Mother tongue and social media influence on second language learners' English proficiency

by

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Supervisor: Prof. Lizette de Jager

April 2022

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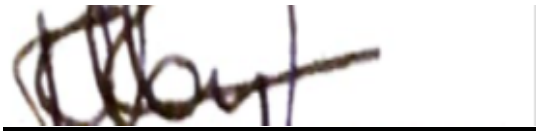

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to my late grandmother Matjie Khubega who played a pivotal role in my upbringing, God and ancestors for keeping me alive and encouraged even when it seemed impossible.

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To have achieved this milestone in my life, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the following:

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Abstract

English is used as a medium for global communication, education, business, and research. Subsequently, universities in more than 130 countries determine prospective students' level of proficiency through English competency tests like the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). This adds an additional burden to Grade 12 English second language learners to be more proficient. Even so, poor Grade 12 results in the National Senior Certificate examination in South Africa, especially for English First Additional Language, and poor reading achievement of learners in lower grades in the Annual National Assessment (ANA) and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), remain a concern. It is in this context that I investigated mother tongue and social media influence on English second language learners' proficiency, focusing on Grade 12. The study was conducted through a qualitative approach with an interpretivist paradigm. It was theoretically framed on the Linguistic Interdependence Theory of Cummins (1978), which argues that the mastery of L1 skills is influential in the development of the corresponding abilities in L2. The findings reveal that unsuccessful skills transfer from L1 to L2 result in learners committing concord and spelling errors. Even so, the brevity mostly used on social media was found in learners' written work. L2 learners switch and mix both mother tongue and English when they lack vocabulary. They also lacked motivation to use and develop adequate English proficiency in the classroom.

Key words: brevity; code-switching; code-mixing; concord errors; International English Language Testing System (IELTS); Linguistic Interdependence Theory; Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)

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To whom it may concern

This is to confirm that I, MJ de Jager, edited the dissertation,

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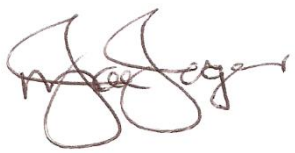

MJ DE JAGER

22 April 2022

List of abbreviations

ANA	Annual National Assessment
BEd	Bachelor of Education
BICS	Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills
CA	Contrastive Analysis
CAH	Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis
CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
CUP	Common Underlying Proficiency
DBE	Department of Basic Education
ELL	English Language Learners
ESL	English as a Second Language
FAL	First Additional Language
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
IH	Identity Hypothesis
LiEP	Language in Education Policy
LIT	Linguistic Interdependence Theory
LOLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
MT	Mother Tongue
NSC	National Senior Certificate
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
TL	Target Language
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language

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CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The influence of mother tongue and social media on the English language proficiency of Grade 12 First Additional Language (FAL) learners has dominated educational discourse for many years. This is no surprise when one takes the global status of English into account. English remains significant for growth as it is the biggest and most spoken language internationally (Nishanthi, 2018). English is undoubtedly one of the four most-used second languages worldwide (Saville-Troike, 2006). It is thus not difficult to understand why it is important for learners to learn and acquire English as a second language.

English is not only a language for universal communication, but it is used worldwide in different spheres (Jeraltin & Ramganesh, 2013; Ozowuba, 2018). Nyamayedenga, De Jager and Aluko (2018) and Ekola (2016) contend that English is used for wider communication in research, work and commerce.

Nishanthi (2018) contends that in many universities worldwide, almost all learning is conducted in English to accommodate and make learning available for international students. Nyamayedenga et al. (2018) further postulate that English remains the language of power and prestige and that it is essential for speakers to be proficient to ascend the social ladder.

There is no doubt that English is a leading business language and it has almost become a requirement for people to be proficient in the language if they are to enter the worldwide workforce. International companies like Microsoft, Nokia, Airbus, Daimler-Chrysler, Samsung, SAP, Fast-Retailing, Renault, and Technicolor have authorised the use of English as their recognised language of business (Nishanthi, 2018). Even so, the learning of and proficiency in English as a second language remains a challenge, also for Grade 12 learners.

The South African Language in Education Policy (LiEP) (South Africa, 1997) determines that starting from Grade 4, all schools shall offer their preferred language of learning and teaching (LoLT) and at least one additional language as subjects. Guided by the LiEP (South Africa, 1997), most South African schools adopted

English as LoLT. In agreement, Masitsa (2004) contends that in the late nineteen eighties, most township schools opted to use English as their medium of instruction, or LoLT. Nyamayedenga et al., (2018) mention that in Southern African countries like Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Botswana, English is part of the curriculum, in spite of which, English learning has continued to be a challenge.

In acknowledging the importance of English proficiency in academic achievement, many countries worldwide adopted the use of English assessments for admission of international students to their institutions of higher learning, placing an even greater burden on English second language learners. According to Ozowuba (2018), the need to communicate and teach in English has increased, thus English language competence testing has become more important. Many educational institutions around the world conduct English assessment tests to gain authentic information about English language learners' (ELL) competency, especially when they wish to study abroad (Ozowuba, 2018). The two most internationally recognised tests are the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) (O'Dwyer, Kantarcioğlu & Thomas, 2018; Ozowuba, 2018). These tests are used in over 130 countries, which includes Australia, the United States of America (USA), the United Kingdom (UK), New Zealand, and Canada, to determine the proficiency and academic prospects of students intending to study in English medium universities across the world (O'Dwyer et al., 2018).

The results of the tests demonstrate a strong correlation between high scores in English language proficiency and high prospects of academic achievement (O'Dwyer et al., 2018; Ozowuba, 2018). However, some argue that the tests cannot be exclusively accurate for all students. Xu (1991) argues against the strong correlation between TOEFL tests and academic achievement by saying that an individual may have a high TOEFL score but struggles to achieve academically because language proficiency is not the sole requirement of academic success.

In corroborating Xu's (1991) findings, Cho and Bridgeman (2012) and Wait and Gressel (2009) distinguished among low scoring groups and higher scoring groups in English tests and evaluated their educational performance. They discovered that good language ability upon entry into university positively drives academic

performance. However, the language competence level gained does not play any significant role in terms of academic performance. This means that a student may demonstrate a high level of language competence but fail to master the grades in classes.

Added to the existing challenges to learning L2, mother tongue (MT) influence and the complexity of social media as contributing factors to academic achievement need investigation. Social media undoubtedly remains the most rapid developing web application in the modern world (Abu-Shanab & Al-Tarawneh, 2015). Facebook and Twitter are ranked highest with over a million users (Abu-Shanab & Al-Tarawneh, 2015). The ubiquitous use of social media, as well as mother tongue influence in second language learning, provides the context to my study. It is through this context that I seek to establish how both MT and the usage of social media as a resource in the classroom influence English proficiency and thus academic achievement.

In the remainder of this chapter I provide an overview of the study, which is represented visually in figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1 Visual representation of the structure of chapter 1

1.2 Problem statement

Mother tongue and social media influence the proficiency of English second language learners. English First Additional Language (English as a second language) is a fundamental subject in Grade 12 and paves a way for learning all other subjects. This is to say that language is a factor in academic achievement (Prinsloo, Rodgers & Harvey, 2018). The teaching and learning of English is aimed at producing proficient learners ready for university or to enter the job market. Learners in Grade 12 must ideally be proficient in writing, reading and speaking

English. According to Department of Basic Education (2011), the specific aim of learning a First Additional Language (FAL) ought to be to acquire necessary language skills needed to accurately communicate, bearing in mind the audience, context and purpose.

In addition to using the language across the curriculum, learners need to listen, read, speak and write the language with confidence and enjoyment (Department of Basic Education, 2011). However, this has not been the case in some rural secondary schools in Sekhukhune East. The learners do not express themselves in proper English in and outside the classroom – even in Grade 12. Some learners' writing and reading skills are at elementary level, which could be as a result of language deficiency caused by a myriad of factors.

These challenges emanate from and are reflected in the poor reading achievement of South African learners in the Annual National Assessment (ANA) and the 2011 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) (Prinsloo et al., 2018). The aim of the ANA introduced by the Department of Basic Education in 2011 for Grades 1 to 6 and 9 was to introduce systemic evaluation of educational performance in order to accelerate achievement of learners in numeracy and literacy (Van der Berg, 2015). South African learners tested in African languages in Grade 4 achieved below the international centre point in PIRLS 2011 and those in Grade 5 writing Afrikaans and English also performed poorly at about 80 points below the international average of 500 (Howie, Van Staden, Tshele, Dowse & Zimmerman, 2012). The literacy achievement of learners in lower grades matters because it lays the foundation for English proficiency in Grade 12.

Yadav (2014:574) states that "fluency and literacy in the mother tongue lay a cognitive and linguistic foundation for learning additional languages such as English". This is to say that the development of fluency in the mother tongue paves a way for fluency in English as L2. Furthermore, textese such as the invention of own acronyms, abbreviations, letter-to-number homophones, vowel deletion, phonological approximation, spelling manipulation, shortening of words and pronounceable spelling techniques used in social media adds to the challenges of gaining English proficiency (Salaudeen & Lawal, 2019). The use of social media in

the English classroom ought to be as a resource to disseminate information to the learners without the use of textese.

Many schools chose English as their preferred language of learning and teaching. However, most of these schools have not adequately developed language policies which promote effective use of English as a classroom subject and a means of communication. Probyn, Murray, Botha, Botya, Brooks and Westphal (2002) mention that very few schools have developed school language policies in line with the LiEP (1997). The schools ought to enforce English language policy in order to afford learners enough opportunity to develop their vocabulary.

Studies on this topic have investigated the influence of English language proficiency on the overall academic performance of learners in all subjects, but few, if any, studies have focused on mother tongue and social media influence on English second language learners' proficiency in a school subject – especially in a rural context.

1.3 Aims of the research

The aim of this research was to investigate mother tongue and social media influence on English second language learners' proficiency. The focus was on the English proficiency of Grade 12 English second language learners in public schools in the Sekhukhune East education district in the Limpopo province of South Africa. The study was conducted in three secondary schools. Learners were observed in interactive classroom situations in English First Additional Language classes between November 2020 and June 2021. Furthermore, a sample of eighteen learners were interviewed to determine their level of English proficiency (both oral and written).

The purpose of the study was to explore how mother tongue and social media influenced English second language learners' English proficiency. The findings from this research may assist education stakeholders and the research community to find strategies to improve English language proficiency and academic achievement among learners – especially in rural contexts.

1.4 Purpose of the research

The purpose of this research was to explore MT and social media influence on English second language learners' proficiency. The study was premised in the context that proficiency in mother tongue has the ability to influence corresponding proficiency in L2 (Cummins, 1978). It further explored the influence of social media as an additional resource in English L2 learning. The findings will add value to the existing body of literature relating to MT and social media influence on English second language learners' proficiency and academic achievement. The study should also contribute to the discourse and improvement of English second language acquisition and achievement in rural contexts and help educators in English FAL to identify and develop strategies to improve learners' proficiency.

1.5 Key terminology

A number of key terms used throughout this study are explained in this section.

1.5.1 A second language is an authorised and dominant language required for multiple purposes such as employment and education (Saville-Troike, 2006).

1.5.2 Mother tongue (referred to as Home Language in the South African education system) is a language acquired during early childhood, usually prior to three years of age and is learned by speakers of that particular language as part of growing up (Saville-Troike, 2006). For the purpose of this research, mother tongue refers to language 1 (L1).

1.5.3 Language proficiency refers to an individual's ability to speak or perform in an acquired language (Ozowuba, 2018).

1.5.4 Academic achievement refers to the degree to which a learner, teacher or organisation has achieved their short- or long-term educational goals. In the context of the study, academic achievement refers to learners' ability to meet minimum pass requirements in an English assessment.

1.5.5 In the South African school curriculum, English as a subject in schools is studied as Home Language (first language [L1] level) or First Additional Language (FAL) (offered at second language [L2] level). For the purpose of this research, First Additional Language refers to a second language or L2 and the two will be used interchangeably.

1.6 Research questions

Research questions are main questions guiding the research topic. The research questions add value to the problem statement in research.

Main research question:

1.6.1 How does mother tongue and social media influence English second language learners' proficiency?

Sub-questions:

1.6.2 To what extent is English language proficiency influenced by the MT?

1.6.3 To what extent is English language proficiency influenced by social media as a resource?

1.7 Literature overview

The review of the literature is discussed under the broad themes of English language proficiency as part of second language acquisition (SLA) and included the two sub-themes of mother tongue interference and social media as a language learning resource, which play a role in proficiency and the resulting academic achievement. In this chapter, I provide an overview of the review of the relevant literature.

1.7.1 Second language acquisition (SLA)

SLA involves the process of acquiring an additional language subsequent to the learning of the first language (Saville-Troike, 2006). The additional language learned is referred to as the target language (TL) or the second language (L2), although it may actually be acquired as a third, fourth or fifth language. Two widely known hypotheses in SLA, namely, the Identity Hypothesis (IH) (Namaziandost, 2017:165) and the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) (Klein, 1986:23) are discussed extensively in chapter 2.

1.7.2 Identity Hypothesis (IH)

The IH postulates that the successful acquisition of one language has little or no effect on the acquisition of another language (Namaziandost, 2017). Based on this theory, the learning of languages is not interdependent and synonymous, therefore success in one does not guarantee success in another.

1.7.3 Contrastive Analysis (CA)

The CA Hypothesis was developed by Lado (1957) in order to account for the systematic acquisition of L2 by comparing the L1 and culture with the L2 and culture (Lado, 1957). Lado (1957) focused on studying a language pair with the aim of determining their similarities and differences in structure (Thyab, 2016). The method was used in the 1960s and 1970s to provide an explanation of why some features of the target language were more complex to learn than others (Thyab, 2016). The CAH highlights grammatical errors made by English second language learners (Wong & Dras, 2009).

1.7.4 Mother tongue interference in SLA

According to Thomason (2001), interference refers to a direct transfer and integration of features of one language into the other and the possible changes made to suit the user's intentions. Subandowo (2017) argues that the concept of mother tongue interference can be regarded as a transfer that affects learning negatively and positively (Subandowo, 2017). Negative interference refers to when mother tongue influence leads to errors in the acquisition and use of the target language (Bardovi-Harlig & Sprouse, 2018) and interference has no regard for the language structures of the target language.

Positive interference refers to when mother tongue influence leads to immediate or quick acquisition or use of the target language (Bardovi-Harlig & Sprouse, 2018). Positive interference occurs when the acquisition of L1 positively impacts the learning of L2. Literature presented in chapter 2 explores how the above-mentioned interferences affect English second language learners' proficiency in Grade 12.

1.7.5 Social media, language proficiency and acquisition

In this study, social media as a resource has been identified as playing a role in influencing proficiency of English second language learners in Grade 12. L2 learning and advanced proficiency require relevant exposure to the target language (Alghamdi & Sabir, 2019; Krashen, 1985). Using social media as a resource in English second language teaching and learning has been advanced by many scholars while others have criticised the influence of neologisms used in social media on academic writing. Social media refers to online communication platforms dedicated to society-based input, communication, the sharing of content and networking. Social media platforms include Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, Snapchat, YouTube and Instagram.

The use of social media cannot be ignored as learners spend more and more time on social media (Abu-Shanab & Al-Tarawneh, 2015). Rwodzi, De Jager and Mpofu (2020) mention that due to limited resources, South African English teachers in township areas need to develop appropriate teaching strategies, which incorporate social media. This means that teachers of English must use social media resources in their teaching. However, concerns have been raised about textese used in the medium which finds its way into the Grade 12 English learners' vocabulary. The role played by this medium is discussed extensively in chapter 2.

1.8 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of a study refers to "the theory that a researcher chooses to guide him/her in his/her research" (Imenda, 2014:189). The theoretical framework in this study is based on a review of literature on second language acquisition, proficiency and achievement and was chosen to help identify the methodology for the study. The theoretical framework of this study is Cummins' (1978) Linguistic Interdependence Theory.

1.8.1 Linguistic Interdependence Theory

In the Linguistic Interdependence Theory (LIT), Cummins (1978) maintains that knowledge of a first language (L1) can be completely transferred during the exercise of acquiring a second language (L2) (Vrooman, 2000). Cummins' (1978) Linguistic

Interdependence Theory shows the relationship between a first language and the learning of a second language. Vrooman (2000) argues that the mastery of L1 skills can become exceptionally influential in the development of matching capabilities in L2. The aspects of the two languages which appear to be very different on the surface are actually interdependent in the psychological context (Cummins, 1978).

Figure 1.2 highlights the interdependence between L1 and L2 in language learning (Cummins, 2005). Cummins acknowledges the common underlying proficiency essential for the development of second language proficiency, which he calls the Developmental Interdependence Hypothesis (Cummins, 1979b; Liew, 1996). In essence, Cummins' theory claims that learners who have an adequate foundation or proficiency in a first language (L1) will not struggle to acquire a second language (L2) (Khatib & Taie, 2016).

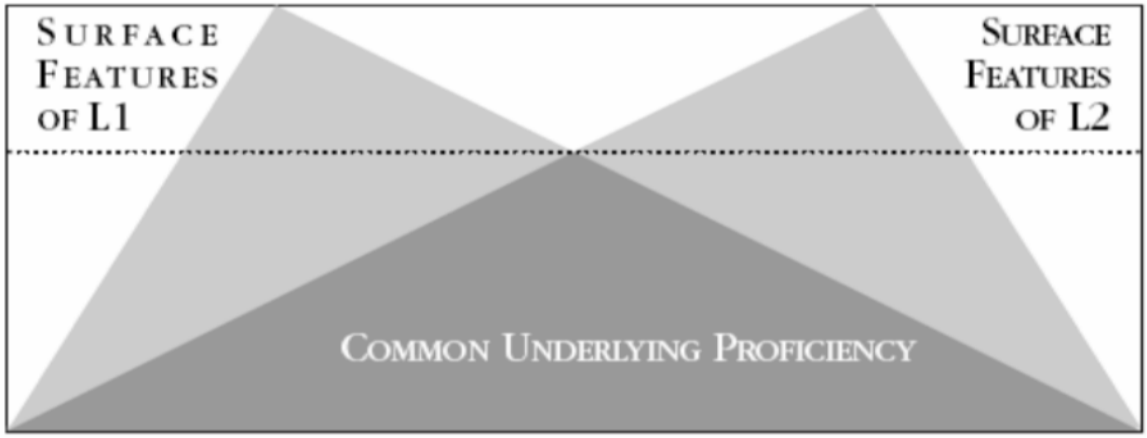


Figure 1.2: Common underlying proficiency (Cummins, 1978)

The implications of a practical interdependence among the development of L1 and L2 skills (Cummins, 1979b) as demonstrated in figure 1.2, are that the surface features of L2 are as a result of the surface features of L1. The common underlying proficiency displayed in figure 1.2 represents common features of both languages which help the positive transfer from L1 to L2. This explains that the development of second language competence is partly a function of the type of proficiency already developed in L1 during the time when exhaustive exposure to L2 begins (Cummins, 1979b). The interpretation is that it would be easier for someone who is proficient in L1 to become more proficient in L2.

Cummins (Kandagor & Rotumoi, 2018) further developed the Dual Iceberg Model represented in figure 1.3, which is premised on common underlying proficiency (CUP). This metaphor explains the cross-lingual proficiencies underlying the diverse surface manifestations of each language (Khatib & Taie, 2016).

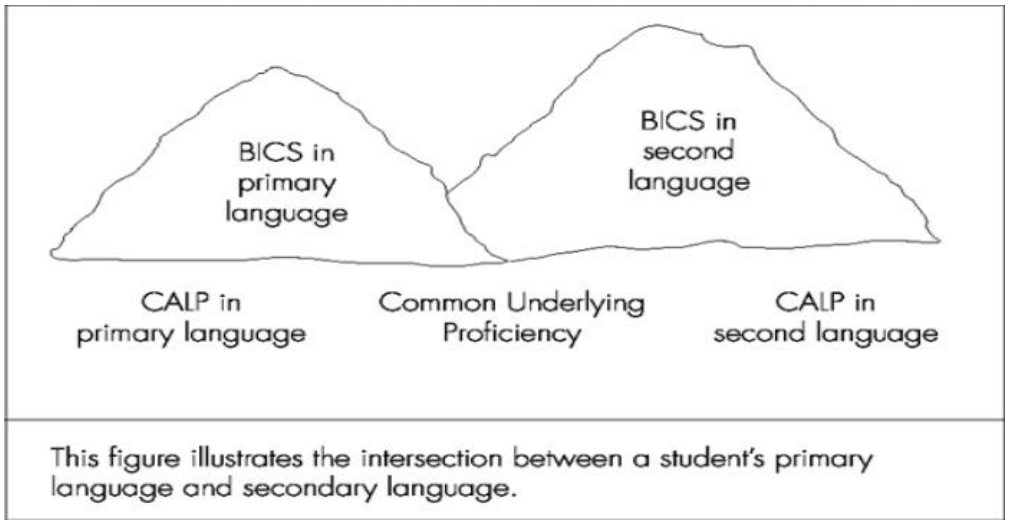


Figure 1.3: The dual iceberg model (adopted from Kandagor & Rotumoi, 2018; Cummins, 2000)

The CUP in figure 1.3 refers to the proficiencies involving learning of the more cognitively challenging activities like content learning, literacy, abstract thinking and problem-solving (Kandagor & Rotumoi, 2018). Cummins used the iceberg metaphor (peaks) to better explain the prospects of growth in the second language due to the CUP. The left-hand peak in figure 1.3 represents the basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) that a learner has developed in their L1 (Sepedi in my study) and the right-hand peak, which is displayed higher than the first, represents the BICS of the second language (English in this instance). The higher peak representing BICS for English second language implies that the learner's BICS for English develops more through the use of L1 as a base (Kandagor & Rotumoi, 2018). The overlap between the two peaks represents what is referred to as the common underlying proficiency.

I used the principles of the Linguistic Interdependence Theory (LIT) to help me answer the research questions in my study. The theory is relevant to my study as I investigated mother tongue and social media influence on English second language

learners' proficiency. As an English second language teacher, I have observed the interference of both mother tongue and social media on English second language learning (which includes thinking, writing and speaking) of Grade 12 learners. The LIT explains mother tongue influence on second language learning and therefore explains the errors that learners make in the target language. The theory may also help in understanding when transfer from L1 to L2 takes place, why the teacher should know this and what the teacher can do to assist in this process.

1.9 Research methodology

Three commonly used approaches to research govern the direction of research from the initial stages to the last stage of writing the research report. These approaches are the qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods research approaches (Creswell, 2009). I chose a qualitative approach since it corresponds to my worldview or paradigm, and is considered most suitable to answer the research questions.

1.9.1 Research paradigm

A research paradigm refers to a basic set of beliefs or a worldview guiding the research action (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). A research paradigm establishes the intangible beliefs and philosophies that shape how a researcher understands the world, interprets it and behaves within that world (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). A research paradigm encompasses four elements, namely, axiology, ontology, epistemology and methodology (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

This study was grounded in the interpretivist paradigm which is premised on the point that "methods used to understanding knowledge associated with human and social sciences cannot be the same as its practice in physical sciences because human beings interpret their world and act based on such interpretation while the world does not" (Hammersley, 2013:36). Creswell (2007) argues that in an interpretivist perspective, researchers gain a profound understanding of the phenomenon under study and its intricacy in its exclusive context rather than attempting to make sweeping statements on the basis of understanding for the entire population.

Hammersley (2013) stresses that since numerous interpretations of human relationships have been developed, interpretivist researchers should attempt to comprehend the various ways of viewing and exploring the world through different contexts and traditions and try to avoid the prejudice in studying the events and people from their own understanding. Interpretivists adapt a relativist ontology through which a particular phenomenon may produce numerous interpretations rather than a single truth, which may be determined by a process of measurement (Pham, 2018). The epistemological view of interpretivists is that reality is understood through perceived knowledge.

1.9.2 Research approach

In this research, I used a qualitative approach because it is suitable for social research, and investigations can be undertaken in subjects' natural sites (De Vos, 2001). Teherani, Martimianakis, Stenfors-Hayes, Wadhwa, and Varpio, (2015:669) define qualitative research as "a systematic enquiry into social phenomena in natural settings". The approach has the advantage of providing depth and detail of a phenomenon, thus enabling the researcher to comprehend the attitudes of the participants. The limitations of this approach are that the findings cannot be generalised to a wider study population and are difficult to replicate.

1.9.3 Research design

A research design refers to the inclusive strategy used to incorporate the different aspects of an inquiry in a clear and consistent way (Yin, 2009). I used an exploratory case study as a research design. "A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 2009:18). Creswell (2009) describes case study as a plan of investigation in which the researcher explores an event or a process in depth. The use of a case study design in my study ensured that the phenomenon under study was investigated in the participants' natural setting in schools where learning takes place. An advantage of using a case study is that it allows for more detail to be collected which would not have been easily attained through other research designs (Creswell, 2009).

1.10 Sampling strategy

Sampling refers to the process of picking a representative part of a population in order to determine the characteristics of the entire population (Bhardwaj, 2019). I used purposive sampling because of its ability to recruit participants who are able to provide comprehensive and detailed facts concerning the event under enquiry. Purposive sampling is used in qualitative research due to its ability to identify and select information-rich cases relating to the studied phenomenon (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan & Hoagwood, 2015). Creswell and PlanoClark (2011) postulate that purposive sampling encompasses finding and choosing individuals who are seemingly familiar with the phenomenon of interest. The disadvantage of this strategy is its vulnerability to mistakes in judgement by the researcher (Palinkas et al., 2015).

The criteria that I used to select participants were the following. The participants had to be Grade 12 learners of English FAL registered at a public school in the Sekhukhune East education district. Schools in this district are typically rural with learners from poor socio-economic backgrounds. During the study the class sizes were relatively smaller due to COVID-19 restrictions with limited resources and technological teaching aids. Learners in these schools typically spoke Sepedi as mother tongue (L1) and English as L2. Six learners from each of the three participating secondary schools (n=18) were purposively selected and interviewed over a period of three months.

1.11 Data generation

Data generation refers to a process of gathering or generating data in research using approved research techniques. I used semi-structured interviews, non-participant classroom observations and document analysis for data generation.

1.11.1 Semi-structured interviews

I chose semi-structured interviews as a strategy because this type of interviews allows participants to freely express their views and opinions. Furthermore, the researcher prepares a list of questions to be covered in the interview and the interviewee is afforded greater leeway in responding to the questions (Bryman, 2004; Hofisi, Hofisi & Mago, 2014; Jamshed, 2014). Semi-structured interviews are flexible (Hofisi et al., 2014) and they offer possibilities of adapting responses and exploring underlying responses (Robson, 2002). Interviews were conducted at the participating schools with six learners per school. Three teachers were also interviewed. The interviews were audio-recorded and I kept the recordings in a safe place. I applied face to face interviews and each interview lasted for approximately 15 minutes.

