

**Pedagogical practices in teaching siSwati as a first language
in diverse linguistic settings**

by

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6 JUNE 2023

DECLARATION

I, Tholakele Constance Mngometulu, declare that the dissertation/thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.



Signature

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ETHICS STATEMENT

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this thesis, has obtained, for the research described in this work, the applicable research ethics approval. The author declares that she has observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University of Pretoria's *Code of ethics for researchers and the Policy guidelines for responsible research*.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to my children, Favour Saviour Mlulamisi and Heavenly Mercy Ivakele Dlamini, my mother, Lononi Albertina Mngometulu and my deceased brother, Celani Mngometulu.

- Favour Saviour and Heavenly Mercy Ivakele Dlamini, let this be an inspiration for you that nothing is impossible when you put your mind to it. Just work hard and trust God to do the rest;
- Mom, I cannot thank you enough for believing in me and for all the sacrifices you made so that I could have an education;
- Celani, although you are no longer with us, I am forever grateful for stepping in when mom could not afford paying for my school fees. I am so blessed to have had you as my brother. Rest in God's perfect peace. *"Mngometulu, Dlakadla, Lubelo, Suthu, Nkhabayenkhosi, Songancome ngemtimba, Mbikiza, Mfiso longafi, lofa nakutsandza yena, Phamba phamba, Jama Jinjinini!"*

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ABSTRACT

Educational research indicates that sound pedagogical practices are essential for learners to achieve positive learning outcomes. This suggests that the success of any learning programme is dependent on the selection and utilisation of relevant and appropriate pedagogical practices. In response to educational research which indicates the vital role played by a learner's first language in learning, the Eswatini Ministry of Education and Training embarked on an exercise of decolonising the curriculum in 2011 by using siSwati as the medium of instruction and learning in the foundation and middle phases and a core subject throughout primary and senior secondary school. However, arguably, research on African language pedagogy is scanty, let alone teaching of siSwati, as the little available research has been on issues of policy, thus leaving a knowledge gap on the pedagogy in siSwati first language (SL1). Therefore, this study used the sociocultural theory to explore and comprehend pedagogy in SL1 in light of Eswatini's Language in Education Policy, which provides for siSwati to be a compulsory subject and a vehicle for teaching and learning in early primary, despite the country's linguistic heterogeneous classrooms in urban schools.

This was a qualitative exploratory case study conducted in two urban schools of Nhlanguano in the Shiselweni region of Eswatini. The study sought to respond to three research questions, which were: How are pedagogical practices used in teaching SL1? Why are these pedagogical practices used in the teaching of SL1? How do teachers experience the teaching of SL1? Participants were purposively selected, and they included the teachers who taught siSwati. Data were generated through interviews, a focus group discussion, lesson observations and documentary review. To comprehend the data in this study, I used conventional content analysis, which involved deriving coding categories directly from the text. The findings indicated that teachers' practices were anchored to the understanding that the teaching of SL1 meant equipping learners with functional language skills, such as productive and receptive skills, which are essential for studying across subject curricula. However, a lack of technological knowledge (TK) and pedagogical knowledge (PK) thwarted teachers' pedagogical practices. Teachers acknowledged this knowledge gap and attributed it to a lack of training to teach SL1 under the competency based education curriculum, let alone in diverse linguistic settings and to the way they were trained to teach siSwati in colleges. The findings revealed that teacher-centred expository pedagogy dominated SL1 classrooms, as opposed to the requirement of the curriculum that learner-centred pedagogies be used in social practice. Based on these findings, it is recommended

that teachers be provided with in-service training on learner-centred and culturally responsive pedagogies appropriate to teach SL1 under the CBE curriculum. Besides, they should be equipped with the technological skills necessary to teach language in the 21st century. Also, the pre-service training offered to SL1 students in colleges be evaluated to comprehend why a first language is taught in a second language.

Keywords: SiSwati; First language; Pedagogical practices; Sociocultural theory; Diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Sifinyeto

Lucwaningo lwetempfundvo lukhomba kutsi tinchubo tekufundzisa letiphusile tibalulekile kute bafundzi batfole imiphumela lemihle ekufundzeni. Loku-ke kuveta kutsi imphumelelo yanoma nguluphi luhlelo lwesifundvo luncike ekukhetseni nasekusetjentisweni kwetinchubo netindlela tekufundzisa letifanele. Nga-2011, uMnyango weTempfundvo neKucecesha Eswatini (EMoET) wacala umkhankhaso wekusebentisa lulwimi lwesiSwati lokululwimi lwemdzabu njengendlela yekufundzisa nekufundza etigabeni letisisekelo temabanga laphasi (Libanga 1 kuya ku-4). Kanjalo lulwimi lwesiSwati lwaba sifundvo lesiyinhloko kusukela kumabanga laphansi kuya kulaphakeme. Loku kuhambelana nelucwaningo lwetempfundvo lolukhombisa indzima lebalulekile ledlalwa lulwimi lwemfundzi lwekucala ekufundzeni. Noma kunjalo, kuyamangalisa kutsi luncane lucwaningo lolwentiwe luhlolisisa tinchubo netindlela tekufundzisa tilimi temdzabu njengesiSwati njengoba lucwaningo loluncane lolukhona lumayelana netindzaba tENCHUBOMGOMO njengekusetjentiswa kwesiSwati njengelulwimi lwekufundzisa nekufundza. Ngaleyo ndlela, loku kushiye umkhawu welwati ngekufundziswa kwelulwimi lwesiSwati. Ngako-ke, lolucwaningo lusebentise ithiyori yeTenhlalo nemasiko (sociocultural) kuhlola kanye nekucondza tindlela tekufundzisa siSwati njengelulwimi lwekucala (SL1) kulandzela siphakamiso saEMoET sekutsi siSwati sibe sifundvo lesilithulusi lekufundzisa nekufundza kusukela ebangeni 1 kuya ku-4 kuto tonkhe ticolwa telive, letisemakhaya naletisemadolobheni lapho kunebafundzi labakhuluma tilwimi letahlukahlukene.

Lolucwaningo lwekhwalithethivu lwentiwa etikolweni letimbili eNhlango esifundzeni saseShiselweni Eswatini. Lwafuna kuphendvula imibuto lemitsafu: (1) Tisetjentiswa kanjani tindlela tekufundzisa ekufundziseni SL1 etikolweni temabanga laphansi? (2) Kuya ngani kusetjentiswe letindlela ekufundziseni SL1? (3) Bothishela bakutfola kunjani kufundzisa SL1? Labahlanganyela kulolucwaningo bakhetfwa ngenhloso yekutsi bafundzisa siSwati. Idatha yatfolakala ngetingcogco nathishela ngamunye, nangelicumbu, kubuka kufundzisa, nekubuyeketa emadokhumenti lahambelana nekufundzisa SL1.

Imiphumela yaveta kutsi bothishela bacondza kutsi kufundziswa kwe-SL1 kusho kuhlomisa bafundzi ngemakhono ekulalela, ekukhuluma, ekufundza newekubhala lokungemakhono labalulekile emphilweni nekufundzeni letinye tifundvo kukharikhulamu. Noko-ke lolwati lolu lwakhinyabetwa kutsi bothishela batfolakala bashoda ngelwati bebuciko bethknologi (Technological Knowledge) kanye netindlela letilungele kufundzisa (Pedagogical Knowledge) kute bafundzi batfole lamakhono labalulekile elulwini. Kwavela kutsi indlela legcamile futsi leyyabusa kakhulu ekufundziseni nasekufundvweni kwe-SL1 bekuyi-

esiposithari (expository pedagogy), indlela lengahambisani nemgomo nekharikhulamu. Bothishela bavuma kutsi sikhona vele sikhebesi elwatini lwabo ngetindlela tekufundzisa ikharikhulamu lensha (CBE) njengoba kungasibo bonkhe labatfolo kuceceshwa kuyo. Kusiphakamiso salolucwaningo kutsi bothishela batfole kuceceshwa ngetekutfufukisa kusebenta kwabo (in-service training) nekutsi kuceceshwa kwabothishela besiSwati emakolishi kuhlolisiswe njengoba lulwimi lwekucala lufundziswa ngelulwimi lwesibili.

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This serves to confirm that I edited substantively the above document including a Reference list. The document was returned to the author with various tracked changes intended to correct errors and to clarify meaning. It was the author's responsibility to attend to these changes.

Yours faithfully

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AHLs	African Home Languages
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
CBE	Competency Based Education
CK	Content Knowledge
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
CLOS	Classroom Lesson Observations
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ECESWA	Examination Council of Eswatini
ENCFGE	Eswatini National Curriculum Framework for General Education
EMoET	Eswatini Ministry of Education and Training
ENCFGE	Eswatini National Curriculum Framework for General Education
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FOMIPs	Foundation and Middle Phases
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HL	Home Language
LoLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
MKO	More Knowledgeable Other
MT	Mother Tongue
NCC	National Curriculum Centre
PTD	Primary Teachers Diploma
PCK	Pedagogical Content knowledge

PK	Pedagogic Knowledge
SCT	Sociocultural Theory
SL1	SiSwati First Language
TCK	Technological Content Knowledge
TPACK	Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge
TPK	Technological Pedagogical Knowledge
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a prelude to a qualitative case study in which I explored pedagogical practices in teaching siSwati as the first language in two linguistically diverse urban primary schools of the Shiselweni region of Eswatini. The concept of pedagogical practices in this study relates to all the instructional practices, techniques, strategies and all resources used by the teacher to teach siSwati as the first language in the foundation and middle phases. The study aimed at exploring pedagogical practices in teaching siSwati in light of Eswatini's Language in Education Policy, which provides for siSwati to be a compulsory subject and a language of instruction and learning at the foundation and middle phases of Eswatini schools, despite the country's linguistic heterogeneous classrooms. This chapter further presents the context and historical background of the teaching of siSwati as a subject in Eswatini. In this chapter, I further present the rationale and the motivation to explore pedagogical practices in siSwati considering research needs that exist in first language pedagogy. I then present the focus, purpose and research questions of the study. Major terms and concepts used throughout the study are also provided. Finally, the chapter presents the study's approach, design and methodological overview, the organisation of the study and the chapter summary.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Human language is the most important tool for learning. Sustainable Development Goal 4, which focuses on quality education (UN, 2015:19), can only be attained through language, which is the key instrument to equip learners with fundamental core skills of the 21st century. For Eswatini learners to survive in this competitive world, they need to be good collaborators, effective communicators, novel creators and critical thinkers. These 21st century 4Cs competencies, that is, collaboration, communication, creativity and critical thinking, are linguistic, thus, they can be acquired by learners through the employment of sound pedagogical practices by teachers. Therefore, language is a principal vehicle through which learners can learn various subjects' content, equipping them with skills required in the world market (Stauffer, 2020). Vygotsky (1978:28) noted that the first language of the learner is important in assisting the learner to understand concepts. According to Vygotsky (1978), the first language of the learner offers the learner a reasonable linguistic foundation

for subsequent study across all subject areas. Furthermore, studies by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) (2010) share the same view that the first language of the learner is not only a tool for communication but a driver of learning, as it facilitates learners' acquisition of meta-skills for survival in the 21st century. That is why first language advocates in the context of Africa call for education systems in the continent to make a learner's First Language (L1) a core subject in schools and for at least the first four years of the education of the learner to be conducted in his/her first language (Bamgbose, 2011; UNESCO, 2010; Brock-Utne, 2001; Adegbija, 1994; Awoniyi, 1982).

Considering the history of most education systems in Africa being influenced by imperial education structures, this has proved difficult, but limited progress has been made, as several African countries have an indigenous language as the language of teaching and learning (LoLT) or a subject in their school curricula. For example, in West Africa, despite the many indigenous languages spoken in Nigeria, the Federal Ministry of Education through the National Policy on Education emphasises the usage of native languages in education through three major African languages that are recognised by the Nigerian constitution namely Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba (Amaechi, 2017; Amaechi, 2013). In East Africa, the Ethiopian language in education policy requires that the teaching and learning of children be in their L1 for the first eight years of their schooling (Ikome, 2019). In the Republic of South Africa, the language in education policy seeks to promote and preserve the teaching of official indigenous languages, at the same time, allowing the learning of other official languages by learners (Department of Education, 1997).

Moreover, the decision on which language to be used as LoLT or a school subject is often a challenge for education systems because all countries are linguistically heterogeneous (UNESCO, 2010), thus, it is uncommon to find a linguistically homogenous classroom. It is then prevalent for most education systems to practice the assimilation approach, whereby the language of the majority is learnt as L1 and used as the LoLT, despite the class having multilingual learners. Mokibelo (2016) and UNESCO (2010) equate the assimilation approach to a divide-and-rule approach in the sense that speakers of minority languages are made to assimilate into the language and culture of the majority. The question is; how does the teacher navigate the language teaching and learning process in a classroom environment where there is linguistic diversity in the sense that some learners are proficient in the language yet others are not? This is the question I wanted to get answers to in this study.

Eswatini, where this study was conducted, practices the assimilation approach to language teaching and learning, particularly at primary school. The situation is that through the assimilation approach, learners who have a mother tongue (MT) other than siSwati must adapt and conform to the language and culture of the siSwati speaking learners. This means that these learners have to learn siSwati First Language (SL1) despite being none L1 speakers of the language. This is the case because siSwati has a dual role of being LoLT from Grade 1 up to Grade 4 and a school subject from the former grade one up to senior secondary (EmoET, 2018:39a; EmoET, 2011:27). Therefore, at primary school, all learners as in native and non-native speakers of siSwati study the language as L1, and it is the LoLT for both groups of learners. Moreover, some researchers advised teachers that their pedagogical practices should be inclusive and embrace all learners, since the world has become a global village with learners in most classrooms coming from different socio-economic and political contexts (Milner, 2017; Milner, 2012; Milner, 2010). According to Milner (2012:694), teachers must afford all learners the best possible learning opportunities. Milner (2017:88) contends that researchers have to determine how effective learning is, and also see to it that pedagogical approaches and practices used in teaching and learning are formulated in ways that attend to learners' diverse needs, as these learners are from diverse backgrounds, and they bring with them diversities to classrooms.

In Eswatini, most rural primary schools have learners whose L1 is siSwati. These learners learn SL1, and the use of siSwati as LoLT seems to augur well with these learners, as there is also research evidence that learners from rural schools perform better in siSwati than those in urban areas (World Bank, 2021:7). This is a reality because they study a language they are most comfortable with and also learn other subjects through their native language and a language they use at home (EmoET, 2011). However, the environment in urban areas is different. Schools in urban areas are made of learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Moreover, in primary school, there is no option in the language curriculum for non-MT learners of siSwati to do siSwati as the second language, an option and privilege those non-MT speakers of siSwati in junior secondary and senior secondary have. The Eswatini National Curriculum Framework for General Education (EmoET, 2018:30a) stipulates that learners at primary school have to learn the core language subjects, which are siSwati and English, and it recognises that besides English and siSwati, the two official languages of the country, the learner can add French as an optional language subject depending on whether the school has this subject in its curriculum. In essence, in junior and senior secondary, non-native speakers of siSwati do English as their first language and

siSwati as their second language, a privilege primary school learners who are non-native speakers of siSwati do not have. Therefore, the urban primary school teacher is left with the mammoth task of teaching siSwati as L1 to learners who have siSwati as their MT and to those who cannot speak the language at all. Moreover, the situation has not always been like this. In the next section, I present the history of the teaching of siSwati in Eswatini schools, which will give insight into the prevailing situation of teaching SL1.

1.2.1 A brief history and context of teaching the siSwati language in Eswatini schools

The history of teaching siSwati as a school subject in Eswatini schools is full of twists and turns. SiSwati has been in the Eswatini primary school curriculum for over five decades, having been introduced into primary schools after independence in 1969. It was first tested in the primary examination in 1975. Amongst the barrage of problems that usually affect the introduction of an African language into the school language curriculum, such as the lack of teaching and learning resources and the absence of qualified siSwati teachers as claimed by Mahlalela (2005) and Kanduza and Mkhonza (2003), none surpassed the fierce competition it faced from the colonial language, English. Through the Imbokodvo Manifesto, the government's working document of that time, siSwati and English, were declared official languages of Eswatini after independence (Prime Minister's Office, 1972:10). This meant the relationship between these two languages was diglossic whereby they both operated side by side, but the inequality was there between the two languages. This is the case because, for a better part of the history of the Eswatini education system, siSwati remained in the shadow of English, as the latter was the LoLT and besides being the only official language in administration, judiciary, health and practically all domains of government.

Just like most African countries, Eswatini was once under European control, and when the British took control of the country from Boer rule in 1902 (Dlamini, Dlamini, Mhlanga & Magagula, 2008:106), they imposed their language English as the official language, a situation not unique to Eswatini, as most countries which were colonised by European countries had a European language as an official language (Bamgbose, 2011:2). Moreover, in Eswatini, the British did not attempt to improve and develop siSwati, as this language was not taught in schools, but its Nguni counterpart, isiZulu, was taught instead (Ferreira-Meyers, Malambe, Nkosi & Sibanda, 2008; Mahlalela, 2005). Interestingly, the British made the error that siSwati was a dialect of isiZulu, and since there was already available learning material in isiZulu, producing material in siSwati would be an unnecessary cost (Dlamini, 2012; Ferreira-Meyers *et al.*, 2008). This British perception of the relationship between

siSwati and isiZulu was a big misconception because siSwati and isiZulu are distinct languages that descend from one proto-language, Bantu and together with isiXhosa and isiNdebele belong to the Nguni group of Bantu languages of the Southern Eastern Zone (Miti, 2006). As a result of this fallacy, from 1902, isiZulu, siSwati's Nguni counterpart was taught in schools instead of siSwati up until the country got independence in 1968, when the government tried to reverse the inequality by introducing siSwati as a school subject in 1969.

Despite the stiff competition, siSwati faced as a school subject from the colonial official language English, none has been as fierce and rivalrous as French, another language of European origin. Initially, French was introduced in Eswatini before independence in the three exclusively white schools where siSwati was not taught as a subject (Mhlatane in Pigg's Peak, St Marks in Mbabane and Evelyn Baring in Goedgegun, present day Nhlanguano). According to Kanduza and Mkhonza (2003:60) and Mkhonza (1990:23), in these schools, French was taught to children of the white population in Eswatini for them to be admitted to tertiary education in Europe and nearby South Africa, hence it was taught as an added language to English, the official language subject and LoLT. These schools had systematic segregation and were racist such that the introduction of French was to distinguish them from the native schools whose languages of the curriculum were English and siSwati, the latter often referred to with the racial epithet 'vernacular', which according to Mkhonza (1990) carried racial connotations. During the colonial era, the presence of French in schools did not impact the teaching of siSwati, as the former was taught to white learners in white schools.

Moreover, the country's gaining independence in 1968 saw a twist in regards to the position of siSwati as a school subject, particularly because liberation came with reforms and restructuring of the country's education system so that it could align with the nation's developmental dreams. In 1972, the Imbokodvo Manifesto, the government working document specified that siSwati and English were the official languages of an independent Swaziland (Prime Minister's Office, 1972:10). It further detailed the significance of developing the siSwati culture through the siSwati language, hence the introduction of siSwati as a school subject in Eswatini primary schools in 1969. In 1973, the Eswatini government policy through Circular No. E21/73 instructed schools that by 1974, all primary schools should offer siSwati and English, and all other languages like French and Afrikaans which had been offered in place of siSwati should be phased out from the curriculum (Swaziland Ministry of Education, 1973). These educational reforms meant that the three

white schools had to adhere to the educational policy by making siSwati a compulsory subject alongside English and began to admit native learners. The result of this was the movement of white learners from these white schools to 'whites only' schools in South Africa, as at that time South Africa was still under the apartheid regime.

The triumph of siSwati as a school subject was to be short-lived. This was the case because when Eswatini gained independence, she lacked professionals in almost all domains of government, including industry, health and education. The shortage of expert personnel saw the influx of expatriates into the country, and these were individuals with specialised training from all over Africa, including Anglophone and Francophone Africa. In 1981, the Eswatini government got financial assistance from the French government, which provided resources like French teachers, teaching and learning resources and a French inspector (Mkhonza, 1990:24), who reintroduced French in schools to cater for the linguistic needs of the French speakers. Unlike before independence, the reintroduction of French in 1981 was more aggressive and invasive, particularly in urban areas. According to Kanduzi and Mkhonza (2003:61), by 1985, there were 9 primary schools and 5 high schools offering French. The reintroduction of French brought about stiff competition between these two subjects, as in urban schools, siSwati was paired against French. Instead of offering siSwati in their subject curriculum, most private schools offered French alongside English, languages often deemed as "pathways to jobs and wider opportunities" (UNESCO, 2012:14).

The practice in Eswatini schools was for some government owned schools, particularly those in urban areas whose enrolment comprised learners who were MT speakers of siSwati and non-MT speakers to pair siSwati with French so that learners who were L1 speakers of siSwati would do SL1, and learners who were not proficient in siSwati would do French. It was also common to find parents who are native speakers of siSwati to decide that their children who are also native speakers of siSwati should study French "at the expense of the national and official language" (Mkhonza, 1990:24). It appeared that siSwati was neglected in urban schools, and this was blamed on the European languages. The reality is English and French hegemony has been blamed for the struggles facing a lot of African home languages like siSwati (Bamgbose, 2011; Adegbija, 1994; Thondhlana, 2002). Moreover, the lack of a language policy in Eswatini was responsible for the underdevelopment and neglect of the siSwati language. My thinking is supported by Ndebele (2018:92) who cautions against the perennial blaming of colonialism for the underdevelopment and teaching of African languages. Ndebele (2018:96) argues that the

truth about the underdevelopment of these languages is ingrained in fallacies about their utilisation and failure to implement language policies. For instance, in Eswatini, the situation was exacerbated by the absence of a clear language policy. Currently, there is the siSwati Language Board, which was put in place by the deceased Prime Minister, Dr Sibusiso Barnabas Dlamini, to look into issues of the language policy, but as of 2022, not much has been done in this regard. As early as 1990, Mkhonza (1990:34) opined that without a clear language policy in Eswatini, schools would continue to let colonial languages like English, French and Portuguese compete with siSwati. This same observation was made by Bamgbose (2011:3) who shared the same sentiments about the importance and need for a clear language policy among African nations, decrying that the lack of such policies perpetuated the dominance of colonial languages.

Likewise, the coming of the 21st century appeared to bring about a positive change in the linguistic aspirations of the country. There were intense nationalistic sentiments amongst the Swati people for siSwati and English to be afforded equal status in education and other government domains and for the former not to be made to compete with French in education. Such a change might have been a result of international organisations like UNESCO (UNESCO 1953; 2001; 2005; 2006; 2007; 2010; 2012; 2015), which have been persistent and relentless in stressing the importance of one's MT in education. One significant development that elevated the legal status of siSwati at the start of the 21st century was the formulation of the national constitution of Eswatini which was finalised in 2005. Through this policy, both English and siSwati were entrenched in the national constitution as co-official languages (Ministry of Justice & Constitutional Affairs, 2005:13). There was a call and insistence by EMoET that siSwati is made a compulsory subject in all schools.

However, the trend of pairing siSwati and French continued unabated. In 2011, the Eswatini language in education policy was formulated (EMoET, 2011), and it provided that siSwati and English were core language subjects in schools. To empower and elevate the status of the siSwati language in education and other functional domains, in February 2017, UNESCO together with EMoET held a conference whereby various stakeholders discussed the status of siSwati in the country. Discussions were held on how to promote the teaching of siSwati through national policies and strategic plans such as the Constitution of Swaziland of 2005 and the National Strategic Plan of 2013-2022. The declaration was rehashed that all schools, both private and public, should make siSwati a core subject. The importance of siSwati in the Eswatini curriculum was highlighted, as it is the language that

most learners are proficient in, their MT and the most powerful instrument for preserving and developing the nation's culture and heritage.

To correct the threat imposed by the colonial languages on the existence of siSwati as a national language, in 2017, the Eswatini Ministry of Education and Training (EMoET) issued a directive advising head teachers to ensure that siSwati is offered as a core subject in both primary and high schools (EMoET, 2017). The directive issued a strong reminder that Eswatini has two official languages, siSwati and English, hence these two languages ought to be accorded equal status. Head teachers and teachers were thus instructed to ensure that siSwati was a compulsory subject in schools, and a stern warning was issued that there should be no situation where siSwati is paired with any other language (EMoET, 2017). According to the directive, all learners in primary and high schools were to take SL1, but in high schools, non-native speakers of siSwati could do siSwati as a second language and English, the other core language subject. Any other language subjects like French and Portuguese were to be electives. However, at primary school, the Eswatini government through EMoET took the aggressive assimilation approach whereby teachers had to integrate learners who were non-native speakers of siSwati into their siSwati first language classrooms. Teachers had to assimilate learners in two ways: (1) they used siSwati as LoLT for both groups of learners, and (2) all learners learnt siSwati as L1 in primary school for there was no option for learners who were non-native speakers of siSwati to do the subject as L2, an option offered at junior and senior secondary levels.

Moreover, Cummins (2005:586) warned against assimilating proficient speakers of other languages into monolingual speakers of the language of the majority as earlier and later research findings (Evans & Mendez Acosta, 2020; Trudell, 2016; UNESCO, 2015; Macdonald 2002; Cummins, 1991) had shown the significant role played by the MT in a child's cognitive development and academic achievements, thus the failure to provide the child an opportunity to be taught and learn in his/her language may lead to poor socialisation and cognitive development. In England, Bailey and Marsden (2017:298) investigated how teachers of English handled learners of other languages other than English in their English Home Language classrooms and reported teachers' concerns on how time consuming and demanding it was to simultaneously attend to learners who were L1 speakers of English and those who were non-native speakers. In addition, Mokgoko (2019:51) documented the challenges of learners living in the Republic of South Africa who are initially from Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Limpopo. These learners study Setswana as their home language subject although they lack proficiency in the language. Mokgoko (2019:71) outlined the struggles

experienced by these learners in secondary school where Setswana home language is a core and compulsory subject although these learners are from diverse linguistic backgrounds and lack proficiency in the language. One challenge the non-Setswana-speaking learners faced was the language barrier in class as their lack of proficiency in the language made them lag in the teaching and learning processes (Mokgoko, 2019).

1.2.2 Instruction to siSwati language teachers and decision to explore pedagogy in SL1

Interestingly, although the EMoET directive of 2017 was directed to all stakeholders, none got stronger instruction than teachers who were to implement the teaching of siSwati in the classroom. Teachers were instructed to use effective pedagogical practices so that the siSwati subject is “passed by all learners” (EMoET, 2017:23), implying both first and second language speakers. Teachers were advised and expected to use contemporary and practical instructional practices in teaching SL1 for learners to acquire the core language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, despite being taught in monolingual or multilingual classrooms. Thus, the siSwati language teacher, particularly those in urban schools had to juggle teaching learners of diverse linguistic backgrounds siSwati as their home language and make use of sound pedagogical practices that will ensure that all learners, both L1 and L2 speakers, pass the subject.

It was on that account that in this study I sought to investigate how teachers taught siSwati in urban primary schools, particularly because the classroom environment there had learners who were first language speakers of siSwati while others had limited proficiency or no proficiency at all in the language. The analysis of the education sector in Eswatini by the World Bank (World Bank, 2021:7) indicates that learners in urban schools perform poorly in siSwati than learners in rural schools. Scholars (Cunningham, 2019; Kwon, 2017; Watson, 2015; Hugo & Nieman, 2010) agree that lack of support, poor pedagogical practices, a lack of teaching and learning resources, a negative attitude towards a subject and a lack of qualified teachers are some barriers which impede academic success among learners. It was further on the basis that the teaching of siSwati is still plagued by learners’ poor academic performance in the primary exit examination (ECESWA, 2019), although 95% of the population are L1 speakers of siSwati (Simons & Fennig 2018). A similar assessment was currently made by the World Bank (2021:25) and showed that although learners passed their examinations, there was a high failure rate in core subjects, including siSwati. Yet, according to the siSwati syllabus (ECESWA, 2021), the development of a learner’s ability to use his/her language effectively to improve his or her education in primary school is listed

as the first objective. Moreover, the examination reports by ECESWA appear to be counterproductive to this curriculum objective. Furthermore, a study exploring grade retention and its implications for primary schools in Eswatini (EMoET, 2018b) showed that siSwati was one of the subjects responsible for the high repetition rate in primary schools, and in 2018, the grade retention rate in Eswatini primary schools was at 16 %.

I particularly chose to explore teacher pedagogical practices in the foundation and middle phases (FOMIPs) because siSwati was key to both the teachers and the learners, as it was the language through which other subjects were taught and learnt in the curriculum. I aimed to explore teacher pedagogical practices in teaching this important subject in the FOMIPs and to determine why teachers taught the way they did to address the needs of the first language learners and those learners who were linguistically displaced (Jones, 2012) because siSwati was not their first language. It was in light of the research gap in African language pedagogy which I noticed existed, as a lot of studies conducted in African home language teaching (Ikome, 2019; Amaechi, 2017; Mkhabela, 2018; Madonsela, 2015; Heugh, 2005; Desai, 2003; Qorro, 2003; Foley, 2001) focused on using African home languages as LoLT. They did not dwell on how these languages were taught in class, let alone the teaching of an African language in a culturally and linguistically diverse environment.

Considering the important role teachers play as drivers of the teaching and learning process, my intention in conducting this study was to establish how teachers taught SL1 in linguistically diverse settings, their rationale for teaching the way they did, considering existing research findings (Macdonald, 2002; Cummins, 1991) on the significant role played by the MT in a child's cognitive development and academic achievements. Furthermore, the role of home languages in education is a topic of growing interest on local, national and international platforms (Dekeyser, Puschmann & Agirdag 2019). My exploration of teacher pedagogical practices in SL1 was guided by social constructivism, in particular Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978:25). In his Sociocultural theory (SCT), Vygotsky saw language teaching and learning as a collective effort and posited that cognitive development among learners can be facilitated through daily social interactions with peers and skilled individuals that the learners interact with within their social environment. In this study, the skilled individuals were the teachers; peers were the learners and the environment meant the schools and the classrooms with learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Below is the map of Eswatini depicting the location of the study.

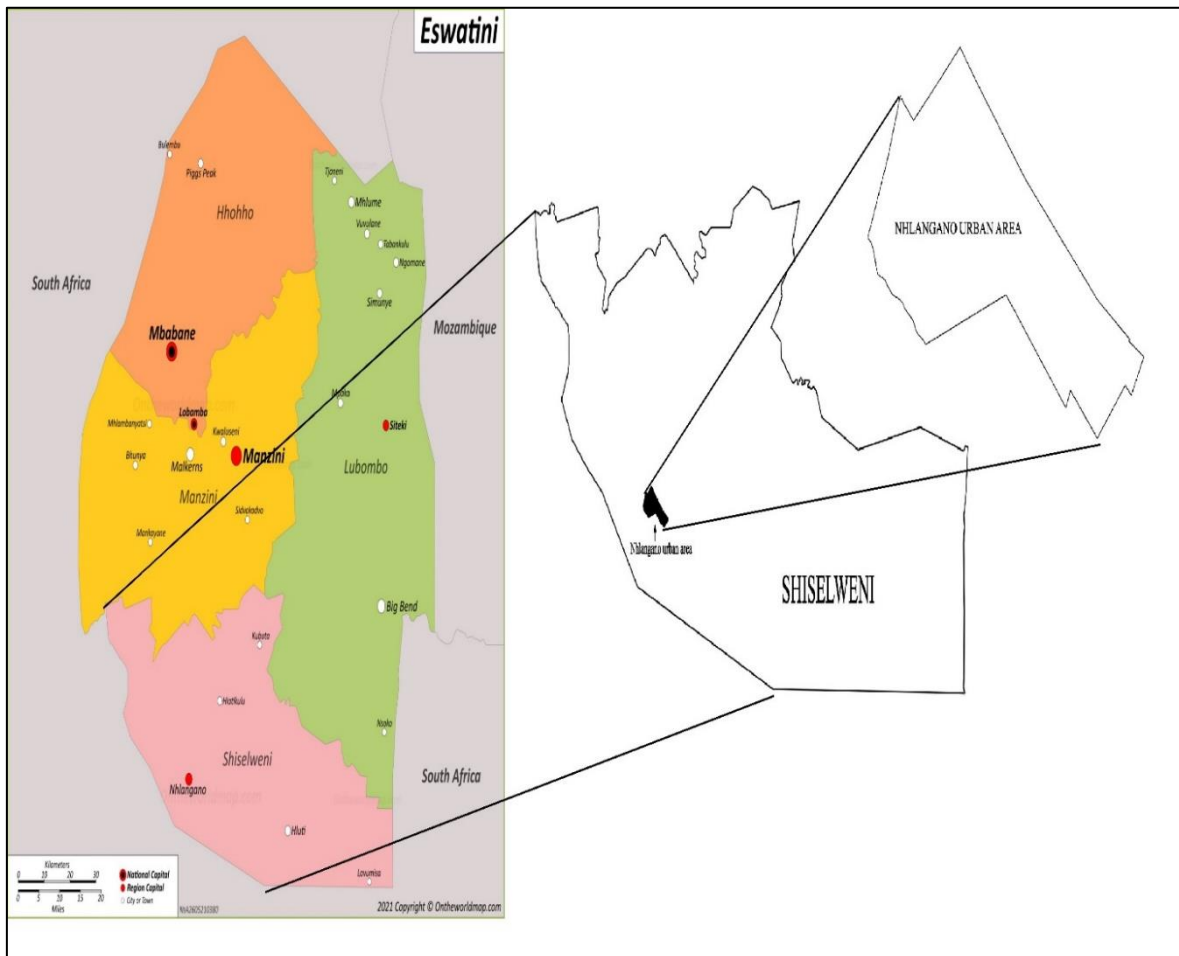


Figure 1.1: Map of Eswatini showing the location of the study: sourced from Surveyor General, Ministry of Natural resources and Energy

1.2.3 Setting of the study and a brief socio-economic context of Eswatini

In this section, I present the location of the study. I also explain why in principle Eswatini considered monolingual, that is, if I take into account the definition given by Fishman (1967:19) that a monolingual country has above 85% of its population speaking one language as their first or native language; transformed into a multicultural and linguistically heterogeneous society, specifically in urban areas. This study was conducted in the town of Nhlanguano, the administrative centre of the Shiselweni region of Eswatini. The Shiselweni region is in the south of Eswatini. In the northeast, it is bordered by the Lubombo region and in the northwest by the Manzini region of Eswatini. In the south, it is bordered by the Mpumalanga and KwaZulu Natal provinces of South Africa. It is one of the poorest regions in the country. It is characterised by high-grade retention rate in primary schools (EMoET, 2018b). Noting the high poverty rate in the region, the government of Eswatini has been

successful in inviting investors to start businesses around the town of Nhlngano where this study was conducted. In recent years, the town has been inundated with foreign nationals to start manufacturing industries. The result of this has been the migration of Swati families from Shiselweni rural areas to the outskirts of Nhlngano in search of job opportunities. Although poverty-stricken, most of these migrant labourers do everything in their power to send their children to urban schools where they learn together with children who are immigrants and are predominantly from an affluent background since their parents own businesses and manufacturing industries in the town and its outskirts. Furthermore, being close to South Africa, specifically the KwaZulu Natal province, has some linguistic bearing on the citizens of Shiselweni, as although most speak siSwati, some speak a combination of siSwati and isiZulu, a dialect called “ukuthithiza” in siSwati. This is where there is the phoneme [ts] in standard siSwati, they use the Zulu equivalent [th]. Although the regular sound correspondence that occurs between these genetically related languages (siSwati and isiZulu) is minimal, it presents linguistic differences between standard siSwati spoken by the rest of emaSwati and the dialect spoken by the people of southern Shiselweni.

Moreover, since the study was on pedagogical practices in teaching siSwati as a first language in diverse linguistic settings, I saw it important to explain how the socio-economic challenges facing the country transformed some places like Nhlngano where the study was conducted into an area characterised by cultural and linguistic diversity. Eswatini is a country in southern Africa formerly known as Swaziland. King Mswati III renamed the country Eswatini in 2018 when it marked fifty years of independence from British rule, thus decolonising the name and suiting it to the people, emaSwati and the language, siSwati. It is a landlocked country bordered by the Republic of South Africa and Mozambique with a population of about 1.1 million inhabitants and measuring approximately 17, 200 square kilometres. The country is a former British protectorate (Dlamini, *et al.* 2008:106), and this has had a bearing on the teaching and learning of siSwati, as shown in section 1.2.1 of the report. It is a country ruled by a monarchical regime and has four administrative regions, namely Hhohho, Manzini, Lubombo and Shiselweni, the latter being the region where Nhlngano, the setting of the study is found.

Regarding linguistic diversity, 95 % of the population speaks siSwati (Simons & Fennig, 2018). The remaining 5 % of the demography of the country is largely made up of foreign investors from around the world who are mostly found in urban areas where they own businesses, such as shops and manufacturing industries. These investors predominantly comprise Chinese from the Republic of China (Taiwan), Indians, Pakistanis and

Bangladeshis. Moreover, because of the economic slump facing the world, in recent years, the country has also seen an influx of immigrants from the Southern African Development Community (SADC), East, West and North Africa and others across the world in search of greener pastures. These foreign nationals are the ones that render urban areas of the country linguistically heterogeneous. Despite the presence of a multicultural and linguistically diverse society in urban areas, the two official languages of Eswatini are English and siSwati (Ministry of Justice & Constitutional Affairs, 2005:13).

Economically, the country falls under the category of developing countries, and with a Gross Domestic Product of US\$4,700 per capita (World Bank, 2021:5), it is regarded as a lower-middle-income country. In 2021, the World Bank reported that 59 % of the Swati population lived below the breadline subsistence level. The prevalence of the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic in 2020, accompanied by the volatile political situation in 2021, worsened the country's economic environment, with some businesses liquidated and foreign investors leaving the country. Moreover, before the COVID-19 pandemic, the country was already experiencing other universal challenges like global change, which resulted in drought and the predominance of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) among its citizens. In 2017, the prevalence of HIV infections among the adult working class was at 27.2 %, with 80% on antiretroviral therapy (ART) and about 64 % of young children, even those of school-going age were on ART (UNAIDS, 2017). In 2019, the prevalence of HIV among the youth, especially between the ages of 15-19 was 10.2% in females, with males of the same age at 1.9% (UNFPA, 2019). This means HIV/AIDS directly affects teaching and learning in the country, as both learners and teachers are either infected or affected by it. Poverty and HIV/AIDS are some causes of the high dropout rate at the primary school level and because of these factors, it is common to find learners above the age of 15 still in primary school. These two factors, combined with a stagnant economy, a low level of foreign investments, a very high rate of unemployment affecting the youth, extreme poverty, high levels of inequalities and bad application of policies and programmes, have ensured that most of the people in the country live in abject perpetual poverty (Eswatini Ministry of Economic Planning & Development, 2019).

Amidst the barrage of economic and social problems facing the country, the Eswatini government has made minor gains in wooing investors to establish businesses in the country's cities and towns such as Mbabane, Manzini, Siteki and Nhlengano, the latter being the subject of this investigation. As mentioned earlier in the study, most of these investors

are particularly of Asian descent. This has resulted in the creation of a multilingual society. It is worth mentioning that about 73 % of the Swati population is found in rural areas, but because of poverty, urban areas have seen a great deal of migration by people who move from rural areas to urban areas in search of job opportunities and a better life. According to Khoza (1999:134), there is a direct link between urban and rural poverty in Eswatini. This is the case because the people who move from rural to urban areas in search of greener pastures transmit rural poverty into urban areas (Dlamini, 2018). This has resulted in the creation of shanty towns on the outskirts of cities, and this is where low-income earners and their families reside. Therefore, one characteristic feature of schools in Eswatini is that rural schools are made up of Swati native speakers, yet urban schools have learners who come from diverse linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds. The foreign nationals send their children to private and government-owned schools around the four main towns and cities, which are Mbabane, Manzini, Siteki and Nhlanguano. These are the children who then bring linguistic and cultural diversity to the classrooms otherwise dominated by Swati-speaking learners.

It was based on the prevailing socio-economic status and linguistically diverse conditions of Eswatini, particularly the Nhlanguano town of the Shiselweni region, that my interest to conduct the study was triggered in me. Seeing a lot of learners who are MT speakers of siSwati and a lot of Indian, Chinese, Pakistani and Bangladeshi learners who are not proficient in siSwati made me wonder how teachers navigate the SL1 classroom. This was because siSwati is a compulsory subject and LoLT, yet the classroom environment is linguistically heterogenous. I aimed to establish how teachers teach, how they facilitate learners' acquisition and learning of this important language. The language used to learn other subjects and to ultimately understand their motivation for teaching SL1, considering the linguistic diversity of learners found in Shiselweni urban areas. I hoped that such a study may present a contribution to language pedagogy.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The SL1 classroom, particularly in urban areas where the study was conducted, comprises learners who are proficient in the language by being native speakers and those who are exposed to the language for the first time. At primary school, siSwati is a compulsory subject. This means all learners, MT and non-MT speakers of the language study siSwati as a core subject, and it is the LoLT. However, at junior and senior secondary school levels, siSwati is offered as L1 to learners who are MT speakers and learners who are non-native speakers of the language do siSwati as a Second Language (L2), a privilege not available

to non-mother tongue speakers of siSwati at primary school. In fact, according to the EMoET, “as a core subject, siSwati shall be taught in all levels and be passed by all learners” (EMoET, 2017:23). The levels alluded to by this policy are of elementary school and all levels of junior and senior secondary (Grade 1 up to Form 5, the latter referred to as Grade 12 in South Africa). According to this circular, the siSwati language teacher has to use effective pedagogical practices to ensure that learners acquire the core language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing in siSwati and have knowledge and understanding of Swati culture so that all learners, MT and non-MT speakers of siSwati pass the subject. Teachers are expected to equip learners with these skills, despite the misalignment in the curriculum. The consequences of this practice are manifold. According to consecutive reports by the Examination Council of Eswatini (ECESWA), from 2009 to 2020, the quality of the results obtained by learners in siSwati in the Grade 7 exit examination is poor.

It was based on this scenario that I wanted to understand how teachers teach siSwati as a first language in classrooms that are characterised by learners of diverse linguistic backgrounds. I wanted to comprehend why they taught the learners the way they did and ultimately gain an understanding of their experiences of teaching siSwati as the L1 to learners who came to school having acquired the language skill of listening and speaking, yet others came to school with none of these skills. It was also based on the importance of siSwati as a core subject and a LoLT that I wanted to understand the appropriateness of these pedagogical practices in helping learners acquire the core literacy skills in siSwati. This was important because siSwati is a LoLT across all subject areas from the foundation to the middle phase (Grades 1 to 4). Therefore, exploring the effectiveness of the pedagogy in SL1 was important to me as siSwati is an important subject in the school curriculum, and the skills taught in this subject are the very ones the learner will use not only in his/her academic life but also in his/her social and professional life as an adult. Similarly, Barnett (2011:976) concurs that learners who acquire the core language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing in primary school are more likely to succeed academically and professionally than those who fail to acquire them.

1.4 RATIONALE

Several intertwined factors motivated me to conduct this study. These are personal, professional, scholarly and conceptual. On a *personal level*, I am from Eswatini and siSwati is my first language. Therefore, I have an interest in preserving my home language through education and research work. *Professionally*, I am currently a full-time siSwati lecturer at

Ngwane Teachers College in Eswatini. By conducting this study, I anticipate gaining an understanding of the teaching of MT in Eswatini schools and consequently improving my practice as a trainer of teachers. Moreover, the *conceptual motivation* for me to embark on this study emanated from my view that in education, quality input determines quality output. This is to say, the methodology employed by teachers in the lesson delivery has a direct effect on learners' learning and their subsequent performance in a subject. This is supported by Wang (2008) and Grossman (1990) who contend that pedagogical practices have a massive influence on learning achievements and that the effectiveness and success of any programme depend on the choice of methods and pedagogical strategies employed. This means if the instructional input is very poor so will be the outcome and vice versa. This view is also supported by Hattie (2012:27) who affirms that a teacher with excellent pedagogical practices impacts learners' academic achievement immeasurably.

Moreover, the *scholarly rationale* to do this study was that, to the best of my knowledge, no research has been conducted on the teaching of siSwati to establish how pedagogical practices are used in teaching SL1 in multilingual settings and why teachers engage these practices the way they do in Eswatini primary schools. This makes the study different from other studies as the few studies that exist were conducted by Master's students from the University of Eswatini and most of these studies remain unpublished. Furthermore, these studies focused on issues of the Language in Education Policy regarding the use of siSwati as LoLT (Mkhabela, 2018). Besides, most local and international studies (Bell, Fortier & Gauvin, 2020; Ikome, 2019; Bruen & Kelly, 2017; Abidogun, 2012; Brock-Utne, 2005; Vuzo, 2005; Alidou, 2004) explored how the first language can be used to facilitate the learning of the second language, especially English, not how home languages are taught. This has left a void in AHLs pedagogy and by conducting this study, I hoped to bridge this gap by providing a different contribution to this under-researched field of study.

1.5 PURPOSE AND FOCUS

Based on the rationale and gap in research, the purpose of this research was to explore pedagogical practices in the teaching of SL1 in Eswatini primary schools and also to ascertain the appropriateness and suitability of these pedagogical practices in helping learners acquire core literacy skills in siSwati. The focus of the study was to find out how pedagogical practices are used in the teaching of SL1 and also to understand why they are used presently.

1.6 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Based on the rationale and gap in research, the objectives of the study were to:

- a) Explore pedagogical practices used in teaching SL1.
- b) Determine why these pedagogical practices are used in the teaching of SL1.
- c) Establish teachers' experience of teaching SL1.

1.7 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In light of the purpose and focus of this investigation, I raised the following research questions in this study:

- a) How are pedagogical practices used in teaching SL1?
- b) Why are these pedagogical practices used in the teaching of SL1?
- c) How do teachers experience the teaching of SL1?

1.8 VALUE OF THE RESEARCH

Interest to conduct this study emanated from my observation of the prevailing situation in Eswatini primary schools where siSwati is taught as a first language to both native and non-native speakers of the language. The reality is that no education system can include all languages spoken by people living in the country in its language curriculum. However, compelling learners who are not first language speakers of a language to learn it as their first language is concerning. It is even worse to have the same language in which learners lack proficiency to be used as a LoLT across all subject content as is the current practice in Eswatini (EmoET, 2017:23). It is even more concerning to expect the teacher to perform wonders about these learners' academic performance in the language. Therefore, even though this study was not critical in approach, it was my goal to give teachers who participated in the study a voice where they gave an in-depth description of their teaching practices and determinants of their practices and ultimately hear about their experiences of teaching SL1 in multilingual settings.

Although this was a case study of two schools and its results generalised to these schools, the study has the benefit of guiding future research and also shows, although on a small scale, how teachers teach the language in primary schools in Eswatini. The study has the potential of influencing policy with regards to formulating Language in education policies that are not exclusive, but inclusive to the needs of learners of diverse linguistic backgrounds, considering the reality that no country is linguistically homogenous

(UNESCO, 2010). The study may also help teacher-training colleges to evaluate and judge the appropriateness and efficiency of the kind of training they offer to students who will become language teachers, thus providing them with the chance to improve their practice if need be.

Furthermore, I hope the findings of the study will enhance teachers' practice, as it may add educational value by providing different pathways of thinking for researchers, professionals and policymakers in education to envisage the use of siSwati in the future. It is hoped that the study should be of serious gain to teachers, parents and researchers given the pressing need to make sense of the changing terrain in the use of the siSwati language and the Eswatini authorities' shared devotion to the use of indigenous languages to improve pedagogy and student learning. This study may provide insight that the concepts and practices of literacy in schools are not autonomous or isolated from the contexts and cultures in which literacies emerge. The study may demonstrate that literacies are complex matters and are underpinned by the country's ideological assumptions, embedded in the siSwati home language. The study may reveal that the usage of siSwati in teaching and learning is one way of improving learners' literacies, helping learners to adapt to new learning modalities and making sense of their academic world. Furthermore, literature shows that the teaching of African home languages like siSwati is a neglected and under-researched area. This is despite research findings (Cunningham, 2019; Macdonald, 2002; Cummins, 1991) showing the significant role played by the MT in a child's cognitive development and academic achievements. Therefore, by conducting this study, I wanted to offer a new contribution to research in this field of study that is under-researched.

Furthermore, according to the ECESWA (2019), learners' performance in siSwati is poor, so the study might benefit stakeholders like teachers, parents and EMoET on what mediation and the collaborative role they can play in helping children acquire core skills in the home language. This is the case because poor academic performance does not only bring unhappiness to learners but to parents. Actually, no parent wants to see their child being unsuccessful academically for academic success brings happiness and contentment to both parents and learners.

1.9 DELIMITING THE STUDY

The study was delimited to the exploration of teachers' pedagogical practices in teaching SL1 in Eswatini primary schools from 2020 to 2023. The study was delimited to identifying what pedagogical practices teachers used to teach siSwati, how they engaged in these

practices and why they engaged in these pedagogical practices. This research was also delimited to teachers who taught siSwati in two urban primary schools in the Shiselweni region of Eswatini. The rationale for choosing teachers in urban schools was that urban schools are characterised by learners of diverse cultural, socio-economic and linguistic backgrounds, characteristics which most rural schools lack in Eswatini. Therefore, I envisaged that teachers from urban schools would generate rich data, sharing their experiences of teaching siSwati as a first language to learners who are first language speakers of siSwati and those who lack proficiency in the language. Furthermore, primary schools of the Shiselweni region were chosen because they have the highest repetition grade rate, and siSwati was found to be one of the subjects responsible for the high retention rate at the primary school level (EMoET, 2018b). Moreover, for data collection, the study was delimited to interviews, focus group discussions, classroom lesson observations and document review. For data analysis, the study was delimited to content analysis to interpret data generated from data-generating tools.

1.10 LIMITATIONS

The study was conducted at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and at a time when Eswatini was experiencing political unrest. These two factors affected education in the country, as schools were closed for over a year because of the pandemic and unrest. As one would expect, these challenges affected the data generation, particularly because some participants who had taken part in the initial stages of data collection could not take part in the latter stage, as some were ill with COVID-19 and one later succumbed to COVID-19 related complications. Although this was a roller-coaster ride of emotions between the siSwati teachers who participated in the study and I, those challenges did not undermine the quality of the data generated. Coincidentally, just before the tragedy occurred, all participants had taken part in the individual interview, which was the main data generating tool. Also, I was able to conduct the lesson observations and source school documents for analysis from participants, except for the deceased one. Additionally, I conducted one focus group discussion with one school that was hardly hit by the pandemic.

Furthermore, the study was a case study of teachers in two schools in the Shiselweni region of Eswatini. Rather than generalising the findings of the study to a wider population, I hoped to get a comprehensive understanding of how teachers taught siSwati as a first language and why they taught the way they did. I also hoped to gain an understanding of how teachers experienced the teaching of the language in their linguistically diverse classrooms. Therefore, the findings of the study are generalised to the two schools whose teachers

participated in the study. Moreover, even though the results may be generalised and applicable to the teachers who participated in the study, the results of this study have the potential of contributing and guiding future research and policy. They could also show, although on a micro-scale, how teachers teach SL1 to learners who are from diverse linguistic backgrounds. One other limitation of the study relates to my position as a researcher in the study. By profession, I am currently a trainer of teachers at Ngwane Teachers College. This means that I had to carefully and constantly guard against imposing my views and biases with regards to how the subject is supposed to be taught.

1.11 EXPLANATION OF KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS USED IN THE STUDY

This part of the thesis explains the major terms and concepts that were central to the study. The terms and concepts clarified in this section are pedagogy, pedagogical practices, siSwati, language and first language, siSwati first language, diverse linguistic settings and sociocultural theory.

1.11.1 Pedagogy

Pedagogy is a multi-dimensional concept that does not only involve knowledge and understanding of teaching methods (Dewey, 2018:181). It is the knowledge and the understanding that teaching and learning are social processes involving the understanding of the environment where learning and teaching occur, cognitive science (how learners learn and how the human mind works), that learning is interconnected with participation in a culture of practice and understanding of the instruments and technologies established for us to understand our world and the fact that it is liberating (Leach & Moon, 2008). The latter definition by Leach and Moon (2008) best suits the study in the sense that pedagogy is defined from a holistic point of view. It is presented as a multifaceted concept that involves the understanding of what and how to teach, under what socio-economic and political environment should teaching occur, the tools and resources for teaching and learning and the crucial part learners play in their learning.

1.11.2 Pedagogical practices

Since pedagogy entails the knowledge of the theories, context, approaches and methodology of effective teaching and learning, pedagogical practices are thus derived from approaches and teaching methods (Webster & Ryan, 2018). Therefore, pedagogical practices are the methodologies and techniques used by teachers to facilitate the acquisition of subject content among learners (Dewey, 2018:175). Moreover, in this study's

context, pedagogical practices refer to all the teaching and learning approaches, modes, methods, strategies, techniques and tools teachers employ in their language classrooms for learners to learn SL1.

1.11.3 Language

Generally, language is defined as the creative and rule-governed principal social tool used by human beings to communicate with each other (Joubert, 2015:2). Although it is primarily oral, it can be transferred to other media such as the written mode. It is an instrument that shows the identity and culture of a people and a mechanism that can either provide or not provide individuals access to education and innovations such as emerging technologies which can ultimately decide the socio-economic and political well-being of those people (Negash, 2005:95). In this study, language refers to all the systems that are key to oral and written language, such as phonetics (sound production), phonology (relationship between sounds in a language), morphology (word derivation), syntax (sentence construction), semantics (word meaning) and pragmatics (language usage).

1.11.4 First language

A first language is the earliest language a child learns to speak, and it is acquired from the people in the child's environment, such as parents, siblings and extended family members. A first language is otherwise called an individual's MT, a home language or his/her native language (Omidire, 2019:8), as it is the language a child acquires from birth and is considered the first language s/he makes initial verbal associations, connections and contacts. Thus, MT or first language is "the language or languages of the immediate environment and daily interaction which nurture the child in the first four years of life. Therefore, the MT is a language or languages with which the child grows up with and of which the child has learnt the grammar before school" (UNESCO, 2010:62). Although in Eswatini the terms MT and first language are used synonymously, in this study, I used the first language when referring to siSwati, the MT and the teaching and learning of siSwati. This was for the sake of consistency and in line with the ECESWA and the National Curriculum Centre (NCC) which refer to the siSwati subject, siSwati as First Language or First Language siSwati.

1.11.5 SiSwati / Swati

SiSwati or Swati is a southern Bantu language spoken in Eswatini and some parts of South Africa, particularly the Mpumalanga province of the Republic of South Africa. It belongs to

the Nguni group of Bantu languages of the Southern Eastern Zone (Miti, 2006:50). The Swati language and the people known as Swati or EmaSwati got the name from one of the earliest kings of Eswatini, Mswati 1. Moreover, the siSwati that was subject to this study is spoken in Eswatini where together with English they are the only two official languages in the country (Ministry of Justice & Constitutional Affairs, 2005:13) and the only core language subjects that all learners should pursue, both native and non-native speakers of these languages (EMoET, 2011).

1.11.6 First language siSwati (SL1)

In the case of this study, First language siSwati has two meanings. The first meaning refers to the primary or native language that learners acquire from the social environment and a language learners have proficiency. The second meaning relates to an important core school subject that is taught in Eswatini schools to both native and non-native siSwati-speaking learners in primary and to native speakers of siSwati in senior secondary school (EMoET 2018a:26-32; EMoET, 2017:23). It is significant because it is compulsory to all learners across all grades and very important, particularly at the FOMIPs where it has a twofold role of being the language of learning other subjects from Grades 1 to 4 and a core subject.

1.11.7 Eswatini and Swaziland

The country was formerly known as Swaziland, and it was renamed Eswatini in 2018 (BBC, 2018). Moreover, there are still some government documents that have not changed to the new name. Therefore, if the document has not changed, like the constitution of the country which still bears the title Constitution of Swaziland, the country's former name shall be used in reference to that document and other documents that have not assumed the new name.

1.11.8 Sociocultural theory

A theory originated by Vygotsky, the Russian philosopher and pedagogist posits that learners learn through the interactions they have with figures in their social environment (Vygotsky, 1978).

1.12 AN OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Below is a brief overview of the research design and methodology that I used to respond to the research questions in this study. A comprehensive analysis of this is conducted in Chapter four.

1.12.1 Research paradigm

The study leaned towards the interpretivist paradigm which tries to comprehend how individuals make logic of situations that occur in their everyday lives and in that process continuously give reasons for their day-to-day behaviours (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport, 2011:8). This was a suitable paradigm for the study, as it guided me as I engaged with participants of the study who were teachers. I got to know what influenced teachers' choices of pedagogical practices when teaching siSwati in multilingual primary schools of Eswatini, how they taught the subject and why they taught the way they did. Through the interpretivist paradigm, teachers also shared their lived experiences of teaching SL1 to learners of diverse linguistic backgrounds.

1.12.2 Research approach

In light of the interpretivist paradigm embraced by the study, the study adopted the qualitative approach. As the name suggests, this is an approach which attempts to generate quality data by understanding how individuals comprehend their world. It also endeavours to understand the meaning individuals construct about their world and the explanations they ascribe to the experiences of their social environment (Yin, 2016:9; McMillan & Schumacher 2014:346). The qualitative approach was suitable for the study, as it provided me with the opportunity to do a comprehensive investigation of the phenomenon which was exploring pedagogical practices in teaching SL1 in diverse linguistic settings. It allowed me to understand teachers' explanations (Yin, 2016:9) of the pedagogy they employed and got their experiences of teaching SL1 in the urban social environment. Furthermore, the nature of the study required that I observed how teachers taught SL1 and interviewed them on why they taught the way they did. Thus, qualitative research was suitable for the study, as it helped me get valuable and in-depth information (Maree, 2007) about pedagogical practices in teaching SL.

1.12.3 Research design of the study

For research design, the study employed the exploratory case study as its design. Yin (2014:14) and Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011:289) assert that a case study is useful in answering the 'how' and 'why' questions in research. This design was suitable for the study, as it provided me with the opportunity to conduct a detailed and comprehensive analysis of how pedagogical practices are used in the teaching of siSwati in two urban primary schools of the Shiselweni region of Eswatini, and why teachers employed them in the way they did. One advantage of the case study is that it helps researchers to learn about a phenomenon that not much is known about it (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014:143; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:348). In the case of this study, debatably, no study has been conducted in Eswatini primary schools to determine how teachers teach SL1 in a classroom environment that is made of learners of diverse linguistic backgrounds.

1.12.4 Target population and sampling

Since the study was an exploratory case study, the population was all the siSwati teachers in the two urban schools of the Shiselweni region of Eswatini. McMillan and Schumacher (2014:5) assert that a population is an assembly of people that match a particular standard or norm to which researchers aim to generalise the results of their findings. In this study, research findings were generalised to participants who were selected from the two schools. In this study, participants were selected through purposive sampling. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2014:154), Cohen *et al.* (2011:156) and Bryman (2012:418), purposive sampling is useful when a researcher needs participants who exhibit several significant traits that render such participants suitable to give detailed and comprehensive information vital to respond to research questions. Guided by this principle, I identified teachers who taught siSwati in two urban primary schools in the Shiselweni region of Eswatini. Teachers who had been teaching siSwati as their first language for over five years were selected. With a wealth of experience, these teachers were expected to offer an insight into what pedagogical practices they engage in the teaching of the language and also give reasons why they teach the way they do. These experienced teachers were expected to share their lived experiences of teaching SL1.

1.12.5 Data generation

In this study, I used semi-structured interviews, a focus group discussion, classroom observations and document analysis to generate data. I used semi-structured interviews to collect data from siSwati teachers because of their flexibility, as they gave me a chance to

probe participants when there was a need to do so (Yin, 2014; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). I also generated data through focus group discussions. The rationale behind the use of focus group discussions was to get a collective perspective of teachers who shared similar characteristics and experiences of teaching SL1 in primary school and to find where they differed in perspectives. This was in line with Van Aken and Berends' (2018) assessment that one advantage of focus group interviews is that they make it possible for the researcher to see where participants have the same perspective on a topic or different points of view.

Moreover, as my other objective of conducting this study was to see how teachers teach siSwati, I conducted classroom lesson observations to capture pedagogical practices in the teaching of SL1 and to see how they were used. I was a non-participant observer in the teaching and learning process. I observed teachers and learners carrying on their daily businesses without my involvement. Conducting lesson observations in this exercise was important to me as I witnessed teachers in action; I was a testament to how they teach. This was informed by Maree (2016) and McMillan and Schumacher (2014) who assert that with observations, the researcher witnesses and hears what occurs naturally in the research site. Finally, data for the study were collected through the analysis of documents. Bowen (2009:27) describes document analysis as an organised method for checking and evaluating printed and electronic documents which contain words and descriptions documented without the researcher's involvement. In line with Bowen (2009), I analysed existing documents, such as the siSwati curriculum documents and policies to understand what informed teachers in teaching siSwati in primary schools. Furthermore, lesson plans, teacher made tests, learners' textbooks and learners' classwork exercise books were analysed to find out if their contents aligned with the objectives of the siSwati curriculum.

1.12.6 Data analysis

Since the study was qualitative, the data that were generated were purely qualitative, thus they were analysed through an inductive process involving sorting, arranging, classifying them, detecting characteristics and sequences and associations among the groups (McMillan & Schumacher 2014). Data that were generated through the semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, lesson observations and documentary review were analysed through content analysis. This is to say, data were sorted and arranged into codes, then categories to come up with themes. This was in line with scholars who note that with content analysis, coding categories are derived directly from the text (Flick, 2018:482; Leedy & Ormrod, 2014:150; Cohen *et al.*, 2011:563; Maree, 2007:101).

1.13 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

This study is made up of six chapters:

Chapter one presents the introduction and context of this investigation. In Chapter one, I presented the background of the study, a brief history of teaching siSwati in Eswatini schools and the setting and socio-economic context of Eswatini, which has rendered urban areas of the country a linguistically diverse and culturally dissimilar society. I also presented the rationale and motivation for exploring pedagogical practices in SLI. I gave the purpose and focus of the study, research questions, and significance of the study, delimitations and limitations of the study. I also provided a brief overview of the methodology that I used in the study, how the study is organised and finally gave a summary of the chapter.

Chapter two presents the literature review, focusing on a detailed discussion of issues relating to first language teaching and, pedagogical approaches to language teaching and the themes vital to teaching language in diverse linguistic settings.

Chapter three comprehensively discusses Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, a theory that forms the theoretical framework underpinning this study.

Chapter four presents the methodology that I used to respond to the research questions raised in the study. This included the interpretive paradigm that underpinned the study, qualitative approach, exploratory case study, instruments of data generation and data analysis.

Chapter five provides a thematic presentation and interpretation of research findings that came out of data analysis. The findings were presented against the six concepts of the SCT.

Chapter six presents the discussion of the findings, summary of the findings, conclusion and recommendations found in the study's findings. The discussion is in themes and was guided by research questions, the literature review and the theoretical framework of the study. Ultimately, in the very same chapter, I present the study's synopsis and chapter summary.

1.14 SUMMARY

In this chapter, I presented an introduction to a qualitative case study in which I explored pedagogical practices in teaching siSwati as the first language in two urban primary schools of the Shiselweni region of Eswatini. These primary schools are made up of learners from diverse language backgrounds, but all learners study SL1. In this chapter, I presented the background and context of the study. The rationale for exploring pedagogical practices in teaching SL1 in Eswatini primary schools was provided. I also presented the purpose and the focus of the study and also outlined the objectives and research questions raised by this study. I further presented an overview of the research methodology that I employed to respond to research questions. I also provided the significance, delimitations and limitations of this investigation. Ultimately, I provided the organisation of the report. In the next chapter, I present a comprehensive literature review pertinent to the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a literature review focusing on the title of the study, which is exploring pedagogical practices in teaching siSwati as a first language in diverse linguistic settings. As a researcher, I understand that nothing under the sun is new, someone somewhere might have done work almost similar to mine. Therefore, in this chapter, I attempt to place my study in the body of knowledge of language pedagogy, with a specific focus on pedagogical practices relating to teaching the L1 or L2 in elementary classrooms that are made up of learners of diverse linguistic backgrounds. I begin the chapter by defining a literature review and providing the rationale for conducting a review of literature pertinent to the study. I also explain the methodology that I followed in conducting the literature review. I then present a detailed discussion and a critique of available literature focusing on the key themes of this study. I finally conclude the chapter with a summary, bringing to light the knowledge gap that exists in language pedagogy, particularly in the teaching and learning of African home languages (AHLs).

