 2008. Second Language Acquisition in Childhood. In *Blackwell Handbook of Language Development*. Edited by E. Hoff and M. Shatz. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., pp.387-405.

Peräkylä, A. 1997. Reliability and validity in research based on tapes and transcripts. In *Qualitative research: Theory, method and practice*. London: SAGE, pp:201-220.

Phatudi, N. 2014. Introducing EFAL as language of learning and teaching. In *Introducing English as First Additional Language in the Early Years*. Edited by N. Phatudi. Cape Town: Pearson.

Phatudi, N.C. 2007. *A study of transition from preschool and home contexts to grade 1 in a developing country.* PhD thesis. Pretoria: University of Pretoria.

Plessis, S.D. & Louw, B. 2008. Challenges to preschool teachers in learner's acquisition of English as language of learning and teaching. *South African Journal of Education,* 28(1):53-74.

Posel, D. & Casale, D. 2011. Language proficiency and language policy in South Africa: Findings from new data. *International Journal of Educational Development,* 31(5):449-457.

Probyn, M., Murray, S., Botha, L., Botya, P., Brooks, M. & Westphal, V. 2002. Minding the gaps – An investigation into language policy and practice in four Eastern Cape districts. *Perspectives in Education,* 20(1):29-46.

Ramirez, J.D., Yuen, S.D., Ramey, D.R., Pasta, D.J. & Billings, D.K. 1991. *Final report: Longitudinal study of structured immersion strategy, early-exit, and late-exit transitional bilingual education programs for language-minority children.* San Mateo: Aguirre International.

Renshaw, P. & Brown, R.A.J. 2007. Formats of classroom talk for integrating every day and scientific discourse: Replacement, interweaving, contextual privileging and pastiche. *Language and Education - Clevedon,* 21(6):531-549.

Republic of South Africa. 1996. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. Act No. 108 of 1996. *Government Gazette,* Vol. 378 No. 17678. Cape Town: Government Printer.

Roodt, D. 2002. Keel se klanke. *Beeld,* 22 February.

Sailors, M., Hoffman, J.V., Pearson, P.D., Beretvas, S.N. & Matthee, B. 2010. The effects of first-and second-language instruction in rural South African schools. *Bilingual Research Journal,* 33(1):21-41.

Salami, L.O. 2008. It is still "double take." Mother tongue education and bilingual classroom practice in Nigeria. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education,* 7(2):91-112.

Sanacore, J. & Palumbo, A. 2008, Understanding the fourth-grade slump: Our point of view. *The Educational Forum* 73(1):67-74.

Seabi, J. 2012. Research designs and data collection techniques. In *Complete your thesis or dissertation successfully: Practical guidelines*. Edited by J. Maree. Cape Town: Juta & Company Limited.

Senesac, B.V.K. 2002. Two-way bilingual immersion: A portrait of quality schooling. *Bilingual Research Journal,* 26(1):85-101.

Sešek, U. 2007. English for teachers of EFL – Toward a holistic description. *English for Specific Purposes,* 26(4):411-425.

Shatz, M. & Wilkinson, L.C. (eds.) 2010. *The Education of English Language Learners: Research to Practice.* New York: Guilford Press.

Short, D.J., Fidelman, C.G. & Louguit, M. 2012. Developing academic language in English language learners through sheltered instruction. *Tesol Quarterly,* 46(2):334-361.

Silverman, D. 2006. *Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods for Analysing Talk, Text and Interaction.* London: SAGE.

Silverman, D. 2013. *Doing Qualitative Research: A Practical Handbook*. London: SAGE.

Sink, C., Edwards, C. & Weir, S. 2007. Helping children transition from kindergarten to first grade. *Professional School Counselling,* 10(3):233-237.

South Africa. 1996. *The South African Schools Act* (Act number 84 of 1996). Pretoria: Government Printer.

Sparks, R., Patton, J., Ganschow, L. & Humbach, N. 2009. Long-term relationships among early language skills, L2 aptitude, L2 affect, and later L2 proficiency. *Applied Psycholinguistics,* 30:725-755.

Stadler, H. 2002. *Rapport.*

Stake, R.E. 2005. Qualitative case studies. In *The Sage handbook of qualitative research.* 3rd ed. Edited by N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, pp.443-466.