I used an adapted version of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) rubric. IELTS is a test that assesses learners' abilities in listening, reading, writing and speaking (British Council, 2015). IELTS is an international standardised test of English language proficiency for non-native speakers of English (British Council, 2015). I used the test rubric specifically designed for speaking/oral proficiency. The IELTS test helped me make an informed evaluation of the participants' oral proficiency. Only I judged the learners' proficiency, which was very subjective, but using this test rubric helped me to adhere to a standard and make the data more reliable.

1.11.2 Non-participant classroom observations

I observed Grade 12 learners in English FAL classes from the three participating schools throughout the data collection period, focusing on their interaction with the subject teacher in a pedagogic situation to assess their proficiency and achievement. During the interactions between the teacher and learners, I again judged learner proficiency using the same adapted version of the IELTS test. This helped ensure credibility of the data. The class sizes were dependent on the school arrangement. The observations lasted from 30 to 45 minutes, which is equivalent to a single period. Although the main focus was on the learners, the three English

subject teachers of the identified schools were also interviewed to gain another perspective on the study.

1.11.3 Document analysis

Document analysis is a systematic procedure used for evaluating or reviewing electronic and printed material (Bowen, 2009:27) and has the advantage that documents are easily accessible. I analysed the identified learners' written assessment tasks using the IELTS written work rubric to help determine the identified learners' level of proficiency and achievement.The identified learners' written assessment scripts which were chosen were sampled from learners' creative writing (essays and transactional) texts.

1.11.4 Triangulation

Using the three methods of data collection ensured that triangulation of data could be done to ensure the credibility thereof. Triangulation refers to a method used in research to increase credibility and validity of the research findings (Noble & Heale, 2019). Credibility in a qualitative study refers to trustworthiness with regard to how believable the study is (Noble & Heale, 2019). Validity refers to the extent to which research correctly reflects the concept or phenomenon being studied (Noble & Heale, 2019). Four triangulation types exist in research and they are data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation and methodological triangulation. Data triangulation includes periods specific to time, space and people (Noble & Heale, 2019). Investigator triangulation refers to the use of several researchers in one study (Noble & Heale, 2019). Theory triangulation is concerned with the use of several theoretical schemes to enable interpretation of a phenomenon under study (Noble & Heale, 2019). Methodological triangulation refers to the use of methods of data collection such as interviews, observations and documents in one research study (Noble & Heale, 2019). In this study, I used methodological triangulation to achieve trustworthiness of the study.

1.12 Data analysis

Data analysis refers to the procedure of carefully arranging and searching the observation notes, interview transcripts and other non-textual materials which the

researcher gathers to maximise the understanding of the phenomenon under study (Wong, 2008). I used qualitative data collection methods to gather data for analysis. Interviews were recorded, documents analysed and observation notes stored for data analysis. Once data were collected, I used thematic analysis to analyse the data. Thematic analysis refers to a systematic approach used to analyse data in qualitative research. In thematic analysis, I familiarised myself with the data, generated initial codes, searched for themes, reviewed themes, defined and named themes, and produced the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

1.12.1 Familiarising myself with the data

This is the stage in which I familiarised myself with the data at my disposal. I organised the data obtained from the three data collection methods, namely, the interviews, observations and documents. In the process I wrote down my initial thoughts which I later used during the data analysis. I stored the data collected from participating schools safely to ensure retention of all the data. The storing of all records of the raw data offers a benchmark and an audit trail against which later data analysis and interpretations can be tested for appropriateness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017).

1.12.2 Generating initial data codes

Data coding refers to the procedure of classifying and fragmenting data to formulate explanations and comprehensive data themes (Creswell, 2007; Creswell, 2012a; Miles & Huberman, 2014b). Data coding is not only aimed at reducing the data through breaking down the data (anecdotes) into manageable and meaningful segments (Akinyode & Khan, 2018) but also lets the researcher simplify and focus on particular characteristics of the data (Nowell et al., 2017). The starting point was developing initial codes from the data gathered – a theorising activity which required me to keep on revisiting the data (Nowell et al., 2017). I developed codes from the available data from each of the three participating schools. I assigned labels and codes to different units of text gathered on English language proficiency and academic achievement. I started with the most fascinating aspects of the data set and those became the basis of the themes. I documented the main ideas, codes and themes from the data on English proficiency and stored them in a safe place.

1.12.3 Searching for themes

Themes in research refer to an intellectual unit that carries significance and distinctiveness to a continuing experience and its variant exhibitions (Nowell et al., 2017). In my study, I searched for themes in relation to mother tongue and social media influence on English second language learners' proficiency. This is the stage where possible themes emerging from the developed codes are discovered. The phase started once all the data had been primarily coded and organised and a list of diverse codes recognised across the data set had been developed (Nowell et al., 2017). I reflected on the data and the codes that I had generated from the previous step. I then formed themes from the existing data. I then started the search for themes with predefined codes in order to help guide the analysis (King, 2004). This stage enabled me to probe the data even further and to think about possible changes that I could make to the preliminary exhaustive and mutually exclusive themes from all the data sets.

1.12.4 Reviewing the themes

Once a set of themes had been developed, it required modification (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). The review of themes was guided by the research questions. I reviewed the coded data extracts for each theme to consider whether they seemed to form a coherent pattern. The aim was to ensure that none of the data were left out from analysing during these steps. When I identified an important issue in the text not included in an existing code, a new code or theme was inserted. Similarly, some themes which did not have enough supporting data or were too diverse, were collapsed. Other themes were broken down into separate themes (Nowell et al., 2017). Themes were reviewed in line with the research questions to adequately define the data.

1.12.5 Defining and naming themes

This is the phase in which the final definition and naming of themes occurred. I determined which parts of the data were captured by each theme and I identified what was interesting about them and why. In each unique theme, I conducted and wrote up a detailed analysis, identifying the story told by each theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006), as themes provide identity to an experience and make it meaningful.

The themes are clearly defined and explained in chapter 3. I aligned the themes with the research questions so that they added value to the study. In this phase I identified the data that were left out and could be categorised and analysed under each specific theme. If there were data left over that were related to the research question, I derived another theme.

1.12.6 Producing the report

According to Braun and Clark (2006), the write-up of a thematic analysis should provide a logical, brief, coherent, non-repetitive and interesting account of the data across and within themes. From chapter 3, the findings of this research study are clearly documented. This was the stage in which I interpreted every theme in detail and produced a written report. The final report presents not only the analysis and interpretation, but also the significance of the data.

1.13 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness of a research study refers to the amount of confidence that exists in the interpretation of research data, together with the methods used to confirm the quality of a study (Connelly, 2016). Trustworthiness of a qualitative study is achieved through credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. In order to achieve trustworthiness in a qualitative study, Maree (2007) mentions that it is acceptable to engage in different methods of data collection such as observation, interviews and document analyses.

1.13.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the assurance of truth which could be positioned in the findings revealed by research (Korstjens & Moser 2018). Credibility refers to the trustworthiness of a research study. Shenton (2004) argues that ensuring credibility of the research findings is one of the most important factors in establishing trustworthiness. To ensure credibility in the study, I used member checking, triangulation and peer debriefing. Triangulation, as mentioned earlier, involves the use of different data collection methods, namely focus groups, observations, and interviews, which make up the major data collection strategies for qualitative research (Shenton, 2004). Two triangulation types were used, namely, triangulation

of sources and triangulation of methods of data collection to ensure that the findings are credible (Moon, Brewer, Januchowski-Hartley, Adams, Blackman, 2016).

Member checking entails returning the findings to the participants to establish whether the findings reflected their experiences correctly (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Moon et al., 2016; Padgett, 2008). Member checking was used to ensure that data were interpreted correctly, to allow the participants to clarify what their intentions were and to provide additional information where necessary.

Peer debriefing involves sharing questions about the research process and findings with peers in order to provide a supplementary perspective on analysis and interpretation (Moon et al., 2016). I shared questions and the research process with peers and my research supervisor in English second language education in order to get a clearer perspective on this type of study. Shenton (2004) argues that through frequent debriefing sessions between the researcher and his/her supervisors, the investigator's vision may be broadened as others bring to bear their perceptions and experiences. I used peer debriefing to get a clearer perspective on the data and to ensure that the data were credible.

1.13.2 Dependability

Dependability refers to the reliability and consistency of the findings in research and the extent to which proceedings of research are correctly documented, letting an outsider to audit, trace and review the research process (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Polit, Beck & Hungler, 2006; Streubert, 2007). I used qualitative research protocols to ensure that I adhered to dependability. I used reflexivity (self-assessment) to increase dependability and to ensure transparency of the research findings by reporting on my predisposition, beliefs and assumptions to avoid bias (Guba, 1981:80; Moon et al., 2016). Reporting on my beliefs and assumptions enabled me to remain objective while interpreting the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Moon et al., 2016).

Field notes refer to transcripts of qualitative research documented by researchers during and after observation of a specific phenomenon under study (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). I used field notes to attain a measure of dependability and to ensure that the data were interpreted correctly without bias. I documented the

research design and implementation, methods, the details of data collection such as memos, recordings, field notes and my reflexivity journal (Moon et al., 2016; Shenton, 2004). Detailed coverage of the methodology and methods used allows the reader to assess the extent to which appropriate research practices have been followed (Shenton, 2004).

1.13.3 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the extent to which the findings of a particular research study could be affirmed by other researchers (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Shenton (2004) argues that in order to accomplish confirmability, researchers need to demonstrate that the outcomes are evidently linked to the conclusions in a way that can be traceable and can be replicated as a process (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Moon et al., 2016). Miles and Huberman (1994) highlight that reporting on the researcher's beliefs, predisposition and assumptions such as ontology and epistemology is a major criterion of confirmability. I applied reflexivity to avoid personal bias. Constant engagement with my supervisor, who was aware of my predisposition, beliefs and assumptions also ensured that I adhered to a measure of confirmability. I also provided a detailed methodological description, showing data, constructs and emerging theories (Moon et al., 2016; Shenton, 2004).

An audit trail refers to the transparent account of the steps of research taken from the start of a research project to the development and subsequent reporting of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) By recording all the steps followed in the research, I ensured that an audit trail was developed throughout the study (Moon et al., 2016).

1.13.4 Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings described in one study can be applicable to theory, practice and future research (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Moon et al., 2016). Moon et al. (2016) describe transferability as the degree to which the findings of a particular study may be applicable to other subjects and in other contexts. To enhance transferability in my study, I used proper recruitment strategies (purposive sampling) combined with thick descriptive data (Guba, 1981; Moon et al., 2016).

Graneheim and Lundman (2004) mention that provision of a clear and full description of the selection, context, culture, and features of the participants, data collection, and analysis ensure measurement of transferability. I purposively selected the participants which allowed me to obtain a knowledgeable group of participants. Highly detailed descriptions of the context of my study, learners' situations, selection criteria, methods and data analysis were supplied as a measure of transferability. Transferability was measured through providing the expected range and limitations for the application of the conclusions (Malterud, 2001; Moon et al., 2016).

1.14 Ethical considerations

In this study I addressed three main issues related to ethics: permission to conduct the study, informed consent, and participant confidentiality. I applied for and was granted ethical clearance by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria (before I started with field work and data collection). I requested permission from the Limpopo Department of Education to conduct the study at schools under the Department, which was granted. Letters of request to conduct the study in their schools were sent to principals and SGBs of the schools involved. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study; consent and assent forms were issued to the participants and they were assured of their confidentiality, safety and rights regarding the study. Since the participants included children under 18, they signed informed assent forms, while their parents signed informed consent.

1.15 Value of the research

This study was conducted to add value to the existing body of literature relating to the influence of MT and social media on English second language learner's proficiency and academic achievement. The study should also contribute to the discourse on English second language in rural contexts, thus improving acquisition and achievement. It will test existing L2 acquisition theories on English second language learners' proficiency in Grade 12 in rural Sekhukhune East schools. The study will also help educators in English FAL to identify and develop strategies to improve learners' proficiency.

1.16 Research structure

Chapter 1: Overview of the study

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the study. The problem statement, the aims of the research, the purpose of the study, the research questions, a brief description of the literature reviewed, the theoretical framework and the methodology applied in the study are presented in this chapter.

Chapter 2: Literature review

In chapter 2 I explore the existing body of literature on English second language acquisition and learning, mother tongue interference and social media as a language learning resource. I aimed to contextualise the study within the research of others in English second language proficiency, mother tongue interference and social media.

Chapter 3: Research methodology

The research methodology used in this study is discussed in chapter 3. The approach, design, sampling and measures ensuring trustworthiness are discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 4: Research findings

In chapter 4 I endeavour to conclusively answer the research questions posed in chapter 1. My findings from the data collection and analysis are interpreted and analysed.

Chapter 5: Recommendations

In the last chapter I explore and contextualise the study within the existing body of knowledge, and I offer a few recommendations for future research.

1.17 Chapter summary

Chapter 1 outlines the direction of the study as it provides a general orientation of the study. It provides the introduction that contextualises the study, the problem statement rationalising the study, the aims of the research, the research questions and the theoretical framework underpinning the study. Existing literature and the value of research are briefly discussed to place the study in context. Furthermore, the research methodology is discussed to provide the reader with some information of the type of research embarked upon.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The focus of the study was to investigate mother tongue and social media influence on English second language learners' proficiency. In this chapter I explore existing literature and theories on English second language acquisition (SLA) and learning, mother tongue interference and social media. Figure 2.1 provides a visual representation of the structure of the chapter.

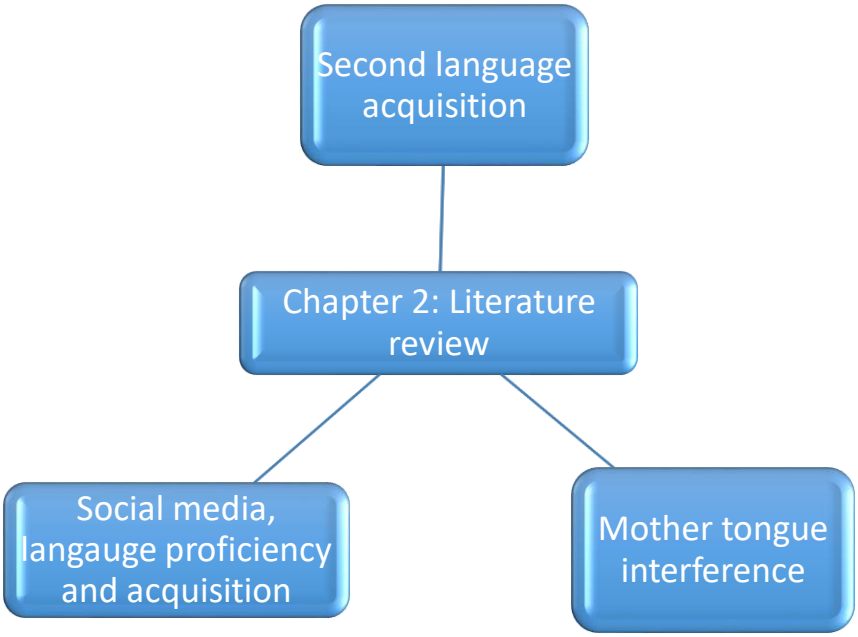


Figure 2.1: Visual representation of the structure of chapter 2

2.2 Second language acquisition (SLA)

Acquiring a second language (mostly a societal or an official language) is necessary for various purposes such as education and employment (Derakhshan & Karimi, 2015). Such is also the case in South Africa with regard to English. Many theories, each with a different dynamic, have been developed to explain second language acquisition and learning. In this section, I discuss the following: behaviourism, acculturation, the Interaction Hypothesis, the Universal Grammar Hypothesis, the Output Hypothesis, the Comprehension Hypothesis, the Identity Hypothesis and the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis in order to contextualise the various views on SLA.

SLA refers to the acquisition of an additional language following the learning of the mother tongue as a child, and to the process of learning that language (Saville-Troike, 2006). The additional language learned is referred to as the target language (TL) or the second language (L2), although it may actually be acquired as a third, fourth or fifth language. In the South African education system, English is learnt in public schools by non-native speakers of the language as First Additional Language. In my study, FAL learners refer to learners of English as a second language. SLA is not limited to classroom interaction but includes informal L2 learning that takes place in naturalistic contexts/environments and L2 learning that involves a mixture of these circumstances and settings (Saville-Troike, 2006). In the context of my study, second language learning takes place during lessons in class, but also outside the classroom through interactions with learners, teachers and other staff members.

2.2.1 Identity Hypothesis (IH)

The Identity Hypothesis (IH) was developed by Wode in 1974 to study second language learning (Klein, 1986). The IH postulates that the acquisition of one language has a slight or no effect on the acquisition of another language (Namaziandost, 2017). It means that linguistic structures learned in one language do not play a role in the learning of a second language. The theory recognises the differences in language structures, pronunciation, phonology and syntax of different languages. The theory is in contrast to literature arguing for the vast similarities in linguistic structures between first and second language. Contrary to IH, Cummins' (1978) Linguistic Interdependence Theory argues for the common underlying proficiencies in both first and second language. The truth of the matter is the subject of my enquiry.

2.2.2 Contrastive Analysis (CA)

In understanding the complexities of mother tongue influence on L2 proficiency, it is important to look into the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH). Lado (1957) developed the CAH to account for the systematic acquisition of the second language by comparing the first language and culture with the second language and culture (Lado, 1957). The CAH focuses on studying a duo of languages with the aim of determining their similarities and differences in structure (Thyab, 2016). The CAH

identified grammatical errors made by English second language learners (Wong & Dras, 2009). The method was used in the 1960s and 1970s to provide an explanation of why certain features of the target language were much more complex to acquire than others (Thyab, 2016).

The CAH is based on the assumption that the complexity of acquiring the second language could be foretold or discovered depending on the degree of difference between the learners' L1 and L2 (Namaziandost, 2017; Thyab, 2016). In essence, the CAH posits that first language structure affects successful second language learning (Namaziandost, 2017) – in contrast with the IH. In the context of my study it could mean that the structure of both the teachers' and learners' L1 influenced the acquisition of English as their L2. The resultant linguistic errors best describe the different linguistic structures.

A study of Persian learners' English second language acquisition found variations in phonological features such as vowels, consonants, stress patterns and intonation contours (Namaziandost, 2017). The syntactic errors made by the non-native English learners were grouped into subject-verb disagreement, noun-number disagreement, and misuse of determiners (Namaziandost, 2017; Wong & Dras, 2009).

2.2.2.1 Subject-verb disagreement

Subject-verb disagreement in linguistics refers to when a subject in a sentence disagrees with the verb of that sentence in terms of person or number (Namaziandost, 2017). This is what is referred to as concord errors in English grammar. The following are some examples:
An asterisk is used to indicate a grammatically incorrect sentence.
*If the situation become worse – incorrect (subject-verb disagreement)
If the situation becomes worse – correct (subject and verb agree)
*Kgosi play soccer – incorrect (subject-verb disagreement)
Kgosi plays soccer – correct (subject and verb agree)

In these simple incorrect sentences, the standard rule of concord was disregarded. Concord refers to agreement between words with regard to gender, number, person,

case and any other category of grammar that affects the form of words that share reference (Hassan & Latiff, 2015). If the subject is in the singular form, the verb takes an s-suffix. In contrast, if the subject is in the plural form, the verb does not take the s-suffix. Hassan and Latiff (2015) confirm that a subject in singular form must be followed by a verb in singular form while a subject in plural form must be followed by a plural verb.

2.2.2.2 Noun-number disagreement

Noun-number disagreement refers to when a noun is in disagreement with its determiner in terms of number (Namaziandost, 2017). For example:
*They provide many negative image – incorrect (noun-number disagreement)
They provide many negative images – correct (noun and number agree)
In this example, the role of the determiner determining the plural or singular state of the noun was disregarded.

2.2.2.3 Misuse of determiners

Misuse of determiners refers to where determiners like demonstratives, possessive pronouns and articles are inappropriately used with the nouns they modify (Namaziandost, 2017). The situation includes omitting a determiner when it is required and adding an extra determiner when it is not needed. Examples are as follows:

*Cyber cafes must not be located outside airport – incorrect (omission of a determiner)
Cyber cafes must not be located outside an airport – correct (addition of the correct determiner)
*I am going to the town – incorrect (an additional determiner added)
I am going to town – correct (no additional determiner)

These mistakes made by Persian learners are also seen in South African second language learners' use of English in rural contexts where I teach English as a second language. I included the mistakes commonly made by the South African learners with those of the Persian learners to contextualise and show the influence of mother tongue on L2 proficiency in relation to literature on similar studies.

Johansson's (2012) study in which the focus was on concord errors made by Swedish learners of English revealed similar results. The aim of Johansson's (2012) study was to determine which types of concord errors were the most common for Swedish learners of English and what they found most difficult when pairing the verb and the subject. Johansson (2012) found and categorised concord errors into four different types: grammatical, notional, concord of proximity, and distance concord. Similar to Persian learners, Swedish learners of English had difficulties with grammatical concord which is related to subject-verb agreement.

The CAH allows researchers to depict many common errors of grammar made by English second language learners. In terms of the CAH, the above grammatical inconsistencies are evidence of the fact that mother tongue influences learners' proficiency levels.

In contextualising my study, it is imperative to highlight that many other studies investigating learners' language proficiency were conducted around the world. It was found that concord errors were generally problematic for English second language learners. Mungungu (2010) identified and compared the types of English language errors in the writing of senior secondary school students from three different native language groups in South Africa. Mungungu (2010) also investigated the frequency at which these errors occurred in each group. The findings indicate that the types of errors commonly made by students were misspelling followed by errors of tenses. These errors affect the language proficiency of English second language learners.

Similar studies were conducted at universities on the African continent to determine the types of common errors made by English language learners. Klu (2014) investigated the use of grammatical concord in the writing of undergraduate students at the Ghana Technology University College. Grammatical concord errors in relation to tenses, phrases, subject-verb agreement, relative pronouns, expressions or words like "in addition to", "as well as" and "together with", were some of the common errors found. Aboud (2009) tried to identify a number of mistakes committed by students at university level. The findings show that errors were usually as a result of competence deficiency owing to the incorrect storage of rules in the learners' minds.

Although not within the scope of my study, it is worth mentioning that these common English language errors are not only limited to educational institutions but also other sectors like religious institutions. Obi and Ezekulie (2014) assessed preachers' applications of English concord in Nigeria. They demonstrated that pronoun-antecedent concord, inconsistency in tense usage and subject-verb concord were the most common concord errors made by preachers. The conclusion was that some errors were intralingual while others were interlingual by nature. Interlingual errors refer to errors made when a learner of a foreign language makes a blunder in the target language due to his/her mother tongue interference (Long & Hatcho, 2018). These are regarded as related to language transfer, interference, and cross-linguistic interference.

Intralingual errors refer to errors in learning which occur when learners are not familiar with the target language (Long & Hatcho, 2018). Long and Hatcho (2018) classified the errors that they found in their study into six categories, namely, 1) overgeneralisation, 2) ignorance of rule restrictions, 3) false analogy, 4) hyperextension, 5) hypercorrection, and 6) faulty categorisation. As part of the holistic community, learners emulate these errors made by preachers as language models.

2.2.3 Behaviourism

Behaviourists state that second language learners acquire the language through repeated practice and being rewarded for correct answers (Menezes, 2013). This means that learners of a particular target language, especially English, need to be adequately exposed to the target language in an environment where it becomes a means of communication. They further explain that for a complete mastery of the second language, the teacher must use reinforcement or positive reward after the learner has produced a correct structure in the second language (Menezes, 2013). In the school environment, this would imply that the teachers should monitor learners' language use in and outside the classroom and recognise their efforts through rewards. Behaviourism suggests that learners improve their proficiency when there is an expected reward.

2.2.4 Acculturation

Learning a second language is multifaceted and influenced by a number of factors, ranging from internal to social and cultural factors (Zaker, 2016). As a result, a number of studies have emphasised the substantial impact of culture on learning a second language (Zaker, 2016). In this context, culture is defined as "powerful human creations, affording their members a shared identity, a cohesive framework for selecting, constructing, and interpreting perceptions, and for assigning value and meaning in consistent fashion" (Zaker, 2016:80).

"Acculturation is the social and psychological integration of the learner with the target language" (Menezes, 2013:405). Schumann (1986) mentions psychological and social factors which account for the manner in which learners acquire a language. According to Schumann's Acculturation Hypothesis, social factors account for the extent of social distance that a second language learner has to the target language. According to Schumann and other theorists, social distance refers to a person's position or supposed position with regard to the targeted language group and the extent to which they become a member of the intended target language group (Zaker, 2016). Based on social factors, a learner who is exposed to the culture of the target language stands a better chance of successfully learning that language. It implies that in the context of my study, learners who are exposed to the culture of the English language stand a better chance of acquiring the language (L2). Schumann (1986) highlights that a taxonomy of elements control the social distance that determine how near a person will come to emulating the targeted language group. They are listed as follows.

Dominance/Subordination: This relates to the supposed status of a language group in relation to the other. It implies that if the target language (L2) is perceived to be more powerful than the mother tongue (L1), the individual will strive to successfully acquire the second language.

Integration pattern: This relates to giving up one's own lifestyle in favour of that of the target language (assimilation) and how much of one's own culture one holds on to. This is perceived to increase the chances of successful L2 learning.

Degree of enclosure of both groups: This refers to whether the two language groups share similar social facilities (low enclosure) or have different social facilities (high enclosure). The more the two languages share similar linguistic structures and culture, the greater the chances of successful acquisition.

Degree of cohesiveness of the second language group: This refers to the intergroup contacts regarded as non-cohesive or intragroup contacts regarded as cohesive. If the two languages are in the same language group, then the individual will have a greater chance of learning the intended language.

Size of the second language learning group: The size of the group learning the target or intended language refers to the number of people learning the second language. It also refers to the class size which may hinder successful acquisition.

Degree of congruency of the two cultures: This refers to the similarity or the difference in culture of the target language group compared to that of the mother tongue.

Intergroup attitudinal evaluations: This refers to negative or positive attitudes displayed by each language group in relation to the other, which affects the learning of the other language.

Psychological factors are focused on the person's response to the conditions that he/she finds himself/herself in during their process of learning a language (Zaker, 2016). According to Zaker (2016), psychological distance confuses a learner to such a degree that he/she may fight opportunities to take full advantage of the social state in learning a target language. Ushioda (1993) (cited in Zaker, 2016) provides a list of five affective factors that may increase the psychological distance.

Language shock: This refers to the confusion (disorientation) triggered by learning a new linguistic system. As a result, learners experience language shock which may prevent them from learning the second language. Schumann (1986) mentions that if and when learners try to speak a second language, they frequently fear that they might seem funny. He compares using a second language to someone wearing

fancy clothes but fears criticism and ridicule from sectors of society. Thus he/she enjoys wearing his/her fancy clothes similar to acquiring a new language. It means that the learner may want to speak the second language to improve their proficiency but due to fear, he/she may not, which hinders acquisition.