2.2 LITERATURE REVIEW - DEFINITION AND RATIONALE

According to Jesson, Matheson and Lacey (2013:1) and Ridley (2012:3), a literature review is an evaluation of existing work that is related and appropriate to a study being investigated at a given period. It is an important aspect of the research process as Rewhorn (2018:147) and de Vos *et al.* (2011:109) contend that it provides the background for research, the motivation for conducting the review and distinctly shows the knowledge gap existing in the literature. Hart (2018:33) agrees with these authors and contends that the objective of the literature review is to guide and demonstrate to the researcher information and concepts presented in form of scholarly claims developed in that particular area of research. According to Hart (2018), the review of literature helps the researcher to get a clear understanding of the topic under investigation, be aware of how previous scholars dealt with their research work and ultimately find out what major questions have been addressed or ignored in that subject area. Based on the foregoing definitions, my understanding of a literature review in this context is that it is not only an evaluation and a synthesis of manifold scholarly work on L1 pedagogy and other topics related to the field, but also a guide on

which very important areas pertinent to the topic I have to explore in the review of the literature.

Therefore, by conducting a literature review in this study, I hoped to evaluate what scholars had done related to L1 pedagogy and identify theoretical assertions that have been developed in this area, thus placing my work within available literature, as guided by several scholars (Booth, Papaioannou & Sutton, 2012:7; Bryman, 2012:8; Jesson *et al.*, 2013:18). It was also important for me to conduct a literature review in this study to comprehend pedagogical practices in teaching an L1 in classroom contexts that are made of learners of diverse linguistic backgrounds. This was in light of the current practice in Eswatini primary schools, particularly in urban schools where siSwati is taught as the first language to native and non-native speakers of the language. Furthermore, through conducting a review of the literature in this study, I wanted to be aware of how previous scholars dealt with their research work and what major questions have been addressed or ignored in the area of first language pedagogy. Thus, this was crucial in identifying the knowledge gap in the area of L1 teaching, particularly AHLs and highlighting the weaknesses in the literature as guided by Ridley (2012:6) and Booth *et al.* (2012:3).

Additionally, I adopted the thematic approach as a methodology to present the literature review. This was for readability and sequential writing, as guided by Rewhorn (2018:146). Therefore, through using this approach, I developed themes from the topic of the study and the literature addressing the themes was used as a lens to guide this research. This is to say, through the thematic approach and the sociocultural theory, which was used as a framework guiding this study, I provided a review of the literature by first recognising the main constructs (themes) in this study. I then presented these different constructs vis-a-vis available literature and research studies pertinent to the study. Therefore, guided by the research questions, as suggested by Jesson *et al.* (2013:18), I reported and critiqued key components available in the literature relating to pedagogy in L1.

The main themes that were addressed were pedagogy as defined by various scholars, the different kinds of knowledge a language teacher should possess to be effective in teaching language and various pedagogical approaches for L1 and L2 teaching. Other themes that were addressed include the various postulations about how children gain language competence, pedagogical contexts suitable for language learning, working with learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds and finally, a discussion of the assessment of language.

Likewise, in discussing the above aspects, I made use of journals, books, peer-reviewed articles, e-books, conference papers and theses pertinent to the study.

2.3 DISCUSSION OF PEDAGOGY

Webster and Ryan (2018) and Leach and Moon (2008) assert that the term pedagogy has its roots in the Greek language, and it comes from the compound 'pais-agogus', which means leading children. The first morpheme, 'pais' means child, the following morpheme, 'agogus' means leader and the final affix, the suffix 'gy' means logic. Hence, pedagogy refers to the logic of leading children. Also, there are differing views among progressives and traditionalists on what pedagogy is, and as such, the concept is defined by scholars in different but almost related ways.

From the traditionalist view, scholars (Watkins & Mortimore, 1999; Smyth, 1987) define pedagogy as the hands-on, realistic, academic and philosophical knowledge a teacher has concerning the learning experiences s/he gives learners, and this is done through teaching and learning resources. Furthermore, from the progressive standpoint, scholars denounce such definitions as inadequate and restrictive, since they attribute learning solely to the teacher who is catapulted to the position of controlling and defining what happens in class (Dewey, 2018:181; Leach & Moon, 2008:6). Thus, for Leach and Moon (2008:6-7), pedagogy is a multifaceted concept bigger than teaching methods that are to be used by teachers. For these authors, the knowledge of pedagogy should include the understanding of the setting where teaching and learning occur; how the human mind works and how learners acquire knowledge (cognitive science). This also includes the fact that learning is a social process and acquisition of knowledge is not divorced from participation in a culture of practice, tools and technologies developed to understand the world we live in and the fact that pedagogy is liberating and builds learners' identity and esteem.

Furthermore, studies in pedagogical theories reveal that nothing has a disregard for pedagogical theories more than the belief that they are just recipes for teachers on how to teach (Dewey, 2018:181). Dewey argues that even though pedagogy provides teachers with a systematic and orderly approach to teaching, it is not rigid, as there is room for versatility, depending on the circumstances under which teachers teach. In light of the foregoing perspectives, my understanding of the term pedagogy is that it is a very broad concept that entails an understanding of what the teacher has to teach, how should it be taught, under what socio-political and economic environment should it be taught, the

resources available for teaching and learning and the vital role played by the learner in his or her learning.

Moreover, in this study, I was not interested in addressing the many debates and contests surrounding the meaning of the concept. My understanding of what it entails helped me to understand what practices are used by teachers in teaching the L1 or L2 in similar or diverse linguistic settings. Therefore, in this study, the concept of pedagogical practices refers to all language didactic approaches, teaching methods, strategies, techniques, tactics and instructional practices a language teacher uses to teach language in his/her language classroom.

2.3.1 Content knowledge

As stated in the preceding section, pedagogy is a broad concept that requires the knowledge and understanding of many factors for teachers to effectively engage in their practice of teaching. One of this knowledge and requirement is content knowledge (CK). According to Shulman (1987:93) and Grossman (1990:17), content knowledge (CK) is the knowledge of the subject area. This is knowledge about the subject that the teacher might have learnt during and post-training, and it is the primary quality a teacher should possess to qualify to teach. Content knowledge is thus viewed as the foundation of a teacher's expertise (Baser, Kopcha & Ozden, 2015; Pachler, Evans & Lawes, 2007). To Shulman (1986), content knowledge should be known for its substantive and syntactic structure. This suggests that teachers of language in the foundation and middle phases must understand key language content areas. However, research by Mbele (2019:81) and Nkosi (2011:280) found that teachers lacked knowledge of the purpose of teaching reading isiZulu among foundation phase learners. As a result, they taught reading in isolation, instead of contextualising it to the learners' environment as per the postulations of social constructivists. Moreover, my understanding is that the knowledge of what to teach when teaching language in the foundation phase generally begins with understanding the inseparable and interdependent relationship between teaching language and literacy. Thus, a language teacher of elementary school needs to understand the relationship between the two and how they impact each other.

Generally, language is a broad entity that can prove difficult to capture all its forms and features in a paragraph (Joubert, 2015:1). Language has been defined in different ways. For Cullingford (1998:42), language is the channel of communication, without it, people would struggle to live. Scholars define language as a wonderful invention, an essential

instrument to converse, convey how one feels, aspirations and views and a tool for acquiring education (Madonsela 2015; Genishi & Dyson, 2009). Besides, Negash (2005:95) views language as the fundamental vehicle through which learners can get or not get an education, a conduit to understanding new scientific innovations and intellectual knowledge that will subsequently influence the socio-economic well-being and identity of the learners and their communities at large. This means both oral and written language are a prerequisite for children to learn. Kurt (2020) observed that the teaching of language is essential, as it produces creative learners, good communicators, critical thinkers and great collaborators. For Joubert (2015:10), language is a skill that develops over time among individuals. Like all skills that are acquired and learnt, individuals such as teachers play an important role in learners' acquisition of language skills. This leads us to the concept of literacy and how it connects to language.

Traditionally, literacy refers to the capability to read and write adequately, at least in one language to function in society (Sayed, 2018:165; Joubert, 2015:18; Calhoun, 1999:58). However, Calhoun (1999) contends that literacy is more than being able to read and write but produces immeasurable opportunities within the school and beyond so that individuals can function meaningfully in a democratic society. In today's society, individuals who cannot read and write are considered illiterate, but according to Joubert (2015:18), this is a fallacy as some communities can function through oral language. Even though the foregoing view asserts that some societies lead a productive life with only oral language, such productivity is questionable in the present context, as present-day life requires that an individual has holistic functional use of language through both oral and written forms. That is why Calhoun (1999:58) argues that nowadays a person cannot fulfil all their citizenship duties without skills in both oral and written language. Therefore, the implication for language teachers in today's world is to produce learners who cannot only speak the language, but learners that can read and write it to be functional in today's demanding society. Also, Brewer (2016:34) contends that literacy is grounded on the linguistic skills that enable an individual not to only gain knowledge from the spoken word but also from print.

Thus, in the foundation and middle phases, language is taught to develop literacy skills. Most education systems around the world teach language via literacy in the foundation phase (Ellis, McCartney & Bourne, 2011:34). In England, the United States, Australia, the Republic of South Africa and Eswatini, to name a few, the language curriculum for the foundation phase calls for language to be taught via literacy (United States Department of Education, 2017; England Department of Education, 2013; Ellis *et al.*, 2011; Department of

Basic Education, 2011; EMoET, 2018a). What is common in these curriculum frameworks is that learners in the foundation and middle phases are taught language so that they can have functional use of oral and written language. Learners are expected to listen and understand language, speak and be eloquent in it and be able to read and write, showing critical thinking and reasoning skills. All these language skills are a foundation of lifelong learning and are embedded in the different forms and structures of language and once acquired by a learner, they should not be reversible.

The relationship between teaching language and literacy, particularly in the foundation and middle phases of elementary school is symbiotic. This is the case because language and literacy are reliant on each other, as literacy skills are embedded in language and the latter is the base upon which the literacy skills of speaking, reading and writing are built (Sayed, 2018:169). In Australia, Ellis *et al.* (2011:33) found that it was important for teachers to know about both the development of language and literacy when teaching learners who were learning English while also learning via English. This is largely because language is the foundation of all the different types of literacies, such as reading and writing, numeracy, technology, finance, health, culture and others. All these literacies are dependant on spoken and written language, and it can prove difficult for a learner to develop them without the basic language. Hence, when teaching literacy skills in the foundation phase, teachers should not lose sight of language, as, without the latter, it would be difficult to learn the skills of reading for comprehension and writing meaningfully, thus, learners have to grasp the language and be grounded in it. Therefore, learning the language in the foundation phase is vital as research indicates that learners who are not grounded in language fail to comprehend what they learn (Evans & Mendez Acosta, 2020; Macdonald, 2002).

Additionally, there is debate on the place of grammar in a language curriculum, particularly in the foundation phase of primary school (Ellis *et al.*, 2011). For these authors, teaching grammar in primary school is not supposed to rest “in crude applications of prescriptive rules to correct children’s writing but in opening up possibilities, patterns and ways of meaning-making” (Ellis *et al.*, 2011:86).

Figure 2.1 below shows the interdependent relationship between language and literacy.

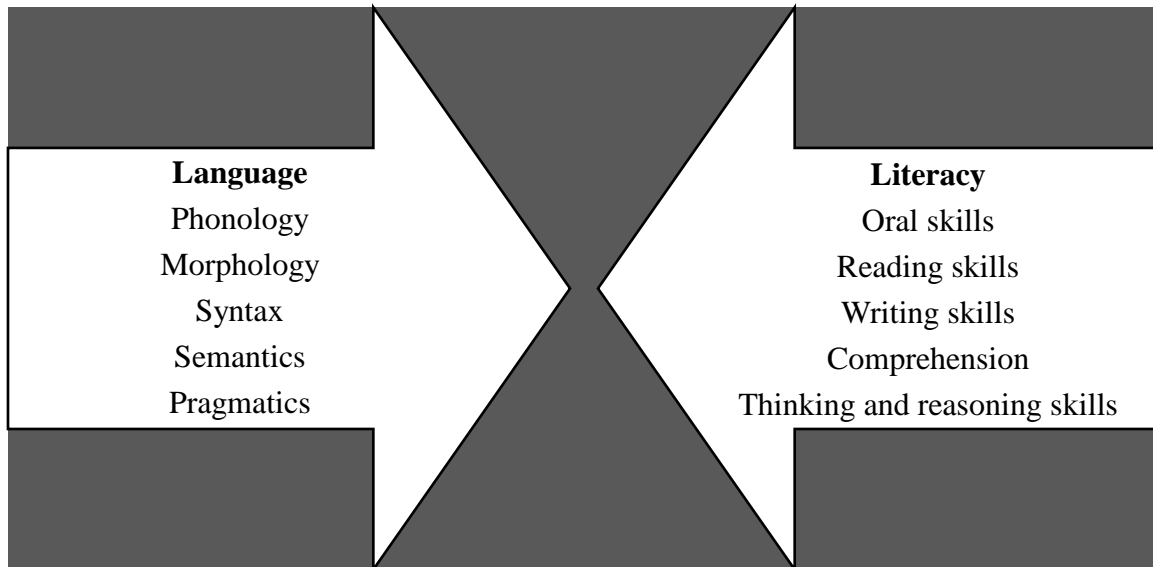


Figure 2.1: Diagram showing the symbiotic relationship between language and literacy

The reality is, all the aspects of language are meaningless if they are learnt in isolation. Nonetheless, there is an interrelationship between learning how to speak a language and learning how to use it in reading and writing. Furthermore, teachers need to have the awareness that all these different aspects of language are embedded in listening, speaking, reading, phonics, fluency, comprehension and writing, which are the foundations of a literacy programme in the foundation and middle phases of primary school. Therefore, teaching the L1 or L2 in the foundation phase calls for language to be taught through literacy, as the knowledge of language and speaking, reading and writing are interrelated.

The next section of this report provides a brief discussion of the different forms of language content areas that teachers should know to teach language in the foundation and middle phases. Traditionally, the four core skills that are taught in language and literacy are listening, speaking, reading and writing, which are accompanied by other sub-skills. Even though these skills are different, they are intertwined because a learner needs one to acquire the other. I provide what each skill entails and why it is important to be taught to young learners.

2.3.1.1 Oral language - listening and speaking

Oral language is made up of listening and speaking. These two language skills are more related and hardly possible to teach in isolation - hence I discussed them together. The two

are interrelated in the sense that, although listening is the receptive skill in the oral mode, it is primarily for the acquisition of spoken language. Speaking occurs later in the language acquisition and learning cycle, which is why it is a productive skill in the oral mode. From the moment they are babies up until they start school, children gain knowledge through hearing people around them talk (Resnick & Snow, 2009a:3). One would then argue that there is no need to teach oral language in L1 class, as it comes naturally. However, this is false, as most of the activities in class are dependent on oral language, and it is used more than the other skills to collect information (Joubert, 2015:49). According to Resnick and Snow (2009a), learners must be taught their home language (HL) and master it, as listening and speaking form the basis for reading and writing. Teaching learners oral language makes children smarter, as by talking and collaborating, they develop problem-solving skills. This is the case because research evidence on the study of oral language shows that the two oral skills are the basis of a learner's academic, social and other life skills that will remain with them for the duration of their school life and the rest of their lives in the world as adults (Martin, Lovat & Purnell, 2007:24; Calhoun, 1999:54). Therefore, teachers have the responsibility of producing lifelong learners who will focus and listen in class and become skilled leaders of society that will be good listeners and good speakers, capable of resolving conflict and misunderstandings amicably.

In Australia, research by Williams (in Ellis *et al.* 2011:55), shows that some educators lack knowledge of the language components of phonology and syntax, and this impacts their teaching of both oral and written language negatively. That is why, according to Resnick and Snow (2009a:14), language teachers have to know the basic forms of language key to oral language learning, which are:

- *Phonology* - the sound patterns in language;
- *Morphology* - word formation;
- *Syntax* - sentence formation;
- *Semantics* - word meaning;
- *Pragmatics* - language usage.

Still, scholars, (Joubert, 2015:87; Wells & Haneda, 2009:143; Cullingford, 1998:67; Resnick & Snow, 2009a:164) assert that teachers can give learners a lot of activities to develop their oral language. Among these activities are the use of songs, storytelling, play, drama, language games and plenty of talk. According to Carr, Buchanan, Wentz, Weiss and Brant (2001:147), "a good story is a strong teaching tool". These authors' ideas augur well with

the Indian proverb which says, 'Tell me a fact and I will learn. Tell me the truth and I'll believe. But tell me a story, and it will live in my heart forever.' For Wells and Haneda (2009:143), dialogue in any form is an essential tool for learning a language by learners. This suggests that the more opportunities provided for learners to be involved in conversations, songs and play, the better they acquire skills of listening and speaking. Additionally, Joubert (2015:87) suggests that teachers should encourage learners to speak and listen to each other through class discussions, debates, interviews, and individual and group presentations on topics that are of interest to learners. That being said, teachers as facilitators have to engage with learners in rich talk, creating dialogic platforms where not only oral language is improved, but also their vocabulary and socially acceptable behaviour are instilled in learners. This includes the competency of not interrupting someone while they speak, responding politely and including everyone in a discussion.

2.3.1.2 Reading as a core language skill

Reading is an intricate skill and for it to be meaningful, learners need to be equipped with different strategies and techniques that will help them identify and recognise text, comprehend the meaning and be able to speak with the intended meaning. Literacy in a language is the key to learning and one can only learn when one can read. Reading is an important skill, as it is the key to the teaching and learning process. It is said that "the way we learn how to read also serves as a very potent analogy for learning generally" (Cullingford, 1998:49). This means reading as a receptive skill is of utmost importance, as it is the conduit through which a learner can get new knowledge which is in print format. Resnick and Snow (2009b:7) and Martin *et al.* (2007:45) define reading as the process or art of decoding or interpreting a written text or print for the ultimate purpose of understanding it. As a skill, it is interrelated to that of listening as both involve receiving input through language - hence reading is the receptive skill in the written mode (Joubert, 2015:102). Just as listening and speaking skills are important in learning, reading is a vital skill that needs to be taught to learners in a language literacy programme, "as learning to read is arguably the most important academic achievement of a child's life" (Resnick & Snow, 2009b:7). Specifically, this is because learners need to understand the written work in all subject areas.

Besides, several scholars, admit that learners who are skillful readers read more, and they are smarter, as new concepts and content they acquire form the base for new ideas (Calhoun, 1999:54; Resnick & Snow, 2009b:11). Through reading, learners acquire vocabulary, learn new words and their meanings, and how they are used and add plenty of

vocabulary to their lexicon (Resnick & Snow, 2009b:13). With plenty of vocabulary, the better they read and learn. Therefore, learners need to acquire the receptive skill of reading as early as the foundation phase, a stage where the skill and art of receiving input and understanding need to be cemented in learners so that they are successful in their academic journey.

Since the main objective of reading is to comprehend written text, elementary school teachers are expected to know about the interconnected reading competencies that learners need to acquire. According to Joubert (2015), Resnick and Snow (2009b) and Cullingford (1998), these include:

- **Accuracy** - the art of identifying words correctly at first sight without assistance. For example, a learner is said to be an accurate reader if at first glance s/he sees the combination of the letters [u-m-f-u-l-a] on a chalkboard and reads it as [umfula] 'river', instead of [umfana] 'boy' or [umfino] 'vegetable'. Therefore, it is important to develop the art of reading accurately among learners, as it reflects mastery of the written text and the meaning carried by that print.
- **Fluency** - the art of reading out with the right intonation and pitch of the language, showing that one comprehends the meaning of what is read and making rare pauses to decipher a word and structure of the sentences. Fluency and accuracy are interrelated in the sense that one can never be a fluent reader if they are not accurate. Teaching learners to be fluent readers requires teachers to equip them with the knowledge of rules of sentence formation and structural features, like punctuation (commas, full stops, quotation marks, colon, semi-colon, dashes) and other marks that can cue learners to pause, lower or increase their voice or read in another voice.
- **Vocabulary** - is the knowledge of words and their meaning in both receptive and productive forms and in both oral and written forms. It is essential for understanding text and a predictor of text difficulty.
- **Self-correcting and self-monitoring strategies** - the ability of learners to use self-monitoring or metacognitive strategies where learners monitor themselves if they are reading with understanding and self-correct instead of reading the whole text without comprehension.
- **Comprehension** - it is the ultimate goal of reading. It is reading to understand a written text to get the essence of meaning, thus interpreting a text, drawing comparisons and inferences and relating it to other views.

As a language educator, I believe that teacher knowledge of the above components of reading is primary because it guides the teacher regarding why s/he teaches reading, and the different competencies learners should acquire to be competent readers. However, research shows that teachers struggle with teaching reading for comprehension. For instance, Mzila (2016:66) found that language teachers taught reading without purpose and did not use the establish, maintain and consolidate recurring strategy, the appropriate strategy for teaching reading comprehension, as it involves meaning construction, retaining meaning and consolidating it.

Another component found by scholars to be important in the teaching and learning of reading is phonics (Joubert, 2015:109; Barone & Mallette, 2013:157; Martin *et al.*, 2007:45; Muijs & Reynolds, 2005:203; Weitzman & Greenberg, 2002:327). These authors agree that phonics is the knowledge of the consistent relationship or correspondence between letters (graphemes or units of writing) and sounds (phonemes). It is the system where learners are taught the correspondence between sound and word, and it is centred on building a bank of known words and deriving new ones from them. The learning is methodical, and it is a bottom-up approach where the teacher teaches learners a sequence of prepared phonic segments and sounds learnt in context rather than isolation. For example, learners can be taught to turn graphemes into phonemes and combine the phonemes to create new words (Muijs & Reynolds, 2005:203). For example, from the grapheme [-at], a letter prefixed to it can form new words, such as [*bat, cat, fat, hat, mat, pat, saf*] and others. Likewise, there is research evidence suggesting that the phonic method is widely used by teachers in teaching reading in the foundation phase (Dlamini, 2018:174; Mkhwanazi, 2014:131; Nkosi, 2011:171). For example, a study by Nkosi (2011:171) on the pedagogy of teaching reading in selected foundation phase isiZulu HL classes in South Africa found that the phonic method was a common method used by teachers to teach reading.

Additionally, foundation phase teachers also need to know phonological awareness and phonemic awareness, key concepts which are central to phonics instruction. The former pertains to the awareness that words are a product of an assortment of verbal communication, such as sounds, syllables, stretches of words of the same sound, rhymes and alliteration, and the latter is a subset of phonological awareness, and relates to the awareness that sounds (phonemes) form words, that is, recognising and consciously reflecting on the sounds that construct words (Joubert, 2015:244; Barone & Mallette, 2013:157; Martin *et al.*, 2007:45). For these authors, phonological awareness is a precursor for reading, thus, teachers should know that learning to read directly or indirectly moves

from phonological awareness to phonemic awareness. This is because learners develop the two (phonological awareness and phonemic awareness) long before they start school where they chant some melodies and poems and end up constructing their rhymes.

Based on the foregoing, foundation phase teachers ought to be aware that explicit teaching of reading solely through phonics is not enough, but phonics should be a part of a whole consisting of printed texts, phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, morphology and fluency (Lindsey, Kuehl & Mesmer, 2020). In this way, the teaching of reading will not only be introduced step-by-step to the learners by linking the auditory and graphic, but it will focus on the phonological structure of words that are spoken, the meaning attributed to them and sentence formation (Joubert, 2015:243; Barone & Mallette, 2013:157). This is in line with research by Elhassen, Crewther and Bavin (2017:6) who found that the development of reading in the foundation years was not solely dependent on phonological awareness but other processes such as elision. Thus, teachers must find out the degree of the phonological and phonemic awareness of their learners, as the former is said to occur in a linear fashion, which is chronological, beginning with larger language units, like words and syllables followed by smaller units, such as rhymes. Although beginning learners might know the art of forming their rhymes, they do not know the rhyme, sounds and words in the context. This is the very essence of phonics instruction, which is introducing reading to learners step-by-step, sound-by-sound and letter-by-letter.

Despite the many debates surrounding the age of teaching phonics, the best method for teaching (Martin *et al.* 2007:46) and the limitations phonics instruction has on learners, such as reducing reading speed and the focus on mechanical reading (Joubert, 2015:111), one cannot ignore its advantages, particularly in the foundation phase. Its positives are that sounds are learnt gradually, and it is a vehicle through which learners can sound the word, and understand it, but most importantly learners taught through this method usually write correct spelling (Joubert, 2015:111). However, the issue of focusing on too much spelling is challenged by authors who contend that focusing on teaching single words without context can be counterproductive (Smyth, 2002; Martin *et al.*, 2007; Joubert, 2015). For Smyth (2002:60), phonics instruction can be productive when it is used in conjunction with the whole text approach, which equips learners with different aspects of writing, including spelling, punctuation, paragraphing and others.

Likewise, my experience as an educator is that no single method of teaching is perfect, and there is no fixed formula for teaching. Teachers are different and so are learners. Phonics

instruction might work with one teacher and his/her learners but might not work with another group. The same is true with the whole language approach, which claims that learners learn written language through communicative and authentic activities (Muijs & Reynolds, 2005:204). The implication for teachers is to understand the nature of their learners and the context under which they work as the two influence their practice. For the sociocultural theory, language learning is a social construct, thus Vygotsky (1978:118) advised that reading should be contextualised to the learners' environment. This means teachers should let learners read about subjects they know to make reading meaningful. The best way to approach the teaching of reading is to employ integrative approaches like the balanced approach which provides a bridge between the phonics and whole language approaches and attempts to bring out the best of each. Also, Mngomezulu (2014:76) found that teachers did not use integrative approaches when teaching language, as they avoided learner-centred approaches. It is said that teachers used text-based approaches and relied on the question-and-answer method which they confused with the communicative teaching methods.

2.3.1.3 Writing as a core language skill

Resnick and Snow (2009b:16) and Martin *et al.* (2007:45) define writing as the art of communication via written language. It is encoding or using letters to write text. It is a productive skill in the written mode. Joubert (2015), Ellis *et al.* (2011) and Calhoun (1999) agree that writing is one of the trickiest and most challenging skills for both young and adult learners. This is the case “because it requires mastery of two contrasting skills: a creative skill and a critical skill” (Ellis *et al.*, 2011:85). Writing is not like the oral language, which is acquired and learnt through social interaction and inborn abilities, but it is a skill that needs individual instruction. For Calhoun (1999:54), young learners need to be taught writing so that early in life, they acquire skills of sourcing information through observations and reading and organising it into coherent ideas, as indicated in Figure 2.2 below. These are skills that will put them at an advantage at school and as working adults. In light of the foregoing view, Ellis *et al.* (2011:89) contend that there is a need for teachers to teach writing explicitly, starting from pencil handling to writing a coherent essay.

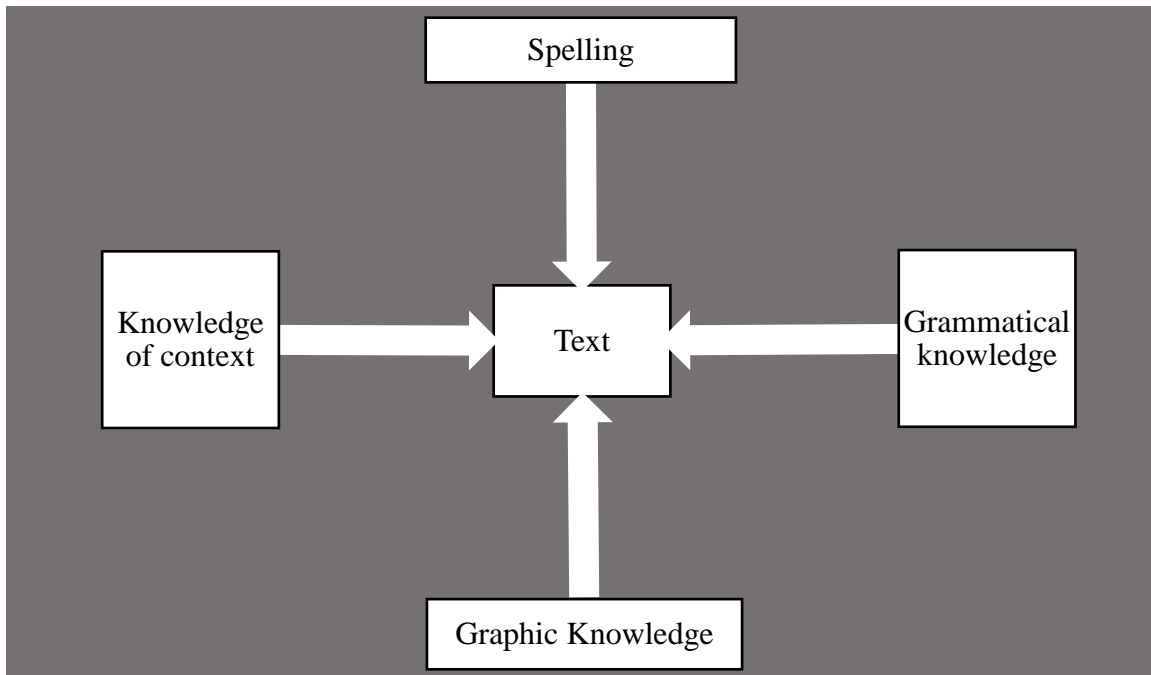


Figure 2.2: A summary of the writing process: Adapted from Martin *et al.* (2007:22)

As shown in Figure 2.2, teachers need to have the knowledge that writing requires learners to make meaningful language constructions (text) through a holistic manipulation of oral and reading skills, as shown in the diagram. Writing requires learners to master the skill of combining handwriting, which is graphic knowledge with spelling and sentence formation and knowledge of context to produce meaningful text. The issue of making writing realistic to learners means that when preparing and designing the input, teachers of language should challenge their learners, and the best way to do so is by using items available in the learners' environment.

This applies to both L1 and L2 learners. Vygotsky (1978:118) addressed the issue of writing in the language classroom and advised teachers to create a conducive environment that will ensure that instruction is organised in such a way that writing is meaningful to foundation phase learners, and it is taught in a naturalistic way, with teacher pedagogical practices involving tasks that are relevant and appropriate to the environment of the learner. This view is in line with Milner (2017:88), who observed that when teachers mostly function from a de-contextualised cultural experience of teaching, the teaching and learning exercise can seem unfamiliar to learners who are from a different cultural background of the teacher.

Thus, learners are motivated to engage in writing activities when they are made to write about a subject familiar and an idea appealing to them. Lam and Law (2007:146) argue

that children are motivated and challenged to write a task they expect success from and a task that is of value to them. Therefore, the implication for foundation and middle phase teachers is to give learners writing tasks that are of real-life significance to the learners, as shown in Figure 2.3 below.

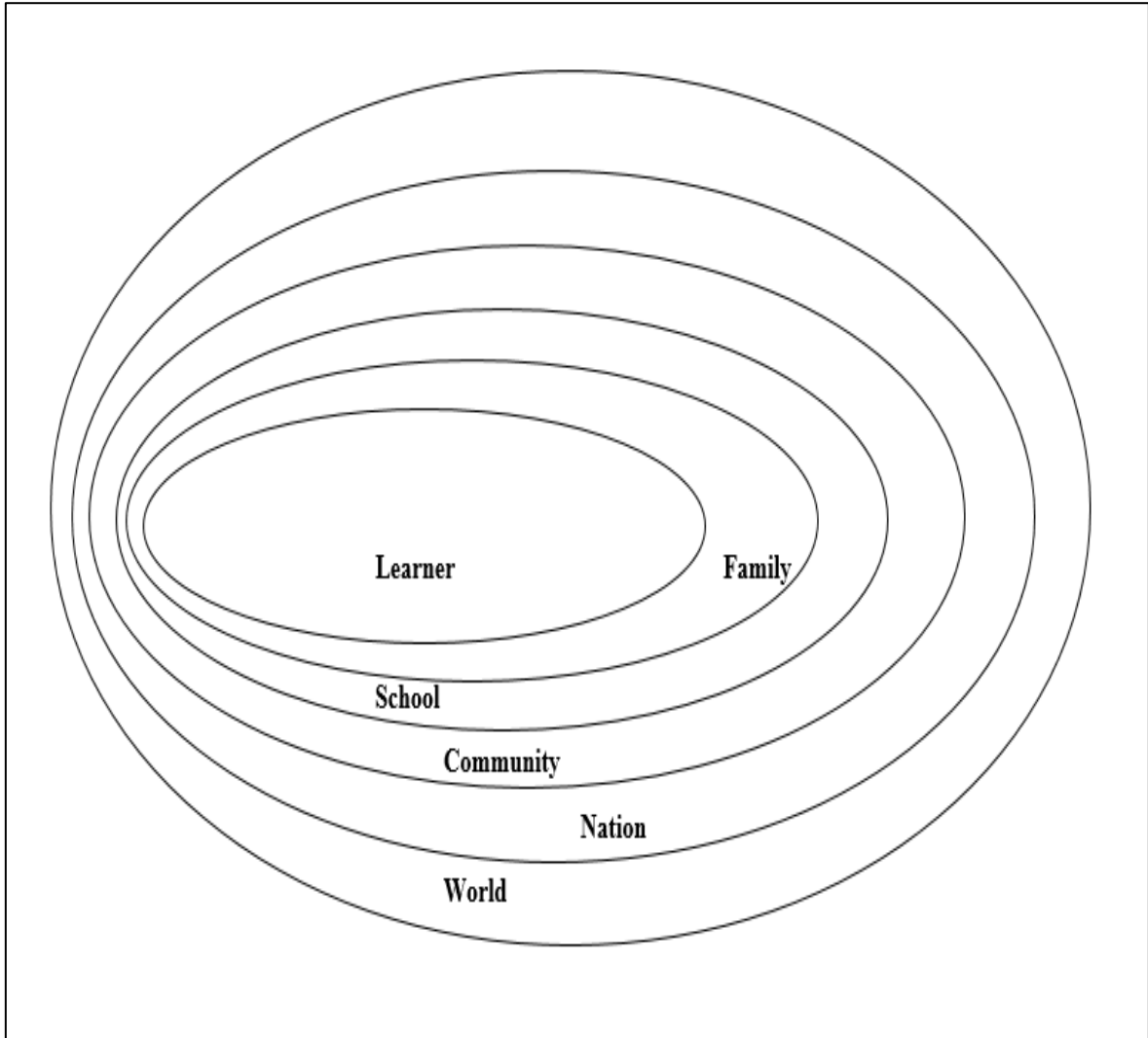


Figure 2.3: Circle of writing ideas as depicted by Moore-Hart (2010:6)

As shown in Figure 2.3, teachers can make teaching writing realistic and relational by ensuring that all the ideas the learner writes about are from his/her context or environment. The circle of ideas the learner writes about should begin with the immediate family, the people s/he lives with, followed by the school where learners spend most of their educational lives and learn to socialise with people other than family members. With careful monitoring and support from the teacher as facilitator, the learner can grow to write about issues in his/her community, nation and the world at large. When writing is approached from

this perspective, learners can grow up to be skilful writers who are passionate about it. Milner (2012:701) asserts that sometimes in class, learners and teachers might not work towards achieving the same goal because of the latter's inability to making learning relational to children. Thus, a language teacher needs to design an input that relates to learners' lived experiences instead of an abstract input. Findings by Lam and Law (2007:158) showed that motivated learners' writing performance was better and such motivation was a result of teachers' instructional practices that provided challenging tasks, ensured that learners wrote their compositions based on real-life situations, and teachers recognised learners' work by providing valuable feedback. Thus, teacher knowledge of contextualising any form of language content is beneficial to foundation phase learners, as it arouses their curiosity, and prepares them to be independent writers in the future who will not be scared to explore any subject area.

2.3.2 Pedagogical content knowledge

The other knowledge and understanding that language teachers should have to effectively teach language is pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). As early as the 1980s, Shulman (1987:93) observed that as much as knowledge of content is integral for effective teaching, a teacher may not be effective in his/her practice if s/he lacks the methods and strategies of relaying that content to the learner. Some authors called this kind of knowledge pedagogic knowledge (PK), which includes not only the methods and strategies for teaching but also the understanding of the learners, how they learn, the tools of learning and the context where learning occurs (Leach & Moon, 2008; Shulman, 1986; Shulman, 1987; Grossman, 1990). For these authors, a teacher cannot be effective if s/he possesses CK alone, but effective teachers should possess both subject matter and pedagogic knowledge. Understanding and connecting subject matter and pedagogic knowledge are what Shulman (1986:9) and Shulman (1987:93) termed pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). For Shulman (1987:127), PCK is combining subject knowledge and methods and strategies into an in-depth understanding of how topics, problems and questions are arranged and grouped or adapted to the various interests and abilities of learners for teaching. Therefore, some authors agree with Shulman that effective teaching can be possible when the teacher knows the subject content, the learners, the context and the command and an understanding of the variety of teaching methods and strategies and tools to make the subject matter accessible to learners in that particular context (Webster & Ryan, 2018; Leach & Moon, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2005; Grossman, 1990).

With regards to teaching language, this implies that teachers should not only possess an in-depth knowledge of the linguistic content but also hold diverse methodologies to teach language to foundation and middle phase learners. According to Brown (2007), teachers who are to implement a language curriculum should possess methods and strategies of teaching the language curriculum: knowledge being an all-inclusive and prearranged assemblage of classroom requirements to accomplish language objectives and techniques being wide-ranging tasks and activities to attain goals. The literature indicates that a lack of PCK by the teacher can be detrimental to learners. Some researchers found that teachers lacked PCK when teaching language (Mngomezulu, 2014:73; Mcaba, 2014:74). Mcaba (2014:74) claimed that teachers lacked PCK in English first additional language and isiZulu HL in South Africa, as most did not use the pedagogical practices advocated for teaching the two language subjects. These teachers also did not identify reading errors in both English and isiZulu, despite most of them being L1 speakers of isiZulu. Similarly, Mngomezulu (2014:73) observed that teachers had a confined and superficial knowledge of isiZulu content, thus, they focused on teaching grammar and taught the latter in isolation. This implies that there is a strong correlation between teacher knowledge of linguistic content and the pedagogy to relay that content to learners, and if any of the two is lacking, the linguistic experiences provided to learners can be wanting. Furthermore, the literature shows a gap between teacher content knowledge and pedagogic knowledge (Schaffler, Nel & Booysen, 2021; De Vos, Van der Merwe & Van der Mescht, 2014; Schaffler, 2015). For example, Schaffler (2015:563) found that teachers lacked knowledge of phonological awareness and the appropriate pedagogy to teach the content to foundation phase learners. This was a consequence of inadequate training and the teacher's lack of proficiency in English.

Likewise, it appears that the development of PCK is also a result of teachers' experiences and training. Burns (2018:1250) contended that foundation phase learners can be provided quality education by teachers who have specialised training in ECE and have PCK to provide lifelong learning experiences. According to Cruickshank, Jenkins and Metcalf (2006:8), how a teacher was taught, the way they prefer to learn, and the way they desire to teach may influence their knowledge of PCK and the choice of pedagogical practices. It appears that a misalignment in teacher training and the actual practice of teachers in the field can cause teachers to choose a pedagogical practice that will not benefit learners in the language classroom. For example, Nkosi (2011:171) found that teachers' beliefs, pieces of training, experiences and preferences influenced their choice and implementation of pedagogy when teaching isiZulu reading in the foundation phase. Some of the determinants

for pedagogy were contrary to curriculum requirements. Similarly, Sichula (2018:151) found that training and personal preferences were some of the determinants of teacher pedagogical practices in adult literacy learning in Zambia. Nomlomo (2013:214) argued that if there is a misalignment in theories informing the training of HL teachers in South Africa and the real teaching in schools, the teaching of AHLs will remain poor. In a study on pre-service teachers' training experiences in isiXhosa, Nomlomo (2013) found that there were misalignments between pre-service teachers' training and the actual practice in schools. For instance, teachers espoused that they had more challenges than positive experiences, as they were mostly prepared on how to control their classrooms rather than on how to teach isiXhosa. The implication for teacher preparatory institutions is that the training of HL teachers should be in line with the practice in schools where teachers have to apply the knowledge they acquired in institutions of higher learning. Besides, teachers also find challenges relating to professional development during practice. Mngomezulu (2014:74) found that isiZulu teachers were dissatisfied with the quality of in-service training they received from government officials, as the workshops were usually short and unsatisfactory.

2.3.3 Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge

In section 2.3, we saw that Leach and Moon (2008:115) contended that an understanding of pedagogy should not only include the knowledge of tools designed for humans to understand the world, but also the technologies developed to help them better understand the world they live in. This suggests that teacher knowledge of PCK is insufficient nowadays where technology has become part of 21st century daily life. According to Martin *et al.* (2007:6), society has advanced into a biotechnology stage where almost everything is a mouse click away, and education systems have to adapt to the new technological advancements and requirements. This is because technology continues to advance swiftly without any indicators of deceleration. The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic appears to have propounded the situation and forced all areas of societal function to use technology to avoid physical contact, which is the main way through which the virus spreads. Education has not been spared, as the entire globe has been forced to incorporate blended learning, comprising calculated face-to-face teaching and learning time and virtual teaching and learning.

Moreover, long before COVID, scholars had written about the importance of integrating information technology across all subject curricula, including the teaching and learning of language. As early as the beginning of the 21st century, Mishra and Koehler (2006) founded the TPACK framework by expanding on Shulman's (1986) CK and PK to come up with three

kinds of knowledge a teacher should have for effective practice. TPACK, the acronym for technological, pedagogical and content knowledge, is a framework that explains how expert teachers can integrate technological tools with content and pedagogical knowledge for effective teaching. These authors added technological knowledge (TK) to CK and PK as part of the package of knowledge a teacher should possess to carry out effective practice in response to the many educational challenges teachers face today. In the case of the teaching of SL1, this implies that the teacher should possess the technological, linguistic and methodological expertise to teach the language to foundation and middle phase learners.

Figure 2.4 shows the TPACK framework which is the final product and an amalgamation of the three main types of knowledge that a teacher should possess, which are TK, PK and CK. These three are merged and re-merged in several ways within the TPACK framework to show an overlapping relationship within the framework's six components. As earlier mentioned in Sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2, CK and PK respectively describe teacher knowledge of the subject area, and knowledge of the methods and instructional practices and strategies to communicate that content to learners. PCK describes teachers' abilities to integrate both CK and PK for an effective teacher. TK thus describes a teacher's knowledge and abilities to utilise diverse technological tools for effective teaching. Technological content knowledge (TCK) describes how a teacher's understanding of technology can influence subject matter knowledge and how content can be relayed to learners through diverse technological tools.

For instance, the curriculum content for SL1 for the foundation up to the middle phase requires the development of oral and written language (EMoET, 2018a:14), and to develop these skills, learners can use a wide range of technological tools such as radios, YouTube, computers and many more, hence integrating subject matter with technology. This is in line with Moore-Hart (2010:31) who suggested that foundation phase and practically all groups of learners can learn new words by the use of word processing tools of technology as the kinesthetic, tactile keyboard often helps them to learn the names of letters and their sounds more easily. Thus, technology is good for teaching oral and written language and appears to simplify writing, as learners simply press the button, instead of the traditional way of writing, which takes ages with learners trying to master pencil handling and writing within the page margins and handwriting. Furthermore, although handwriting is strenuous for beginning learners, Medwell, Strand and Wray (2009:341) found that some educators believed that it was a fundamental aspect of language literacy as it is not only an art, but it is also instrumental for teaching neatness in learners.

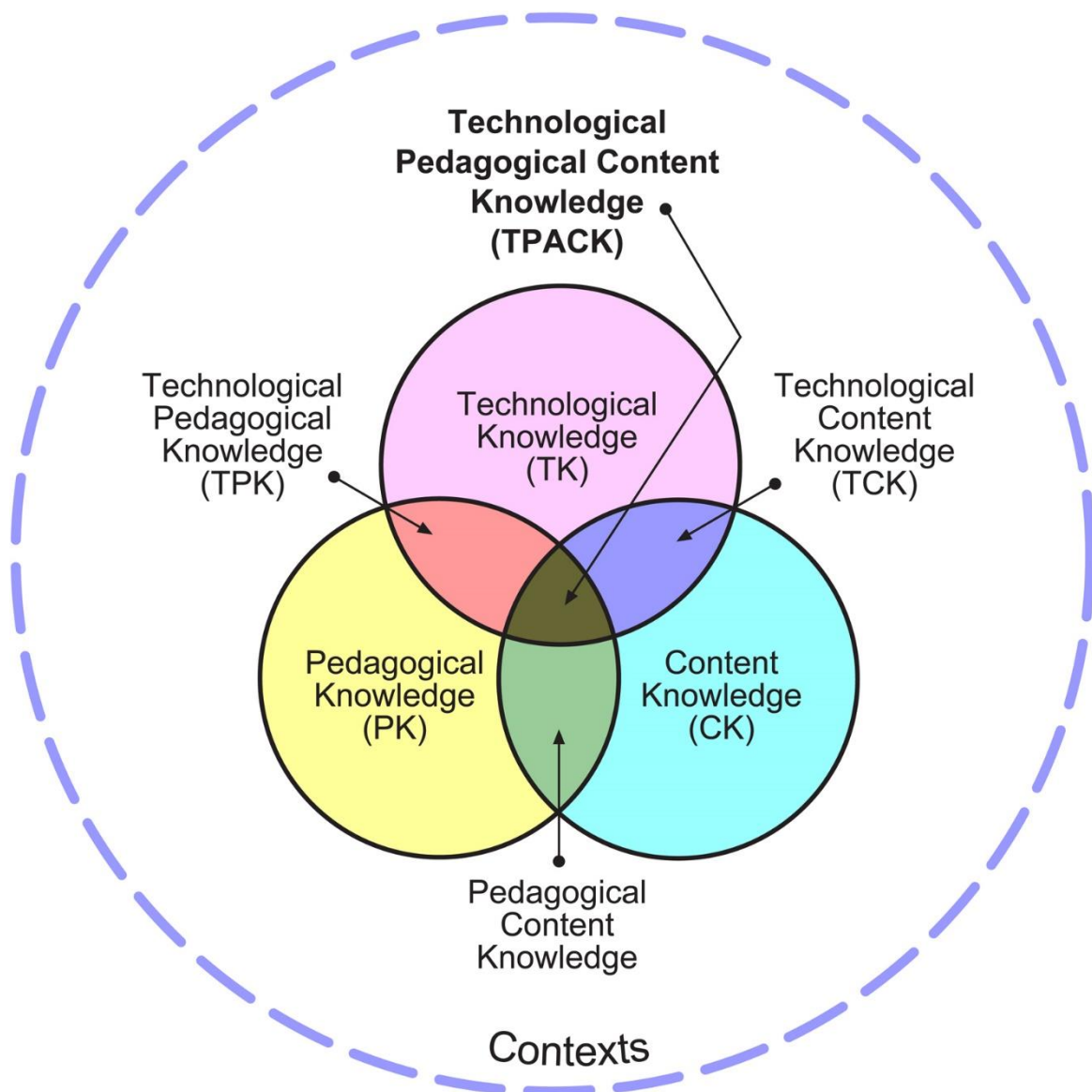


Figure 2.4: The TPACK framework, Mishra and Koehler (2006). Image sourced from educationaltechnology.net

The final component of the framework, which is technological pedagogical knowledge (TPK), describes teachers' understanding of how diverse pedagogies can be used alongside various technological tools in the classroom. It also stresses the importance of utilising available tools for particular pedagogies, including digital tools such as PowerPoint, and e-learning platforms like Zoom, Edmodo and others, and non-digital tools, such as traditional charts, bulletin boards and chalkboards.

Also, as earlier stated in the discussion, scholars asserted that the knowledge of pedagogy should also include the understanding of tools and technologies developed to understand the world we live in (Mishra & Koehler, 2006; Leach & Moon, 2008). This suggests that the application of any technology in a language classroom requires an understanding, and acknowledgment of the changing relationship between subject matter, pedagogy and the ever-evolving technology in relation to the environment of the cultures, school and classrooms. This also suggests that language teachers' knowledge of technology must be up-to-date and be able to integrate technology, content and pedagogy, considering the number and nature of learners in their classrooms and the culture of the society they work in. For Ndebele (2018:93), the best way through which AHLs may be developed and be at par with languages of European descent is by providing the knowledge which is contained in English and other languages through the internet and the use of software tools. Earlier, Hannaway and Steyn (2017:11) noted that foundation phase teachers saw the importance of integrating technology in teaching-learning, as it has the benefit of impacting CK and pedagogy. Therefore, it is clear that the integration of technology in the L1 and L2 classrooms requires societies, that is to say, the schools and their teachers, homes and the learners to have sufficient technological devices, electricity and access to the internet.

However, the issue of understanding teaching and learning resources starts with the availability of these resources, and a teacher or learner cannot master any resource if there is none. It appears the integration of technology in education may favour developed countries where schools, classrooms, homes and learners have technological gadgets. Seemingly, it is a challenge to developing countries like Eswatini where schools lack basic resources like reading textbooks, and only a handful of schools have computers which are not enough for all learners. For instance, Martin *et al.* (2007:7) stated that primary schools across the United Kingdom have projectors and installed digital whiteboards used daily in language literacy lessons. It is also said that learners in that country have access to computers at school, and examples of their work are uploaded on the internet. This augurs well with language learning, as the writing of teachers and learners is saved and returned to them, and corrections are made by simply editing the initial document, and learners have access to all kinds of literature they can use to improve oral and written language skills.

Additionally, in poor countries, this is a different story. In developing countries, the integration of technology into language teaching is still a challenge, as Cruickshank *et al.* (2006:13) observed that in most African countries, Asia and South America where poverty still abounds, schools lack basic teaching and learning resources, such as textbooks, desks,

computers and televisions. They also report that these schools have insufficient human resources in the form of trained teachers, as opposed to developed countries of the West where schools have all these resources. The unavailability of teaching and learning resources then influences teachers to use expository pedagogy, as the teacher becomes the only source of information. Some researchers showed that AHLs teachers use traditional teacher-centred methods of teaching, and the lessons are characterised by drilling learners through rote learning and inactive classroom activities (Mkhwanazi, 2014:156; Mcaba, 2014:59; Stroud, 2003:18; Nomlomo, 2013:212). This is particularly because teachers lack the resources to facilitate the teaching and learning process. Mcaba (2014:59) and Nkosi (2011:298) found that a lack of reading resources resulted in a lack of language acquisition among learners. Another notable finding by Nomlomo (2013:212) was that AHLs teachers know learner-centred methods, but the scarcity of teaching and learning material forces them to employ teacher-centred strategies such as giving learners notes. Moreover, Mkhwanazi (2014:156) found that teachers did not have diverse reading material to teach siSwati reading to Grade 3 learners in the Mpumalanga province of South Africa.

From the literature, it appears that if the environment where the teacher teaches lacks the teaching and learning resources, these circumstances can force the teacher to choose a shortcut and employ a method that will be convenient in that particular situation, regardless of the consequences of using that pedagogical practice to the learner. Such a teacher may appear to lack TPACK, yet it is the environment surrounding his/her circumstances. This suggests that the availability of teaching and learning resources may facilitate the learning of a language and their unavailability can do the opposite. It can be thus said that the availability and unavailability of resources influence teachers' choices of pedagogical practices.

2.3.4 Pedagogical approaches to language teaching and learning

The topic of pedagogical approaches to language teaching is one of the most dynamic areas in educational research today. Over the years, pedagogical approaches to language teaching have evolved in many ways, starting from the traditional teacher-centred pedagogy to progressive learner-centred pedagogies. According to Webster and Ryan (2018), pedagogical practices used by teachers in their classrooms are derived from approaches and teaching methods. For Dewey (2018:175), these are methods that facilitate the acquisition of subject content so that it is stored in one's mental processes. Below is a discussion of some of the approaches and instructional methods used by teachers in their language classrooms.

2.3.4.1 Expository pedagogy

An expository approach is a form of transmissive pedagogy. As the name suggests, the teacher exposes or transmits new knowledge to the learners. Some authors asserted that expository pedagogy is founded on the assumption that there are vast subject matters, values and skills that a learner has to learn, hence such knowledge has to be passed by the knower to the person who lacks it, the learner (de Sousa, Loizou & Fochi, 2019:299; Dlamini, 2018:101 & Rogers, 2009:3). It is a traditional approach that is teacher-centred, as it embodies a deductive methodology to teaching and learning, since the teacher commands the instructional process by introducing a concept to learners, explaining it and asking the learners to exercise using it. It follows a ritualist routine where learners, listen, read, answer, write and discuss, as instructed by the teacher (Dlamini, 2018:99). Thus, the role of the teacher is that of the custodian of knowledge, source of information, guiding the teaching and learning process and deciding what is to be learnt. On the other hand, the learner is a passive recipient who is expected to follow the instructions of the teacher and meet all his/her requirements.

Furthermore, the teacher sometimes uses demonstration or modelling to explain a particular concept or to show how something is done. For some authors, language teachers have to model both oral and written language by respectively demonstrating good listening, speaking, reading and writing, as learners learn best by imitating models (Bokas, 2016:29; Joubert, 2015:95; Resnick & Snow, 2009a:139; Cullingford, 1998:20; Good & Brophy, 1984:134). Thus, modelling can be used both as an expository or discovery approach. Other authors stated that teachers can do the following when conducting demonstrations (Muijs & Reynolds, 2005:63; Good & Brophy, 1984:140):

- Ensure that learners are attentive;
- Provide an overview of what they will do (processes) and what learners should expect;
- Label objects clearly and ask learners to read them until they understand them;
- Show the main steps to be followed;
- Slowly demonstrate the procedure to the whole class, pausing now and then to check if they are following, and;
- Finally, ask the learners to do the task, and observe to check whether they got it right or wrong and give prompt corrective feedback.

Moreover, some language teaching methods that fall under expository pedagogy are grammar-translation, audio-lingual and direct methods. These methods are viewed as traditional and teacher-centred, as the teacher controls the instructional process. They do not encourage much meaningful communication, as the focus is on grammar rules and teaching language structure and rules in a decontextualised manner. In these methods, most lessons are characterised by heavy drilling; the learner repeatedly mimics a dialogue until they memorise it (Ponniah, 2010:16; Celce-Murcia, 2001:4; Krashen, 1982:135). Such methods are ineffective in ensuring learners acquire the language, as learners are forced to produce language early. Yet, early language production does not promote acquisition but only makes learners know the rules of the language (Krashen, 1982:131). This suggests that extensive use of the grammar-translation, audio-lingual and direct methods can frustrate young learners, particularly those learning a second language, as they may be forced to produce language early. Yet productive skills are acquired later than receptive skills. Figure 2.5 below is a visual illustration of expository pedagogy.

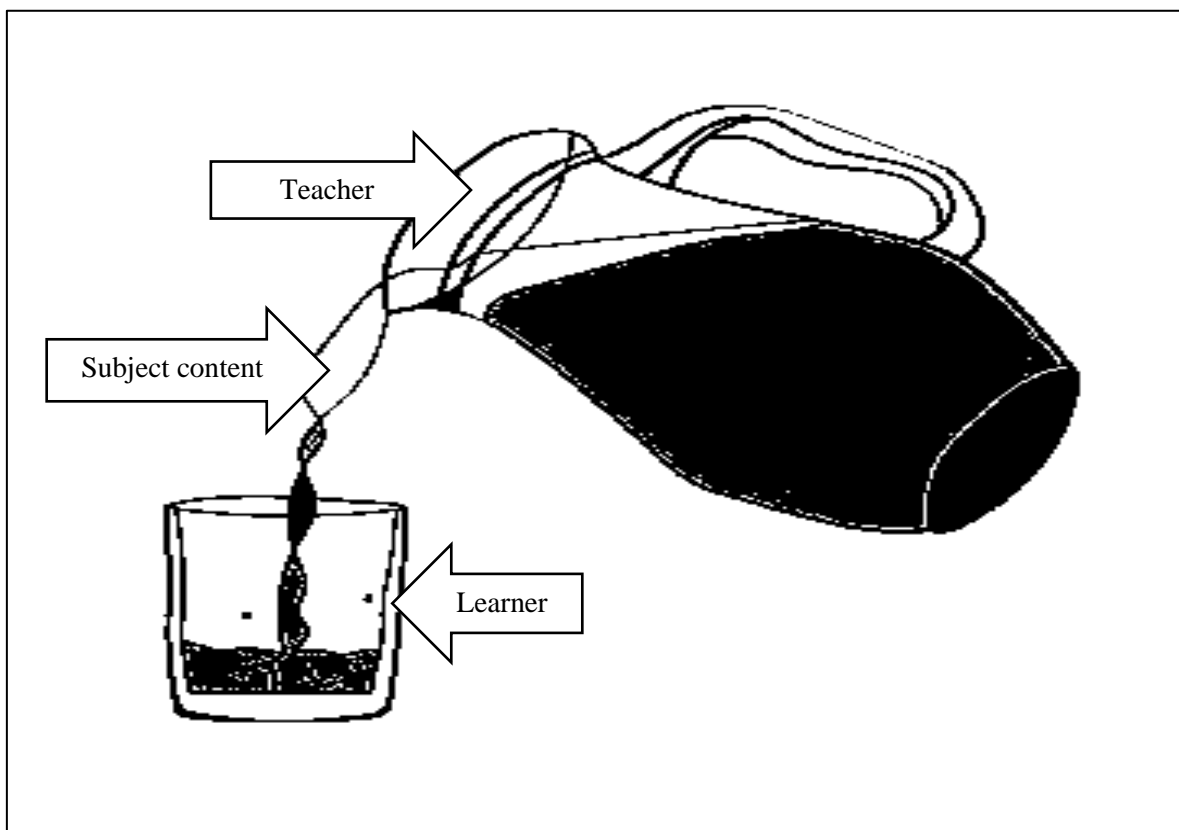


Figure 2.5: An illustration of the expository or jug and mug approach: image sourced from pngtree.com

From Figure 2.5, the jug and mug metaphor indicates the one-sided relationship between the teacher and the learner in the language class where the teacher is presumably the

master of knowledge and the learners are blank slates. In this regard, the learners are assumed to come to class empty, lacking linguistic knowledge, and the teacher gradually fills them up with information. This is the very downside of expository pedagogy, as there is research evidence (Ponniah, 2010:14; Muijs & Reynolds, 2005:64; Barone & Mallette, 2013:56) that learners come to class having a considerable amount of knowledge. This is very true, as almost all learners begin school having acquired the oral language of their L1. Although limited, the teacher can use that prior knowledge to facilitate learners' acquisition of the target language.

Furthermore, expository pedagogy has been criticised for its failure to create a balance in the teaching-learning process, and for making the learner a passive recipient of information that is already there. Despite many limitations of this approach, research indicated that expository pedagogy is widely used by teachers in teaching AHLs, even though it is teacher-centred (Mkhwanazi, 2014; Stroud, 2003; Nomlomo, 2013; Murray, 2009; Mcaba, 2014). Moreover, teaching language forms in isolation without paying any consideration to meaning and decontextualising content makes the teaching and learning process mechanical, and does not support the acquisition of language. In an ideal situation, this should not be happening in L1 or L2 classrooms, particularly in the foundation phase where learning language is anchored in sociocultural and participatory pedagogies, like the use of group work, play, storytelling, and role-play. That being said, expository methods can be effective if they are not used in isolation, but when they are integrated with other approaches like the ones mentioned in the preceding sentence. For instance, modelling the right way to listen, speak, read and write is a good practice a teacher can do for her/his learners, that is, if the demonstration or modelling is integrated with sociocultural approaches. Furthermore, Feryok (2013:217) observed that teachers frequently modelled speaking in their language classrooms and the rationale for that was that they wanted their learners to copy the right way of speaking from them.

2.3.4.2 Discovery pedagogy

Discovery pedagogy is an enquiry-based approach to teaching that is the total opposite of expository pedagogy where the teacher is viewed as a provider of information. It is based on the assumption that learners learn best when they are empowered to be self-directed and critical thinkers who solve problems, thus, learners gain knowledge when they construct it rather than receiving it from the teacher. Some authors stated that discovery pedagogy promotes active and independent learning, as learners are encouraged to ask questions and come up with solutions to these problems (Ilmu, 2016:293; Dlamini, 2018:110; Svinicki,

1998:5). It is a learner-centred method of teaching language which requires learners to be active participants who demonstrate creativity by finding out for themselves by asking questions and finding answers to those questions. Thus, the role of the teacher is that of guiding, stimulating and facilitating learning among learners by challenging them to identify questions or problems and making sure that they do not deviate from what is to be learnt. According to Dlamini (2018:109), discovery learning is made possible when teachers provide an environment that promotes exploration, such as a psychologically supportive environment that promotes good interpersonal relations and autonomous habits and allows learners to be free to explore. It is believed that it is an effective method of teaching language as through individual successful discovery of knowledge, learning is made meaningful to learners and that knowledge is bound to last long as they were directly involved in its construction.

Discovery pedagogy appears to be an effective method of teaching and learning language, as it is anchored on the learner making discoveries and mistakes, and consequently learning the language on his/her own. However, this approach is rarely used by teachers in their language classrooms. According to Boulton and Cobb (2017:451), discovery pedagogy is usually evidenced through the use of corpora, which encourages learners to engage in independent discovery and individualised learning of language. However, even though discovery pedagogy appears to be an ideal approach to teaching and learning because it encourages learners to be self-directed and self-driven, and stimulates their critical thinking and problem-solving skills, it is hardly used in the teaching of AHLs mainly because most schools lack simple teaching and learning resources like textbooks and technological tools which are highly used with this approach (Mcaba, 2014; Nomlomo, 2013). Furthermore, corpus-based language learning through investigations in the context of most African primary schools remains largely unknown to most teachers. This is mainly because of its absence in teacher-preparation programmes, and teachers' lack of skills in handling technology, yet corpus-based language instruction requires technological skills to facilitate the teaching and learning of language (Ma, Tang & Lin, 2021; Boulton, 2017; Chambers, 2019).

2.3.4.3 Participatory pedagogy

Participatory pedagogy is rooted in the assumption that learners learn best when they are actively involved in their learning. The assumption in this approach is that when learners are active participants, they are empowered. For some authors (Leach & Moon, 2008:67; Waring & Evans, 2014:104), participatory pedagogy is premised on the principles of social

justice and ethics where the relationship between the teacher and the learner is that of mutual respect and working together and the teacher being the facilitator. The learner's life experiences are the foundation or base of acquiring new knowledge in this paradigm. Furthermore, learning is a collective endeavour. This is in line with findings by some authors who analysed ten studies conducted in a wide range of geographical, social and cultural contexts, including Brazil, Italy, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom (de Sousa *et al.*, 2019:300). These authors found that the common ideas central to participatory pedagogy were that teachers, learners and parents were the key educational players in this paradigm. They also found that collaboration or lack of it greatly impacted learners' academic achievements either positively or negatively.

According to Waring and Evans (2014:105), participatory pedagogy is characterised by inclusion, personalisation and individualised instruction that promote active learning. Thus, for Leach and Moon (2008:66), the classroom is viewed as a complex social setting where learning is constructed by the learners, teachers and other individuals through a wide range of activities and other tools. This suggests that the teacher should make use of a wide range of pedagogical practices that cater for the needs of learners from diverse socio-economic and language backgrounds, and they need to appreciate and embrace diversity in their classrooms. Other authors suggested that a method that encourages active participation among learners is group work (Klein, 2003:147; Wood & Bennett, 1998:19). The importance of using groups is based on the assumption that learners in this approach gain knowledge through a collaborative endeavour. For instance, when learners are given a task to work in groups, they do not only learn the subject matter, but collaboration results in the acquisition of subject content, teamwork and inclusion. However, literature shows that pedagogy used in language teaching is often skewed towards expository pedagogy where teachers control the instructional process and learners are passive recipients (Dlamini, 2018; Mcaba, 2014; Mkhwanazi, 2014; Nkosi, 2011; Nomlomo, 2013; Murray, 2009; Stroud, 2003). It is not supposed to be this way, but teachers have to employ a combination of pedagogical approaches, both individual and social because language learning is anchored on social interaction.