Stander, M. 2001. Taaloordrag in die onderrig van Afrikaans as tweede taal. *Literator: Journal of Literary Criticism, Comparative Linguistics and Literary Studies,* 22(3):107-122.

Taylor, S. & von Fintel, M. 2016. Estimating the impact of language of instruction in South African primary schools: A fixed effects approach*. Economics of Education Review, 50:75-89.*

Theron, L.C. & Nel, M. 2005. The needs and perceptions of South African Grade 4 educators, teaching English second-language (ESL) learners. *Africa Education Review,* 2(2):221-241.

Thorne, S.L. & Lantolf, J.P. 2007. A linguistics of communicative activity. *Disinventing and Reconstituting Languages,* 62:170-195.

Turner, S. 2007. Introduction to special issue: Transitional issues for K-16 students. *Professional School Counselling,* 10(3):224-226.

Van der Berg, S. 2008. How effective are poor schools? Poverty and educational outcomes in South Africa. *Studies in Educational Evaluation,* 34(3):145-154.

Van der Berg, S., Burger, C., Burger, R., de Vos, M., du Rand, G., Gustafsson, M., Moses, E., Shepherd, D., Spaull, N. & Taylor, S. 2011. *Low quality education as a poverty trap.* Stellenbosch: University of Stellenbosch.

VanPatten, B. & Benati, A.G. 2010. *Key Terms in Second Language Acquisition.* London: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Vorster, C., Mayet, A. & Taylor, S. 2013. The language of teaching and learning in South African schools. Stellenbosch: SUNScholar Research Repository.

Vygotsky, L. 1978. Interaction between learning and development. *Readings on the Development of Children,* 23(3):34-41.

Vygotsky, L. 2012. *Thought and Language* (Revised and expanded edition). Edited by E. Hanfmann, G. Vakar and A. Kozulin. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Wellington, J. 2015. *Educational Research: Contemporary Issues and Practical Approaches.* London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.

Williams, E. 1998. *Investigating Bilingual Literacy: Evidence from Malawi and Zambia. Education Research Paper*. London: Department for International Development.

Willig, C. 2013. *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology. 3rd ed.* Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Wood, D. 1998. *How children think and learn: The social contexts of cognitive development.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Yule, G. 2016. *The Study of Language.* 6th ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

7. ANNEXURES

7.1 Annexure A: Letters of consent

7.1.1 A1: Consent from Principal/teachers

21 October 2015

The Grade 3 & 4 teachers/Principal
The sampled school

Dear Ms _____

Permission to participate in Master's study research at (the sampled school)

I am a registered Masters student at the Early Childhood Education Department of the University of Pretoria. The title of my study is: THE TRANSITION OF GRADE 4 LEARNERS TO ENGLISH AS MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION.

I would like to carry out a study on the transition of learners from SiSwati to English as Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT). The reason is that many learners fail in Grade 4. I want to find out whether the reason can be attributed to the changing from one medium of instruction to another.

I am granted permission to conduct my research at your school during the third and fourth term of 2015. Should it be necessary, data collection could continue to the first term in 2016. My research will involve conducting interviews with Grade 3 & 4 teachers and observing you and your learners in the classroom situation.

Interviews will not be conducted during teaching/contact time. Observations will be done on a weekly basis during the school day for a period of 6-8 weeks. Classroom observation sessions will be for an hour at a time. I will be a passive participant who will take field

notes while you and your learners are busy in class. During this period, I would also like to examine the Grade 3 & 4 learners' books, academic records and their ANA results.

I will strictly adhere to the ethical principles of the University of Pretoria. Your and your learners' privacy will be protected and no identities will be revealed. Your participation is completely voluntarily and you may withdraw from the research at any time without any consequences. No harm will be inflicted on anybody in any way.

It is envisaged that this study would reveal pedagogical and non-pedagogical practices that could affect Grade 3 learners' successful transition from home language education to English as LoLT in Grade 4.

I trust that you will embark fully on this endeavor and regard this as an opportunity for professional development. You will be kept informed regarding the progress of the research. Data will be collected, analyzed and verified with you and the principal. I undertake to disclose the findings of my research with the stakeholders involved.