According to Schumann (1986), a learner regards a language as a way of play and finds a source of pleasure in communication. Grown-ups speaking a second language are frequently preoccupied by doubts about their language use while children are less concerned about the errors they make in learning (Schumann, 1986). My study focuses on Grade 12 L2 leaners (young adults) who may also be preoccupied by doubt about their language use and avoid speaking English, thus inhibiting their proficiency. Through anecdotal evidence I have had experiences where older Grade 12 learners refuse to speak English in the classroom fearing ridicule by peers when making mistakes in speech. In contrast, younger learners attempt to speak the language without fear, which is in line with Schumann's (1986) findings. I included these contrasting scenarios as a practical perspective on the influences of second language learners' proficiency.

Culture shock: This refers to anxiety, fear and stress emanating from entering a new culture. This may overwhelm the learner and become a big obstacle in the learning and acquisition of English as a second language. Schumann (1986) says that when migrating into a new culture, one finds oneself in a dependent state. As a result, one's usual coping mechanisms often do not work. This means that routine and activities which were done effortlessly in the learner's native country/language, requires more effort in the new environment. It thus causes fear, anxiety, stress and disorientation. The resultant mental state produces a powerful syndrome of rejection blocking the learning of a second language.

Culture stress: This refers to extended culture shock such as being home sick and starting to question self-identity. This is as a result of acculturation which immerses the language learner in the culture and psyche of the second language.

Motivation: This refers to the motivation (both intrinsic and extrinsic) of a learner to successfully acquire a target language. It includes learners' motives in trying to

attain the second language. Schumann (1986), a proponent of acculturation, claims that learners have two motivational orientations for learning a second language. They are integrative and instrumental motivation. An interpretively-oriented learner wants to learn the second language for the purposes of meeting with, talking to, finding out about and being like the speakers of the second (targeted) language whom he/she values and admires.

An instrumentally-oriented learner is not interested in the target language (L2) speakers but only wants to learn the language. He/she wants to acquire the language sorely for utilitarian reasons such as gaining recognition from his/her membership group or gaining promotion at work. Motivational orientations of learning a second language differ according to setting. This is instrumental in propelling a learner to learn a second language and gain proficiency.

Ego permeability: This refers to the extent to which a learner gives up his or her differences in favour of the second language group. Ego permeability enables learners to grow what is referred to as language ego. It explains the ability of L2 learners to obtain native-like pronunciation in the desired second language. Second language learners develop the accent and strive to perfect the pronunciation of words in the target language. It is done to allow successful learning of the target language.

It is important that schools set positive second language learning conditions to enable successful learning. In some schools, English language policy is implemented in and outside class across all subjects, except for Home Language. This sets a favourable condition for positive learning and thus improving English language proficiency. According to the acculturation model, for the learners to be efficient in SLA, there should be fewer psychological and social distances between them and the speakers of the second language (Menezes, 2013).

The model advances the idea that the degree to which a learner acquires a second language is heavily dependent on how much contact he/she has with the speakers of the desired second language (Zaker, 2016). The teachers and staff members at the school should be model speakers of the second language. Acculturation claims

that the environment plays a key role in successful acquisition of a second language. Indoctrinating the learners in the culture of a target language is important for successful language learning. This means that the language instructors must also work on instilling the psyche and culture of the target language in the students they are teaching.

From the acculturation model, two types of second language learning emerge. In type 1, the learner must be integrated socially and must develop social contacts with the second language speakers. The L2 speakers provide the learner with input while continuing to preserve the values and lifestyle of his or her native culture. Based on this acculturation type, the extent of the learner's language acquisition depends on his/her proximity to the target language audience.

In type 2 acculturation, a learner creates social contacts in the culture of the second language. The learner makes a move towards the adoption of the values, culture and lifestyle of the second language group in an effort to successfully acquire the language. Two conclusions can be drawn from these two types of acculturation: (a) a learner may flourish in acquiring the L2 whether he/she opted to adopt the culture of the target language or not; (b) inadequate exposure to the L2 community will result in linguistic structure errors of the target language (L2).

2.2.5 Universal Grammar Hypothesis

The Universal Grammar Hypothesis, as proposed by Noam Chomsky in the 1960s, is in contrast with the behaviourist theory. The theory argues that all people are biologically gifted with a language faculty, the language acquisition component, which is responsible for the initial state of language development (Menezes, 2013). This theory recognises that all languages have the same structures. The ability of children to acquire language in the same way, with little effort, seems to support the claim. The Universal Grammar Hypothesis recognises the similarities in language structures across all languages. This is in support of Cummins' (1978) Linguistic Interdependence Model.

2.2.6 Comprehension Hypothesis

The Comprehension Hypothesis argues that language is acquired and literacy developed when we comprehend messages (Krashen, 2003). The theory regards language acquisition as a subconscious process wherein the language competence developed is stored in the brain subconsciously (Menezes, 2013). This means that children develop a language unconsciously and naturally with not much effort.

2.2.7 Interaction Hypothesis

The Interaction Hypothesis attempts to define SLA in contrast to Krashen's Input Hypothesis. Menezes (2013) points out that this theory argues that a person learns how to converse (interacting verbally) and out of the interaction, syntactic structures are formed (proficiency is developed through face-to-face interaction or communication in the target language).

2.2.8 Output Hypothesis (Lingualisation)

The Output Hypothesis argues that practising the target language assists learners to monitor their language production and development. According to Swain (2005:471), "the act of producing a language (speaking and writing) constitutes, under certain circumstances, part of the process of second language learning". The theory argues that adequate exposure and practice in the target language enhances successful acquisition.

2.3 Mother tongue (MT) interference in SLA

Mother tongue refers to a language that a child starts acquiring prior to the age of three (Derakhshan & Karimi, 2015; Masood, Shafi, Rahim & Dewesh, 2020). Most researchers believe that first languages interfere in second language acquisition (Derakhshan & Karimi, 2015). In writing and speaking, the learners of L2 rely on the structure of the mother tongue (L1) (Masood et al., 2020). Due to the different linguistic structures, errors emerge, which point out the interference of mother tongue structures in the second language (Masood et al., 2020). According to Derakhshan and Karimi (2015), a learner experiences difficulties in L2 with regard to vocabulary and grammar as a result of the interference of habits from both L1 and L2. The errors made in learning a second language cause interferences, which

are distinguished as developmental, ambiguous and unique errors (Derakhshan & Karimi, 2015). Developmental errors refer to errors which have no relation to the learner's first language (Derakhshan & Karimi, 2015). Ambiguous errors refer to those that include both interference and developmental errors (Derakhshan & Karimi, 2015). Unique errors refer to those which cannot be clustered into interference or development errors (Derakhshan & Karimi, 2015). They emerge during the process of the learning of L2.

According to Thomason (2001), interference refers to a direct transfer and integration of language features of one language into the other and possible changes which are made to suit the user's intentions. Subandowo (2017) further argues that the concept of mother tongue interference can be regarded as a transfer that affects learning both negatively and positively (Subandowo, 2017). Negative interference refers to where the influence of mother tongue leads to errors in the use or acquisition of the intended target language (Bardovi-Harlig & Sprouse, 2018). The interference has no regard for the language structures of the target language.

Positive interference refers to a situation where the influence of the mother tongue leads to instant or quick acquisition and use of the desired language (Bardovi-Harlig & Sprouse, 2018). Positive interference occurs when the acquisition of L1 impacts the learning of L2 positively. In this interference, some linguistic features of mother tongue are transferred into L2 or the target language in an attempt to make meaning. In the context of my study, English FAL Grade 12 learners' first language, Sepedi, interfered with both verbal and written proficiency, thus affecting academic achievement. Thyab (2016) refers to the interference of mother tongue as the effect of the learner's L1 on his/her learning of L2. Deraksham and Karimi (2015) indicate that interference is as a consequence of old habits learned in L1 and that it is important to unlearn those habits before learning the habits of L2. Proficiency of some learners in their mother tongue helps in acquiring English proficiency for academic achievement similar to what Cummins describes in his Language Interdependence Theory.

In an attempt to emphasise and clarify points of view in a language, some speakers use language contact. Language contact is the social and linguistic occurrence by which speakers of different languages intermingle with one another, leading to

transfer of linguistic features (Gramley, 2012). The linguistic features transferable include vocabulary, alternative pronunciations, and grammatical structures. From anecdotal evidence, for example, the learners in the Sekhukhune East education district who are native speakers of Sepedi will, when referring to more than one person, start a sentence with the speaker. They apply direct translation, which contradicts English language structure.

For example: “Joseph and I went out for lunch” (correct English).
Some learners of English as a second language use direct translation and say:
*“Me and Joseph went for lunch” (incorrect English showing negative interference from the mother tongue).

This happens due to language contact where two languages are in contact and a learner applies the structure of L1 to the structure of L2.

2.3.1 Code-switching and code-mixing

Code-switching and code-mixing are used by learners and their teachers. Code-switching refers to a situation where speakers switch from one language to another and back again within the same sentence (Thomason, 2001). Almelhi (2020) defines code-switching as rule-governed, sophisticated and organised communicative behaviour utilised by linguistically proficient bilinguals in order to achieve a variety of communicative goals. From Amelhi’s (2020) definition, it is clear that code-switching cannot be regarded as a language deficit. This indicates that code-switching does not imply that a speaker does not know the second language. However, in the context of my study, allowing learners to code-switch deny them an opportunity to develop their vocabulary, thus influencing their proficiency.

In code-switching, speakers shift between two languages or variants of the same language within or across utterances which is regarded as inter- or intra-sentential code-switching. Learners of English as a second language occasionally switch between their native language and English in conversation. As an English teacher, I have observed that learners mix Sepedi and English during oral presentations. Barnali (2017) argues that code-switching often happens at points in discourse where juxtaposition of L1 and L2 elements do not encroach upon syntactic rules of

either language. Many researchers differ about the term "code-switching". Almelhi (2020) distinguishes between three types of code-switching, namely tag switches, inter-sentential switches and intra-sentential switches.

Tag switches are types of code-switching which comprise a tag insertion, short expression, discourse markers or fillers like "you know" or "I mean" in L1 into a sentence in L2 which is not currently used during a conversation (Almelhi, 2020). For example, a learner/speaker would say "*Ke lapile*, you know" [I am tired, you know]. This tag inclusion of a discourse marker can be implanted in speech without violation of syntactic structure of the language used in the conversation.

Intra-sentential switches occur inside clause boundaries in a sentence and within the word boundary (Almelhi, 2020). They involve a shift in language in the middle of a sentence, mostly done without a pause, interruption or hesitation (Almelhi, 2020). This implies that intra-sentential switches are performed in the same sentence, from single morpheme level to higher levels. Both languages (Sepedi and English in our case) are used within the same turn. For example, a speaker will start a sentence in English and finish it in Sepedi: "I am going to buy you *matšoba bosasa"* [I am going to buy you flowers tomorrow]. Intra-sentential switches need interlocutors to exercise the greatest precision and fluency in both languages which the bilinguals switch between (Almelhi, 2020). The switch requires the learners to have developed adequate proficiencies in both languages.

Inter-sentential switches occur at sentence boundaries whereby a speaker utters a sentence fully in one language (Almelhi, 2020). It means that all expressions in one turn may be produced in Sepedi in an English context. For example, a speaker may finish his/her thought concerning an issue in one language and begin a speech of a different topic in the second language. "*Ke swabišitšwe ke maitshwaro a lena kua merapelong* and I still maintain that all learners must pay for the trip before Friday" [I was disappointed by your behaviour during assembly and I still maintain that all learners must pay for the trip before Friday]. In this sentence, both Sepedi and English were used in an English context. In this switch, two ideas in two different languages are mentioned without any syntactic violation. According to Almelhi (2020), this type of code-switching needs adequate proficiency in both languages.

Code-mixing is the mixing of two or more languages or language diversification in speech (Barnali, 2017). In code-mixing, learners use words haphazardly without taking the grammar rules of the target language into account. For example, some Sepedi prefixes are attached to English words. Although code-mixing has not been proven by literature as a sign of a lack of proficiency in a language, it is worth mentioning that learners do use code-mixing when they do not know how to explain a word or sentence in English. Over reliance on code-mixing for learners delay their vocabulary building and proficiency. This lack of proficiency in English is also as a result of inadequate proficiency in the MT. This corroborates Cummins' (1978) study on common underlying proficiency (CUP), which emphasises that if learners have developed adequate proficiency in L1, then they would be able to develop proficiencies in the second language. Gulzar (2010) investigated the functions of code-switching in EFL classrooms in Pakistan and determined that it served numerous functions (Akhtar, Khan & Fareed, 2016). Gulzar (2010) mentions that code-switching is done to clarify difficult concepts, to help learners understand, to reiterate and to build mutual understanding with the students (Akhtar, Khan & Fareed, 2016).

According to Kustati (2014), there are motivational reasons for using code-switching and code-mixing. Kustati (2014) conducted interviews with English lecturers and students at an undergraduate programme of English and revealed that code-switching and code-mixing encouraged active participation in the classroom. Some English students admitted that they used their mother tongue due to their inadequate proficiency in English (Kustati, 2014). Their argument is rooted in their inability to engage extensively in English. However, there are concerns that if students habitually code-mix and code-switch, they will reduce the sense of necessity to communicate in English (Kustati, 2014). From the literature, it is safe to assume that neither code-mixing nor code-switching affect the linguistic structure of English negatively, but it encourages the use of the mother tongue in English classrooms. This could, however delay building of English vocabulary.

It is assumed that since South African learners are exposed to English as LoLT from Grade 4, they would excel in English by the time that they reach Grade 12, as they would have been exposed to the language for eight years. Yadav (2014:573) highlights that "six to eight years of education in a language are necessary to

develop the level of literacy and verbal proficiency required for academic achievement in secondary school". However, anecdotal evidence suggests that not all English FAL learners in Grade 12 are proficient in English for the advancement of academic achievement.

In contextualising my study, it is worth mentioning that numerous studies have been conducted to investigate mother tongue influence on the second language. Karim and Nassaji (2013) investigated L1 transfer in L2. They discovered that when learners of a second language wrote in the L2, traces of their L1 (mother tongue) were visible in their writing (Derakhshan & Karimi, 2015). In another study, Fatemi, Sobhani and Abolhassani (2012) probed the differences relating to consonant clusters orally in both L1 and L2. The study demonstrated that if L1 and L2 structures are different, learners have difficulty in L2 pronunciation because they face unfamiliar phonological rules.

From the studies mentioned above, two striking observations can be made relating to the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis. Firstly, the extent of differences between the two languages demonstrates the degree of difficulty (Derakhshan & Karimi, 2015). Secondly, the extent of similarity between the two languages demonstrates the extent of simplicity (Derakhshan & Karimi, 2015). An assumption can thus be made that learners who learn a second language which falls within the same language group category as the first language, will have fewer difficulties when learning the L2.

Languages from different language families have different linguistic structures, thus making transfer difficult. "Languages which come from different language families have distinctive features that need an intensive process to acquire" (Septianasari, Huznatul & Baihaqi, 2019:206). In the South African context, Nguni languages include isiXhosa, isiZulu, isiNdebele and siSwati. These languages have linguistics similarities which aid transfer from one language to another. Similarly, Sepedi, Setswana and Southern Sotho have linguistic similarities which help the transfer from one language to the other. English and other South African languages, such as Sepedi, have no linguistic similarities which can aid the transfer from one to the other. Septianasari et al. (2019) postulate that mother tongue interference

commonly takes place during the learning of L2 and is an obstacle towards successful learning of the target language.

Yadav (2014:580), in acknowledging the interference of mother tongue in second language learning, says the following: “In a monolingual context, that is to say where all students speak the same mother tongue [a classroom reality for the majority of language teachers]; this perception can become quite a problem”. The interference causes imperfect learning. Yadav (2014) recommends that the best way to deal with the problem (at least for some educators) is to negate the students’ use of the mother tongue and force them to speak English. This will help English FAL learners in Grade 12 to gain adequate levels of proficiency.

Syaputri (2019) mentions that speakers in bilingual communities attempt to maintain their L1 while integrating in it the features of the target language (L2). The native language is used as a cushion to linguistic deficiencies which the speaker may experience. This is done to close language gaps that the speakers have in the target language. Syaputri (2019) argues that switching to another language causes imperfection in learning and subsequently enables the speaker to commit errors connected to the process of shifting and producing output in the intended language. This means that the speaker incorporates the culture of the first language erroneously in the second language. In contrast, successful learning and proficiency in the second language have unwanted consequences on the L1. Lord (2008) studied the diverse effects of L2 acquisition on L1 and found that learners in bilingual communities subsequently lose their L1. The speakers need to strike a balance between acquisition of the second language and retention of mother tongue.

Certain teaching methodologies support the use of mother tongue in second language classrooms, while other methods are against it. The grammar translation method advocates for the use of mother tongue in L2 classes and argues that meaning is made clearer by translating concepts into the learners’ L1 (Şener & Korkut, 2017). This is done to clarify difficult concepts in the teaching of the second language.

The direct method of teaching does not recommend the use of L1 in L2 classes, but advocates that learners link meaning with the targeted language directly (Şener &

Korkut, 2017). This is done to avoid errors made in translation of concepts from L1 to L2. The learners are then totally immersed in the second language to quickly achieve proficiency. The direct method gives learners enough practice of the second language, subsequently increasing prospects of proficiency.

The audio lingual method is another teaching method that does not support the use of L1 in L2 classrooms. The proponents of this method believe that the use of the learners' native language will delay their efforts to master the second language (Şener & Korkut, 2017).

2.4 Social media, language proficiency and acquisition

Literature has proven that L2 learning and advanced proficiency requires relevant exposure to the target language (Alghamdi & Sabir, 2019; Krashen, 1985). Using social media as a resource in English second language teaching and learning has been advanced by many scholars while others have criticised the influence of neologisms used in social media on academic writing. Social media refers to online communication platforms dedicated to society-based input, communication, content sharing and networking. Social media platforms include Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, Snapchat, YouTube and Instagram.

Songxaba and Sincuba (2019) mention that development and technological advancement has resulted in the decline of formal English writing and most of this is credited to WhatsApp communication. The shortening of words is done through the use of symbols to represent them or the use of symbols whose names are almost identical to a syllable of a word (Songxaba & Sincuba, 2019). In a WhatsApp conversation, some text may comprise of words or an alphanumeric combination. For example, the person will write "before" as *"b4", "for you" as *"4 U" and "to date" as *"2d8"' (Songxaba & Sincuba, 2019). Jabeen, Kazemian and Shahbaz (2015) cite the shortening of words (for example *"plz" instead of "please") in formal writing as one of the factors which affects proficiency. Songxaba and Sincuba (2019) warn that such writing styles may corrode the progression of grammar, good sentence construction and spelling in formal English writing.

The use of social media cannot be ignored as learners spend more and more time on social media (Abu-Shanab & Al-Tarawneh, 2015). Rwodzi, De Jager and

Mpofu (2020) mention that due to limited resources, South African English educators based in township areas need to develop appropriate teaching strategies which incorporate social media. This means that English teachers must use social media resources in their teaching. Mubarak (2016) argues that social media enables more adaptable experiences of language learning through constructivism. Rwodzi et al. (2020) agree and argue that participation on social media platforms provides more prospects in construction of text, deconstruction, analysis and interpretation for construction of meaning.

In advocating for the use of technology and social media in the classroom, Hashim, Yunus, Ibrahim, Jeri, Sukr, IIahi and Hassim (2018) say that technology enactments can be used for the sharing of information and communication via social media. Almarwaey (2017) and Alsaied (2017) state that language students prefer using social media platforms to find answers, exchange information and topic ideas with their fellow students, subsequently augmenting their performance in language and overall academic performance (Alghamdi & Sabir, 2019).

Kabilan, Ahmed and Abidin (2010) found that Facebook can serve as an important tool in the schooling environment because it augments learners' motivation to learn, provides exposure to language, enhances communication skills, self-efficacy and confidence. Similarly, Warschauer (1996) found that social media platforms (SMPs) create a virtual atmosphere in which students have more courage to speak and participate in comparison to face-to-face interactions in the classroom. This would enhance learners' English proficiency skills envisaged by oral assessment.

El-Sawy (2015) discovered that students using social media recorded improvements in vocabulary skills, English writing and grammar. Alghamdi and Sabir (2019) attribute the improvements to self-confidence gained by writing comments on SMPs, learners' creative skills and their thinking in English. Che Wil, Yunus and Suliman (2019) corroborate these findings by arguing that social media help learners to develop their confidence levels by uploading status, voicing opinions and writing in English on these platforms.

However, Haq and Chand (2012) found that the use of Facebook has an adverse impact on students' academic performance. Kabilan et al. (2010) caution that

Facebook is a tool that provides students with the opportunity to improve their language skills but cannot be directly linked to participants' language proficiency. Teachers still need to teach concepts in the classroom environment through modern language teaching approaches. With this study I determined the relationship between social media as a resource in advancing proficiency and academic achievement for EFAL Grade 12 learners.

There are several concerns about the use of social media as a tool to develop English language proficiency and skills. Chat language, otherwise known as textese, unconsciously finds its way into formal writing (Salaudeen & Lawal, 2019). This chat language affects English learning negatively. Wallace (2015) identified commonly used acronyms used by teenagers on social media which are not recognisable English acronyms.

Some of these acronyms are:

- *"OOTD" – "Outfit of the day" is used to refer to someone's dress code on social media.
- *"HMU" – "Hit me up" is typically used when asking for an individual's Snapchat phone number or username in order to text.
- *"BAE" – "Baby" is a loving and affectionate term used in reference to social media user's girlfriend or boyfriend. It is mostly used on Facebook.
- *"WCW" – "Woman crush Wednesday" refers to when a girl posts an image of another girl whom she believes is pretty or worthy of praise, while boys also post pictures of girls that they think are beautiful or worthy of praise.
- *"MCM" – "Man crush Monday" follows the same trend as "Woman crush Wednesday", but features images of men posted in appreciation on Facebook.
- *"LOL" – "Laugh out loud" is a reaction meant for extreme laughter in amusement for a social media post.

These acronyms find their way into learners' creative writing and somewhat affect English FAL learners' proficiency. In giving a clear description of this innovative morphological trend, Salaudeen and Lawal (2019:73) conceptualised the classification of textese into eight groups with clear descriptions and terminology.

Abbreviation: Abbreviation involves making a word or phrase shorter by omitting some letters or using the initial letter of every word. For example, “I rest my case” is written as “IRMC” and “Rest in Peace” is written as “RIP” (although not only limited to social media).

Letter to number homophones: In this situation, a number sounding like a word or a group of letters inside a word is typically used to substitute them. For example, “thanks” is written as *“10ks”, “great” is written as *“gr8” and “late” is written as *“la8”.

Letter for word representation (phoneme): In these texts, letters or phonemes are utilised to embody an entire word. For example, “okay” is written as *“k”, “be” is written as *“b” and “see” is written as *“c”.

Phonological approximation: This refers to reducing orthographic words to their phonological level. For example; “night” is written as *“nyt” or *“nait” and “what” is written as *“wot”.

Pronounceable spelling techniques (graphones): This refers to techniques of manipulating spelling in which words are transcribed as they are pronounced. For example, “sweet” is written as *“swit”, “good” is written as *“gud”, “love” is written as *“luv” and “what” is written as *“wat”’.

Shortening of words/reduction: This is a situation where some letters of a word are omitted, thus making the word shorter. For example, “school” is written as *“schl” and “because” is written as *“bcos”.

Spelling manipulation: In textese words are manipulated in order to attain brevity. This type of alteration is both inconsistent and not standardised. For example, “have” is written as *“av” and “thanks” is written as *“tankx/10ks”’.

Vowel deletion: In this instance vowels are deleted within the word for the purpose of brevity. For example, “love” is written as *“lv” and “text” is written as *“txt”.

Salaudeen and Lawal (2019) conclude that the chat language seen on social media comes from each of the listed categories. However, because the medium is not restricted by rules of grammar, users write in a way that they deem suitable in online chats. The use of this chat language unfortunately finds its way into learners formal

writing which is why I intended to determine whether it affected the English proficiency of Grade 12 English FAL learners.

2.5 Chapter summary

In this chapter, mother tongue and social media influence on English second language is discussed in detail. The three broad themes of second language acquisition, mother tongue and social media are thoroughly explained through existing literature. A few of the many existing theories guiding second language acquisition relating to my study are sampled. Interference of mother tongue and the role of social media in language teaching are explored in detail.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present the methodology used in the study. I describe the paradigmatic orientation of the study, the research approach used, the research design, sampling, data collection strategies, data analysis procedure and measures used to ensure trustworthiness of the study. I also explain the ethical considerations I adhered to. Figure 3.1 presents an overview of the structure of the chapter.

Figure 3.1: Visual representation of the structure of chapter 3

3.2 Research paradigm

When we decide which research approach to use, we are influenced by our particular worldview and the particular phenomenon we want to understand better, therefore, we frame our study within a particular paradigm. As mentioned in chapter 1, a research paradigm encompasses a set of beliefs which guide the research action (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017) and establishes the abstract beliefs and principles shaping how a researcher understands the world, interprets it, and behaves within that world (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). A research paradigm encompasses four elements, namely axiology, ontology, epistemology and methodology (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

“Epistemology refers to the branch of philosophy which studies the nature of knowledge and the process by which knowledge is acquired and validated” (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016:52). Epistemology focuses on the nature and forms of knowledge, the process of acquiring it and how it could be conversed to different people (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). An epistemological view is typically characterised as either objective or subjective (Rashid, Rashid, Warraich, Sabir & Waseem, 2019). I view my epistemology as subjective because I regard knowledge as somewhat interpreted by individuals (Rashid et al., 2019). My answer to how I can know lies in the understanding, analysis and interpretation of individuals’ perspectives that I gleaned from the thick descriptions of the data collected. Ponelis (2015) argues that epistemologically the standpoint for interpretivists is that their knowledge of reality is socially constructed by individuals.

According to Richards (2003:33), “ontology refers to the nature of our beliefs about reality”. It answers questions with regard to the nature of truth and the nature of people in the world (Rashid et al., 2019). I was aware that ontology is habitually categorised as both realist and relativist (Rashid et al., 2019). As an interpretivist, I adapted a relativist ontology in which a single phenomenon may have numerous explanations instead of a single truth that can be determined through a process of measurement (Pham, 2018).

Ponelis (2015) reiterates that interpretivism is informed by a life-world ontology which advances the argument that all observation is both value-laden and

theory-based and an inquiry of the social world phenomena is not, and cannot be the search of an isolated truth. Rehman and Alharthi (2016) further explain that researchers have assumptions which are sometimes explicit about reality, its existence and what needs to be known about it. My ontology in this study was influenced by my interpretation that mother tongue and social media influence second language learners' English proficiency. I, however, acknowledge that a lack of proficiency in English for Grade 12 learners may also be influenced by other factors outside the scope of my study. My epistemological view as an interpretivist researcher is that reality is understood through perceived knowledge.