Moreover, the participatory approach is closely linked to social constructivist pedagogy by being more inclined to the social nature of learning, which is the essence of social constructivism.

2.3.4.4 Social constructivist pedagogy

Social constructivism is the product of the Russian philosopher Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky's ideas of the sociocultural theory. Vygotsky viewed knowledge construction as a result of the social interaction between learners and other skilled individuals in the learners' context, such as the teacher, peers and parents. It is opposed to Jean Piaget's cognitive or individual constructivism, which views knowledge construction as a product of the learner's experiences (Vygotsky, 1978:57; Kalina & Powell, 2009:243; Daniels, 2005:11). Furthermore, the social constructivist approach to language teaching is anchored in social, cultural and historical influences of the learner (Iwashita & Dao, 2018; Wood & Bennett, 1998:18). It positions the teacher as the facilitator of learning rather than the spreader of information, and the mediator between learner and the subject content. For social constructivists, learning does not occur in isolation, but the learner and the people in the learners' environment, such as teachers, parents and peers collectively contribute to the learners acquiring knowledge. For example, peers can be used to develop a learner's spoken language.

In the case of a linguistically diverse class, the learners who are first language speakers of the language studied can be an important tool to help their peers make conversations. According to Joubert (2015:74), teachers can make these learners start conversations in class, thus making the lesson learner-centred and learners learn best from their peers. Likewise, peers cannot only help develop learners' oral language during instruction only, but the lunch break can also be the ideal time where learners speak freely without fear of being monitored. These learners can start songs, and poems and do riddles and involve others even if they are not proficient in the language, as excluding them can make them feel unaccepted socially. It is for this reason that Joubert (2015:79) contends that activities such as singing songs, telling jokes and reciting poems and rhymes are effective and fun methods of teaching oral language to the foundation phase and middle phase learners, as they help them recognise sounds of language. This observation was earlier made by Weitzman and Greenberg (2002:261) who noted that songs support learners' acquisition of the L2, as they help them acquire new vocabulary and phrases.

Furthermore, understanding the contextual dynamics where a teacher works, and the impact it has on the child's learning is important for social constructivism. This is because this approach is anchored in situated learning where learning is made authentic and knowledge derived from context or the environment. For instance, Vygotsky (1986:150) was unambiguous in his beliefs about the impact the environment had on learning, and he

posited that “direct teaching of concepts is impossible and fruitless” if it is not related to the daily experiences of the learner. He was a strong believer that learning should be authentic by being made relevant to the daily life practices and cultures of the learners and their society. For instance, teaching written language to foundation phase learners can be made authentic by having learners write on subjects that they understand and topics that speak to their everyday lives experiences (Vygotsky, 1978:118). Thus, the implication of this for the language teacher is to employ a pedagogy that is appropriate and relevant to the context of the learner.

Moreover, learners in this approach are believed to gain knowledge through collaborative and cooperative learning strategies (McKinley, 2015:186; Kalina & Powell, 2009:244; Wood & Bennett, 1998:19). Thus, for social constructivism, cooperative learning is central to learners acquiring a deep understanding of concepts. For instance, in a social constructivist class, learners do not work with the teacher alone but are supposed to work with the teacher and other learners, as they have so much to offer one another. It is argued that when learners complete a group task in this approach, each learner internalises what they have learnt at their pace, based on their experiences (Kalina & Powell, 2009:244). Therefore, cooperative strategies, such as group work, storytelling, drama and play, are believed to be effective in teaching language to young learners. For instance, foundation and middle phase learners may be given a task to do in groups and later report to the whole class or they can be made to role-play a short story they have just learnt in class. Vygotsky saw symbolic and imaginative play as vital to learning (Hedge & Cullen, 2012:924; Vygotsky, 1978:102). This is mainly because from the perspective of the young learner, play and learning are not disconnected. Thus, when learners act on their understanding of social behaviour and imaginary behaviour in their environment through role-play or drama, they acquire societal valuable linguistic literacy and other literacies. Even though play is a good source of learning, research shows that while foundation phase teachers employ varied pedagogical practices in their English literacy classroom, they lack a sociocultural methodology to teaching language literacy (Ramdan, 2015:234). This is attributed to several factors, such as poor training, as some are not even qualified for literacy instruction.

Besides, one other important aspect of the social constructivist approach is the use of learners’ prior knowledge in teaching. In this approach, learners’ pre-existing knowledge is used by teachers to gauge learners’ current level of knowledge so that learners can construct personal meaning when they are provided with new knowledge (Kalina & Powell, 2009:241). Research evidence (Shangguan, Gong, Guo, Wang & Lu, 2020:1088; Dong,

2017:146) shows that learners' prior knowledge facilitates their acquisition of new information by helping them to link the known to the unknown. For example, a study conducted by Dong (2017:146) in the United States on using English language learners' previous knowledge in learning Social Studies found that teacher's use of learners' linguistic prior knowledge enabled learners who were non-mother tongue speakers of English to grasp social studies concepts faster, as the vocabulary they had learnt at home was used as an anchor for learning new concepts.

With regards to language learning in the foundation phase, the reality is, most learners who are L1 speakers of a language begin school having acquired basic oral language, that is, they can hear and speak their L1 as opposed to their L2 counterparts. They may lack the knowledge of where and how the sounds are produced and how words, phrases and sentences are formed, the rules of negation, derivation and inflection, and even lack the knowledge of grammatical and syntactic categories, but the bottom line is they speak their L1. Thus, Barone and Mallette (2013:56) suggested that teachers can support learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds by using the oral language knowledge learners bring to class to learn new concepts and practices. Therefore, the teacher can use the oral language knowledge the learner brings to class as a base for learners to acquire the second language through practices that are familiar to the learner. In this regard, teachers are scaffolds by providing supportive tasks and activities that facilitate learners' acquisition of language. As scaffolds, they utilise learners' pre-existing knowledge to support learning and provide help to learners to do tasks they could not master independently, and they slowly remove the assistance, thus helping learners to be independent (Muijs & Reynolds, 2005:64). This could be made possible through in-class and out of class activities that require social interaction.

2.3.4.5 Communicative language teaching

The communicative language teaching (CLT) approach is linked to the sociocultural theories because it emphasises the purpose and primary goal of language which is primarily communication and communication occurs via social interaction. Communicative approaches emerged in the 1960s as a response and criticism of Chomsky's distinction between competence and performance. According to Chomsky, there was a distinction between competence and performance. He described competence as the knowledge of the speaker's and learner's awareness and understanding of linguistic structures, and performance as the usage of language. Moreover, in 1966, Dell Hymes reacted to Chomsky's ideas regarding the two and found them to be insufficient and abstract, as the

focus was on the structural aspects of language rather than the function (Whong, 2013; Brown, 1994). Hymes coined the concept of communicative competence which, apart from the knowledge of linguistic structures, also means knowledge of the functional use of language in all aspects and contexts. Thus, communicative competence, as a language teaching model, emphasises the importance of the learner having holistic knowledge of the language and such knowledge comprises of:

- *Grammatical/linguistic competence* - the knowledge of the rules of language;
- *Sociolinguistic competence* - the knowledge to use and respond to language appropriately in all contexts;
- *Strategic competence* - the knowledge of how to recognize and repair communication breakdowns, and how to learn about the language in context, and;
- *Discourse competence* - the knowledge of how to interpret larger texts, and how to write long stretches of sentences without breaking an idea (Broad, 2020; Dlamini, 2018; Whong, 2013; Canale, 1987; Brown 1994 & Baai, 1992). The preceding components and sub-components of communicative competence are demonstrated in Figure 2.6.

Figure 2.6 presents communicative competence as the extensive knowledge of the language, exceeding the mere understanding of grammar rules and the structure of language, but also the understanding of what communication is, understanding where it is from and to whom and the ability to communicate appropriately in any given situation. This was based on studies into classroom interaction by Canale and Swain (1980), which showed that language learning should involve the four communicative activities that equip the learner to communicate in any social context. Moreover, Larsen-Freeman (2008:134) and Celce-Murcia (2001:6) contended that the benefits of communicative language teaching methods are that they are learner-centred, as they do not only focus on the knowledge of language structures but stress the importance of the learner communicating in the target language. Moreover, lessons are characterised by semantic notions and social functions, thus learners work in groups to negotiate meaning in a class context where one individual has knowledge that the others lack. Additionally, in this model, learners engage in several interactive tasks such as play and storytelling to adapt their utilisation of the target language to diverse social environments (Cheng, 2015:711; Whong, 2013:122; Larsen-Freeman, 2008:134; Celce-Murcia, 2001:6). Furthermore, the teaching and learning materials and the classroom tasks are realistic to mirror real-world situations and expectations. Figure 2.6 below depicts the comprehensive linguistic knowledge that a learner should possess to be competent in a language.

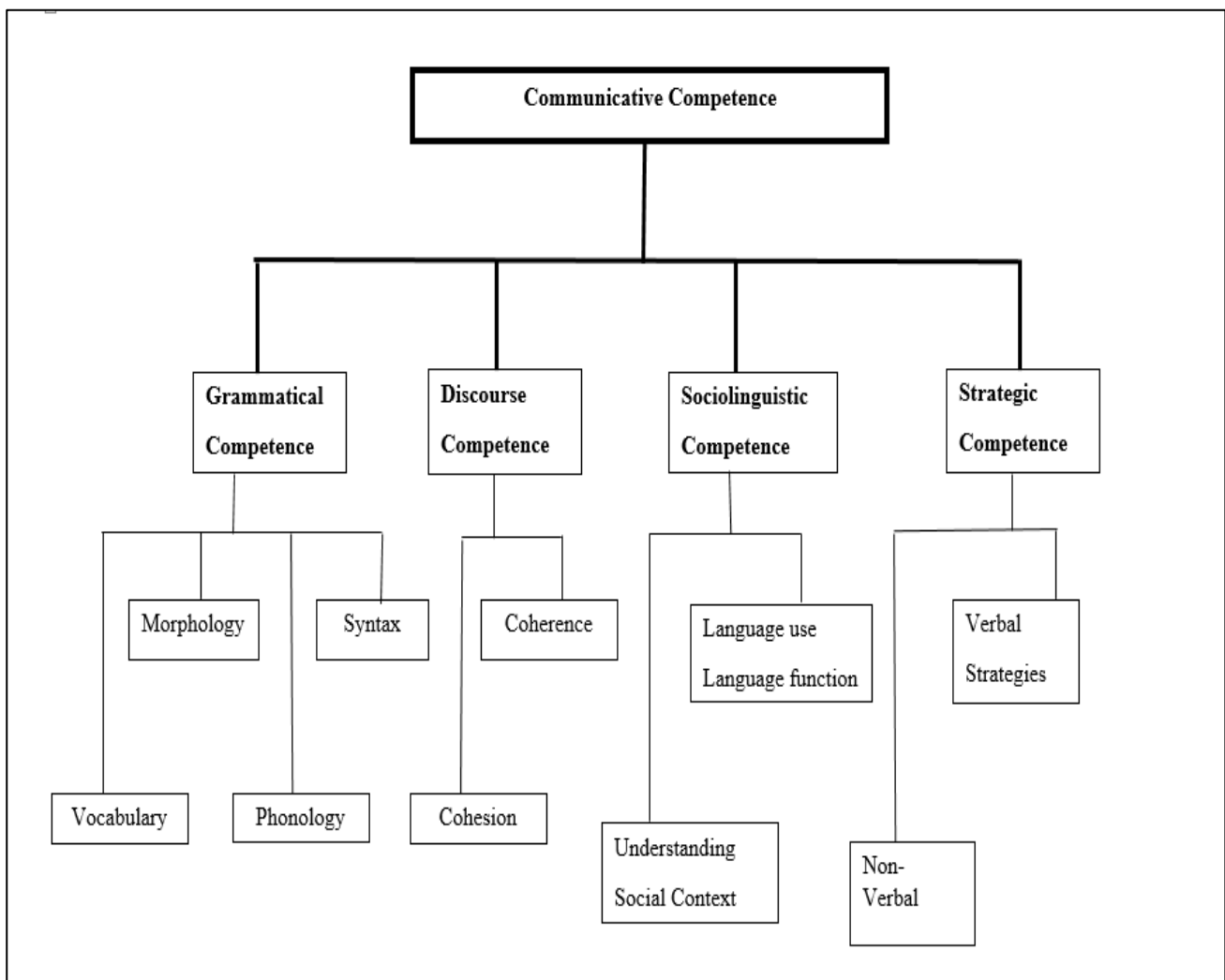


Figure 2.6: Communicative Competence model (sourced from Alzebaree, 2017:17)

This suggests that this approach is related to the social constructivist approach, as in both approaches teachers make use of realistic tasks, based on situations that depict learners' experiences in their everyday life. The most important aspect is that the teacher should be fluent and proficient in the target language and use it appropriately. However, Baai (1992:63) investigated the lack of communicative competence among Xhosa L2 learners who got a credit in the subject in their matriculation and observed that pedagogical approaches, textbooks and the curriculum document did not reflect communicative activities in which learners were actively involved outside the classroom. Thus, teaching was not meaningful and naturalistic, as lessons were not contextualised to learners' experiences. This suggests that lessons were monotonous, and teacher-centred, as learners relied on the teacher for input.

As indicated in the preceding paragraphs, the employment of diverse tasks through CLT caters for the needs of learners of diverse linguistic backgrounds, as strategies used like group work, play, and storytelling are interesting and motivating to the learner. Therefore, in a language classroom where the teacher uses the communicative teaching method, learners may be put in pairs or groups where they discuss and solve problems. As the learners make mistakes and struggle with words, the teacher does not have to correct their mistakes, but learners will correct themselves. According to Whong (2013:121), some learners struggle to understand and be understood, but this is not a big issue, as it is part of the learning process. However, Larsen-Freeman (2008:128) contended that one major challenge of CLT is that the learner should be proficient in the language. If s/he is not proficient in the language, s/he may find it impossible to perform the communication tasks and activities in oral practical lessons and also in written work. However, despite this challenge, I contend that when the tasks are made realistic and connect with the interests of the learner, the learner may be motivated to learn.

2.3.4.6 Diversity pedagogy

Diversity pedagogies have their origins in diversity pedagogy theory (DPT), which is a set of ideologies highlighting the natural and close link between culture and understanding or cognition (Sheets, 2009:11; Bierema, 2010:314). Its emergence was to meet the needs of 21st century classrooms, which are made of learners from diverse backgrounds, thus the need to come up with culturally responsive pedagogical practices to teach diverse learners. According to Sheets (2009:11) and Richards, Brown and Forde (2007:64), diversity pedagogy is a culturally responsive approach to teaching, as it connects culture, learning and understanding as one entity, thus uniting the practices in classrooms with profound comprehension of the role culture plays in the social and cognitive development of children. This means that it is closely related to the sociocultural and participatory approaches, which emphasise the need to align pedagogy with the environment.

For Richards *et al.* (2007: 64), a culturally responsive approach facilitates and supports the successes of all learners in the sense that in a culturally responsive classroom, teaching and learning are made effective through the use of learner-centred pedagogical practices like small groups. This means the prior knowledge learners bring to class is used as a scaffold to facilitate learning. Moreover, research evidence show that many education systems are restructuring their curriculum to be culturally responsive, thus meeting the educational needs of diverse learners, even those who are from diverse cultural and

linguistic backgrounds (Glowacki-Dudka, Murray & Concepción, 2012:10; Ellis *et al.* 2011:23). Teachers are also taught and encouraged to view diversity differently and use inclusive pedagogies. Some pedagogical approaches linked to diversity pedagogy, particularly in linguistically diverse classrooms, are translanguaging, multilingual emancipatory and plurilingual pedagogies. According to Dooly and Vallejo (2020:82), through these approaches, learners' heterogeneous linguistic abilities are appreciated and used in the language learning process. In fact, languages spoken by all learners in the class are deemed useful as communicative tools. However, as shown in the previous sections of this report, this is not what always obtained on the ground, as there is research evidence that most teacher pedagogical practices are not inclusive, but are more slanted towards expository pedagogy.

Based on the foregoing, it appears that for a language teacher to be effective in his/her practice, s/he needs to recognise and comprehend the vital role played by culture and language in the instructional and learning process. Although teachers are regarded as the drivers of teaching and learning, diversity pedagogy strongly acknowledges the important, dynamic and active role learners play in their learning (Bierema, 2010:314), and it is anchored around eight interrelated dimensions provided in Table 2.1. Each dimension has two parts, which are teacher pedagogical behaviours and learners' cultural displays. The former describes the actions of teachers in the classroom, and the latter describes ways learners demonstrate who they are and the knowledge they have.

Table 2.1: Diversity pedagogical dimensions according to Sheets (2009:14)

Teacher Pedagogical Behaviours	Learner Cultural Displays
1. Diversity: differences in traits like values, beliefs, characteristics, mannerisms and qualities shown through pre-set and unfixed features.	1. Consciousness of difference: awareness and study of differences in people. Prejudices, stereotypes and biases against people different from themselves are minimised.
2. Identity: knowledge of self. Self as an individual and a member of a group determined by the ethnic, sociocultural, political and psychological factors in one's socialisation.	2. Ethnic identity development: an aspect of self, as an individual and as a group member developing as a result of membership in an ethnic group and is a result of a distinct socialisation process.

<p>3. Social interactions: shared contact in group situations providing people the chance to gauge, talk and share assets.</p>	<p>3. Interpersonal relationships: close social associations among people involving reciprocation, trust, support and company.</p>
<p>4. Culturally safe classroom context: a classroom atmosphere where learners feel secure physically, emotionally, culturally, socially, psychologically, linguistically and intellectually.</p>	<p>4. Self-regulated learning: displays of self-induced, directed, and controlled behaviour essential to meet self-determined individual and group objectives and to acclimatise to customary classroom values.</p>
<p>5. Language: a cultural tool for sharing, conveying thoughts and emotions, orally or by print. The most powerful tool to preserve culture.</p>	<p>5. Language learning: development in language shown through functional use of oral and written skills acquired formally or informally.</p>
<p>6. Culturally inclusive content: culturally inclusive content in all teaching and learning resources across all subject curricula.</p>	<p>6. Knowledge acquisition: links previous cultural knowledge to a new one. Aids acquisition of new knowledge. Develops reasoning, problem solving and critical thinking skills</p>
<p>7. Instruction: teacher activities used to build learners' new knowledge through strategies linking learners' prior knowledge to the new one, and formation of a classroom environment allowing learning and culturally inclusive content.</p>	<p>7. Reasoning skills: the skill to relate knowledge from individual cultural practices and experiences to advance one's thinking through attaining and growing the thinking tools required to acquire new understanding and be in control of one's learning.</p>
<p>8. Assessment: planned and designed continuing diverse methods used to detect learners' performance so as to determine what they know, gauge their performance in relation to teacher's expectations and provide them with opportunities to improve their performance.</p>	<p>8. Self-evaluation: self-reflection of individual and group performance to observe and assess educational and social goals and detect skills and weaknesses, be responsible for one's learning and gauge the approaches used to optimise the acquisition and retention of new knowledge.</p>

As shown in Table 2.1, the dimensions of diversity pedagogy are interconnected and cut-across each other. According to Sheet (2009:12), they hardly happen in isolation. Although, DPT advocates for holistic culturally responsive approaches, as shown in Table 2.1, realistically, it might prove impossible to meet all the needs of learners in linguistically diverse classrooms. Actually, it might prove impossible for the teacher to know all the first languages of the learners in his/her class, hence, this might create tensions. For instance, in a study by Dooly and Vallejo (2020:87), they found that teachers who attended a workshop promoting the European Union's approach to plurilingualism showed tension when it came to the use of another language in a language class where the aims and objectives of the curriculum were to teach one specific language, English. It appears that such tension was caused by the dilemma of which input they had to promote when they were primarily employed to teach the English language.

However, such thinking is misguided and should not prevail, as it overlooks the fact that translanguaging is a natural phenomenon that occurs implicitly or explicitly when teaching language to learners of diverse linguistic backgrounds. It is, therefore, my belief that teachers in such contexts can use the learners' L1 as a scaffold to learn the intended language. Thus, teachers are creating a conducive learning environment by centring the learner in the teaching and learning process. In this regard, some authors contended that the teacher must provide an emotional, cultural and intellectually empowering classroom environment where the learner from a different linguistic background feels secure to learn the intended content (Bierema, 2010:318; Richards *et al.*, 2007:65; Sheets, 2009:16). Apart from this, the teacher values learners' prior or home knowledge they come with to class, but most importantly, the teacher focuses on changing his/her conduct and learning to appreciate diversity, without being judgemental and blaming learners' backgrounds or their communities regarding inadequacies they might show in the language class.

2.4 THEORIES OF L1 ACQUISITION

Teaching language to foundation phase learners whose language development is in its early phase requires an understanding of how children acquire and learn the language so that teachers can align their instructional practices with the developmental level of learners. Since this study was on pedagogical practices used by teachers to teach SL1 to learners of diverse linguistic backgrounds in the foundation and middle phases of primary school, I saw it fit to first explore what scholars say about how children acquire their L1 and L2.

The concept of language acquisition is defined by scholars as the gradual natural process where children acquire language from the environment through interaction and are devoid of effort (Joubert, 2015:10; Krashen & Terrell, 1998:26; Krashen, 1982:10). To comprehend L1 and L2 acquisition, many researchers and philosophers, like Vygotsky, Lenneberg, Skinner, Chomsky and Krashen, have come up with theories (Vygotsky, 1978; Krashen, 1981; Krashen, 1982; Lightbown & Spada, 2013). These theories are important because they not only assist educators to comprehend the teaching and learning of language but also help them how to support and guide their learners in their language learning process. Moreover, child language acquisition has been approached from three perspectives: reinforcement, heredity and interaction. Three vocal exponents of child language acquisition, the nativists, behaviourists and interactionists, have differing views about how children acquire language as shown in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: A summary of theories of first language acquisition

Theory	Description	Source
Behaviourism	Children acquire language through operant and classical conditioning. Through operant conditioning, the child produces language (stimulus) and gets a reaction from the people in the environment. Though classical conditioning, the child is presented with the stimulus, that is, an item is paired with adult speech, and the child has to respond to the adult speech by imitating the adult. If the imitation is good, the child is rewarded, and if the imitation is poor, s/he is corrected.	Broad, (2020:80); Lightbown & Spada, (2013:12); Joubert, (2015:10)
Innateness	Children are born with a set of innate faculties, universal grammar, which enable them to acquire language. They are born with the predisposition to acquire language, and the language acquisition device enables them to acquire language without assistance.	Cullingford, (1998:42); Broad (2020:81); Joubert, (2015:10); Lightbown & Spada, (2013:20); Brown, (2007:25)

Interactionist theory	Children acquire language through meaningful social interactions or associations they have with adults or other people living in the children's environment.	Vygotsky, (1978:25); Broad, (2020:81); Lightbown & Spada, (2013:24)
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From Table 2.2, it is clear that the extremely contrasting views are between the behaviourists and nativists, as the latter takes an internal approach to explaining the language acquisition phenomenon, while the former takes an external approach to language acquisition. It is also clear from Table 2.2 that interactionism is the theory, which tries to bridge the gap between the two contrasting views of language acquisition. This is the case because while behaviourists' ideas are centred on reinforcement and nativists focus on the innateness of language, interactionism acknowledges both areas of concentration but highlights the active role a child plays in acquiring the language through social interactions with the people in the child's environment. Interactionism is rooted in cognitive and sociocultural theories, which respectively view language development in children as a result of the personal and interpersonal relationships children have with people in their environment. The knowledgeable individual in the child's social environment facilitates language development in learners by guiding and supporting them. In this study, the social environment consists of the classroom environment where the teacher and peers are supposed to assist the learner acquire and learn the language and the home environment where the family is expected to do the same.

Moreover, the behaviourists and nativists perspectives on language acquisition have been criticised by linguists, such as Steven Krashen, an American linguist and researcher, for respectively basing language acquisition on reinforcement and the innate ability of children to acquire language. For Krashen, the correction of language errors has little or no effect on language acquisition, as children make their rules and overgeneralisations (Krashen, 1982:11). Krashen believed that both adults and children can acquire L1 and L2 (Krashen, 1982:10; Krashen & Terrell, 1998:26). He formulated a theory of second language acquisition, which he presented in terms of five hypotheses namely the acquisition-learning process, natural order hypothesis, monitor hypothesis, input hypothesis and the affective filter hypothesis (Krashen, 1982). Some of his postulations are largely researched and some authors agree that they have shaped not only contemporary language pedagogy but across various subject spectrums (Ponniah, 2010; Lee & Hsu, 2009; Kweon & Kim, 2008). Table 2.3 is a summary of the five hypotheses by Krashen.

Table 2.3: A summary of Krashen’s theory of second language acquisition

Hypothesis	Description	Source
Acquisition -learning Hypothesis	Linguistic competence is acquired through acquisition and learning. Acquisition is an implicit unconscious process that informally occurs in the natural environment. It results in contextual comprehension and guarantees fluency and proficiency. Learning is more conscious and explicitly sequenced and occurs in unnatural settings like schools. Through it, learners gain an awareness of the rules and structure of language.	Krashen, (1982:10) Ponniah, (2010:14) Joubert, (2015:15) Krashen & Terrell, (1998:26); Ponniah, (2010:14)
Natural order Hypothesis	A natural order is followed when acquiring a language. Some language forms and functions are acquired earlier than others, while others are acquired later.	Krashen, (1982:30); Krashen & Terrell, (1998:100)
Monitor Hypothesis	Since acquisition guarantees proficiency and fluency, learning has the function of monitoring and editing. Learning assists learners in scanning and thinking of the correct rule they learnt in school to apply in a sentence but does not guarantee fluency and proficiency.	Broad, (2020:82); Krashen, (1982:15); Ponniah, (2010:15)
Comprehensible input hypothesis	Learning occurs when learners are exposed to comprehensible language consisting of grammatical structures above their knowledge. Comprehensible input should consist of $i + 1$; where i stands for the language that has been acquired by the learner and 1 represents vocabulary, grammatical functions and forms somewhat above the learner’s mastery. Optimal comprehensible input can be assisted linguistically and non-linguistically. Linguistically, through explanations, descriptions and prompts, and non-linguistically, through the use of concrete objects, such as drawings and pictures that may give the learner a clue of what the input is.	Broad, (2020:84); Krashen, (1982:21) Krashen, (2004); Ponniah, (2010:14);

The affective filter hypothesis	Learning is most likely to occur optimally in a low anxiety environment where the teacher has positive high expectations for his learners, and the latter are motivated, confident in their abilities and are not ridiculed for their weaknesses.	Krashen, (1982:31); Ponniah, (2010:15)
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Table 2.3 shows the five hypotheses postulated by Krashen relating to how children learn their second language. Basically, Krashen's hypotheses suggest that the process of acquiring and learning a language is not abrupt, but gradual, and the comprehension of vast grammatical rules through intensive drills from the teacher does not guarantee fluency and proficiency in the language. Thus, teachers need to be aware that a natural order transpires when children acquire language and be cognisant that language acquisition happens in a naturally uncontrolled environment. It is therefore clear that what teachers do in class, that is teaching language, does not guarantee proficiency and fluency but results in the learners mastering the rules of the language. Moreover, the ultimate goal of teaching language is for learners to have functional use of it. Thus, teachers can ensure that their teaching of language results in both learning and acquisition by ensuring that the learners learn the language in a stress-free environment, where the teacher is patient and employs ideal pedagogical practices that provide "comprehensible input". Ponniah (2010:14) best described the situation by stating that with a planned in-depth input, the language teacher can help the learner whose current stage of linguistic knowledge is (i), to progress to (i+1). Thus, the learner's acquired pre-existing language proficiency will help him/her transfer from the existing level (i) to the next level (i+1).

In this study, the input hypothesis is relevant, as the study focused on the teaching of a native language (siSwati) to both mother-tongue and non-mother tongue speakers of the language. In this regard, Krashen (2004) observed that the comprehensible input hypothesis is helpful when learning a L2 in the sense that the learners' L1 can be used to make the input more comprehensible, thus contextualising the lesson. For instance, the teacher can use the learners' first language in a brief story to give a clue before an intricate concept is taught. In this regard, the knowledge provided in the L1 is equated to the same information offered by pictures, traditional ornaments and other concrete objects that facilitate language learning. This idea augurs well with the views of Winch, Johnson, March, Ljungdahl and Holliday (2006:378) who contend that on top of supporting the learning of language, concrete objects like pictures are language on their own.

2.4.1 Remarks on the theories of language acquisition

Regardless of the differing views held by these scholars on how a child acquires language, the consensus is that any normal child is inclined to acquire the language of the people of his/her environment in stages varying from child-to-child and depending on how rich the input of the environment is. The fact is, no single theory is sufficient to explain how children acquire and learn their L1 and L2, thus, both first and second language acquisition theories provide a guideline in terms of the helpful environment and teaching strategies that can promote effective teaching and learning of the L1 and L2. In this study, all theories were important in understanding how children acquire and learn their L1 and L2, as the study explored pedagogical practices in teaching siSwati to both native and non-native speakers of the language. My take from these theories is none of them is incontestable, but this was not the purpose of this study. I believe they provide some explanation on how children learn their L1 and L2.

The reality is, L1 development occurs gradually in stages with receptive skills developing first, followed by productive skills. The L1 is the very language that forms a base for the learning of a second, third or even more languages. By cooing, in the early months of life, then babbling at around 6 months, it is a sign that children are acquiring the pitch and intonation of their L1, as they suppress the sounds not available in their environment and maintain those available (Joubert, 2015:12). At around 12 months, they utter a holophrase (one-word sentence), and at around two years, through repeated imitation, experimenting and generalisation, they utter two words. At 3 years, without many inflection and derivation markers, they form meaningful sentences made up of the subject, predicate and object. It can therefore be said that, when children begin pre-school and elementary school, they already have a command of their L1 and can manipulate the language to express their thoughts, feelings, and emotions and also to comprehend what their fellow L1 speakers say. Therefore, it is the duty of the teacher to build on the learner's L1, regardless of any language s/he speaks.

2.5 SUITABLE PEDAGOGICAL CONTEXTS

Based on the foregoing theories of language acquisition, different pedagogical approaches, and the different components of language that are taught in the foundation phase, the teaching and learning of language need to take place in a conducive learning environment. The nature of the environment where language teaching occurs determines the teacher choice of pedagogical practices. Traditionally, a learning environment is an educational

structure where learners learn, such as the classroom. However, in the 21st century, such a definition is deemed narrow as findings in cognitive and neuroscience regarding activities of the brain in learning indicate that learning does not only occur in physical spaces but also in other places beyond the classroom and library walls (Bokas, 2016; Gültekin & Özenç, 2021; Taylor, 2009:134). For Bokas (2016:26) and Gültekin and Özenç (2021:180), a learning environment represents the entirety of the environments and circumstances within which a child learns. It comprises the wide-ranging features that impact a person's learning. This suggests that a suitable pedagogical environment consists of the sociocultural and psychological environment, including teacher and learner behaviour that affects a child's learning. Therefore, the following section of the report describes these suitable teaching and learning environments.

2.5.1 The physical aspect of the classroom environment

Taylor (2009:134) refers to the physical classroom environment as the silent curriculum. In addition, Bokas (2016:28) referred to it as the micro or hidden environment. This refers to the physical space, like the classroom or home, sustained by teachers and parents. Realistically, learners spend most of their time within the borders of the classroom. Therefore, effective teaching and learning of language can occur when the classroom is accessible; it is spacious enough to accommodate all learners, and the class size is manageable. Puteh, Che Ahmad, Mohamed Noh, Adnan and Ibrahim (2015:237) observed that there is a correlation between the structure of the classroom (classroom size, its organisation, arrangement of desks and chairs) and psychological facets, which is the interaction between the teacher and learners and between the learners themselves. Research by Rudwick (2018:264) and Cruickshank *et al.* (2006:12) also shows that learners who are few in class perform academically better than those in crowded ones. This is the case, as fewer learners allow for teacher-learner interaction and learner-learner interaction, as opposed to packed classrooms.

This suggests that the classroom size and the number of learners in it can influence a language teacher's choice of instructional practices and the way they employ them. For example, teaching in a small overcrowded class can propel a teacher to use expository instead of participatory pedagogy because the physical structure of the classroom does not have much space. In such a situation, movement around the class can be limited and teachers and learners cannot interact freely as opposed to a bigger class. Therefore, the way the physical space of the classroom is organised can either restrict or maximise interaction in a language classroom. However, the chief purpose of teaching language

particularly for literacy is for learners to acquire communicative competence in that language. That can be achieved when young learners are paired and work in groups, and the teacher can move around the classroom monitoring their activities. Moreover, research by Ramdan (2015:184) and Dlamini (2018:209) on literacy practices in South African and Eswatini, respectively, showed that teachers had an intense workload, which negatively affected their practice. For instance, Ramdan (2015) revealed that teachers were dissatisfied with their work conditions, which consisted of large class numbers, and large volumes of work. Similarly, Khohliso (2015:83) found teachers who taught isiZulu first additional language had a huge workload as they were understaffed, thus they had to teach a lot of classes. Drawing from my experience as a home language educator, teaching language becomes a nightmare when the teacher has to teach a lot of classes that are also overcrowded.

Furthermore, scholars and researchers have teamed up and come up with various philosophies and approaches that are believed to maximise teaching and learning and highlight the significance of using the classroom's physical space. That is why in today's classrooms, teacher skills and pedagogical practices have a vital role in shaping the physical environment in schools. These methods impact on teachers' role and how they have to use the physical learning space, as nowadays the classroom environment should complement teacher pedagogy for the learners for effective teaching of language. According to Gültekin and Özenç (2021:181), the 21st century has seen a paradigm shift from traditional teacher-centred teaching with most education systems advocating for the use of constructivist approaches which are grounded in learner-centred methods. Therefore, as constructivism, both social and individual are anchored on collaborative teaching methods, and this means the physical environment should encourage collaborative learning, as well as allowing learners to work independently. This is in line with Taylor (2009:134) who contended that, just as diverse educational objectives need diverse learning approaches, different teaching approaches need different learning spaces. Thus, the classroom and everything in it, such as desks and chairs, need to be accessible, spacious and personalised to the learners for effective teaching and learning of language.

2.5.2 The psychological aspect of the classroom environment

A conducive L1 learning environment is friendly, safe and comfortable for all learners of different kinds to learn. Bokas (2016:28) referred to the psychological aspect of the classroom environment, the macro learning environment. This refers to the factors and circumstances that emerge from the entire learning milieu a learner enters and influences

their learning. This suggests that the physical environment is not only a place of social contact that provides physical security for learning to occur, but it provides psychological growth as well. Psychological security is described by Weinstein (1996:29) as denoting an environment where learners feel emotionally and mentally secure to learn. As early as the 1980s, the importance of the psychological environment was addressed by scholars, Tonelson (1981) and Krashen (1982). Tonelson (1981:96) observed that there was a hidden curriculum learnt in school besides the traditional prescribed one, and it comprised the teacher's verbal and non-verbal actions of his/her engagements. Thus, in building a psychological environment, the teacher has to motivate learners and build their self-esteem, and also have an awareness of self-concept, which is knowledge of his personality and how what s/he does affects their learning. Also, addressing the classroom psychological environment, Krashen's words were that, "the affective filter hypothesis implies that our pedagogical goals should not only include supplying comprehensible input but also creating a situation that encourages a low filter" (Krashen 1982:32). On the same note, Lightbown and Spada (2013:25) and Hattie (2012:26) noted that low anxiety classrooms support learning and learner participation. It appears that for these scholars, language teachers can create a healthy psychological environment by positively viewing themselves. Hence, healthy psychological environments are characterised by warmth, acceptance and permissiveness. For Hattie (2012:26), skilled teachers create a warm classroom environment which makes it okay for learners to make mistakes, acknowledge them and learn from these mistakes without fear of being bullied by their peers.

Based on the foregoing views, the holistic behavioural traits of an individual can influence the emotional and mental environment of the classroom. If a teacher is enthusiastic, warm, has a sense of humour and is credible, s/he can create a psychological environment that is conducive to inspiring and encouraging learners to work hard (Cruickshank *et al.*, 2006:325; Cullingford, 1998:20; Good & Brophy, 1984:340). For Cullingford (1998:20), a sense of humour not only helps teachers to survive a demanding and strenuous profession with high expectations from parents, inspectors and politicians but also displays teacher charisma, which enables learners to see if they are relatable and approachable. Muijs and Reynolds (2005:47) asserted that a good psychological classroom environment is created when the teacher does several practices, such as maintaining eye contact, body gestures and nodding during instruction. Furthermore, the teacher needs to wait for learners to respond and provide a chance for them to self-correct and refine their responses. Instilling positive discipline and rarely interrupting learners when they are doing their tasks are also some practices that create a healthy psychological environment. This suggests that the language

teacher should be positive and energetic by showing interest in young learners and varying their tone and using gestures to approve or disapprove of a behaviour. In such a low-anxiety language classroom, learners can work hard and be free to engage in communicative activities with the teacher and among themselves, seeing that their teacher is supportive and goal driven. According to Good and Brophy (1984:93), teachers who do these practices are supportive and believe in themselves that they are the instruments through which learners can learn. They also believe that learners are capable of excelling when they are given support.

However, being warm and permissive in the context of the classroom does not mean a laissez-faire or authoritarian environment, but the teacher should be authoritative with all the other friendly attributes that promote teaching and learning of language. In essence, a conducive pedagogical setting is free from both physical and psychological threats that can hinder a child's learning. There is research evidence that classrooms equipped with valuable physical features in primary schools not only facilitate the physical, cognitive, and kinaesthetic development of learners but also result in affective development as well (Gültekin & Özenç, 2021:188; Puteh *et al.*, 2015:238). This was a similar observation earlier made by Weitzman and Greenberg (2002:259). They observed that a conducive language learning environment is one where learners feel comfortable speaking and making errors without the fear of being judged. Actually, it begins when teachers accept criticism. According to Brophy (1984:149), when teachers accept criticism from learners, learners view them as people that are credible and trustworthy. This can make learners trust and look up to them, particularly foundation phase learners who take things as they are. Thus, learners can also accept constructive criticism in return.

Moreover, any exchange that occurs in the language classroom accompanied by a sense of humour and a warm personality does not equate to unprofessionalism. But, the language teacher should do all this to establish a good teacher-learner rapport, as language teaching and learning entails interpersonal relations and good interpersonal relations can maximise student learning. Traditionally, the maternal feature of the female has made society believe that they are natural nurturers (Petersen, 2014; Mashiya, 2014), hence they provide a suitable environment for learning a language in the foundation phase. Thus, it has been the tradition of most schools since time memorial to have old female teachers teach the foundation phase instead of male teachers. According to Ravhuhali, Mashau, Lavhelani, Mudzielwana and Mulovhedzi (2019:284), male teachers have been made a "scarecrow" to young learners because of their built and deep voices. The findings of a study by Dlamini

(2018:163) supported a claim that almost all the teachers teaching English literacy in the foundation phase were females. This could be because most classrooms led by female teachers are presumed to be warmer, as the teachers are believed to be tolerant and learners often initiate asking questions with teachers reciprocating their efforts by using positive reinforcement a lot, while male teachers are more authoritarian and the environment is more controlled (Cruickshank *et al.*, 2006:3).

As much as these studies view the female teacher as the provider of life and a born nurturer, the time has changed and with it, some education systems have called for more motivated and well-trained teachers in contemporary methodologies to take the lead (Department of Basic Education, 2015:32; EMoET, 2018a:36). Despite these, studies indicate that male teachers choose to train to teach the foundation phase because of desperation, as they are not admitted in the degree of their first choice (Ravhuhali *et al.*, 2019:294). This proves that even though education systems are trying to normalise the teaching of the foundation phase by both male and female teachers, it is still a thorny issue among males who teach the grade not because of passion, but because it is the last resort. Then, in a situation like this, it is highly possible that the psychological environment of the classroom can have tension, which does not augur well with language learning in the foundation phase.

Moreover, several scholars agreed that teacher's beliefs and attitudes can also influence the classroom psychological environment, and ultimately the choice of instructional practices (Cunningham, 2019; Sayed, 2018; Webster & Ryan, 2018; Milner, 2017; Watson, 2015; Durán & Palmer, 2014; Nkosi, 2011; Thomson & Stakhnevich, 2010; Cruickshank *et al.*, 2006). Pedagogy is dynamic and changes with time and context. According to Milner (2017:77), teachers' reactions to curriculum innovation and the pedagogy they employ in its implementation are guided by psychological factors, such as their attitudes and beliefs. For Cruickshank *et al.* (2006:7), all teachers hold certain beliefs about their learners, the content and the subject they teach and how it should be taught. These beliefs could be rational and substantiated or may be misconstructions. According to Sayed (2018:76) and Hattie (2012:25), teachers' beliefs influence how teachers formulate and utilise their knowledge and how these ultimately influence their choice and employment of pedagogical practices.

That being the case, teachers' beliefs may birth attitudes that may be either positive or negative. Researchers conducted studies on the relationship between teachers' beliefs and pedagogical practices (Cunningham, 2019; Watson, 2015; Hos & Kekec, 2014; Durán & Palmer, 2014; Nkosi, 2011). The findings gave evidence that attitudes play a significant role

in influencing pedagogy and showed that beliefs and individual conceptions have the power to shape teaching. For these researchers, teachers' attitudes and beliefs have a more significant role in their daily classroom practices than any guiding principle of a school. For instance, Nkosi (2011:292) found that teachers had a negative attitude towards teaching isiZulu and espoused that the language was difficult, and they preferred teaching English. The result of this was that when teaching isiZulu, teachers would mix it with English, and this practice was later copied by learners who imitated their models. On a positive note, reporting about the attitudes of Chinese students and their parents regarding the latter studying the language of their origin (Mandarin), Zhang and Slaughter-Defoe (2009:78) asserted that having a positive attitude toward one's first language usually results in an improved determination to learn it and in high proficiency levels. The same results were observed by Pulinx, Van Avermaet and Agirdag (2017:550) in their study, who found that Flemish teachers' beliefs matched with language education policies. However, the finding of work by Hos and Kekec (2014:83) contradicted the works of the above authors as they found that the beliefs of language teachers were not always aligned with their actual practices in teaching grammar. Interestingly, the results of the above studies indicate that people do not see things from the same viewpoint but from different perspectives.

Additionally, besides teachers, negative attitudes of other stakeholders involved in education, such as learners, parents, school administrators and language policymakers have been observed to impact teachers' choice of instructions when teaching AHLs, which consequently impacts the classroom's psychological environment. For example, in most African schools, the language of instruction is usually a language of European origin and a second language to learners. The language of instruction is associated with the elites and its knowledge is assumed to lead to job opportunities. Researchers (Cunningham 2019; Kwon, 2017) observed that over the world, HL speakers look down upon their languages, as learners pay more attention to the language believed to be a language of opportunities. They also found that learners believed that their languages will not benefit them shortly, and this affected teachers pedagogical practices and the classroom's psychological environment. Earlier, Pludderman (2002) observed that for some HL speakers in South Africa, HL learning was perceived as 'damaged goods'. Cunningham (2019:4) found that there was a failure to explain why learners were uncomfortable using their HLs, and this problem has not received much research coverage. Unfortunately, it is the actions of all stakeholders that count in the end. This means the educational success of learners depends on teachers who are facilitators of teaching, the learners who learn and parents who are supposed to be the support system. If all these stakeholders have negative attitudes

towards the learning of any language, it can be a failure. On the contrary, if they work in partnership, both the psychological environment of the classroom and the home can be conducive for language learning to flourish for the beginning learner.

2.5.3 The home environment

Besides, the learning environment is not restricted to the classroom, but goes beyond the parameters of the classroom walls and extends into the homes where learners and their parents/ guardians live (Gültekin & Özenç, 2021; Bokas, 2016; Joubert, 2015; Wells & Haneda, 2009). The reality is that children spend more daytime with teachers than parents, but since ancient times parents or guardians have been an essential unit for the education of children and their overall well-being. In an ideal world, both the physical and psychological aspects of the home environment where the children live should support the learning of language. This means there should be enough learning resources and parents should support their children physically and emotionally. In this regard, teaching and learning of language can be made effective when teachers work in partnership with parents and guardians.

This means effective teaching of language can occur when parents are actively involved in the academic activities of their children. That is why in the United States, schools are forming parent-teacher associations so that teachers and parents can partner up in assisting learners with their education (Wilder, 2014:378). Findings by researchers showed that parental involvement or lack of it impacts learners' academic performance positively or negatively (Dlamini, 2018:206; Cabus & Ariës, 2017:294; Ramdan, 2015:219; Erlendsdóttir, 2010:31). Early work by Erlendsdóttir (2010:31) revealed that parents who were involved in their children's education impacted their educational performance. Cabus and Ariës (2017:294) found that there was a strong correlation between learners' holistic academic achievement and home support, and learners' academic success was embedded in the supportive school-home environment. Similar findings were made by Dlamini (2018:206), who found that teachers viewed learners whose parents were involved in their learning of English literacy in the foundation phase fared well compared to those who did not. However, Ramdan (2015:219) reported that teachers complained about the lack of parental support in helping learners with homework, as most learners stayed with elderly extended family members who could not read and write – hence they could not help. That is why Joubert (2015:74) suggested that to help the development of language skills in learners, teachers can partner with parents by encouraging them to speak the target language to their children at home or they can provide learning materials, such as compact discs, which go with

pictures books. In so doing, both parents and teachers are working for the common good of the learner.

The implication for both teachers and parents in this regard is they need to be aware of this dynamic and work together so that learners are successful in school. As stated in Section 2.5.1 and 2.5.2, both the micro (physical) and macro (psychological) environments need to be conducive for language learning to flourish. That is why Bokas (2016:28) refers to both the micro and macro learning environments as the canvas for learning. In essence, conducive teaching and learning of language can occur when there is partnership and harmony between the micro and macro learning environments, where the school, teachers, families, communities and governments create a conducive, safe and comfortable physical and psychological atmosphere for learning.

2.6 WORKING WITH LEARNERS FROM DIVERSE LINGUISTIC SETTINGS/BACKGROUNDS

Present day society is characterised by linguistic and cultural diversity. Children found in today's schools are an illustration of present day society where multiculturalism and multilingualism reign. As early as the 1960s, Wilt (1966) showed that the time had passed whereby American classrooms were made up of learners who were all proficient in English and who were L1 speakers of the language. She remarked, "A first grade today may include a child from almost any country, state, region, rural or urban slum, professional or blue collar home" (Wilt, 1966:4). Wilt is right. The advent of globalisation has seen significant patterns of migration among individuals speaking different languages into areas of business, such as urban areas. Societies that were primarily monolingual like Eswatini are now characterised by a diverse linguistic environment. According to Barone and Mallette (2013:42), the concept of diverse linguistic background stresses extensive experiences, practices and abilities that learners bring to school which are different from those they come across at school. Genishi and Dyson (2009:55) referred to this as not only learning the language in diverse times but also in a diverse environment. Therefore, in the context of the study, diverse linguistic settings refer to teaching environments, that is, the school and classrooms comprising learners from different cultural and language backgrounds by virtue that they speak different languages and have dissimilar cultures.

In almost all societies, there is a majority of people sharing a common culture, such as language, beliefs and way of life. This is what Cruickshank *et al.* (2006:47) referred to as the dominant culture. In education, this means schools and classrooms as educational settings are made up of learners who speak diverse languages, and are from culturally

different backgrounds. In such situations, diversity should be viewed as an advantage that brings healthy competition in the class, and for Joubert (2015:74), being from a different ethnic group and speaking a different language should not disadvantage learners. Cantador and Conde (2010:17) found that healthy competition was beneficial in education if it is short-term, symbolic, and its objectives clearly set towards learning. Moreover, as noted earlier, language teaching is not only about passing linguistic information through teaching methods and strategies by teachers, but also about understanding the context where teaching occurs (Leach & Moon, 2008:28). This suggests that pedagogy must be relevant to that particular context. It thus appears that language teachers must understand the sociocultural milieu, and the nature of learners in the environment they work as all these have the potential of influencing their pedagogical practices. The reality is that most learners in today's classroom are diverse and differ in terms of cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic, developmental, gender and learning styles (Muijs & Reynolds, 2005:185; Cruickshank *et al.*, 2006:11). Thus, opportunity gaps in learning usually occur when educators permit the socio-demographic divide amongst themselves and their learners to lead them into colour-blind conversations, perceptions and practices (Milner, 2012:700). Ideally, teachers are not supposed to teach only subject matter but the child in a holistic manner. Consequently, an awareness of diversity can influence teachers to consider appropriate instructional practices that will include all learners.

In this regard, educators teaching language in diverse linguistic settings need to be inclusive and ensure that all learners in their class experience a sense of belonging, irrespective of ethnicity, race and language. The implication for the language teacher teaching in diverse linguistic settings is to create a community of language learners by ensuring that learners are not stigmatised because they speak a different language, but the teacher should guide all learners to accommodate each other, thus all experiencing language as inclusive, not exclusive. Cruickshank *et al.* (2006:10) noted that in education, the language of the majority usually discriminates against learners who speak the minority language in class. But, a teacher who is aware of the context where s/he teaches, even though teaching the language of the majority culture, s/he can appreciate that his/her class also has learners with cultures and languages different from the one s/he teaches in class.

That being said, teachers can ensure that all learners are included in their language lessons by employing diversified pedagogies that cater for the different linguistic needs of learners like the ones provided under Section 2.3.4. For instance, Mati (2004:21) observed that in the context of African schools, where English is the dominant language subject despite

being the L1 of a minority, it is common practice for teachers to alternate between English and African languages in classes where the instruction is supposed to be executed through the medium of the former to support learning. This suggests that translanguaging can be an effective pedagogy to promote communicative practices in L1 or L2 classes. Likewise, Babane and Maruma (2017:8824) found that learners code-switched because they lacked vocabulary in the home language, whereas teachers code-switched to English for class control and social reasons. Additionally, teachers cannot be conversant about these strategies if they are not trained on how to teach language in multilingual settings and if there is no appropriate content to teach these learners. This perspective is confirmed by Shawe (2015:55) who found that teachers who taught isiZulu first additional language in multi-lingual schools were not trained in it, but they were trained to teach the isiZulu home language. Furthermore, there were no appropriate teaching-learning resources prepared for isiZulu first additional language (Kohliso, 2015:77; Shawe, 2015:55), as available resources were prepared for the isiZulu home language.

It appears it is the responsibility of the 21st century teacher to ensure that in his/her class diversity is appreciated. Milner (2012:699) and Milner (2017:73), in their opportunity gap explanatory framework designed to help researchers and philosophers in examining, explaining and identifying instructional practices, particularly in extremely diverse and urban schools as in this study's context, warned teachers against taking a colour blind approach in their language classrooms. By colour blindness, they mean lacking awareness of the ethnic diversity of learners in their class and the impact that awareness has on language pedagogy. Thus, teachers as curriculum developers are expected to design content and instructional practices that show an awareness of the diversity of learners found in their classrooms. Moreover, research evidence suggested that minority learners in diverse linguistic school settings usually do not excel academically compared to their counterparts (Milner, 2012:705; Cruickshank *et al.*, 2006:48). This is due to several causes such as a lack of resources, unqualified teachers, poor teaching and learning materials, poor motivation and because both teachers and learners do not celebrate and appreciate diversity. However, it is not supposed to be this way, as language is supposed to be the glue that ties these culturally and linguistically diverse learners. Reporting on integrating multicultural literature with writing and word processing in the United States, Moore-Hart (2010:104) observed that providing the basis for culturally and linguistically inclusive classrooms, where there is mutual respect among all learners can be quite a daunting but doable task. She highlighted how teachers laid the foundation of a multicultural classroom

by using writing to reinforce multiculturalism and respect and celebrate diversity among learners (Moore-Hart, 2010:104).

That being said, when teaching in their language classrooms, teachers can teach different language skills by manipulating them to create an awareness and appreciation that being different is not a bad thing but humankind is different. As early as the 1960s, Wilt (1966:4) cautioned that when teaching language, teachers should refrain from making learners feel like their language and culture are substandard or what the child has known for years is useless and has no value in his acquiring learning. But, teachers should build on the learners' pre-existing cultural and linguistic experiences. For instance, the Cinderella story is a multicultural phenomenon, as it has its equivalent in all cultures. In teaching oral skills, teachers can ask learners to share this story based on their cultures. Learners can dramatise and role-play it as per the findings of Cheng (2015:711), and the teacher's role would be of synthesising the key points in the language learnt. By so doing, all learners will feel that their language and culture matter, and by the story cutting across cultures, learners might understand that although diverse, language unites them. Thus, at the beginning of the 21st century, some schools in the United States introduced multicultural education. This is an education that traverses through all cultures and through programmes such as teaching cultural differences, which assists learners to improve and retain their culture while learning the dominant one and human relations, which help learners communicate with others and still feel good about themselves (Cushner, McClelland & Safford, 2012).

Based on the foregoing, Barone and Mallette (2013:56) observed and suggested the following pedagogical strategies that teachers can employ to support learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds:

- Use of oral knowledge learners bring to class;
- Develop reading and writing skills by reading a lot of books so that they can learn the language of books;
- Contextualising language learning;
- Teachers getting to know learners and teaching language stories that are familiar to the culture of learners; and
- Being sensitive to the needs.

The above recommendations suggest that teachers in diverse linguistic and cultural classrooms need to ensure that being different does not disadvantage a learner who cannot speak the language or have limited proficiency in the language of the majority. For example,

a study conducted in Taiwan by Cheng (2015:711) on CLT indicated that the learners' L1 was useful, as it helped to reduce anxiety among learners in their English as a foreign language class. This happened after the teacher had modified the teaching strategies and contextualised the lesson, thus learners' attitudes were positive and they were actively involved in class. Genishi and Dyson (2009:57) suggested that teachers can ensure inclusivity in their diverse language classrooms through the concept of multi-temporality or teacher's sense of diverse times. This term was coined by Levine in 1977, denoting a teacher's ability to adapt to different manifestations of time, that is speeding where need be, and slowing down when it calls for one to do so. Teachers teaching language in diverse linguistic classrooms are advised by scholars to use translanguaging and plurilingual pedagogies that allow for the use of a learner's L1 to aid learning (Dooly & Vallejo, 2020; Cheng, 2015; Bierema, 2010; Sheets, 2009).

The above can be achieved through code-switching strategies, where the teacher temporality alternates between languages to aid learning. Heller (in Mati, 2004:2) defined code-switching as "the use of more than one language in the course of a single communication episode". Writing about the high degree of linguistic diversity in South Africa and many developing countries, Mati (2004:5) argued that code-switching "is a language practice that could support classroom communication in general and the exploratory talk that is such a necessary part of learning". In this regard, code-switching is viewed as a resource for teaching and learning in linguistically diverse classrooms. However, too much code-switching can be catastrophic resulting in the learner lacking knowledge of both languages, but there is research evidence that planned and moderate use of this strategy supports learning (Cheng, 2015). This is per the finding by Cheng (2015:711) in China who found that code-switching between L1 and L2 motivated learners and helped them to understand the conversation, particularly if the strategy was accompanied by visual aids, such as pictures and short videos.

However, findings by Thomson and Stakhnevich (2010:293) showed that primary school teachers in South Africa had reservations about using isiZulu in their English lessons, and some used it for non-pedagogic reasons like disciplining learners when they did not follow instructions. This was despite their awareness that the learners' L1 (isiZulu) supported learners' understanding of English concepts, as they were able to draw back from the mother tongue when stuck. Such views indicate the disproportionate understanding among teachers of HLs and second or foreign languages about the main purpose of language, which is communication. From my point of view, it does not help forcing learners to use a

language they lack organisational and pragmatic competence in, and using a learner's L1 has been found to help learners transition well to their L2, as supported by research evidence (Evans & Mendez Acosta, 2020; Trudell, 2016; UNESCO, 2015). Moreover, scholars state that teaching the L1 of most learners in a class where there are non-native speakers can be quite challenging (Bailey & Marsden, 2017:298). In a study conducted in England, these authors found that teachers decried how time consuming and arduous it was to concurrently attend to learners who were L1 speakers of English and those who were non-native speakers, yet studying English as an additional language.

2.7 ASSESSMENT OF ORAL AND WRITTEN LANGUAGE

Assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning of language. Some authors contended that the teaching-learning process is incomplete without assessment, as it determines the extent to which educational goals and objectives are achieved (Baird, Andrich, Hopfenbeck & Stobart, 2017; EMoET, 2018a; Hugo, 2013; Dreyer, 2014; Mkhwanazi, 2014; Salvia & Ysseldyke, 2001). It further measures the effectiveness of teachers' instructional practices, what they teach, how they teach, and how learners learn and determines if learning has occurred and to what extent (Dreyer, 2014:6). Thus, for Hugo (2013), assessment is central to the teaching-learning process, and it is cyclic, beginning when learning starts.

Assessment is of two types: informal and formal (McAfee & Leong, 2002; Dreyer, 2014). The former relates to teacher observation of learners' in-class oral and written activities, while the latter is planned and methodical and requires a year-long plan of assessment to be developed. Moreover, in L1 and L2 classes, both types of assessment are used by teachers to record, file and evaluate the performance of a learner or a group to find out what the learner knows, to gauge their performance in relation to the teacher's expectations and to provide opportunities to improve learners' performance.

Moreover, some authors asserted that teachers can assess both oral and written language of foundation and middle phase learners by carefully observing learner interaction during group activities and play. This can inform teachers about the linguistic strengths and weaknesses of learners (Dreyer, 2014; Joubert, 2015). However, research by Mbele (2019:82) and Mkhwanazi (2014:186) found that teachers who respectively taught isiZulu and siSwati in South Africa lacked knowledge of formative assessment, as they failed to communicate learning objectives to learners, thus, learners did not understand the objective of lessons. It is said teachers did not provide constructive feedback based on instructional

objectives (Mkhwanazi, 2014:186). However, this is not supposed to be so. Teachers ought to comprehend that the development of learners' oral and written language can be facilitated when they engage learners in diverse tasks. These tasks could require learners to do them as a group or as individuals. Therefore, it is expected that teachers use pedagogical practices that will reveal the strengths and weaknesses of learners' spoken and written language and that can be made possible if teachers have adequate knowledge of conducting the different types of assessment, be it diagnostic, formative or summative.

In Eswatini, the competency-based Education (CBE) curriculum implemented in 2019 in Grade one views assessment as part of the learning process. According to the Eswatini curriculum framework (EMoET, 2018a), the assessment of language should be holistic; it should be for learning, of learning and as learning. This means assessment of language should be diagnostic, to check learners' pre-existing knowledge and ongoing informing teaching and learning and be a learning curve for both teachers and learners (Baird *et al.*, 2017:320). According to the framework, assessment practices at the foundation and middle phase should be based on teacher observation of learner performance during teaching-learning where teachers use rubrics and checklists to convey learner performance. There are no end-of-unit tests, end-of-term tests or end-of year-examinations, be it in written or oral forms. This suggests that assessment is to measure learner competencies, what they can do and to see their progress.

2.8 SUMMARY

This was a review of the literature on language pedagogy and other subjects related to it. I began the chapter by providing a rationale for conducting a review of literature, and the methodology I followed. Various kinds of knowledge a language teacher is expected to have to teach language effectively were provided. These included CK, PCK and TPACK. Moreover, the literature revealed that there were knowledge gaps between teacher knowledge of linguistic content and their expertise to teach those concepts. Furthermore, various pedagogical approaches for language teaching, including expository, discovery, participatory, social constructivism, CLT and diversity pedagogy were discussed. The literature revealed that the most appropriate practices of teaching language were those that encourage communicative activities and those anchored in social interaction, as they make language learning realistic and mirror the real-world experiences of the learners. However, the literature also showed that pedagogy for teaching the L1 or L2 was largely slanted towards expository pedagogies, with the teacher dominating the instructional process, and learners being passive recipients. Moreover, I also provided the different theories of

language acquisition and explained why it is vital for educators of learners whose language development is in its early phase to understand them. This chapter also revealed that although the theories have different perspectives, to some extent, they provide the nature of the environment conducive for the learning of the L1 and L2 to thrive. Some key points to be considered when teaching language to learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds were provided. I then explored the assessment of language, particularly in the foundation and middle phases.

Interestingly, from my reading of the literature, I discerned that the teaching of AHLs in schools continues to be an under-researched field. Generally, much research in African language education today focuses on issues of politics, chiefly the status of AHLs in education. Much attention continues to be paid to the issue of language in education policies and how the first language can be used as a medium of instruction (Mkhabela, 2018; Bell *et al.*, 2020; Bruen & Kelly, 2017; Bamgbose, 2011; Brock-Utne, 2005; Vuzo, 2005; Alidou, 2004; UNESCO, 2010; Heugh, 2005; Qorro, 2003; Thondhlana, 2002; Foley, 2001; Adegbija, 1994). This is a good thing. However, as long as the pedagogy used in teaching African languages is unexplored, the development and status of these languages will remain marginalised. This was the very essence of this study, to understand SL1 pedagogy with the hope that such an endeavour will offer a new contribution, although minimal to research in this field of study that is under-researched, particularly in the context of Eswatini.

Moreover, the chapter concluded with a summary that tried to synthesise the major themes discussed. The subsequent chapter presents the description of the sociocultural theory, which was used as a lens through which pedagogical practices in teaching SL1 in diverse linguistic settings were explored.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This section of the study discusses the theoretical framework which was used as a lens through which pedagogical practices in SL1 were explored and understood in this research. In presenting this discussion, the chapter begins by defining a theoretical framework and its importance to this study. It provides a comprehensive discussion of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which is the theory that was used as a roadmap through which I explored and gained an understanding of the pedagogical practices in the teaching of siSwati as a first language in Eswatini primary schools. The chapter then provides the different constructs of the sociocultural theory and their relevance to the study. Finally, I present the summary of the whole chapter.

3.2 DEFINING A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The concept, 'theoretical framework' is made up of two words, theory and framework. Before I define a theoretical framework, I must begin by defining the two terms that form the concept. According to Baker (in de Vos *et al.* 2011:37), a theory is a collection of ideas and postulations presenting a methodical understanding of an occurrence or situation and such understanding is based on observations that predict and explain the incident. Bryman (2012:22) concurred with de Vos *et al.* (2011) and defined a theory as a set of interlinked concepts, explanations and postulations that introduce methodical perspectives of phenomena and specify relationships among variables, with the sole purpose of interpreting and predicting phenomena. In essence, a theory is a set of tested ideas that explain a particular phenomenon. On the other hand, Hey and Holloway (2015:604), in the Oxford Advanced dictionary define a framework as assumptions and philosophies that are utilised as a base for making judgements and decisions. Therefore, drawing from the words, theory and framework,

"The theoretical framework is the foundation from which all knowledge is constructed (metaphorically and literally) for a research study. It serves as the structure and support for the rationale for the study, the problem statement, the purpose, the significance and the research questions" (Grant & Osanloo, 2014:12).

Labaree (2003:20) concurred and posited that a theoretical framework is a theory that describes the main ideas, constructs and information existing in a field of study. This means it provides me as the researcher with what is available empirically in the field of study under investigation. On a similar note, Troudi (2010:2) viewed a theoretical framework as a logical fabric that directs one's research, and it advises the investigator on different perspectives of the data. That being the case, it is an intellectual structure that consists of a theory or theories which the researcher purposely chooses to guide his/her views, thoughts and conclusions about a study (Grant & Osanlo, 2014:19). These authors further equate the theoretical framework to a house's foundation which bears the load of the building, without which a house cannot stand. Thus, based on this analogy and the foregoing statements, I discern that it is one of the most significant aspects of research because it is practically an anchor of the whole research project. It is a base and directs the research process, as the literature analysis and all other methodologies followed in a study are dependent on it. Therefore, what I gather from the above scholars is that they agree on a theoretical framework being an important component of any investigation in the sense that almost all the components and stages of the research process are informed, guided and structured by the theoretical framework. This is to say, the research questions, problem statement, data collection tools, data collection procedures and the processes of data analysis and presentation are informed by the theoretical framework. Having defined what a theoretical framework is, in the subsequent section, I provide the rationale for using a theoretical framework in this study.