Your co-operation will be highly appreciated. Should you have any questions regarding this research please feel free to contact me at g.steyn@lantic.net or my supervisor at phatun1@unisa.ac.za

Yours sincerely

_____

Mrs G Steyn
Cell no: 082 440 2833

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign this letter as your consent:

I, the undersigned, _____
hereby give my consent to participate in the study entitled THE TRANSITION OF GRADE 4 LEARNERS TO ENGLISH AS MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION.

I understand that participation in this study is completely voluntary and that I may withdraw from it at any time with no consequences.

Furthermore I, the undersigned, understand that:
- my identity will remain anonymous
- interviews will be recorded

_____   _____

Signature of participant   Date

Ms _____

_____   _____

Signature of researcher   Date

Ms G Steyn

7.1.2 A2: Consent from parents (English)

I, the undersigned, _____, legal parent/guardian/caregiver

of_____hereby give my consent that my child/minor under my care may participate in the study entitled THE TRANSITION OF GRADE 4 LEARNERS TO ENGLISH AS MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION.

I understand that participation in this study is completely voluntary and that he/she may withdraw from it at any time with no consequences.

Furthermore I, the undersigned, understand that:

- his/her identity will remain anonymous
- the researcher will observe him/her in class
- may have access to his/her academic records

_____   _____

Signature of parent/guardian/caregiver   Date

_____   _____

Signature of researcher   Date

Ms G Steyn

Mine _____, ngekwemtsetfo umtali/umsiti/umnakekeli

wa_____

nginiketa lilungelo kutsi umntfwana wani/umntfwana wami lengimnakekelako uvumelekile kungelelela tifundvo letinesihloko lesiti KUDLULELA KWEBAFUNDZI BELIBANGA LESINE ESINGISINI NJENGELULWIMI LWEKUFUNDZA.

Ngiyavisisa kutsi kungenelela kulesifundvo kukutinikela nje futsi angayekela noma ngasiphi sikhatsi ngaphandle kwetihibe.

Ngiyakuvisisa futsi kutsi:

- Bunguye bakhe angeke buvetwe.
- Umcwaningi utawubuka eklasini.
- Utawubuka nemvume yekubuka imiphumela yakhe.

_____   _____

Losayinile (umtali/umsiti/umnakekeli)   Lusuku

_____   _____

Losayinile (Umcwaningi)   Lusuku
Make G Steyn

7.1.3   A3: Assent from learners (English)

Dear friend

Mrs Steyn is also learning at a school. This school is very

big. Its name is the University of Pretoria.

Will you and your friends please

help me? May I see how you work and learn in class?

You can tell me ![photo of Mrs Steyn] or your teacher ![teacher] if you don't

want to help me anymore, I will NOT be cross ![smiley face] .

Your parents ![parents] know you are helping me.

No one else will know that you helped me.

Thank you very much.

![photo of Mrs Steyn]

Mrs Steyn

Please colour the ☺ **green if you say YES**
          or
circle the   X   red if you say NO.

I _____ say

Yes	☺
No	X

_____

Date

Mngani wami

Make Steyn naye ufundza kulesikolo. Lesikolo

sikhulu kakhulu. Ligama laso yiNguvesi yase Pitoli.

Ningangisita yini wena nebangani

bakho? Ngicela kubona kutsi nifundza nisebente njani eklaseni.

Ungangitjela noma utjele thishela uma

ungasafuni kungisita, angeke ngitfukutsele.

Batali bakho bayati kutsi uyangisita.

Akekho lomunye lotawati kutsi ungisitile.

Ngiyabonga kakhulu.

Ngimi make Steyn

Faka umbala loluhlata njengetjani kulobuso ☺ **uma utsi YEBO**
noma

ubiyela lesiphambano X ngalokubova uma utsi CHA.

Mine _____ ngitsi

Yebo	☺
Cha	X

_____

Lusuku

7.2   Annexure B: Observation schedule

Observation schedule

The following aspects were observed in the grade 3 and 4 classes:

1. Language used in class

Teachers
*   General communication
*   When explaining concepts/content
*   Proficiency

Learners
*   General communication
*   When responding/asking questions
*   Among the learners

2. Lesson preparation
*   Correspondence with actual lesson
*   Comprehensiveness/lack of some elements

3. Facilitation
*   Interest
*   Good preparation
*   Learner participation/involvement
*   Resources used

4. Do learners show understanding?

5. Evidence of work done
*   Number of activities
*   Control and corrections

6. Classroom ambiance and discipline

7.3   Annexure C: Interview schedule

TOPIC: Grade 3 teachers

1. How long have you been teaching Grade 3 learners?

    And before that?