At the level of axiology, the paradigm of interpretivism is largely concerned with vigour and relevance (Ponelis, 2015). Ponelis (2015:537) argues that placing a research study within a particular paradigmatic context is a valuable undertaking that can lead the researcher to "reflect upon the broader epistemological and philosophical consequences of my perspective". Therefore, this study was framed within the interpretivist paradigm. I understand that there is no single truth and that reality is interpreted so that we uncover the underlying meaning of actions, attitudes and behaviour. I interpreted learners' responses to English second language teaching and learning, their interview responses and their creative writing scripts to understand their reality better. As an English second language teacher, I used my knowledge of English linguistic structures and tried to determine whether errors made were influenced by mother tongue interference or social media textese.

Hammersley (2013) supports an interpretivist paradigm and claims that the way in which human and social scientists make sense of knowledge is different from how physical scientists do, because social scientists interpret their world and act based on such interpretation, while physical scientists do not. Creswell (2007) argues that from an interpretivist perspective, researchers acquire a profound understanding of the phenomenon and its intricacies within its unique context instead of attempting to generalise the base of understanding for the whole population. As an interpretivist researcher, my aim was not to generalise but to understand the influence of mother tongue and social media influence on L2 learners' proficiency. Rehman and Alharthi (2016:55) state the following: "interpretivists believe in socially constructed multiple realities. Truth and reality are created, not discovered."

As an interpretivist researcher, my goal was not to realise global, context-free and value-free data and truth but to attempt to appreciate the understanding of people about the social phenomena or problems they might interact with (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). In my study, I analysed the data collected on English language proficiency from an interpretivist point of view and also acknowledged that the data collected may have had multiple interpretations. I, therefore, did not seek to establish universal truths about language proficiency but tried to understand mother tongue and social media influence on second language learners' English proficiency from the particular research site with the particular data collected. As a social researcher, my role was to collect data on learners' English proficiency by making observations, through interviews and through document analysis.

Blaikie (2000) emphasises that social scientists can only collect data from a particular point of view through making observations shaped and coloured by past experiences, traditions, language, knowledge of the discipline and experiences that flow from these. Consequently, there will continuously be a kind of breach between the data that were collected and the truth that they were supposed to represent.

Hammersley (2013) stresses that since numerous explanations are developed among humans' relationships, interpretivist researchers should attempt to comprehend the various ways of experiencing and seeing the world through different contexts and cultures and try to avoid the prejudice of studying the events and people from their own understanding. In this study, I applied reflexivity to ensure that I avoided personal bias in the interpretation of the data. Mother tongue proficiency is a launch pad for learning a second language. Learners generally think in their mother tongue and apply the linguistic knowledge of their mother tongue to present their ideas in the second language, in this case English. Where the two languages differ and learners are unable to speak in English, they apply code-switching and code-mixing.

The advent of social media has also influenced learners' writing skills. The emphasis on brevity through shortening of words and invention of own acronyms seen on social media influence learners' writing skills.

I ensured, through reflexivity, that my beliefs and assumptions did not unduly influence my interpretation of the data, since my role as a researcher was to understand and express views about the nature of reality, establish what could be known about it, and how we go about attaining that knowledge (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016).

3.3 Research approach

In this research, based on my particular perspective as an interpretivist, I chose a qualitative approach due to its suitability in social research, which is usually conducted in the participant's natural setting (De Vos, 2001). Teherani et al. (2015:669) define qualitative research as "a systematic enquiry into social phenomena in natural settings". I conducted the enquiry in schools to gain a better understanding of the language proficiencies in a structured school environment.

Qualitative research is not concerned with numerical representation but focuses on deepening understanding of a given phenomenon (Queirós, Faria & Almeida, 2017). The focus of my study was on widening understanding of mother tongue and social media influences on English L2 learners' language proficiency. The objective was to produce in-depth and instructive information in order to comprehend the different dimensions of the problem (Queirós et al., 2017).

I used a qualitative approach because it has the advantage of providing depth and detail of a phenomenon, thus enabling me to understand the attitudes of participants better (Daniel, 2016). The process in which data are collected is regarded as unique, as the researcher collects non-numerical data like words and pictures (Daniel, 2016). In my study I collected oral responses from the participants through interviews.

A qualitative research approach is best for simplifying and managing data without eliminating complexity and context (Atieno, 2009). However, qualitative research also has several limitations. Daniel (2016) found that in qualitative research the world is viewed as being dynamic rather than static, subsequently making it difficult to replicate findings. This implies that my findings on mother tongue and social media influence only applies within the schools where the study was conducted.

Another limitation is the subjectivity of qualitative researchers (Daniel, 2016). My ontological and epistemological paradigm could not but influence my interpretation of the data.

3.4 Research design

I chose a case study design because it allows researchers to conduct an in-depth investigation of a complex phenomenon within a specific context (Rashid et al., 2019). A case study is a pragmatic probe that examines a contemporary phenomenon in depth within a real-life setting, particularly when the confines between phenomenon and milieu are not clearly evident (Ebneyamini & Sadeghi Moghadam, 2018; Yin, 2009). Creswell (2009) describes a case study as a plan of an investigation in which the researcher investigates a process, an event, a programme, an activity or one or more individuals in depth.

Studying the participants in their natural setting ensured that I gained the answers to my research questions. Yin and Davis (2007) explain that a case study is chosen for research when there is a need to understand a real-world case and that such understanding is likely to include vital contextual conditions. Rashid et al. (2019) argue that a phenomenon is explored within its natural context, with the consideration that context will create a difference. This difference in context is what I aimed to explore in my study. Learners in rural and urban areas are clearly different and their language proficiencies differ for varying reasons. Mother tongue and social media influence the proficiency of learners in some way. The extent of the influence was the subject of the investigation.

Case study as a research design is more flexible than other qualitative approaches such as grounded theory or phenomenology (Ebneyamini & Sadeghi Moghadam, 2018; Ponelis, 2015). A case study design has the ability to capture the complexity of a single case and its methodology (Ebneyamini & Sadeghi Moghadam, 2018). Another advantage of a case study is its ability to establish rapport with research participants (Ponelis, 2015). Case studies are designed to suit the case under enquiry and the types of research questions posed by the researcher (Ebneyamini & Sadeghi Moghadam, 2018). In a typical case study design the researcher selects a limited number of participants as subjects and a small geographical area for the

study (Yazan, 2015). In my study, three schools from a small geographical area in the Sekhukhune East education district were chosen. This suited the small scope of a master's study and the limited time and resources available.

Ebneyamini & Sadeghi Moghadam (2018) distinguish a case study as follows: one case or a small number of cases in their real-life setting are chosen and data obtained from the selected cases are then analysed in a qualitative way. In my study, data collected from the three participating schools were analysed using thematic analysis, which is a qualitative method of data analysis. The advantage of using a case study is that it allows more detail to be gathered which might not be easily obtained through other research designs.

The three major types of case study research designs are descriptive, explanatory and exploratory (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011:37). Descriptive case studies define a phenomenon which occurs within the data in question. According to Zaidah (2007), the goal of the researcher is to describe the data as they arise. The descriptions are centred around the analysed data. Descriptive case studies can be presented in the form of narration (Zaidah, 2007). In a descriptive case study, the researcher must start with a descriptive theory in order to support the description of the phenomenon under enquiry (Zaidah, 2007).

Explanatory case studies scrutinise data carefully both at a surface and a deep level in order to explain the phenomenon in the data (Zaidah, 2007). On the basis of the data, the researcher may then frame a theory and set to test that theory. Explanatory case studies are also deployed for causal studies where pattern-matching may be used to investigate certain phenomena in very intricate and multivariate cases (Zaidah, 2007).

Exploratory case studies are used to explore any occurrence in the data set which becomes a point of interest for the researcher (Zaidah, 2007). For example, a researcher conducting an exploratory case study on English second language proficiency can ask generic questions such as "Does mother tongue and social media influence the proficiency of English second language learners? And if so, how?" These generic types of questions serve as a launch pad for further examination of the observed phenomenon. Prior field work and data collection on a

smaller scale can be piloted before the actual research questions and hypotheses are proposed (Zaidah, 2007). I conducted my study through an exploratory case study design because I attempted to answer questions typically framed by the pronoun “what” (Yin, 2014). I asked sub-questions such as “What is the influence of mother tongue and social media on learners’ English language proficiency?” The exploratory case study design was more appropriate because it allowed me to find answers to my research questions which led to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

In line with interpretivist studies, an exploratory case study design does not rely on a single set of results and interpretations but involves multiple interpretations (Seaton & Schwier, 2014). According to Ponelis (2015), answering the following four questions may assist to decide whether a case study design is applicable for a particular research study:

Can the phenomenon of concern be studied outside of its natural setting?
Must the study focus on modern-day events?
Is manipulation or control of subjects or events possible?
Does the phenomenon of interest enjoy a dependable theoretical base?

Regarding my study, the above questions can be answered as follows. Exploratory case study research on mother tongue and social media influence on second language learners’ English proficiency cannot be studied outside of its natural context. The study focused on modern-day events and it was not possible to manipulate or control the learner and teacher participants in the study. Based on the answers to these questions, I decided that the exploratory case study design was a suitable choice for my study. In addition, case studies are regarded as more persuasive than theoretical discussions (Ponelis, 2015). It is argued that the choice of research method demonstrates both a particular epistemological standpoint and application of a specific data collection technique (Ponelis 2015). Table 3.1 provides a summary of the research methodology used in this study.

Table 3.1: Research design

AIM	RESEARCH QUESTION	SUB-QUESTIONS	THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	DATA GENERATION METHODS
1. To examine mother tongue and social media influence on second language learners' English proficiency	1. How does mother tongue and social media influence English second language learners' proficiency?	1. To what extent is English language proficiency and achievement influenced by the MT? 2. To what extent is English language proficiency and achievement influenced by social media as a resource?	1. inguistic Interdependence Theory (LIT), Cummins (1978). 2. Common uderlying poficiency (CUP) 3. Iceberg mdel	1. Interviews 2. Non-participant classroom observation 3. Document analysis

3.5 Sampling strategy

Sampling is a crucial part of the research process. The population of interest to the researcher is mostly too big for any study to include the entire population as participants (Majid, 2018). Sampling refers to a process of picking a representative part from a large group or population for a certain research purpose (Bhardwaj, 2019). According to Majid (2018), sampling simply refers to the procedure of selecting a statistically representative sample of individuals from the population of interest. Yin (2014) sums it up by arguing that sampling denotes a desire to achieve statistical generalisability. This implies that the findings of the study will be applicable to the entire population within the research site.

Population of interest refers to the target population of the study (Majid, 2018). It is often not possible or feasible to recruit the entire population of interest. As a result, researchers recruit a sample from the entire population of interest to include in the study (Majid, 2018). Bhardwaj (2019) says that sampling is vital because it is too expensive and time-consuming to survey a whole population in a research study. Therefore, it is necessary to select an appropriate sample from the population. In my study, the population of interest was Grade 12 English secondary school learners in three rural schools.

In this study non-probability sampling was used to select the sample. Non-probability sampling refers to a sampling strategy in which the probability of each member of a population to be selected into the sample is unknown (Bhardwaj, 2019). Four main types of non-probability sampling are used by qualitative researchers, namely, convenience, purposive, snowball, and theoretical sampling.

Convenience sampling is when individuals are invited to take part in a study because they are conveniently or opportunistically available due to access, time, location and willingness (Bhardwaj, 2019). It is the fastest and easiest type of non-probability sampling. Two advantages of convenience sampling are that data can be collected over a short period of time and it is cheaper and easy to implement (Bhardwaj, 2019).

Snowball sampling is when the researcher starts gathering information from one, or a small number of individuals whom her or she then requests to put him/her in touch with others possible participants who may be friends, relatives, colleagues or any other significant contacts (Whitehead & Whitehead, 2016). Snowball sampling is the most common type of sampling technique used when dealing with a hidden population. Although it has greater chances of sampling bias and marginal error (Bhardwaj, 2019), the two advantages of snowball sampling are that samples can be very quickly collected and snowball sampling is not expensive to conduct (Bhardwaj, 2019).

Theoretical sampling starts from a homogeneous sample and navigates to a heterogenous sample (Whitehead & Whitehead, 2016). It occurs sequentially and alongside data analysis, which guides the researcher to more areas to be explored

(Whitehead & Whitehead, 2016). Theoretical sampling is mostly used in grounded-theory studies.

In purposive sampling, participants are recruited according to pre-selected criteria relevant to the research aims and questions of the given study (Whitehead, 2016). It is designed to provide information-rich participants who possess the required status, experience or knowledge which is of interest to the researcher (Palinkas et al., 2015; Whitehead, 2016). Creswell and PlanoClark (2011) postulate that purposive sampling involves finding and selecting people who are especially knowledgeable about the phenomenon of interest.

I used purposive sampling because of its ability to recruit participants who are able to deliver comprehensive and detailed information about the phenomenon under enquiry. I purposively identified and recruited Grade 12 English second language learners and their English teachers in three rural schools in order to obtain information-rich data. Bhardwaj (2019) posits that purposive sampling is done when there is a need to filter the samples selected by other sampling methods and thus depends on the researcher's knowledge and experience. Based on my experience as an English second language teacher, I selected second language learners in Grade 12 to participate in this study.

Bhardwaj (2019) outlines the following as advantages of purposive sampling:

> There are no hurdles and the selection of samples become convenient as it is done by an experienced researcher.
>
> Real-time results will be gained as the selected participants will be good respondents as they have appropriate knowledge of the subject under investigation.
>
> The researcher can get the desired results as he/she directly communicates with the target audience.

The only limitation of purposive sampling is that the researcher is subjective and biased in selecting the participants for the study (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). Reporting on my predisposition, peer debriefing, and constant member checking allowed me to alleviate possible bias from the study. The learners were observed in a classroom during a pedagogic activity with a second language teacher. Teachers

in each of these classes helped to identify learners for the interviews. Six learners from each of the three participating secondary schools (n = 18) were purposively selected and interviewed over a period of three months. The schools were based in the Sekhukhune East education district in the Driekop circuit in the Limpopo province of South Africa. Learners in the three schools spoke Sepedi as mother tongue (L1) and English as L2. The three schools from which the participants were selected are based in poor communities of the Limpopo province. The class sizes ranged from 30 to 45 learners and the schools had limited resources and technological teaching aids. The photos in image 3.1 and image 3.2 depict a typical classroom in this area/school context.

Image 3.1: Typical classroom in the Sekhukhune East education district (Source: https://www.google.com).

Image 3.2: Typical classroom in the Sekhukhune East education district (Source: https://www.businesslive.co.za)

The three schools were ranked as Quintile 1 schools under the five-quintile ranking system established by the South African Department of Basic Education. The Amended National Norms and Standards for School Funding (ANNSSF) necessitated that schools be graded into one of five quintiles. Quintile 1 schools are the poorest schools while Quintile 5 schools are the most affluent schools (Van Dyk & White, 2019). The amendment and the quintile system implies that schools serving impoverished communities receive more funding than those in other quintiles (Van Dyk & White, 2019). The Limpopo province, were the three research sites are located, has the highest number of Quintile 1 schools (28,2%) (Van Dyk & White, 2019). This is an indication that the communities feeding the three participating schools are destitute.

3.6 Data generation

Data generation in qualitative research involves a process of using approved research techniques for generating data. Creswell (2014) groups qualitative data generation techniques into four categories, namely, observations, interviews, documents, and audio-visual methods. In my study, I generated data from the research sites through semi-structured interviews, non-participant whole class observations, and document analysis.

3.6.1 Semi-structured interviews

The purpose of interviews in a study is to explore the views, experiences, beliefs, and motivations of people on particular topics (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017). Three commonly used types of interviews in qualitative research are structured, unstructured and semi-structured interviews. Adhabi and Anozie (2017) define qualitative interviews as an attempt to comprehend the world from the participant's point of view, to unfold the meaning of participants' experiences and to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations. The interviews are a system of consultation through which the researcher strives to know more about an issue from an interviewee's perspective.

Structured interviews are interviews in which the interviewer has full control of the interview and gives the interviewee less opportunity to be casual and flexible (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017; Jamshed, 2014). They are typically very short in design and the subjects are anticipated to be brief in their responses (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017). The interviewee strictly follows the sequence of the interview questions.

Unstructured interviews are narrative types of interviews in which researchers immerse themselves within the study group (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017). Unstructured interviews are mostly used when dealing with pressing social issues to allow the researcher to make observations, point out the leading subjects, and informally ask the participants questions while also taking notes (Stuckey, 2013).

Semi-structured interviews are interviews in which the researcher outlines the topics and questions to be answered by the participants but with no rigid adherence to interview protocols, unlike in structured interviews (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017). The researcher prepares a set of guiding questions to use in semi-structured interviews and the interviewees have greater leeway in how to respond to these (Bryman, 2004; Hofisi et al., 2014; Jamshed, 2014). The participants' responses allow the researcher some flexibility to ask more probing questions than those initially drafted (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017). I chose semi-structured interviews as a strategy because these types of interviews allowed the participants to freely express their views and opinions. Interviews were recorded and later transcribed for analysis.

The purpose of the interviews was to explore the influence of mother tongue and social media on English second language learners' proficiency. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with six learner participants in each of the three schools. Three teacher-participants teaching English in the identified classes were also interviewed to give a perspective on the proficiency although the focus was primarily on learner participants. The interviews were conducted face to face. Each interview lasted approximately 15 minutes. The interviews were audio-recorded and the recordings were kept in a safe place. I explained the research protocol in detail so that the participants had a clear understanding of the process and what was expected of them. I conducted the interviews after hours in a noise-free environment at the three schools. I conducted the interviews at times convenient to learners in the afternoon during their own study time. The interviews were rescheduled when learner participants had other commitments.

The semi-structured interviews were divided into two sections, namely mother tongue and social media and included questions on both mother tongue and social media. The questions on mother tongue (Section A of the interview questions) were directed at the learner participants, for example, "What is your mother tongue?" "Do you use mother tongue in English second language classes?" cf. Addendum E for a full list of questions).

Section B of the interview questions was about social media. Learner participants were asked, among others, whether they had social media accounts and how many hours they spent on social media per week, whether they used social media as a learning resource and what their preferred language use on social media was. The last question was whether they thought that social media enhanced their creative writing skills (cf. Addendum E for a full list of questions). The participants' responses were captured in writing and in audio format.

During the semi-structured interviews, in addition to the questions that I asked, I used an adapted version of the descriptors of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) as an assisting tool. The IELTS is a popular English test used to assesses learners' abilities in listening, reading, writing and speaking (British Council, 2015) and to evaluate the proficiency of individuals intending to work and study in an English-speaking context (Hashemi & Daneshfar, 2018).

These are international standardised tests of English language proficiency for non-native speakers of English (British Council, 2015). The structure of a typical IELTS original test comprises four components weighed equally, namely, listening, reading, speaking and writing (Hashemi & Daneshfar, 2018). The assessor uses the mean of the four sub-sections to determine the candidate's overall band score (Hashemi & Daneshfar, 2018). The tests for writing and speaking are supervised by an accredited IELTS trainer every two years to ensure that the assessors mark the performance guided by the standards set before marking papers on reading and listening (Hashemi & Daneshfar, 2018).

Although the purpose of my study was not directly linked to IELTS, I regarded the descriptors of this test as suitable tools to use during the semi-structured interviews and analysis of the learner participants' documents. The descriptors were relevant because my study focused on mother tongue and social media influence on English second language learners' proficiency – especially those at the exit level of the South African basic education system, Grade 12. I used an adapted version of the test specifically designed for speaking/oral proficiency for the interviews (cf. Addendum F for the adapted version). The IELTS test assisted me in making an informed evaluation of the participants' oral proficiency during the interviews. I, as sole researcher, judged the learners' proficiency, which is inevitably very subjective, but the use of this test helped me to adhere to benchmarked standards and made the data more reliable.

3.6.2 Non-participant classroom observations

Observation in qualitative research is a method of observing the daily experiences and behaviour of participants in their natural context in order to record traits such as actions, social position, function and interactions (Whitehead & Whitehead, 2016) Observations provide researchers with strategies to identify non-verbal expression, determine interactions, grasp the manner in which participants talk to each other, and determine the average period spent on different events (Kawulich, 2005). This is made possible because the researcher does not interfere with the activities of the participants. Observation is important for interpretivist researchers as exploring observed actions is often used to interpret and understand behaviour (Whitehead & Whitehead, 2016). There are three major types of observations, namely, complete

participation, partial participant and lastly, non-participant observations. The three types are distinguished as follows.

Complete participant observation refers to a method of observation in which the observer attempts to become part of the studied environment and to appropriate the group's lifestyle, their perceptions of reality and their customs (Ciesielska, Boström & Öhlander, 2018). The observer fully participates in the activities of the observed group. The only drawback of this approach is that the researcher may lose the analytical attitude and become biased (Ciesielska et al., 2018).

Partial participant observation is a type of observation in which the observer participates in the interactions but not in the type of activities which are specific to the environment under study (Ciesielska et al., 2018). This means that the observer gives input in the interactions but does not necessarily give away answers which are supposed to be given by the participants. The researcher guides where necessary.

Non-participant observation is the type of observation in which the observer takes notes without any involvement in human interaction (Ciesielska et al., 2018). The researcher only takes notes of the observed experiences to avoid bias. Non-participant observations are somewhat discreet qualitative research strategies for collecting data about an interesting social phenomenon without directly interacting with the participants (Williams, 2008). This type of observation gives the researcher enough time to focus on all the observable characters without interference.

I chose non-participant observations and observed the Grade 12 learners in English FAL classes at the three participating schools. I focused on learners' interactions with the subject teacher in a pedagogic situation during class in order to assess their proficiency and achievement without interfering with the lessons. This strategy enabled me to be part of the setting without any interaction, thus allowing the participants to act more naturally.

During the teacher-learner interactions, I assessed learner proficiency using the same adapted version of the IELTS test rubric. The sizes of the classes were dependent on the school arrangement and in strict adherence with the applicable

COVID-19 protocols. The class that I observed at School A had 44 learners, the class at School B had 27 learners, while the class at School C had 23 learners. The observations were each 45 minutes long, which was equivalent to a single period on the timetable. In total, I observed eighteen (18) lessons. I used a notepad to note observable behaviour related to the study for further analysis and interpretation.

3.6.3 Documents for analysis

Collecting documents for analysis entails the review of written materials (Busetto, Wick & Gumbinger, 2020) that range from personal to generic documents, such as annual reports, archives, policy documents, guidelines, letters or diaries (Busetto et al., 2020). O'Leary (2014) points out that a researcher can utilise a plethora of texts for research but the most common is likely to be written documents. The advantage of using documents is that they are easily accessible. I asked for and collected learners' creative writing (essays and transactional texts) written assessment tasks from the subject teachers of each class. These assessment tasks were written test scripts for continuous assessment as outlined by the Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2011).These documents were from the same learner-participants chosen for semi-structured interviews and who were part of the non-participant classroom observations. This was done to additionally analyse the differences between the oral and written proficiencies.

I used the adapted IELTS writing band descriptors to determine the learners' level of proficiency. The IELTS writing band descriptors are used to assess English second language students' writing proficiency before admission into top universities in the world. However, it is worth mentioning that the tests that I used were not IELTS standardised tests but continuous assessment (CASS) tests administered for South African Grade 12 FAL learners. I used the adapted band descriptors to analyse the learner participants' writing proficiency as displayed in their continuous assessment tasks. I felt that this was appropriate because these learner participants were at the exit level of the South African basic schooling system, which is Grade 12. Table 3.2 shows the adapted IELTS writing band descriptors used to analyse the test scripts for learners' writing proficiency.

Table 3.2: Adapted IELTS writing band descriptors

Adapted IELTS writing band sore	Level of skill
9	Expert writer
8	Very good
7	Good
6	Competent
5	Modest
4	Limited
3	Extremely limited
2	Intermittent
1	Attempt

Source: British Council, 2015

Level 1 represents the lowest and level 9 represents the highest proficiency score.

3.7 Data analysis

Data analysis involves a vigorous process of recognition and merging of emerging themes, identification of key units or ideas of meaning and obtained material from the literature (Mohajan, 2018). Willig (2014) describes qualitative data analysis as a process of identifying themes from the data which are relevant to the research questions and subsequently making links between those themes. It is a systematic approach to analysing qualitative data related to research. Creswell (2014) further explains that it involves grouping and separating the data just as one would peel back the layers of an onion and assembling it again. This means that the researcher examines the data to find interesting aspects of the data worth reporting.

Wong (2008) refers to data analysis as the process of carefully searching and arranging observation notes, interview transcripts and other non-textual resources which the researcher collects to increase the understanding of the phenomenon. This means that for a careful analysis, the researcher groups together data observed from observations, interviews and documents separately. Since I used qualitative data collection methods to gather data, I relied on qualitative methods for data analysis as well. I used thematic analysis to analyse the data. In thematic analysis, I familiarised myself with the data, generated initial codes, searched for themes, defined and reviewed themes, and produced the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.7.1 Familiarising myself with the data

As the first step in thematic analysis, I arranged the data obtained from the interviews, observations and documents and familiarised myself with the data. Through reflecting on the data I tried to gain an understanding of the data in order to familiarise me with them. I wrote down my thoughts so that I could later use the notes when I analysed the data. Data were kept safe to ensure that nothing went missing. According to Nowell et al. (2017), storing all records of raw data affords an audit trail and a benchmark against which later data analysis and interpretations can be verified for adequacy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This process will enable other researchers to verify and substantiate the gathered data.

3.7.2 Generating initial data codes

Data coding is the process of classifying text and fragmenting it to form explanations and all-inclusive data themes (Creswell, 2007; Creswell, 2012a; Miles & Huberman, 2014b). Data coding is not only limited to reducing the data by breaking down the interview text or anecdotes into meaningful and manageable text sections (Akinyode & Khan, 2018) but also allows the researcher to simplify and focus on definite characteristics of the data (Nowell et al., 2017). I started with the initial code production from the data gathered – a theorising activity which required me to keep returning to the data (Nowell et al., 2017).

Different labels were assigned for data on mother tongue influence and social media influence to avoid misinterpretation of the data. The data gathered through interviews, observations and documents were assigned different codes and labels to enable a smooth analysis process. I started with the interesting features of the data set and these became the basis of my themes. I documented the main ideas, themes and codes from the data on English proficiency and put them in a safe place. Figure 3.2 indicates the initial codes that I allocated to the data.