3.3 IMPORTANCE OF A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK IN THIS STUDY

My use of a theoretical framework in this study was on the basis provided by scholars like Troudi (2010:2), Grant and Osanloo (2014:12) and Labaree (2003:20) in the foregoing section that it forms the base on which the statement of the problem, research questions, methodology used to answer research questions and data analysis procedures are formulated by the researcher. Informed by these scholars' views, the use of a theoretical framework in this study guided my formulation of research questions which had to show how various social dynamics affect the teaching and learning of SL1. The theoretical framework also guided me on which themes to consider when reviewing the literature. My view on this was informed by the assertion that "your theoretical framework will provide your position vis-à-vis the issue being studied and your stand on the literature" (Troudi, 2010:3).

Furthermore, Grant and Osanloo (2014:19), Labaree (2003:20) and Troudi (2010:2) contended that a theoretical framework is important in research as besides being a guide, it reflects the researcher's intellectual position. It also shows where the researcher stands intellectually to her/his research questions and the approach s/he will use to collect and interpret the data. These scholars further posit that it is essential in education research, as it helps the researcher to define and locate in literature constructs related to the study s/he is exploring. This is with an intention that his/her perspectives and understanding of the phenomena under investigation are determined, interpreted and confirmed. Based on the above contentions, using a theoretical framework was important for me in this study, as it helped me define the constructs that I was exploring through the research questions I had formulated. This is to say, the use of a theoretical framework in this study guided me in identifying key constructs that I had to explore and which definitions I had to adopt in this study. Since this study explored pedagogical practices in teaching SL1 in elementary school, the use of a theoretical framework guided me: in providing my views of what pedagogy is and what pedagogical approaches and practices are used in language teaching, the different ways through which children gain language competence and the effective language teaching practices.

Also, it was important to use the theoretical framework in this investigation as it informed my selection of the methodology I saw as ideal to respond to the research questions raised in this study. It guided my choice of data generating tools and procedures and informed data analysis procedures I chose for the study, as advised by Troudi (2010:3) and Grant and Osanloo (2014:17) that it informs the researcher's choice of the data analysis process. Therefore, when analysing data in this study, I had to show that meaning does not exist in objectivity, but it is a consequence of human social interaction, a key construct of the sociocultural theory used as the theoretical framework in this study. Additionally, a theoretical framework provided my position in this study to the phenomena that were studied, that is pedagogical practices used in L1 teaching and my position on the literature review. For example, in this study, I adopted the social constructivist approach, specifically, the sociocultural theory by Lev Vygotsky in exploring the teaching and learning of the siSwati language as a core subject in a multilingual classroom environment in Eswatini primary schools.

3.4 THE SOCIOCULTURAL THEORY: AN OVERVIEW

The sociocultural theory (SCT), which underpins this study, developed out of the ideas of the Russian psychologist Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky in the early 20th century. Vygotsky, a

social constructivist and his associates initially applied selectively the SCT in Russia in the 1920s and 1930s. However, Vygotsky died at a very young age, with much of his work left incomplete and the world had not accepted his theory. Thus, his work was later propounded by his followers like Alexander Luria, Mark Lebedinsky and Leontiev in the 1970s (Esteban-Guitart, 2018). Vygotsky built his sociocultural theory upon the importance of social interaction. For him, human development and learning originate from social and cultural interaction.

According to Vygotsky's SCT of development, three aspects are primary to the development of a child. Vygotsky (1978) identified these aspects as language, society and culture. For Vygotsky, the culture of the environment where a child lives, the social interactions s/he has with people living in that particular environment and languages strongly shape the development of high-order abilities in the child (Vygotsky 1978:25). He studied the role of the social environment and how the culture in which children lived shaped their mental abilities and influenced the development of higher-order thinking skills or cognition. In essence, learning was a social construct (Vygotsky, 1978:130) and for Vygotsky, the environment in which children live has a profound influence on how they develop cognitively. That is why SCT is regarded as a theory of cognitive development that contends that learners' cognitive development is facilitated through social interaction with skilled individuals who could be teachers, parents, siblings and peers (Vygotsky, 1978; Cherry, 2022).

Through his SCT, Vygotsky contends that human behaviour, on both the social and individual lanes, is influenced by tools such as language. Vygotsky viewed language as the basis and an essential tool of learning (Vygotsky, 1978:28). He theorised that the only way through which knowledge construction could be facilitated among children was via the semiotic tool, language. For Vygotsky, language was the only way through which adults were able to transmit knowledge and culture to children (Vygotsky, 1978). He viewed language as the medium through which information is passed from the skilled individual to the child in their social interaction and such interaction through language played a vital role in the development of cognition or higher-mental abilities in learners. Thus, language is viewed as the most important tool through which cognitive development could occur in learners through support from a skilled individual like a teacher, resulting in learners adopting and internalising what they have learnt and applying it in future situations. That being the case, in the classroom context, it appears language is the only means through which the teacher or skilled individual can transmit educational ideas to the learner. That is

why Vygotsky encouraged language teaching and acknowledged the role played by the child's first language in learning a second language. In support of Vygotsky's ideas, Kurt (2020) noted that language teaching is important as it results in making judgements, logic, reasoning and reflective thinking in learners. In the case of this study, the views of Vygotsky about the importance of language teaching and learning influenced me to adopt SCT as a lens through which I explored how teachers taught siSwati as the first language, bearing the fact that there are many dynamics involved in the teaching and learning of siSwati in Eswatini primary schools. Firstly, it is taught as a first language to learners of diverse linguistic backgrounds, yet some lack proficiency in the language. Secondly, it is a LoLT from Grades 1 up to 4. Hence, exploring teacher pedagogical practices was important for me, as the development of numerous literacies in learners in the foundation and middle phases of primary school in Eswatini is dependent on siSwati, the tool for learning other subjects in the curriculum. This was in keeping with Vygotsky (1978), who noted that it is through language that reading and writing are supported.

3.5 MAJOR CONCEPTS OF THE SOCIOCULTURAL THEORY

The SCT is made up of several interrelated and intertwined concepts and constructs. The major concepts and constructs of the SCT are: social interaction, the more knowledgeable other, mediation, zone of proximal development and scaffolding and collaboration. Having given an overview of the sociocultural theory, in the next presentation, I provide a succinct discussion of these concepts.

3.5.1 Social interaction

Vital to the SCT is the concept of social interaction. According to Vygotsky, learning among children is not an independent phenomenon, but it is interdependent as its foundations are on socialising with other people who are skilled individuals like teachers, guardians and peers. Social interaction involves the associations and socialisation a learner has with people in his/her social environment. As social beings, Vygotsky postulated that children were born with four elementary mental functions, namely, attention, sensation, perception and memory (Vygotsky, 1978). He contended that when children interact with the sociocultural environment, the people around them in particular, these elementary functions are eventually developed into more advanced efficacious mental processes called higher mental functions (Ableeva & Lantolf, 2011:135). For him, the only way through which a child's elementary mental skills were to develop was through children interacting, associating and communicating with the people living in their environment, thus teaching

reading should be contextualised to the learners' environment (Vygotsky, 1978:118). Therefore, higher mental functions are developed through elementary mental functions by involving a skilled person, such as a teacher acting as a guide, model and facilitator. That is why Vygotsky believed that much of the important learning that a child acquires and is responsible for the development of higher-order functions occurs through the social interaction with skilful individuals who might be guardians of children, such as parents, teachers, caregivers and peers (Cherry, 2022). This skilful person models good behaviour and provides instruction and also gives guidance. The child tries to comprehend that particular instruction and then internalises it and the internalised instruction will eventually guide and regulate the learner's future performance. In this way, the child or learner is said to have developed higher mental functions, which are characterised by independent thinking and learning.

Cherry (2022) viewed Vygotsky's SCT as denoting that learning for children would be impossible without the day-to-day interactions children had with people in their social environment. According to Vygotsky, the knowledge gained by a learner through socialising or interacting with people around the child's social environment is then moved to an individual level or autonomous rationalisation and learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Turuk (2008:248) agreed with Vygotsky as he observes that a learner obtains linguistic knowledge and skills through the constant associations, exchanges and communications s/he has with people around him. Consequently, that knowledge is then assimilated and internalised by the learner by building on his values to it and then internalised for future use. Vygotsky (1978:84) argued that: "Cognitive processes are the result of social and cultural interactions". In the case of a child, his/her first social environment is the home and then the school, which means teachers have to build upon the learner's prior knowledge, that is her/his home experiences, instead of ignoring them. In the case of this study, 95% of learners begin school having acquired speaking and listening skills of their L1, and teachers have to support learners by building on their prior knowledge to learn the other skills of the language. This is also true of the non-native speakers of siSwati; they come to school having acquired their first language. Therefore, in the case of this study, SCT contends that teachers should not ignore that prior knowledge but instead utilise it so that the latter group of learners acquires siSwati.

Likewise, in his sociocultural theory, Vygotsky theorised that social learning was responsible for development. This is to say, learning in the social environment preceded development. This view resonates with Milner (2017:77) who concurred that structures in the social

environment influence and determine the way individuals operate and their social interactions in turn shape their beliefs, attitudes and cognition. This line of thinking is supported by proponents of the Vygotskyian theory like Freire and Macedo (2005) who concurred that every child begins by studying the world around him before they begin to know about what is written. According to Hugo (2013), Vygotsky theorised that the type of social interaction between the learner and the skilful individuals around him involved cooperative and collaborative dialogue, and these were responsible for the promotion of development or cognitive ability. Thus, for Vygotsky, knowledge acquisition was a result of learners building on their social experiences. Vygotsky saw all stakeholders who were involved in child development, such as teachers, parents and peers, as tools through which learners can learn. It is in line with this thinking that Wertsch (2007:185) noted that Vygotsky theorised that the growth and development of school-age children was a consequence of well-structured and methodical school teaching.

As a consequence of the above Vygotskyian idea, I am of the view that the pedagogical practices of teachers are instrumental in supporting learners to improve and develop systematic linguistic skills which they had before starting school. It is based on this idea that I believe language teachers should build on learners' prior linguistic knowledge. Moreover, SCT suggests that teachers must be cognisant of the developed abilities of a learner, but must not limit their instruction to these abilities which have already developed. Instead, they should utilise effective tools in the form of sound and effective pedagogical practices to develop functions in the process of maturing. Furthermore, social interaction with language teachers implies that children will copy what they see and hear when interacting with teachers and uphold that as a personal value. Therefore, teachers have to model holistic good behaviour in front of learners, as learners spend most of their young lives in school and interact with the teacher almost daily, copying any good or bad behaviour.

3.5.2 The more knowledgeable other

Inherent to SCT is the concept of the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO). According to Fulbrook (2019), the MKO serves as a means by which learners can learn and acquire new skills through interacting with individuals who have more expert skills than the learner and s/he is the principal tool through which learners can expand their comprehension of concepts past their present capabilities by being given direction and prompt feedback. Vygotsky's views on the MKO were largely influenced by his personal and professional experiences. He was not only a psychologist but a pedagogist who taught literature and history in Moscow institutions (Esteban-Guitart, 2018:386). His love for teaching is

demonstrated by the fact that he believed that effective learning could only occur when the teacher, MKO or skilled individual gives learners demanding work that could challenge all their mental processes. As a pedagogist, he viewed the teacher as an individual who was vital in shaping the thinking of a child and an instrument through which learners can achieve high mental processes. For him, a learner could not learn without the help of a skilful individual, who is the teacher in the classroom scenario. Teachers in these sociocultural environments have tools such as pedagogical and instructional methods and strategies that they have to use effectively to help learners develop cognitively. Vygotsky was of the view that as long as teachers were to direct and assist learners in doing tasks they could not do independently, learners had the capability of achieving any challenging tasks before them. Thus, he posited that cognitive growth among learners could be attained when oral language is paired with practical activities (Vygotsky, 1978:24). Expounding on these ideas, Lantolf (2008) related the SCT to the teaching and learning process and contended that when children begin elementary school, they are largely depended on the teacher and parents to equip and support them with effective diverse educational tools, which will help them in developing their elementary mental functions into high mental skills. In essence, teachers have the role to support learners to internalise what they learn in class such that those skills are personalised and are applied in future situations.

Besides, although SCT posits that the MKO is primarily someone with an expert understanding of a subject such as teachers, parents and peers, nowadays the definition of an MKO is unrestricted to these individuals. Presently the MKO could also be electronic performance support systems, which could be used to support learning, especially in the present era of the COVID-19 pandemic where a lot of teaching and learning is through virtual platforms, such as Zoom, MOODLE, Edmodo and others. These could be electronic tutors who could be used to facilitate and guide learners. However, according to SCT, the advancements in technology cannot replace the important role played by social and physical interaction between a teacher and a student in education. As Fulbrook (2019) stated that cognitive development in learners primarily occurs through instruction and guidance by skilled teachers, in the case of this study, the skills teachers are expected to have knowledge of the subject matter and pedagogical practices they have to use to support elementary school learners to acquire literacy in siSwati. It is based on the importance of the teacher as a skilled individual, someone that exists in the learners' social environment and an individual expected to offer support to the learner to acquire language competence in siSwati that I used SCT as a roadmap to guide this study.

3.5.3 Mediation

According to Lantolf, Thorne and Poehner (2015:3), mediation is the central construct of the SCT. For these authors, mediation is the main concept that ties together all the other constructs of the SCT, thus bringing into light the major ideas of the theory. According to the SCT, mediation relates to the use of a “tool” that can be used to help learners solve novel problems and subsequently accomplish their objective in learning (Vygotsky, 1978). For Daniels (2015:34), mediation is one of Vygotsky’s key pillars and his valuable contribution to social science. Daniels (2015) note that this concept has been found effective not only in the teaching and learning of language, but also in the teaching and learning of all subjects across the school curriculum. Furthermore, scholars, Ableeva and Lantolf (2011:134) observed that although mediation is a simple idea, it has great significance for the cognitive growth of a learner which starts in the ZPD as Lantolf (2000:2) stated that it is the major belief of the SCT “... that the human mind is mediated”. Lantolf, like Vygotsky held the view that mental growth in learners was a result of the support the learner receives from the socio-cultural environment. Agreeing to this view, Ableeva and Lantolf (2011:144), in their study investigating the effects of dynamic assessment of L2 listening comprehension among learners, found that mediation supported the acquisition of the listening skill as learners’ listening abilities were immensely improved.

Accordingly, Turuk (2008:250-251) asserted that mediation denotes the role played by important individuals and tools in the lives of learners. For this scholar, language learning is a collaborative endeavour which can be made possible through the support and assistance provided to the learner by people in the former’s environment. Thus, a learner can struggle to learn any language if s/he works in isolation, and without the assistance of the MKO (Turuk, 2008:258). That is why Khanahmadi and Sarkhosh (2018) conclude that mediation refers to the part that individuals play in the educational journey of learners, and happens when skilled individuals work as mediators, assisting in stirring learners to move further than what they already know to new knowledge. For Lantolf (2007:32), the development of individuals such as children is mediated by other individuals like teachers and parents who guide and direct them as they read or partake in educational activities. All these scholars are in agreement that a learner can learn best when the teacher or any other skilled person facilitates (mediates) the acquisition of subject content in learners. This could be through the use of sound and learner-centred pedagogical practices and other semiotic tools.

That is why Vygotsky (1978) regarded language as a mediation tool in discourse and thus it is the vital mediator between the teacher and the learner. Kozulin (1998) perceived mediation to be anchored in language. That being the case, mediation can be understood from two points of view, implicitly and explicitly. Scholars agreed that Vygotsky's concept of mediation can be understood from these two perspectives, that is, it can occur covertly and overtly (Daniels, 2015; Lantolf, *et al.*, 2015; Wertsch, 2007; Ellis, 1994). According to Daniels (2015:35), implicit mediation can be hidden and unintended. Ellis (1994:260) asserted that in implicit mediation, the learner is made to learn an unknown and difficult concept unconsciously. I will make an example of a situation in a language classroom when a learner learning to read is left to make mistakes and self-correct rather than the teacher prompting her/him. In so doing, the learner is making use of private speech and his/her zone of proximal development is at work rather than the social processes.

In contrast, Wertsch (2007:180) described explicit mediation as intentional, like when a person guiding another individual openly and deliberately presents a 'stimulus means' in an ongoing activity. In essence, explicit mediation is more observable and long-term. For example, a teacher can issue rules, which are guiding principles that every learner has to live by and follow in class. Exemplar rules that could be given to learners could be, no mocking of other learners and no stealing. These rules are obvious to the learner, and they are intended to be obeyed. That being the case, in the situation of a first and second language classroom, this implies that both oral and written languages are mediational tools to thinking, which can be used implicitly and explicitly by both the teacher and learners to execute activities and achieve them in a social context, which is the language classroom. On the same note, the language teacher through the mediation tool language is expected to help learners develop cognitive abilities when learners internalise oral and written language practices from a social external plane to a psychological plane or individual-internal plane (Vygotsky, 1978:27).

Furthermore, proponents of the SCT contended that Vygotsky identified two forms of mediators, namely mediation through symbols (symbolic mediation) and mediation through another individual (human mediation) (Lantolf *et al.*, 2015; Wertsch, 2007; Lantolf, 2000; Kozulin, 1998). For these scholars, understanding is established through numerous and multi-faceted mediation instruments, which Vygotsky termed tools and below is a discussion of the two forms of mediation.

3.5.3.1 Mediation through symbols

Mediation through symbols involves the use of psychological and physical tools like language and arts, which according to Daniels (2015:37) and Lantolf (2000:2) are used to control and guide the mind and human conduct. Symbolic tools are a characteristic of humans and are “inwardly or cognitively directed” (Lantolf *et al.*, 2015:5). Vygotsky (1978) postulated that the intellectual development in children was dependent on the comprehension of symbolic tools, which according to Lantolf (2002:2) include somatic and psychological tools created by people and used “to establish an indirect or mediated relationship between ourselves and the world”, and they are passed from generation to generation. This implies that symbolic tools are not automatically mastered by learners and Kozulin (1998) warned parents and educators about the dangers of assuming that a child might be able to deduce the correlation in symbols, even if it may seem to be too easy for the adult. Thus, there is a need for adults to guide and direct children methodically so they can acquire symbolic associations. In this regard, Lantolf *et al.* (2015:5) viewed language in all its manifestations as the utmost universal and great cultural symbol that individuals own to mediate their connection to themselves, each other and the world at large. For example, all the language skills of speaking, reading and writing are forms of symbolic mediation in the sense that it would be hard for the learner to construct the meaning of the phonological, morphological and syntactic symbols without the guidance of the MKO who acts as a mediator. Turuk (2008:254) concurred that language is the most important mediator, as the teacher selecting the learning experiences has to be proficient in the language and have a deeper understanding of the activity that has to be done by the learner. The medium of communication and a tool for the teacher to communicate their expectations to learners is the language and learners have to communicate to teachers their understanding or misunderstanding of a concept through language - hence language is a form of symbolic mediation which helps both the teacher and the learner to construct meaning.

3.5.3.1 Mediation through another individual

This kind of mediation is through another person, a more knowledgeable individual who assists the child by encouraging, nurturing and facilitating their learning (Wertsch, 2007:185). This is to say, mediation through another person is the kind of adult involvement that is available to support the child’s learning. Mediation through another individual can be manifested in many ways. For instance, in a language classroom, the sheer existence of the teacher to manage the social environment and establish a good teacher-learner rapport

is some kind of mediation that helps learners to learn. Furthermore, the teacher may help the learner to attain his/her goals through other mediation tools like challenging tasks, feedback and encouragement; these too are forms of mediation through another person (Lantolf, 2000; Lantolf *et al.*, 2015). In essence, the MKO acts as a guide and supports learners to be confident such that they can construct knowledge and meaning by seeing the relationship between concepts and making connections. In the case of this study, the siSwati language teacher is expected to assume the role of a human mediator who through the use of sound pedagogical practices (the other mediating tools) assists the learners to achieve their goals of functional use of the siSwati language. This means that active and effective learning can be achieved when learners are surrounded by teachers of different skills who can help the learner move from one level of knowledge to another. In this regard, the language teacher as a human mediator is the epitome of linguistic, cultural, social, textual and pedagogic mediation.

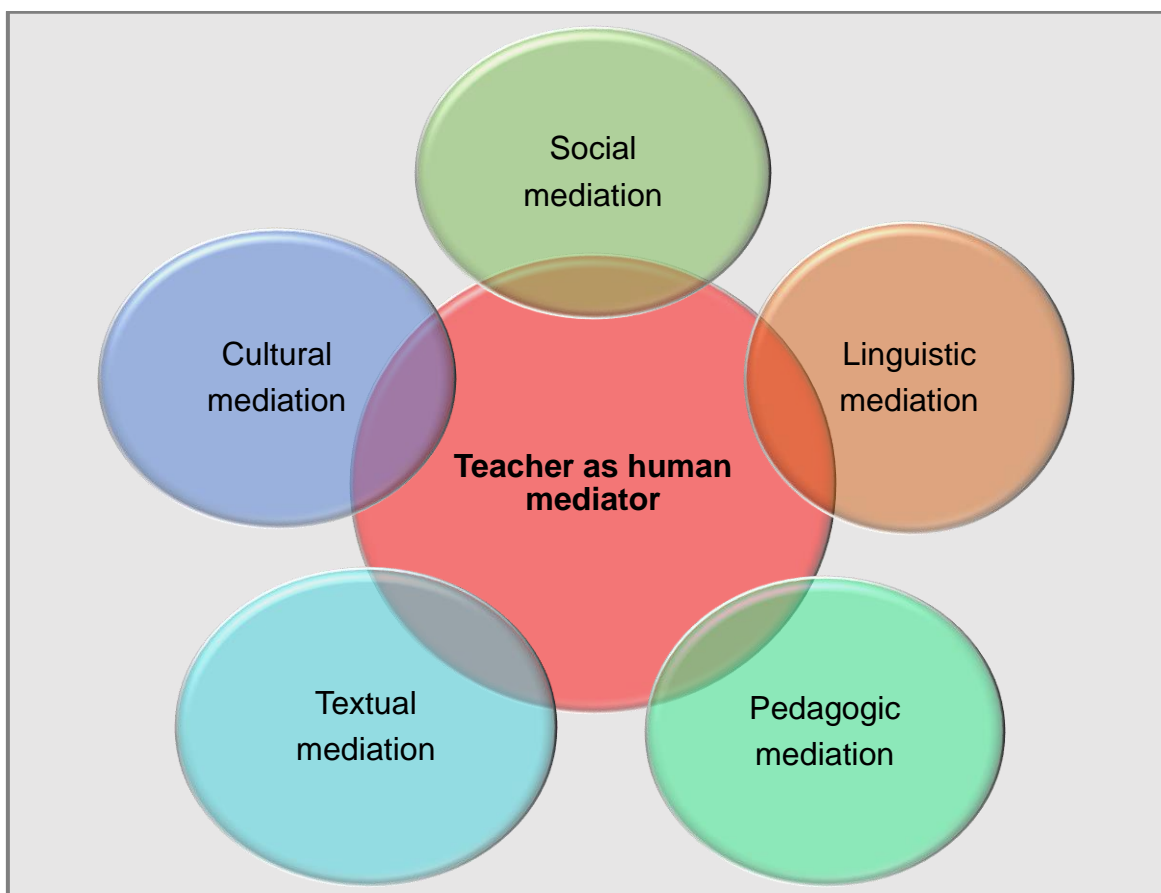


Figure 3.1: Illustration showing the overlapping relationship of the language teacher as a human mediator (Adapted from ALTE, 2017:88)

As can be observed from the above diagram, the language teacher as a human mediator has the responsibility of ensuring that learners acquire all the textual and linguistic skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing that guarantee communicative competence. Since this study focused on teaching the siSwati language as a first language to learners of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, the teacher is anticipated to be the glue that holds the class together by facilitating an understanding of different cultures in his/her language classroom and by playing the role of intermediary and creating a conducive social environment. Over and above that, the teacher as a pedagogist, teaching language to learners has to use appropriate pedagogical practices and mediate knowledge and concepts to facilitate learners' acquisition and learning of the subject.

3.5.4 Zone of Proximal Development

This construct is primary to the sociocultural theory. Some authors viewed the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) as an important construct in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of cognitive development (Lantolf, 2015; Ableeva & Lantolf, 2011; Fry, Ketteridge & Marshall, 2009; Fani & Ghaemi, 2011). They described the ZPD as the distance between what learners can do successfully on their own and what they can achieve with assistance from other people like teachers, parents and peers. This means there is a distinction in what one can achieve with no support and what one can accomplish with support from a knowledgeable individual. Vygotsky (1987:210) described the ZPD as the foundation of human growth and in his own words he had earlier said it is:

“The distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky (1978:86).

This, according to the SCT, means that learners who are in the ZPD can approximately execute a task on their own, but because they are on borderline, they are not quite there yet in the next phase of development (proximal) - hence they require assistance to do that task effectively (Vygotsky, 1978). Thus, “what one can do today with mediation is indicative of what one will be able to do independently in the future” (Lantolf *et al.*, 2015:7-8). Later work on the ZPD is best illustrated by Shabani (2016), Khanahmadi and Sarkhosh (2018) and Fulbrook (2019) who contended that the ZPD refers to the point linking a learner's autonomy to do a task, and the assistance they get to do that task from a more skilled individual who guides the learner into an understanding of novel situations. This means the

ZPD is the distance between what learners cannot do and what they can do with the assistance of the MKO.

Likewise, Vygotsky (1978:86) saw the ZPD as the zone where maximum support and thoughtful coaching ought to be provided to novice learners so they can acquire competencies they will use independently in the future. This facilitates the development of higher mental functions. For Ableeva and Lantolf (2011:135), Vygotsky held the view that teaching was the driving force of intellectual growth and if well executed, it can unlock the learners' mental abilities within the ZPD, thus activating internal growth processes. That is why Turuk (2008:250) asserted that inherent to the ZPD is that learning stimulates a diversified internal development process. For example, internalisation and assimilation only function when the learner associates and collaborates with skilled individuals and peers in his or her social environment (Vygotsky, 1978:56). This is to say, these developmental processes can only be functional when the learner interacts and collaborates with the skilled individual in doing a task. This means learning in the ZPD is not only developed through collaborative and cooperative endeavours with the teacher but also the learners' peers. Once these tasks have been assimilated and internalised by the learner, they become part of the learners' cognitive developmental achievements. That is why Vygotsky (1962:204) recommended four methods educators can utilise to recognise the growing higher intellectual functions of the learner relating to the ZPD. These are; (1) modelling to ascertain if the learner can emulate the step, (2) solving a problem to ascertain if the learner can finish it on their own, (3) engaging the child to collaborate with another peer whose developmental level is above his/hers; and (4) clarifying the different steps of solving the problem through asking the learner questions and ultimately conducting a comprehensive analysis of the problem, hence helping the learner to solve it.

The processes of assimilation and internalisation are further expounded by Fulbrook (2019) who contended that the ZPD has four important components which are: *self-assistance*, which refers to when learners reflect on existing knowledge which can be prior knowledge and assumptions on a particular topic; *teacher-assistance* which entails to when the teacher directs, steers and guards learners in their learning activities; *internalisation* when learners show their ability to use the knowledge they acquired from the teacher and when the children demonstrate their capacity to use the content they got from the teacher and; *reoccurrence* which refers to the application, thus what learners learnt from the teacher is now applied into practice, similar life situations or other situations. In essence, the idea of the ZPD stresses the point that learners achieve higher mental functions or higher cognitive

levels when knowledge gaps in their reasoning and the skills to figure out challenges are reinforced by knowledgeable adults, such as teachers and any other person living in the child's environment. What the SCT says is that the MKOs act as a scaffold that allows the learner to learn within the ZPD. The social environment comprising teachers, parents and peers supports development in such a way that what can be done collaboratively now will be accomplished independently by the learner at a later date. Thus, it is critical for the learner to actively participate in the learning process for this development to occur.

I found the ZPD facet of SCT pertinent to this study in the sense that this study focused on how teachers teach SL1 in a classroom environment made up of native and non-native speakers of the language. In line with scholars who view that supporting and guiding a learner in the ZPD for an activity can result in the learner accomplishing that activity, in the case of this study, I am also of the opinion that the language teacher as the skilled individual has to support and guide both mother tongue and non-mother tongue speakers of siSwati to acquire core skills in the language (Fulbrook, 2019; Khanahmadi & Sarkhosh, 2018; Shabani, 2016; Fani & Ghaemi, 2011). Therefore, I believe that the language teacher as a skilled individual should be swift in identifying when a learner is faced with learning difficulties and act as a scaffold, to bring out the learner from that difficult situation. Such challenges could be a lack of understanding and linguistic misconceptions. The teacher should seize that opportunity and use it as a scaffold to inculcate new knowledge in the learner so that they may apply the newly acquired knowledge to a variety of new situations (Iddings, Risko & Rampulla, 2009).

The implication of the ZPD to the language teacher is that as much as s/he is an expert in his or her field, s/he should be cognisant of the fact that learners have problem-solving abilities. However, it is worth noting that the ZPD does not only result in guidance by the skilled individual. According to Turuk (2008:249-250), other developmental factors come into play and have an integral role as a learner's function can be limited or fixed by his or her developmental state. This is to say, instruction alone is insufficient but holistic developmental aspects like physical, social, emotional, intellectual and aesthetic growth of the child are basic for learning in the ZPD to be functional and effective. Thus, when selecting learning materials and learning experiences to be provided to learners, language teachers must ensure that the learning context offered aligns with the learner's development state. For example, in Grade 1, the language teacher may have to first teach phonics to the learners before s/he can proceed to phonemes that make a morpheme. Through collaboration with the teacher, the learner may acquire the fundamental techniques of

combining morphemes to words and acquired principles of forming words can be internalised and applied to other related life situations whereby s/he forms words and sentences and then paragraphs. Cherry (2022) offered suggestions on how teachers can employ the ZPD in classrooms: Firstly, by preparing and drawing up a well-thought-out outline of their lessons, this could be done by pairing learners into groups and pairing struggling learners with those who demonstrate high levels of skills. Secondly, a teacher might use hints, prompts and direct instruction to help advance the skills of learners. Lastly, with the use of scaffolding, and here the teacher can give implicit and explicit prompts to gradually stir the learner towards achieving his/her learning goals. Scaffolding as a tenet of SCT is discussed in the next section.

3.5.5 Scaffolding

Scaffolding is another important and interesting concept of the sociocultural theory. The concept of scaffolding was not invented by Vygotsky himself but developed by Jerome Bruner, a proponent of Vygotsky's work. Bruner and his colleagues were influenced by Vygotsky's thinking that there was no other way of understanding human development other than through a supportive and collaborative endeavour between the learner and the skilled individual (Lantolf *et al.*, 2015). Having been convinced and influenced by Vygotsky's work, they invented the concept of scaffolding. They used the metaphor of a scaffold, a platform construction workers utilise to access an inaccessible part of a building to indicate that a skilled person was an essential tool to promote cognitive growth in learners. According to Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976:90) and Lantolf *et al.*, (2015:11), by scaffolding, Bruner referred to the provisional assistance afforded a learner by a skilled individual (be it a teacher, parent, mentor or sibling) who helps the learner to do a task until such a period when the learner can do the task on his own. Therefore, the MKO acts as a scaffold in developing higher order thinking skills among learners. Vygotsky postulated that learners use the MKO as a platform or support system to develop higher mental functions (Fry *et al.*, 2009:21).

Interestingly, there is a profound link and connection between Bruner's concept of scaffolding and Vygotsky's ZPD. The deep relationship between the two concepts lies in the fact that Bruner described scaffolding as the support and guidance adults offer to learners through a variety of pedagogical practices to develop and organise their behaviour and thinking processes such that they can independently solve problems that they could not solve on their own (Lantolf *et al.*, 2015:11; Fry *et al.*, 2009:21;). This is related to the sociocultural theory's ZPD in the sense that the skilled individual has to assist the learner

who is within the ZPD until s/he can do a particular task on her own, which s/he could not do without the support or guidance of the skilled individual.

Moreover, King (1995:16) noted the important role scaffolding plays in the holistic development of a child, especially cognitive development. According to King (1995), in the social constructivist approach like the sociocultural theory, teachers, parents and peers provide the necessary scaffolding through which learners construct new knowledge and develop higher order thinking abilities. Gillespie and Greenberg (2017:90) concurred that scaffolding is a very important component of the ZPD because it assists learners who are starting school to be confident in their learning relying on models such as the teacher and other people around them as a source of support. This is helpful because it helps novice learners, starting school to adapt well and become motivated in their studies. King (1995:16) viewed modelling as a form of scaffolding and advises teachers to employ effective scaffolding pedagogical practices to arouse learners' motivation towards the subject. Thus, teachers should ensure that activities given to learners are well articulated and challenge them to attain their goals. According to Vygotsky, through scaffolding, the learner:

“...acquires a greater number of models that she understands. These models represent, as it were, a refined cumulative design of all similar actions; at the same time, they are also a rough blueprint for possible types of action in the future” (Vygotsky 1978:22).

This implies that a learner who has the support of someone who is knowledgeable oozes self-confidence and handles learning difficulties without fear. If they fail, they do not despair, but they are challenged to try over and over again until they can accomplish a task they could not do on their own.

In the case of this study, I view the SL1 teachers as the MKOs, their pedagogical practices and instructional strategies are scaffolds through which they demonstrate the desired task to the learner and then gradually shift the responsibility to the learner (Turuk, 2008). My perspective of this is in line with Daniels (2001) who asserted that the most important aspect of scaffolding is that teacher's assistance should be decreased gradually as the learners' understanding and self-reliance grow. I believe that as much as scaffolding is important in teaching all grades, it appears more vital when teaching foundation phase learners as in the case of this study. This is because the foundation and middle phase learners need a bit more attention, assistance and approval. Thus, this strategy requires teachers to regulate the classroom environment, ensuring that learners get gradual instruction devoid of frustration while they expand their knowledge depth.

I find scaffolding as a construct of SCT pertinent to this study because I am of the view that like a scaffold, teachers should be structures that enable learners to solve problems in their quest to attain language competence. The teacher should structure the task such that it provides the best learning experience to the learner. This means that the teacher should create a conducive social environment of learning for the learner to work on a given task successfully. However, language teachers should ensure that they allow learners to explore the steps towards achieving that particular task on their own. In the case of this study, most learners are native speakers of siSwati and go to school after having attained the language skill of speaking, and partially of listening. Moreover, in the context of this study, some learners begin school without knowing a single word of the siSwati language. Therefore, teachers as people with skills have the responsibility of helping these learners to acquire the siSwati language, which is also a language of learning and teaching in the foundation and middle phases of primary school in Eswatini. This is the case because the sole purpose of scaffolding is to help the learner be autonomous and learn on his own, thus being actively involved in his learning. This view is in line with Applebee and Langer (1983) who found that teaching reading and writing in a school situation was a continuation and redevelopment of prior language-learning processes such as speaking and listening.

3.5.6 Collaboration

Vygotsky founded his theory of gaining knowledge on partnership, postulating that working with the MKO was vital to any learner's cognitive development (Cherry, 2022; Vygotsky, 1978). In the case of a classroom situation, the knowledgeable or skillful individual is the teacher or an adult at home. He advocated for cooperative or collaborative learning. According to Vygotsky, when a teacher works with a group, he can steer that group towards a predetermined objective. This means without a social group, the learner may struggle to achieve his/her goals. Thus, a teacher is a facilitator in class who has to guide learners, move around in class, and find out if learners are attentive and participate in what is being learnt. In this way, the teacher will be able to see what they are discussing and writing, whether is it relevant or not, who is lagging and who is following and be able to provide a prompt correction. Collaboration means that the teacher should employ pedagogical practices that are learner-centred such as group discussions, oral presentations and debates. This is the case because these methods do not only require learners to rely on the teacher but involve learners working with peers which can make the learners not only learn from the teacher who is the expert but from their peers. Furthermore, SCT does not see the teacher as the sole contributor to the learning of a child. Other factors such as parents,

siblings and the environment are viewed as influential in teaching and learning. Being cognisant of these factors in teaching language literacy, Vygotsky addressed the importance of organising teaching content so that it caters for the sociocultural, economic and political context of learners. He contended that instruction should be planned in a systematic way such that the two language skills of reading and writing are significant to the learner. For him, a lesson in writing should be instinctive and spontaneous and the pedagogical practices and methods of teaching reading and writing should include suitable functions in the learner's contextual background (Vygotsky, 1978).

The issue of collaboration is further emphasised by Milner (2012) and Milner (2010) who contended that teachers have to be aware of the linguistic and cultural diversities that exist in their language classrooms. They should try to collaborate with parents and also take into consideration the learners' environment and cultural experiences. Collaboration as a construct of SCT is significant to this study because though a majority of learners in primary schools in the country are L1 speakers of siSwati, a significant number of these learners are not native speakers of the language. Their first encounter with the language is at school where they are exposed to it in Grade One. Therefore, Milner cautions teachers against having a colour-blind approach to teaching but teachers are challenged to collaborate with the learner and parents so that the former can be successful in learning the language.

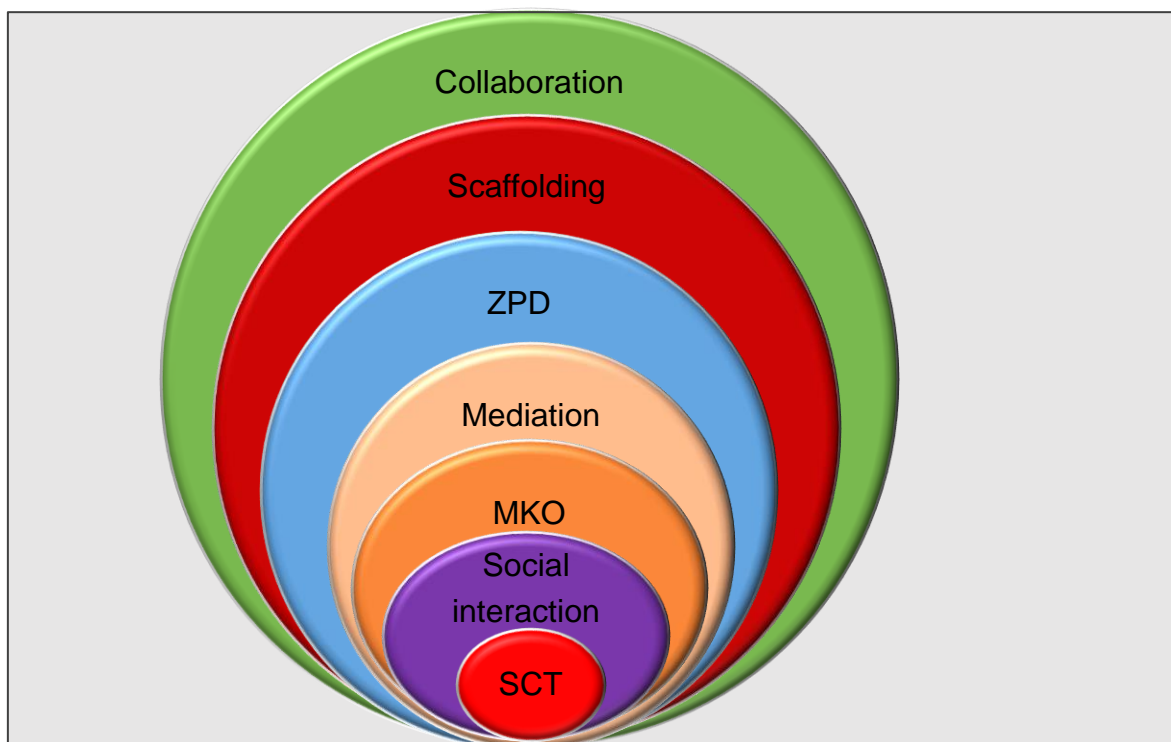


Figure 3.2: Constructs of Vygotsky's Sociocultural theory

Figure 3.2 is a presentation of the constructs that make the sociocultural theory and are pertinent to teachers' pedagogical practices in the first and second language classroom. Although these constructs are different, Figure 3.2 shows the overlapping relationship between these concepts which are important in assisting a learner to learn and acquire language. As shown in Figure 3.2, these different aspects of the SCT are intertwined and they show an elaborate relationship that synchronises and intersects, pointing out that thoughtful incorporation of all these constructs guarantees an efficacious teaching and learning of language. These constructs of the theory also indicate that an effective language teacher has to look in and beyond the language classroom for successful teaching and language learning.

3.6 WHY I FOUND THE SOCIOCULTURAL THEORY RELEVANT TO THIS RESEARCH?

The SCT is pertinent to this study because:

“...within SCT it has always been important to understand: how instruction, a socially constructed phenomenon, influences development; what type of instruction can be considered to be positive instruction and to what extent instruction might promote development” (Ableeva & Lantolf, 2011:136).

The above assertion aligns well with the study as its focus was to explore how teachers taught SL1 to learners, what type of pedagogical practices they used and how they used them to facilitate language acquisition and learning among the FOMIPs learners. My view is that language acquisition and learning are social constructs anchored in human interaction. Therefore, the interconnected facets of the theory link well to the study as when integrated harmoniously, there can be successful learning and acquisition of language. The SCT is pertinent to this study because not only does it view the teacher as a knowledgeable individual and a driver of the teaching and learning process, but also a facilitator who can collaborate with other stakeholders involved in the education of a learner. It views the teacher as the more knowledgeable other, an individual with skills to facilitate language learning. This aspect of the theory is relevant to the study as siSwati teachers who are the participants in this study are viewed as individuals who have skills to stimulate and motivate learners to learn siSwati language. Moreover, as a skilled individual, the teacher has to design his/her instruction such that it challenges the learner to think outside the box and execute tasks that they could not do before. Through the construct ZPD, siSwati teachers

are expected to nurture and support learners to accomplish what they could not do without their support.

Besides, I find the SCT pertinent to the study because it provides the important work done by the teacher through scaffolding. In the siSwati language classroom, the teacher who is the MKO has to act as a scaffold that supports and builds the learner to acquire core skills in the language. As a scaffold, the teacher is a guide and as such is expected to employ appropriate and engaging pedagogical practices, which will empower learners to acquire linguistic skills they did not have before interacting with her/him. Just like in construction where workers use a scaffold to reach an area beyond their reach, teachers of language are expected to act as a support system that supports learners to access linguistic skills which they could not access without their help. As a structure of support, the teacher is expected to design quality and challenging tasks such that the input yields the expected learning objectives.

Furthermore, the sociocultural theory is pertinent to this study because it suggests that teachers should look outside the actual siSwati language classroom context for collaboration and mediation measures. I am of the view that all the constructs of the SCT can be very useful tools for siSwati language instruction. This is to say, collaborative and mediation interactions which occur through the siSwati language within the classroom between the teacher and learners, and outside the classroom between learners and parents and among learners themselves can result in effective language teaching and learning. I find the concept of mediation by Vygotsky significant to first language and second language teaching and learning as according to this concept, higher cognitive functions in individuals are mediated through language and other semiotic artefacts. The theory suggests that the teacher has to create purposeful and meaningful associations and interactions with learners and among learners. When I link this idea to this study, it means that teacher pedagogical practices should be sound and encourage thoughtful discussions in the language classroom through collaborative and participatory learning pedagogies.

3.7 SUMMARY

In this chapter, I introduced the reader to the sociocultural theory, which was used as a lens through which I explored teacher pedagogical practices in teaching SL1 in Eswatini primary schools. I began the chapter by defining what a theoretical framework is and by pointing out its importance to this study. I then explored the different constructs of the theory, showing their intricate relationship and how harmonious incorporation of these constructs can result

in successful teaching and learning of language. Furthermore, I linked the SCT to the study, pointing out the relevance of the theory to the study. Ultimately, I summarised the key points discussed in this chapter. In the following chapter, I present the methodology that I employed to respond to research questions raised in the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, I presented a discussion of the sociocultural theory, the theoretical framework that I used as a lens through which I gained an understanding of pedagogical practices in SL1 instruction in multilingual settings. In this chapter, I present processes and procedures that I followed to respond to research questions raised in the study. I begin the chapter by presenting the research paradigm, the interpretivist paradigm that informed my choices of research design and the methods I complied with in this investigation. I then discuss philosophical assumptions of ontology, epistemology and methodology which underpin the study and were guided by the paradigm. I also provide the research approach of the study which is the qualitative approach. The type of the study is presented through the research design, which is the exploratory case study design. I then provide a discussion of how I selected participants of the study and the methodology I used to generate data responding to research questions raised in the study. Moreover, I present the processes of data analysis, and the action I took to ensure quality assurance in the study. Finally, I provide the chapter summary.

4.2 A RESEARCH PARADIGM

Some scholars agree that a paradigm is an assemblage of suppositions and ideas regarding basic features of reality that bring about a certain ideology (Maree, 2016:52; de Vos *et al.*, 2011:513). Also, a detailed description of a research paradigm is given by Creswell (2012:630) who defines it as denoting a particular worldview guiding a researcher who might be of that view about practices that are allowed in conducting research and how those practices influence the researcher on the type of research questions to ask, of what could be examined, explored and observed, on how to generate data and explain results. Bertram and Christiansen (2014) further posit that responses to the research questions show a certain perception with regards to the qualities of the social environment, what can be discovered about it and how those discoveries can be reached. As much as these scholars agree about a research paradigm showing how one views the world and their assumptions about it, the definition of a research paradigm I adopt in this study is the one by Bertram and Christiansen (2014) because it is transparent on how researchers view and research the social world. I understand that a paradigm provides a perspective through which what

people believe to be the truth is explained. Therefore, guided by this definition, the research paradigm I embraced in this study to comprehend teacher pedagogical practices in teaching SL1 is the interpretive research paradigm discussed in detail in the following section.

4.3 THE RESEARCH PARADIGM-INTERPRETIVE

The interpretive paradigm developed in the 19th century has its origins in hermeneutics, an enquiry into understanding ideologies and the application of explanations (Maree, 2016:60; Bryman, 2012:28; de Vos *et al.*, 2011:8). Its utmost purpose is to give a viewpoint on a case under study and also to examine it giving perspective on how people understand their context or the case under investigation. Thus, for Maree (2016), this paradigm is not just a philosophical theory of comprehending literacy, but of understanding and meaning -hence this aligned with this study because I sought to understand teachers' implementation of pedagogical practices in their SL1 classrooms and their experiences.

The main reason for employing the interpretivist paradigm is based on its philosophical assumptions which I found pertinent to this study. One philosophical assumption of this paradigm is that one cannot understand human life from afar, in a detached environment but from within (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018:114; Cohen *et al.*, 2011:17; Maree, 2016:61). In this investigation, I wanted to obtain an in-depth comprehension of teachers' practices by interacting with them in their social setting, which is the school and try to understand "subjective experiences, on how people construct the social world by sharing meanings and how they interact with or relate to each other" (Maree, 2016:61). Therefore, by interacting closely with participants, I endeavoured to comprehend teachers' lived experiences, explain the importance of the meanings they attribute to their life experiences and how their experiences shaped their present actions. To be successful in this undertaking, I needed to place myself within the social environment of siSwati teachers' classrooms to interact and observe them in practice interacting with learners and how they interpreted their daily classroom actions. This line of thinking is supported by Troudi (2010:2) who contends that the interpretive paradigm is suitable when a researcher's focus is to explore and gain an understanding of a specific event or occurrence like the process of teaching and learning a language at elementary school, including the instructional practices used by teachers. Therefore, the research's focus and purpose informed my choice of an interpretivist paradigm by being rooted in this paradigm. This is the case because the purpose and focus of this research were to examine teacher pedagogical practices in SL1 in multilingual classrooms and also to understand how and why they are used in the manner they are used. Therefore, the interpretive paradigm was selected, as it enabled me to comprehend

how teachers construct and understand their pedagogical practices and how they experience teaching SL1 in the foundation and middle phases (FOMIPs).

Moreover, I adopted the interpretive paradigm because of the nature of this research, which focused on appreciating and understanding the world from the standpoint of siSwati teachers. Hence, I employed the interpretive paradigm, as it is pertinent to social science-based research, which highlights the importance of examining situations in context and the perspective of participants. Several scholars agree about the interpretive paradigm emphasising analysing an occurrence in context so as to conceive reality from the perception of the individual (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018:114; Cohen *et al.*, 2011:17). Therefore, interpretivism allowed me to partake in the journey of SL1 teaching at the FOMIPs and to understand teachers' interpretations of the phenomenon, which was studied and ultimately see things from their perspectives. The nature of the study required me to comprehend how teachers make logic of situations that occur in their everyday lives, and in that process continuously give reasons for their day-to-day behaviours (de Vos *et al.*, 2011:8). In essence, this paradigm allowed me to understand SL1 teaching and learning from the perspectives of FOMIP teachers, with the sole purpose of appreciating and understanding how they teach, why they teach the way they do and ultimately gain an insight into their experiences of teaching SL1 in multilingual settings.

Furthermore, my adoption of the interpretive paradigm was influenced by the research questions raised in this study, which were rooted in it. According to Maree (2016:61), the social world co-exists with human knowledge. As an educator and a researcher, my understanding of instruction influenced the nature of the questions I raised in the study and how I went about doing the research. The questions I asked in the study were how teachers employ pedagogical practices in teaching SL1 and why they employed them in the manner they did. The nature of these questions is "relational, naturalistic, subjective, interpretive and descriptive" (Maree, 2007:61). Therefore, this paradigm was used in this investigation, as it enabled me to select appropriate data generating tools that would assist me to respond to the research questions raised in the study, thus generating in-depth data sufficient for me to comprehend the phenomenon of SL1 teaching in multilingual settings. With the help of interviews, focus group discussions (FGD), classroom lesson observations (CLOS) and document analysis, I related and observed teachers as they described their practices in natural setting, which is the classroom. My practice in this study was informed by Bryman (2012:31) and Troudi (2010:2) who assert that the interpretive paradigm is appropriate in

such a situation as it offers the researcher not only an opportunity to ask participants open-ended questions, but also to live and see for herself the participants in their world.

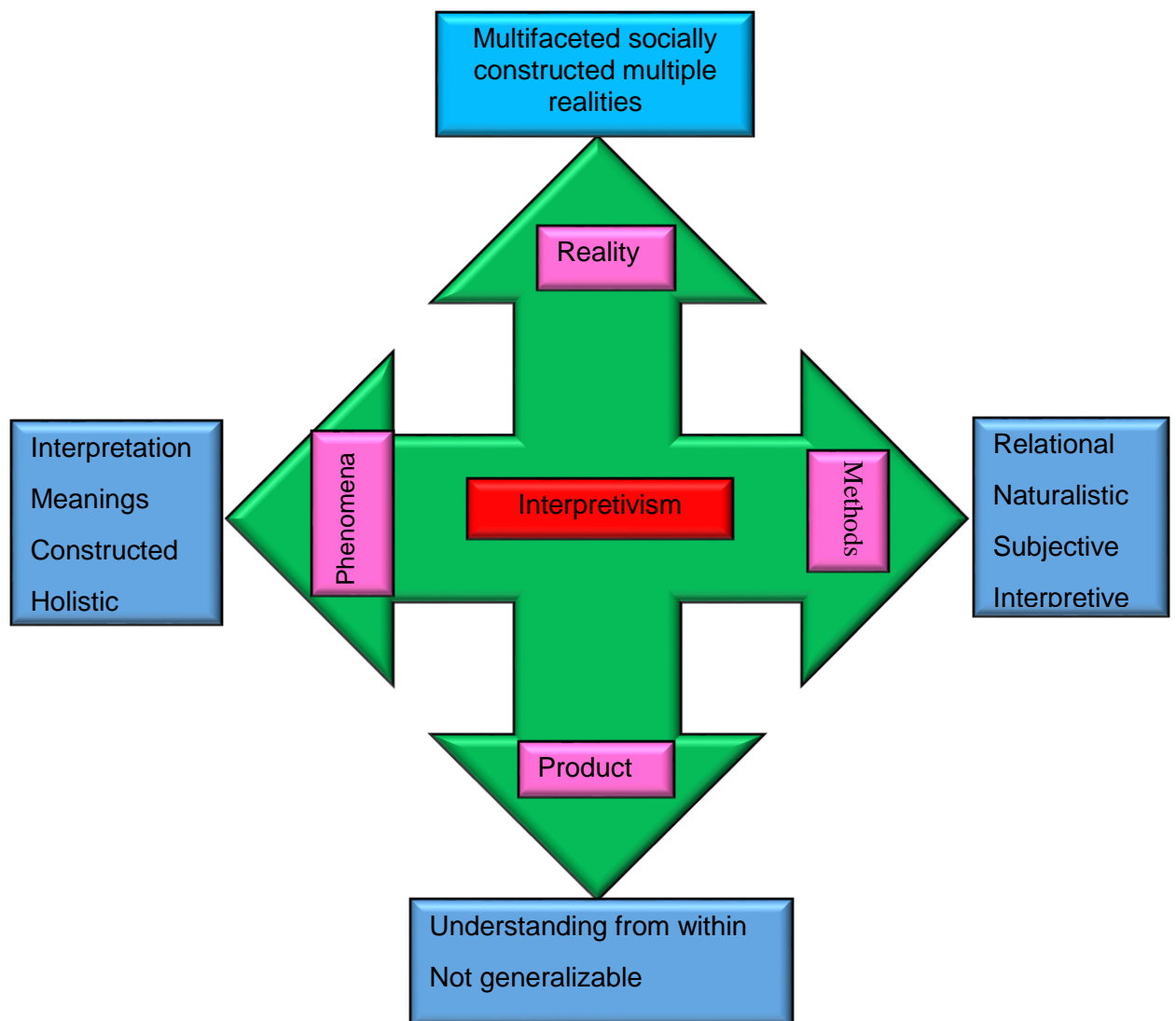


Figure 4.1: Representation of the interpretive paradigm: (Adapted from Maree, 2007:61)

Last but not least, my adoption of the interpretive paradigm was in line with the sociocultural theory, which posits that ideally human behaviour can be understood by studying an individual in their social environment and cultural context. My stance was informed by Creswell and Poth (2018:34) who proclaim that the goal of a social constructivist researcher is to comprehend their world by studying and interpreting the meaning participants give to their life experiences. In this regard, Vygotsky' sociocultural theory (SCT), the theory that informed this enquiry, guided my preference of the paradigm, as it stresses the relationship

between cognitive development and people and their social and physical environment (Vygotsky, 1978:131). For the sociocultural theory, learners acquire language competence through social and cultural interaction and the major components instrumental to the cognitive development of a child are language, society and culture (Vygotsky, 1978; Kurt, 2020; Cherry, 2022). For that reason, in the case of the study, learners acquire language competence when they interact with teachers in their environment, hence culture affects the learners' acquisition of cognitive processes chiefly because all children grow in the context of culture, be it the home, community or school environment.

For me, teachers as the skilled individuals in the environment of the learner were the individuals to be studied in this study; the environment is the school and the classroom and cultural contexts provided the best avenue to understand their daily classroom interactions and practices. Therefore, choosing the interpretive paradigm enabled me to closely engage with teachers so that I identified their pedagogical practices in teaching SL1 in diverse linguistic settings, how these practices are used and ultimately gained an insight into why they are used in that manner.

Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that the paradigm I selected for this study is criticised and “most of the critique levelled against interpretivist research paradigm is directed at the subjectivity and the failure of the approach to generalise its findings beyond the situation studied” (Maree, 2007:60). Additionally, such criticism does not affect the findings of the study because the aim and intent of the research were not to generalise findings to elsewhere, nonetheless to attain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon that was researched.

4.3.1 Application of the interpretivist paradigm in this study

According to Scotland (2012), and Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2006), all paradigms are founded on their ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions. Therefore, this study used the interpretivist paradigm based on these three assumptions in the following ways:

4.3.1.1 Ontological assumptions

Some authors assert that ontology is concerned with the study of nature and form of reality (Bryman, 2012:32; Maree, 2016:57; Cohen *et al.*, 2011:33). Gray (2015:19) generally views ontology as the analysis of the world, its existence and what generates truth. Moreover,

Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2006) avow that ontology relates to what is truth, that is, the nature of reality of what is being researched. For Cohen *et al.* (2011) and Bryman (2012), the primary focus of ontology is the character of the occurrence under investigation, what is reality and how people construct their reality. In essence, ontology responds to the question, what is? My ontological assumption is that reality is socially constructed and this was guided by the fact that language teaching and learning are social practices that are determined by the culture and environmental context where both the teacher and learner live (Vygotsky, 1978:130; Krashen, 1982:58).

The interpretive paradigm views reality as a social construct and is dynamic. This is to say, no two people can experience an occurrence the same way. Several authors agree that every person is influenced by the social context, which is the knowledge about the world, culture and relations people have with each other (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018:115; Cohen *et al.*, 2011:15; Maree, 2016:62). In essence, ontology says each individual has assumptions about the world; these assumptions can be about the person's views on life, beliefs, norms, experiences, practices and principles, which may influence the way the individual interacts with other people in the social environment. In this study, likewise, teachers have different experiences of teaching SL1 in the FOMIPs owing to several dynamics. The way teachers construct and interpret their pedagogical practices is influenced by their worldviews. Therefore, I endeavoured to understand how they understood their world in their natural setting (the classroom) through their everyday practices and interactions with SL1 learners.

Furthermore, interpretive researchers are of the view that realities are manifold and lone reality is non-existent (Yin, 2016:16; Maree, 2016:60). Therefore, the ontological assumption I have is that objective reality is fictitious, but the reality is subjectively built by understanding the different teachers' meaning of their world (de Vos *et al.*, 2011). In my quest to explore and establish these multiple realities, I employed different techniques of data generation to establish how teachers teach SL1 in multilingual classrooms. Individual interviews were conducted to have an intimate interaction with teachers; CLOS was conducted to see teachers in practice; the FGD was conducted to get a collective and differing experience of teachers' experiences, and finally, documents such as teacher's scheme of work, lesson plans and tests were analysed to corroborate teachers' verbatim accounts and the lesson observations. Therefore, in this study, I viewed teachers as being responsible for the construction of their social world and the way teachers constructed and interpreted their pedagogical practices was to provide me with an in-depth comprehension

of SL1 learning and instruction in the FOMIPs and also help me gain meaning they attribute to their classroom practices and experiences.

4.3.1.2 Epistemological assumptions

According to Cohen *et al.* (2011:33) and Bryman (2012:27), epistemology focuses on how one gets to know the different structures of knowledge in the world. For Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2006), epistemology is not only concerned with the source of knowledge and what leads researchers to conduct a study but it is also concerned with how knowledge is acquired and how researchers get to know about a phenomenon. An in-depth description of epistemology is, “epistemology relates to how things can be known - how truths or facts or physical laws can be discovered and disclosed” (Maree, 2016:67). Therefore, epistemology relates to how a researcher gets to know the truth about a phenomenon under study and what leads to them knowing what they know. It answers the question, how can I know and what it means to know?

In this research, epistemology concerns the knowledge of pedagogical practices in teaching siSwati as a first language in multilingual classrooms as a phenomenon. My epistemological position in this study is that knowledge is based on participants’ narratives and their subjective experiences of the world. My point of view is supported by scholars who contend that the world is supposed to be understood through explanations given by participants about their lives and that the narratives chronicled by them are a vehicle by which we examine and comprehend reality (de Vos *et al.*, 2011:309-310; Maree, 2016:61). Therefore, the only way of gaining knowledge of the teaching of SL1 in the FOMIPs in this study was by understanding it from teachers’ perspectives, through their practices, experiences and the interpretations they attached to their teaching of SL1. Through participants’ explanations and interpretations of their pedagogical practices and experiences, I gained an understanding of the phenomenon of teaching SL1 in the FOMIPs in the natural environment of participants. Therefore, in this study, I sought to socially construct knowledge by experiencing teachers’ implementation of instructional practices in their SL1 classrooms, which are the natural setting. Both the enquirer (me as an investigator) together with the enquired (teachers as participants) were involved in an interactive process where we conversed about their experiences of teaching SL1 in multilingual classrooms. I employed interactive methods of data generation to obtain a subjective comprehension of siSwati teachers through employing interviews, FGD and lesson observations

4.3.1.3 Methodological assumptions

Cohen *et al.* (2011:33) contend that ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions are interconnected. As ontology focuses on the nature of reality, epistemology is concerned with how one gains knowledge, therefore epistemological assumptions influence a researcher's choice of methodology or the procedure and processes to employ in a study. Methodological assumptions can thus be understood to refer to the various ways through which a researcher gathers information to understand a phenomenon. They respond to the "WH" questions like what, why, where, when and how data were collected, generated and analysed (Crotty, 2003:3). The theoretical perspective is vital in determining the methodological assumption and for Crotty (2003:7), it is; "the theoretical stance informing the methodology and thus providing a context for the process and grounding its logic and criteria".

Methodologically, the interpretive paradigm is flexible in employing numerous and varied research strategies to find out what can be known about a phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:181; Creswell & Poth, 2018:43). In essence, methodological assumptions determine how a study will be conducted. Therefore, since this study adopted the interpretive paradigm, methodologically, it adopted a qualitative approach which allowed me to select appropriate tools in my quest to find out how teachers employed pedagogical practices in their SL1 classrooms. Concerning the methodological assumption of this research, the research approach, study design, sampling, method of data generation, methods of data analysis and quality assurance procedures are part of the methodology section and are presented comprehensively in the subsequent sections.

4.4 THE RESEARCH APPROACH – QUALITATIVE

I employed the qualitative approach in this investigation to explore teacher pedagogical practices in teaching SL1 in a multilingual context at the FOMIPs of elementary school. Denzin and Lincoln (2018:12) argue that qualitative research is multifaceted, and different paradigms and approaches can be qualitative. Several Scholars approach the definition of qualitative research in different ways (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014; de Vos *et al.*, 2011; Cohen *et al.*, 2011; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). While others pay attention to the focus and purpose of qualitative research, others focus on philosophical assumptions, particularly epistemological and methodological positions. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014:346), the qualitative approach as the name suggests is research that endeavours to generate quality data to comprehend a certain event or occurrence under investigation. This

is to say that issues of quantifying data are not the purpose of this approach. With regards to research focus and purpose, Yin (2016:9) contends it is an approach that is interested in comprehending an individual's construction of meaning, how people understand their world and how they explain their experiences in the social environment.

Epistemologically, Maree (2016:67) and Yin (2016:18) assert that it is research that shows that society is made up of an array of people with different worldviews and sets of beliefs and reality and meaning can be known by studying peoples' experiences, thus giving them a voice to talk about their experiences. Methodologically, it is research that puts the enquirer at the centre of the research process as s/he becomes the data generating tool and is actively immersed in the natural world by interpreting what s/he finds through interviews, observations and document analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018:43; Cohen *et al.*, 2011:225). That is why Denzin and Lincoln (2018:12) posit that a qualitative investigator does her/his research in the environment where the event occurs and makes interpretations based on what the people say. Therefore, the approach of this study is qualitative, as it investigated pedagogical practices in SL1. It expounded on teachers' explanations and their behaviours and processes of teaching and their experiences and motivation for teaching SL1 in diverse linguistic classrooms.

4.4.1 Justification for adopting the qualitative approach

The study's purpose and focus, my understanding of gaining language competence, the SCT and the interpretive research paradigm embraced by this study informed my choice of the qualitative approach. The purpose of this research sought to comprehend how and why pedagogical practices are used in teaching SL1 in diverse linguistic classrooms of the FOMIPs. Both the focus and purpose of the study were linked to how a child gains competence in language and this is ultimately linked to the SCT, the theoretical framework guiding the study, and a theory that posits that cognitive development among learners is built upon the importance of social and cultural interaction. As the SCT views social interaction as the basis for cognitive development, it was important for me to choose an approach that will allow me to interact and observe teachers in their working environment, thus examining their SL1 classroom practices, as suggested by several scholars that this approach is suitable when studying people or an occurrence in its natural context, and this the primary feature of this approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:181; Creswell & Poth, 2018:43, Maree, 2016:53; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:345; Leedy & Ormrod, 2014:141).