    What was the reason for the change?

2. You teach your Gr 3 learners in siSwati.

    Is your home language also siSwati?

3. What is your view of mother tongue education?

4. How many of your learners are really siSwati HL speakers?

5. Do you think that your learner's HL is well developed and that they are fluent in siSwati?

    (I observed in the practical reading assessment that many of the learners could not read siSwati fluently.)

6. In what language were you taught at school?

    Did you also have to change to English in your schooling career?

    At what stage did that happen and how did you experience it?

7. Do you think that was a better system than our present situation?

    In what way?

8. Are you satisfied with your learners' level of performance?

    If not, what do you think could be the reason(s) for it?

9. Now, your learners must continue their schooling in English next year.

    How do you prepare them for this transition?

    Are there certain strategies you use in your teaching?

10. Do you think EFAL as presented in the CAPS document is sufficient preparation for our learners to switch successfully to English as LoLT?

11. Are you experiencing any challenges in your teaching and preparation of the learners for this transition?

    In terms of resources/skills?

12. Do you think there is any correlation between the learner's HL level of development and his/her successful transition to English as LoLT?

13. What is your personal view regarding this transition from home language education to English as medium of instruction in our schooling system?

14. Do you have any suggestions regarding this transition?

What could or should be done differently?

15. Is there anything else you would like to share or add that could give me a better understanding of the preparation and transition these learners face?

TOPIC: Grade 4 teachers

1. You are teaching Grade 4 Social Sciences/English/Mathematics, correct?
   Do you enjoy teaching Grade 4 Social Sciences/English/Mathematics?

2. How long have you been teaching Grade 4 learners?
   And before that?
   What was the reason for the change?

3. I would firstly like to hear what your view of mother tongue education is.

4. How were you taught at school?
   I believe you also had to make a switch to English somewhere in your schooling career?
   How did you experience that?
   Do you think that was a better system than our present situation?
   In what way?

5. Do you think your learner's HL is well developed and that they are fluent in siSwati?

6. Do you think there is any correlation between the learner's HL ability and his/her successful transition to Eng as LoLT?

7. When studying your school's Gr 3 and 4 learners' results for term 3 there is a sharp decline in the Gr 4's performance.
   How are the learners in your class coping with using English as LOLT in Gr 4?

8. Are you experiencing any challenges in your teaching of the Grade 4 learners?

9. Do you think the learners were well prepared in Gr 3 for this transition?

10. What do you think could or should be done about it/differently?

11. What do you think are the most important factors influencing this transition?

12. Are you comfortable with teaching in a language other than your own home language?
    Are you experiencing any challenges in this regard?

13. What is your view regarding this whole transition from home language education to English as medium of instruction in our schooling system?

14. Do you have any suggestions regarding this transition?

15. Is there anything else you would like to share or add that could give me a better understanding of the preparation and transition these learners face?

7.4 Annexure D: Interpreter/translator confidentiality and non-disclosure agreement

INTERPRETER/TRANSLATOR CONFIDENTIALITY AND NON DISCLOSURE AGREEMENT

Title of research: THE TRANSITION OF GRADE 4 LEARNERS TO ENGLISH AS MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION.

I, _____, have been appointed as an interpreter in the above research project by the researcher, Mrs G. Steyn.

I agree to the following terms and conditions as stated below:

- I shall keep all research information (such as names, identity) shared with me confidential.
- I shall not discuss or share the research information in any form of format (eg. disks, tapes, transcripts) with anyone other than the researcher.
- I shall keep all research information in any form of format (eg. disks, tapes, transcripts) secure while it is in my possession.
- I shall return all research information in any form or format (eg. disks, tapes, transcripts) to the researcher when I have completed my research tasks.
- I shall erase or destroy all research information in any form or format regarding this research project that is in my possession and which is not returnable to the researcher after receiving her permission to do so.

- I shall not obtain any personal profit or advantage from any confidential information during my interpretation/translation services.

These terms and conditions are fully understood by me.

_____   _____

Signature (Interpreter/translater)   Date

Dr Z G Ntimane

_____   _____

Signature (researcher)   Date

Mrs G Steyn