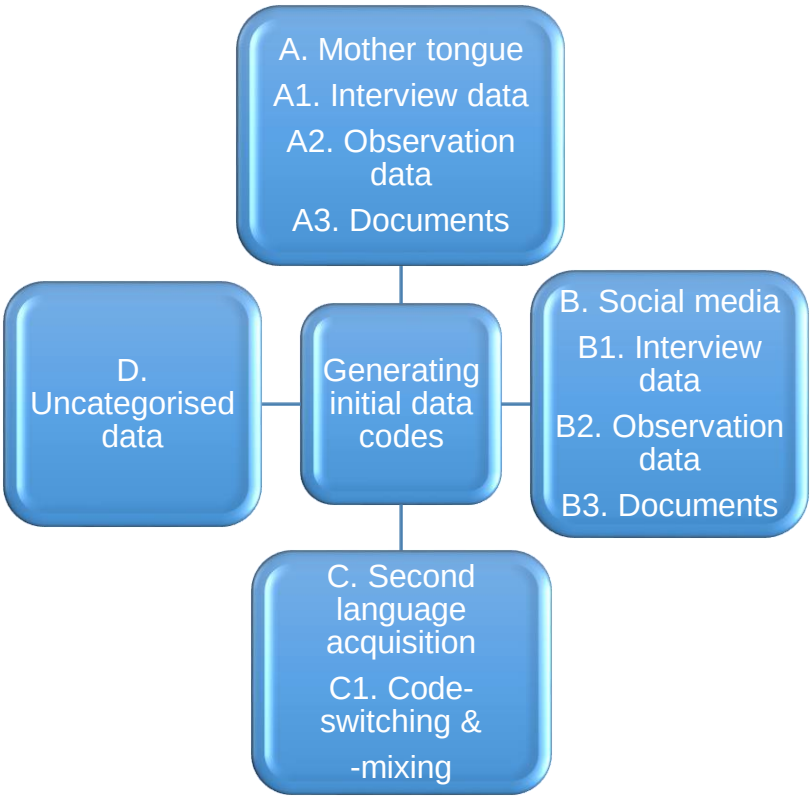


Figure 3.2: Initial codes

3.7.3 Searching for themes

This phase commenced after all the data had been originally coded, organised and lists of dissimilar codes identified across the data set had been developed (Nowell et al., 2017). According to Nowell et al. (2017), a theme refers to an abstract entity that brings sense and distinctiveness to a recurrent experience and its variant manifestations. I reflected upon the data and the codes that I had generated from the previous step. I then formulated themes from the existing data. King (2004) suggests that when searching for themes it is better to start with predefined codes to help guide the analysis. Predefined themes became the basis of my analysis. I started with labelling the broader themes as mother tongue, social media and second language acquisition. I wrote down subthemes emerging from the three main themes as presented in table 3.3.

This stage enabled me to probe deeply into the data to determine likely changes that I could make to the preliminary themes. The themes were guided by my theoretical framework, Cummins' (1978) Linguistic Interdependence Theory. I

looked for the influence of mother tongue on the proficiency and acquisition of English L2. I looked for knowledge transfer from mother tongue to English L2. The transfer was also scrutinised with regard to the use of L2 on social media. The themes were mutually exclusive and exhaustive. Inductive and deductive data analyses were used in determining themes for analysis. The inductive process meant that I had to work back and forth among the themes and the database until I had established an inclusive set of themes. Creswell (2014) explains that qualitative researchers build categories, patterns and themes from the bottom up by arranging the data into gradually more abstract units of information. The themes covered all the data sets.

Table 3.3: Themes and sub-themes identified

Mother tongue	Social media	Second language acquisition
Negative interference	Invented abbreviations	Concord errors
Positive interference	Brevity	Motivation
Code-switching	Letter to number homophones	Vocabulary
Code-mixing	Phonemes	
	Graphones	
	Vowel deletion	
	Spelling manipulation	

3.7.4 Review and definition of themes

The fourth phase commenced once a set of themes had been established and required modification (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). I reviewed the themes from the first set of data and reviewed the coded data extracts for each theme to consider whether they seemed to form a coherent pattern. The aim was to ensure that none of the data were left out from analysis during these steps. When I identified a significant issue in the text not covered by an existing code, I inserted a new code or theme. This was done extensively to cover all themes. Similarly, some themes that did not have enough data to support them or were too diverse, were collapsed while other themes were broken down into separate themes (Nowell et al., 2017). Themes such as code-mixing and code-switching were collapsed into one theme to make the data more manageable. Themes with insufficient data were removed. I then made a decision on what the final themes would be in line with my research questions. Defining and naming themes was done in accordance with the

theoretical framework for the study, the Linguistic Interdependence Model (Cummins, 1978). I ended up with four themes from the data. The final themes used in my study (represented in figure 3.3) were concord and spelling errors, motivation, vocabulary and code-switching.

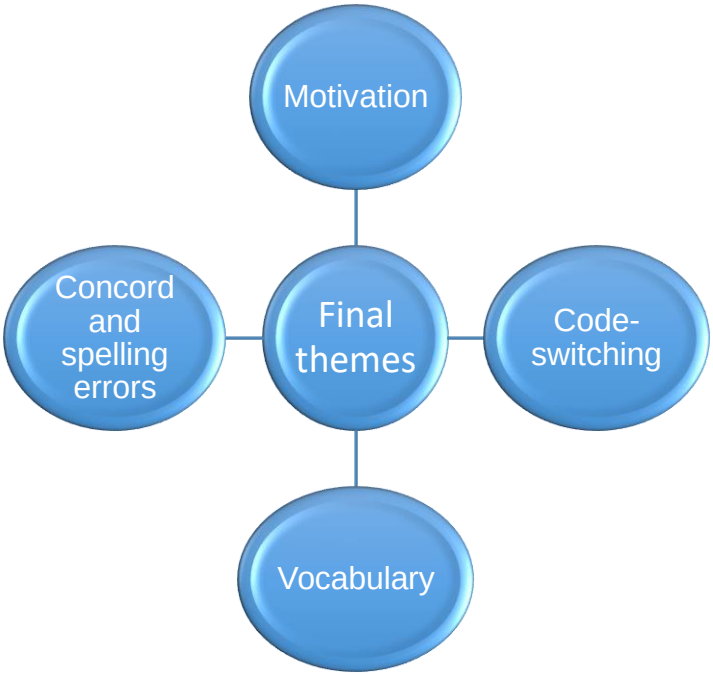


Figure 3.3 The final themes

3.7.5 Producing the report

I embarked on this phase after I had fully established the themes. According to Braun and Clark (2006), the write-up of a thematic analysis should provide a brief, coherent, logical, non-repetitive, and interesting account of the data within and across themes. After having read through the data repeatedly, I was in a position to interpret each theme in detail and produce a written report.

3.8 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness of a research study refers to the amount of assurance that exists in the data, interpretation, and methods used to confirm the quality of a study (Connelly, 2016). In my qualitative study I ensured that measures of trustworthiness were adhered to. I used three methods of data collection to ensure trustworthiness of my results. Trustworthiness of a qualitative study is achieved through credibility,

transferability, dependability and confirmability. Below are the measures taken to ensure trustworthiness of the data collected.

3.8.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the assurance that is to be placed in the certainty of the research findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Credibility links the research findings with reality to demonstrate the truth of the findings of the research study. As mentioned in chapter 1, credibility in my study was achieved by means of triangulation, peer debriefing and member checking.

Triangulation refers to the merging of two or more theories, methods, data sources or researchers in one particular study investigating a single phenomenon (Yeasmin & Rahman, 2012). Triangulation involved the use of different methods, namely, observations, document analysis and semi-structured interviews, which are the major data collection strategies for qualitative research (Shenton, 2004). The advantage of triangulation in my study was that it reduced bias and provided rich descriptive data which enhanced the credibility of the findings (Yeasmin & Rahman, 2012).

Member checking involves returning findings to research participants to determine whether the findings reflected their experiences accurately (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Moon et al., 2016; Padget, 2008;). I constantly checked with the teacher participants at the host schools to ensure that responses were captured correctly. Member checking was used to ensure that the data were interpreted correctly. The participants were allowed to clarify what their intentions were and to provide additional information where necessary.

I used peer debriefing to get a clearer perspective and ensure that my data were credible. Peer debriefing involves sharing questions about the research process and findings with peers who provide an additional perspective on analysis and interpretation (Moon et al., 2016). Shenton (2004) argues that through recurrent debriefing sessions between the researcher and his/her supervisors, the vision of the researcher may be widened as others bring to light their experiences and

perceptions. Constant engagement with my supervisor and peers enabled me to broaden my knowledge of the study and research protocol.

3.8.2 Dependability

Dependability refers to the reliability and consistency of the research findings and the degree to which research proceedings are documented, allowing an outsider to follow, audit and critique the research process (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I used reflexivity (self-assessment) to increase dependability and ensure transparency of the research findings by reporting on my predisposition, beliefs and assumptions to avoid bias (Moon et al., 2016). As a second language teacher and researcher, reporting on my beliefs and assumptions enabled me to remain objective in the interpretation of the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Moon et al., 2016).

I used field notes to attain a measure of dependability. Field notes refer to notes of qualitative research recorded by researchers during or after their observations of a specific phenomenon under study (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). Field notes were used to ensure that the data were interpreted correctly without bias. As a measure to ensure dependability, I documented the research design and implementation, methods, the details of data collection such as memos, recordings, field notes and my reflexivity journal (Moon et al., 2016; Shenton, 2004). Shenton (2004) highlights that comprehensive coverage of the methods and methodology used permits the reader to assess the extent to which appropriate research practices have been adhered to (Shenton, 2004).

3.8.3 Confirmability

In order to achieve confirmability, researchers must show that the results are visibly connected to the conclusions in a way that can be shadowed and can be replicated (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Moon et al., 2016). The use of qualitative methods of data analysis ensured that the results were visibly connected. In adhering to confirmability, I reported on my predisposition, beliefs and assumptions such as ontology and epistemology (Miles and Huberman,1994).

I applied reflexivity to avoid personal bias. In addition, constant engagement with my supervisor, who was aware of my predisposition, beliefs and assumptions, also ensured that I adhered to a measure of confirmability. I also provided a detailed methodological description, showing data, constructs and emerging theories (Moon et al., 2016; Shenton, 2004).

An audit trail refers to the clear description of all the research stages from the beginning of the research venture to reporting of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study an audit trail was created through the clear description and documentation of all decisions taken and research stages applied.

3.8.4 Transferability

Transferability means that the findings described in one particular study must be applicable to practice, theory and future research (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Moon et al., 2016). Moon et al. (2016) describe transferability as the extent to which the findings of a particular study may be applicable in other subjects and contexts. This is to say that the findings must find expression within other contexts and with the use of different subjects.

To enhance transferability in my study, I used proper recruitment strategies (purposive sampling) combined with thick descriptive data (Guba, 1981; Moon et al., 2016). Provision of a clear and detailed description of the culture, selection, context, characteristics of the participants, data collection and analysis ensure measures of transferability (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). I purposively selected the participants to allow me to obtain a knowledgeable group of participants. Highly detailed descriptions of the context of my study, learners' situations, selection criteria, methods and data analysis were supplied as a measure of transferability. Transferability was measured through providing the anticipated range and limitations for the application of the findings (Malterud, 2001; Moon et al., 2016). A summary of the strategies used for enhancing trustworthiness of the data is presented in table 3.4.

Table 3.4: Strategies for enhancing trustworthiness

Trustworthiness	Measures
1. Credibility	• Triangulation • Member checking • Peer debriefing
2. Dependability	• The use of reflexivity • Field notes
3. Confirmability	• Audit trail • Detailed methodological description showing data, constructs and emerging theories
4. Transferability	• Thick descriptive data • Purposive sampling • Vivid and detailed description of culture, context, data collection and analysis • Projected range and limitations for the application of the findings

3.9 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are defined as the values of suitable conduct governing research and procedures undertaken to respect and protect the participants' dignity, rights and welfare in a host of varying disciplines of research, methods and participants, as well as research that includes children (Abrar & Sidik, 2019). I addressed three main issues related to ethics: permission to conduct the study, informed consent/assent and participant confidentiality. Seeking permission in an appropriate way is one of the most vital steps in research (Rashid et al., 2019). I applied for and was awarded ethical clearance by the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria before commencing with fieldwork (clearance number: EDU185/20). I requested and received permission from the Limpopo Department of Education to conduct the study at schools in the province (cf. Addendum A). Letters of request were sent to principals and SGBs of the schools involved (cf. Addendum B).

Participants, whom Creswell (2014) refers to as "informants", play a pivotal role in the successful completion of a study. It is important to inform them of their roles in the study and how the information solicited from them would be used.

Creswell (2014) outlines that to safeguard the informants' or participants' rights, the following must be done: (1) the research objectives must be expressed in writing and verbally and an explanation of how the data will be utilised must be given so that the informant understands them; (2) written submission to continue with the study as expressed must be received from the informant; (3) a research immunity form ought to be filled with the institutional review board; (4) the informant ought to be informed of all the activities and data collection resources; (5) both written transcriptions and verbatim transcriptions and reports ought to be made available to the informants; (6) the rights, wishes, and interests of the informants must be taken into consideration when decisions are made with regard to reporting of the data; (7) the final decision regarding the informant's privacy must rest with the participant.

Abrar and Sidik (2019) outline that the general ethics principles for research involving children are largely similar to the ones for adults. For a study to commence, informed consent, protection of all participants, confidentiality and anonymity (Abrar & Sidik, 2019) should all be in place. Abrar and Sidik (2019) mention that in order for a researcher to gain access to children, he/she must have sourced initial assent from the parents. The process becomes increasingly difficult when the research is conducted in a school setting where there are different layers of gate keepers such as principals, SGBs, and teachers who need to give consent before the researcher can contact the children as learner participants (Abrar & Sidik, 2019).

Guided by Creswell's (2014) and Abrar & Sidik's submissions above, I strictly adhered to the outlined ethics protocol. Participants were duly informed about the purpose of the study; consent and assent forms were issued to the participants and they were assured of their confidentiality, safety, and rights regarding the study (cf. Addenda B and C). Since the participants were mostly children younger than 18 years, they signed informed assent forms, while their parents signed informed consent forms.

3.10 Chapter summary

In this chapter I succinctly present the research paradigms, including my ontology and epistemology, and the research approach and design chosen to guide the study. The sampling strategy, data collection methods used and data analysis strategy are discussed. Measures of trustworthiness and ethical considerations are also discussed in this chapter.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present all the findings that emerged from the collected data and the analysis thereof as outlined in chapter 3. The findings are presented in line with the research questions. Data collected were carefully analysed to answer to the main research question: “How does mother tongue and social media influence English second language learners’ proficiency?” Data were generated from interviews with 18 learner participants (LP) and three teacher participants (TP). Observation data were gathered at three participating public secondary schools (n=3) and documents were also solicited from the participating schools in the form of learner assessment scripts from a sample of learners (n=18). The data generated through the use of the three data collection methods were analysed and interpreted using thematic analysis.

4.2 Participants in the study

Participants in the study were 18 Grade 12 learner participants, ranging between the ages of 16 and 19 years, and three Grade 12 English First Additional Language teachers. Although the main focus was on learner participants, teachers offering FAL at the three selected schools were also interviewed to understand their views on second language proficiency with regard to mother tongue and social media.

4.2.1 Teacher participant interviews

Teacher participant 1 (TP 1) from School A said that teaching English had always been his passion. However, he conceded that overcrowding, which lead to excessive marking of scripts, was a challenge. Teacher 2 from School B admitted that teaching a second language was difficult because learners were complacent about the subject and ended up with poor marks. She further explained that she loved the subject. Teacher 3 from School C said that he was passionate about the subject but wished that the department would hire more language teachers to share the load, since the heavy workload affected performance. The three teachers’ mother tongue was Sepedi, as was that of the learner participants. Table 4.1 provides biographical information of the interviewed teachers.

Table 4.1: Biographical information of the three interviewed teachers

Teacher participant	Age	Gender	Qualifications	Experience in teaching a second language
TP1	33	Male	BEd* Honours (Management)	07
TP2	35	Female	BEd*	04
TP3	26	Male	BEd*	03

*BEd – Bachelor of Education

Two of the teachers admitted to sometimes using mother tongue to explain difficult concepts during their lessons, while one admitted to using English only throughout First Additional Language lessons. The three teachers admitted that the use of L1 derailed learners' oral proficiency but improved the results of the learners who struggled with the language as a medium of instruction. All three teachers were articulate, could speak English well and could be understood by native speakers. When asked about social media, they all admitted to having social media accounts. They also added that social media could not be used as a learning resource since the language used on social media was not standard English, which was required in the classroom.

Two teachers admitted to casually including L1 phrases in their emphasis on the concepts taught. The teachers maintained that they used L1 when they solicited answers from the learners. My observation and interpretation was that L1 was used to create a safe space for learners to engage freely in L2 classes. It created a bridge for learners who were not adequately proficient in L2 to participate in the lessons. Moreover, it created the basis for the learners to also mix the two languages in their responses to questions.

Teacher participant 1 (TP1) used the grammar translation method in the lessons in order to make meaning clearer by translating concepts into the learners' L1 (Şener & Korkut, 2017). In contrast, in a lessons on orals, TP 2 used the direct method of teaching throughout the lesson – the lesson was conducted in English only. The direct method provides learners with enough practice in the second language, subsequently increasing prospects of proficiency. This diversity in teaching

approaches used indicated to me that teachers used diverse methods. Sometimes, however, the diverse approaches did not improve the learners' English proficiency.

4.2.2 Learner participant interviews on mother tongue

Responses from the interviews on mother tongue demonstrated that L1 was used during second language learning and teaching. Table 4.2 presents a summary of the learner participant interviews on mother tongue.

Table 4.2: Summary of learner participant interviews on mother tongue

Use of mother tongue	Yes = 15	No = 03	
Frequency	Always = 01	Never = 02	Sometimes = 15
Views on whether mother tongue improved English learning	Yes = 12	No = 06	
Code-mixing & -switching	Yes = 15	No = 03	
Proficiency	No = 03	Yes = 15	

Many African countries have adopted English as an official language because of its value as a global business, commercial and communication language (Van Wyk & Mostert, 2016). Most of these countries, including South Africa, have a multilingual environment in which more than one language is used. South Africa has 11 official languages, of which English is one. However, for most South Africans (participants included) English is not their home language (Van Wyk & Mostert, 2016) but a second, third or even fourth language. This situation creates a dilemma for the use of English as second language in South African classrooms.

The learner participants that I interviewed admitted to using mother tongue during second language learning. Of the 18 interviews conducted, 15 learner participants admitted to using mother tongue in their interaction with the language teacher and other learners. This is 83,3% of the total interview sample. This implies that L1 is used to facilitate English language teaching and learning by the majority of the learner participants in the classroom. It implies that for effective learning to take place, English L2 learners apply linguistic skills learnt in L1 to facilitate successful

English language learning, thus proficiency. This is supported by the theoretical framework of Cummins' (1978) Linguistic Interference Model.

The use of L1 in English FAL classes is a controversial issue (Şener & Korkut, 2017). A socio-cultural perspective on L2 acquisition argues that L1 usage in second language classes can serve as an enabler when teaching difficult concepts, to explain grammar and to enforce discipline (Şener & Korkut, 2017). With the Developmental Interdependence Hypothesis, Cummins (Cummins, 1979, 1998, 2006) suggests that second language competence is largely dependent on the type of competence already developed by the learner in the first language (Van Wyk & Mostert, 2016). This suggests that the learners' mother tongue is fundamental and must not be neglected in order for second language learners to reach adequate proficiency levels (Van Wyk & Mostert, 2016). Some learners admitted in the interviews that the use of mother tongue enabled them to understand difficult concepts quicker.

In response to my question whether learners thought that the use of mother tongue in EFAL classes improved their learning (cf. Addendum E), one learner participant admitted that her marks had improved remarkably due to some of the explanations having been done in her mother tongue. The inference drawn from this statement is that some learners rely on mother tongue translations to understand abstract concepts during English FAL lessons. Of the 18 learner participants, 12 admitted that the use of mother tongue improved their learning and only 6 did not agree (cf. Table 4.2). Most of the learner participants (66,6%) admitted that the use of mother tongue in second language classes improved their learning while 33,4% did not agree.

Cummins, in his advocacy of bilingualism, argues that transfer of literacy-related language activities was not only limited to orthographically and typologically similar languages, but even distant language pairs like Japanese and English and English and Vietnamese showed high inter-language correlations (Van Wyk & Mostert, 2016). The learner participants' responses indicate that they paired English and Sepedi learning although the two languages were not orthographically and typologically similar. They used their knowledge of L1 for mastery of L2. Several other researchers (Prinsloo, 2007) support the idea that mother tongue (MT)

instruction promotes performance in the second language and that skills acquired in the learners' first language can be transferred to the second language (Van Wyk & Mostert, 2016). During the interviews a learner claimed that the use of mother tongue resulted in an improvement of the second language marks due to familiarity with L1. This demonstrates skills transfer from L1 to L2. The assumption is that the pairing of English and other official South African languages in the classroom may yield positive results for learners.

It is important to note that some theories of L2 acquisition, such as the interactionist view of L2 acquisition, do not support the usage of L1 in second language classes and support maximum exposure to the second language (Şener & Korkut, 2017). Some of the learners admitted that the use of their mother tongue in second language classes prevented them from improving and learning the second language successfully. Some admitted that in as much as it helped them grasp concepts quicker, it did not improve their oral proficiency. They were thus aware of the disadvantages of using their mother tongue while learning the second language.

4.2.3 Learner participant interviews on social media

As indicated in the literature review, in this technological age, social media enables people to share their views with friends, relatives, colleagues, classmates and teachers without taking distance into account (Khan, Ayaz & Faheem, 2016), social media is a vital source of communication. With this study I explored the influence of social media on English second language learners' proficiency. A summary of the numerical responses from the learner participant interviews is presented in table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Summary of learner participant interviews on social media

Social media account	Yes = 17	No = 01		
Average time spent on SM weekly	1–2 hours 06	3–4 hours 06	5– hours 04	12–84 hours 01
Use of SM as a learning resource	Yes = 18	No = 0		
Preferred language on SM	English = 13	Vernacular = 05		
Views on SM enhancing creative writing skills	Yes = 17	No = 01		

Of the 18 learner participants, 17 admitted to having social media accounts. Only one learner participant admitted to not having a social media account. From the data interpretation, it was clear that many Grade 12 English second language learners had social media accounts. This made exploring the medium a worthwhile exercise.

Six learner participants admitted to using social media between one and two hours on average per week, and six learner participants admitted to using social media between three and four hours per week. Four learner participants admitted to using social media between five and eight hours per week and only one admitted to using social media between twelve and eighty-four hours. Based on this data, it is safe to assume that most of Grade 12 learners were active users of social media. Although this was not the focus of the study, the reasons for the variation in time spent on social media could be as a result of a culmination of factors such as data costs involved, parental involvement, socio-economic background, and so on.

From the above it is evident that social media is a platform other than the classroom where learners converge. All 18 learner participants admitted to using social media as a learning resource, including the learner participant who did not have a social media account. Thirteen learner participants admitted to using English to communicate on social media while five admitted to using the vernacular.

17 learner participants admitted to social media enhancing their creative writing skills while one admitted to social media not enhancing their creative writing skills. In fact, the learner participant who did not believe that social media enhanced creative writing skills cited that “social media uses a lot of slang and abbreviations and does not teach how to write properly” (LP4). The learner participant was seemingly aware of the neologisms used in social media which are not part of standardised English. Some learner participants cited the autocorrect feature on devices as a helpful tool which improved their spelling and thus their language proficiency. Two learner participants claimed that social media helped them to learn and use new words, thus improving their vocabulary. The analysis of these responses demonstrates that the medium had both negative and positive effects on the learner participants in the study.

According to Khan et al. (2016), social media plays an important role in developing the four English skills or competencies, namely, speaking, listening, writing and reading. It also develops English vocabulary and grammar competency (Khan et al., 2016). In support of this claim, learner participants admitted to learning new words and spelling through the use of social media. Learning through social media takes place in the absence of the teacher. According to Khan et al. (2016), the most vital aspect of social media sources in learning English is that it allows second language learners to be autonomous to practice listening, speaking, reading and writing at home, in a guest house, on the road or in a shop without any difficulty.

A detailed breakdown of the learner participant scores based on the adapted IELTS test scores is represented in tables 4.4 to 4.6 (cf. Addendum F for the adapted IELTS score rubric).

Adapted IELTS SCORE DESCRIPTORS

1 = Low; 2 = Medium; 3 = Moderate; 4 = Good; 5 = Excellent/Outstanding

LP– Learner participant

Total female learner participants = 09

Total male learner participants = 09

Table 4.4: School A learner participant interview scores

Learner participant	LP1	LP2	LP3	LP4	LP5	LP6
Gender	Male	Male	Female	Male	Female	Female
Age	18	19	19	16	17	17
1. Fluency	2	3	2	4	3	3
2. Pronunciation	3	3	3	5	4	3
3. Grammar	2	4	2	4	3	4
4. Vocabulary	2	4	2	4	4	4
5. Content	3	3	3	4	3	4
Total score	12/25	17/25	12/25	21/25	17/25	18/25
Percentage	48%	68%	48%	84%	68%	72%

Table 4.5: School B learner participant interview scores

Learner participant	LP7	LP8	LP9	LP10	LP11	LP12
Gender	Male	Male	Female	Male	Female	Female
Age	19	17	17	19	18	17
1. Fluency	1	2	2	2	3	4
2. Pronunciation	2	3	3	2	3	4
3. Grammar	2	3	2	2	2	4
4. Vocabulary	2	2	3	2	4	4
5. Content	2	3	2	3	3	4
Total score	09/25	13/25	12/25	11/25	15/25	20/25
Percentage	36%	52%	48%	44%	60%	80%

Table 4.6: School C learner participant interview scores

Learner participant	LP13	LP14	LP15	LP16	LP17	LP18
Gender	Female	Male	Female	Female	Male	Male
Age	17	19	18	17	17	19
1. Fluency	3	1	1	2	3	3
2. Pronunciation	3	1	2	2	2	3
3. Grammar	3	2	2	2	2	2
4. Vocabulary	3	2	2	2	3	3
5. Content	3	3	2	3	3	3
Total score	15/25	09/25	09/25	11/25	13/25	14/25
Percentage	60%	36%	36%	44%	52%	56%

4.3 Non-participant classroom observations

I observed 18 Grade 12 English FAL lessons at the three participating schools. I acted as a non-participant classroom observer in order to obtain the most useful data.

4.3.1 School A

I observed six Grade 12 English FAL lessons at school A. The classes were small and manageable with between 23 and 26 leaners in line with COVID-19 regulations. The teacher made all learners feel comfortable in all the lessons. Learners seemingly understood what the teacher asked but could not entirely respond in the language of learning and teaching (English) when discussing among themselves. When asked questions, learners discussed the answers among themselves in their mother tongue and code-mixed and -switched between their mother tongue and English when responding to the teacher. They used their mother tongue as a safety net to avoid making mistakes in the second language. The teacher occasionally tag-switched to emphasise the points made throughout the lesson. Some of the learners' responses contained concord errors, which, based on my observation, could be attributed to a lack of practice in the target language. I also observed that learners were not motivated to speak in the target language. A summary of the lessons observed at School A is provided in tables 4.7 to 4.12.