Moreover, according to the SCT, the phenomenon of language teaching, acquisition and learning is embedded in the social context and social practices (Cherry, 2022; Krashen, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978), thus the justification of choosing qualitative research for this study was based on its intrinsic feature of permitting an understanding of a phenomenon situated not only in the social world but also within the educational world. This conformed with Cohen *et al.* (2011:219) who assert that both the social and educational worlds are characterised by thickness, wealth, interconnectedness and conflicts, hence the qualitative approach permits a comprehensive and meticulous understanding of meanings and actions, of both the observable and non-observable phenomena of these worlds. This idea aligned perfectly with this research, as I wanted to conduct a comprehensive exploration of pedagogical practices in teaching SL1 in diversified linguistic classrooms. The nature of the study required extended time on the field interacting with siSwati teachers observing how they taught SL1 in their language classrooms. Therefore, in this study, I envisaged the role played by the social and cultural environment in influencing teachers' choice of pedagogical practices in their SL1 classrooms, as teaching is one educational feature that involves complex human interactions and can be studied by physically interacting with teachers in schools, which is the setting. The multifaceted and multidimensional environment of language teaching and learning in the FOMIPs, that is the social world (selected Eswatini primary schools) needs to be researched in totality rather than in fragments, hence providing my justification for utilising qualitative research.

Furthermore, my philosophical perspective of the world and research in general, that is, my ontological, epistemological assumptions about the world and the research paradigm I adopted in this study informed my decision to employ the qualitative approach. As earlier stated, my ontological assumption is that reality is socially constructed and language teaching and learning is a social practice. My epistemological stance is that knowledge is based upon the stories of participants and experiences of the world. In respect of these assumptions, my perspective on reality was guided by the interpretive paradigm, which espouses that the best way to study humanity is from within, not from outside (Maree 2016:61; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:347), thus SL1 teaching ought to be interpreted and understood through the subjective meaning that participants give to their life experiences. Thus in keeping with these authors, I adopted the qualitative approach so that I could give a voice to teachers and tell the story (pedagogical practices in SL1 teaching) from their perspective by understanding, interpreting and explaining the meaning they attribute to their lived experiences. In essence, the approach submerged me into the sociocultural context of participants such that it allowed me to explore and comprehend not

only teacher instructional practices but also teachers' behaviour, values and beliefs in their social contexts (Silverman, 2016:169) and how these social factors influence their teaching and learning of SL1 in linguistically diverse contexts.

Furthermore, I anticipated that the qualitative approach would enable me to generate authentic and rich data as McMillan and Schumacher (2014:346) posit that it allows investigators to generate a wealthy narrative description of an occurrence or situation as they approach it with the perspective that all is important, and nothing is insignificant in their quest to know reality. For these authors, qualitative data generating strategies do not only generate data that is in-depth and rich but generate quality data that is relational and naturalistic, which yield a deep understanding of what is studied. For me, this warranted that the study would generate a sound and reasonably reliable and truthful interpretation of the phenomenon that was studied. Thus all teachers' actions, words and all details they provided about their day-to-day practices in their language classrooms were regarded as important and all observations were treated as important for a better understating of the phenomenon under discussion, pedagogical practices in the teaching SL1. They helped me to generate ample data that resulted in the production of a rich narrative description of the phenomenon.

4.4.2 Strengths of the qualitative approach

Qualitative research is praised by several scholars for several reasons amongst which is its ability to examine participants by interacting and watching them in their environment so as to focus on meanings and interpretations of their experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:181; Creswell & Poth, 2018:43; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:345; Maree, 2016:53). It helps with the employment of manifold data collection methods and the fact that the researcher personally collects data, resulting into a wealth of data which produces deep descriptions of the phenomenon studied. It is these strengths of the approach that allowed me to immerse myself in the study, interacting and observing teachers in their natural context, which was the classroom in this case. Interacting with teachers in their natural contexts allowed me to view the phenomenon under investigation from within, not from outside (Maree, 2016:61; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:347). Investigating teachers from their social context ensured that I not only comprehend explanations teachers attribute to their daily classrooms action, but also gain an understanding of their perceptions of their practices.

4.4.3 Limitation of the qualitative approach

Moreover, even though I chose the qualitative path for this study, I was aware of its perceived weaknesses. Some scholars point out some weaknesses of this approach, including the fact that its research findings cannot be used in other similar situations (Bryman, 2012:406; Maree, 2016:68; Brown & Lloyd, 2001:351).

“A major criticism of qualitative studies: that the data lack generalisability and are unreproducible, as they are context specific. However, this weakness becomes the strength of such methods when used appropriately. The point is always ‘What is the question you are seeking to answer?’” (Brown & Lloyd, 2001:351).

In this study, I considered Brown and Lloyd’s advice and did not deviate from the purpose and focus and the research questions to which the study initially sought to respond. I understood that although findings could not be generalised, in the context of this study, they provided clarity on how siSwati teachers taught SL1 and their experiences of teaching the subject in linguistically diverse classrooms, as noted by Maree (2016:68) that despite findings being ungeneralisable, they provide clarity on the people studied under a specific context.

4.5 DESIGN OF THE STUDY - EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY

Some scholars agree with the definition of a research design that it is a plan through which a researcher decides and makes known to others his/her choices regarding the style or format his/her study will follow and participant selection, how s/he will generate data from participants and analyse it and how findings will be presented (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:6; Kumar, 2014:94; Bryman, 2012:46; Cohen *et al.*, 2011:235). Moreover, a design is guided by “fitness for purpose” (Cohen *et al.*, 2011:235). Therefore, being guided by the study’s focus and purpose, which were respectively to explore pedagogical practices in SL1 in multilingual settings, to find out how and why they were used in that manner, I chose the exploratory case study within the interpretive paradigm as the design of the research.

Moreover, several authors concur in their definition of a case study that it is a thorough examination of an occurrence that is confined to a particular natural context or place, time and setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018:96; Yin, 2014:16; Kumar, 2014:126; Cohen *et al.*, 2011:289). Creswell and Poth (2018:121) further state that it generates a comprehensive account and an analysis of single or manifold cases. Moreover, for a study to be called a

case study, it should have a specific defined case (Yin, 2014:16). Therefore, the defined case that was explored in this study was the teaching of SL1. The place and natural setting were the two linguistically diverse urban primary schools in the Shiselweni region as per several authors that a case study involves an organised comprehensive exploration of an occurrence in its natural setting to come up with new information and knowledge (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:181; Creswell & Poth, 2018:43; Leedy & Ormrod, 2014:141). The focus in each case was teacher pedagogical practices; that is how teachers taught SL1, why they taught the way they did and how they experienced teaching SL1 to learners of diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Furthermore, this was an exploratory case study. It is a design that investigates a topic about which nothing is known and is designed to influence future research (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014:143; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:348). Gray (2015) agrees that a carefully planned case study has the potential of providing strong ways of investigating instances where little is known or ambiguity exists about a phenomenon. Therefore, at the time I conducted this research, debatably, no investigation had been conducted about the phenomenon of teaching SL1 in multilingual school settings in Eswatini. Although it is an investigation involving two schools, its results have the potential of influencing future research and language policy. This is the case because the defined phenomenon was comprehensively investigated by utilising a variety of data-generating tools existing in the natural setting where the study was conducted as per the advice by McMillan and Schumacher (2014).

4.5.1 Justification for using the exploratory case study

Numerous strengths of the exploratory case study influenced my choice of it as the design for this research. Some scholars agree about the advantage and strength of this design that it specifically helps the investigator to learn about a phenomenon that not much is known about it (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014; Rule & John, 2011; Kumar, 2014; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014; De Vos *et al.*, 2011). This strength aligned with the study's purpose and focus, as they were respectively to explore pedagogical practices in the teaching of SL1 in linguistically diverse classrooms and determine how and why pedagogical practices are used. In the context of this study, arguably, no study has been conducted in Eswatini to explore pedagogical practices in teaching SL1 to learners who are native and non-native speakers of the language. The little research conducted in Eswatini focused on issues of the language of learning and teaching (LoLT), not on how siSwati is taught for literacy in the foundation and middle phases.

Furthermore, many scholars contend that one strength of the case study is that it offers a broad investigation of an instance that establishes a distinctive presentation of individuals drawing from actual events and real life experiences (Kumar, 2014:127; Cohen *et al.*, 2011:289; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). In the case of this study, this strength of the design offered me the ability to explore comprehensively teacher pedagogical practices and understand each teacher's practices by drawing from what I heard and saw during interviews and lesson observations. In this way, I was able to record manifold viewpoints, investigate opposed perspectives of the participants and ultimately explicate how and why circumstances transpired in the case under investigation which not much is known about, with the hope that it will also open a door for advanced investigation if need be (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014; Bertram & Christiansen, 2014; John & Rule, 2011).

My rationale for using the case study design was also informed by the research questions raised in this study and the interpretive paradigm I adopted. The unique characteristic of a case study is that it allows participants to answer the exploratory questions 'how' and 'why' for the investigator to obtain a deep and holistic comprehension of participants' actions (Cohen *et al.*, 2011:289; Yin, 2014:14). These are the questions I asked in this study, as I wanted to gain and understand of how teachers engage instructional practices in teaching SL1 and why they engaged in these practices the way they did. Moreover,

“From an interpretivist perspective, the typical characteristic of case studies is that they strive towards a comprehensive (holistic) understanding of how participants relate and interact with each other in a specific situation and how they make meaning of a phenomenon under study” (Maree 2007:75).

Based on the foregoing, this design gave me ample time to mingle with teachers in their work environment, explaining how they taught SL1 and why they taught the way they did. Through this design, I tried to bring to light why a particular resolution was taken, how it was executed and what were outcomes (Yin, 2014:14). By so doing, I gave teachers a voice to explain their experiences, as they are the drivers of teaching and learning as in qualitative case study design, participants' voices are the only way we get to know about the world and reality (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014; de Vos *et al.*, 2011).

Moreover, the theoretical framework of the study informed my choice of the exploratory case study design for this study. This is the case because the sociocultural theory posits that language teaching and learning are sociocultural practices and the best way through

which learners can gain linguistic competence is through the interaction they have with people in their social environment (Esteban-Guitart, 2018; Vygotsky, 1978). For these scholars, cognitive development in learners is facilitated through social interaction with skilled individuals, who in the context of this research were teachers. In this research, I had to think of a design that would allow me to have physical interaction with teachers in their natural setting and see them in action teaching language in classrooms. Thus, the exploratory case study design was befitting in this regard, as it allowed me to observe teachers in their natural environments in check with de Vos *et al.* (2011) who contend that this design allows researchers to be immersed in the day-to-day actions of participants - hence enabling researchers to obtain a deep investigation of the situation under examination.

Furthermore, my motivation for choosing this design was because of its important characteristic of being able to employ a variety of data generating strategies. Its strong point of fluidity and flexibility; that is, it is neither controlled by a strategy or method nor dependent on time (Flick, 2018:108; Kumar, 2014:127), made me select appropriate data generating methods and participants to offer rich and valuable data to understand SL1 teaching. By employing multiple data generating tools, I managed to intermingle with participants in their environment and obtained rich and quality data from what they said through interviews, records of personal and individual features such as emotions they displayed, their classroom practices and reviewed archival data in the form of SL1 curriculum documents.

4.5.2 Limitations of the case study and measures taken to control them

Even though the case study design has strengths such as employing a variety of data generating tools, and studying participants in their natural setting, there are perceived weaknesses. Some scholars contend that one notable limitation of the case study is that it focuses on a bounded occurrence in a specified context and its results are not generalisable (Flick, 2018:109; Yin, 2014:20; Cohen *et al.*, 2011:293). Furthermore, Rule and John (2011) claim that researcher bias might impede findings through obstructive methods, particularly if the researcher has practitioner experience with the case study as a phenomenon.

However, proponents of qualitative research such as Maree (2016:68) and Kumar (2014:127) share that the aim of the design is not to generalise its findings to a wider population, but its purpose is to gain an in-depth understanding of an instance studied in its natural context. I also agree with these writers because a case study design is judged by what is not its central purpose and focus. It is like criticising a fish for its inability to live on

dry land, yet it was not designed for such a purpose. There are numerous research designs and each with its unique purpose and concerns. For me, what is most important is that the researcher focuses on the initial purpose they wanted to conduct a study and chooses a design that will help him/her achieve his/her objective and never deviate from it. If a researcher wants to research and address the issues that the case study is accused of, then there are research designs that can serve such purposes.

Having said that, my intention in this study was not to make generalisations, but the sole purpose was to obtain a deep and comprehensive mastery of the phenomenon under investigation, that is pedagogical practices in teaching SL1 in the FOMIPs classes with multilingual learners. My focus was on the quality of data and interpretations I would get through in-depth investigation of the phenomenon rather than the quantity (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Thus, a small number of participants who could give rich data were preferable rather than quantifying results. Through this design, I was able to gain a holistic understanding of the phenomenon by employing multiple tools of data generation in the form of interviews, focus groups discussion, lesson observation and document analysis. In this way, I was able to generate data on the socially constructed meaning FOMIPs teachers had on their use of instructional and pedagogical practices in teaching SL1.

4.6 SAMPLING PROCEDURES: SELECTION OF THE LOCATION AND PARTICIPANTS

Sampling is defined by Maree (2007) as generally the procedure followed by a researcher to choose participants for a study from a defined population. For de Vos *et al.* (2011), this happens when qualitative researchers look for people and locations where the issue under investigation is very likely to exist or occur. This is what authors call purposive sampling, and it is the sampling technique employed in this study (Leady & Ormrod, 2014:154; Cohen *et al.*, 2011:156; Bryman, 2012:418). These authors describe purposive sampling as a sampling strategy used to choose participants who meet the requirements and needs of a study. I employed this strategy as Seidman (2013:55) argues that it is the ideal technique for selecting the relevant location and participants that have attributes befitting a study. Since the study was on pedagogical practices in teaching SL1 in linguistically diverse classrooms, I needed to be careful in selecting a research site and participants who met the purpose and focus of the study, as advised by Yin (2016:63) and Cohen *et al.* (2011:156). In the next section, I explain how and why I selected the research site and participants of the study.

4.6.1 Selection of the research location

Creswell and Poth (2018:156) advance that when choosing a research site, the following are some points that can be considered by a researcher: rationale for choosing the site, what will be done on the site and the time that will be spent. Since the study's purpose was to explore pedagogical practices in teaching SL1 in linguistically diverse classrooms at the FOMIPs of primary school, I had to be very careful in selecting schools that met the attribute of the purpose of the study. As I provided in Chapter 1, generally, the enrolment of learners in Eswatini primary schools is primarily made up of learners who are L1 speakers of siSwati as the language is spoken by 95% of the population (Simons & Fennig, 2018). It is common, particularly in rural schools and some urban schools to find that the whole class is made up of learners who are mother tongue (MT) speakers of siSwati. Therefore, in keeping in line with the purpose and focus of the study, this meant that I had to look for schools that had the key attributes, that is, learners of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The research site I selected to conduct this research project and which was befitting for such a study is the town of Nhlanguano, situated within the Shiselweni region of Eswatini; the poorest region in the country. Observing the high rate of poverty in the region, the government of Eswatini has sourced investors to establish industries around the town. In this town and around its outskirts, there are businesses owned by foreign nationals such as Indian, Chinese, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and others from the SADC regions and other parts of Africa and the world. The consequence of this has been the migration of families from the Shiselweni rural areas to urban Nhlanguano in search of greener pastures. This has resulted in the town having inhabitants of diverse sociocultural and linguistic heterogeneous backgrounds.

My selection of the schools in the town of Nhlanguano was based on its prevailing socio-economic status and linguistically diverse conditions. Most of the learners are from low-income earning families and are native speakers of siSwati and a significant number of learners are from high-income earning families and are non-native speakers of siSwati. These are both government schools. Therefore, the two urban schools selected as the setting of the study were chosen because they had attributes that met the conditions of the purpose of the study, that is, they have learners of diverse cultural, socio-economic and linguistic backgrounds, features which Eswatini rural schools lack. My observation of native speakers of siSwati and a significant number of foreign nationals who lacked proficiency in siSwati raised curiosity in me, and I wanted to explore how teachers taught SL1, bearing in mind that siSwati is a mandatory subject, yet the classroom environment is linguistically heterogonous. Therefore, the two schools provided all the attributes I needed to conduct an

in-depth investigation of the phenomenon. Moreover, the Shiselweni region was also selected as the research site because primary schools of this region have the highest grade retention rate, and a study conducted by EMoET in 2018 established that SL1 was one of the subjects responsible for the high repetition rate.

4.6.2 Selection of participants

As stated in Section 4.6, participants from the two schools were purposively selected. Creswell and Poth (2018:157) assert that one should give the justification for why s/he purposively selected their participants, so the study focused on 8 FOMIPs teachers (primary participants) and their learners, that is, Grades 1 up to 4, and 3 more teachers from Grade 5 to Grade 7. The rationale for choosing teachers in urban schools was because they had experience in teaching siSwati to learners of diverse linguistic backgrounds, as urban schools had these features, thus they exhibited several significant traits rendered suitable to give detailed and comprehensive information vital to respond to research questions (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014:154). This was guided by McMillan and Schumacher (2014:50) who posit that decisions with regards to sampling should be made to select participants who have deep knowledge and will provide insightful information about the phenomenon under investigation. In line with this view, most teachers who participated in this study had the same qualification, a general Primary Teacher's Diploma (PTD) and one had a Bachelor of Education (B. Ed). This was not an issue as what mattered most was the years of experience the teacher had in teaching SL1 in the FOMIPs. Therefore, teachers who had taught siSwati as their home language for more than five years were selected. With a wealth of experience, these teachers were expected to offer an insight into what pedagogical practices they engage in the teaching of the language, give reasons why they teach the way they do and also share their experiences of teaching SL1 in linguistically diverse classrooms. For me, gender was immaterial, as both male and female teachers who taught in the FOMIPs participated in the study and I approached the teachers and asked them to be participants in this study.

Moreover, I must justify my selection of the FOMIPs in this study. These phases were chosen, as it is in these grades where siSwati language is taught for literacy. It is also in these grades where siSwati is the LoLT. This means learners must be proficient in siSwati, as it is the language through which they learn other subjects. Furthermore, there is no national report detailing how teachers teach siSwati in this phase, yet this is where the foundation and base of siSwati literacy are supposed to be laid. The only available national report is for Grade 7 which shows that learners do poorly in siSwati. Therefore, it was based

on the above reasons that teachers of the FOMIPs were selected as participants to respond to research questions in this study. This was also done to ascertain if teachers had similar views on how they teach SL1 and why they teach the way they do and also to establish whether teachers have the same experiences and teach siSwati the same way. The following tables provide the profiles of all the participants in both schools. Both the school and teachers were given pseudonyms and codes to protect their identities.

Table 4.1: Pseudonyms and codes of schools and participants

School Code	Pseudonym for teacher
SEA	SEA1
	SEA2
	SEA3
	SEA4
SEB	SEB1
	SEB2
	SEB3
	SEB4

Table 4.1 shows the codes and pseudonyms of the schools and teachers that were involved in the research study. Participants were drawn from the two schools respectively named SEA and SEB. The acronyms, SEA and SEB are codes that I formulated to conceal the two schools. Column 2 shows the pseudonyms given to the teachers to protect their identity. These were developed from the school they taught and each teacher was assigned a number next to the school code indicating the grade they teach. The number indicates the grade taught by the teacher. For instance, SEA1 and SEB1 respectively taught grade 1 in School SEA and SEB.

Table 4.2: Profile of participants in individual interviews and lesson observations

Teacher characteristic					Nature of learners in class		
Teacher	Gender	Age range	Title	Employment status	No.	SL1 speaker	Non-SL1 speakers
SEA1	Female	50-60	PTD	Permanent	65	50	15
SEA2	Female	20-30	B. Ed	Contract	60	41	19
SEA3	Female	50-60	PTD	Permanent	62	40	22
SEA4	Female	40-50	PTD	Permanent	60	45	15
SEB1	Female	50-60	PTD	Permanent	60	30	30
SEB2	Male	50-60	PTD	Permanent	61	38	23
SEB3	Female	50-60	PTD	Permanent	59	45	14
SEB4	Female	40-50	PTD	Permanent	61	44	17

From the above table, it is evident that the teaching of SL1 in the FOMIPs was dominated by female teachers, as seven of the teachers were female and there was only one male teacher in School SEB. This suggests that the two schools held the traditional view of gender stereotyping teachers with the perception that female teachers provide care and motherly love and are generally gentle towards foundation phase learners (Petersen, 2014; Mashiya, 2014). Furthermore, most teachers who taught the FOMIPs were around retirement age except for teacher SEA2 who was on contract. These were experienced teachers, but this had implications on teacher motivation and the pedagogical practices they employed. On the same note, although these were qualified primary teachers, most held a general teachers' diploma, which means they did not have the relevant certificate in early childhood education (ECE), a certificate required to teach foundation phase learners, learners from grade zero up to grade two.

Besides, almost all teachers were employed permanently except SEA2, and this could have a positive or negative bearing on how they taught. Permanent teachers could be motivated in their work because their future was secured and the contract teacher could be

demotivated because she was underpaid although she was more qualified than the group or the total opposite could happen. Each teacher was assigned a grade and taught all the subjects in that grade. Table 4.2 also shows that the teacher-learner ratio in both schools was 61:1, which is too high. This confirmed the findings of the World Bank (2021:123) on the Eswatini Education Sector Analysis report that although the national learner-teacher ratio was 29:1, the distribution of learners in schools was not even, as most urban schools had a huge enrolment, yet rural schools had a fewer enrolment. The overcrowded classrooms had a bearing on the nature of pedagogy employed by teachers when teaching SL1 as presented in the next chapter.

Furthermore, Table 4.2 shows that the FOMIPs classes had learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds. The reality is that the majority of the learners were native speakers of siSwati, but a considerable number of them were not, yet they all studied SL1 regardless of their varying linguistic proficiency.

Table 4.3: Profile of participants in the focus group discussion

Teacher	Gender	Age range	Qualification	Grade teaching	No. of learners	Employment status
SEB1	Female	50-60	PTD	1	60	Permanent
SEB2	Male	50-60	PTD	2	61	Permanent
SEB3	Female	50-60	PTD	3	59	Permanent
SEB4	Female	30-40	PTD	4	63	Permanent
SEB5	Female	22-30	PTD	5	60	Permanent
SEB6	Female	40-50	B.Ed	6	61	Permanent
SEB7	Female	40-50	PTD	7	61	Permanent

Table 4.3 shows the profile of participants who participated in the FGD, and these were all the siSwati teachers from school SEB, as only teachers from this school participated in the FGDs. Initially, I had planned to conduct two FGDs with each group of siSwati teachers in the two schools. Unfortunately, it ended up being done by School SEB, as teachers in School SEA later declined to partake. It is worth mentioning that teachers from SEA were

the hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic as immediately after the individual interviews, six of them had COVID-19, and one subsequently died of COVID-19 related complications. I interpreted their sudden unwillingness to partake in the FGD to be a result of grief and a lack of morale considering the misfortune that had befallen them. I respected their decision in line with scholars who assert that participants should not be forced to participate in a study, but should do so willingly (Bryman 2012; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Even though the FGD was conducted with one school, it provided me with great insight, as I was able to see common views held by participants and where they differed. Furthermore, as the group interacted, they provided a broad-spectrum of feedback, as details about forgotten events and experiences were soon brought to the fore (Maree, 2007:90). As can be observed in Table 4.3, the FGD comprised the initial four teachers of the FOMIPs who were the primary participants of the study (Grades One to Four) and all the teachers who taught siSwati in the school (Grades Five to Seven). Moreover, Table 4.3 shows that even though the teaching of SL1 in school SEB was dominated by female teachers, the school had taken some strides towards gender inclusion and had a progressive view towards the teaching of foundation phase learners, as it entrusted a male teacher to teach a lower grade, a practice non-existent in school SEA. The other attributes of the teachers in the FGD were almost similar to those discussed in Table 4.2.

4.7 DATA GENERATING STRATEGIES

Since the purpose, focus and questions raised in this study required participants to describe their experiences and practices rather than to prescribe, I needed to employ data generation methods that would allow for the effective generation of a wealth of data resulting in an understanding of the phenomenon. Scholars agree that a qualitative researcher becomes the data collection and generating instrument (Creswell & Poth, 2018:43; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018:12; Cohen *et al.*, 2011:225). By being actively immersed in the study, s/he participates actively in data generation and its interpretation. With the purpose and research questions of the study determining the paradigm (which ultimately determined the design and data generating tools), interviews, the FGD, CLOS and documentary evidence were used to generate data for a deeper understanding of pedagogical practices in teaching SL1 in multilingual classrooms. The process of data generation proceeded in the following manner: individual interviews were held with teachers followed by the FGD. The next step was observing teachers teaching SL1 in classrooms and lastly, I reviewed siSwati documents. Below is a description of each data generation strategy and how I generated the data.

4.7.1 Semi-structured interview

This was the major data generating tool. I chose the interview as the primary data generating tool because of its ability to generate knowledge through researcher-participant interaction (Flick, 2018; Creswell, 2014). Moreover, Macmillan and Schumacher (2014) identify three types of interviews, which are structured, semi-structured and unstructured. Of the three, the semi-structured interview was deemed advantageous for this research as it is flexible. Thus, I employed semi-structured interviews to generate data from SL1 teachers, and they were interviewed on pedagogical practices they employed in teaching SL1, how they employed the practices, why they employed them the way they did and ultimately how they experienced teaching SL1 in linguistically diverse classrooms. Even though I had prearranged questions on which to base the interview, the semi-structured interview allowed me to see verbal and non-verbal cues and its flexibility provided me with the opportunity to ask follow-up questions and probe the interviewee when a need arose (Yin, 2014; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). I constructed a semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix P) to obtain detailed information from the participants pertaining to SL1 pedagogy.

Likewise, before the nationwide lockdown, I visited each teacher to seek their consent to partake in the research and they signed consent forms. Before the interview process began, I reiterated to the participants that their participation was voluntary and they were free to discontinue the study as soon as they felt uncomfortable. An agreement with participants regarding the language through which the interviews were to be held was also reached. Data generation in this study was primarily supposed to be in English. However, most participants felt that they could express themselves better in their MT, siSwati. One even questioned the very act of interviewing in English, yet the phenomenon under investigation was the teaching of SL1. To this participant, it appeared the use of English to interview her on how she teaches her MT would be to propagate linguistic imperialism and to look down upon siSwati, yet both the participants and the researcher were native speakers of siSwati, thus, the use of English was unnecessary. I explained that my use of English had nothing to do with competition between these two official languages in Eswatini, but English was the LoLT in my institution. Since the idea and purpose of data collection is to get authentic information about a phenomenon, and it can be impossible to get that kind of information if there are language barriers and in this case, the use of English sounded like a thorny issue among participants, I created rapport with teachers by having the interviews in siSwati, a language they understood best and a language that united us. This was in keeping with de Vos *et al.* (2007:363) who advise that for data collection to proceed successfully, the

language of participants must be considered and respected. Furthermore, as an MT speaker of siSwati, it was easy for me to switch to the language preferred by participants. I simply translated the questions from English into siSwati, and they responded in the language they were comfortable with. Moreover, I noted that most participants could not engage fluently in English and as soon as there was a switch to siSwati, the conversations began to flow.

Initially, I had planned to conduct only face-to-face interviews with participants. However, the travel restrictions and the ban on meetings passed by the Eswatini government to curb the spread of the COVID- 19 pandemic, which was prevalent during data collection, forced me to conduct preliminary interviews by telephone. Also, once the COVID-19 restrictions were uplifted, I held follow-up interviews with participants which were face-to-face. Scholars have written on the strengths and weaknesses of telephone interviews as sources of data collection and they assert that although they are cost effective, speedy and great at ensuring the anonymity of participants, the latter may lack motivation, hang up on the interviewer, and it is impossible to see nonverbal cues (Bryman, 2012:214; de Vos *et al.*, 2011:356). Nevertheless, in this study, I mitigated the above limitations by first having detailed discussions with teachers about the nature of the study and its potential benefits to them as language teachers. Furthermore, the follow-up face-to-face interviews mitigated the above limitations, as I eventually had physical interaction with participants, and I was able to record both verbal and non-verbal cues.

Overall, 16 interviews were conducted with eight teachers from the two participating schools. With each teacher, there was one telephone interview which was later accompanied by face-to-face engagement after the COVID-19 restrictions were lifted, and schools were opened. Face-to-face interviews were held at a time convenient to teachers, and the venues were their classrooms. Since COVID19 was still widespread, its protocols were observed. Although the wearing of masks made me not see the whole facial expression of participants during the interview, the physical interaction with teachers ensured that there was a good relationship which facilitated a smooth interview. Moreover, the words of participants and non-verbal cues like gestures facilitated a deeper understanding of pedagogical practices in teaching SL1 and teachers' lived experiences of teaching siSwati in a multilingual setting. Most interviews ranged between 40 to 60 minutes. The interviews were recorded with an audio recorder, as suggested by Yin (2014:110). The next section of this thesis describes the FGD.

4.7.2 Focus group discussion

The next stage was the generation of data through the focus group discussion (FGD). Some authors agree that a FGD is a focused conversation with a set of people who share similar characteristics and experiences to the phenomenon under investigation and deliberate on a focused theme as a collective (Yin, 2016:148; de Vos *et al.*, 2011:360). Additionally, Cohen *et al.* (2011:436) observe that in FGDs, the participants talk to one another as opposed to the researcher, and data are derived from the interactions of these participants. Van Aken and Berends (2018) posit that FGDs make the researcher aware of where the group shares similar views and where they tend to disagree. It is in line with this strength that I used the FGD, as it benefitted the study by generating data that was in-depth and from a collective viewpoint. I prepared a FGD protocol (Appendix Q), which was used to generate comprehensive data relating to the group's view on SL1 teaching and learning. Furthermore, my stance to conduct the FGD was informed by several scholars who highlight the strength of the FGD that by interacting with each other, participants expand on each other's viewpoints and forgotten experiences are somehow resurrected, hence eliciting a comprehensive analysis which could not be achieved in other instruments (Cohen *et al.*, 2011:436; Maree, 2007:90).

Additionally, I was aware of the limitation of the FGD that some participants might exert control over the discussion and be intimidating to others (Maree, 2016:97). However, I was able to counteract that by assuming the role of a mediator steering the discussion and gave participants equal opportunities to contribute in the discussions, as suggested by Flick (2018:258). Better still, this was a homogenous group as all members shared similar characteristics (Flick, 2018:257). They were all L1 speakers of siSwati, taught SL1 and almost had the same qualification, a teacher's diploma. This on its own gave little or no room for conflict and some members dominating others. Furthermore, I ensured that this was not a focus group interview, but a group discussion as the former has the weakness of being more structured as the interviewer asks structured and semi-structured questions, which only allow participants to give answers without discussion (Maree, 2007:90). For me, to get different views of participants, I made this a discussion, and as the moderator, I directed and guided the discussion process, allowing participants to freely discuss and have a healthy debate on the subject under investigation. The FGD was conducted physically in the hall of School SEB. Seven teachers who taught SL1 from Grade One to Grade Seven in this school participated. In conducting the FGD, I was informed by Maree (2016:96) who provided a guideline when conducting the FGD. Maree (2016) advises that the moderator may follow a funnel approach where s/he: (a) begins the session by asking a broad and

open ended question to get the general views of members regarding the topic; (b) asks semi-structured questions and guides members to participate in the discussion and debate on issues; (c) asks structured questions until the crux of the matter is discussed, thus eliciting specific answers to the questions and finally; (d) goes back to ask general questions to facilitate the summation of key points deliberated in the FGD.

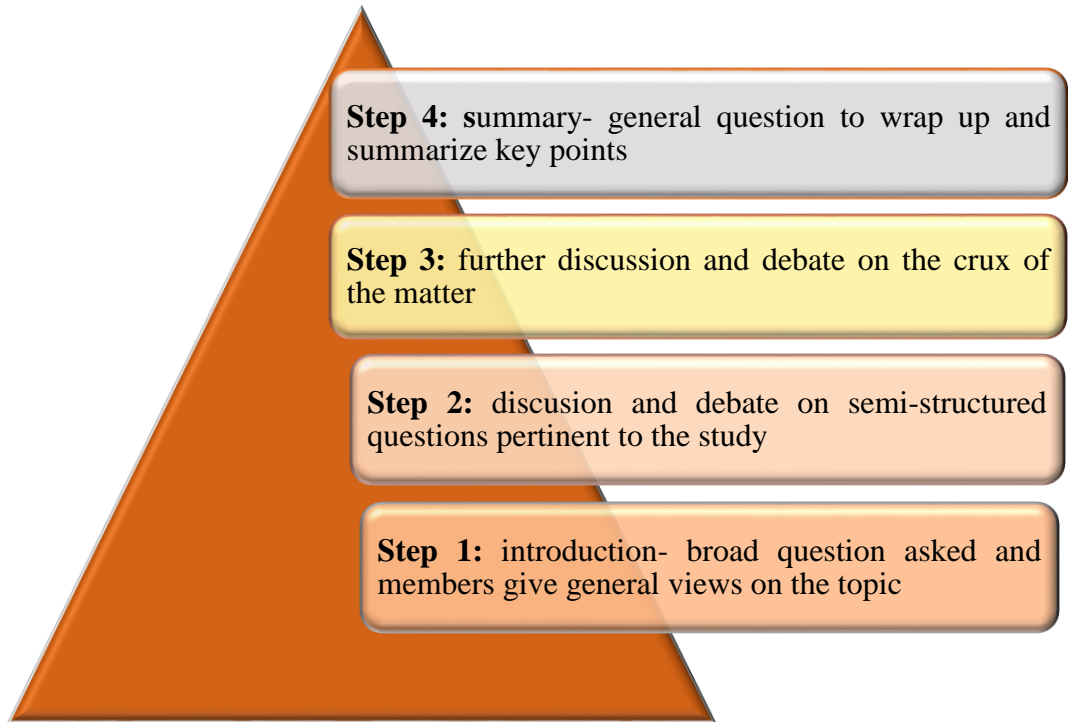


Figure 4.2: Visual presentation of the focus group discussion process

As can be observed in Figure 4.2, I began the discussion by asking the group general questions to ease tension and actively engaged them as suggested by Maree (2016:96) on how to conduct a FGD. As the moderator, I ensured that all members participated and probed them where need be to get clarity on a point. I remained neutral and channelled members towards the gist of the discussion so that by the end of the session, members provided specific answers responding to how they taught SL1, why they taught the way they did and ultimately got each member's lived experience of teaching SL1 in a multilingual setting. Conclusively, I gave a summary of prominent points that emerged. The FGD was recorded with an audio recorder.

4.7.3 Classroom lesson observations

After the semi-structured interviews and FGD, I carried out classroom lesson observations (CLOS) with the respective FOMIPs teachers where I observed the teaching and learning of SL1 in each of the eight FOMIPs classrooms. Some authors concur about observation as a method through which the investigator witnesses and hears what occurs naturally in the research location (Maree, 2016; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). For Maree (2016),

“Observation is the systematic process of recording the behavioural patterns of participants, objects and occurrences without necessarily questioning or communicating with them” (90).

Thus, the purpose of the CLOS was to see in practice teacher pedagogical practice in SL1, hence they were “useful in providing additional information on the topic” (Yin, 2014:114). The CLOS provided me with first-hand experience on how SL1 teaching occurred. Amongst the four data generating tools, they were a perfect measuring instrument that bore testament to what happened in class, how teachers taught SL1, the pedagogical practices employed in lessons and how they employed them. They further provided me with the opportunity to witness the challenges experienced by teachers when teaching SL1 to learners of diverse linguistic backgrounds. It was also through the CLOS that I was able to see the extent of the frustration experienced by learners who were non-MT speakers of siSwati in trying to understand and communicate in the language and how that hindered their active participation in lessons.

Besides, scholars like Creswell and Poth (2018:167) and Maree (2016:91.) identify four types of observation roles, which are specifically a: (1) *complete observer*- does not take part in the phenomenon but is there to take note of what is happening from afar; (2) *observer as participant*- gets involved in the situation but concentrates on his observation role; (3) *participant as observer*- one who partakes in the situation and works with participants towards coming up with intervention, especially in action research and; (4) *complete participant*-one who completely gets immersed in the situation and becomes part of the situation and this is typical of ethnographic research. These authors further posit that an observer should identify his/her role. Informed by this code, I assumed the role of a complete observer and allowed SL1 teachers and learners to carry on their business without my participation. This kind of observation was suitable for me in this study, as it had the advantage of being less interfering and allowed the participants to carry on their day-to-day activities in a normal fashion (Johnson & Christensen, 2012) without any interference from

the researcher. Although Maree (2016:91) points out the inability to become fully involved in a situation as one major weakness of complete observation, that limitation did not affect me as my observation was informed by the purpose and focus of the study, and I did not deviate from it.

In light of the foregoing, let me explain the procedure I followed in the CLOS process. The process of data generation through CLOS was guided by Maree (2016:90) who provided this five step guide to observation:

- a) Defining the purpose and focus of the observation and knowing what you want to observe;
- b) Linking the focus to the research question;
- c) Defining key constructs to be observed;
- d) Defining what you will be looking for and;
- e) Explaining how you will record when you see what you are looking for.

In keeping with Maree's (2016) advice, I restated the purpose and focus of the study which were respectively to explore pedagogical practices in teaching SL1 in diverse linguistic settings, to determine how pedagogical practices are used in the teaching of SL and also to comprehend why they are used in the manner they are used. The purpose and focus were linked to the research questions: how are pedagogical practices used in teaching SL1 and why are these pedagogical practices used in the teaching of SL1? Therefore, I defined the key constructs, pedagogical practices being all the instructional approaches, methods, practices, strategies, techniques and tools teachers used to teach SL1; diverse linguistic settings referring to the two schools and classrooms made up of learners speaking multiple languages other than siSwati. Through structured observation, I defined what I was looking for by identifying pre-arranged constructs of behaviour that I wanted to observe. I constructed a pre-arranged CLOS protocol on which I recorded the proceedings of the lesson (Appendix R), and it adhered to the research questions, focus, purpose and the theoretical framework guiding the study. The tool directed me to the intention of the observation such that it had sections on which to record teacher social interaction with learners through instructional activities, learner activities, learner interaction during break time and assessment methods. It also had space where to add any other valuable information from the observation.

Initially, I had planned to observe each teacher for four days teaching the four language skills. Unfortunately, because of the COVID-19 pandemic and political unrest which

occurred during the period of data collection, teachers could only allow me to observe two lessons, as they had to push the syllabus after schools had been closed for over a year. This was not a huge problem as the four language skills are intertwined, and they are hardly taught in isolation. I then observed participants teaching siSwati, two days per teacher in school SEB. On day one, the teacher informed the learners that I was a student who had come to observe how they learnt. As a complete observer, I settled at the rear of the class and recorded what I was looking for in the pre-arranged CLOS protocol. This stance was informed by Bryman (2012:482) and Maree (2016:91) who assert that recording data is the most crucial aspect of observations and advise that data can be recorded through anecdotal records, running records or structured observations, hence I chose structured observation and recorded what transpired in class, break and lunch time in the observation protocol which was my field book.

4.7.4 Document analysis

In this study, data were also generated through the analysis of documents. Bowen (2009:27) describes document analysis as an organised method for checking and evaluating printed and electronic documents which contain words and descriptions documented without the researcher's involvement. Scholars identify two types of documentary sources namely primary and secondary documents (Flick,2018:378; de Vos *et al.*, 2011:377; Maree, 2016:88). According to de Vos *et al.* (2011) and Maree (2016), primary sources are sources that the researcher acquires from the participants, and they can either be in an unpublished or published format. Secondary sources are typically sources that are created from previously printed work (Maree, 2016:88). In this study, the documents that were analysed are primary sources in the form of siSwati curriculum document, siSwati textbooks (teacher's guide and learners' prescribed books), lesson plans, learners' exercise books and teacher made tests. An analysis of these documents was important as it helped me to understand what informed teachers in teaching SL1, how they designed and prepared their siSwati lessons and to find out if what is contained in the documents aligns with the objectives of the siSwati curriculum. In this study, the above documents were also reviewed to corroborate the findings of data generated through the individual interview and the FGD. This was in keeping with Maree (2016:90) and Bowen (2009:30) who posit that document analysis plays a crucial role in crystallisation as it assists in supporting and validating data from other data generating tools used in a study and supplementing data from other sources by providing context.

I constructed a document analysis protocol (Appendix S) on which I stated the nature of the document and recorded the items that I was looking for and these related to SL1 teaching and learning. I then requested the documents from the National Curriculum Centre (NCC) and from teachers and with their permission, I had the documents photocopied. The lesson plans and the learners' exercise books provided me with an opportunity to look at the nature of class activities learners engaged in and the type of work teachers gave learners to test their acquisition of SL1 concepts. I also examined teacher-constructed tests to determine whether the experiences provided to learners were consistent with the objectives of the SL1 curriculum. The analysis of documents was beneficial and befitting for this study, as they expounded and threw some light on the phenomenon under exploration. Furthermore, de Vos *et al.* (2011:382) and Bowen (2009:31) give strengths of document analyses that they are cost-effective, lack obtrusiveness and reactivity and are stable as my presence as a researcher did not alter what was being studied. In the next section of this report, I provide how data generated through the four research instruments were analysed.

4.8 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is mainly described as an inductive procedure that involves sorting, arranging and classifying data and recognising forms and associations amongst the groups (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014) or "the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data" (de Vos *et al.*, 2011:397). In simple terms, it is the scanning and dissecting of the data such that it makes sense to you the researcher and responds to the research questions. To understand the data in this research, I used content analysis which is defined by scholars as the practice and procedure of analysing and summing up written or textual data (Flick, 2018:482; Leedy & Ormrod, 2014:150; Cohen *et al.*, 2011:563; Maree, 2007:101). My choice of content analysis as a data analysis method was informed by that all the data (interview, FGD, CLOS and documents) were subsequently transcribed into text and content analysis is appropriate for analysing data as this. Therefore, through content analysis, I examined content that related to SL1 pedagogy.

This study employed conventional content analysis and the findings were presented against the six concepts of the SCT showing instances in the data where they are revealed. This is to say, coding categories were derived directly from the text. Several scholars have come up with almost similar steps that set as guidelines in the data analysis process (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:193; Creswell & Poth, 2018:1187; Saldana, 2016:14; de Vos, 2011:403-404; Maree, 2016:114). These steps that can be followed in qualitative data analysis include the following among others: (1) planning to record the data; (2) gathering data and its initial

analysis as qualitative data generation is iterative and happens during and after collection; (3) managing the data; (4) reading and writing reflective journals; (5) coding and making categories (6) testing emerging themes and looking for new meaning; (7) interpreting the findings and (8) presenting findings in your report. Moreover, these scholars agree that these steps are not cast in stone, and they are not a rigid recipe that has to be followed to the tee. This means a researcher may choose to follow the steps or be creative by employing a structure that works for him/her even if it calls for combining some steps.

That being the case, in analysing the data in this study, I was primarily directed and informed by the purpose, focus, objectives and the three principal research questions provided in chapter 1 of the thesis. On that account, it is important to provide a brief reminder of why each set of data was collected. The intention of conducting the interviews and the FGD was to obtain in-depth information from participants on how they taught SL1 in linguistically diverse classrooms at the FOMIPs, why teachers taught the way they did and subsequently get their experiences of teaching SL1 in a multilingual environment. The purpose of the CLOS was to see teachers in practice teaching SL1 and the CLOS was to corroborate or disapprove of teachers' views in an interview. Finally, the analysis of documents was to assist me to understand what informed teachers' choice of pedagogical practices.

Informed by the guidelines provided by scholars on qualitative data analysis, I followed a systematic step-by-step process which first involved developing a scheme that would ensure clarity of how I analysed the data generated through the four research tools (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Saldana, 2016; de Vos, 2011; Maree, 2016). This was a seven step process that involved: (1) organising and sorting interview, FGD, CLOS and document data; (2) translating interview and focus group data from siSwati to English; (3) transcribing and understanding all the forms of data; (4) reading and rereading the data; (5) developing open codes and categories; (6) grouping similar categories into themes and, (7) making sense or interpreting the data. Below is a detailed presentation of what each step entailed.

4.8.1 Organising and sorting data

I began the process of organising and sorting the data during the exercise of data generation, as qualitative data generating and analysis are interwoven; they are iterative and an ongoing process (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:395; Maree, 2016:114). After every interview, I would listen to the recordings to get a feel of what made sense, what was missing and needed a follow-up interview, and what part was relevant and what part was

irrelevant to the study. I then kept the records in files, sorting and organising them school by school and participant by participant, as suggested by Creswell and Poth (2018:185). The same went for FGD and observation data which I kept in separate files.

With regards to document data, the documents that I analysed were the Eswatini national Curriculum Framework for General Education, the teachers' guide which was the main curriculum document, learners' prescribed textbooks such as the picture book, learners' reader, learner's workbook and teacher-made tests. I was able to get one teacher-made test, as most teachers did not have tests citing that testing was not conducted under the competency-based education curriculum. I began the data analysis process by sorting and organising the different documents according to types and what they contained in files. I arranged and grouped curriculum documents because they were supposed to contain matters related to teaching and learning siSwati and pedagogical approaches to be used in SL1; teacher lesson plans were supposed to contain content selected by teachers to teach SL1, the type of resources and pedagogical practices chosen to transfer the content to learners and measures taken by teachers to ensure that their instructional objectives were achieved. Learners' exercise books and workbooks were grouped to examine if the experiences provided to learners by teachers were aligned with the predetermined instructional objectives relating to the acquisition of language skills. I then read and reread each document underlining what pertained to language teaching and learning, as informed by Yin (2016:191). I made notes, documenting what was contained in the documents relating to pedagogical practices in SL1.

4.8.2 Translating interview and FGD data from siSwati to English

After sorting and organising the data, I embarked on the rigorous task of translating the interview and FGD data from siSwati to English, as the language through which the data were generated was primarily siSwati. This was not a problem for me, as I am a first language speaker of siSwati. In translating the data, I did a verbatim translation of all participants' responses. To ensure that the translated transcripts had a similar meaning to the initial document, I employed the process of back translation. This involves translating the translated English transcripts back to siSwati again and comparing them with the initial transcript to see that it still carries the same meaning. As much as I was aware that some participants were not straight to the point in their responses, I translated anyway to avoid missing ideas that were essential to the study. Although I did a verbatim translation, it was not always possible to do a word-to-word translation, as the two languages differed in structure and meaning, hence sometimes I changed the structure of the sentence to cater

for the linguistic distinction and dynamics, without compromising the meaning of the original text.

4.8.3 Transcribing and understanding the data

The third step in analysing data was to transcribe all the data sourced through the four tools. I translated and transcribed the data to be submerged in it, thus familiarising myself with it and being aware of emerging perspectives as recommended by de Vos *et al.* (2011:408). When transcribing the data, I did a verbatim transcription of the translated individual interview and FGD audios, classroom observations and document notes into text. This was informed by Cohen *et al.* (2007:471) who contend that there should be a verbatim transcription of not only recorded data but of all collected and observed material, including non-linguistic elements such as gestures. I avoided presenting summaries of the interview, FGD audio records, classroom observation and document notes as Maree (2016:115) and Seidman (2013:118) caution against such a practice because the weakness that one's bias cannot only lead to including sections that are of interest to them but may avoid material that might carry significant information about the issue that is investigated.

4.8.4 Reading and rereading the data

After I had transcribed the data, I repeatedly read through them to get a deeper understanding and knowledge, as suggested by several authors. Furthermore, Maree (2007:104) also advises that for a researcher to get to know the data, they must read through the text several times to get a general sense of them (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:193; Creswell & Poth, 2018:187). For a better understanding of the data, I made short notes on the edge of the transcripts as per the suggestions of these authors.

4.8.5 Developing open codes and categories

The fifth step was to develop codes, which are words or short phrases that are representative of a fragment of written data and bear its meaning (Saldana, 2016:4). Generally, coding is defined by Flick (2018:423) and Maree (2016:116) as the practice of meticulously reading through data, systematically labelling and categorising it with distinctive terms and figures into understandable units that are analysable. I decided to employ open coding because my concern was for the findings to directly emerge from the data. Open coding is the data analysis process that involves labelling, naming and classifying data into manageable sets (de Vos *et al.*, 2011:412; Bryman, 2012:569). In line

with these authors, I began the process of developing codes by reading and rereading the typed transcripts to gain an understanding.

To develop the codes, I first prepared a four columned structure whereby: column 1 showed my reflective notes, column 2 showed interview and interviewee raw transcripts, column 3 showed the descriptive code and in column four, I showed the interpretive codes. This is to say, in column 1, I recorded my reflection; in column 2, I showed the interviewer and interviewee raw transcripts where I underlined words and lines and labelled them as suggested by Silverman (2016:119). In column 3, I provided a description section of the raw data where I used short phrases and in column 4, I showed the interpretation or meaning deduced from the descriptive code. Based on the interpretive paradigm, I grouped participants' responses under each question to see similarities and differences. I employed open coding so that findings would directly come from data by reading and rereading the transcripts, underlining text and pictures of what I found to be describing teacher conceptualisation of SL1, pedagogical practices and their experiences of teaching SL1. I further made labels and blocks that summarised what I perceived to be happening, thus providing a significant meaning emerging from the data. I then applied a process of synthesis, where I chunked sets of coded data into categories or meaningful units, which is the primary feature of qualitative research (Saldana, 2016:10). This involved selective coding where codes that carried the same meaning were grouped under one category, which were sub-stories that were to be regrouped into meaningful themes.

4.8.6 Grouping similar categories into themes

The sixth step involved combining similar categories into themes. This step is where I described what I saw (Creswell & Poth, 2018:189), and I used descriptive words to assign a theme as postulated by Saldana (2016:15) that a theme is a result of the coding and subcategorising process. These descriptors were taken directly from the text relating to pedagogical practices in teaching SL1. This is to say the themes inductively emerged from the text by reading through and assessing the identified codes, thus finding themes that were regular in the data. This was an iterative process in which I cut sections of coded data and put them together under the relevant theme. Sometimes after further reading, I would move it to another group that I found most appropriate. I repeated this process until all the coded data were under themes that indicated the findings of the study.

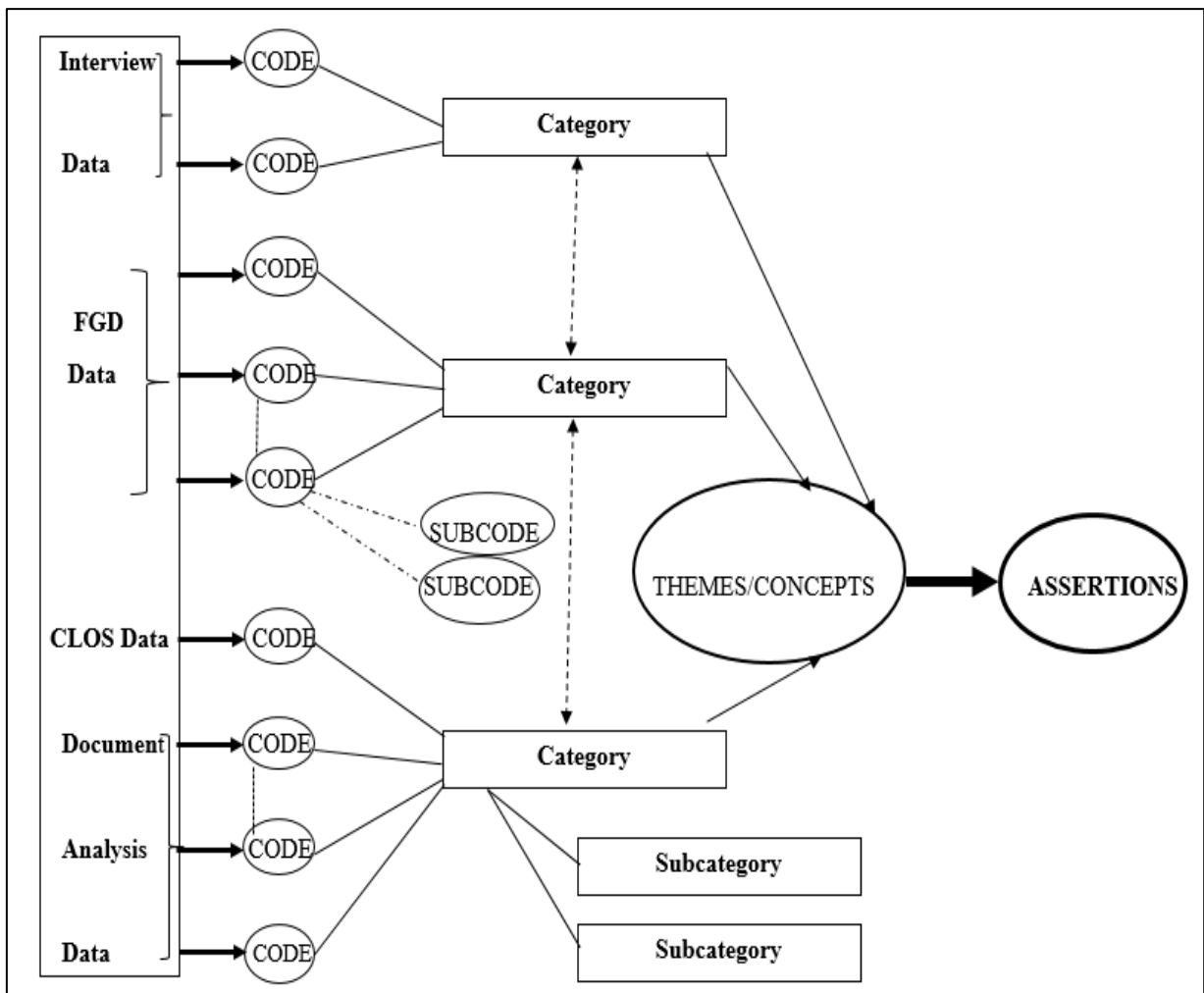


Figure 4.3: The data analysis process adapted from Saldana (2016:14)

4.8.7 Making sense of interview, focus group, observation and document data

This was the final stage of the data analysis process which involved interpreting the findings of the study on pedagogical practices in teaching SL1. According to several authors, the trick to interpreting data is to contextualise your findings into existing theory, showing how it confirms and disconfirms it and showing what new scholarly knowledge the findings provide to a particular discipline (Maree, 2016:120; Creswell & Poth, 2018:197). The preceding principle guided my interpretation of findings in this study, as my interpretation was primarily informed by the purpose and focus of the study and the sociocultural theory which was the lens under which teacher pedagogical practices were studied.

As suggested by Creswell and Poth (2018:197), my interpretation was direct and based on what I learnt. It was unavoidable for my analysis of data not to be interpretive, as it was an

involuntary interaction between me as a researcher investigating the phenomenon of teacher pedagogical practices and the gathered data, which were already explanations of an interactive encounter (Cohen *et al.*, 2007:469). My interpretation of the findings was not critical or to measure, as this was not my goal, but informed by the interpretive paradigm, I constructed new meaning by navigating between the data, my lessons from existing literature and theory to either corroborate or disapprove existing theory. Thus, providing similar or multiple views to social constructivism, the theory that underpinned the study. My actions in this regard were informed by Flick (2018:425) who asserts that “interpretation means to understand the internal logic of an excerpt of the data or to put it into context”. Having said that, in the next section of this thesis, I provide measures I undertook to ensure quality assurance of the research and its findings.

4.9 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE RESEARCH

Inherent to the issue of quality assurance in qualitative research is the issue of trustworthiness. “Trustworthiness means the rigour of research work. It refers to the degree of confidence in the research’s data, interpretation and methods used to ensure the quality of such a research work” (Rakotsoane, 2019:56). That is why for Maree (2016:123), the concept of trustworthiness in qualitative research relates to the reliability and validity of the research. Trustworthiness of the research was ensured through the following interrelated criteria: credibility, dependability, transferability and conformability (Lincoln & Guba, 1982; Maree 2016; Bryman, 2012; Morrow, 2005; Shenton, 2004). The following section of the thesis addresses the measures that were taken to ensure trustworthiness in this study.

4.9.1 Credibility

In qualitative research, Yin (2016:85), Maree (2016:123) and Bryman (2012:390) state that credibility has to do with the extent to which research findings represent the actual views of participants, the trustworthiness of the data and data analysis. It is equivalent to quantitative research’s internal validity (Morrow, 2005:251; Lincoln & Guba, 1982:246). In this study, credibility and truthfulness of research findings were achieved through conducting member checks; this is to say both the interviews and the FGD were followed by member checks or member validation where I sought participants’ insights into the credibility of findings as suggested by many authors (Creswell & Poth, 2018:261; Maree, 2016:123; Bryman, 2012:390). I conducted peer-debriefings as suggested by several authors (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1982) and also used crystallisation, which is the use of numerous data collection tools to compare and corroborate research findings (Maree,

2016:121). Interviews were followed by the FGD, CLOS and the scrutiny of documentary evidence to corroborate findings from each data generating tool. This is in line with Rakotsoane (2019) who posits that credibility in qualitative research can be achieved by employing suitable and reputable methods of research and engaging an iterative process in data generation.

4.9.2 Dependability

The trustworthiness of this study was achieved through dependability, which relates to the consistency of the results of a study. That is to say that if the research was to be redone in a similar environment with the same contributors, it is hoped to yield similar results (Yin, 2016; Guba, 1982). Dependability can be equated to reliability in quantitative research (Bryman, 2012:392; Morrow, 2005:252). Quantitative research is reported as having the possibility of replication, which is its strength, yet qualitative research does not endeavour for replication (Cohen *et al.*, 2011:203). Since reliability is impractical in qualitative research, reliability can be determined through dependable findings, and Bryman (2012:392) and Maree (2016:124) suggest several measures that can be taken to ensure dependability in qualitative research. Among which are in-depth explanation of the assumptions and theory informing the study, utilisation of multimethod of data generation, decisions why you followed certain processes, a comprehensive description of how the information was generated and keeping records of each step of the investigation process to permit for an audit trail if need be. In this study, I attempted to achieve dependability by giving an in-depth analysis of the SCT theory which underpinned the study (see Chapter 3). I also gave a detailed description of philosophical assumptions that guided the study and also provided an in-depth picture of the design and all the methodological procedures I complied with in the research process (Rakotsoane, 2019). I gave a comprehensible explanation of the data generating tools and methods of data analysis. This is in line with Shenton (2004:71) who posits that an in-depth description of methodological procedures enables anyone who reads the study to determine if the right practices were applied.

4.9.3 Confirmability

Confirmability deals with establishing the genuineness of research findings and it is the extent to which the research can be verified and corroborated (Morrow, 2005:252; Bryman, 2012:392). It is equated to objectivity in quantitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1982:247). Moreover, the use of an audit trail in a study addresses the subject of confirmability of findings (Cohen *et al.*, 2011:202; Lincoln & Guba, 1982:248). In keeping with these authors,

I provided a report of how I tried to satisfy various stages of the research process. Also, Shenton (2004:72) contends that the researcher has to employ measures to ensure research findings are a consequence of the participants' experiences and contributions and these include making his/her assumptions and beliefs known and also acknowledging the shortcomings of the study. I ensured the confirmability of research findings in this investigation by admitting my ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions. Ontologically, I believe that reality is a social construct. Epistemologically, I believe that knowledge is based on participants' narratives and their subjective experiences of the world. My philosophical assumptions are aligned with the SCT, the theoretical framework of the study, as it views the social environment as a fundamental aspect when studying an individual. Additionally, I gave a comprehensive methodological account of how data were collected and analysed with the hope that this will help anyone reading the study confirm its trustworthiness as suggested by Shenton (2004:72).

4.9.4 Transferability

Some authors posit that transferability is concerned with the generalisations of results to other research contexts, which is usually impossible in qualitative research (Yin, 2016:106; Morrow, 2005:252; Lincoln & Guba, 1982:246). Cohen *et al.* (2011:203) equate transferability to external validity (the degree to which results can be generalised). Firstly, it was not my purpose to generalise the findings of this study to other cases of SL1 teaching in Eswatini, but to get an in-depth understanding of SL1 teaching in linguistically diverse classrooms in the FOMIPs, which is the essence of case study research (Kumar, 2014; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Nevertheless, Maree (2016:124) and Lincoln and Guba (1982:248) contend that transferability in qualitative research can be achieved when the setting and location of the study are well established, participants are described in full and a comprehensive description of the data generation tools is given. In line with the above scholars' suggestion, I offered an elaborate narrative of the study's location and sample. I also gave an in-depth description of the data generation tools I employed in this study. Moreover, I gave a comprehensive explanation regarding the generalisability of the results of the study. Since this was a case study of eight teachers in two schools, the results were generalised and applicable to these individuals, as the study has the importance of guiding future research and also showing, although on a micro-scale, pedagogical practices employed by teachers in teaching SL1 in multilingual classrooms in the FOMIPs of Eswatini primary schools.

4.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Integral to the issue of quality assurance in qualitative research is the issue of ethical considerations. In research, ethical behaviour embodies a set of values, regulations or standards that an individual has to adhere to with regards to a particular profession (Silverman, 2016:148). The following section of this discussion gives details on how I abided by the principles of ethical conduct in this study:

4.10.1 Ethical clearance and entry into the research site

Creswell and Poth (2018:54) and Bryman (2012:144) avow that before embarking on a research project, it is vital that a researcher acquaints himself/herself with the ethical policies of the institutions concerned and get approval from the ethics review board to conduct the study. Therefore, before conducting the study, I applied for ethical clearance from the University of Pretoria Research Ethics Committee under the Faculty of Education as per the institution's requirement. Once the ethical clearance was approved by the university, I then sought permission to enter schools (research sites) through formal gatekeepers, which is the EMoET, the ministry responsible for education in Eswatini (Appendix A and Appendix B). After the EMoET gave me the approval to enter schools (Appendix C), I then sought permission and consent from the school governing bodies of the two schools used as a case under study (Appendix D, Appendix E, Appendix F and Appendix G). As suggested by Seidman (2013:47), I also wrote letters seeking permission from the principals of the two schools whose teachers were involved in the study and sought their informed consent (Appendix H, Appendix I, Appendix J and Appendix K).

4.10.2 Informed consent

Before the research began, I requested teachers in writing to participate in the study (Appendix L), explained its nature and how it will benefit them as SL1 educators as guided by some authors (Creswell & Poth, 2018:151; Leedy & Ormrod, 2014:153; Cohen *et al.*, 2011:78). But most importantly, I shared the important message with them orally and in writing that their involvement in the research was voluntary and no one was forced to partake as suggested by Flick (2018:140). In my conversation with the teachers, I also shared that there were no physical risks associated with the study and made them aware that it was within their rights to withdraw from participation should they feel the need to as suggested by Seidman (2013:64). Participants were given a week to decide whether they wanted to participate in the study. Those who showed interest to participate signed the consent letter declaring their voluntary consent to partake and their willingness to be

recorded (Appendix M). At each stage of the research, I ensured that there was no emotional and psychological harm by addressing issues that concerned participants like the issue of the language of conducting the interviews, as I provided under section 4.7.1. Additionally, the third stage of the research involved the CLOS, thus, I also sought parents' permission to observe their children learning SL1 and required their consent (Appendix N and Appendix O).

4.10.3 Privacy, anonymity and confidentiality

Bryman (2012:142) proclaims that the issue of privacy in research is closely linked to anonymity and confidentiality. Furthermore, I ensured the privacy of participants by focusing on issues that were related to their job only (teaching SL1), not personal issues as suggested by Cohen *et al.* (2011:93). With regards to anonymity, Cohen *et al.* (2011:93) suggest that the primary measure that a researcher may take to ensure that the identity of participants is concealed in his/her study is to avoid using their names and other ways through which their identification can be revealed. Informed by these scholars' suggestions, I ensured that the identity of participants and both schools remained anonymous by using pseudonyms. The fictitious identities given to the two schools were School SEA and School SEB. The aliases for teachers from each school were SEA1, SEA2, SEA3, SEA4, SEB1, SEB2, SEB3, SEB4, SEB5, SEB6 and SEB7 respectively.

Also, Bryman (2012:143) and Seidman (2013:64) state that the subject of confidentiality is always related to the subject of secrecy and privacy in the research procedure. I gained the trust and confidence of participants by first explaining my role as a researcher and describing in detail the nature of the study and assuring them that the information they provide will remain strictly confidential. Furthermore, I assured teachers that at no point in time will they be required or called in to other platforms to explain their involvement in this exercise. I also explained to participants that data will be safely kept in an encrypted google drive account in the University of Pretoria repository.

4.10.4 Data storage

With regards to data storage, Yin (2016:31) cautions that a researcher has to be diligent and protective about their data and give it great attention and maximum security. In line with this author, I ensured that information and data generated from participants remained private and confidentially protected and were used for this study only. I abided by the principles of the University of Pretoria with regards to data storage and disposal. Data were

stored in a password protected google drive account for the duration of the study. After completion of the study, data were to be stored in the University of Pretoria repository for 15 years, thereafter it would be disposed of.

4.11 SUMMARY

This chapter presented the methodology I employed to respond to research questions raised in the study which explored pedagogical practices in SL1 instruction in linguistically diverse classrooms in the foundation and middle phases. I began the chapter by presenting the interpretive paradigm that guided my selection of the approach, design, and methods I utilised in the research. I then presented philosophical assumptions which underpinned the study, that is, ontology, epistemology and methodology. Furthermore, I discussed the research approach taken by the study which is the qualitative approach, my justification for employing this approach and its limitations and strengths. I further described the design of the study and provided the rationale for utilising the exploratory case study design in this study. The strengths and limitations of this design and how the limitations were mitigated in this study were also presented. I also discussed how I employed purposive sampling to select participants that responded to research questions, hence generating data for the study. Moreover, I provided how I used interviews, lesson observation, FGD and document review to generate data for the study. Finally, I explained how data collected through the various data-generating tools were analysed and the measures I took to ensure quality assurance in this research. The subsequent chapter provides a presentation of research findings.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, I provided the methodology I followed to collect and generate data for the study whose purpose was to explore pedagogical practices in the teaching of siSwati as the first language in linguistically diverse primary schools in the Shiselweni region of Eswatini. This was necessitated by the gap that exists in literature, the lack of existing studies exploring teacher pedagogy despite siSwati being LoLT in the foundation and middle phases of primary school in Eswatini, and the fact that siSwati is one of the subjects responsible for a high retention rate at primary school (EMoET, 2018b). From a sociocultural perspective, I saw it vital to explore pedagogical practices employed by teachers to teach SL1 in these linguistically diverse classrooms of the foundation phase, why they engaged in these practices the way they did, and ultimately, to find out the experiences of teachers in teaching SL1 in the foundation phase.

Moreover, in this chapter, I present a thematic presentation of research findings that emerged from data analysis. As alluded to in Chapter 4, I employed content and thematic analysis to analyse the data collected through individual interviews, focus group discussion (FGD), classroom lesson observations (CLOS) and document analysis. Moreover, in this chapter, the findings from the data were presented against the six constructs of the sociocultural theory (SCT) which guided this study. Even though these constructs are interrelated, an effort was made to align each against data that speak specifically to it. This means each of the six constructs of the SCT is systematically used as classifying principles demonstrating occurrences in the data where they are revealed and how the data relates to each construct.

In Chapter 4, I presented in detail the profile and characteristics of the schools and teachers who participated in the study. As mentioned earlier, the study was conducted in two urban schools found in the Shiselweni region's town of Nhlangano. These are government schools that have learners of diverse cultural, socio-economic, and linguistic backgrounds. The cultural and linguistic diversity feature of these schools is a result of investors who are of Asian descent and some Africans in the diaspora who have come to start businesses in the town of Nhlangano. This has resulted in an influx of Swati people coming to work in

manufacturing industries and shops in town. Most learners in these schools comprise foreign nationals and a significant number of Swati nationals lack proficiency in siSwati, yet siSwati is a compulsory subject and the LoLT in the foundation and middle phases of primary school.

In a bid to understand how teachers teach and experience the teaching of SL1 in light of existing linguistic diversity among learners, I purposively selected teachers from the two schools. For ethical purposes, I hid the identity of the two schools by assigning them the codes, SEA and SEB. For the individual interviews, CLOS, and document analysis, the study involved eight teachers, four from the foundation phase, covering Grades 1 to 2 and four from the middle phase, meaning Grades 3 and 4. I chose these teachers because they were teaching the FOMIPs, and they had vast experience in teaching siSwati to learners of diverse linguistic backgrounds in the two urban schools. The two schools were selected to determine whether teachers had similar experiences and teach siSwati in similar ways. Teachers from the two respective schools were given pseudonyms SEA1, SEA2, SEA3, SEA4, and SEB1, SEB2, SEB3, and SEB4. Only teachers from school SEB participated in the focus group discussion. Thus, the findings emerged from transcripts of eight teacher-individual interviews, one focus group discussion, two classroom lesson observations per teacher in each school, and documentary evidence in the form of siSwati curriculum document, lesson plans by teachers, learners' exercise books, and teacher-made tests. The teachers' comments showed parallelism rather than differences. Considering this, I present similar findings together and the different ones apart as demonstrated in the following sections of the study. I finally conclude the chapter with a summary.

5.2 FINDINGS RELATING TO SOCIAL INTERACTION

In chapter 3, I presented how social interaction, the fundamental construct of SCT posits that learning in children is dependent on socialising with skilled people like teachers, guardians and peers in the child's sociocultural environment. For SCT, social interaction is the precursor for language teaching-learning which results in the development of higher-order functions among learners. Based on the foregoing, data generated in this study revealed the teaching and learning of SL1 were primarily centred on teachers socialising with the learners in the language classroom. Moreover, findings further revealed that both the school and home environment were vital in learners acquiring core language skills as the latter gained language by interacting with both the teachers and peers at school and parents at home.

It was the common opinion of teachers that the teaching and learning of SL1 were not only restricted to the classroom but extended to the social interactions the learners had with other learners during break or lunchtime at school and the interactions they had with individuals at home. SEA2 and SEB6 had the following to say about how the social interactions they had with learners impacted the latter's learning:

My learners learn the language in class, but they acquire many words outside when they play and interact with their peers. For example, I had a Pakistani learner who didn't understand siSwati at all. As time went by, I realised that the learner had acquired much vocab, and I knew I was not responsible for such success. I asked the parent, who informed me that he had hired a garden boy who spoke siSwati to his son. After school hours, the learner interacted with the helper, and in no time, his language improved as he actively participated during siSwati lessons (Interview, SEA2).

For me, the environment plays a crucial role in language acquisition. It makes a big difference with whom the child interacts and in which language, so when the child interacts more with siSwati native speakers, she acquires the language. In class, we teach the basics, vocabulary and the rules of sentence formation. I once had one learner who came to this school not knowing a single word of siSwati, but within a term, she had acquired the language. I discovered that her parents encouraged her to play with the local children in their neighbourhood. Then, I realised that she got the language from her peers (FGD, SEB6).

The foregoing views reveal the role played by the classroom and home environment in developing siSwati proficiency among learners. The above views suggest that learners learnt SL1 in class when the teacher was teaching, but they acquired language in the environment where they lived. This tallies with Krashen's (1982) assertion that language learning occurs in class when teachers teach grammar and the awareness of the rules of the language, but generally, children acquire language unconsciously as a consequence of social interactions learners have with people in their social environment, which could include when they play with their peers in a low-anxiety environment.

Moreover, another finding was that the interaction of learners in class and outside class aided their acquisition of the siSwati language.

They also learn plenty of vocabulary outside when they play with friends. In class, we have insufficient time for the learners to acquire all siSwati words (Interview, SEA3).

According to my observation, learners are involved in teaching each other spoken language. Fortunately, in our school, learners are not punished for speaking vernacular during break time, so they speak siSwati at that time. You will hear the non-mother tongue speakers of siSwati saying vulgar language, then you know you didn't teach her that word, so she might have heard it from friends (Interview, SEB2).

The above views of the teachers indicate that the learning of SL1 was unlimited to teachers, but the school atmosphere also provided a conducive environment that promoted the development and acquisition of siSwati by learners. For example, in both schools, there were no policies that prohibited learners from speaking siSwati during break or lunchtime, yet this was a practice that was common in many rural schools in Eswatini. Furthermore, in the CLOS I confirmed what teachers said about learners interacting with each other within the school premises. When I conducted the CLOS, I remained in the school for the duration of the school day. I noted that the environment outside the classroom provided plenty of opportunities for learner-learner social interaction. During break and lunchtime, the learners of Asian descent played with the local learners. Their conversations were primarily in English, but they also spoke in siSwati when playing games which included siSwati rhymes. I found this period a great platform for learners to acquire siSwati.

Furthermore, findings from the CLOS also showed that teachers made an effort to have a socially interactive classroom environment conducive to language learning by displaying charts on walls with siSwati content. Teachers' views and practices were also in line with documentary evidence, as the teacher's guide instructed teachers to prepare work on charts and display it on classroom walls. Teachers had to display other teaching and learning items such as watches. In the classrooms, I noted that the content displayed on walls was either teacher creations, like flipcharts with siSwati phonemes or words or picture charts provided by the National Curriculum Centre (NCC). However, it was disappointing to note that during reading and writing lessons, most teachers did not use the flip charts as a resource or reference and did not encourage learners to socially interact, moving around the class and use the pictures when either reading or writing spelling. The same situation prevailed even during the teaching of oral skills.

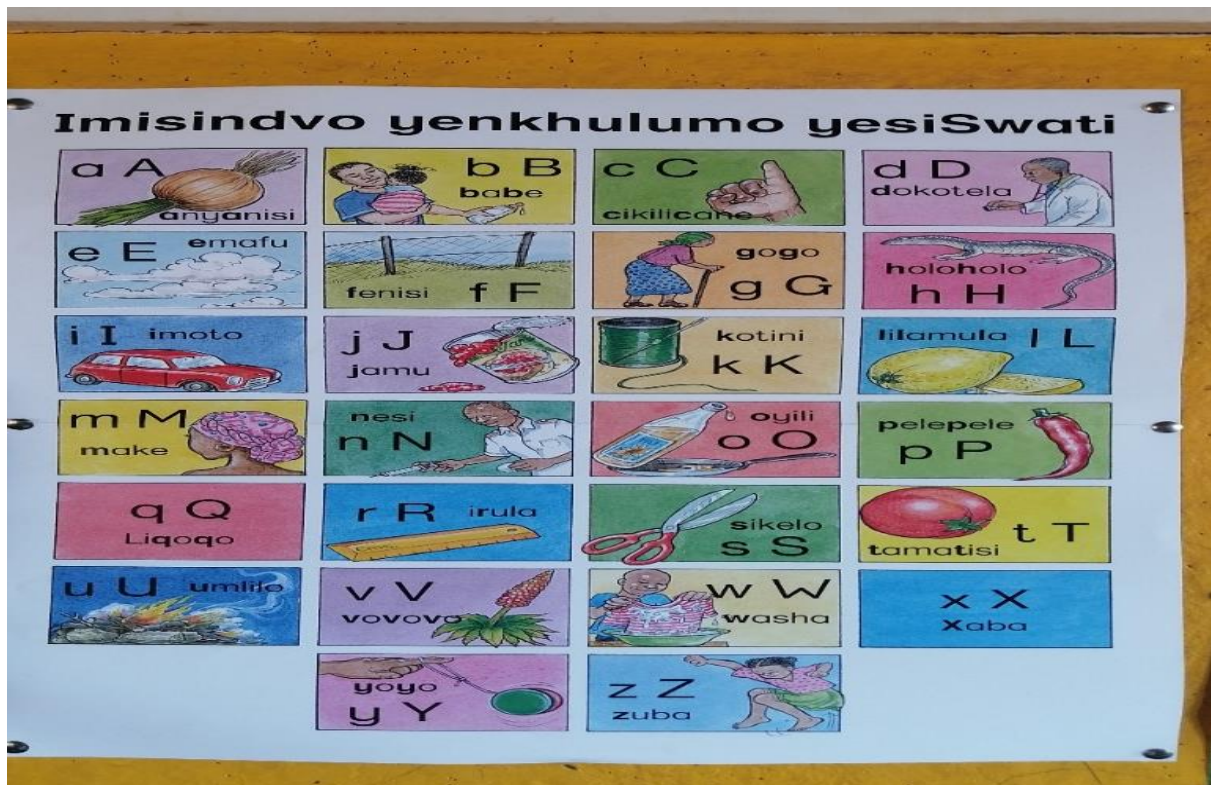
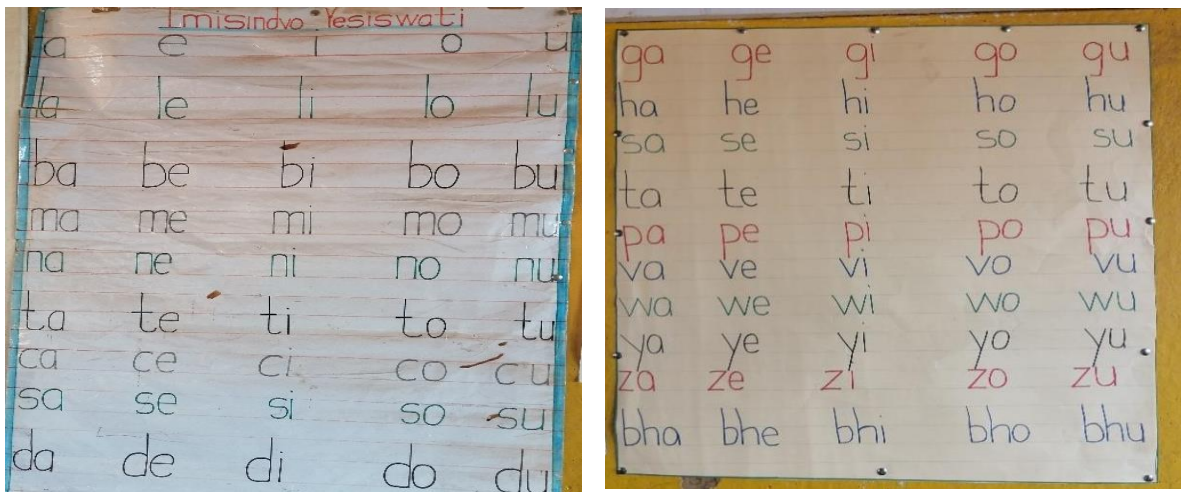


Figure 5.1: Samples of siSwati work displayed on classroom walls

As shown in figure 5.1, the wall print had valuable resources to promote the teaching of both oral and written language. The displayed pictures showed siSwati phonemes and the letters of the alphabet. However, I observed that both teachers SEA1 and SEB1 respectively did not use these resources in their teaching by making them a reference point, or as a way to promote learner-text interactions.

5.3 FINDINGS RELATING TO THE MORE KNOWLEDGEABLE OTHER

According to the SCT, the MKO is a skilled individual and in the context of the study, the teacher is expected to be an expert in their field so that s/he can be the conduit through which learners acquire new language skills (Fulbrook, 2019). Therefore, these findings were all centred on the teacher who as the MKO held the dual role of being a facilitator and transmitter of knowledge. As an expert in the siSwati subject, the teacher was expected to exude content, sound technical abilities, and pedagogical strategies in teaching SL1 so that learners can expand their understanding and knowledge of SL1 concepts past their present abilities.

As presented in Chapter 2, the teacher as the MKO should demonstrate TPACK which is an amalgamation of the three main types of knowledge that a teacher should possess (TK, PK, and CK). As stated earlier, TK describes the teacher's expertise in using various technological tools for productive teaching-learning; PK describes the knowledge of the methods and educational practices and strategies to transfer that subject content to learners, and CK defines the teacher's understanding of the subject content. Therefore, a knowledgeable teacher of siSwati in the FOMIPs was expected to exude these types of knowledge in their SL1 classrooms. For me to arrive at how teachers as language specialists taught SL1, I explored the instructional practices, methods, strategies, and techniques they used as pedagogics, how and why they used them, and their appropriateness to teach SL1. Pedagogical practices in the context of the study, therefore, relate to all the approaches, methods, modes, models, instructional practices, strategies, and tactics teachers used to teach and facilitate learners' acquisition of SL1. Therefore, these findings related to the which, how, and why questions. Moreover, regarding these three types of knowledge, the findings of the study revealed that SL1 teachers had CK but lacked the pedagogy and technology to relay that knowledge to the learner. Figure 5.2 below is an illustration of the three fundamental kinds of knowledge to be possessed by the SL1 teacher to be effective in teaching the subject in the FOMIPs.

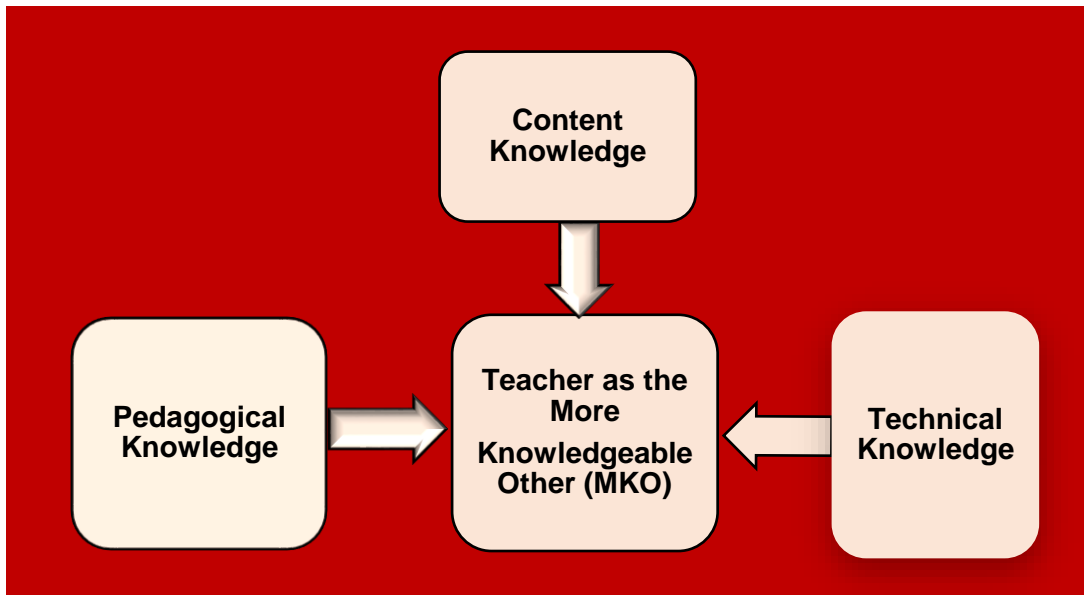


Figure 5.2: Illustration of types of knowledge to be possessed by the SL1 teacher as MKO

5.3.1 SL1 Teachers' knowledge of subject content

Teacher knowledge of SL1 content was revealed by their understanding of what skills should be taught to FOMIP learners and the purpose of those skills. For teachers at both Schools, SEA, and SEB, the four language skills had to be taught to learners so that the latter are able to communicate in both spoken and written forms (that is, learners should acquire oral and written skills to guarantee communicative competence in SL1). It is teaching language literacy. Thus, according to teachers, teaching the siSwati language refers to teaching the learners the ability to holistically use language correctly and appropriately to achieve the goals of communication. They shared that a learner that is unable to make meaningful communication in the language, one who is unable to speak, read and write, is illiterate in the language. Hence, they justify the need for teachers to teach the siSwati language in the foundation phase and middle phase of primary school. These ideas were provided by teachers from SEA and SEB, who when asked about their understanding of teaching SL1, gave the following responses:

Teaching SL1 means equipping learners with speaking, reading and writing skills which are essential skills for learning (Interview, SEA1).

It is teaching a learner so that she is able to listen and answer to questions you ask. She must read and write in siSwati. For me, if the learner has those abilities, she is literate in siSwati (FGD, SEB1).

It involves equipping learners with the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, which are used in all subjects (FGD, SEB3).

It is to teach the siSwati language so that the learner can be able to make conversation with others (akhone kucocisana nalabanye); it is to train them to listen to what is said and to teach them how to read and write anything in the language (FGD, SEB4).

From the above transcripts, teachers' views in the (FGD) corroborated those from the individual interviews as teachers understood that teaching SL1 in the foundation and middle phases means teaching speaking, reading and writing skills. It is worth mentioning that even though participants shared similar views on teaching SL1 involving both receptive and productive skills, their focus was on the productive skills of speaking and writing and the receptive skill of reading. In the individual interviews, all teachers were silent about teaching the receptive skill of listening to learners in their SL1 classrooms. Moreover, in the FGD all teachers included the listening skill, which ironically, they had omitted in the individual interviews. I attributed this to forgetfulness and concluded that SEB4 reminded them about this experience. Maree (2007) states that in an FGD, participants build upon each other's perspectives and forgotten experiences are somehow resurrected. Thus, for teachers, teaching SL1 involves teaching learners and equipping them with expressive skills of speaking and writing so that they may be able to express their thoughts in oral or written form, and also equip learners with the receptive skills of reading and of listening. When interpreting the views of teachers, I concluded that they regard the four language skills as the core skills to be taught and learnt in SL1 as these skills are the backbone of learning in all subject areas. In other words, teachers regard teaching the siSwati language as teaching learners the language to function in both the oral and written modes of communication. For teachers, knowledge of the siSwati language means being able to receive, interpret and produce a message in both oral and written forms.

Teachers' understanding of what teaching SL1 meant was demonstrated in the CLOS. In all the lessons I observed, teachers taught the four language skills, (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). The focus of teachers' language practices in the FOMIP was teaching

language literacy so that all learners can have functional use of the language across the subject curricula both in its oral and print form, which is consistent with objectives of the siSwati curriculum and most language curricula around the world. In this regard, participant teachers demonstrated knowledge and purpose of the SL1 content. Thus, participants had the fundamental knowledge required for them to teach SL1 which is content knowledge (CK) which according to authors (Baser, Kopcha & Ozden 2015; Pachler, Evans & Lawes, 2007; Shulman 1987) is the primary prerequisite and quality a teacher should possess to qualify to teach a subject area.

5.3.2 SL1 Teachers' pedagogical knowledge

The findings revealed that teachers predominantly used expository pedagogy when teaching and they lacked the appropriate, adequate, and relevant pedagogy to teach SL1 to learners. The use of traditional teacher-centred methods which did not cater for learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds like the lecture and question and answer methods by teachers was against the requirements of the curriculum. The Eswatini national curriculum framework for general education categorically spells out that learner-centred pedagogies, such as discovery and participatory should be used across all subject spectrums (EMoET, 2018a). All participants alluded to using the question-and-answer method and the following excerpts are representative of teachers' views when asked how they teach SL1 language skills:

I teach listening and speaking the same way. When I teach listening, I begin the lesson by asking the learners to put away their pencils and anything that might distract them. I then ask them to look me in the eyes, not to look sideways. They look at me and listen. I then read the story over and over again. The important thing to consider when teaching listening and speaking is that the learners should be attentive, look and respond only to a question. I usually tell stories about contemporary issues, for example, acceptable behaviour and abuse. Children talk because they like stories. I read and ask questions as I read to determine whether they are following or not (Interview, SEA1).

I use the lecture method when teaching oral and written language. When I teach listening and speaking, I use the question-and-answer method a lot. I ask learners questions that they answer orally. This helps them to listen, speak and learn new words. These are the methods of teaching I know (Interview, SEB1).

We are not allowed to use English when teaching siSwati, but I often use English to explain the lesson to non-native speakers of siSwati (Interview, SEB2).

Our lecturers taught us which methods of teaching are appropriate for the lower grades. We were trained to use methods of teaching that will provide new knowledge to the learners like the question-and-answer methods. (Ngimi lowatiko lapha. Kufuna ngibachache labafundzi) I am the knowledgeable one here; I must enlighten the learners (Interview, SEB3).

I usually ask learners questions based on the news I have read for them, and they answer the questions verbally (FGD, SEB6).

The above-mentioned views show that participants predominantly employed expository pedagogy through the question and answer and lecture methods to teach oral skills. These are methods not suitable to teach language at the FOMIPs as they are characterised by heavy drills and learners assuming the passive role of only speaking when the teacher asked a question. The above views indicate that although the teacher controlled the teaching and learning process, s/he tried to captivate the attention of learners and provided the opportunity for the development of oral skills by asking questions that they had to answer orally. However, relying on the question-and-answer methods to teach language at the FOMIPs has the weakness of forcing learners to speak, yet according to Krashen's (1982:12) natural order hypothesis, there is a natural order to be followed in language acquisition and language learning. According to the natural order hypothesis, teachers should be patient with their language learners (Krashen, 1982:30; Krashen & Terrell, 1998:100). They should not use force by heavy drilling to have the learners talk. Therefore, relying on the question-and-answer method was not appropriate for teaching oral language to these young learners. As MKOs, teachers had to be cognisant that children go through a silent period (internalisation) where they pick and internalise what they hear in their environment when they acquire language (Vygotsky, 1978). Thus, the lesson here is, language teachers should not rush learners to produce oral language but should be patient and support the learners as once they have internalised sufficient language, they will begin to speak with ease.

The foregoing views indicate that teachers as SL1 experts lacked knowledge of the appropriate pedagogy for teaching siSwati language to young learners. According to Leach and Moon (2008) and Shulman (1987), teachers ought to have pedagogic knowledge (PK),

which includes not only the methods and strategies for teaching but also the understanding of the learners, how they learn, the tools of learning and the context where learning occurs. According to Brown (2007), teachers who are to implement a language curriculum should possess methods and strategies for teaching the language curriculum: knowledge being comprehensive and prescribed set of classroom specifications to achieve linguistic objectives and techniques being an extensive range of activities and exercises used to achieve objectives. Thus, the preceding views of teachers indicate that they held the traditional view that the teacher is the master of knowledge and learners are blank slates, hence conforming to the 'jug and mug' strategy where the learners (mug) begin school without the knowledge and the teacher (jug) fills them with it. However, the understanding that teachers as trained individuals are equipped and prepared to teach a curriculum is not always factual because learners always come to school with pre-existing knowledge that the teacher can use to foster understanding of new concepts. Although the teachers might have gone to college, some still lack pedagogical knowledge. In this way, teachers as 'MKOs' failed to give learners demanding tasks that could test and challenge all their cognitive processes.

However, another finding indicated that some teachers could not distinguish between a skill, a teaching method and a teaching strategy. When asked what methods and strategies of teaching they used to teach the oral skills, teachers SEA2 and SEA3 had this to say:

I use the listening and speaking skills method (Interview, SEA2).

When teaching listening and speaking, I use the modelling teaching method. I want learners to copy the correct language from me (Interview, SEA3).

The above views indicate some pedagogical knowledge deficiency on the part of the two participants who as SL1 experts are expected to know the difference between a skill, teaching method and a strategy. For example, in the above excerpts, SEA2 did not mention any teaching method but reproduced the question as an answer. My interpretation of her views was that she could not distinguish between a skill to be acquired or learnt by a learner, the procedure (method) the teacher or learner follows so that the skill is acquired or learnt and the tactic (strategy) the teacher employs for easy acquisition of the skill. Participant SEA3 had the idea but assumed modelling was a teaching method, yet in this instance, this was a strategy or a tool that language teachers used to demonstrate the correct pronunciation of siSwati words and concepts. The above views speak volumes about the

educational experiences provided to the learners when the people who are regarded as experts cannot distinguish between basic professional terms. This also gives light as to why the academic performance of learners is wanting in siSwati as a school subject and why the subject is responsible for a high retention rate (EMoET, 2018b).

Moreover, some teachers as MKOs espoused to using learner-centred pedagogy and communicative pedagogies such as participatory and discovery pedagogy to teach SL1. Findings from the interviews and FGD showed that some participants claimed to use role-playing, storytelling, dramatisation and debates, which fall under participatory pedagogy and are learner-centred. Interactive strategies such as play and storytelling to teach oral and written language are advocated for by the SCT as effective for the MKO to use in teaching language in the FOMIPs. The following teachers' views are consistent with researchers who found storytelling instrumental in developing new vocabulary, thus promoting language development in learners (Joubert, 2015:87; Wells & Haneda, 2009:143).

I believe that for learners to learn the language, I have to use learner-centred methods. That is why I teach SL1 skills through storytelling, drama and play (Interview, SEA4).

One belief I hold is that an individual should take pride in his/her language. When I teach the siSwati language, I teach it with love and pride, and this influences me to choose methods that will make learners enjoy the subject. Through using drama and play, learners learn the language indirectly (FGD, SEB4).

From the foregoing views, it is evident that teachers in this study espoused that their beliefs shaped their pedagogy. Thus, they employed methods and strategies of teaching that captivated the attention of learners and involved them in participatory and discovery tasks in the form of drama and play. However, this was not entirely true as I observed in the CLOS that their beliefs did not align with their actual teaching practice in class. Even though participants championed using participatory pedagogy which is learner-centred like play, role play, dramatisation and debates to foster language learning, findings from CLOS disconfirmed that as there was no evidence of this in practice. This finding confirmed the results of a study (Hos & Kekec, 2014), which established that educators' beliefs were not aligned with the real practice of teaching language. I then concluded that what teachers said by word of mouth did not always transpire in class when they were teaching siSwati.

In all lessons I observed, teachers were passionate about teaching SL1, but their pedagogical practices as the MKO in the subject were not appropriate for the teaching of SL1 particularly in the FOMIPs. In almost all the lessons I observed, teachers predominantly employed expository pedagogy where the teacher controlled the instructional process when teaching the four language skills, even though I could see opportunities for learners to actively engage in participatory and discovery pedagogy. Almost all SL1 lessons were largely dominated by expository pedagogy with the teacher drilling and teaching language concepts in a de-contextualised manner. Although most of the classroom activities were largely dominated by the teacher, learners participated to some degree when asked by the teachers to participate. For example, when teaching oral skills, the CLOS showed that the audio-lingual approach dominated teaching-learning. All teachers taught oral skills through reading and asked learners oral questions, but it was only teacher SEA3 who channelled her class to debate and dramatise the story before the end of the lesson. Generally, most lessons progressed in the same fashion with the teacher reading the story, and then asking learners questions which the latter had to respond to verbally. Thus, the characteristic feature of almost all lessons I attended was the teacher dominating the instructional process, drilling learners on the correct pronunciation of the siSwati vocabulary and concepts and the learners reciting the words after the teacher. The question is how can FOMIP learners develop cognitively if the teachers 'experts' lack the tools to impart knowledge to learners?

Furthermore, when teaching the productive skill of writing, teachers used the lecture method to give instructions ranging from how learners should handle pencils and pens, teaching learners to align their writing with the margins of the exercise books, and explaining the use of punctuation marks in writing and what learners should write. Discovery pedagogy was limited to learners doing individual work like writing spelling, doing classwork in their workbooks and going to the chalkboard to write words, which they formed from a pool of phonemes the teacher provided on the chalkboard. Although teachers led and controlled the instructional process in the writing lesson, learners were active participants to some degree. Learners wrote work in their exercise books, workbooks and the chalkboard. What I decried was the nature of the work given to learners. For the most part, learners wrote spelling as an integral part of the writing lesson (See figure 5.3).

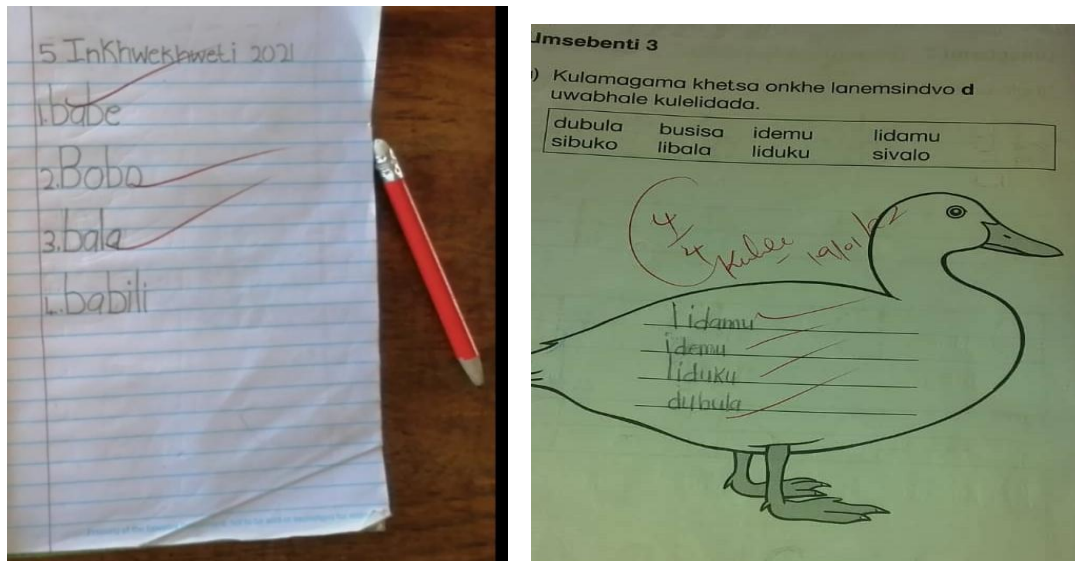


Figure 5.3: Sample of learners' written work

The lesson began with teachers reading a story, and learners were either asked to answer questions based on the story orally or given a spelling exercise that was related to the lesson. In other words, teachers used the single-word approach to teach writing. I did not find this approach effective and functional in teaching learners the productive skill of writing. That was the case because as a productive skill, learners ought to be exposed to larger text instead of learning single words in isolation without any form of contextualisation (Muijs & Reynolds, 2005:204). One shortcoming I noted about giving learners too much spelling was that it deprived learners of the opportunity to learn about other formal aspects of writing, like punctuation. My line of thinking was consistent with observations made by Smyth (2002:60), who found that the whole text approach is effective in teaching writing, as it takes a multimodal approach to teaching. For Smyth (2002), through the whole text approach, learners learn about other aspects of writing including, but unlimited to the use of punctuation, spelling, paragraphing and many more.

Furthermore, the findings from the document analysis corroborated those from the CLOS and gave me an insight into why teachers predominantly employed expository pedagogy. The documents I analysed were the Eswatini national curriculum framework for general education (ENCFGE), teachers' guide, picture book, learner's book, learner's reader, and the learner's workbook. It was important for me to analyse these documents as they are key for guiding pedagogy in siSwati language classrooms. The teacher's guide stipulated which

skills were to be acquired by learners in each grade such as the 21st century skills. It also provided a scheme of work for each unit, which books to be used in each lesson, the competencies to be acquired, the indicators of success, the objectives of the lesson and a step-by-step guide on how the teacher should conduct the lesson. However, I noticed that the teacher's guide did not suggest which pedagogical approach was best suitable for each lesson and how it was to be used. The same was true of the ENCFGE by EMoET (2018a:35) which stated that the CBE curriculum required a shift from teacher-centred methods but still allowed teachers to use these methods. Thus, teachers strayed and predominantly used the teacher-centred methods because there was a clause in the curriculum framework which gave them the flexibility to do so.

5.3.3 SL1 Teachers' technical knowledge

As presented in Chapter 2, the MKO could be the teacher with expertise in IT and also electronic and digital support systems, which could be employed to facilitate and support teaching-learning, especially in times of disasters such as pandemics. Also, as mentioned in Chapter 4, I conducted the study at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and most teaching and learning was supposed to be conducted virtually to curb the spread of the virus. The Eswatini government had instructed all educational structures to conduct online teaching and learning, including primary schools. Through this directive, the internet was supposed to be the tool that provided mediated learning of SL1 to learners in this context. However, I was disappointed to note that learners in both schools, particularly those of the FOMIPs did not study because the teachers did not have IT skills. The situation was unpleasant because even learners whose parents could afford online learning costs, could not assist their children as there was no SL1 content on the internet. In other words, these learners did not learn anything during the lockdown of the country and only resumed learning once lockdown restrictions had been eased. It was based on these two factors that teachers suggested the integration of IT into the teaching and learning of siSwati. Teachers were of the idea that the school should provide technological resources to mediate the teaching and learning of siSwati. It was the finding of the study that teachers were cognisant of the importance of IT in supporting SL1 teaching and learning. These teachers were aware that most learners had access to technological devices such as cell phones and computers so integration of a siSwati programme could improve their learning, as IT excites learners by discovering new ideas and connecting children to the world. Teachers had the following to say in this regard:

It can help to use technology when teaching siSwati. For example, siSwati educational content can be saved on computers and uploaded online because most learners are familiar with computers (Interview, SEA2).

Children like computers and they learn best when they like what is used. I think they can learn best with them. Most parents have computers. But, here there is a need to build a larger computer lab and add computers so that they are enough for all learners (Interview, SEB3).

We need to go digital. The school needs to buy computers, video recorders and a television so that we can make our recordings to use in class (FGD, SEB4).

I think if there can be siSwati educational cartoons, the learners might learn and take the subject seriously. They take English seriously because they watch a lot of English stuff on TV. There is a need for siSwati content to be on television and online (FGD, SEB5).

The aforementioned views indicate that teachers showed an understanding that educators of the 21st century should not be satisfied with possessing PCK only but should be a complete package and possess Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (TPACK) to be effective in their practice (Koehler & Mishra, 2005). Moreover, as much as teachers were aware of the benefits of integrating IT into a language programme, and IT being a conduit for change, they had concerns regarding their lack of the skills needed when using computers. That is why teachers suggested that they be provided with training on how to use computers first. During the discussion with teachers, I also noticed that most of them had a narrow understanding of IT, as it was restricted to the use of computers. I understood why when they spoke of the IT skills they needed, they only spoke of computer literacy, yet the integration of IT to language literacy programmes involves not only computers but other gadgets, devices, and apparatuses.

During the classroom observations, I noticed that in all lessons, there was no integration of technology to aid the teaching and learning of siSwati. In both schools, there was a computer laboratory, but most of the work teachers prepared for their learners was not typed. The work was handwritten and xeroxed for all the learners. Likewise, documentary evidence showed that teaching and learning materials such as the teachers' guide and the learners' textbooks had minimal information that supported the integration of technology in

the siSwati language classroom. For example, the Grade 2 textbook had a picture of a person using a desktop computer (Dlamini-Ndlovu *et al.*, 2019b:45) and Grade 3 textbook, *Likusasa lichakazile* had a poem on the use of cell phone titled *Chafa Chafa* and the use of a laptop (Dlamini-Ndlovu *et al.*, 2020b:45&48).

Based on the views of teachers, it appears that IT must be integrated into the teaching and learning of siSwati, as it has the potential of assisting learners with oral and written skills. These are skills that are essential in accessing and using information in the 21st century. In my opinion, it is commendable that teachers suggested the integration of IT in teaching siSwati, as technology has become part of everyday life in the 21st century. The views of teachers in this study were in line with Hannaway and Steyn (2017:11) who found that foundation phase teachers believed that the integration of technology in teaching had a beneficial impact on the subject matter, methodology and the way the administration ran the school.

5.3.4 Justification for teachers' pedagogical practices

Furthermore, when teachers as MKOs were asked to justify their choice of pedagogical practices and the way they employed them, they gave a number of determining factors. A justification is a rationale or motivation for doing something. Therefore, these findings pertained to teachers' rationale and reasons for choosing the pedagogical practices they engaged in and why they used them in the manner they did. They pertained to the determining factors that influenced teachers to employ different pedagogical practices which ranged from teachers' beliefs about siSwati language teaching, personal preference and curriculum requirements, and teacher training.

5.3.4.1 Teachers' beliefs, personal preference, and curriculum requirements

Teachers as the experts in teaching SL1 stated that their beliefs, personal preference, and curriculum requirements were determining factors for choosing the instructional practices they used in their SL1 classrooms. With regards to teachers' beliefs, they ranged from how they felt about learners learning siSwati, and its value and these subsequently influenced and informed their pedagogical practices:

I believe that learners need to know who they are, where they come from, and that is where siSwati comes in as the mother tongue of most learners and the medium of instruction. This belief makes me to market siSwati in my teaching by using

learner-centred methods of teaching such as play, singing and drama (Interview, SEA1).

I'm a Swati by nationality; I, therefore, do not want my language to be lost. This makes me use methods that allow me to explain like the lecture method and those that will make learners speak the language like the discussion method (Interview, SEB2).

I hold the belief that we shouldn't allow foreign languages to dominate our education system. Therefore, I use methods of teaching that will promote learning of the mother tongue, siSwati (FGD, SEB4).

The above views of teachers were in line with Watson (2015) who found that there was a relationship between teachers' beliefs and pedagogical practice. Watson (2015) concluded that beliefs played a role in influencing pedagogy and demonstrated that beliefs and individual assumptions shaped teaching. However, teachers in this study did not practice what they preached as their SL1 classroom practices did not always align with their views.

In this study, personal preference and curriculum requirements were other factors that influenced teacher choice of pedagogical practices and their way of teaching. By personal preference in this study, I mean the actions of a teacher choosing and liking one pedagogical approach or practice over another. Then, by curriculum requirements, I mean the curriculum expectations or standards of the siSwati curriculum at primary school, the foundation phase in particular. Therefore, it was a finding of this study that teachers used an instructional method or strategy because they preferred it over another, probably because they liked it. It has proven to be effective over others in the past, or because they knew their learners or because they were adhering to curriculum standards.

As the MKO in SL1, teachers shared that their experience of teaching SL1 and the knowledge of their learners influenced their teaching methods and practices, the following is what teachers stated in this regard:

I have taught Grade One for many years and I know my learners. I know which methods of teaching work for Grade One learners and which ones do not work (Interview, SEA1).

As an experienced teacher, I have some instructional strategies that I prefer over others. I know which methods are good for the foundation phase and I rely on them. When I use them, I know learners will master the concept (Interview, SEB2).

Looking at the above statements, the teachers imply that their choices of instructional practices are influenced by their knowledge of the learners and the methods that have worked for them in the past when teaching these grades. Although this practice might seem effective for teachers, it has shortcomings. As MKOs, teachers ought to be cognisant that it is not a given that learners will remain the same each year as the above views of teachers imply. But each year the teacher is introduced to a new group of learners with varying needs from those of the previous year. From my point of view, such a view is unrealistic and shows some degree of naivety on the part of the teachers who are expected to be experts in their field. This is more so because learners are different; their needs are diverse and the context under which instruction and learning occur should keep on evolving to suit the nature of the subject and meet the individual needs of learners. It is not always true and impractical to think that what worked for one in previous cases will always be effective in new cases. Hence, the above views of teachers are not in line with the sociocultural theory which contends that in education, the MKO should consider contextual dynamics, as they influence the cognitive development of learners. The remarkable thing is that the pedagogical practices employed by teachers did not show that they understood the needs of the learners contrary to their backed perspective that knowledge of their learners was the determining factor for the teaching methods they used and how they used them. On the contrary, a teacher with intimate knowledge of foundation phase learners would refrain from extensive use of expository pedagogy but would use approaches that encourage learner engagement such as discovery and participatory pedagogy. This above here also explains why learners performed poorly in SL1 in their exit examinations.

Additionally, Teacher SEA3 shared:

Eh! I can tell you that I use instructional methods that work for me. I think some are advocated by the curriculum, but I'm not sure. I will have to find out if all the methods I use are aligned with those laid down in the siSwati curriculum (Interview, SEA3).

In the above view, teacher SEA3 just like the other teachers indicates that the pedagogical practices she employed were influenced by her preferences. Her rationale for using the methods she used is that she viewed them as effective in teaching siSwati. However, it is

remarkable that teacher SEA3 was unsure whether the methods she used were advocated for by the siSwati curriculum or not, although it was in the middle of the year. I found this denoting some level of ill-preparedness. Of course, she was sure of one thing, utilising instructional methods that worked for her in the past, but was unsure if these methods were in line with the specifications of the siSwati curriculum. The lack of this fundamental knowledge on the part of this individual who is supposed to be an expert in SL1 teaching could prove detrimental to the learning experiences provided to the SL1 learners.

Moreover, some teachers believed that both personal preference and curriculum requirements informed their choices of instructional practices as experts of the subject. These teachers said the following regarding how the two influenced their choice of pedagogical strategies:

I mostly use methods that are laid down in the siSwati curriculum. But, I often use other strategies which I see relevant even if they are not in the curriculum document (Interview, SEA2).

The siSwati curriculum document advocates for learner-centred methods. I follow the curriculum. But, there are methods of teaching I prefer (Interview, SEB1).

I use a variety of teaching methods. What is important for me is for the learner to acquire that skill. It doesn't matter whether it's advocated for by the curriculum or not. As long as the child acquires the skill, I'm happy (FGD, SEB3).

Eh! Yes, these methods are laid down by the curriculum, but as a teacher, I look at other methods I find effective. I don't stray far from those laid down by the curriculum; I follow them and add where ever I feel there is a need (FGD, SEB4).

The aforementioned views of the teachers in both the interview and the FGD indicate that both personal choice and curriculum standards influenced them on which teaching methods to use, unlike the other teachers who deviated from the curriculum standards. I find the above views realistic and representative of what should happen in effective language teaching. As much as curriculum standards are there, teachers as MKOs should not be rigid. They should follow curriculum requirements, but nothing in this world is cast in stone. Language teachers should be flexible and depending on the context and individual needs

of learners, they ought to employ teaching methods that will facilitate the learning of language skills, resulting in learners having functional use of the language.

Moreover, findings from the CLOS gave evidence that personal preference motivated teachers to select certain pedagogical practices over others. It was odd that teachers as the MKOs often used methods and strategies convenient to them, even if they were not beneficial to the learner. My interpretation of teachers' assertions is that they did not reflect what transpired in class mainly because those who claimed that curriculum standards guided them on the required and expected pedagogical practices to use in teaching siSwati content did not adhere to it completely, as their teaching practices were not advocated by it. Those who stated that they were influenced by personal influence like experience and knowledge of the learners mostly used pedagogical practices that were not learner-centred.

Furthermore, findings from document analysis showed that teachers' choice of pedagogy was rarely influenced by curriculum requirements. For example, the teacher's guide emphasised teachers and learners should speak in siSwati in all lessons, and it did not have any provisions for code-switching. However, code-switching was a daily practice in the SL1 classroom in this study. Also, the analysis of siSwati curriculum documents showed some discrepancies regarding teachers' choice of pedagogical practices. The analysis of documents revealed that the CBE is a skilled based curriculum whose focus is on the learner rather than the teacher. It focuses on the skills and competencies to be acquired by the learner in each lesson. According to the ENCFGE, the appropriate pedagogical approaches to be used in the foundation phase are participatory and discovery pedagogies (EMoET, 2018a:19). These approaches are believed to facilitate the acquisition of the desired skills by learners. However, findings from the analysis of teachers' lesson plans showed some inconsistencies in the following ways. Even though some teachers prepared their lessons according to the specification of the curriculum, often the teaching methods stipulated in the lesson plans were not learner-centred. Take, for instance, Teacher SEA3, this teacher's lesson plan format was recommended by the CBE curriculum, but the choice of methods was mostly teacher-centred, thus contrary to the specification of the curriculum which advocates for learner-centred pedagogical practices. Similarly, the analysis of lesson plans for teachers who said personal preference was the determinant for their choice of pedagogical practices showed that expository pedagogy was the dominant approach used in teaching SL1. For instance, findings from the analysis of lesson plans for teachers SEA1, SEA2, SEB1 and SEB3 showed that the way they prepared their lessons was not in line with the CBE curriculum. These teachers had their way of lesson planning and eventually

taught siSwati language in a way best preferred by them. The teacher was often a master of knowledge by exposing content to learners. Teachers rarely used engaging practices that allowed learners to be involved in their learning. Thus, it remains doubtful if the educational experiences provided to learners were in line with the CBE curriculum. The unfortunate part about this is both teachers formulated and presented lesson plans which did not focus on the skills to be acquired by the learner, but the focus was on the teachers' achievement of objectives by the end of the lesson. Sadly, as professionals and MKOs, teachers were expected to adhere to curriculum standards and employ instructional practices that will facilitate the acquisition and learning of SL1 among FOMIPs learners. In short, by not adhering to curriculum requirements, teachers applied inappropriate pedagogy which explains why learners perform poorly in the subject resulting in a poor retention rate.

5.3.4.2 Teacher Training

Teachers stated that another determining factor to choose the pedagogical practices they employed in their SL1 classrooms was their training, that is pre-service training and in-service training. Pre-service training is the initial and essential training that prepares and equips teachers with content and educational pedagogies to use in schools. Whereas in-service training is the type of training given to teachers who are already in the field of work to enhance their teaching skills. With regards to pre-service training, the findings revealed that the way teachers were trained to teach siSwati in colleges made them choose the pedagogical practices they used and used them the way they did. The major areas of influence were how their college instructors taught and the language used to teach and learn siSwati at college. Teacher SEA2 had the following to say about how her lecturers influenced her teaching methods:

I emulate my trainers at college. The lecture and discussion methods worked for them; they explained a concept to us as they were the ones with knowledge and we would discuss it. I do that now (Interview, SEA2).

From the above excerpt, teacher SEA2's rationale for using expository pedagogy because it worked for their lecturers shows a lack of understanding of the context under which s/he taught. This view indicates that the teacher lacked pedagogical knowledge as stated by authors (Leach & Moon, 2008; Shulman, 1986; Shulman, 1987; Grossman, 1990) that it does not only entail the understanding of methods and strategies for teaching but also the understanding of the learners, their context, how they learn, the tools used for learning and the environment where learning occurs. In the case of the study, teachers as MKOs were

expected to know that the lecture method might have been suitable for them as they were college students, but it is unsuitable and inappropriate for foundation phase learners who learn by discovering things for themselves and participating in their learning.

Teachers also revealed that the language used to learn and teach (LoLT) siSwati at college influenced their practice, particularly code-switching from siSwati to English. For teachers, they used code-switching because of the way they were trained to teach siSwati at colleges which directly affected their expertise and current practice. According to teachers, the LoLT siSwati at colleges was English and that practice did not align with their primary and high school education. It did not even align with the current practice in schools where they taught siSwati in siSwati. In the schools, they were expected to teach siSwati in siSwati, but code-switching comes naturally to them in their lexicon, and most of the siSwati metalanguage is in English.

Mmhhhi! Code-switching comes naturally to me because at college, I was trained to teach siSwati in English. I find it hard to relate what I studied in English to siSwati and that is why now and then I find myself using the two languages interchangeably in a siSwati lesson. To me, this is unconscious (Interview, SEA1).

Similarly, SEA3 stated:

My college training makes me teach the way I do. At college, the training of siSwati was in English, which frustrated me then. But, I find it helpful here in school, as we teach siSwati to learners of different languages. But, I still find it hard to adapt to using siSwati only and to completely relate what I studied in English to siSwati (Interview, SEA3).

Teacher SEB2 and SEA2 echoed the above views and said:

I studied siSwati in English, and I still refer to my college notes which are in English. This makes it easy for me to use English when teaching siSwati. My notes are in English, yet the teaching material is in siSwati (Interview, SEB2).

My teaching is influenced by pre-service training. When I started teaching, I could not connect the English terms to siSwati so I reverted to my college training which was in English and used English words. The switch from siSwati to English is

automatic, which is not a good thing. I sometimes wonder why siSwati wasn't used as the medium of instruction so that our training could align with our actual teaching practice in schools. Because the English terminology used was difficult, relating concords and verbs radical to siSwati is difficult (Interview, SEA2).

Findings sourced from the FGD paralleled those from the individual interviews as teachers expressed the view that their college training influenced their use of code-switching as a pedagogical strategy and the way they employed it:

At college, I was taught siSwati in English, yet here at work, I'm supposed to use siSwati. Why? "Loko kuyaphambana ngoba sishaya siNgisi lemakolishi, latikolweni sesiSwati (this is contradictory because we use English at college, but in schools we use siSwati) (FGD, SEB1).

I'm a first language speaker of siSwati; I find myself using a lot of English when teaching siSwati because that is how I was trained. I code-switch because I sometimes run short of terms (FGD, SEB5).

From the foregoing views, it appears that teachers did not use code-switching as a resource and scaffold to support FOMIPs learners' acquisition of SL1. It seems teachers employed code-switching because of metalanguage limitations rather than using it to facilitate meaningful and functional learning of the siSwati language. The fact that teachers alluded to having uncontrolled use of English when teaching siSwati as a result of their training defeats the purpose of code-switching as a scaffolding tool that facilitates meaningful communication in the SL1 classroom. The uncontrolled use of English to teach siSwati by teachers showed their lack of fluidity in the siSwati metalanguage. This could be a result of the structural differences between the two languages as English and siSwati are unrelated, neither typologically nor genetically. This results in teachers struggling to stick to siSwati, thus they habitually drift between these two languages when teaching siSwati. That is why Nomlomo (2013) contends that a misalignment in theories and pedagogy informing the preparation of home language teachers and the actual practice in schools can negatively impact the teaching and learning of these languages. From my point of view, the unplanned and unmanageable use of this strategy suggests that it might be one of the factors responsible for learners' poor academic performance in SL1 exit examination. This is supported by research (Cheng, 2015; Thomson & Stakhnevich, 2010; Mati, 2004) who

stated that unplanned and excessive use of this strategy can be counterproductive and end up not supporting learning.

Last, but not least, the findings of the study revealed that in-service training provided to teachers or the lack of it influenced the way they taught SL1. Participants of the study were experienced teachers, who explained that their teaching was influenced by the skills they acquired over the years through workshops they attended called by the siSwati Subject Association and the siSwati panel. These are organisations that establish cluster workshops in different regions of the country to capacitate teachers. These workshops are conducted by inspectors and teachers themselves. However, teachers decried the content of the in-service workshops. Also, the lack of training particularly in the CBE curriculum introduced in Grade One in 2019 was disparaging and a cause for concern.

I've received a lot of advice on how to teach siSwati from workshops I have attended, but the discussions are more on subject content and not much on the methods of teaching the content (Interview, SEB2).

Workshops help me with new ideas of teaching, but I haven't been trained in CBE. I don't know how to prepare the lesson plan and the scheme book under CBE. I rely on teachers who went for training when the curriculum was introduced but that is not enough (Interview, SEA1).

I was confident to teach siSwati under the old curriculum, but with the new one, it's a different case. When CBE was introduced, the administrators and the siSwati subject inspectors wanted one representative from the school to attend. These teachers had to train us, but they are often clueless, and (batsi abakeva) they did not understand what was discussed in the workshop. This is bad because if I had attended the workshop, I would have heard it from the horse's mouth (FGD, SEB1).

The workshops we attended in the past helped us in shaping our teaching and how to teach overcrowded classrooms. But when the CBE curriculum was introduced, they trained Grade one teachers, and the problem is when the curriculum reached Grade 2 in the following year, there was no thorough training. We were expected to be guided by the Grade one teachers who had attended training the previous year (FGD, SEB2).

Meanwhile, SEB 4 shared:

I find the workshops held at the beginning of the year very helpful as we share experiences, but I have a concern about the way they are held. With CBE, one representative teaching the grade where the curriculum was to be introduced attended. Next thing the teacher transfers to another school and you are expected to take over that class, yet you don't know anything about the curriculum. Without choice, you end up teaching the new curriculum the old way even though it is different (FGD, SEB4).

The foregoing views indicate that teachers decried not receiving in-service training in the CBE curriculum introduced in 2019, hence they hugely relied on experience and taught the new curriculum the old way as they did not know how the new curriculum was to be taught. I found this concerning because if teachers, the implementers of a curriculum are untrained and unprepared for the new curriculum, problems in curriculum implementation are bound to occur. This also explains why teachers used inappropriate pedagogical practices as they lacked the necessary training to make them more knowledgeable in transmitting SL1 content to the FOMIPs learners.

5.4 FINDINGS RELATING TO MEDIATION

Mediation as the principal construct of the SCT entails the use of a “tool” to assist learners solve new problems and successively achieve their objective in learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Findings of the study indicated that mediated learning took place through the two forms of mediation, that is mediation through another individual/ human and mediation through symbols (tools).

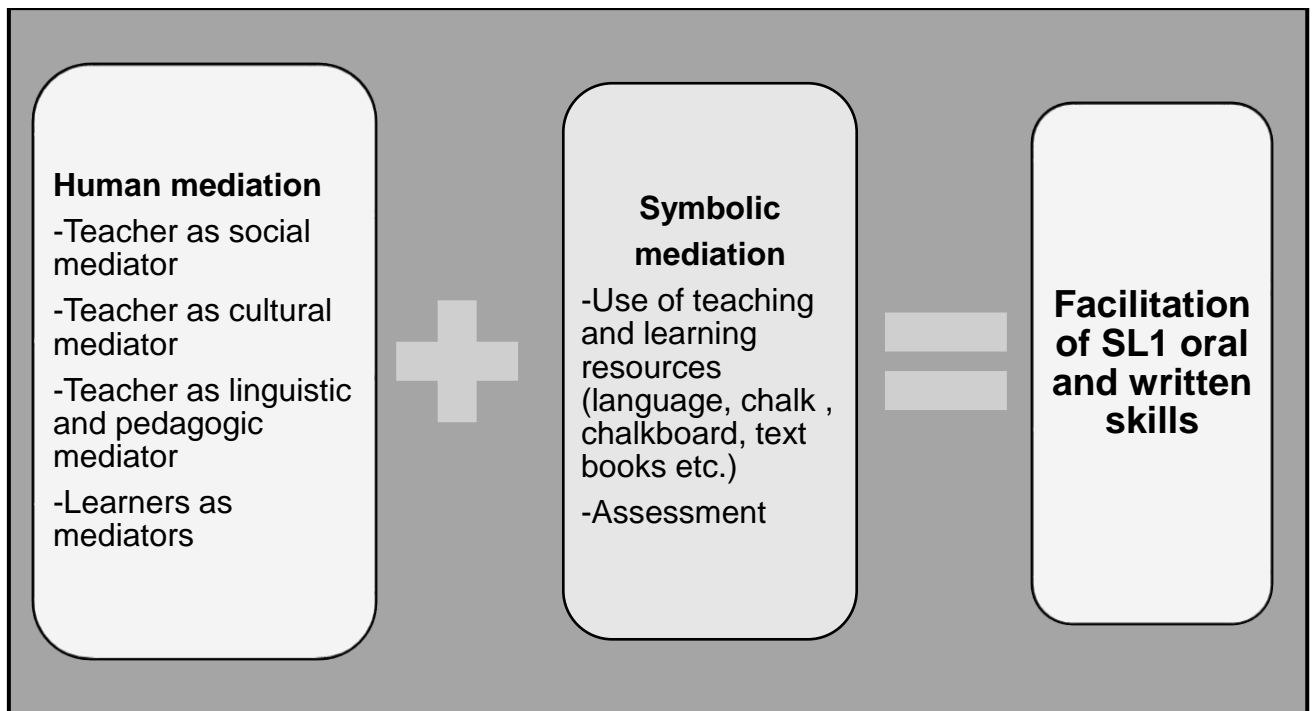


Figure 5.4: Illustration showing the types of mediation in the SL1 class

5.4.1 Human mediation

The findings of the study indicated that teachers and learners of both schools offered some form of human mediation in the teaching and learning of SL1. The teacher offered four different kinds of mediation to nurture, support and facilitate learners' acquisition and learning of core SL1 skills. Teacher mediation was manifested through social, cultural, and linguistic and pedagogic mediation, whereas learner mediation was manifested through peer teaching:

5.4.1.1 The teacher as a social mediator

Findings indicated that teachers from both Schools SEA and SEB understood that good interpersonal relationships in the SL1 class were vital for learning. That is why they ensured that the social and emotional environment in the SL1 classrooms was conducive for learning. Teachers stated that friendly interpersonal relationships in class are imperative in teaching SL1. They also highlighted that great interpersonal relationships were not only vital between the teacher and the learners, but also among learners themselves as this supports peer teaching. These were some of the teachers' views on how they used the social and emotional environment to teach SL1:

The relationship between the teacher and the learners should be friendly. It makes learning easier. Children learn by imitating a lot. If you are kind to them, they will be kind to us, so when I explain concepts to them, I do it with love and empathise with those who are struggling and encourage them that they can do it (Interview, SEA3).

The relationship between the teacher and the learner determines the learning environment. I am friendly to learners but strict. When it's time for learning, we learn, and when it's time to play, we do so (FGD, SEB4).

It's important to have a good relationship with your learners and for them to relate. That makes them speak, ask questions and are not afraid to answer your questions. Our school is in town, and the learners from rural areas are fluent in siSwati. In class, when they understand a concept, they explain it to their peers (Interview, SEB3).

I have observed that learners learn better from each other. In my class, I encourage them to ask each other, and they cannot do that if they are not friendly to others (FGD, SEB5).

The foregoing views indicate that teachers believed that a friendly emotional and social learning environment aided teaching and learning in their language classrooms. This is the case because teachers and learners had a good rapport and such understanding was present among learners themselves, thus creating a conducive language learning environment, as learners were unintimidated to ask questions from the teacher and among themselves, resulting in peer teaching. The above views indicate that there was psychological security in the SL1 classes, a vital element in a language classroom which ensures that learners are emotionally and mentally secure to learn (Weinstein, 1996:29).

Findings sourced from the CLOS confirmed those obtained through the individual interview and the FGD. In seven of the eight observed classrooms, the classroom environment was free and had low anxiety, as the learners were free to ask questions and express themselves in siSwati without rebuke from the teacher. In these SL1 classrooms, I discerned that teacher-learner and learner-learner interaction were crucial in teaching and learning SL1, particularly because these classes were made of learners from different social, economic, and linguistic backgrounds and they needed the teacher to be warm and impartial. Teachers' practice of a psychologically secure classroom is in line with Lightbown and Spada's (2013:25) contention that a conducive classroom environment with low anxiety

supports learning and encourages learner participation, as learners feel secure and confident, and the teacher holds them in high esteem as crucial members of the class. Regarding answering questions, most teachers waited for the learners to respond, except Teacher SEA1, who yelled and intimidated the learners to speak. She would shout, “Yeyi! Ubindze leni? Khuluma!” meaning, “Hey! Why are you quiet? Speak!” It was also in this one class where the environment was unfriendly in the sense that the teacher scolded the learners for several shortcomings, ranging from late coming, noise-making and failure to answer questions, poor handwriting to poor presentation of work. This resulted in a high-anxiety classroom, particularly among the learners who had not acquired any siSwati language. The actions of this teacher were counter to effective language teaching and learning, as Krashen (1982) noted that a high-anxiety classroom makes learners unwilling to partake in oral activities because of fear that their weaknesses will be exposed to the whole class.

5.4.1.2 The teacher as a cultural mediator:

The findings indicated that teachers espoused to be cultural mediators as they ensured cultural tolerance among their learners for the sole purpose of facilitating learning of SL1. According to teachers, they were cognisant that although most learners were L1 speakers of siSwati, a considerable number were non-native speakers of the language and lacked proficiency. Although they taught S1, they ensured that all cultures are respected and teacher SEA2 is representative of teachers’ views in this regard.

In my teaching of siSwati, I use learners' prior knowledge to introduce a lesson. When teaching about siSwati culture, I usually ask the learners to explain what they know about their cultures. All learners say something. For example, I would explain that in siSwati, when receiving something from an adult, you use both hands, then the Indians would say we use one hand. I then compare the cultures and show the diversity that exists among the languages (Interview, SEA2).

However, the above view was contradicted by teachers’ views and actions pertaining to how they value the teaching of SL1. Although teachers understood that teaching SL1 to learners meant equipping them with holistic functional use of the language and appreciating diversity, their views disregarded that they were not only teaching SL1 to MT speakers of the language, but also to learners who lacked proficiency in the language. Not once in their submissions did they mention what they understood teaching SL1 to learners of diverse linguistic backgrounds meant. It was evident from the submissions of participant teachers

that they believed that teaching SL1 in the FOMIP meant aggressively assimilating non-native speakers of siSwati into the language and culture of the siSwati-speaking learners. As much as some of the views of teachers highlighted the academic and cognitive importance of learners acquiring SL1, such as being literate in siSwati benefits learners, as siSwati is LoLT in the foundation and middle phases of primary school in Eswatini and also pointed out that the acquisition of siSwati as L1 aided learners' acquisition of the second language, which in the case of these learners was English, the general view of participants on the value of teaching siSwati is rooted in nationalism. This does not augur well with the teacher as a cultural mediator and an individual who has to facilitate the teaching and learning of learners from different cultures and languages:

SiSwati is the root of learners; it is their identity. It is who they are. SiSwati has a value not only to the native speakers of the language, but also to those who are immigrants, as they need to know the language and culture of the country (Interview, SEA1).