Table 4.7: Lesson observation 1

Lesson 1	Lesson topic: Active and passive voice	Duration: 30 minutes	School A
Lesson activities (Observation notes) The teacher introduced the lesson in English and activated the learners' prior knowledge. Learners seemingly understood the lesson. The teacher used tag-switches once to gain the learners' attention. For example, she only tag-switched or added a short Sepedi expression like "*Lea e bona*?" (Do you understand?) and continued in English when introducing the subject, verb and object (SVO) formula for rewriting statements from active to passive voice.	Comprehension Understanding of the language was observably good. Learners responded exactly as asked.	Oral proficiency Learners responded in English when answering questions posed by the teacher. When they were given a chance to discuss among themselves, they switched between English and their mother tongue. As an observer, I could hear them as I was seated among them in the back row of the class.	

Table 4.8: Lesson observation 2

Lesson 2	Lesson topic: Question tags	Duration: 45 minutes	School A
Lesson activities (Observation notes) The teacher introduced the lesson using English and activated the learners' prior knowledge by asking what question tags were. Learners seemingly understood the lesson and answered accordingly.	Comprehension Understanding of the language was observably good. Learners responded exactly as asked. Participation had improved compared to the first lesson.	Oral proficiency Learners, as in the first lesson, responded in English when answering questions posed by the teacher. When they were given a chance to discuss among themselves, they switched between English and their mother tongue. As an observer, I could hear them as I was seated among them in the back row of the class.	

Table 4.9: Lesson observation 3

Lesson 3	Lesson topic: Concord	Duration: 45 minutes	School A
Lesson activities (Observation notes) The teacher introduced the lesson in English and activated the learners' prior knowledge. Learners did not seem to understand the lesson. One learner who was asked to define "concord" just said that it was "an agreement". The teacher had to correct him and the rest of the class.	Comprehension Understanding of the language was observably good. Learners responded exactly as asked although at times gave wrong answers.	Oral proficiency Learners gave wrong answers but responded in English when answering questions posed by the teacher. The teacher spent some more time writing notes on the chalkboard. As a result, interaction was minimal. After having written the notes, she wrote questions for which the learners took turns to write the answers on the chalkboard. I could hear how some of the seated learners guided and instructed the learners while they committed errors on the board. They shouted to correct the mistakes and switched between their mother tongue and English.	

Table 4.10: Lesson observation 4

Lesson 4	Lesson topic: Writing a formal letter	Duration: 45 minutes	School A
Lesson activities (Observation notes) The teacher introduced the lesson topic as formal letter writing in English and activated the learners' prior knowledge. Learners seemingly understood the lesson.	Comprehension Understanding of the lesson was observably good. They actively participated in the lesson more than in other lessons that I had observed. Learners responded exactly as asked and were left to write classwork on the lesson.	Oral proficiency The teacher emphasised the structure of a formal letter. She paved the way for the use of mother tongue by asking the learners what "structure" was in Sepedi. Learners uniformly responded "*sebopego*" as prompted. This gesture seemed to have awakened the class and other learners who initially seemed uninterested, started participating in the lesson.	

Table 4.11: Lesson observation 5

Lesson 5	Lesson Topic: Drama: *My children! My Africa!*	Duration: 45 minutes	School A
Lesson activities (Observation notes) The teacher introduced the lesson in English and activated the learners' prior knowledge about the drama. Learners listened attentively.	Comprehension Understanding of the lesson was fair. The learners seemed to understand the instructions given by the teacher.	Oral proficiency The learners took turns in reading scenes from act two of the drama. Most learners read audibly and well. However, they were unable to use stage directives to set the scenes and change tone when reading. The focus of the teacher was on explaining the long paragraphs read by learners. It was difficult to establish whether most learners understood the lesson.	

Table 4.12: Lesson observation 6

Lesson 6	Lesson topic: Parts of speech: Nouns	Duration: 45 minutes	School A
Learning activities (Observation notes) The teacher introduced the lesson as types of nouns. The teacher wrote some notes on the chalkboard for additional information. Learners seemingly understood the lesson.	Comprehension Understanding of the language was observably good. Learners' responses were accurate. They were given a home activity at the end of the period.	Oral proficiency Learners responded in English when answering questions posed by the teacher. When they were given a chance to discuss the answers, they switched between English and their mother tongue. As an observer, I discovered that classroom participation was at a maximum when the learners switched between mother tongue and the second language freely. The teacher maintained decorum by cautioning them when they made uncontrollable noise when using their mother tongue. This seemingly worked.	

4.3.2 School B

I observed six lessons at School B in the same district. The first class had 27 learners in line with COVID-19 protocols. The class was small and easy to manage. The learners were generally more receptive to me as a researcher compared to those at School A. They went out of their way to make me feel comfortable. They volunteered to get me a table and chair to sit among them. I think this was triggered by the manner in which I was introduced to them and given ample time to explain the purpose of my visit.

In a different lesson on active and passive voice, the learners who gave answers tried to use English without switching to their mother tongue. This class was smaller with 23 learners. I believe that the smaller class size contributed to the learners expressing themselves freely without being ridiculed by their peers. The teacher mostly spoke in English throughout the lesson. A detailed breakdown of the lessons observed is provided in tables 4.13 to 4.18.

Table 4.13: Lesson observation 7

Lesson 7	Lesson topic: Active and passive voice	Duration: 45 minutes	School B
Learning activities (Observation notes) The teacher explained the purpose of my visit to the learners and introduced the lesson. The lesson was on active and passive voice – similar to the first lesson at School A. The learners were given short notes on the lesson topic. Learners took turns writing answers on the chalkboard.	Comprehension Understanding of the language was observably good. Learners responded exactly as asked. There were no traces of the use of mother tongue in the chosen learners' responses throughout the period. Learners took turns in writing answers on the chalkboard. In this lesson, both the teacher and learners constructed meaning together. It was one lesson in which I saw learners taking charge of their learning.	Oral proficiency Oral proficiency for the learners and the teacher was generally good. Learners responded in English when answering questions posed by the teacher. The teacher seemed to know all his learners and called them by name when requesting answers. The chosen learners responded in English only.	

Table 4.14: Lesson observation 8

Lesson 8	Lesson topic: Direct/indirect speech	Duration: 45 minutes	School B
Learning activities (Observation notes) The teacher introduced the lesson using English and activated the learners' prior knowledge by asking what they understood by direct speech. Learners seemingly understood the lesson and answered accordingly. The teacher wrote notes on the chalkboard for learners to refer to.	Comprehension Understanding of the language was observably good. Learners responded exactly as asked. Participation had improved compared to the first lesson. The learners struggled with changing the tenses when rewriting sentences in reported speech. I concluded that the learners may have had a problem with tenses or understanding the dynamics of reported speech.	Oral proficiency As in the first lesson, learners responded positively in English when answering questions posed by the teacher. When they were given a chance to discuss among themselves, they tried to maintain their discussions in English. The oral proficiency of the learners who participated in the lesson was fairly good. The learners spoke confidently and naturally without distractive hesitation.	

Table 4.15: Lesson observation 9

Lesson 9	Lesson topic: Oral (Prepared speech)	Duration: 45 minutes	School B
Learning activities (Observation notes) The teacher introduced the lesson as Oral: prepared speech. He explained the procedure in which the orals would be conducted, which included him asking questions. Learners took turns in ascending to the stage.	Comprehension The learners demonstrated understanding of the language of learning and teaching. It seemed as though the learners understood the dynamics of a prepared speech. Most learners presented speeches about gender-based violence, although from different angles. They answered questions posed by the teacher after their presentations. Each presentation was between 2 and 5 minutes.	Oral proficiency Most learners presented audibly in English. They demonstrated research skills by presenting statistics on gender-based violence and other topics. Some learners hesitated several times, but generally seemed to know the desired words, although they made errors in pronunciation.	

Table 4.16: Lesson observation 10

Lesson 10	Lesson topic: Literature: Short story: “Transforming moments”	Duration: 45 minutes	School B
Learning activities (Observation notes) The teacher introduced the lesson topic as reading of the short story, “Transforming moments”. The teacher activated the learners’ prior knowledge of the story and literary devices.	Comprehension The teacher guided the reading of the literary text. Learners’ understanding of the lesson was observably good. Due to the limited time, learners were asked to continue reading at home to prepare for the class activity of the following day.	Oral proficiency Learners took turns in reading paragraphs from the short story. The reading was voluntary and learners raised hands to volunteer to read. The volunteers’ reading was audible and pronunciation of most words was fair. The teacher corrected errors in pronunciation of difficult words. Learners battled with pronouncing words such as “protestation” and were duly corrected.	

Table 4.17: Lesson observation 11

Lesson 11	Lesson topic: Literature: Short story: "New Tribe"	Duration: 45 minutes	School B
Learning activities (Observation notes) The teacher introduced the lesson in English and activated the learners' prior knowledge about the story. Learners read from the story book and listened attentively when others read. My interest was on their reading and speaking proficiencies.	Comprehension The learners seemed to understand the purpose of the lesson. Most of the comprehension emanated from the reading of the short story.	Oral proficiency The reading by the chosen learners was good. The responses to posed questions were fair but they did not seem to have read or understood the book before the lesson. The teacher continuously stopped and explained literary devices from the read paragraphs. He made his presentations in English.	

Table 4.18: Lesson observation 12

Lesson 12	Lesson topic: Diary entries	Duration: 45 minutes	School B
Learning activities (Observation notes) The teacher introduced the lesson as shorter transactional texts. He listed all topics under shorter transactional texts. He listed what was required in writing diary entries such as emotions, written in first person, and details about the dates.	Comprehension Understanding of the language was observably good. Learners were given an opportunity to write a diary entry as an example. The period ended while the learners were still writing.	Oral proficiency Learners spent most of the time copying notes from the board. The interaction was minimal and it was difficult to gauge the learners' proficiency.	

4.3.3 School C

In school C, the classes were bigger. There were two Grade 12 classes of 40 and 46 learners respectively. The learners attended class in the school hall in line with the COVID-19 protocols of social distancing. In the first two classes, learners were studying literature and had to take turns reading. Learners struggled with

pronouncing some words in the target language due to limited vocabulary, asking their teacher to intervene. One learner who was asked to read came to a stop when he was supposed to read the word “bureaucracy”. Learners occasionally laughed at each other when they made errors in the target language. The teacher tried but could not entirely control the laughter and ridicule of learners making pronunciation errors. I could sense that the learners were not entirely used to speaking in English in the classroom, hence these reactions. The summaries of the observed lessons are provided in the tables 4.19 to 4.24.

Table 4.19: Lesson observation 13

Lesson 13	Lesson topic: Literature: Drama: *My Children! My Africa!*	Duration: 45 minutes	School C
Learning activities (Observation notes) The lesson was on the synopsis of the prescribed drama, *My children! My Africa!* by Athol Fugard. Learners were all instructed to uniformly read the synopsis in their textbook. The teacher stopped the learners to explain key concepts of the drama, like the setting.	Comprehension Based on the learners’ responses and body language, understanding of the language was fair. There were no traces of mother tongue in the chosen learners’ responses throughout the period. The level of interaction was low and it could mean that some learners could not speak due to limited proficiency.	Oral proficiency The method used was whole-class reading. The method made it difficult to assess learners’ individual proficiency. As a team, the learners attempted to read well with a slow tempo. The teacher asked the learners about literary devices such as setting, theme, metaphor and irony. Chosen learners responded in English, but failed to answer the question on what irony was.	

Table 4.20: Lesson observation 14

Lesson 14	Lesson topic: Reading: Drama	Duration: 45 minutes	School C
Learning activities (Observation notes) The teacher introduced the lesson as drama reading in English and activated the learners’ prior knowledge by asking	Comprehension Understanding of the language of learning and teaching was observably low. Learners did not show keen interest in learning. They gave incorrect answers even when the teacher guided them	Oral proficiency Learners chosen responded in their mother tongue although the teacher asked the questions in English. Only two learners responded in English when asked	

what they knew about the characters in the drama. Half of the learners chosen seemingly did not study the characters that the teacher asked about. The teacher had to remind the class of the previous lesson.	towards the correct answers. The situation made me conclude that the learners were not adequately prepared for the lesson. They had not read the prescribed literature on their own before the lesson. This made me think that they lacked reading skills and were not autonomous in their learning, thus they probably had low reading proficiency.	about Thami and Isabel (characters in the story). The teacher read the first paragraph and asked the learners to read in turns. He only stopped them to explain important scenes and when they made errors in pronunciation.

Table 4.21: Lesson observation 15

Lesson 15	Lesson topic: Longer transactional texts: Obituary	Duration: 45 minutes	School C
Learning Activities (Observation notes) The teacher introduced the lesson and asked the learners what they knew about an obituary. Learners were keen to explain that it was detailed information about someone's life read after their death. The teacher based his lesson on the learners' prior knowledge.	Comprehension The learners demonstrated understanding of what was taught and were given an activity. The lesson was short and most of the activity was learners writing on their own. However, when observing their construction of obituaries, I could detect direct translation from mother tongue phrases into L2 as I am fluent in their L1.	Oral proficiency Most learners who answered used English. They demonstrated thorough knowledge of the requirements of writing an obituary. There were hiccups in their language proficiency which signals that they were not exposed to English.	

Table 4.22: Lesson observation 16

Lesson 16	Lesson topic: Literature: Short story: "Next Door"	Duration: 45 minutes	School C
Learning activities (Observation notes) The teacher introduced the lesson topic as literature reading of the short story, "Next Door". The teacher activated the learners' prior knowledge of the story and literary devices.	Comprehension The teacher guided the reading and the understanding of the lesson was observably good. The period came to an end and learners were asked to continue the reading at home to prepare for the following day. I observed that the teacher did most of the difficult reading after he had realised that the learners struggled with the pronunciation of unfamiliar words. This, to me, indicated low levels of reading proficiency and comprehension.	Oral proficiency Learners took turns in reading paragraphs from the short story. The teacher unilaterally chose learners to read extracts from the story. He stopped them where he felt he needed to explain difficult concepts. The reading was audible and pronunciation on most words was fair. The teacher corrected errors in pronunciation of difficult words. Learners battled with pronouncing words such as "protestation" and were duly corrected.	

Table 4.23: Lesson observation 17

Lesson 17	Lesson topic: Shorter texts: Advertisements	Duration: 45 minutes	School C
Learning activities (Observation notes) The teacher introduced the lesson in English and activated the learners' prior knowledge about forms of advertisements. Learners were shown different advertisements in the form of posters, flyers and brochures. Learners were keen to learn about advertisements.	Comprehension The learners seemed to have an understanding of advertisements. When the teacher assessed their knowledge through baseline questions, the raising of hands indicated their willingness to answer. Most of the activities were done by the teacher and learners were given homework to practice at home.	Oral proficiency The learners struggled to present the advertisements orally due to their limited vocabulary. Some attempted to use mother tongue to show their understanding of the subject. Their responses to the teacher's questions were fair but they did not seem to show higher levels of oral proficiency. The teacher used both English and Sepedi in explaining the homework on advertisements.	

Table 4.24: Lesson observation 18

Lesson 18	Lesson topic: Essays: Narrative essays	Duration: 45 minutes	School C
Learning activities (Observation notes) The teacher introduced the lesson as narrative essay writing. The lesson started with reminding the learners about the different types of essays. He listed everything that was required in writing narrative essays.	Comprehension Understanding of the language was observably fair. Learners were given an opportunity to write a narrative essay in their workbooks. The period ended while learners were still writing.	Oral proficiency Learners spent most of the time copying notes from the board. The interaction was minimal and it was difficult to detect learners' proficiency.	

The summaries of the lessons presented above are clear demonstrations of what happened in the English classrooms. I observed that the learners' English oral proficiency remained low because they did not use the language fully in the English classroom. One of the reasons that I observed was that they feared to be ridiculed by their friends when they made errors in pronunciation. As a result, they were not motivated to use English throughout. Teachers need to do more in order to protect these learners during English FAL lessons.

4.4 Documents analysis

Documents for analysis were in the form of learner participants' assessment scripts (n=18). The analysis was done with the adapted IELTS test rubric. I scrutinised the learners' creative writing scripts (Paper 3) guided by my research topic. In some scripts, it was clear that learners used direct translation from mother tongue (negative interference) when writing. The tenses were not properly used, concord errors emerged and traces of social media neologisms were found. A summary of the words spelt incorrectly in the analysed texts is presented in table 4.25.

Table 4.25: Summary of the spelling errors found in written work

Incorrect word + corrected word	Change	Type of error
1. archieved – achieved	*r* added	Addition
2. carreer – career	*r* added	Addition
3. collage – college	*a* > *e*	Spelling
4. confortable – comfortable	*n* > *m*	Spelling
5. defenetly – definitely	*e* > *i*; *-tly* > *-tely*	Spelling
6. deseased – deceased	*s* > *c*	Spelling
7. deaseses – diseases	*ea* > *i*; *seses* > *seases*	Spelling
8. deppression – depression	*p* added	Addition
9. futher – further	*r* omitted	Omission
10. favorite – favourite	*u* omitted	Omission
11. honored – honoured	*u* omitted	Omission
12. illigal – illegal	*i* > *e*	Spelling
13. imagened – imagined	*e* > *i*	Spelling
14. immidently – immediately	*i* > *e*; -dently > -diately	Spelling
15. load-chedding – load-shedding	*che-* > *she-*	Spelling
16. oganise – organise	*r* omitted	Spelling
17. preper – prepare	*-er* > *-are*	Spelling
18. planing – planning	*n* omitted	Omission
19. resturent – restaurant	*-turent* > *-taurant*	Spelling
20. recorgnise – recognise	*r* added	Addition
21. reseach – research	*r* omitted	Omission
22. sore throad – sore throat	*d* > *t*	Spelling
23. stoped – stopped	*p* omitted	Omission
24. strugle – struggle	*g* omitted	Omission
25. surprices – surprises	*c* > *s*	Spelling
26. symtom – symptom	*p* omitted	Omission
27. succede – succeed	*e* omitted	Omission
28. unfortunetly – unfortunately	*-netly* > *-nately*	Spelling
29. unknowly – unknowingly	*-knowly* > *knowingly*	Spelling
30. yongest – youngest	*u* omitted	Omission

Table 4.25 shows the spelling errors taken from the analysis of 18 learner assessment scripts. The spelling errors ranged from omission, substitution, addition and invention of words. Some of the spelling errors were as a result of emulating the pronunciation of the words. For example, in the word “symptom”, letter /p/ is silent, therefore the learners omitted it in writing. It could be as a result of being

misled by pronunciation of the different syllables of the word. The inability to use different tenses of the words was evident in the learner's written scripts. Subject-verb agreement (concord) errors were also evident in the analysed scripts. For example one learner wrote "… the policemen is …" instead of "are", thus was unable to distinguish between plural and singular nouns.

Mother tongue influence was also observed in how some learners constructed their sentences. In an obituary, a learner wrote "He left behind" a direct translation (negative interference) from the mother tongue instead "He is survived by". There were many other examples where learners loosely translated statements from the mother tongue. As I am fluent in the learners' mother tongue, I was able to spot such translations. Some of the brevity in spelling used could be attributed to the type of slang used on social media.

Table 3.2 in chapter 3 shows the adapted IELTS writing band descriptors that I used to analyse the learners' test scripts for writing proficiency. As indicated there, the tests used were not the IELTS tests themselves, but the band descriptors that I applied to determine the learners' level of writing proficiency. Figure 4.1 shows the 18 learner participants' scripts graded according to the IELTS writing band descriptors.

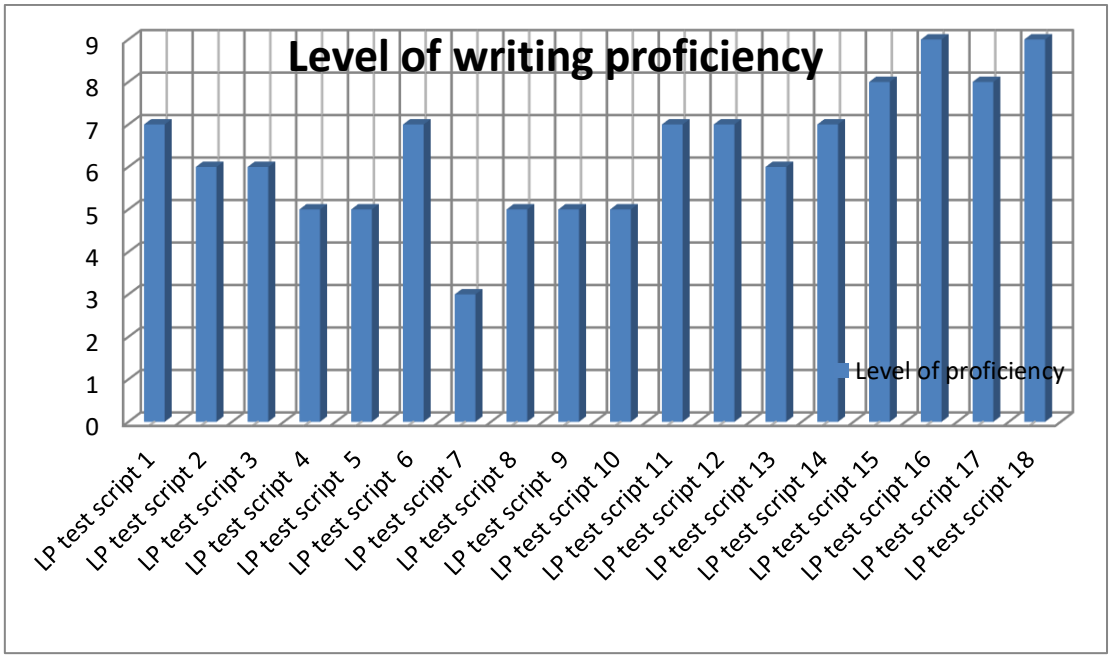


Figure 4.1: Learner participants' level of writing proficiency

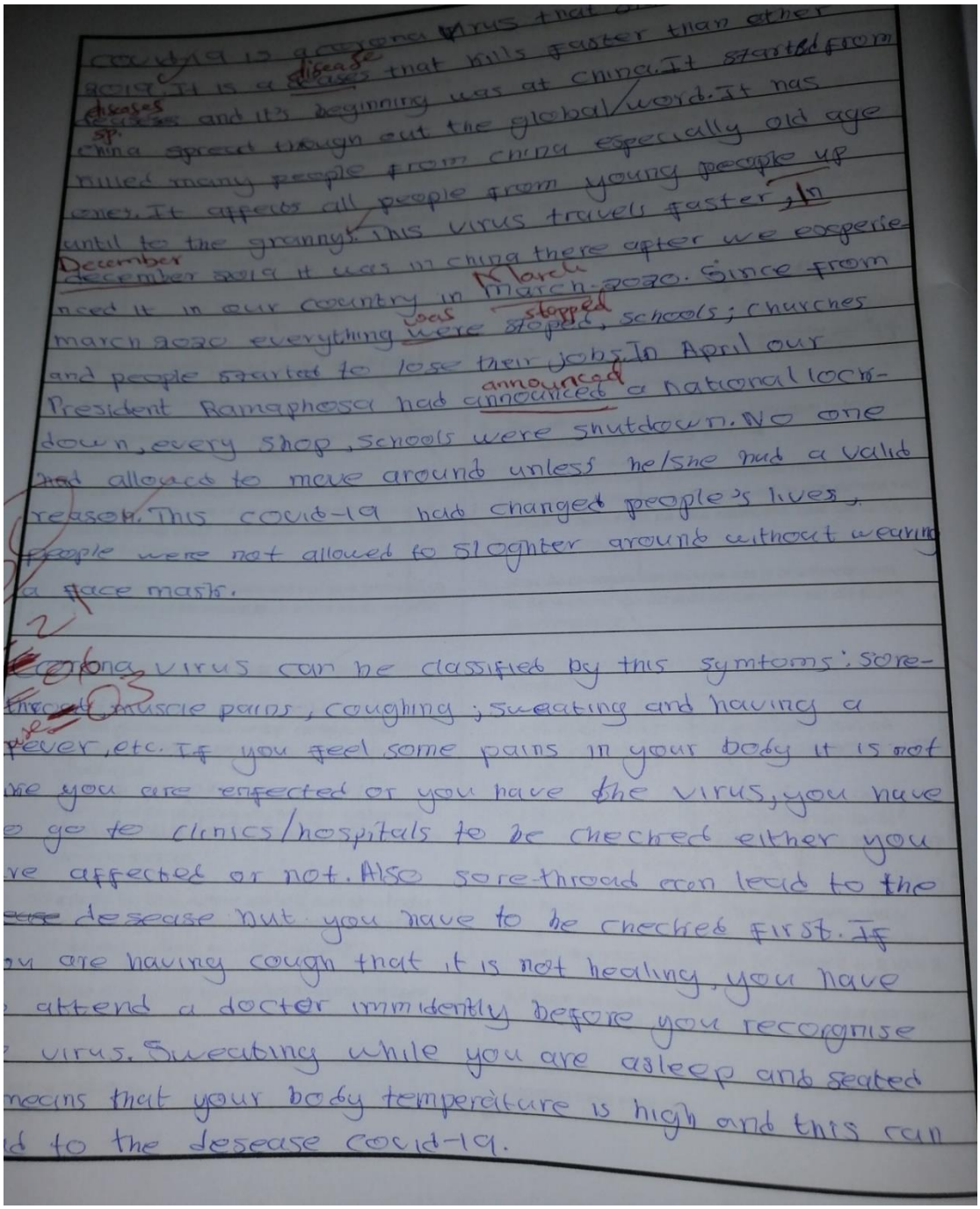
According to the IELTS writing band, an average score for competence is 7. From the 18 scripts analysed, the average written proficiency was 6,3, thus below 7. The sampled learner participants' writing proficiency was below the expected average competence.

With regard to task achievement, the learners were able to address the minimum requirements of a task in terms of understanding the question.

In terms of coherence and cohesion, cohesion within or between sentences was faulty. The learners did not reference the question clearly in their answers.

In terms of the lexical resource, the learners used an adequate range of vocabulary for the task. Some learners attempted to use less common vocabulary but with some inaccuracy. They made spelling errors but the errors did not entirely impede communication.

In terms of grammatical range and accuracy, the learners made noticeable errors in grammar. However, some errors did not impede the message of the text. Their grammatical range and accuracy was not outstanding, but generally fair, as shown in figure 4.2.



covid-19 is a corona virus that ... 2019. It is a disease that kills faster than other diseases and it's beginning was at China. It started from China spread through out the global/word. It has killed many people from china especially old age ones. It affects all people from young people up until to the grannys. This virus travels faster, In December december 2019 it was in china there after we experie-need it in our country in March 2020. Since from march 2020 everything were stopped, schools; churches and people started to lose their jobs. In April our President Ramaphosa had announced a national lock-down, every shop, schools were shutdown. No one allowed to move around unless he/she had a valid reason. This covid-19 had changed people's lives, people were not allowed to sloghter around without wearing a face mask.

Corona virus can be classified by this symtoms: sore-throat, muscle pains, coughing; sweating and having a fever, etc. If you feel some pains in your body it is not me you are infected or you have the virus, you have o go to clinics/hospitals to be checked either you ve affected or not. Also sore-throad can lead to the desease but you have to be checked first. If u are having cough that it is not healing, you have attend a docter immidently before you recognise virus. Sweating while you are asleep and seated means that your body temperature is high and this can d to the desease covid-19.

Figure 4.2: Sample of learner's written essay

Figure 4.2 shows an example of a learner's written essay with spelling mistakes indicating low levels of written proficiencies.

4.5 Categories and themes emerging from the data

The following categories and themes that emerged from the analysed data are discussed in the following section:

1) Concord and spelling errors
2) Code-switching and -mixing
3) Lack of vocabulary
4) Motivation

4.5.1 Concord and spelling errors

Concord implies agreement between words with reference to number, people, gender or any other distinguished grammar grouping that impacts the formation of words in the same sentence (Obi & Ezekulie, 2014). Concord errors refer to mistakes committed as a result of subject-verb disagreement in a sentence. Some learners did not add an s-suffix to the verb for a singular subject. In a sentence, a subject presented in singular form must be followed by a verb in singular form (Obi & Ezekulie, 2014). Similarly, a subject in plural form must be aligned with a verb in plural form (Obi & Ezekulie). One learner wrote: *“School close on Monday” instead of “School closes on Monday”. The learner could not align a subject in singular form to a verb in its singular form.

Spelling errors refer to errors committed when words are spelt or written. Spelling errors in written grammar form a distinctive problem that may hinder a learner’s overall performance in English (Dadzie & Bosiwah, 2015). In the documents analysed, the learners committed many spelling errors, which affected their performance in the tasks. The types of spelling errors committed included those mentioned by Dadzie & Bosiwah (2015), namely omission, addition and substitution, inversion and miscellaneous.

4.5.1.1 Omission

Omission refers to a spelling error in which letters have been omitted. The following were commonly used words with omission errors.

*anouncement – announcement

*stoped – stopped

*embarrasment – embarrassment

*comittee – committee

*oponents – opponents

In these examples, learners were unable to spell the words and omitted *n*, *p*, *s*, *m* and *p* respectively.

4.5.1.2. Addition and substitution

Some learners added letters that were not required to English words (Dadzie & Bosiwah, 2015), of which the following are examples:

*interlligent – intelligent

*writtng – writing

*yougurt – yogurt

The letters *t*, *r*, and *u* were added to these words to make the spelling incorrect.

*no – know

*nee – knee

The learners substituted the letter *k* to make the spelling incorrect.

4.5.1.3 Inversion

Common inversion errors were evident in the learners' spelling, of which the following are examples:

*recieve – receive

*frend – friend

The above were some of the words most commonly misspelt by the learners in the analysed assessment scripts.

4.5.1.4 Pronunciation errors

According to Dadzie and Bosiwah (2015), learners struggle with spelling as a result of pronunciation errors. These errors emanate from their lack of knowledge and their teachers' mistakes (Dadzie & Bosiwah, 2015). Furthermore, the learners do not use dictionaries to learn the correct pronunciation. Teachers also make mistakes in pronunciation and transfer those mistakes to unsuspecting learners. Learners in secondary schools are at a stage where they are highly dependent on what is said by their teachers. My findings in these schools corroborate Dadzie and Bosiwah's (2015) argument that general spelling performance in public schools is poorer compared to private schools (Dadzie & Bosiwah, 2015).

Transfer from mother tongue to L2 also causes errors in the target language. As argued in chapter 2, languages from two different language groups cause learners to make mistakes in learning L2. Inconsistency in spelling (phonology) and pronunciation of some English words propel learners to commit spelling and pronunciation mistakes, for example:

*nees – knees
*nock – knock
*cycology – psychology
*nemonia – pneumonia

In these examples learners omitted the silent letters (*k*, and *p*) when spelling these words.

4.5.1.5 Miscellaneous

Miscellaneous refers to words being misspelt without following a specific pattern as a result of their pronunciation being completely different from their spelling, of which the following are examples:

*air – heir
*inimia – anaemia
*jueary – jewellery

In these words, the pronunciation is totally different and does not guide a learner towards the correct spelling. The deviations confused some learners which resulted in them committing the spelling errors.

4.5.2 Lack of vocabulary

Vocabulary refers to a cluster of words which language users utilise differently for communication (Afzal, 2019). Vocabulary is the most important aspect of learning a second language. It is the basis for the language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing (Afzal, 2019). Vocabulary can be divided into two types, namely, active and passive vocabulary (Afzal, 2019). The active vocabulary refers to words taught that learners may use in speech or writing for normal and daily conversations (Afzal, 2019). Passive vocabulary refers to words that learners recognise and comprehend in a context mostly found when listening or reading texts (Afzal, 2019). Based on my observations, most learners had a rather limited vocabulary.

The plethora of reading that learners are required to do for school and personal enjoyment should have a positive effect on their reading and comprehension skills, thus contributing to their academic achievement (Stoffelsma, 2019a). However, throughout my classroom observations, during literature reading lessons, learners were unable to read words which were not used on a daily basis. Some even stopped reading entirely as a cry for help when they came across an unfamiliar word like “bureaucracy”. The situation can be attributed to a lack of exposure and encouragement to read the myriad of available reading texts. According to Stoffelsma (2019a), a key building block for being a fluent reader is vocabulary knowledge, thus there is a strong correlation between reading proficiency and vocabulary knowledge. The learner participants in this study, however, did not demonstrate adequate levels of vocabulary.

It is argued that growth in vocabulary develops through incidental exposure to oral or written language (Stoffelsma, 2019a). Oral language exposure is not only limited to classroom interactions but exposure to English medium news channels, cartoons and a variety of English medium television programmes. Through anecdotal evidence gained as a second language educator, I can confirm that many learners in public secondary schools do not subscribe to reading for pleasure from books, magazines and newspapers. It is, therefore, of great importance that teachers support and promote a reading culture in the classroom, in order to avoid a demise of vocabulary.

Stoffelsma (2019a) postulates that if English L2 learners come across unfamiliar words ten times while reading, this subsequently leads to substantial vocabulary learning gains. The words can be achieved only if learners are encouraged to read extensively. Equally, more than ten repetitions are required in order to develop full knowledge of a word (Stoffelsma, 2019a). It means that newly acquired words must be applied in different contexts for their successful mastery. This reading deficiency is against the backdrop of PIRLS Grade 4 literacy study which reveals that around 78% of South African Grade 4 learners did not reach the benchmarks of basic reading skills as opposed to only 4% of learners internationally (Howie, Combrinck, Roux, Tshele, Mokoena & McLeod Palane, 2017). These learners go through the entire schooling system with these reading deficiencies.

Secondary schools, especially Further Education and Training teaching, should include drills or strategies of vocabulary training for second language learners. In primary schools, drills and word cards with pictures are used to help learners learn a second language. Drills can be improvised and used in secondary schools to improve the learners' vocabulary.

4.5.3 Code-switching

A significant amount of code-switching was observed during the interactions between learners and teachers. According to Nurhamidah, Fauziat and Supriyadi (2018), code-switching helps to clarify main points of discussion in order to avoid miscommunication. During my observations, there were instances where learners switched between L1 and L2 in trying to explain their answers clearly. Learners also switched to mother tongue when they were given group activities. Nurhamidah et al. (2018) concede that students are likely to speak in L1 during group activities because it seems easier.

During the interviews an overwhelming number of learners conceded that the switch between mother tongue and English in second language classes helped them understand concepts quicker. Stoffelsma (2019b) argues that the use of L1 in teaching L2 English learners facilitates the form-meaning linkage, in that it provides easy access to the meaning of the word that is already in the learner's memory (Stoffelsma, 2019b). However, after the process, it is important for the learner to be

exposed to the new lexical item in the L2 contexts so that the contextual word knowledge can start developing (Stoffelsma, 2019b). The exposure may be in the form of class projects and activities in which learners use the acquired words in a different context.

However, during the lessons that I observed, teachers at times switched between L1 and L2 in conversation with the learners or to call rowdy learners to order so that the lesson could proceed smoothly. Code-switching was thus used for classroom management (Hamid, 2016). Participant teachers seemingly felt that their anger would be lost in translation if they used English when dealing with ill-disciplined learners. Furthermore, participant teachers used L1 in L2 lessons to give learners instructions, in providing feedback, and when constantly checking learners' understanding. Words such as "*Le a nkwa?"* meaning "Do you understand?" were used casually in some lessons.

Hamid (2016) sums up the functions of teachers' code-switching as expressive, directive, metalinguistic, poetic, and referential functions. Expressive functions refer to when the teacher code-switches in order to express emotions towards the learners (Hamid, 2016). This is done to immerse the learners in the topic or expression under discussion. This type of function was observed when the teacher reprimanded noisy learners during discussions. Directive functions refer to when code-switching is used to direct the learners in terms of what they need to do in class (Hamid, 2016). For example, the teacher may use L1 to give examination instructions to the learners before they start writing an examination. During my observations, participant teachers used the directive function when making announcements and issuing important directives like the date of the next test.

Metalinguistic functions refer to when the teacher uses L1 for the definition of terms, paraphrasing words used in the text books and explaining metaphors.

Poetic functions refer to the insertion of jokes, stories or poetic quotations in L1 into an English-based communication (Hamid, 2016). This is done by some teachers to stimulate the attention of the learners throughout the second language class. During my observations, the participant teachers used metalinguistic functions when

explaining scenes of the prescribed literature. Their aim was to set the scene for the learners.

Referential functions refer to the use (in reference) of L1, for example, on terms that the learners were more familiar with in L1 than in L2 to aid quick understanding. Referential functions were used in situations where a term lacked semantic appropriate words within the second language while another word closer to that of L1 suited the description. In one literature lesson, the participant teacher used L1 to explain “an exaggerated sigh of relief” which a learner was battling to understand in the drama scene. The body language of both the inquiring learner and other learners demonstrated that the L1 explanation made them understand completely.

4.5.4 Motivation

English, most arguably, enjoys a position of power, prestige and upward social mobility throughout the world (Azar & Tanggaraju, 2020). However, the teaching and learning of the language has not been met with great and equal enthusiasm and eagerness by second language learners. Motivation to learn the language has been relatively low in many rural public schools in South Africa. This was also evident in the three schools in the rural Sekhukhune district. Gökçe (2013:36) defines motivation as “a state of cognitive and emotional arousal, which leads to a conscious decision to act and which gives rise to a period of sustained intellectual and physical effort in order to attain a previously set goal”. This definition indicates that motivation is a tool that makes people attain their goals. Reflecting on some of the classroom lessons observed, learners lacked motivation to learn the second language. Some did not even try to use L2 in response to the language teacher’s instruction. The possible reasons for this lack of motivation might have been rigid teaching approaches used by the teacher participants, the fear of ridicule by some learners when committing errors in speech and no strict policies regarding English usage in classrooms.

The unregulated use of mother tongue in the English FAL classrooms demotivated learners and persuaded them not to strive for proficiency in L2, but only literacy. I mention literacy, because some learner participants were only interested in getting average grades which would enable them to pass the subject instead of being fully

proficient. One of the learners conceded in the interviews that the fact that they were allowed to use L1 in L2 classrooms, demotivated them to be proficient in L2. Learner participant 4 said, “it holds you back from improving” thus making an assumption that L1 use in speech postpones improvement in L2. Gökçe (2013) concedes that a lack of motivation creates a serious problem in English language classrooms for both teachers and learners. This lack of motivation is attributed to extreme anxiety, low self-confidence and self-esteem, teacher’s harsh and disheartening attitudes and a psychologically insecure classroom atmosphere (Gökçe, 2013).

Teachers need to create a positive learning environment by making learning more fun and appealing through different activities, creating supportive environments and providing positive reinforcement. A willingness by the teacher to transfer roles to the learners to develop their autonomy in learning cultivates motivation to learn (Gökçe, 2013). Azar and Tanggaraju (2020) add that unqualified teachers and the use of wrong teaching strategies contribute to a lack of motivation by some English second language learners. It is possible that the use of the wrong teaching strategies attributed to demotivation. Some of the teachers that I observed were eager to complete the topics stipulated in the annual teaching plans and, therefore, did not use the right strategies to make learners understand throughout the didactic activity.

Azar and Tanggaraju (2020) concede that motivation is the ignored “heart” of language teaching and mentions four factors that motivate learners to learn a language, namely, instrumental, integrative, intrinsic and resultative factors (Azar & Tanggaraju, 2020). Learners are influenced by any and all of the factors in learning English as a second language.

Instrumental factors of motivation refer to learning a language for reasons such as getting a good job, passing examinations or gaining admission into a university or college (Azar & Tanggaraju, 2020). It is characterised by the learners’ desire to gain something concrete and tangible when they learn the second language (Razi & Rahmat, 2020); learning a language because of the perceived utility it might hold for the learner. Most of the learners from my sample were only interested in learning the language to pass examinations and gain access into university or college.

Integrative factors are concerned with learning a language for superior comprehension like integration into a society which speaks the target language, in our case English. Learners learn for self-improvement and are propelled by their desire to increase their knowledge of foreign cultures (Razi & Rahmat, 2020). Motivation to take in that language emanates from positive emotions towards the community that speaks the target language (Azar & Tanggaraju, 2020). These are learners who learn a language beyond classroom comprehension skills and are eager to develop exceptional proficiency. These are mostly cosmopolitan learners who learn the culture, ethos and all mannerisms displayed by speakers of the target language. Many learners from the three research sites were not motivated by integrative factors and did not develop adequate proficiency to be integrated. Societies in which learners live play a significant role in helping them achieve integrative language competencies. Learners who live in fairly English neighbourhoods will be more inclined to want to learn the language for integrative purposes. The learners from my study lived in rural monolinguistic environments, which may have contributed to them not being motivated by integrative factors.

Intrinsic factors refer to the eagerness and interest to do and participate in certain activities because a person feels that they are attractive and pleasant (Azar & Tanggaraju, 2020). Learners who are intrinsically motivated are bound to ignore the challenges that they face in their grammar and speech and aim for fluency and proficiency. Such learners subsequently gain knowledge from their slips and mistakes (Azar & Tanggaraju, 2020). During my observations I could see and hear all learners, even the ones less interested in the lesson. I was concerned to notice that there were some learners who made it their personal mission to ridicule and laugh at those learners who made grammar errors in their speech. However, some of those learners who were ridiculed seemed unfazed by such negativity and continued to participate in the lesson. Those were the intrinsically motivated learners. Sadly, there were those learners who were intimidated and gave up in their attempts to speak English in subsequent lessons. The intrinsically motivated learners would learn for their own sake, not because they expected extrinsic rewards (Azar & Tanggaraju, 2020).

Resultative motivation factors are centred on the relationship between motivation and achievement. Learners with this type of motivation are motivated by their own

achievement. Learners who do well in all subjects are probably likely to gain more confidence and be more enthusiastic to join in and learn the second language. Such learners have a record of doing well and do not want to be outshone by other learners. The sense of academic competition helps them strive for proficiency in the second language. As I had not fully studied the academic progress and prowess of the learner participants, those who were fully confident and participating could have been in the resultative category.

The findings in this study indicate that from all the factors, instrumental factors have proven to have the biggest influence on learners' motivation to learn English. From the interviews, learners conceded that they learnt the language to gain better marks, hence they welcomed the use of mother tongue to explain difficult concepts. However, there were limitations to the effectiveness of instrumental factors in that learners only developed language proficiency to be able to write and pass an examination; they did not gain lasting proficiency in the language. The oral proficiency remained neglected, and vocabulary not used in the classroom remained unknown to the learners. Most learners in the three participating schools seemed likely to pass an English examination but their oral proficiency needed much improvement. The findings suggest that many learner participants paid more attention to written proficiency, thus neglecting listening and speaking. This finding was not anticipated as it was not part of the theoretical framework underpinning the study. However, it is important and could not be ignored as it has influence on the second language learners' proficiency.

4.6 Discussion of the main findings

The findings from the interviews reveal that most learners and some teachers used mother tongue for learning and teaching English as a second language. The learners viewed the use of mother tongue as an enabler to grasp difficult concepts and to improve their overall language marks. The focus for these learners was mostly on passing their language tests and subsequently progressing to the next stage. They did not dwell much on their oral proficiency. Despite this, 83,3% of the sample of learner participants believed that they had mastered the basic proficiencies to be able to speak English fluently. The very same learners made concord and spelling errors as a result of unsuccessful language skills transfer from

L1 to L2 (cf. section 1.7). This was evident from the concord and spelling and errors which were influenced by the learners' mother tongue. The words were spelt as they were pronounced and were directly translated, which resulted in concord and spelling errors.

In linking motivation to Cummins' (1978) LIT, the lack of motivation to achieve proficiency in English L2 also stems from unsuccessful language skills transfer from L1 to L2. As a result, an overwhelming number of learners switched and mixed L1 and L2 in the interactions with the teachers. Learners who had developed adequate proficiencies in the mother tongue performed well in the assessments in L2. Those learners who passed well in L1 were likely to pass L2. This means that L1 skills are successfully transferred to L2 learning. Two of the three Grade 12 English teachers interviewed believed that the use of the mother tongue in L2 classes delayed learners' progress in being proficient in the second language. Only one teacher admitted that it improved the learning of the second language when it was used in moderation to explain seemingly difficult concepts. From the statement, it is clear that mother tongue is used in some L2 lessons in Sekhukhune East rural schools.

As mentioned earlier, the motivation to fully use English in L2 classes seems to be lacking among these learners, even among some of the learners who are seemingly proficient in English as L2. For these learners and even those struggling, it delays building their vocabulary. Second language teachers should ensure that there is no over-reliance on L1 in L2 classes if considerable strides are to be made in making Grade 12 second language speakers of English proficient.

The findings further reveal that of the 18 learner participants, 17 had social media accounts, which applies to most Grade 12 learners in urban or rural areas. Both learner participants and teacher participants used Facebook and WhatsApp. Time spent on these platforms varied for all users. This could be attributed to the socio-economic status of the learners and data costs. The learner participants were keen to use social media as an additional learning resource. Perhaps second language teachers and the Department of Education could exploit this medium more fully to improve second language proficiency. This can supplement the traditional teaching approaches in the classroom. Some learner participants admitted to

learning new English words from the medium although they admitted to some textese misleading them in spelling English words.

Some learner participants admitted that the auto-correct feature on their devices helped them with spelling. Another learner participant conceded that because the medium was used by different people from different ethnic groups, he was forced to converse in English, which helped him to improve his language skills. In contrast, teachers argued that the medium promoted slang and misspelling of words when learners write essays and transactional texts in Paper 3.

With this study I have shown, to an extent, that mother tongue and social media both influence English second language learners' proficiency. In line with the Linguistic Interdependence Theory, findings indicate that the use of mother tongue skills influences learners to quickly grasp concepts taught in the English FAL classrooms, thus improving learners' assessment marks. However, the findings also indicate that excessive use of mother tongue inhibits learners' motivation and oral proficiency.

The findings suggest that in rural schools both learners and teachers mostly consent to the use of mother tongue in L2 pedagogy. I emphasise consent, because in the interviews, some learner participants cited that the use of L1 helped them grasp difficult English concepts. Similarly, teacher participants admitted that they used L1 for instructions and established learners' understanding.

An interesting finding was that mother tongue served a variety of purposes in an L2 instructional situation and formed an integral part of L2 teaching and learning. However, the use of the learners' mother tongue did not address vocabulary limitations in L2 teaching and learning but merely served as a bridge to augment L2 vocabulary deficiency. The gap still remains in the learners' vocabulary because the bridge served only as a tool to get the learners to understand what the teacher was teaching. Therefore, it does not seem to be a solution for vocabulary development but rather a safety net for hiding L2 deficiencies. Moreover, for L2 proficient learners, mother tongue use serves as a stumbling block to developing further L2 proficiencies. Having said that, one cannot ignore that L2 deficient learners benefit from the use of L1 in L2 instructional situations and pedagogy. However, the benefit

is only at BICS level of L2. The learners still fail to apply CALP in their formal activities. This supports Cummins' (1978) LIT which claims that if a learner fails to develop adequate CALP skills in L1, he/she will not successfully develop corresponding proficiencies in L2.

The findings also suggest that mother tongue influence on learners' proficiency differed. One group of learners' L2 proficiency skills were high, while the second group of learners' L2 proficiency was low. The learners whose L2 proficiency seemed to have improved (high) did not benefit from further use of L1 in L2 teaching and learning. They had developed both adequate L1 and L2 proficiencies, which allowed them to switch and transfer skills at a mental level. They, therefore, did not seem to need the occasional verbal switches in the classroom to understand teaching instructions. The situation qualifies Cummins' (1978) Linguistic Interdependence Theory (LIT) which claims that skills transfer takes place from L1 to L2. LIT, however, argues that if learners had not developed sufficient proficiency in L1, they would not develop adequate proficiency in L2 (cf. section 1.7).

The second group of learners, those who struggled with L2 proficiency (low proficiency), assumed that they benefited from occasional switches to L1 in L2 teaching and learning. However, the perceived benefit seemed to be only at basic understanding of instructions and during the writing of formal examinations, not at the level of their overall proficiency. It seems that these learners struggled with vocabulary in creative writing due to their limited proficiency. This suggests that the switches had not translated into positive transfer. Therefore, mother tongue influence on L2 learning is two-fold; both positive and negative.

Although this study seemed to suggest that successful acquisition of mother tongue influences the successful learning of L2 as proposed in the theoretical framework, I do not disagree that there could be single cases where learners continue to do well in L2 while they have not developed proficiency in their L1. This could be attributed to the multilingual environment and dialect variation of the learners. There is a need to investigate issues affecting L2 proficiency on a deep level. Using L1 as a scaffold in L2 pedagogy provides temporary relief for struggling learners but does not solve the problem of inadequate L2 proficiency. The learners' low levels of English

proficiency also suggest that they have not acquired CALP skills (Cummins, 1978) but have only acquired BICS.

The findings reveal that many Grade 12 L2 learners have access to social media. The most common social media resources used by both learners and teachers were WhatsApp and Facebook. Even learners who did not seem to have active social media accounts were aware of how social media was used. They were also aware of both the negative and positive influences of social media on their learning of English second language. Interestingly, the medium seemed to contribute to the development of L2 learners' BICS and not their CALP. This means that L2 learners develop basic social media language skills which cannot be transferred to L2 classroom learning skills. For example, the brevity of words used in social media is not transferable to L2 writing. Learners who are familiar with social media use the neologisms gained from social media to augment their lack of English vocabulary.

In this study I have not found any compelling evidence to suggest that social media influenced Grade 12 learners' overall English proficiency negatively. On the contrary, social media seemed to expose the learners to new English words which were not taught in the classroom. This in turn augmented both the teacher' and learners' limited vocabulary. However, a lack of instruction on how to spell words contributed to the spelling deficiencies among English L2 learners. This suggests that, although the English vocabulary is enriched by the medium, correct spelling is not emphasised because brevity is promoted more than accuracy. The purpose of social media is to communicate and entertain while schools' main focus is to educate. Social media was not designed to develop learners' proficiency but awaken the learners to the culture and gestures engulfed in English as a second language. Based on my observations, this aspect of L2 teaching is neglected by many L2 educators. The advent of social media cannot be ignored by L2 educators if any significant progress is to be made in achieving maximum proficiency.

4.7 Chapter summary

In this chapter, the findings from the interviews, observations and documents are presented and discussed. Themes and categories which emerged are discussed to provide a picture of the influence of mother tongue and social media on English

second language learners' proficiency. Main themes identified were concord and spelling errors, code-switching, vocabulary, and a lack of motivation. The implications of these themes are discussed extensively.

From the observations it was clear that the learners lacked vocabulary. A significant number of Grade 12 English second language learners used social media, be it Facebook, WhatsApp, or others, and were eager to learn from it to supplement classroom lessons. However, textese used on these platforms affected learners' written language proficiencies. From the document analysis traces of social media influence on the learners' written work were clear. Brevity used on social media was seen in the learners' written work. An interesting finding that emerged from the data is that it seems that apart from mother tongue and social media, motivation also influences English second language learners' proficiency, both positively and negatively. This aspect needs to be included in teachers' planning and preparation of English L2 teaching.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I provide concluding thoughts based on a synopsis of the findings and contextualise the study within the existing body of knowledge.

The purpose of the study was to answer the main research question, namely: How does mother tongue and social media influence English second language learners' proficiency? The sub-questions which guided the study are as follows: To what extent is English language proficiency influenced by mother tongue?; To what extent is English language proficiency influenced by social media as a resource?

In chapter 5 I also offer recommendations for policy, education bodies, language departments in secondary schools, and teachers to improve proficiency among Grade 12 English second language learners. Recommendations for future research for academics in the English second language field are also made.

As highlighted throughout this report, a plethora of literature exists on second language learning and acquisition, with mother tongue and social media as valuable components. In contextualising my study, my aim was to explore the influence of both mother tongue and social media on English second language learners' proficiency. This was a novel way of looking at English second language learners' proficiency and contributes to the body of knowledge on second language learning. The second language learners who participated in the study were Grade 12 learners in the rural Sekhukhune East education district in the Driekop circuit of the Limpopo province. This means that the results are relative and applicable to the site under investigation.

5.2 Main findings of the study

The four main influences of mother tongue and social media on English second language learners' proficiency are: 1) concord and spelling errors; 2) code-switching and -mixing; 3) lack of vocabulary; and 4) motivation. Negative influences of mother tongue and social media contributed to concord and spelling errors found in learners' English L2 usage. The negative influences that manifested as concord and

spelling errors were as a result of unsuccessful skills transfer from L1 to L2 as alluded to in Cummins' (1978) LIT (cf. section 1.7).

I also found that mother tongue was used in English L2 classrooms to augment a lack of L2 vocabulary. The lack of vocabulary was as a result of the learners' inability to transfer language skills from L1 to L2. This means that the learner has language deficiencies in L1 which makes language transfer ineffective. The learners could not arrive at a common underlying proficiency emphasised in Cummins' (1978) LIT. Excessive use of mother tongue fuelled a lack of motivation for learners to be fully proficient in English. I attribute the lack of motivation to a frustration of not being able to transfer L1 skills into English language skills. Subsequently, learners resort to using mother tongue and applying code-switching to supplement their lack of proficiency in the English classroom, while teachers make the occasional switches to establish and reaffirm the learners' understanding. Therefore, the English FAL classroom breeds two types of learners. Type 1 represents the learners who had made the successful skills transfer from L1 to L2, thus achieving proficiency in L2. Type 2 represents the learners who had not made the successful transfer of L1 skills to L2 and thus lack proficiency in L2. This is the group which I perceive as benefiting more from the occasional code-switches from L1 to L2 in the English FAL classroom.