This is the mother tongue of most learners. It is a policy that all learners in Eswatini primary schools should learn siSwati as a first language, even those who are non-native speakers. My understanding of teaching SL1, therefore, is that all learners have to study the language until they are proficient in it. The learners who are immigrants have to know our language, culture and our way of life because they are in our country, so they need to know our language so that they can communicate with us. If I go to study in another country, I learn their language first so that I can be able to understand what is taught. The same is true with the learners who are immigrants, they first have to learn siSwati as this is the language of learning and a core subject in schools here (Interview, SEB1).

It is important because it is as early in this grade that we instil nationality and patriotism in learners. It is important that the learners acquire their language before they may acquire other languages. They can learn other languages, but their mother tongue gives them identity and their heritage. Anyway, knowing their language helps them learn other languages and other subjects (Interview, SEB3).

Meanwhile, in the FGD teachers had this to say:

I believe that every child attending school in Eswatini should study siSwati. If I can go to study in France, I would be forced to learn French first, which is the language of teaching and learning and also to be able to communicate with the local people (Interview, SEB2).

In the Eswatini curriculum, it is the foundation of all other subjects (siSwati lihlahlandlela laletinye tifundvo). Once the learner acquires the first language, they find it easy to learn the other languages (FGD, SEB5).

From the foregoing views, mostly, teachers had the learners who were native speakers in mind in the sense that they believed SL1 is valuable because it is the first language of learners, a mark of their identity and nationality. For teachers, teaching SL1 instils 'nationalism and patriotism', but what about the other group whose L1 is not siSwati? Here teachers were referring to the native speakers of siSwati. None of the participants said anything about the culture and identity of the learners who were non-MT speakers of siSwati. Moreover, SL1 is taught because of policy on LoLT - hence the subject is taught at the FOMIPs because the policy requires so. The views of the teacher indicate the assimilation approach to language teaching. In essence, the way teachers taught SL1 was determined by how they perceived the subject. The above views of teachers were in line with Watson (2015) who found that there was a relationship between teachers' beliefs and pedagogical practice. Watson (2015) concluded that beliefs played a role in influencing pedagogy and demonstrated that beliefs and individual assumptions shaped teaching.

Interestingly, even though participants were in linguistically and culturally diverse schools, they still believed that siSwati is valuable in the sense that those learners who were foreign nationals had to learn the local language to have meaningful and functional communication with the local people. To these teachers, it did not matter that this was not the L1 of these learners. The views expressed by teachers affirm the assimilation approach to language teaching and learning which was advocated for by EMoET (2017). This is the case because the learners who are non-MT speakers of siSwati were assimilated in learning the language of the majority. Thus, they had to adapt and conform to the language and culture of the siSwati speaking learners.

Although there is some truth in the teachers' views, they overlooked the fact that here they were dealing with young learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds and whose L1 was the sole tool for socialisation and learning. In this regard, teachers were implicitly and

explicitly culturally irresponsible, yet, according to Milner (2017), Joubert (2015) and Barone and Mallette (2013), educators teaching in linguistically diverse classrooms have to be culturally inclusive and ensure that all learners in their classrooms experience a sense of belonging, irrespective of ethnicity, race and language. This is because children found in today's schools are an illustration of present-day society where multiculturalism and multilingualism reign. Thus, for Barone and Mallette (2013) and Joubert (2015), learners who speak diverse languages, and are from culturally different backgrounds, should not be disadvantaged in the teaching and learning process, but in such situations, diversity should be viewed as an advantage that provides opportunities for understanding different cultures. Even in lesson observations, I noted that teachers treated these learners as MT speakers of siSwati, yet they were not. In short, teachers' actions and inactions in this regard demonstrated cultural irresponsiveness.

5.4.1.3 The teacher as linguistic and pedagogic mediator

The teacher as a language and pedagogic mediator had to demonstrate great command of the siSwati language and use sound pedagogical practices to equip FOMIP learners with both oral and written skills. These skills would enable learners to have functional use of the language. According to Vygotsky, (1978:27), language teachers use the semiotic tool language, which is the primary mediation tool to support learners with mental growth. Moreover, findings of the study indicated that teachers' language mediation in the SL1 class was demonstrated through tasked-based support they provided to learners. Teacher language mediation in the SL1 class attempted to solve learners' language problems. All participants alluded to involving all learners in their lessons. For instance, SEA2 shared:

For listening and speaking, I always tell them a story or play the recordings of folklore, then ask them to come retell it to the whole class. By retelling, their speaking skills improve. Sometimes after learning vocabulary like, hello, can I have and thank you (sawubona, ngiyacela, ngiyabonga), I ask them to role-play buying and selling. I allow learners who can't speak siSwati to say what they understood. If I see them struggling, I switch codes to English for their benefit. We are not allowed to use English, but if we don't, the class becomes chaotic as learners are frustrated (Interview, SEA2).

From the foregoing views, it seems that teachers tried to mediate learners' language problems by involving them in dialogic tasks that encouraged interaction and by bridging the communication barriers through code-switching. However, what teachers said by word

of mouth did not obtain in class when they were teaching. Of course, in the CLOS, I observed that teachers as language mediators and pedagogists employed a number of instructional practices to mediate SL1 among learners, but most of the teaching methods, strategies and tactics used by teachers were not learner-centred. In the CLOS, I noted that teachers engaged learners in both oral and written tasks based activities. The oral and written activities respectively included learners listening and responding to questions asked by the teacher and spelling. In the oral lessons, there was dialogic mediation which helped the native speakers of siSwati as they dominated the SL1 class, and the non-native speakers remained passive as they were not proficient in the language.

Furthermore, I also noted that the language experience provided to learners were not effective in the sense that both oral and written language were taught in a decontextualised manner. Yet, according to the SCT, teachers have to offer graduated mediation which taps on activities in the learners' environment and are according to learners' developmental levels (Iwashita & Dao, 2018). The fact that the teaching of writing was on teaching spelling instead of meaningful writing with tasks that related to what learners were used to in their environment meant that the tasks did not speak to the learners' context. The tasks were individualistic, did not promote interaction and collaboration among learners. The learning of both oral and written language was guarded as there was absence of interactive pedagogical practices such as group work, play, storytelling, and role-play. Yet, the best way through which a learner can practice speaking is in an unguarded environment, where speaking is encouraged through the use of drama and humour as the SCT postulates that these activities are not only a source of cognitive development in learners but also have the key role in facilitating self-regulation among foundation phase learners. It is not surprising then that reports indicate that learners do not do well in siSwati as by not contextualising SL1 lessons, teaching-learning was made mechanical, and did not do much to support learners' acquisition and learning of the language. Yet, Vygotsky (1986:150) had warned teachers as pedagogic mediators that failure to consider the environment and teaching concepts directly did not support learning.

Of course, there were limited efforts made by the teacher to provide language and pedagogic mediation to learners, particularly for those who were non-native speakers of the language. For example, in Grade One, most non-native speakers of siSwati could not utter a single word in the language. This resulted in the lesson being dominated by the native speakers of siSwati. The teacher would then try to offer language mediation to these learners (non-native speaker) by using the pedagogical practice, code-switching to mediate

their language problem. Interestingly, the teacher would read the story, use gestures to demonstrate what she denotes and then switch codes to English to explain what she meant. By switching codes from siSwati to English, I noticed that the teacher was trying to be sensitive in the learners' ZPD by involving all learners in the lessons so that the non-native speakers could understand and relate a siSwati concept to English. For instance, teacher SEB1 taught the phoneme [d] and the task was for learners to give siSwati words with the phoneme. One learner said [lidada] and the teacher said, "Yes, it's a duck in English". I learned that code-switching as a translanguaging strategy was a mediator used by teachers in the SL1 classroom to help learners understand concepts.

5.4.1.4 Learners as mediators

Additionally, out of the eight classes I did the CLOS, in one class learners engaged in peer teaching. These learners engaged in task-based activities whereby the more knowledgeable peer assisted the others. For instance, in teacher SEB3's class, most learners were non-native speakers of siSwati. Learners sat at their desks in pairs, and she encouraged them to discuss work, particularly because others did not understand the language. That helped a great deal because I could see that the learners were learning from each other. Unfortunately, this was a rare practice in these schools, yet Cherry (2022) argues that learning for children would be impossible without the collaboration children had with people in their social environment, these being teachers and their peers in this instance. I observed that the constant interaction between the teacher and learners and the interaction among the learners themselves positively impacted learners' acquisition and learning of the siSwati language. In all observed lessons, the teacher often interacted with learners as a whole class, and seldom in group or as individual learners. The teacher went around the classroom, marking and explaining concepts, while the learners worked together.

5.4.2 Mediation through symbols (tools)

Symbolic mediation in this study was manifested through the use of tools such as teaching and learning resources. These included the chalk, chalkboard, textbooks provided by the NCC and the use of assessment. Although teachers provided mediation through these tools, they decried that they were inadequate for language teaching and learning in the FOMIPs. Symbolic mediation through the different tools is discussed next.

5.4.2.1 Use of instructional resources

Findings of the study indicated that symbolic mediation in the SL1 class occurred through the use of tools such as instructional resources. In this study, by instructional resources, I mean all teaching and learning resources, be it materials that the teachers used to teach SL1 to foundation phase learners. According to the teachers in the study, there were several resources available for their practice, but they were not sufficient. Teachers stated that they made use of the following instructional resources to meet the language needs of learners: the teacher's guide, chalk and the chalkboard, learners' textbooks and workbooks, charts provided by EMoET through the National Curriculum Centre (NCC) and their own improvisation. According to teacher participants, the chalkboard was a primary resource as both the teacher and learners used it during lessons. For teachers, the chalkboard provided a natural and neutral platform (mediator) where both teachers and learners demonstrated their work in front of the whole class. These were the views of the teachers regarding the use of the chalkboard:

I make use of the chalkboard a lot when teaching writing. I write on the board, demonstrating how I expect them to write. The learners also do plenty of writing on the chalkboard. I ask them to write their answers on the chalkboard, and in that way, they also practice writing (Interview, SEA2).

Two resources that are always available for my use are chalk and the chalkboard. I demonstrate to learners how they should write on the chalkboard. I cannot teach without the chalkboard because it is through the chalkboard that I can model writing for all learners to see (Interview, SEB4).

We use chalk and chalkboard in all our teaching. All other resources might be in short supply, but these two are always there. There is no day I don't use the chalk and chalkboard. Even when teaching listening, you will still need to write the date and the topic. The chalkboard helps us to demonstrate to learners how they should write. On the chalkboard, we write notes and learners' answers, both right and wrong. With the answers on the chalkboard, I show learners how this answer is wrong or correct. I also ask the learners to give their answers in writing on the chalkboard. They enjoy it. They like using chalk and imitating the teacher (FGD, SEB5).

From the above excerpts, it is evident that findings from the interview and the FGD are in tally as teachers were unanimous in their sentiments that chalk and the chalkboard were the most used resources in teaching siSwati. All teachers shared the same sentiments that the resources never in short supply were the chalk and the chalkboard. When trying to emphasise the availability of the chalk and chalkboard, teacher SEA1 even exaggerated by saying there was nothing else except the chalk and the chalkboard, even though she later added other available resources like charts. The chalk and the chalkboard was the mediating tool which both teachers and learners used to learn SL1 concepts and core skills. For example, teachers used the chalkboard when teaching siSwati to demonstrate or model how to write to learners. Teachers also used the chalkboard to write examples. They asked the learners to write their answers on the chalkboard and practise writing in front of their peers.

Findings further indicated that teachers relied heavily on resources like learner's textbooks and workbooks, charts and instructors' guides supplied by the EMoET through the National Curriculum Centre (NCC). According to teachers:

The government provides us with textbooks and workbooks for the learners. I also bring my material depending on the nature of the lesson. They also provide us with picture charts and reading charts which I display on the classroom walls. For instance, after I have finished teaching a particular sound, I ask learners to open their workbooks, where they do practice work (Interview, SEA1).

We have the learner's textbook, reader, workbook and teacher's guide. The government also provides charts. The teacher's guide guides my teaching. For example, it directs me on what skill to teach, how to teach it and what exercises learners should do. I also use any relevant teaching aid I find, ranging from home appliances to what I see in class or outside class (Interview, SEA3).

The school provides us with books. These resources are relevant, even though they are not enough. We have siSwati textbooks. I use a storybook, a collection of short stories created by one teacher before I joined the school. These are helpful. The NCC also provides textbooks that we use. I don't like using one book, so I usually look for books used long ago and look for some material that is still relevant (FGD, SEB1).

The government provides learners' textbooks and the teacher's guide, which direct us on how to teach. The teacher's guide tells me what I am supposed to do today and the next day, and I follow it (FGD, SEB5).

Besides, teachers said they did not solely rely on the material provided by the NCC, but they improvised by producing their resources in the form of flipcharts. This was because learners who are in the foundation phase of primary school learn best by manipulating concrete objects:

I use the teacher's guide and learners' textbooks, which are accompanied by a workbook. They read the books and write in the workbooks. The head teacher provides us with charts with pictures, but I also bring my teaching aids. Things that learners can touch and feel because learners learn by touching and seeing. I pin the charts on the classroom walls, but I also make my charts where I write the vocabulary I want the learner to learn. I encourage the learners to use the charts which are on display. I display them for future reference (Interview, SEB2).

When interpreting the foregoing views of teachers, I deduced that teachers viewed the use of tangible resources as instrumental in teaching SL1 in the foundation phase as these learners learn best by employing the five senses. These resources were implicitly and explicitly employed by both the teacher and learners to perform tasks and accomplish them in the SL1 class. Learners had to manipulate objects either by touching, smelling, visualising, tasting, or hearing. All teachers shared similar views on using the material provided by the NCC. They explained that the teachers' guide guided and directed their teaching practice. As much as this is good practice as it gave the teachers direction, a rigid and blind following of the teachers' guide can be catastrophic as the needs of learners in a class can vary, and a teacher must be versatile and change their teaching methods and strategies to meet the needs of learners.

The CLOS corroborated the views alluded to by teachers in the individual interviews and FGD. In all lessons I observed, teachers and learners used the chalkboard as an intermediary and neutral platform to write the SL1 content. It ranged from phonemes, words, and sentences to examples of concepts taught to learners and learners' responses. Learners also used the chalkboard to practice writing. In the CLOS, I also noted that the instructional resources used to teach SL1 were primarily the learner textbooks, picture charts and teachers' guides provided by the NCC. Teachers made an effort to provide their

resources, and these were primarily flipcharts with siSwati sounds or words written on them. The flipcharts were pinned on the classroom walls. However, in the CLOS, I noticed that teachers relied heavily on the learners' textbooks. After teaching, the teacher asked learners to do exercises on either their exercise books or workbooks. However, teachers did not make use of the charts displayed on the classroom walls. For instance, teacher SEB3 taught on the phoneme [njw], she had a flipchart on this phoneme on the classroom wall, but when it came to learners using this chart when forming words, she brought cards on which she had written words using the phoneme [njw] and asked learners to read the cards. She then gave learners an individual writing exercise. She asked learners to write words using the same phoneme, but she did not encourage the learners to use the chart on the walls as a reference when writing the words. Additionally, teachers provided teaching aids to teach SL1. For instance, teacher SEA3 was teaching the sound [gc]. She brought a kanga (umgcula) as a teaching aid, and learners also used their winter hats as examples of words made by the sound [gc].

Findings sourced from the analysis of documents indicated that teachers and learners had the following books at their disposal. EMoET through the NCC provided books per learner in all government schools in the country. For instance, Grade One and Grade Two had five books titled *Likusasa lami* and *Likusasa liyakhanya* respectively. These books comprised the: (1) teachers' guide, which guided the teacher on which skill to teach and the anticipated indicators of success; (2) picture book which was to be used by the teacher and served as a guide on how to train learners reading a book and also formulate stories by organising pictures and putting them in sequence; (3) the learner's book, through which learners were to practise and learn all the language skills; (4) learner's reader which contained short stories for reading, and finally the (5) learner's workbook in which learners practised writing phonemes and drawing. In Grade Three, the book titled *Likusasa lichakazile* also came in the above format, except that the picture book and the workbook were removed.

I also noted that the learner's reader was a well-written book, suitable to mediate SL1 teaching and learning in the foundation phase. The learner's reader was written in simple language; it was short and brief, and there were many pictures that learners could use to tell a story, debate or even dramatise a story. However, teachers could not tap into that and see an opportunity to integrate several teaching and learning methods that encourage discovery and participation such as debates, role play and field work, yet this was a suitable resource for such an integration. When teaching reading, most teachers disregarded the

pictures and asked learners to read only what was written and then asked them questions based on that.

However, the data revealed that teachers decried the nature of the above resources as insufficient for mediating the teaching and learning of SL1 at the FOMIPs. According to teachers, even though these resources were available and enough for all learners, they found them insufficient for the teaching of SL1, particularly in the foundation phase where learners learn by continuous reading, repeated practice and manipulating objects. Teachers further revealed that the nature of resources available for teaching was a determining factor in teacher choice of pedagogical practices. Furthermore, the lack of teaching and learning resources and the restrictions pertaining to how the available resources were to be utilised propelled them to choose certain methods of teaching over others. All teachers asserted that there were restrictions on how they were to use the available resources that include the teacher's guide, learner's textbook, storybook, and in the foundation phase in particular, a workbook. One restriction was for the books not to be taken home by the learners. The following excerpts from participants are representative of the views of the other teachers:

We don't have many resources for teaching. I use the teacher's guide, learner's textbook and the storybook when teaching. These books are to be used only at school and as a teacher, I use methods of teaching that will allow me to cover the syllabus, and I don't give learners a lot of homework. Even if I want to give them homework, I find it hard because they are not supposed to take the books home (Interview, SEB3).

The teaching and learning resources provided by the government are inadequate, as there is only one reading book for the learners (Interview, SEB1).

The nature of the resources available to me influences my teaching methods. For example, we are not allowed to give learners books to take home, so I give learners homework that will not require their books. But, this is not effective. In class, I use the lecture, class discussion and question and answer methods because they allow me to cover a lot in the syllabus. I don't give learners research work (FGD, SEB2).

We also have a shortage of resources. The only way to improve vocabulary is by reading, but there are no reading books. Reading only occurs in class, as learners are not allowed to take the prescribed books home (FGD, SEB4).

The foregoing views of teachers were in line with findings by Stroud (2003) and Nomlomo (2013) who found that inadequate teaching and learning resources propelled teachers of African home languages to employ traditional methods of teaching which were teacher-centred and characterised by drilling learners through rote learning and inactive classroom activity. Furthermore, the aforementioned views of teachers indicate that the restrictions on how to use the available resources impeded their instructional practices and consequently influenced them to use teacher-centred pedagogical practices because they were either trying to cover a great deal of subject content or minimise giving the learners work that will require textbooks. However, the analysis of documents such as teachers' guide, picture book, learner's book, learner's reader, and the workbook contradicted teachers' assertion that learners were not allowed to take the books home. The instruction to teachers in all the books was that they were responsible for the safekeeping of all the books and learners were not supposed to remove the books from school without the permission of the teacher. I then concluded that the school policy to deny learners from taking the books home impeded teachers as it affected their teaching.

Teachers also presented another dimension of the inavailability of siSwati literature suitable for foundation phase learners to improve their reading skills. Teachers were aware that books were mediators for language learning. However, there was little written on the siSwati language and even libraries did not have many books on the siSwati language, let alone books that are suitable for FOMIPs learners. To add on these, teachers shared about the lack of siSwati learning programmes on local television and other media platforms:

Our local television station does not have any siSwati educational programmes to cater for the needs of foundation phase learners. There are English cartoons, but we don't have such in siSwati (Interview, SEA2).

Our siSwati learners are deprived a lot. Children learn a lot through TV, and the internet, but there are no educational programmes such as siSwati cartoons on the local television and the internet (Interview, SEA4).

Nowadays learners study online, the internet and the Eswatini television does not show much work on siSwati suitable for primary school learners (Interview, SEB2).

The above views highlight the plight of the lack of development of the siSwati language in terms of published work in the form of books, recorded materials such as movies and videos stored in libraries or uploaded on the internet to provide mediated learning to SL1 learners. Generally, libraries provide learners with a wealth of knowledge that is current and old which learners can use to support their learning. However, teachers in School SEA shared about the lack of this facility or store room where books could be stored. These books were a collection by teachers of out-of-syllabus books to be used by learners, specifically for reading. Teacher SEA3 said the following about the inconvenience brought by the lack of a library:

I used to have a collection of old siSwati books which I gave learners to read, but I lost them because there is no library in this school. I have bought samples of concrete ornaments to be used when teaching Swati culture, but there is no structure where one can store these items. The schools are supposed to buy these things, but they don't. I try to improvise, using my regalia when I teach about traditional attire, but it's not every teacher who has the patience to do that (Interview, SEA3).

Even though teachers in the above views lamented the unavailability of educational facilities such as the school library, from my point of view, the availability of a library does not guarantee that learners will use the material in it. My line of thinking is backed by teachers' observation and their recounting of how the negative attitude of parents resulted in learners having a negative attitude towards siSwati in this study. With that prevailing situation, it remains doubtful whether learners could have read the siSwati books had they been available in the libraries.

The analysis of documents confirmed what teachers said in the individual interview and FGD regarding the instructional resources provided by the government. As presented earlier, the government provided enough prescribed books for all learners in the participating schools, but the challenge was that there were no other reading books in siSwati that learners could take home to read during their spare time. The situation was worsened by the actuality that teachers in both schools did not allow the learners to take the books home, thus reading only occurred during class. This was not a good characteristic of language learning as reading many books provides mediated learning that leads to learners acquiring linguistic literacy. In the CLOS, I noted that all the learners had the prescribed books. In the cupboard where teachers stored the instructional resources, I

observed that there was no extra siSwati reading material, yet there were plenty of English books shelved in the cupboards. This shows that learners who studied SL1 did not have equal opportunities to develop literacy in the subject compared to English where they had the liberty to pick any English book and read in the comfort of their homes.

5.4.2.2 Assessment as a mediation tool

Another way through which teachers provided symbolic mediation to FOMIP learners was through the tool, assessment. Teachers used assessment activities to check learners' mastery of siSwati concepts. Teachers stated that they used formative assessment to check learners' understanding of siSwati concepts. According to teachers, the newly introduced CBE curriculum did not require learners to write the summative assessment in the form of end of year examinations, which made judgement on learners who were to proceed to the next class or repeat the same grade. But the CBE curriculum relied on formative assessment, and at year end, all learners progressed to the next level without any repeaters. These were the views of teachers on how they used assessment activities to foster learners' comprehension of SL1:

I ask oral questions to find out if they are following or what they have learnt. Sometimes I give them a written assessment. I usually prepare my assessment on top of the one in the workbook. Every week, we write spelling, CBE doesn't have tests (Interview, SEA2).

I ask them questions in class, and they respond orally. I check their understanding by asking questions and making them write if the lesson requires writing. They draw if the skill they need to acquire requires that. The CBE curriculum does not have a test. We do not test but teach. As you teach, you see if she understands or not. I keep a portfolio where I record if she has acquired skills in listening speaking, reading and writing (Interview, SEB1).

The findings of the FGD corroborated those from the individual interview as the use of oral questions and written work were the popular modes among teachers to assess learners' understanding of content. Below are the views of teachers in the FGD on how they conducted a formative assessment in their siSwati language classrooms:

According to the CBE curriculum, you look at the child holistically. You look at the competencies (tinkhonakwenta). As I teach about a particular skill, be it listening,

speaking, reading or writing, I give them classwork and mark for them. I then take the exercise books and fill up an assessment form, indicating what competencies she has acquired. As a teacher, you give assessments depending on what skill you want to test. With the new curriculum, its normal progression, no learner should repeat a grade (FGD, SEB3).

Even though most teachers understood giving learners formative assessment activities as fundamental practice and a form of mediated learning in SL1, my finding indicated knowledge deficiency in some teachers when conducting the assessment under the CBE curriculum. Teacher SEA1, for instance, regarded assessment as the teacher made-tests that she gave to learners. Teacher SEA1 had the following to say regarding her use of assessment activities to foster learners' understanding of SL1:

With the new syllabus, there is not much assessment done. There are no tests. I don't follow the new curriculum when conducting formative assessments because I don't understand it. I still use the old method. I give them tests to check how many of them understand. Sometimes, during class, I go around marking and looking for those who don't understand. I then help them during my spare time (Interview, SEA1).

The above view by SEA1 that the new curriculum did not require teachers to conduct an assessment in their classes showed a lack of understating of how the formative assessment was conducted under the new curriculum. I learnt that there were underlying issues of teacher incompetence relating to matters of assessment. Most teachers' understanding of assessment was limited to the giving of teacher-made tests and standardised tests written by learners as end-of-year examinations. I saw a deficiency in teachers' knowledge of measurement, testing, and evaluation, the main components of symbolic mediation that support learning among learners. This confirms the findings by Mbele (2019:82) and Mkhwanazi (2014:186) who respectively observed that teachers' skills in conducting formative assessments in isiZulu and siSwati were deficient. Coming back to this study, even though some teachers claimed not to conduct an assessment in their siSwati classrooms, this was a daily practice, as all observed teachers engaged in some form of formative assessment. They either assessed learners' understanding through oral questions or written work. After teaching, teachers asked learners to do exercises in their workbooks or were given spelling work which was the dominant form of assessing the four language skills.



Figure 5.5: Teacher conducting formative assessment

Although COVID-19 came with several challenges for teaching and learning, such as learners alternating coming to schools to create room for social distancing in their usually overcrowded classrooms, and teachers teaching the same content twice, it provided one merit for teaching siSwati in the foundation phase. Learners were not overcrowded which worked well for language learning. Under normal circumstances, the average intake of learners in each class in the two schools was 61 students per class. But, this time desks were arranged orderly, learners who usually sat in fours pair of desks now sat in twos or threes. That created enough room for the teacher to move around when conducting a formative assessment as shown in figure 5.5. Notably, because learners were few in class, the teachers had the opportunity to attend to individual learner needs, opportunities which most teachers did not use.

5.5 FINDINGS RELATING TO THE ZONE OF PROXIMAL DEVELOPMENT

In general terms, the ZPD relates to the teacher's understanding and knowledge of the learner's strength, the knowledge they bring to class and then constructing activities and tasks that are personalised to develop the learner's knowledge. Such knowledge helps the teacher to support or scaffold the learners so that they are motivated in class, engaged in learning activities, and ultimately grow cognitively. The findings of this study indicated that teachers used learners' pre-existing knowledge to teach SL1 in the FOMIPs. By pre-existing

knowledge in this study, I mean prior knowledge or the knowledge the learner comes with to class. According to these teachers, they understood that both native and non-native speakers of siSwati came to class with strength in the form of linguistic knowledge, which as instructors they manipulated for effective teaching and learning of SL1. Teachers from both schools shared similar views about how they used learners' prior knowledge to teach SL1:

Mmhi, most of the time, learners come to class with a certain level of knowledge. Sometimes they don't know when a particular concept is applied, but they always know something, and I use that knowledge as a base. I show them the way. Most learners come knowing riddles, lullabies, songs and vocabulary. For instance, when teaching the phoneme [b], I ask them to give examples of words with this phoneme. They give me examples like /babe, baba, libala, babelala/. They might not know how to read and write the words, but they relate the sounds to words they know. Then, you can build on that. Sometimes they give you words unrelated to what you are looking for, for example, /mbamba/. I ignore that and focus on what is relevant (Interview, SEB1).

Learners start school at home. When they come to school, they bring with them some knowledge. When teaching, I link what they already know to achieve my objectives. Before I teach any concept, I begin by asking them what they know and then, I introduce what they need to know. I can't specify one single prior knowledge they bring to class. It varies depending on the topic I'm teaching (FGD, SEB3).

The above views of participants from both interview and FGD data are in harmony, as there was a general opinion among teachers that they used learners' pre-existing knowledge to build on new language knowledge. From the foregoing views, it can be deduced that teachers used learners' pre-existing knowledge to set the ground for their lessons. These views suggest that learners are not empty vessels. But learners come to class with some knowledge that teachers can use to introduce their lesson by linking learners' pre-existing knowledge to their objectives, thus linking the known to the unknown. From interpreting the views of teachers, it is evident that it was not only teachers who benefitted from using learners-pre-existing knowledge (ZPD), but learners benefitted from this enterprise as well. As the learners investigated prior knowledge, they acquired new language skills by building on what they were familiar with. Hence, teachers killed two birds with one stone in the sense that by using learners' prior knowledge, teachers achieved their teaching goals, and

consequently helped learners learn new SL1 content by building and relating to what they already knew. The views of teachers were rooted in the sociocultural theory's ZPD and scaffolding, which posit that learners learn by constructing meaning and understanding based on their previous knowledge.

Moreover, SEA2 took advantage of the fact that learners began school with minimal language competence in listening and speaking and she used that to teach SL1:

Both native and non-native speakers come knowing how to speak their native languages. Most of the time when teaching, I start with the native speakers of siSwati. For example, I ask them to explain a concept to the class. I then move to the non-siSwati speaking learners to explain their understanding in English. I then ask the non-native speakers to explain a concept in their language. In that way, both groups of learners feel important that their language matters. When learners play outside, I hear them using siSwati words they learnt in class (Interview, SEA2).

The views of the above participant indicate the importance of acknowledging each learner's first language and the knowledge learners bring to class and using it as a tool to teach the intended language, siSwati. This view highlights the importance of using learners' acquired oral language to teach other language skills. The teacher employed the comparative approach to language teaching and this was important, as it had the potential of bringing awareness to the learners about the major universal fact about language that all languages are equal as their main function is communication.

However, SEB2 had different views from the rest of the teachers as she stated that learners came to class with no prior knowledge. According to SEB2:

Kute, none, the learners come to my class blank. I don't find much prior knowledge from them. The situation is the same because even the learners who are Swati by birth, in this context come from families where English is the first language (Interview, SEB2).

The views of the above teacher show some naivety because most of the learners who were native speakers were fluent in siSwati and English whereas the non-native speakers were fluent in English which is the knowledge they brought to class. Unfortunately, the teacher did not seize the opportunity to use what learners already knew to achieve her intended

goals of learners developing new SL1 skills, unlike the other teachers who used the learners' first language as a base to teach siSwati regardless of whether it was siSwati, English or any language.

The findings from the CLOS were to some degree consistent with assertions made by teachers in the individual interviews and FGD that they used learners' prior knowledge to teach SL1, but my observation was that the learners who were active here were the MT speakers of siSwati. The learners who were non-MT speakers of siSwati remained passive in this exercise, thus their previous knowledge was not gauged by the teacher to build on it. In all the lessons I observed, teachers either began their lessons with a recapitulation of the previous lesson or by asking learners to share their experiences of a particular topic. Interestingly, even teacher SEB2 used learners' prior knowledge in her lesson, contrary to her views in the individual interviews that learners came to class without any pre-existing knowledge, and she was the source of all knowledge. I noted that teachers used learners' pre-existing knowledge in the ZPD to build on what learners already knew. For example, SEA1's lesson was on reading and writing words with the phoneme [b]. Learners were made to give examples of words they know with this phoneme and a pool of these words were written on the chalkboard by the teacher. The teacher then read the phoneme [ba, be, bi, bo, bu] from a book with the learners reading after her. This process, was followed by learners reading as a group, and as individuals. Finally, the teacher gave learners a spelling task (although not contextualised, but taught in isolation) of words constructed by combining the [ba, be, bi, bo, bu] phonemes. Even though this exercise was dominated by learners whose L1 was siSwati, I could see that the teacher had personalised the tasks to what most of the learners knew, and she gradually provided support until these learners had acquired the skill of combining the phonemes with others to come with more advanced words such as /baleka/ 'run away', /baluleka/ 'important' and /babona/ 'they see/saw'.

Also, learners' pre-existing knowledge was also used to correct misconceptions, and to shape teacher pedagogical practices. In one lesson, for example, teacher SEA3 was teaching the phoneme [gc]. She asked learners to give her examples of items in class that used the sound [gc]. One learner gave the word /sigcoko/, meaning "hat". Some learners had hats as it was winter. Another learner gave the noun /ingcebo/, which means wealth. The teacher together with the learners corrected that misconception and said that was the sound /ngc/ not /gc/. Interestingly, most learners gave examples of items that were not in class, like /ligcolo/, and /umgcala/ which respectively mean a tree bark and a drill rod. The teacher wrote these words on the chalkboard even though there was no example of such

in class. The learners already knew these words, and the entire lesson was based on the learners' examples. The teacher later gave learners a reading and spelling exercise based on the content she had prepared for the lesson and some of the examples provided by the learners. In this, way I understood that even though teachers predominantly used expository pedagogy, using learners' prior knowledge supported learners' acquisition of SL1 skills. It was in such episodes where the learners were motivated and encouraged to learn, they were engaged in the lessons and I could discern linguistic growth through the identification of misconceptions and correcting them.

From the CLOS, I also noted that by using learners' prior knowledge, teachers' employed the whole word approach when teaching SL1. Through this approach, learners drew from their experiences to form a structure for new knowledge as language learning was holistic. The learners did not break down sounds as is the practice with the phonic method but took words as they are and related them to their pre-existing knowledge. According to Smyth (2002), the whole word approach is recommended in teaching language, since language learning is approached from a holistic angle, not as a set of meaningless sounds and spelling, which are abstract to learners. The practice by teachers of using the whole word approach when using learners' prior knowledge to teach SL1 was rooted in constructivism, the sociocultural theory in particular, which posits that learners learn by constructing knowledge based on their understanding and experiences. Hence the emphasis is on the learner who is actively involved in his or her learning, rather than the teacher.

Moreover, the analysis of documents such as the teacher's guide which is the main curriculum document directing the teacher on what to do daily was in agreement with teachers' views and practices. According to all the teacher's guides for Grade One to Grade Four, the teacher should use different ways to explore new knowledge that the learner brings to class and the teacher should build on that prior knowledge (Malaza, Mgabhi, Dlamini-Ndlovu, Dlamini & Mavuso, 2018; Dlamini-Ndlovu, Mgabhi, Malaza & Mavuso, 2019a; Dlamini-Ndlovu, Mgabhi & Malaza, 2020a).

5.6 FINDINGS RELATING TO SCAFFOLDING

As presented in chapter 3, the construct of scaffolding implies that the language teacher (MKO) is a tool that facilitates cognitive growth in FOMIPs learners by being a framework of support in the latter's learning. That being said, SL1 teachers are expected to provide provisional assistance to learners by helping them to do language tasks until a time when the learners can do the tasks on their own. This construct was revealed in the data through

how teachers taught the four language skills. The findings revealed that teachers tried to support FOMIP learners to acquire and learn SL1 through a number of pedagogical strategies including modelling (demonstration), code-switching and the use of pictures.

5.6.1 Modelling as a scaffold to teach the four language skills

The findings of the study revealed that teachers from both schools used modelling (demonstration), which falls between the spectrum of the expository and enquiry mode to teach both oral and written language. With regards to oral skills, the findings revealed that teachers taught listening and speaking together, as these skills were interconnected by being oral skills. According to teachers, the activities that teachers and learners were involved in during the listening and speaking lessons varied and they included teacher modelling of correct language usage through storytelling, through the reading of folklore by the teacher, the teacher asking questions, and learners responding to those questions and the use of play and role-playing to foster learners' acquisition of oral language. With regards to the teaching of oral language, teachers had the following to say:

I speak and they listen. The only way you can teach listening and speaking is by speaking and asking them to listen and speak after you. I also listen to them too (Interview, SEA2).

I demonstrate good language usage by pronouncing words correctly. I read the story and ask learners questions based on the story. I then ask the learners to role-play and dramatise the story (Interview, SEB2).

When teaching oral skills, I pretend to be a news anchor reading the news. I build listening skills in learners by asking them to listen attentively, as the news is only read once. I tell them to listen because if they miss something important, they are left out. I seat non-native speakers of siSwati in front and help them with gestures. I usually model speaking because I want them to copy the way I pronounce the sounds (FGD, SEB6).

The above views tally with authors (Bokas, 2016:29; Joubert, 2015:95; Resnick & Snow, 2009a:139; Cullingford, 1998:20; Good & Brophy, 1984:134) about the importance of teachers modelling both oral and written language as learners develop cognitively by emulating models. The foregoing views further indicate the significance of modelling listening and speaking for learners to acquire these two lifelong important skills which

according to researchers (Martin, Lovat & Purnell, 2007:24; Calhoun, 1999:54) are the foundation of learners' social, political, academic and other lifetime competencies needed for learners to survive in school and in the world. Therefore, the above views of teachers indicate that they provided linguistic support to learners by modelling listening and speaking skills as these skills are essential in conflict resolution, be it at school or as working adults in society.



Figure 5.6: Teacher modelling reading a story to learners

I also found that teaching the reading skill was dominated by phonics instruction, accompanied by teacher modelling and minimal use of participatory and discovery pedagogy in the form of group work and individual work. Phonics is a concept used to denote instruction on how speech sounds are represented by letters and spellings. For teachers, it was important to provide support to learners by demonstrating how reading should be done and they also used concrete objects they brought to class to assist learners acquire the reading skill. They either improvised or created picture books in chart format. Participants had the following to say on how they used the phonic method accompanied by demonstration to teach the reading skill in their siSwati language classrooms:

Usually, when the learners start Grade One, they haven't mastered a single word, so I use the phonic method to teach them reading. I teach the children spelling and then introduce them to the sounds in siSwati. I start with the vowels and we go to the consonants, incorporating the vowels as we go along. For example, they will first

learn /a, e, i, o, u/. Then, I slowly introduce the consonants; starting with //, then I add the vowel to the consonants like /lala, Lili, Lili ulele/. I read and demonstrate by a hand gesture that this means Lili is asleep. From here, the learner can read any words with the consonant // and the vowels. I apply the same principle until they have mastered reading in siSwati (Interview, SEA1).

I use phonics and write the main sound that is to be learnt on that day. I write words that have that sound and ask learners to provide examples. Learners then read them out. For instance, if I teach the sound /m/, I write words like mama, mema, Mimi, momo, imumu. I ask them to read after me, as a group and finally individually. I also prepare flashcards which consist of a pool of words about what they have read. I put the flashcards on the board, and I read for them. Then, I let them read as a group, and then as individuals because if I can rely on group reading, some children might hide among others. You think all is well yet they can't read. Making them do individual reading helps me to identify those who can't read so that I can help them (Interview, SEB1).

I teach the learners individual sounds which are bolded or coloured. I first introduce the five vowels in the siSwati language, [a, e, i, o, u]. I later introduce learners to consonants, adding the consonants to the vowels, starting with a single consonant like [b, m, l, s]. I then move to consonants that are in sequence, beginning with two, three and then four. As I do this, I incorporate the vowels. Once learners know the sounds, they will never go wrong. They read new words without assistance. But most importantly, when I teach them reading, I demonstrate how they should read (FGD, SEB4).

The foregoing views were the same sentiments shared by the other participants in both schools, who alluded to using the phonic method by incorporating it with group work, individual work, and modelling to help learners acquire reading as a skill. For teachers, using phonics instruction was vital in teaching the reading skill, as it demonstrated a functional awareness of the phonemic composition of words. This finding suggests that teachers used phonics instruction because it is crucial due to its ingrained capacity to start the reading process from the basics. That is, the learner begins to perceive and identify distinct sounds in words. This enables her to match up letters with sounds, which in turn helps her decode or decipher unfamiliar sounds as the learning-to-read process continues.

For participants, it was crucial to model good reading and make the learners read in groups and individuals to establish who can read and who cannot, so they get assistance.

Moreover, teacher SEA1 was the only participant who revealed the importance of using gestures when teaching reading to demonstrate and help learners encode meaning from text. Additionally, SEA1 was the only teacher who spoke about how he taught reading by using a short story. These were her views:

When teaching reading, I also make learners read a short story in their reader books. I start by reading the story, demonstrating how they should read. Where there is a full stop, I stop. Where there is a comma, I pause momentarily. I then ask the whole class to read. Then, I group them, and the groups read in turns. Finally, I ask the learners to read individually. I begin by choosing the one I know to be the best reader. Then, I give the rest a chance to read. I ask the best readers to read first because I want them to model reading to their peers so they are inspired to read like them (Interview, SEA2).

The views of teacher SEA1 above indicate that reading in the foundation phase does not end in learning letters, sounds, words, and sentences but it goes further into learners reading larger text. SEA1 also raised the role of acknowledging punctuation marks when reading and the importance of peer teaching, a principle grounded in the sociocultural theory that learners learn best from their peers. According to King (1995), social constructivist approaches like the sociocultural theory believe that peers provide essential scaffolding through which learners build new knowledge.

With regards to teaching the skill of writing, findings indicated that teachers also taught this skill by providing scaffolding through modelling. Modelling was the common strategy used by teachers to demonstrate how learners should write either on the chalkboard or in their exercise books. Below are some of the views of teachers when asked to explain how they taught the writing skill:

I usually teach writing together with reading. When teaching reading to Grade ones, I start by drawing lines on the board and demonstrating that when writing, they should write between the lines and make their writing fit into the line. I explain and show them how they should write. For instance, if I'm teaching the phoneme /li/, I will display a chart on the board with the phonemes [la, le, li, lo, lu]. I then model the

formation of words by combining phonemes. For example, if I say write the word /lilala/, she looks for /li/ in the chart, starting by reading from [la] and stopping at [li], and she writes it down. She must go back to the chart, read again and write [la] next to [li] without spacing because she is forming a single word. And she reads again, ooh! /lilala/, it means something is missing, she goes back and checks on the phoneme list and adds another [la]. Finally, the word lilala is formed. That is how I teach writing. As they write, I encourage them to speak (Interview, SEA1).

I write words on a chart and pin them on the chalkboard. I then read the words together with the learner so that they know the words. I ask each learner to come and practice writing on the chalkboard the words on the chart. I also ask them to write in their exercise books as I move around marking and helping those who are struggling (Interview, SEB2).

When teaching writing, I start from the basics, such as how the child holds the pencil. I teach and demonstrate on the chalkboard how they should write. Sometimes I hold their hands helping them to write. I go around checking if they are holding the pencil correctly or whether they are following or not (FGD, SEB3).

I teach writing by demonstrating on the board how learners should write in their exercise books. I first draw lines on the board and demonstrate how to write capital letters and small letters. The learners copy what I write on the chalkboard in their textbooks. I go around marking and checking their handwriting (FGD, SEB4).

Looking at the foregoing views, you can see that teachers in both the interview and FGD were in agreement that modelling was the key to teaching the skill of writing. The above views indicate that teachers were leaders who did not only introduce new information to learners by explaining and giving instruction on how the writing process should be done but also modelled it. According to these teachers, by modelling writing, they wanted the learners to copy the way they write. Teachers' views of using modelling when teaching writing are rooted in social constructivism, as the sociocultural theory holds the view that modelling is another type of scaffolding a teacher provides to his learners by demonstrating how an activity is done (Fry *et al.*, 2009:21; Lantolf *et al.*, 2015:11).

Moreover, findings also indicated that teachers focused on teaching learners handwriting. Teachers explained that teaching handwriting was a crucial practice to improve learners'

writing skills and they also demonstrated on the chalkboard how learners should write. For instance, SEA2 and SEB1 had the following to say in this regard:

I begin by explaining to the learners what they are expected to do when writing. I emphasise the importance of aligning the sound to the lines of the exercise book and that the initial letter should be immediately from the left-hand margin. I then demonstrate how they should write. They copy what I tell them to do. I help them to trace the sounds and practice handwriting until they can write without my help. I make sure they write neatly, and their work should be presentable (Interview, SEA2).

I always start by helping learners trace sounds, as that helps them with pencil handling. Since this is Grade one, most of the time, I hold their hands when teaching them how to write. Once they can handle the pencil, they practice handwriting. I introduce them to writing sounds, words and then sentences. I introduce writing by writing on the chalkboard, demonstrating how it is done because I want them to write neatly (Interview, SEB1).

The above views indicate that although teachers taught learners how to write, they also demonstrated it and that they preferred giving learners handwriting activities because they believed it gave learners enough practice in writing. The above views also show that neatness was the target for teachers when giving learners handwriting work. Teachers held in high esteem the presentation of written work. Teachers' views were consistent with findings of a study carried out in England by Medwell *et al.* (2009:341) that found that teachers believed that handwriting was a language act that had significant relations with composing and neatness among English learners. My perspective on this is too much emphasis and focus on the foundation phase learners producing good handwriting can demoralise them. Rather teachers should focus on the learner writing the correct letter as the rest will occur with time.

Findings of CLOS data corroborated individual interviews and the FGD as teachers used modelling as a strategy to teach both oral and written skills. Regarding the teaching of oral language, I noted that each teacher would say a word more than once and ask learners to repeat it after her/him. I interpreted teacher use of modelling in teaching oral skills as rooted in the SCT, which identifies modelling as one type of scaffolding teachers use in their language classrooms. The learning here is that teachers as MKOs were structures that

provided support for the FOMIP learners to oral language problems until they could solve them on their own.



Figure 5.7: Learners listening attentively to the teacher

CLOS data also revealed that teachers taught reading through the phonic method and demonstration. In the CLOS, I concluded that teachers employed the bottom-up reading model, which stresses a one-way straight path to handling text. That is the case because phonics instruction goes hand-in-hand with the bottom-up model. The teaching of reading in the observed classrooms followed this pattern: the reading of text moved from phonemes (sounds and graphics) to morphemes (words), from morphemes to syntax (sentences) and from sentence formation to paragraphs and paragraphs to discourse. I concluded that teachers' practices were aligned with Joubert's (2015:111) observation that the use of phonics as an instructional method is imperative in teaching reading in the foundation phase, as it results in phonemic awareness among learners. Moreover, Elhassen *et al.* (2017:6) and Barone and Mallette (2013:157) noted that a lack of phonological awareness is the primary cause of reading difficulties among learners. However, the lone use of phonics instruction is inadequate and harmful as noted by Lindsey *et al.* (2020). According to these authors, teachers should accompany it with sound pedagogical practices like participatory and discovery pedagogy. Although teachers in this study adopted an expository approach

to teaching, they made small efforts to incorporate both participatory and discovery pedagogies by employing group reading for a collaborative effort and individual reading so learners discover meaning on their own. For example, for each reading lesson, teachers would begin by writing on the chalkboard the sound to be learnt. It was either written in bold or coloured chalk. The teacher would model the correct pronunciation, repeating it several times. For instance, teacher SEA3's lesson was on reading the phoneme /gc/. She wrote it on the chalkboard and said to the learners, "Tsanini gc!" meaning, "say gc!" She said this several times. In every utterance, the learners would respond [gc, gc, gc, gc] after her. While the teacher was teaching the sound [gc], she allowed several learners to read as individuals.

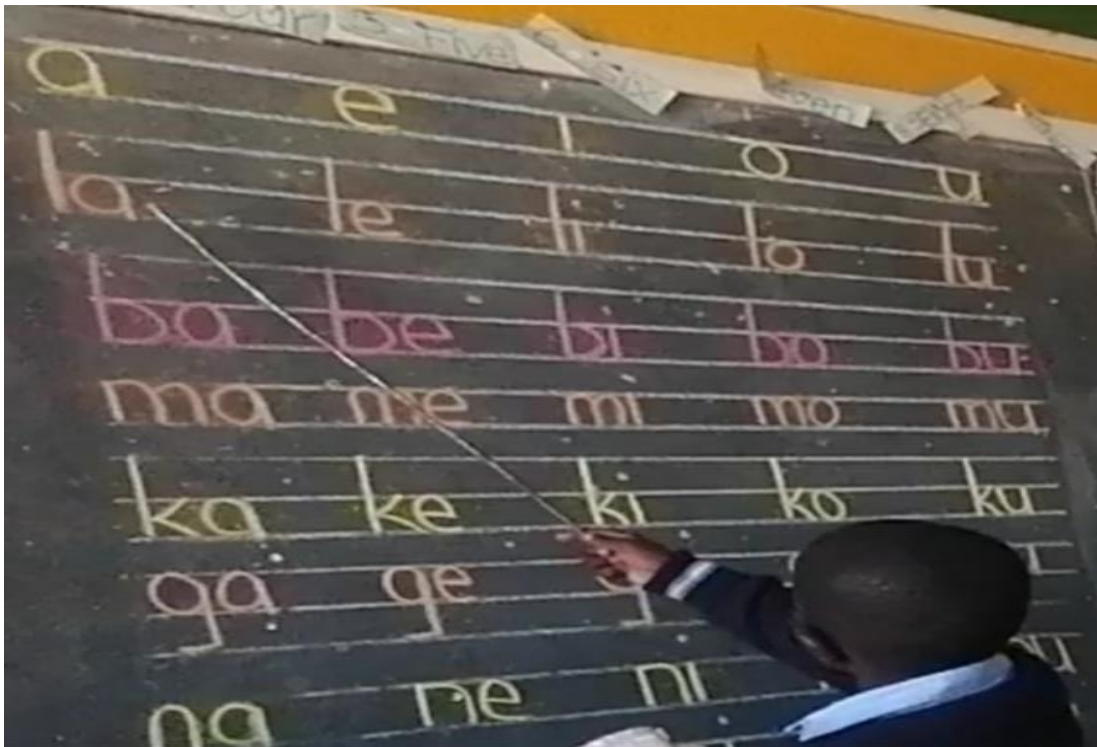


Figure 5.8: A learner reading siSwati phonemes on the chalkboard

Practically in all the grades I observed, I noticed that although teachers faced challenges like some learners reading siSwati sounds as English sounds when teaching siSwati reading, but the situation was far better than when they were teaching the oral skills. In the reading class, both native and non-native speakers of siSwati were eager to read. The former did not have trouble with the tone of the language, while the latter struggled with the tone, but the teacher would chip in and help them by demonstrating how it is pronounced. Furthermore, in the CLOS, teachers were observed using body gestures and demonstrations like they alluded to in the individual interviews. Through body gestures,

teachers demonstrated and illustrated the message read. To mention a few, teacher SEA1 was observed teaching the sound [b]. She read the word /baba/, which means bitter, and she frowned. Teacher SEA3's lesson was on the sound [gc], and she read the word /gcoka/, meaning “dress up or put on”. She removed her winter hat /sigcoko/ and wore it again, demonstrating how to wear a hat. Teacher SEB3 taught reading words with the sounds [tjw] and [njw]. She came with words written on cards and asked individual learners to come up front, read the words and demonstrate the meaning through gestures. For instance, one learner picked a card with the word /Hlatjwayo/, showed it to the class, read it and pointed by hand at a learner who had that surname. Another learner picked a card with the word /banjwa/, meaning “grabbed”. She showed it to the class, read it and demonstrated its meaning by grabbing a book from the teacher’s desk.

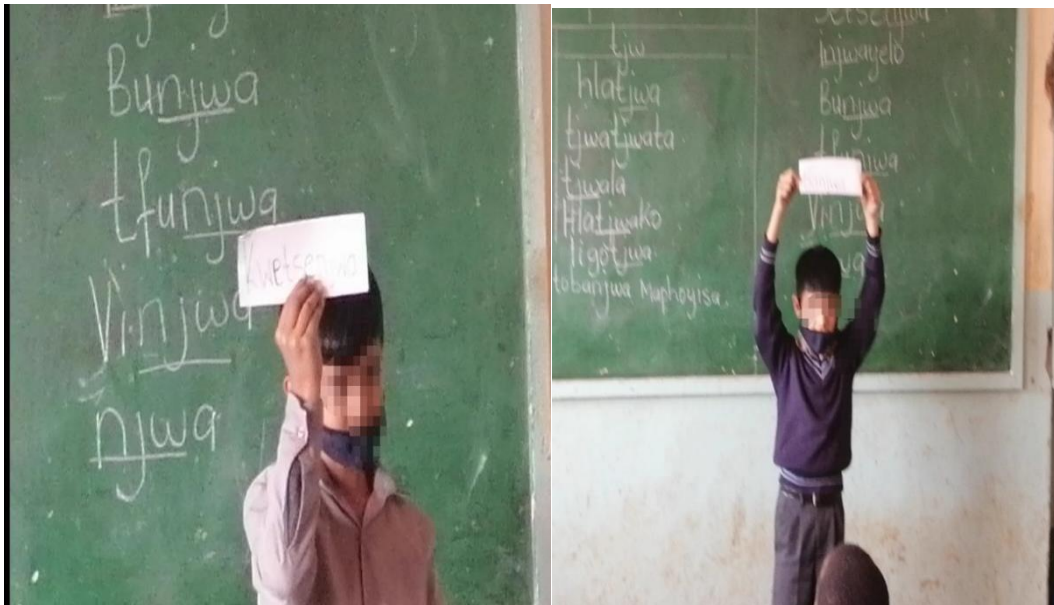


Figure 5.9: Learners reading words on flashcards

In the CLOS, I also observed that modelling was central to teaching the skill of writing. For instance, in Grade One, teacher SEB1 demonstrated writing by first drawing straight horizontal lines on the chalkboard which represented the horizontal lines in learners' faint and margin exercise books. S/he drew one vertical line on the left which represented the left hand margin on learners' exercise books. Learners were shown where to start writing, neatness was central as I could see her reprimanding learners for clumsiness as s/he went around the classroom correcting them and demonstrating how to handle the pencil. Furthermore, I could see that in some classrooms, there was a list of phonemes written in different colours on the chalkboard. The teacher used these phonemes to demonstrate

word-formation. This writing on the chalkboard was not erased, and teachers used it as a reference point. For instance, during the writing lesson, teacher SEA1 modelled the formation of words by combining the phonemes she had written on the chalkboard. The whole lesson was about word-formation and writing the formed words on the chalkboard. The teacher began by writing two to three words, demonstrating where to start writing and how to write. The learners emulated the teacher by going back and forth to the phoneme list and the chalkboard where they wrote the words. Teachers' practices of modelling oral language were consistent with findings made by Feryok (2013). In a study on the role of modelling in creating learner autonomy, Feryok (2013:217) found that modelling was a strategy commonly used by teachers as the teachers reported that they expected the language they used in their class to be emulated by their learners.



Figure 5.10: Teacher monitoring a learner writing on the chalkboard

Furthermore, the findings sourced from the analysis of the teacher's guide showed slight alignment to teachers' views and practices on teaching listening and speaking skills as this document provided that these two skills be taught together. According to the teacher's guide for Grade One to Grade Four, the listening and speaking lessons should be started by learners being attentive and listening to the theme where the teacher demonstrates it and followed by a discussion based on the theme. There should be storytelling, singing, dancing and riddles. Teachers adhered to the first requirement of the curriculum document as in all

listening and speaking lessons, learners were asked to be attentive and speak when the teacher asked them to. Storytelling, singing, dancing and the use of riddles were hardly incorporated into lessons and that was also confirmed by the analysis of teachers' lesson plans. Furthermore, the instruction to the teacher in the teacher's guide is to allow each learner to speak, as it is through speaking that the teacher can see whether there is language development or not. However, in-depth discussions and individualised speaking were rarely done. Also, the teacher's guide stipulated that reading lessons should comprise phonics instruction and demonstration.

When it comes to the teaching of writing, according to the teacher's guide, teachers should engage learners in meaningful writing where they wrote about familiar issues and issues that were in their contextual environment. Teacher modelling of writing was encouraged in the curriculum document. However, as shown earlier writing was taught in isolation in all CLOS as most of the writing activities centred on spelling. Teachers' practices were against the SCT's construct of scaffolding as postulated by scholars (Gillespie & Greenberg, 2017; King, 1995) that teachers ought to offer the needed support particularly to learners who are starting school so that they can acquire the intended skills. Furthermore, by teaching writing in a de-contextualized manner, their practices were not anchored in situated learning where the teaching-learning of both oral and written language is made authentic through the use of the learners' context or environment. (Vygotsky, 1986:150). In the lessons I observed, the teaching of writing through spelling did not help the learners to be creative and compose writing of value. Instead, learners become rigid and uncreative. I then concluded why learners are said to struggle in siSwati as a school subject in their Grade Seven exit examination as this summative assessment entails comprehensive and creative writing. The reality is, learners, cannot be great writers in Grade Seven when they were not taught to be good writers in the FOMIPs where the foundation of language literacy is supposed to be laid.

5.6.2 Code-switching used as a scaffold to teach SL1

Another finding of the study was that teachers used code-switching as a scaffold to help learners acquire oral and written forms of SL1. Teachers gave two reasons why they employed code-switching in their SL1 classroom. The first reason was to facilitate communication and understanding of content in the SL1 classroom and the second reason relates to the way they were trained to teach SL1. Pertaining to the first reason, teachers stated that they had to take into account that the learners they taught were from different cultures and spoke different languages. That impacted their teaching as they had to use a

strategy like code-switching, which caters for the needs of varied learners. When addressing the issue of how they embraced the linguistic diversity of the learners, teachers had the following to say:

There are linguistic dynamics. Most learners are native speakers of siSwati, but some learners are from India and don't speak siSwati. This affects the flow of the lesson as I have to translate and use a strategy like code-switching which involves all learners (Interview SEA3).

We don't have to be rigid and stick to siSwati because the learners won't understand a word. We use code-switching because it relieves stress from the learners and they get an idea of what you are talking about (FGD, SEB1).

Although I teach a language that some learners do not understand, I find myself forced to use English to explain siSwati content (FGD, SEB3).

From the above view, it is clear that the linguistic heterogeneity of learners in the SL1 classroom called for teachers to think on their feet and come up with pedagogical practices that involved all groups of learners, instead of paying too much focus on one group and ignoring another. Also, it is evident from the above views that teachers employed code-switching as a resource to facilitate the teaching-learning of SL1. Teachers spent a great deal of time catering for the needs of non-native speakers by code-switching to English to help learners understand what was discussed in class. Teachers' practice was in line with Mati (2004:5) who contended that code-switching was a language practice that can be used as a scaffold to support communication in the classroom, thus assisting teaching-learning in linguistically diverse classrooms as in the case of the study. This finding also tallied with findings by Cheng (2015:711) who found that code-switching between the first and second language inspired learners to learn and helped them to comprehend and partake in the discussions in class, especially when used with other resources like pictures and videos.

Even though teachers said they used code-switching to maximise communication in their linguistically diverse classrooms, it appears that it frustrated them and both learners who were native and non-native speakers of siSwati. The following excerpts from teachers SEB2 and SEB3 are representative of teachers' views:

In my class, I have learners from Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Pakistan, India and the locals. Most of these immigrants have just arrived in the country. Every time I teach, I have to think that they speak different languages. I spend much time helping learners who don't speak siSwati. I code-switch to English so that they understand the concept as most speak English. While I focus on the non-native speakers, the native speakers are frustrated because they are not learning (Interview, SEB3).

Accordingly, Teacher SEB2 shared:

Eh! This year the linguistic and cultural dynamic is huge (lonyaka behlukahlukene kakhulu). Besides the Swati, I have learners from Venda and Zululand, but most of them are of Indian descent. It is difficult to teach where there are language barriers. The learners tend to be frustrated and cry when they don't understand. I try to be friendly and attend to them, but it calls for a lot of patience and hard work (Interview, SEB2).

The foregoing view was corroborated by the finding of the CLOS as I saw that the teacher spent much of the time teaching one concept. Teachers would teach a concept in siSwati and they would code-switch to English because some learners did not understand the language. In school SEB, the cultural and linguistic heterogeneity among the learners was so huge. In Grade One, half the class comprised learners predominantly of Asian descent. As the teacher conducted her lessons, I noticed the frustration on the faces of the Grade One learners, as they could not understand the communication. Most of the learners were new in the country and did not understand a single siSwati word, which could explain why the teacher employed pluralistic pedagogy like code-switching a great deal. Moreover, I also observed that teaching SL1 to learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds was not impossible, as there were already other learners who conversed in siSwati and fully participated in the classroom practices. I noted that one way to facilitate the teaching-learning of SL1 was for teachers to use these learners to support learning by involving them in peer teaching. I interpreted the frustration among non-MT learners of siSwati to be a result of the choice of pedagogical practices chosen by teachers, which did not provide ample interactive opportunities in class. This is because, teachers did not use play, drama and other learner-centred methods that encouraged learner participation, other than code-switching.

Furthermore, it should be stated that although teachers used code-switching as a mediator and scaffold in their SL1 classrooms, this was against the specification of curriculum documents. For example, the teacher's guide emphasised teachers and learners should speak in siSwati in all lessons and it did not have any provisions for code-switching. However, code-switching was a daily practice in the SL1 classroom in this study. This means by code-switching, the teachers were not adhering to curriculum standards. Moreover, in the context of this study, where teachers taught siSwati to learners of diverse linguistic backgrounds, I found their practice of code-switching beneficial to both teachers and learners even though it was against curriculum specifications. It facilitated communication between the learners and the teacher and also supported the learning of siSwati concepts by learners, as it was additive and progressive. The learning here is that code-switching is a good practice which serves as a scaffold when used in multilingual settings to promote communication, as it is a collaborative and cooperative strategy that if properly used, it can result in the foundation phase learners acquiring problem-solving and communication skills. In short, teachers' actions in this regard demonstrated cultural responsiveness.

5.6.3 Picture used as a scaffold to teach SL1

The findings of the study indicated that teachers used pictures as a scaffold to support language learning as they attracted the attention of learners. According to teachers, pictures were used as a tool to involve all learners (L1 and non-L1 speakers of siSwati) in their lessons as FOMIPs learners learn best by manipulating concrete objects. This view was best expressed by participants SEA2 and SEA3 who shared the importance of using concrete objects such as pictures to teach oral and written language.

For me, learners' understanding of phonemic awareness is important. I first write the sound to be read in block letters on the chalkboard. Although we don't have many resources, I usually bring pictures or concrete objects so learners associate the sound with words and words with the pictures. I display these on the chalkboard. I discovered that these are building blocks to reading and language learning in general. I read and instruct the learners to read after me. They do it together as a class, then in groups. I then make them read one by one to see if they have mastered reading (Interview, SEA2).

In teaching reading, I use pictures of animals whose names have the sound to learn. I have discovered that learners learn best when they connect sounds to objects. I

display the picture chart on the chalkboard. I read and ask each learner to read after me until I'm sure they have all grasped the correct pronunciation. I also display charts with the sound on the classroom walls, so they can refer to it in the future (Interview, SEA3).

Findings from the FGD were consistent with the above views, as teachers not only advocated for the use of pictures to teach SL1, but also the use of colour. According to SEB2:

When teaching oral skills, I ask the class to sit still and attentively listen as I tell a story based on a colourful picture I brought to class. I then display it on the wall. In groups, I ask them to describe what they see in the picture. I include all learners. Those who are still learning to speak the language also partake. They struggle but I don't force them when they don't have the right words. We wait on them until such time they can speak. It starts with one word, then two. Before you know it, they can produce meaningful sentences (FGD, SEB2).

From the above view, it is evident that teachers espoused to using pictures as set induction to teaching oral and writing skills. In this regard, the picture became the source of the conversations in the oral and written language classroom. Indeed, pictures are recommended in teaching language in the FOMIPs as at this stage, children learn through manipulatives and concrete experiences which act as resources (scaffolds) through which learners construct new knowledge and develop higher order thinking abilities. Teachers' views were consistent with Winch *et al.*'s (2006:378) observation that pictures are not merely a support to language learning, but they are a language on their own. Supporting the above views, Joubert (2015:74) asserts that in the foundation phase, learners use pictures to make inferences from a story or predict its ending - hence the use of pictures is a strategy to enhance language learning among learners. Nevertheless, findings from the CLOS contradicted teachers' assertions in the FGD and individual interview. As mentioned under 5.2, teachers never used pictures displayed on their classroom walls to teach SL1. Therefore, having the pictures on display and not using them as a reference point when teaching defeated the objective of using them and their importance of being a scaffold to support the learning of oral and written language among the FOMIPs learners.