5.3 Conclusions drawn from the study

Mother tongue is undoubtedly used in L2 instructional settings and this is supported by the findings presented in chapter 4. Phindane (2020) contends that the idea of L2 learners thinking in English is unachievable. This means that L2 learners are bound to think in their mother tongue in the English classroom. From the findings I have concluded that both the mental and practical use of the mother tongue exists in English second language learning and teaching. From a mental perspective, learners apply L1 understanding skills such as understanding abstract concepts and converting those skills into L2 proficiencies. Learners responding properly to questions asked by the teachers showed successful conversion of the proficiencies. I attribute errors made by learners as a sign of unsuccessful conversion of L1 proficiencies into L2 (English). This conversion is made easier if learners have developed CALP skills in their L1. The level of proficiency in L1 CALP seems to determine the level of proficiency of English L2 learners. For learners who have not

developed CALP in L1, the mental process seems to affect their learning of L2 negatively. Their L2 proficiencies thus remain relatively low.

From a practical perspective, learners viewed the use of mother tongue as an enabler to grasp difficult concepts and improve their overall language marks, and not to enhance proficiency. I classified such learners as those with low proficiency and those without any proficiency. These types of learners heavily relied on L1 code-switches throughout the teaching of L2. In support, Muico, Pineda and Taclibon (2021) argue that L1 bridges L2 learning and acquisition. On the other hand, learners who have developed adequate CALP in L1, do well in L2. These learners do not rely on L1 translations (code-switching and -mixing) in their mastery of L2. During the interviews, these learners admitted that L1 use in L2 classrooms limited them from learning L2 successfully and subsequently derailed their progress in improving their vocabulary. Similarly, Muico et al. (2021) reiterate that learners with higher linguistic ability mostly view code-switching as a barrier in L2 acquisition. Learners who have developed L1 CALP operate at an independent level during L2 pedagogy while learners who have not developed CALP operate at a dependency level, thus relying on L1 scaffolding.

Operating at an independent level means that such learners are able to understand L2 teachings without mother tongue use. Operating at a dependency level means that learners understand L2 lessons with the help of mother tongue translations and code-switches. However, understanding of the lessons does not necessarily translate into positive results for these learners. For these learners a lack of proficiency is the main reason for code-switching in the classroom and subsequently has a negative impact on their successful L2 learning abilities (Muico et al., 2021).

Code-switching, which was mostly initiated by the teachers in the classroom, is a subconscious activity (Muico et al., 2021) which may very well mean that even the L2 teachers had linguistic deficiencies. They (the teachers) code-switched to bridge the gap in their deficiencies and thus contribute to the learners' language gaps. This is in addition to the teachers' use of code-switching to determine learner understanding and to give instructions.

Concord and spelling errors are a result of the inability to learn L2 successfully. It is clear that L2 learners make concord and spelling errors which affect their proficiency in writing and oral tasks. Subject-verb agreement remains a challenge in sentence construction of L2 learners. Obi and Ezekulie (2014) claim that concord errors are the most common type of errors made by many English second language users. It seems that learners fail to learn the rules of English concord successfully. Obi and Ezekulie (2014) confirm that the inability to master the English rules of concord contribute to L2 writers' constant mistakes. I conclude that the inability to master the rules is twofold; the first signalling that the teaching methods applied to teach the rules are ineffective. The second is that learners still apply the rules of their L1 in their application of L2, thus committing errors, which is negative language transfer. The learners' L1, which is Sepedi, is structurally different from English.

Spelling errors are also attributed to wrong pronunciation by both learners and teachers. Nel and Muller (2010) point out that when L2 teachers teach L2 learners, faulty pronunciation is also transferred. The wrong pronunciation is attributed to not being familiar with the words due to a lack of vocabulary of both the teacher and the learners. In case of spelling errors committed by the teacher, Nel and Muller (2010) point out that L2 teachers' modelling of spelling errors are subsequently transferred to their learners. Teachers are learners' role models, hence learners do not question most of the teachings at a deeper level. The situation subsequently results in learners adopting the wrong spelling. The negative transfer of L1 into L2 proficiency is also one of the reasons for challenges in spelling and concord. The Sepedi participants' use of L2 prepositions were at times inaccurate. Nel and Muller (2010) point out that using English prepositions is a challenge, especially for Sepedi speakers of English as L2.

Although there is no striking evidence that code-switching directly affects L2 proficiency negatively, the code-switching initiated by teachers affects the oral proficiency of learners. From the literature is seems that the switches and mixes do not interfere with the syntactic and linguistic structures of L2, but for struggling learners the frequent switches and mixes to L1 in L2 lessons helped them understand the subject matter. This understanding, however, did not lead to improved proficiency. For learners doing well in English, code-switching derailed their vocabulary building. The lack of vocabulary resulted in some learners

constantly switching between L1 and L2 in conversation with their teacher. The lack of vocabulary manifests itself especially during literature reading. Learners have “blank moments” when they are supposed to read unfamiliar words. These blank moments refer to a situation where the learner is unable to pronounce a word due to unfamiliarity and a lack of exposure. This contributes to the demise of reading for both enjoyment and academic purposes.

As explained in chapter 4, motivation is found to be one of the factors affecting L2 proficiency. As presented in the findings, many learners are not motivated to learn and use English. Their main concern is to attain written proficiency only to pass their grades.

Social media is undeniably part of Grade 12 learners’ lives. Rwodzi et al. (2020) add that learners spend a considerable amount of time on social media. I have learnt that most learners use social media for entertainment and education purposes without any prompts from the teachers. Learners carve their own learning through the use of social media, a move which is conducive to learning and lends itself to a constructivist approach in learning. This is in support of Mubarak’s (2016) argument that social media creates space for more flexible language learning experiences through constructivism (cf. section 2.3). Through social media, learners are able to construct knowledge via interaction and by virtue that it becomes an extension of classroom instructional activities (Rwodzi et al., 2020). The space created by social media, although a supplement to language classes, is not enough for full proficiency. Similarly, language educators, schools and departments need to exploit the medium as a possible learning tool where language resources can be disseminated.

A general concern from both teachers and learners is the unregulated form of brevity used in social media which may affect proficiency. The teachers can counter brevity used in the medium by writing in proper English while disseminating information to the learners, especially Grade 12 English FAL learners. Interestingly, learners have admitted that social media enhanced their creative writing skills. Social media create an additional platform for learners to practice English, although the platform is not always available at schools.

Shy learners do not express themselves in class as they regard it as a rather threatening environment. Social media becomes a safe environment to vent and practice English writing skills. In the process, learners learn new words emanating from the interaction with their peers more than they learn in the classroom. This can be because the environment is not formal and happens in the learners' comfortable environment. Some learners are scared of their teachers and classmates and that blocks their learning. This is supported by very few learners raising their hands in class to respond to teachers' questions.

With this study I aimed to answer the research questions posed in chapter 1 through the observed influences of both mother tongue and social media. The themes that emerged support the position that mother tongue and social media influence second language learners' English proficiency. As the study was conducted through an interpretivist lens, I acknowledge that a similar study may yield different results in another context.

5.4 Recommendations

The study is contextualised within the existing body of work on second language learning and acquisition and offers the following recommendations to improve second language learners' proficiency.

5.4.1 Restriction on the use of mother tongue in the L2 instructional environment

The goal of English language teaching is to develop learners' language proficiency. Teaching L2 using L1 denies learners the opportunity to practice the target language. Stoffelsma (2019b) concedes that many English FAL teachers rely immensely on mother tongue for vocabulary instruction. This creates permanent dependency on L1 for second language learners. Hence a considerable number of learner participants in this study admitted in the interviews that they relied on L1 explanations to learn L2 concepts quicker. Although, according to research, proficiency in the mother tongue improves chances of proficiency in L2, this does not mean that L1 should be used in an L2 instructional environment. L2 teachers need to exercise restriction on the use of mother tongue in L2 classes. This can be done by modelling L2 in the classroom by using it throughout. This will motivate learners to learn and use L2 in the classroom and subsequently in the schooling

environment, thus improving proficiency needed beyond the Grade 12 classroom. Schools can assist their English departments by drawing up and enforcing a language policy for the school to avoid many transgressions.

5.4.2 Creation of an English learning classroom

The creation of an English learning environment must be a priority for L2 teachers. This is done so that the psyche of the learners is immersed into the learning of English as a second language. This will subsequently limit the switching and mixing of both L1 and L2 in English second language classrooms and improve proficiency. Learning a language successfully involves the inclusion of subtle gestures and the culture of the target language. Teachers should teach even the simplest English cultural gestures to motivate learners to learn the language.

5.4.3 Improvement of all language skills

It is clear that language proficiency is multi-faceted, therefore, teachers and schools should strive to improve listening, speaking, writing and reading proficiency simultaneously. This can be done through English inspired extra-mural activities like debates, Scrabble and spelling bee competitions and round table discussions. This aspect has been neglected in most rural schools and contributes to learners' low proficiency levels. The school can use the little resources they have as incentives in school-based competitions. For example, a learner may be given a dictionary and a certificate as an incentive after winning a spelling bee, debate or Scrabble competition or be exempted from paying for the next educational school trip. These exercises subsequently improve learners' language proficiency and research skills.

5.4.4 Exposure to a wide range of literary texts

Learners use social media with its textese as a reference point because they are not exposed to a wide range of literary texts outside of the medium. Learners' passion for reading should be ignited through exposure to a wide range of texts from books, magazines and newspapers to add to their prescribed books. This will improve the learners' reading skills. South African learners perform dismally in reading assessments (Stoffelsma, 2019b). Language teachers could utilise an unused classroom as a resource library to keep newspapers, magazines and books

which are no longer used. Those resources can be used to expose and enrich the learner's vocabulary – something learners will use beyond Grade 12 in English-medium situations. The schools can reach out to local media companies or any other organisations to ask for donations for the school's library.

5.4.5 Lack of public speaking platforms

According to Azar & Tanggaraju (2020), challenges in learning English as a second language can be attributed to a lack of English exposure outside the classroom. Research has proven that rural communities are not supportive of learners learning English. They are not supportive in that learners are not encouraged to speak English outside the classroom. Those practicing the language are labelled and given names such as "coconuts" in order to discourage them. This results in insufficient exposure for learners to learn the language (Razi & Rahmat, 2020). The schools and Department of Education can help eliminate this deficiency through the creation of more English language competitions. In order for the learners to be fully proficient, they must be exposed to situations in which they apply the theory learned in the classrooms. Learners are only exposed to public presentations during reading and speaking for marks.

Teachers admit that their Grade 12 learners are only exposed to an external audience when they go for oral moderations at their nearest circuits to ratify their oral marks on the school mark sheet. Only three learners, with a low, medium and high mark respectively, are selected from each school. The dearth of public speaking platforms in secondary schools is directly proportionate to the demise in English oral proficiency. Language teachers, schools and the Department of Education must reignite debates, spelling bee, Scrabble and other language-enhancing competitions for learners. Although some public schools in urban areas still participate in these competitions, it is clear that the remote villages are neglected in this regard. Effective language learning occurs when learners use the language learnt in the classroom in their communication (Razi & Rahmat, 2020).

5.4.6 Inclusion of social media as a resource for language learning

The advent of technology cannot be ignored in the modern, fast-paced, developing world. In this information age most people, learners included, rely on social media platforms for information and entertainment. Social media should be included in the advancement of English language proficiency to supplement traditional teaching approaches. The traditional classroom-based teaching approach is simply not enough to make strides in oral proficiency and vocabulary building for learners who are at an exit level of secondary schooling.

5.4.7 Vocabulary and proficiency-enhancing teaching strategies

As mentioned in chapter 4, secondary schools should include drills or strategies of vocabulary training for second language learners. Primary schools use drills and words with pictures and their meanings to help learners learn a second language. The drills can be improvised and used in secondary schools to improve the vocabulary of learners. The creation of language corners (walls) where language pictures, charts and information are displayed are less expensive and will surely get the learners talking and probing their minds for answers. These should be available to learners even during lunch and leisure time to allow them to learn without the pressure of the subject teacher in the class. Informal learning through discovery has shown to be the best method to get the best out of learners. This will also contribute to beautifying classroom walls and thus enhancing the culture of language learning.

5.5 Limitations of the study

The study was limited to three secondary schools in the Sekhukhune East education district of the Driekop circuit in the Limpopo province of South Africa. The findings of this study cannot be generalised to South African Grade 12 second language learners in general. The study was qualitative in nature and the interpretivist paradigm was applied. I attempted to be as neutral and unbiased as possible in my analysis and interpretation but the interpretation is inevitably subjective, due to my particular worldview and the nature of the qualitative study. The scope of the study (master's study) confined the findings to mother tongue and social media influence, thus limiting the findings to only the aspects under enquiry.

5.6 Recommendations for future research

It would be of interest to the research community if the same study could be repeated in an urban environment with both teachers and learners to determine whether the results would be the same or not. It would also be of interest to the research populace if the same study could be undertaken in a multilingual school environment where learners and teachers speak more than two languages. In my study, all learners had the same mother tongue which made it easier to move back and forth between mother tongue and English second language. The four themes which emerged from the data, namely concord and spelling errors, code-switching, vocabulary, and motivation are worthy of stand-alone research on their influence on second language learners' proficiency.

5.6.1 Concord and spelling errors

From the study we now know that learners misspell some of the frequently used words in English and get plurals, tenses and parts of speech wrong when speaking and writing English. We still do not know conclusively how to remedy these mistakes. It would be of interest to find a study that develops strategies to prevent these errors.

5.6.2 Code-switching

We now know that learners apply code-switching to augment their lack of proficiency in the second language. We also know that the teachers apply the occasional switches to establish understanding. What we do not know is to what extent this affects the morphology and syntax of L2.

5.6.3 Motivation

As outlined in chapter 2, motivation is multifaceted. I attributed the lack of motivation to learn L2 as a factor in lower proficiency levels of L2 learners. Research to determine the types of motivation that play a major role in improving L2 proficiency levels could be beneficial.

5.6.4 Vocabulary

From the study Grade 12 FAL learners' lack of vocabulary was cited as a contributory factor to poor L2 proficiency. Research looking into vocabulary building techniques to enhance English second language proficiency can help in mitigating the low levels of proficiency.

5.7 Final thoughts

The master's journey has been exhausting, yet fulfilling. The information, knowledge and wisdom that I gained from the extensive literature search and scrutiny of the collected data made the long nights at the study table worth it. As a second language educator, the literature and data studied made me reflect on my own teaching and made me strive to improve my craft in order to ensure that learners of English as a second language become proficient in all spheres of the language. I have gained valuable knowledge on good principles of research methodology that I would like to pursue in further studies and scholarly work.

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ADDENDUM A: Letter of approval from the Department of Education

LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
SEKHUKHUNE EAST DISTRICT

REF: 2/2/4 *Enq: Langa SI* Tel: *013 231 0100*

To: The Principal

FROM: DISTRICT DIRECTOR
SEKHUKHUNE EAST DISTRICT

SUBJECT: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THREE SECONDARY SCHOOLS

1. The above matter has refers.

   Kindly be informed that RR Monageng Masters student in the faculty of education at the University of Pretoria is granted a permission to conduct a research at your school

2. Condition attached to permission are:
   - Participation is voluntary
   - Information collected will only be used for study and remain confidential
   - No names should be written on questionnaire
   - Participants are free to withdraw anytime during the process

NB: DATA COLLECTED AND ADMINISTRATION OF QUESTINNAIRE MUST BE BONE ONLY DURING BREAKS AND AFTER TEACHING HOURS

3. The district Director wishes you well as you continue to assist him.

07/12/2020

MAKOLA MS
DISTRICT DIRECTOR

DATE

Subject: Permission to conduct research in Schools within Sekhukhune east District
83 Aloe Street, 2314 Extension4, Aloe Ridge West, BURGERSFORT, 1150, P/Bag X 9041, BURGERSFORT, 1150

ADDENDUM B: Letter to principals

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education
Department of Humanities Education

The School Principal and Staff
Makopi Secondary School
P O BOX 97
Driekop
1129

Dear Sir/Madam

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH STUDY ENTITLED ‘‘MOTHER TONGUE AND SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCE ON SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS’ ENGLISH PROFICIENCY’’

I am a registered Master in Education student at the University of Pretoria. I am conducting research on the mother tongue and social media influence on second language learners’ English proficiency.

Your school has been selected to participate in my research study and I hereby request to conduct this research at your school. The research will involve working with Grade 12 English First Additional Language learners.

The purpose of my study is to examine the influence of mother tongue and social media on English second language learners’ proficiency. The study follows a qualitative research approach which involves structured classroom observation of Grade 12 FAL in a pedagogic activity, interviews with learners and document analysis. I humbly request that the lessons be videotaped and the interviews audiotaped. A sample of the learners’ formal assessment scripts shall be copied for data analysis.

As a researcher, I am obliged to abide by all ethical standards, which include confidentiality, anonymity, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw anytime the participants feel uncomfortable with the activity. To ensure privacy, the participants’ names will not be disclosed, the videotapes will be safely kept and remain confidential at all times.

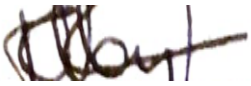
I will issue letters of consent to be forwarded to the grade 12 parents and the learners will be asked to provide assent by signing in the presence of their parents.

I shall make an appointment to meet with you prior to the commencement of data collection for a formal discussion session to explain all processes and procedures, so that the study is conducted in a manner that serves the purpose for which it is intended.

I thank you once more and I believe the study will benefit the school in matters relating to English education and curriculum delivery, which in turn will benefit our learners. I intend sharing the research findings with you and the participants on completion and to offer FAL education workshops, working with the participants.

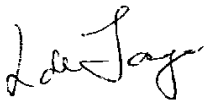
Attached please find the informed consent/assent form to be signed by the participants.

Warm Regards



RR Monageng (Researcher)

Contact No.: 061 490 1556



Dr LJ De Jager (Supervisor)

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I, ……. voluntarily accept to participate in this research study. I am fully informed and I understand all the procedures, processes and the purpose of the study. I also understand that I may withdraw my participation at any time.

Participant's signature: …… Date: ……..

School principal's signature: …… Date: ……

Researcher's signature: …… Date: …….

ADDENDUM C: Letter to parents

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education
Department of Humanities Education

P O Box 97
Driekop
1129

Dear Grade 12 Parents

PARTICIPATION IN A MASTER'S RESEARCH STUDY

I am a master's student at the University of Pretoria. I am delighted to inform you that your child's school has been chosen to participate in my research study entitled **''Mother tongue and social media influence on English second language learners' proficiency''**.

The purpose of my study is to examine the influence of both mother tongue and social media on English second language learners' proficiency.

The study follows a qualitative research approach involving structured observation of Grade 12 English FAL class, interviews with learners and document analysis. The lessons observed will be videotaped, the interviews recorded and I will also make copies of relevant sections of the learners' written work.

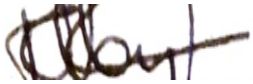
The arrangement entails that your children will be recorded and videotaped. Parts of the formal assessment evidence will be photocopied. I therefore, humbly request you to grant me permission thereof. Please let me assure you that as a researcher, I am obliged to abide by all ethical standards, which include confidentiality, anonymity, voluntary participation and the right to withdraw anytime the participants feel uncomfortable with the activity. To ensure privacy, the learners' names or identities will not be disclosed and the videotapes will be in my safekeeping at all times.

Please note that I am also sending a letter of assent to your child, wherein I ask for his/her signature in your presence.

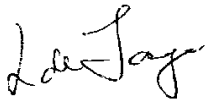
I humbly request you to sign the attached informed consent form, as part of compliance with the ethical requirements of my research study.

I thank you in advance.

Warm Regards



RR Monageng (Researcher)
Contact No.: 061 490 1556



……..

Dr L.J. De Jager (Supervisor)

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I, ……. voluntarily grant permission for my child to participate in this research study. I am fully informed and I understand that as a grade 12 learner, he/she will be involved during classroom observation and might be captured during videotaping.

I also understand that I may withdraw his/her participation at any time.

Parent's signature: …….. Date: ……..

Researcher's signature: …… Date: …….

ADDENDUM D: Letter to learner participants

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education
Department of Humanities Education

P O Box 97
Driekop
1129

Dear Grade 12 learner participants

PARTICIPATION IN A MASTER'S RESEARCH STUDY

I am a master's student at the University of Pretoria. I am delighted to inform you that you have been chosen to participate in my research study entitled **''Mother tongue and social media influence on English second language learners' proficiency''**.

The purpose of my study is to examine the influence of both mother tongue and social media on English second language learners' proficiency. The study follows a qualitative research approach involving structured observation of Grade 12 English FAL class, interviews with learners and document analysis. The lessons observed will be audio-recorded, the interviews recorded and I will also make copies of relevant sections of your written work.

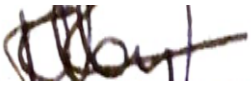
I therefore, humbly request you to grant me permission thereof. Please let me assure you that as a researcher, I am obliged to abide by all ethical standards, which include confidentiality, anonymity, voluntary participation and the right to withdraw anytime the participants feel uncomfortable with the activity. To ensure privacy, the learners' names or identities will not be disclosed and the videotapes will be in my safekeeping at all times.

Please note that an assent form accompanies this letter, wherein I ask for your signature.

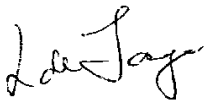
I humbly request you to sign the attached informed assent form, as part of compliance with the ethical requirements of my research study.

I thank you in advance.

Warm regards



RR Monageng (Researcher)
Contact No.: 061 490 1556



……..
Dr L.J. De Jager (Supervisor)

INFORMED ASSENT FORM

I, ……. voluntarily agree to take part in the study. I shall be in class and participate meaningfully in the lessons. I know that I might be audio-recorded during the First Additional Language lessons. I shall be interviewed on record after school for approximately 20 minutes on mother tongue and social media influence on English second language learners' proficiency should the researcher wish to. My creative writing assessment scripts (test) shall be sampled and used to determine my level of proficiency for the study. The evaluation of my assessment scripts will have no implication on my school marks. I have been told that I will be protected, my name will not be known and the tapes will be kept safely in a private place for the university research purposes.

Learner participant's signature: …… Date: ……

Researcher's signature: …… Date: …….

ADDENDUM E: Interview questions

NB! Participation in this study is voluntary and participants reserve the right to withdraw at any time.

Participants' identity shall remain anonymous.

Interview questions for English second language learners

GENDER: FEMALE MALE **AGE:** **GRADE:**

SECTION A: Mother tongue

1. What is your mother tongue?
2. Do you use your mother tongue in English second language class YES NO
3. How often do you use mother tongue in English class ALWAYS NEVER SOMETIME
4. Do you think the use of mother tongue in English FAL classroom YES NO

   improves your learning?

   ……
   ……
5. Do you use words from different languages when talking to your friends outside class? YES NO
6. Do you think you are able to speak and write in English language? Explain
   ……
   ……
   ……

SECTION B: Social Media

1. Do you have a social media account?
2. On average, how many hours do you spend on social media weekly?

YES		NO	
1-2 Hours	3-4 Hours	5-8 Hours	12-84 Hours
YES		NO	
English		Vernacular	
YES		NO	

3. Do you use social media as a learning resource?
4. What is your preferred language use on social media?
5. Do social media enhance your creative writing skills?

   Comment below:

   ……
   ……
   ……
   ……

NB! Participation in this study is voluntary and participants reserve the right to withdraw at any time.

NB! Participants' identity shall remain hidden.

Interview questions for English second language teachers

GENDER: FEMALE MALE **AGE:** **EXPERIENCE:**

SECTION A: Mother tongue

7. What is your mother tongue?
8. Do you use your mother tongue in English second language class YES NO
9. How often do you use mother tongue in English class ALWAYS NEVER SOMETIMES
10. Do you think the use of mother tongue in the English FAL classro YES NO

    Promotes successful teaching and learning?

    ……
    ……
11. Do you use words from different languages when talking to learners and colleagues outside class? YES NO
12. Do you think you are able to fairly speak and write in English language? Explain
    ……
    ……
    ……
    ……

SECTION B: Social Media

6. Do you have social media account?
7. On average, how many hours do you spend on social media weekly?

YES		NO	
1-2 Hours	3-4 Hours	5-8 Hours	12-84 Hours

8. Do you use social media as a learning resource?
9. What is your preferred language use on social media?

YES	NO
English	Vernacular

10. Do social media enhance your learners' writing skills?

YES	NO

    ……
    ……
    ……

INTERVIEW NO: ☐ **GENDER:** ☐ ☐ **GRADE:** ☐

ADDENDUM F: Adapted IELTS oral proficiency rubric

Fluency 1. The speaker has many hesitations and great difficulty remembering or selecting words 2. The speaker hesitates several times, but generally seems to know the desired words, even if it is necessary to think about them a bit. 3. The speaker speaks confidently and naturally with no distracting hesitations. 4. Ideas/Speech flow smoothly. 5. The speaker has superior oral proficiency	**5**
Pronunciation 1. Pronunciation is hard or difficult to understand by a native speaker. 2. Pronunciation is satisfactory; however words sometimes have incorrect articulations or are otherwise sometimes hard to comprehend. 3. Pronunciation is fair 4. Pronunciation is accurate, with correct inflections, numbers of syllables and other correct nuances of pronunciation. 5. Pronunciation is outstanding	**5**
Grammar 1. The speaker makes frequent use of inappropriate verb tenses and/or incorrectly constructs sentences or uses parts of speech. 2. The speaker sometimes uses inappropriate verb tenses and/or inaccurately uses parts of speech, however the speaker has the capacity to correct grammar without prompts. 3. The speaker speaks with no more incorrect grammar than a native speaker would. 4. The speaker is proficient. 5. The speaker possesses excellent language skills.	**5**
Vocabulary 1. Vocabulary is very limited and/or incorrect words are often used. 2. Vocabulary is moderate, although the speaker sometimes needs help identifying the correct words. 3. There are only occasional problems with correct meanings of words. 4. Vocabulary is sufficient to be understood in most settings and words are used with their correct meaning. 5. Vocabulary is rich and beyond expectations by far.	**5**
Content 1. Statements are superficial or not relevant. 2. Speaker seems to have little or no understanding of the subject 3. Provides some details. 4. The speaker is knowledgeable about the subject and provides a significant level of detail, given the time available. 5. The speaker is aware of the subject and attempts to provide relevant ideas about it.	**5**
TOTAL INTERVIEWEE SCORE:	**25**