5.7 FINDINGS RELATING TO COLLABORATION

This construct of the SCT postulates that knowledge acquisition among learners is a result of partnership with several stakeholders including the teacher, parents, peers, and other skilled individuals in the learners' environment. In the case of this study, this means for effective teaching-learning of SL1, the teacher and other stakeholders involved in the learner's life had to engage in a community of practice, where the teacher worked collaboratively with MoET, colleagues, administrators, parents, and learners. However, in this study, the concept of collaboration was hardly revealed in the data as will be shown in this section. The data revealed that teachers experienced lack of collaboration and cooperation from a number of stakeholders in teaching SL1. According to teachers, the lack of support through the actions and inactions by the EMoET, the school administration, and parents were negative experiences that directly affected their daily teaching practice. Yet, according to the SCT, effective teaching and learning is anchored in a community of practice. Teachers as the main drivers of teaching and learning shared how the different stakeholders did not support them and also communicated ideas on how they could be supported teaching SL1.

5.7.1 Lack of support from EMoET

According to the data, EMoET's lack of support in teaching SL1 manifested itself through the intense work load teachers faced accompanied by too much paperwork which took away time they should be using to plan and prepare for lessons. Teachers shared their experiences on this issue in the following way:

Here were are overworked. Some teachers have retired but they are not replaced, instead, we take over the load of the retired teacher (Interview, SEA2).

Despite the administration's request for the government to employ more teachers, that request has fallen on deaf ears. We teach a lot of classes because we are short staffed (FGD, SEB5).

The situation presented by the above excerpts was a serious problem in both schools. The problem of teacher shortage in both schools was not because the country lacked qualified siSwati teachers. But due to the deteriorating economy, it appeared that the Eswatini government did not cooperate with schools in terms of replacing deceased or retired teachers to save money. However, this was to the detriment of teachers and the biggest

loser in this exercise were the learners who because of EMoET's lack of support in providing adequate teachers, were deprived of quality education. This is because having too much workload can result in several problems. It can affect the quality of teaching and that can lead to teacher ineffectiveness. Generally, too much workload makes people lose interest in their work. This was true in the case of this study as teachers were not involved in any research work or professional development which could have provided them with new ideas that could shape their pedagogy. This speaks volumes about the quality of education given to learners, as the educational experiences provided to learners, either good or bad eventually determine the type and nature of tomorrow's society.

Furthermore, teachers revealed that the requirement by EMoET that primary school teachers are not supposed to do subject specialisation was another way the government demonstrated lack of collaboration with them in teaching SL1. Teachers reported that they did not teach their area of specialisation, but taught all subjects in the grade they were teaching.

The CBE curriculum has too much work. I am expected to do a lot yet I teach all the subjects in this class. I am supposed to compile a daily report per subject for all learners. This is physically draining and impossible to do. I find myself able to finish these reports after 3 days, yet they require you to do them every day (Interview, SEB1).

We teach all subjects. It makes it hard for us to focus on one particular subject. By the time you reach home to prepare for a lesson of the next day, you are tired and want to rest (Interview, SEB4).

There is too much work here. We teach all subjects and we are supposed to keep portfolios where we record the learners' performance regarding whether they have acquired the skill or not. This is time consuming and laborious for one subject. It's even harder when you have to do this for all the subjects (FGD, SEB1).

The above view of the teachers relates to the adage of being a 'jack of all trades, but a master of none'. In my opinion, teaching all subjects in a class is a mammoth task, let alone teaching seven in overcrowded classrooms as was the case of teachers in the study. I believe that the EMoET policy that teachers in primary schools should teach all subjects is good for the government in terms of cutting costs. However, it does not support the teacher

regarding lifelong learning because even if s/he thinks about professional development, there is the question of where to start. This is counterproductive to the implementation of an effective and sustainable language programme. This has negative long-lasting effects on the cognitive development of the learner, as the foundation phase is the base for future learning. It is in this phase where much groundwork should be done so that learners may acquire all the language skills which are required in all the subject areas.

Based on the foregoing views, teachers were of the general opinion that probably if they could pay attention to teaching siSwati instead of all the subjects they were teaching in a class, the teaching and learning of siSwati could be improved:

Language teachers should specialise in the foundation phase so that they improve themselves. I was not trained to teach in this grade. We should be given the opportunity to improve our teaching as siSwati is the medium of instruction here (Interview, SEA3).

Teachers should specialise in one or two subject areas instead of teaching all 7 subjects. Teaching all the subjects make one ineffective in all (FGD, SEB6).

The above views suggest that teachers might have seen the ineffectiveness in their SL1 classroom practices as a result of EMoET's policy that stipulates that "teachers at the primary school level must be qualified to teach all subjects offered" (EMoET, 2018a:46). The reality is, in most government schools, teachers teach all subjects and do not specialise in teaching one subject. Moreover, I doubt that anyone can be an expert in all the seven or more subjects offered at primary school. This could suggest that dabbling in all the subject areas meant that teachers did not have expertise in any of them. Furthermore, EMoET's lack of support in teaching SL1 in the FOMIPs also revealed itself through employing general primary school teachers, who had not specialised training in in Early Childhood Education (ECE). Teacher SEB4's views are representative of teachers' sentiments in this regard:

The government should hire teachers who have specialised training to teach in the foundation phase. I don't have that training and to make matters worse, I teach all the subjects here (FGD, SEB4).

The above views of teachers tallied with documentary data as all participants had no training in ECE. Interestingly, official EMoET documents like the ENCFGE, states that teaching in the foundation phase required teachers with specialised training in ECE. According to this document, Grade Zero was included in the foundation phase to link with primary schooling (EMoET, 2018a:35). Therefore, teachers teaching the FOMIPs should be qualified to teach these grades. However, all the teachers who participated in the study had not trained in ECE, but held a general teacher's diploma which explains why some of the pedagogical practices they employed to teach SL1 were not effective in the foundation phase. Yet, according to Burns (2018:1250), the best way in which foundation phase learners can access quality education is by providing a conducive environment, like the provision of trained ECE teachers who have the content and skills for teaching and providing lifelong learning experiences-hence the need for the preparation of teachers with specialised training to teach in the foundation phase. Thus, EMoET's act of assigning unqualified teachers to teach the FOMIPs also shows a lack of cooperation with teachers as the former expects good results from teachers (EMoET, 2017:23), without providing qualified personnel. My perspective on this matter is, effective SL1 teaching and learning can only occur when teachers have the appropriate training and possess the pedagogy to facilitate effective teaching and learning in SL1 classrooms. This is the case because children who are unable to read in the foundation phase are more likely to carry with them that inability to the next phases.

5.7.2 Lack of support from the school administration

Teachers revealed that their experience of teaching SL1 was crowded by the uncooperative action and inaction from the school administration which impacted teachers' work. According to teachers, they experienced lack of collaboration from the school administration in two ways; unparalleled starting point for learners in Grade One and teaching overcrowded classrooms:

5.7.2.1 Unparalleled starting point for learners in Grade One

For teachers, the issue of unparalleled starting point for learners in Grade One which they attributed to the school administration hindered their practice. In the context of the study, the finding of unparalleled starting point relates to the discrepancies by school administrators in admitting learners to Grade One; others begin Grade One after having done Grade Zero while others do not. It further relates to learners being admitted to any grade in primary school, without having any knowledge and understanding of the siSwati

language, yet they are supposed to do siSwati as the core subject. Addressing the first part of this finding, teachers decried that the school administrators did not cooperate with them as they admitted learners in Grade One who did not have the same starting point. The situation was some learners had done Grade Zero and were familiar with the school environment while others started Grade One without that experience. Teachers shared the following on this matter:

Some learners start school without having attended pre-school, yet others begin school with having done pre-school. Those who haven't done pre-school can't even communicate that they want to go to the toilet, and I waste a lot of teaching time in training them (Interview, SEA1).

Teacher SEB1 added:

Some Swati speakers do Grade Zero and others don't, they move straight to Grade One. Although most children who are foreign nationals do Grade Zero before they start Grade One, the pre-schools they attend are English medium pre-schools and in most of them, siSwati is not learnt, not to mention it being spoken. These are the learners who give me problems because I don't know where to start with them (Interview, SEB1).

Looking at the above excerpts, they suggest that beginning school at different entry points is a problem as learners begin school with different experiences. The learners who have attended Grade Zero may have limited knowledge about the school environment, but they are fast to understand what school is about, unlike those who have not. This suggests that teachers spent extensive teaching time trying to acclimatise the latter to the school environment at the same time they were frustrating those learners who have this understanding.

In the FGD, teachers also shared that it was common for learners who were foreign nationals to be admitted in any Grade other than Grade One, and they were expected to teach them the siSwati content for that grade regardless that they lacked the basic SL1 literacy skills covered in Grade One.

Sometimes the administrators admit a non-siSwati speaking learner in Grade Two, Three or even the upper grades and you're expected to teach that child siSwati. It's

difficult; the child has missed so much of Grade One stuff, but you have to teach her until she is able to use the language (FGD, SEB1).

Even though it is a policy that learners admitted in Grade One should have done Grade Zero, it doesn't happen all the time. Some attended pre-school and they know a little bit, but those who haven't, they don't even know how to hold a pencil (FGD, SEB2).

The foregoing views indirectly explains why SL1 is in one of the poorly performed subjects in the Grade Seven external examinations (ECESWA, 2021). Furthermore, the above views indicate the lack of cooperation between the administration and teachers when it comes to issues of admitting learners and the latter view shows a serious mismatch between government policies and their application in schools. It appears the Eswatini government under EMoET has made Grade Zero a part of the foundation phase to cater for a fluid transition from Grade Zero to Grade One, but some learners in Eswatini still begin school without having attended Grade Zero. This suggests that although the government has passed policies that support the teaching of siSwati, she is not doing much to ensure that they are enforced by school administrators which negatively impacts not only on SL1 teachers, but all teachers across different subject spectrum at primary school.

5.7.2.2 Teaching overcrowded classrooms:

It was the general view of teachers from both schools that the school administrators did not cooperate with them as head teachers persist and insist on admitting too many learners despite the fact that they were understaffed. According to teachers, the enrolment of learners in their schools was high, which resulted in congested classrooms. Besides, overcrowded classrooms are not a helping feature for language teaching and learning as they do not allow collaborative methods of teaching such as use of groups, play and individualised instruction. For instance, one teacher said:

The student enrolment in this school is huge. My class has more than 60 learners, and there is no space to move around the class. If I decide to focus on one child, I don't finish the lesson (Interview, SEB3).

Additionally, teachers in the FGD did not only share that they experienced congested classrooms, but also shared that teaching overcrowded learners subsequently influenced their choice of pedagogical practices:

We teach large class numbers. If you can check the classrooms, you will see that they are all congested. This makes me use the lecture and discussion methods as it is hard for me to use methods that focus on each learner (Interview, SEB6).

Looking at the above views, it appears that the huge class numbers forced teachers to use expository pedagogy instead of pedagogical approaches that encouraged collaboration such as discovery, diversity, communicative and participatory pedagogies. Such a practice was not in line with the ENCFGE's specification that the required methodologies for CBE are learner-centred pedagogical approaches and the use of teacher-centred pedagogy should be at all costs kept minimal (EMoET, 2018a:34). It is evident that having an overcrowded class suggests that teachers could not recognise the strengths of individual learners to build on them and the same applies to individual weaknesses, yet foundation phase learners get motivated to learn when they are recognised by the teacher. The absence of learner-centred pedagogy implies that the experiences provided by teachers to learners were inconsistent with the curriculum goals and objectives, which indirectly explains why learners perform poorly in SL1 in their primary exit examination.

Also, during the CLOS, I noted that the classes were full of desks and each class had a small desk that had three or four chairs. Thus, a desk was primarily shared by three to four learners. The huge enrolment in both schools could be attributed to the fact that they were the only urban schools in the town. The overcrowded classrooms resulted in teachers unable to attend to individual needs of learners. This deprived learners of the learning experience they deserved. Teaching a class with above 60 learners suggests that the teaching of siSwati could have been compromised in multiple ways. It could mean (1) the pedagogy employed by teachers was unfit, as they could not attend to or employ collaborative pedagogy and attend to the individual needs of learners, yet both the former and the latter are key to teaching language skills; (2) assessment was affected and; (3) the feedback was delayed because teachers had to mark work for too many learners. However, because I conducted the CLOS during the prevalence of COVID-19, learners alternated coming to school and only two learners occupied a desk to social distance from the other, and in that way, overcrowding was avoided. In my view, although COVID-19 had several challenges such as teachers falling ill and some subsequently succumbing to COVID-19-related illnesses, teachers repeating a lesson as learners alternated coming to school and forcing both teachers and learners to use virtual teaching and learning to mention just a few, it helped by mitigating the problem of overcrowded classrooms. However, this was for

the short-term of course; as when the situation was back to normal, the problem of the congested classroom continued.

5.7.3 Lack of parental support

Furthermore, SCT views parents and other people living in the learner's environment as influential contributors in teaching and learning. According to the SCT, the instructional practices of teaching reading and writing should include close individuals in the learner's contextual background (Vygotsky, 1978). Thus, teachers can ensure that learners acquire core language skills by collaborating with parents. However, the data revealed that teachers faced a lack of collaboration from parents in two ways; through (i) negative attitudes towards siSwati, and (ii) lack of parental involvement.

5.7.3.1 Negative attitudes towards siSwati

Findings sourced from both the individual interviews and FGD showed that teachers from both schools experienced lack of collaboration from parents when teaching siSwati as a result of the latter's negative attitudes towards siSwati as a school subject. Teachers expressed that the issue of negative attitude towards the subject was multi-dimensional in the sense that it involved parents who did not see the value of studying siSwati for their children and that negative attitude usually transcended to the learner. Teachers stated that for most parents, learning of siSwati was unimportant as parents did not see how studying siSwati could assist their children to get better paying jobs. The views of teachers were consistent with findings by Cunningham (2019) and Kwon (2017) who observed that speakers of home languages over the world disregard their languages and concentrate on languages regarded as career languages. Teachers said the following pertaining to how parents' negative attitude towards siSwati impacted their teaching of siSwati:

Some parents argue that since the learners know how to speak siSwati, there is no need to study it. Instead, the focus should be on English, an international language. One parent even said to me (madam ukhuluma ngebumcoka besiSwati, kodvwa-ke utosisebentisa kuphi ngoba lemsebentini sikhuluma siphindze sibhala ngesiNgisi, hhayi siSwati) Madam, you talk about the importance of siSwati, but where will my child use it because at work we speak and write in English, not siSwati. You see, it is a challenge, but my love for the language and my culture keep me motivated (Interview, SEA2).

Teacher SEA3 and SEB2 added that parents' negative attitude towards siSwati as a school subject often extended to the learners as children tend to imitate and copy the habits of their parents:

Some parents have a hand in their children having a negative attitude towards siSwati. When I tell the learners to work hard, they tell me that their parents told them not to worry about siSwati, but to work hard on English for the gate pass to the university. Most learners speak siSwati only at school, as at home their parents encourage them to speak English (Interview, SEA3).

Parents' negative attitude to siSwati spread to the learner. This is unfortunate that children at a very young age are told to dislike their first language. I try to be patient with the learners because they are young, and I usually win some to like the subject (Interview, SEB2).

What is evident in the above views are that despite teachers' espousal that siSwati as a subject was looked down upon by parents, it appears developing a positive attitude made them cope with the challenge. Having a strong mindset and resilience were mitigators that kept them going. Moreover, the findings sourced from the FGD were aligned with those from the individual interview and teachers further revealed that it was not only ordinary parents and learners who had negative attitudes towards the teaching of siSwati, but negativity towards the subject was also ingrained in their colleagues who as parents also viewed siSwati as an easy and useless subject. According to teacher SEB4:

It's not only parents who look down upon siSwati. Teachers of other subjects have a negative attitude. They believe that siSwati is easy as they are its native speakers (FGD, SEB4).

SEB3 echoed the above sentiments and expanded:

Some colleagues look down upon the subject. It's tough. We have to be strong. I had a challenge with a learner who didn't know how to speak the language, but the parent is a teacher. I tried talking to her about how we can help the child, but she made it clear that it did not bother her much that the child lacked proficiency in the language as it won't affect his career (FGD, SEB3).

From the above views, it appears that teachers of SL1 faced war from all fronts, as they faced challenges from the parents, learners and their colleagues. What happened in these two schools was contrary to the SCT's concept of collaboration which espouses that cognitive development in learners can occur when teachers partner with parents. Moreover, from the views of teachers, there is a lesson to be learnt. The cause of parents' negative attitudes towards the teaching of siSwati, as is the case for many other African languages, is the prevalence of linguistic imperialism. As long as languages of European origin are still dominating all official domains of government, African home languages (AHLs) will remain marginalised. From my point of view, siSwati has little or no academic value and only acts as a cultural symbol to the Swati people. Even though on paper (documentary evidence), the Eswatini government has elevated siSwati as an official language alongside English, its role in society is still inferior to the colonial language, English, which still dominates all government domains as a career language, and siSwati remains sidelined.

It was based on the foregoing circumstances that teachers suggested that siSwati be made LoLT and a passing subject in schools and a requirement for admission to tertiary institutions. According to teachers, such a move could counter the passive expansion of English linguistic imperialism which has resulted in parents having a negative attitude towards the teaching of siSwati as a school subject. For teachers, this action could probably make parents appreciate the subject as valuable:

I think if siSwati can be made the medium of instruction and the passing subject, the parents can influence their children to work hard as they do with English (FGD, SEB3).

Besides being a language of teaching and learning, siSwati should be made the gate pass to the next level. Even at university, it should be a requirement for a student to get at least a pass to be admitted (FGD, SEB4).

From the latter view we learn the power struggle between siSwati and English, the two official languages of Eswatini. The aforementioned views of teachers are consistent with researchers (Thondhlana, 2002; Brock-Utne, 2001) who are advocates for using African native languages as LoLT. Unlike the teachers whose suggestions are based on purely nationalist terms, these two researchers put forth the benefits of using a learner's language as LoLT.

Contrary to the above views, teacher SEA2 had the idea that the government had the responsibility to collaborate with schools and sensitise parents before passing laws that they failed to enforce. According to SEA2:

Madam, this issue needs to start from the top (Medemu lendzaba kufuna icale enhloko). Parents should be educated at the national level on the importance of siSwati instead of imposing policies on them. The focus should be on parents because they play a big role in disregarding language. Parents are the ones who tell their children that siSwati is not of importance (Interview, SEA2).

The above view speaks to the power of collaboration between MoET, teachers and parents and the importance of advocacy and sensitising parents on the importance of siSwati. Realistically, parents cannot be faulted because even though siSwati is LoLT from the foundation and middle phases, English continues to enjoy superiority as it is LoLT from Grade 5 to Form 5 (EMoET, 2011) and also a requirement for admission to university. That being the case, parents have to be informed about the importance of the siSwati language as a driver of transmitting indigenous knowledge and the Swati culture from one generation to another.

5.7.3.2 Lack of parental involvement

According to teachers, lack of collaboration with teachers from parents also manifested itself through the latter's non-involvement in their children's schoolwork. Teachers reported that most parents failed to support their children in learning siSwati. The lack of parental involvement directly affected teachers' practice, as it impacted the completion rate of homework by learners and subsequently affected their academic performance. According to the teachers in this study, when they gave learners siSwati homework, most parents did not assist:

The situation is you give the learners homework, but most don't do it. This day you teach about a concept and when they come back the following day, they have completely forgotten yesterday's stuff as most parents don't assist them (Interview, SEA3).

Teachers added that some parents wanted to be involved in their children's work, but they did not know what to do. As result, some foreign nationals hired private tutors to teach their children.

Some parents assist their children with schoolwork, but most don't. I think the reason is that some parents don't know how to help their learners (Interview, SEB2).

Teachers added that the lack of parental involvement was due to the fact that they taught learners from diverse socio-economic background, with some from poverty-stricken families and others from affluent families. For teachers, the availability of resources or lack affected the nature of the support the learners received from home. Teachers had the following to say about this issue:

Most of the Swati learners are from poor families and lack basic resources like pencils and exercise books. Their parents work in factories; they are paid peanuts, and you find that the learner lacks even crayons. I have no problem with those from rich families as they have all the school materials. But, I have to treat both learners equally, I try to engage those who lack learning resources as much as those who have them. I improvise, and give them pencils, but I can't provide all the resources they lack (Interview, SEA1).

The economic and social divide among learners in the siSwati classroom was further revealed by teachers who added another dimension to how the contextual background affected their teaching of SL1. They highlighted the plight of learners who stayed with grandparents and in child-headed homes after losing their parents to AIDS and the COVID-19 pandemic.

There are a lot of problems here, the learners come from poor families and lack basic things. Some stay with their parents but both parents don't work. Others stay with grandparents and others in child-headed homes because their parents died of AIDs and now COVID has made the situation worse. These children don't have support at home, they rely on me as a teacher, yet those who are from rich families have support. Their parents even hire tutors for them, particularly the Indians (Interview, SEB1).

Foreign learners have resources and even when you give them the assignment to write home, they do it. Even though some begin school without the knowledge of siSwati, their parents buy learning resources and get tutors who help them, and they end up excelling in the subject. But the same is not true of the local learners. They

don't do the work and give excuses like having no pencil. So, when I teach in class, I provide them with pencils so that they don't feel left out (FGD, SEB3).

The big problem here is that most of the learners are from poor families, some stay with grandmothers who can't afford to buy them learning materials, and most have never seen the door of a classroom. You give learners homework and they come to school without having done it. When you ask them why they didn't write, they give you a host of excuses; there was no candle, no electricity, they didn't have a pencil and many more. You end up frustrated but continue teaching (FGD, SEB4).

The above views indicate that the lack of support provided to learners, both monetary and parental involvement, can lead to poor academic achievement among learners. This finding suggests that learners who are from an enriched environment usually perform better academically than those whose environment is not enriched. The lesson here is, being a first language speaker of a language does not guarantee excellent academic performance in that language, but several factors such as experience and socio-economic dynamics can hinder or foster a child's learning of language as is evident in the context of the study. This is consistent with the sociocultural theory's construct of collaboration that the social-cultural and economic environments of learners are jointly crucial in their learning (Vygotsky, 1978).

The finding from the CLOS corroborated the above views of teachers as I noticed that some learners lacked basic learning materials like pencils, erasers and crayons. In a bid to mitigate the above problem, teachers had pencils which were stored in their cabinets. For instance, teachers SEA2 and SEA3 gave spelling activities and moved around looking for learners who did not have writing material. After finding some, they gave them a pencil and an eraser. Most learners had exercise books that the EMoET provided, but some had lost them. Teacher SEA2 gave out fly sheets to the learners who had lost their exercise books on which to write. My interpretation of the views and actions of teachers was that they were backed by research as there is evidence (Cabus & Ariës, 2017:292; Wilder, 2014:392; Erlendsdóttir, 2010:31) that children from an affluent environment usually do better than those from a poor environment, as the former provides better opportunities to facilitate cognitive and linguistic development among learners.

Moreover, it is ironic that teachers reported that the little support they received from parents was from parents who were immigrants and non-native speakers of the language. Teacher SEA2 expanded on this point as follows:

Usually, the parents who don't cooperate are native speakers of siSwati. They even go to the extent of telling us that 'I don't see how siSwati can help my child in future career'. The immigrants' parents are cooperative; they see that their children need siSwati. They go the extra mile by hiring tutors to teach their children siSwati and that motivates me (Interview, SEA2).

Also, in the FGD, teachers SEB3 shared that parents differed as some were hands-on and were involved in their children's work, while others did not. The above view suggests that most parents who were native speakers of siSwati did not support their learners with schoolwork probably because of the current language policy situation in the country, where siSwati acts as a national symbol and does not have much academic value in Eswatini. The reality is, every parent wants what is best for their children, and hence they channeled their children to concentrate on English, the 'language of opportunities'. On the contrary, parents who were foreign nationals could have shown support towards their learners probably because most of them owned businesses, and they wanted their children to know the language so that they could be able to communicate and understand the local people as they interacted with them daily in their businesses. Based on teachers' assertions, it means they taught learners who were twofold: those who received parental support and those who did not. However, having a divided classroom does not support effective teaching and learning of SL1. It is therefore clear that lack of parental involvement in the teaching-learning of SL1 is another factor that accounts for learners' poor performance in the subject in the Grade Seven exit examination. This is because collaboration between parents and teachers could be a game changer in the teaching and learning of this subject, which is studied by all learners as L1, although a considerable number of learners are non-native speakers of the language. It appears that most parents had a colour-blind approach to the teaching and learning of SL1 but teachers are challenged to collaborate with the learner and parents so that the former can be successful in learning.

The non-involvement of parents in the teaching and learning of SL1 is in contrast to the SCT's concept of collaboration which views parental involvement vital for learners' development of cognitive skills. According to the construct of collaboration, teaching and learning are complex processes that do not involve only the teacher and the learner, but parents and any other person associated with the child. It was on this account that teachers in this study suggested the formation of teacher-parent clubs in schools. Teachers in both schools noted that there was no formal platform through which parents and teachers met to

discuss general issues relating to children and school, let alone the teaching of SL1. According to the teachers, parent-teacher clubs could be an official platform where teachers could share with parents the importance of their children studying siSwati and also guide each other on how best they could support the learners academically. The views below were shared by teachers in the individual interview and the FGD.

As much as most parents seem to have a negative attitude towards siSwati, I think it can help to partner with them. We can have meetings where they share their concerns about siSwati as a language and school subject and we can share why we think it is important for children to do siSwati. Maybe that can help (Interview, SEA2).

I think the school should come up with a way where teachers can work with parents. It is not every parent who is a teacher. Some parents may want to assist their children but they might not know where to start and how to do it (FGD, SEB2).

The issue of a strong and formal teacher-parent relationship is not only a concern for the educators in this study, but legislators around the world are working towards or have introduced reforms for the establishment of teacher-parent formal clubs in the hope of enhancing the academic achievements of learners. For instance, Wilder (2014:378) states that most schools in the United States are introducing reforms in favour of the formation of parent-teacher associations so that parents and teachers can work together in assisting learners to have better academic accomplishments.

Interestingly, despite the barrage of challenges teachers experienced in teaching SL1 as a result of the lack of cooperation from different stakeholders, some teachers revealed that they experienced a sense of fulfilment when they saw learners who came to school without speaking a word of SiSwati being functional in the language. The following were positive sentiments shared by teachers about their positive experience of teaching SL1:

What I learnt is that learners learn any language they are exposed to. You need to be patient; it's a journey with highs and lows, but the end product is beautiful, the work of your hands. You can't explain the feeling (Interview, SEA2).

It is a challenging experience that is full of surprises. One surprise is that the non-native speaker of siSwati does better than the native speakers. It is disturbing to see learners performing poorly in their mother tongue, but it's an exciting experience

when you see foreigners speaking the language knowing that you have achieved what you thought was impossible (Interview, SEA3).

It brings joy to me to see the change in the learner. It pleases me when I see non-native speakers becoming fluent in the language. Once they grasp the language, they perform better than their Swati peers (FGD, SEB3).

In the beginning, it is hard, but as the year goes by, it gives you joy as a teacher to see the learner being able to use the language in all domains (FGD, SEB7).

From the above excerpts, it is evident that despite the challenges teachers experienced in teaching SL1, they were satisfied and fulfilled when non-native speakers of SiSwati eventually accomplished communicative competence in the latter. According to these teachers, this was the greatest reward and achievement that inspired them to work hard despite the challenges they faced daily in their practice.

5.8 WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM THE FINDINGS

One lesson we learn from the preceding findings of the study is that SL1 learning is a social construct ingrained in human interaction as postulated by Vygotsky (1978). In the case of the study, it was the interaction between teachers and learners during class activities. Moreover, the findings also showed that effective teaching and learning of SL1 goes beyond the classroom walls as learners also acquire and learn language amongst themselves during school break when they socialize and at home through the help of parents, siblings and the use of tutors.

Moreover, although the study showed that language learning is anchored in social interaction, one important lesson was that social interaction alone is not sufficient to help learners acquire communicative competence in SL1, but effective SL1 teaching-learning can be made possible when there is extensive understanding and employment of the six intersecting constructs of the SCT. This is the case because although all the constructs were revealed in the data, it was not always in a harmonious way. Yet the six constructs of the theory are intertwined and demonstrate a clear and overlapping relationship which is congruent and synchronises showing that a thoughtful amalgamation of them can result to effective teaching and learning of SL1. However, in the case of this study, although teachers and learners as social beings interacted in class, teachers lacked the essential skills (technological and pedagogical knowledge), which are fundamental skills to be possessed

by the language teacher to be considered the MKO to teach language. Furthermore, the study showed that the lack of collaborative endeavour among teachers, and other stakeholders like parents, the school administration and EMoET resulted in many negative experiences and challenges which teachers revealed as impacting their SL1 practice. Thus, I discerned that failure to harmonize these constructs cannot guarantee effective SL1 teaching and learning but can jeopardize and negatively impact the SL1 learning experiences provided to learners as was the case with the study.

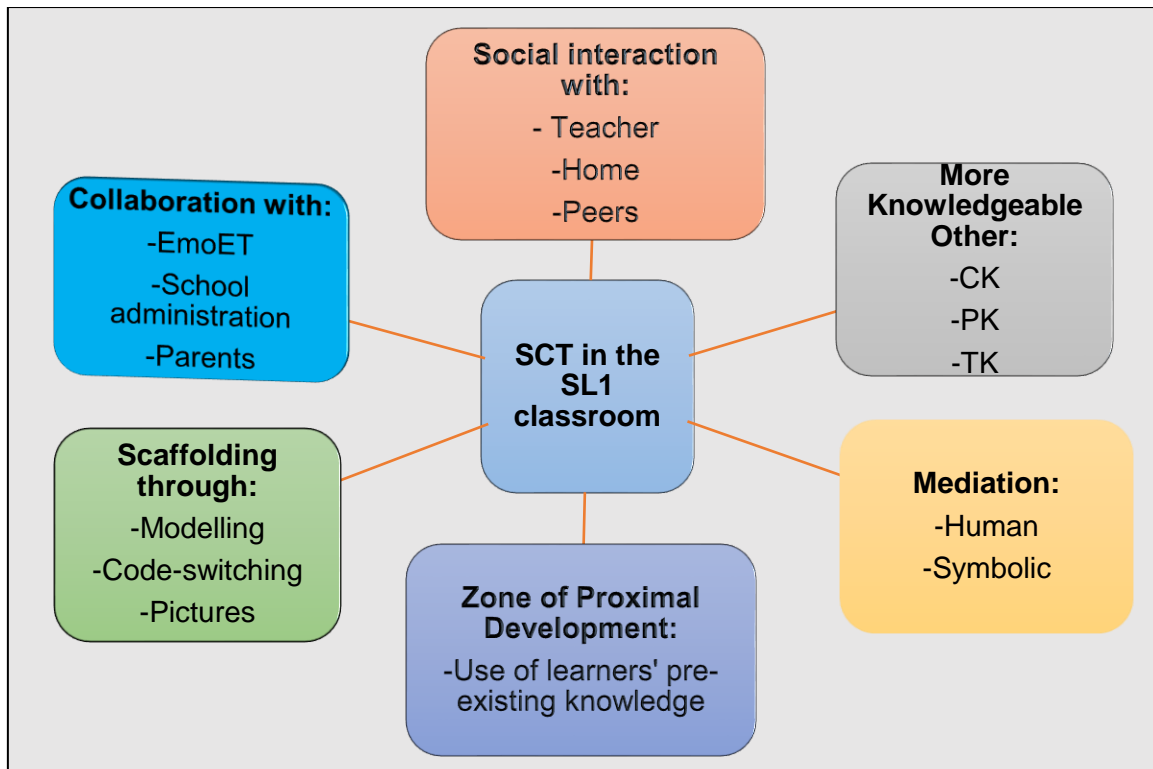


Figure 5.11: Summary of the findings according to the sociocultural theory

Figure 5.11 presented the summary of the findings revealed through the six constructs of the SCT. Indeed, the SL1 teacher, as the MKO and human mediator provided mediation and scaffolding, which were respectively the support and guidance teachers as MKOs offered to learners through a variety of pedagogical practices to develop and organise learners' behaviour and thinking processes such that they can independently solve problems that they could not solve on their own. Moreover, in this study, teachers' actions were undermined by the nature of the pedagogical practices they utilised, as although they were scaffolds, they predominantly used traditional teacher-centered expository pedagogy which did not promote maximum language learning as shown in the preceding discussion.

5.9 SUMMARY

This chapter presented research findings from data generated on pedagogical practices employed in teaching SL1 in two urban primary schools of the Shiselweni region of Eswatini. The sources through which the data were collected and generated were individual interviews (telephone and face-to-face), focus group discussion, classroom lesson observation, and document review. The data were analysed through content analysis. In presenting the findings, the six concepts of the SCT were methodically used as organising principles demonstrating instances in the data where they are revealed. The findings revealed that just as the constructs of the SCT are intertwined in theory, there is a need for their careful incorporation in practice to guarantee successful teaching and learning of language. In this study, the findings showed that there was a misalignment between what teachers professed by word of mouth and their actual classroom practices, as they claimed to use multiple pedagogical approaches such as expository, discovery, and participatory pedagogy. Yet in practice, they were found predominantly employing expository pedagogy which was teacher-centred and did not support language learning. This suggests that the teaching of siSwati in the foundation phase was characterised by the absence of key pedagogical approaches deemed suitable and effective for SL1 teaching and learning, particularly in this phase because of their ability to provide multimodal means and pathways to learning.

The chapter further revealed teachers' beliefs, personal preferences and curriculum requirements, teacher training and the availability of teaching and learning resources as the key determinants for teacher choice of pedagogy. It further revealed teachers' experiences of teaching SL1 and suggestions on how the teaching and learning of siSwati can be improved in the FOMIPs.

In the following chapter, I present a comprehensive discussion of the research findings where they are either corroborated or contradicted by available literature and the sociocultural theory through which the study was anchored. I also present the conclusion and recommendations based on the study.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION, SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a conclusion of the research that explored pedagogical practices in teaching SL1 in two urban primary schools in the Shiselweni region of Eswatini characterised by learners of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. I begin the chapter by presenting the overview of the previous five chapters explaining how we got to this chapter. I then provide the discussion of the research findings provided in the previous chapter and the conclusion and recommendations for policy, practice and future research based on the study's findings. I ultimately end the chapter with a summary.

6.2 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

This section provides a summary of the previous five chapters. In-

Chapter 1: I presented the background, purpose and focus which was to explore pedagogical practices in teaching SL1 in diverse linguistic settings. I provided that my rationale to conduct this study largely hinged on the scanty research on AHLs pedagogy, and in the context of the study the absence of any research on teaching SL1 in Eswatini. Yet, siSwati remains the LoLT in the foundation and middle phases and a core subject from primary up to senior secondary. I offered that studies conducted on siSwati have centred on the issue of the language-in-education policy and how siSwati could be used as LoLT (Mkhabela, 2018; Mkhonza, 1990; Mordaunt, 1990), thus neglecting SL1 teaching and creating gaps in SL1 pedagogy. In light of the foregoing, the study raised three research questions which were:

- a) How are pedagogical practices used in teaching SL1?
- b) Why are these pedagogical practices used in the teaching of SL1?
- c) How do teachers experience the teaching of SL1?

In Chapter 1 I also provided the outline of the research methodology I used to respond to the research questions, the significance, delimitations and limitations of this investigation and the organisation of the report.

Chapter 2: I conducted the literature review focusing on language pedagogy. From the literature, I found that there are three types of knowledge that the 21st-century language teacher should possess to be effective in teaching language. This prerequisite knowledge is presented through the TPACK framework, which integrates technological, pedagogical and content knowledge (Mishra & Koehler, 2006:1029; Webster & Ryan, 2018:120; Leach & Moon, 2008:6-7). Thus, the literature indicated that the knowledge of content and pedagogy is insufficient nowadays for teachers to be effective in their practice, but they should be a complete package knowing technology, content and pedagogy. The literature also revealed that generally language teaching and learning are anchored in social practice (Joubert, 2015:74; de Sousa *et al.*, 2019:300; Vygotsky, 1986:150; Sheets, 2009:11). Therefore, primary school teachers need to be knowledgeable of learner-centred pedagogical approaches that are anchored in social practice such as social constructivism, participatory, discovery, communicative language teaching and diversity pedagogies.

Chapter 3: I provided a detailed presentation of the sociocultural theory (SCT), which was the theoretical framework of the research guiding the formulation of research questions, choice of the paradigm and the methodology I followed to respond to the questions and to analyse and interpret the findings of the study. The SCT views language teaching and learning as a social construct (Vygotsky, 1978:130; Krashen, 1982:58), thus teachers are facilitators who are supposed to help learners acquire linguistic competence by using learner-centred pedagogical practices that encourage meaningful communication and active classroom practices. I chose the SCT as a lens through which I explored pedagogical practices in SL1 because of its distinctive feature of providing a comprehensible description of how the social environment and knowledgeable individuals in the learners' environment play a vital role in assisting learners gain linguistic competence.

Chapter 4: I presented a detailed discussion of the design and methods. I discussed the interpretive paradigm which helped me explore and understand pedagogy in SL1. My choice of this paradigm was informed by its philosophical assumption that people are different and each person constructs knowledge of a social phenomenon based on his/her perspective and that human life cannot be understood from afar, but from within (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Maree, 2016). The design was a case study and my decision to adopt it was because of its ability to answer the "how" and "why" questions (Yin, 2014:14). These are questions I asked in this research to understand pedagogical practices in SL1. I presented the methodology and instruments I used to generate data, which were the individual

interview, focus group discussion, observation and documentary review. I also explained how I analysed the data through content analysis.

Chapter 5: I presented and interpreted the research findings against the six constructs of the sociocultural theory (SCT), the theoretical framework of the study.

In the succeeding section, I provide a discussion of findings that emerged from the content analysis of the four data sources which were categorised into five themes pertaining to: (1) teachers' understanding of teaching the siSwati language, (2) pedagogical practices in teaching SL1, (3) justification for teachers' choice of pedagogical practices, (4) teachers' experiences of teaching SL1 at the FOMIPs and (5) teachers' suggestions on improving the teaching and learning of SL1.

6.3 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS IN TERMS OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW AND THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this section, I offer a detailed discussion of the findings provided in the previous chapter. The discussion is guided by the sociocultural theory which directed the study and which views language learning as a social construct, and the literature on pedagogical practices in language instruction to either corroborate or disprove the findings.

6.3.1 Theme 1: Teachers' understanding of teaching the siSwati language

This theme revealed that teachers' understanding of SL1 was rooted in both a conventional and assimilation point of view. From the conventional viewpoint, teachers understood that teaching SL1 meant teaching learners the productive skill of speaking, which is in the oral mode, and the productive skill of writing, which is in the written mode. It also meant teaching learners the receptive skills of listening and reading, both in the written mode. It is apparent therefore that teachers understood that teaching the siSwati language in the foundation and middle phases meant teaching language literacy so that all learners can have functional use of the language across the subject curricular both in its oral and print form, which is consistent with objectives of most language curriculums around the world (United States Department of Education, 2017; England Department of Education, 2013; Ellis *et al.*, 2011; Department of Basic Education, 2011; EMoET, 2018a).

Thus, teachers' conceptualisation of teaching SL1 in the foundation phase and middle phase was that it should be taught to develop holistic literacy, for learners to acquire

linguistic skills of being able to use the language both in speech and writing, which are a foundation of lifelong learning that ensures that learners are eloquent in language and demonstrate creativity, critical thinking and reasoning skills. This is in line with Calhoun (1999:58) and Brewer (2016:35) who contend that for individuals to actively participate as citizens in their societies, they need to be both proficient in spoken and written language. Thus according to teachers, it was important for learners to be articulate in both oral and written forms of SL1 as it was a core language subject and LoLT. Teachers' views are anchored in the sociocultural theory, which views language teaching and learning as important as language transmits educational ideas from the MKO to the learner (Vygotsky 1978). Moreover, this is not in harmony with findings by Nkosi (2011:280) who observed that isiZulu language educators lacked the knowledge of the purpose of teaching the skill of reading in the language among foundation phase learners.

However, as much as teachers understood that teaching SL1 to learners meant equipping them with holistic functional use of the language, their views disregarded that they were not only teaching SL1 to mother tongue (MT) speakers of the language, but also to learners who had no proficiency in the language. Not once in their submissions did they mention what they understood teaching SL1 to learners of diverse linguistic backgrounds meant. In this regard, their views seemed to affirm the assimilation approach adopted by the EMoET to SL1 teaching and learning in Eswatini primary schools where non-MT learners have to learn SL1 (EMoET, 2017). It was evident from the submissions of SEA1, SEA3, SEB1, SEB2, SEB3, SEB4, and SEB5 in both the individual interview and FGD that teachers believed that teaching SL1 in the foundation and middle phases meant aggressively assimilating non-native speakers of siSwati into the language and culture of the siSwati speaking learners.

This was demonstrated by teacher SEB2's view that when a person goes to study in another country, they have to adapt and conform to the language of the local people. Although there is some truth in this, it overlooks the fact that here teachers were dealing with young learners whose L1 was the sole tool for socialisation and learning. Such an understanding by teachers is contrary to the conclusions made by authors (Mokgoko, 2019; Bailey & Marsden 2017; Cummins, 2005; Macdonald, 2002; Cummins, 1991) who advised against assimilating MT learners of another language into the language of the majority in light of the many challenges learners encounter, including lagging in instruction, poor cognitive development and socialisation. This is more so because research evidence (Macdonald, 2002; Cummins, 1991) indicates that a child's L1 is vital for intellectual growth and forcefully

assimilating them into another language may result in the contrary. Moreover, the findings from lesson observations showed that it is possible to teach SL1 to learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds, but teachers have to employ culturally responsive pedagogical practices and thrive not to assimilate these learners into the Swati culture.

6.3.2 Theme 2: Pedagogical practices in teaching SL1

The findings from both Schools SEA and SEB indicated that teachers engaged in several pedagogical practices to teach SL1. Even though the literature indicated that many teacher-centred and learner-centred pedagogical approaches and strategies have been used respectively to teach language, including expository, discovery, participatory, CLT, diversity, and social constructivist pedagogies, the findings showed that teachers predominantly employed teacher-centred expository pedagogy when teaching oral and written forms of SL1. This finding tallies with the findings by several authors (Mcaba 2014; Mkhwanazi, 2014; Nomlomo, 2013; Stroud, 2003; Murray, 2009) who found that teacher-centred expository pedagogy dominated AHLs classrooms. However, expository pedagogy does not make the learner an active participant and views the learner as a blank slate that has to be filled with new knowledge by the teacher. In the case of this study, almost all lessons were characterised by teachers controlling the teaching-learning process, as almost all lessons assumed the same pattern with the teacher dominating the lesson, be it in teaching oral or written language.

Common expository pedagogies in the SL1 classrooms were the question and answer method and lecture methods where learners had to respond to either oral or written questions. Both oral and written language was taught in a decontextualised fashion and what learners were taught was mechanical, as it did not reflect real-life situations which were not in harmony with the sociocultural theory, which posits that language learning can be made authentic when learners learn about issues they understand and themes that relate to real-world experiences (Vygotsky, 1978:118). This is similar to the finding made by some authors who found that language lessons were taught in a decontextualised manner (Nkosi, 2011:280; Baai, 1992:63). For example, Nkosi (2011:280) observed that teachers taught isiZulu reading in an isolated and decontextualised manner contrary to propositions of the sociocultural theories that reading can be made meaningful and authentic to learners when they are made to read about issues reflecting everyday life.

Interestingly, it was the finding of the study that teachers lacked the appropriate pedagogy to teach SL1 to learners in the foundation phase. Teachers controlled the teaching of both oral and written language through all the different resources they had such as learners' pre-existing knowledge, the classroom learning environment, teacher's guides and learners' textbooks. This confirmed the finding by Ramdan (2015:234) who found that foundation phase teachers lacked a sociocultural methodology for teaching language literacy as they employed teacher-centred pedagogies. For instance, in both Schools SEA and SEB, learners were never provided any opportunities to work in groups, sing songs, play and tell stories. Instead, it was the teacher who told stories and asked learners questions, yet authors (EMoET, 2018a:11-13; Joubert, 2015:87; Buchanan *et al.*, 2001:147; Wells & Haneda, 2009:143; Cullingford, 1998:67; Resnick & Snow, 2009a:164) contend that teachers can facilitate linguistic competence among their learners through play, songs, storytelling and plenty of talk. Carr *et al.* (2001:147) argue that a wonderful story is a teaching aid and the ideas of these authors demonstrate that learners in this study were deprived of the opportunities to be involved in meaningful conversations, songs and play relevant to their context. The reality is if teachers engaged learners in these activities, learners were bound not to easily forget them because they call for their active involvement and could consequently assist their development of spoken and written language.

It would be wrong to say that teachers did not employ learner-centred pedagogies. But the few learner-centred pedagogical practices they applied were plagued by incorrect use. For instance, all teachers used translanguaging methods such as code-switching and having some concepts translated into siSwati worked across the board, as it was good for both teachers and learners in the sense that no learner was lost in the lesson and left behind, as a result of a lack of proficiency in the siSwati language, but all learners got what the teachers wanted them to learn, no matter how good or bad their siSwati was. The use of code-switching by teachers is not uncommon in classes with linguistic diversity and where the language of learning is foreign to some learners as Mati (2004:21) found it to be both an integral and integrated part of the teaching and learning because it aids learning by accommodating all learners. However, the problem arises when there is no clear picture of why it is used just like in this study where teachers alluded to having uncontrolled use of using English when teaching SL1. According to teacher participants, this was a result of their training where they were taught siSwati content and how to teach it in the second language English. In this regard, it cannot be said that teachers' use of code-switching solely benefitted the learner, as the uncontrolled use of English when teaching SL1 could be because of a lack of the siSwati metalanguage, which could have dire effects on learners

learning the language. This contradicts the results of a study by Babane and Maruma (2017) which showed that learners were code-switching because they lacked vocabulary in the home language, whereas teachers code-switched to English for class control and social reasons. Here teachers switched codes from siSwati to English because of metalanguage limitations.

Furthermore, most teachers indeed used learners' pre-existing knowledge to build on new knowledge. However, there was a shortcoming in the way they used it as it was not balanced. Teachers were found to channel their questions to the experiences of learners who were MT speakers of siSwati. Although this was helpful and kept the lesson flowing, it did not aid the learning of SL1 to the other group of learners whose L1 was not siSwati, as learning was not made authentic and meaningful by connecting what they know to what they did not know. In essence, as stated by Kalina and Powell (2009:241), teachers were only able to gauge one group of learners' current level of knowledge, thus providing them with the chance to build personal meaning when provided with new information while depriving others of that same chance. This was contrary to the findings by authors that teachers' use of the knowledge the learner brings to class facilitates their learning, as they can connect what they know to new knowledge (Shangguan *et al.*, 2020:1088; Dong, 2017:146). This finding was also contrary to the sociocultural theory and other pedagogical approaches such as participatory and diversity pedagogies which posit that direct teaching of concepts is worthless if it does not connect to the learner's life experiences, which is a foundation of gaining new knowledge (Vygotsky, 1986:150; de Sousa *et al.*, 2019:300). The same is true with modelling which teachers used to model speaking, listening, reading and writing, but it was more slanted towards expository pedagogy because there were very few opportunities for learners to showcase what they were learning through learner-centred and cooperative methods, such as group work and play. Yet according to the sociocultural theory, young children learn best through play, as for them there is no disconnect between the two (Hedge & Cullen, 2012:924; Vygotsky, 1978:102).

Teachers' lack of the appropriate pedagogy to teach SL1 was also manifested in their failure to use teaching-learning resources that were readily available and displayed on the classroom walls. Although teachers in both schools were aware of the role played by the micro (physical) and macro (psychological) classroom environments to teach SL1, their practice showed the contrary. Almost all classrooms were indeed characterised by teacher warmth and learners interacting with the teacher and among themselves freely without fear of being scolded and rebuked by the teacher which was consistent with ideas by several

authors that a conducive language learning environment was one with low anxiety and supported learning (Lightbown & Spada, 2013:25; Krashen, 1982:32). It is also true that the physical aspect of the classroom environment also agreed with the psychological environment as Bokas (2016:28) points out that for effective learning to occur, there should be harmony between the two. Thus on classroom walls, there were charts displayed with siSwati content, but teachers never utilised the resources on the classroom walls to teach oral and written language.

Furthermore, in Chapter 4, I stated that the study was conducted at the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic when learners alternated coming to schools to allow for social distancing in their 'normally' overcrowded classrooms. Furniture was arranged in an orderly manner, and there was room for both teachers and learners to move and interact freely within the available physical space. But, teachers never exploited this advantage to maximise the teaching and learning of SL1 by employing pedagogical practices that need a lot of physical space, such as group work and play. Teachers continued to excessively use teacher-centred expository pedagogy, which did not support the teaching and learning of language. This is to say, the availability or lack of physical space did not improve their pedagogical practices, as the way they taught during COVID where learners came in small numbers was similar to the way they taught after COVID-19 restrictions were removed when learners were overcrowded with an average of 61 learners per class. This finding was contrary to findings by Gültekin and Özenç (2021:188) and Puteh *et al.* (2015:238) who found that classrooms with good features and enough space facilitated the holistic growth of learners, yet in the context of the study, ample physical space did not improve teacher pedagogy.

6.3.3 Theme 3: Justification for teachers' choice of pedagogical practices

This finding revealed that there were some justifications for teacher choice of pedagogical practices which were a result of intrinsic as well as extrinsic factors. Intrinsically, there were personal determinants such as teachers' beliefs about siSwati language teaching and personal preferences. Extrinsically, it was professional factors such as curriculum requirements, teacher training and availability of teaching and learning resources. Moreover, in the reviewed literature, it was found that teachers' choices of pedagogical practices are usually influenced by their knowledge of CK, PCK and TPACK (Baser *et al.*, 2015; Leach & Moon, 2008; Cruickshank *et al.*, 2006) which were usually socially, professionally and economically constructed.

It was the finding of the study that the type of pedagogy teachers employed in their SL1 classrooms was generally guided by their personal beliefs about themselves as siSwati teachers and the way they viewed their learners. The literature revealed that there was a correlation between teachers' beliefs and their pedagogical practices and thus the former plays a crucial role in influencing the latter (Cunningham, 2019; Milner, 2017; Sayed, 2018; Watson, 2015; Pulinx *et al.*, 2017; Hos & Kekec, 2014). Cruickshank *et al.* (2006:7) assert that all teachers possess certain beliefs about themselves and their learners, and these beliefs may birth behaviour that may influence teachers to behave positively or negatively. For example, teachers in the study had certain beliefs about learners learning siSwati. Although teachers were aware that they taught MT and non-MT of siSwati with the latter lacking proficiency in the language, they believed that all learners had to be assimilated into learning SL1, as siSwati was a core subject and LoLT in the FOMIPs. Such a belief influenced and channelled teachers to employ passive pedagogical practices which they believed would quickly facilitate the development of oral and written language among learners. However, they used expository pedagogy like the lecture and question and answer method, which did not provide many communicative opportunities for learners to construct knowledge from personal experiences, as required by the sociocultural theory and other learner-centred approaches like participatory, diversity, discovery and communicative language teaching pedagogies (Dooly & Vallejo, 2020:82; de Sousa *et al.*, 2019:300; Dlamini, 2018:109; McKinley, 2015:186; Vygotsky, 1978:57).

Furthermore, as mentioned earlier that teachers' choices of pedagogical practices were socially constructed, it was the finding of this study that another determinant of teacher pedagogical practices was the personal beliefs they had about themselves as Swati native speakers and the value they ascribed to the teaching of the L1. Some authors explored the relationship between the beliefs of educators and their pedagogy and found that the beliefs of the former had the power to shape teacher instructional practices (Cunningham, 2019; Watson, 2015; Durán & Palmer, 2014; Nkosi, 2011). Teachers in this study had the belief that siSwati, as the MT to most learners and teachers themselves, was valuable as the LoLT in the FOMIPs. Thus, I observed that although they employed teacher-centred pedagogical practices in their SL1 classrooms, they were passionate about teaching SL1, and even went to the extent of improvising resources to teach the subject in situations where there was none. Such determination by teachers for learners to learn the subject was a good thing on its own, as found by Zhang and Slaughter-Defoe (2009) that positive beliefs about the value and importance of a language give birth to positive attitudes, resulting in improved willpower to learn the L1.

However, in the case of the study, although teachers had the willpower and determination to teach the SL1 efficiently to learners, their willpower and beliefs did not align with the curriculum standards, which required them to use learner-centred methods of teaching SL1. Their practices were not like they taught learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Hence, there were gaps in learning which were a result of their beliefs and practices, since ignoring diversity among their learners made them not to consider appropriate instructional practices that will include all learners (Milner, 2012:700). This finding confirmed the results by Pulinx *et al.* (2017) who found that the beliefs of Flemish teachers did not match with language education policies. For example, according to the ENCFGE (Eswatini national curriculum framework for general education), teachers are expected to use learner-centred pedagogies, such as discovery and participatory when teaching SL1 under the CBE curriculum (EMoET, 2018a). However, the teachers in Schools SEA and SEB did the direct opposite of the curriculum specification by employing teacher-centred pedagogy. The rationale for this will be explored in one of the subsequent paragraphs of this discussion.

Moreover, in this study, I also found that teachers' beliefs were not always translated into their classroom practices when teaching SL1. For example, teachers stated that it was their belief to employ learner-centred pedagogical approaches, such as participatory and discovery pedagogy that would captivate learners to learn SL1, but realistically this was not the case, as their lessons were largely dominated by expository pedagogy with the teacher drilling and teaching language concepts in a de-contextualised manner. Furthermore, teachers alluded to using play, but there was no evidence of this in practice. This finding confirmed the results of a study (Hos & Kekec, 2014:83), which established that educators' beliefs were not aligned with the real practice of teaching language. I then concluded that what teachers said by word of mouth did not always obtain in the ground when teaching SL1.

Still under personal justification to use an instructional practice, I observed that teachers chose to use a pedagogical practice either because it had worked in the past or they just preferred it over others. This tallied with the findings by researchers (Sichula, 2018:151; Nkosi, 2011:171) who respectively found that personal preferences influenced teacher choice of pedagogy in adult literacy learning and isiZulu reading classrooms. For example, I found that teachers chose a teaching approach because they claimed to know their learners, what worked well with them and know a method that has stood the test of time. Although this may sound appealing, it has grave effects on the kind of pedagogy used to

teach SL1. As mentioned in the previous chapter, it is a fallacy that a teacher may claim to know learners, as they change each year as others are introduced into the education system and others progress to the next class. Likewise, learners are different and are not only from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds but also from diverse socio-economic and political backgrounds (Dewey, 2018:181; Moore-Hart, 2010:104; Muijs & Reynolds, 2005:185; Cruickshank *et al.*, 2006:11). That being the case, learners have individual needs and so what might have worked for a group of learners in the previous year might not work with others in the new academic year. Thus, teachers must keep evolving, and structuring their pedagogical practices so that they are in line with the nature of learners (in the context of the study learners from diverse linguistic settings), the current prevailing conditions (COVID-19 in the case of the study) and endless other factors. That is why scholars hold that pedagogy should be contextualised to the sociocultural experience of learners (Barone & Mallette, 2013; Leach & Moon, 2008; Vygotsky, 1978). For Leach and Moon (2008), pedagogy is a multi-layered concept greater than mere teaching methods but should include an understanding and appreciation of the context where teaching occurs, how learners learn, that learning is a social process, and that the construction of knowledge should go hand in hand with participating in a culture of practice. Thus, the practices of teachers did not align with the sociocultural theory which posits that some contextual dynamics should be considered when planning pedagogy for young learners.

Professionally, I found that teachers' choice of pedagogical practices was guided by curriculum requirements and training. Besides, I noted that curriculum standards rarely influenced teacher pedagogy. Some teachers did not know the siSwati curriculum requirements they were supposed to adhere to as SL1 teachers, thus, they often employed instructional practices that were convenient to them, even though these practices did not provide meaningful learning experiences to learners. For instance, all the teacher's guides for Grade One to Four, which are the main curriculum documents did not provide for the use of code-switching (Malaza *et al.*, 2018; Dlamini-Ndlovu *et al.*, 2019; Dlamini-Ndlovu, 2020). However, as earlier mentioned, teachers had uncontrollable use of the strategy in all SL1 classrooms. Furthermore, the teachers' guide required teachers to predominantly use interactive approaches to teach SL1, but teachers often employed expository pedagogy which was in total contrast to this curriculum requirement. However, it appeared that the national curriculum framework for general education had some shortcomings of its own, as it vaguely stated that the CBE curriculum required a shift in teaching methods such that teachers ought to use learner-centred approaches such as discovery and participatory pedagogy. However, it still gave teachers the flexibility to use "the tried and tested methods

they already know” (EMoET, 2018a:35) like the lecture, class discussion, question and answer and demonstration methods without explaining to what extent. This could explain the predominant use of these methods by teachers because these were methods they were familiar with.

The findings of the study also revealed that teacher training was another determinant for teacher choice of pedagogical practice. This pertained to the knowledge the teacher gained during and post-training. The literature revealed that CK, PCK and TPACK guided teacher practice and all these skills are acquired by teachers pre-service and in-service (Leach & Moon, 2008; Baser *et al.*, 2015; Cruickshank *et al.*, 2006). In this regard, I found that teachers stated that two pre-service training factors influenced their choice of pedagogical practices. These were the ways their instructors taught siSwati language and the LoLT used to teach siSwati. With regards to the latter, it was found that teachers predominantly used the lecture method, as it had worked for their instructors who taught large groups of learners at college. This confirmed the observation made by Cruickshank *et al.* (2006:8) that the way a teacher was taught and their preferred way of learning usually influence their knowledge and choice of PCK. Moreover, such a justification by teachers demonstrates a lack of contextual understanding on their behalf, as expository approaches like the lecture can work with tertiary students but are unsuitable for FOMIPs learners whose learning, according to several authors (de Sousa *et al.*, 2019:300; Ilmu, 2016:293; Dlamini, 2018:110; Waring & Evans, 2014:104; Bierema, 2010:314; Sheets, 2009:11; Vygotsky, 1986:150) is anchored in social constructivist, participatory, diversity and discovery pedagogies like group work and play. Thus, teacher pedagogical practices in teaching SL1 could have been effective if they had integrated expository with the sociocultural approaches instead of using the former in isolation.

The fact is teachers in this study demonstrated great mastery of the siSwati content, but they lacked the appropriate methodology to transfer that knowledge to the learner. Furthermore, the study revealed that teachers not only lacked the relevant pedagogy to teach SL1 to young learners, but they also lacked TK. The study was carried out at the height of COVID, and schools were closed which forced teaching-learning to be done virtually. Besides, most teachers lacked basic computer skills, let alone using sophisticated learning apparatuses and programmes. This finding, therefore, revealed that there was a gap between teachers’ CK, PK and TK, which led to the educational experiences provided to the FOMIPs learners wanting. This finding confirmed what is documented in the literature by several authors who found a gap between teacher content knowledge and pedagogic

knowledge (Schaffler, Nel & Booysen, 2021; Mcaba, 2014; Mngomezulu, 2014; Schaffler, 2015; De Vos *et al.*, 2014; Nkosi, 2011). For example, Mcaba (2014:74) made a similar finding in a study on teachers' PCK on English first additional language and isiZulu HL in South Africa and found that teachers lacked PCK and most of them did not employ the pedagogical approaches specified in the curriculum document to teach the two language subjects.

Another aspect of this finding was the influence of the way siSwati was taught during pre-service training on teachers. Teachers revealed that the LoLT siSwati at college and university was English and as I mentioned in this discussion, teachers found it inevitable to use English when teaching siSwati to foundation phase learners. The use of English to teach siSwati to native-speaking students and by native instructors in institutions of higher learning is a strange and incomprehensible case. Actually, I cannot fathom the justification of this practice that prevails in colleges. The problem with this is that there is a misalignment between teacher training (where teachers are taught how to teach siSwati in English) and real practice in schools (where teachers are required to teach siSwati to learners in siSwati). This misalignment in theories guiding the training of home language teachers and the real practice in schools is catastrophic to teaching and learning and the total development of AHLs as observed by Nomlomo (2013:214).

Teachers further revealed that much assistance on how to teach the objective based curriculum was obtained through in-service training, but currently, there was a huge problem as of 2019 a new curriculum called competency based education was introduced (EMoET, 2018a) and most teachers were not trained in it. These were similar findings by Mngomezulu (2014:74) who found that teachers complained about the quality of in-service training they received to teach isiZulu.

In this study, it is thus clear proof that teachers' misuse of code-switching and a lack of other learner-centred approaches is a result of the training they received at college as Cruickshank *et al.* (2006:8) has shown that how a teacher was taught influences their PCK and its subsequent application in classrooms. Teacher's misuse of code-switching is also another clear example of the inadequate training teachers received in institutions of higher learning, thus the misalignment in training and the actual teaching of SL1 influenced teachers to opt for pedagogical practices that were convenient to them and did not benefit the learner that much.

The last determinant for teacher choice of pedagogical practices was the availability or a lack of teaching and learning resources. Teachers revealed that there was not much available literature on the siSwati language and that there were restrictions on how they were to use the available resources, such as learner's textbook, storybook, workbook and learner's reader. According to participant teachers, learners were not allowed to take the books home, thus teachers often used expository pedagogy because it made them cover much teaching content. This confirmed the findings by Stroud (2003) and Nomlomo (2013) that a lack of teaching and learning resources drove AHL teachers to use teacher-centred pedagogy. However, as much as it is true that there is not much written on the siSwati language, my analysis of documentary evidence proved that it was not the instruction from EMoET to deny learners from taking the books home, but teachers had to ensure that the books are safe and learners could remove the books from the school only through the teacher's permission (Dlamini-Ndlovu, 2020; Dlamini-Ndlovu *et al.*, 2019; Malaza *et al.*, 2018). I then concluded that denying learners to take the books from school and to use them at home was an individual school policy that gravely impacted on teachers' practice and the subsequent learning of SL1 in the FOMIPs.

All in all, my dissection of this theme validated my rationale to explore SL1 pedagogy that SL1 pedagogy is an under-researched and neglected field. As demonstrated in this analysis, teacher pedagogical practices were teacher-centred and did not align with the requirements of the ENCFGE (EMoET, 2018a), which require the use of learner-centred pedagogies in teaching FOMIPs. The absence of learner-centred pedagogical practices in both schools SEA and SEB was inconsistent with the sociocultural theory, the framework that guided the study which posits that language teaching and learning is anchored in social practice, and it requires learners to be involved in meaningful interactive communicative activities that will allow them to construct meaning either on their own, that is based on experiences or based on the experiences of the other people living in their environment.

6.3.4 Theme 4: Teachers' experiences of teaching SL1 in the FOMIPs

This finding indicated that teachers experienced both positive and negative experiences when teaching SL1 but the latter outshone the former. About the positive experiences, the findings revealed that although teachers found it time consuming and strenuous to synchronously teach SL1 to L1 and non-L1 speakers of siSwati, they experienced a sense of satisfaction and fulfilment, particularly when learners who initially lacked proficiency in siSwati eventually gained it and ultimately had functional use of the language. This confirmed findings by Bailey and Marsden (2017:298) who recorded that teachers in

England shared the same sentiments about teaching English as an additional language to non-native speakers of the language. Moreover, as much as teachers found it time consuming to teach language to two groups of learners, they also revealed that non-native speakers of siSwati performed much better in the subject than native speakers once they have acquired the subject. Thus, having learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds brought healthy competition in the SL1 class, as the eagerness to learn the language by these learners motivated the Swati learners to work hard. This confirmed the findings by Cantador and Conde (2010:17) who found that healthy competition was valuable in teaching-learning only when it is temporary, symbolic and its objectives clearly outlined. Therefore, learners gaining competence in siSwati was one positive experience and a reward that satisfied and motivated teachers to work hard despite the many challenges they faced in teaching SL1 which are described next. Despite using inappropriate pedagogical practices, it is interesting that teachers in this study demonstrated great motivation to teach the subject, yet the literature reveal that teachers and some speakers of AHL are demotivated to teach and learn these language subjects (Cunningham, 2019; Nkosi, 2011; Pludderman, 2002).

With regards to negative experiences, the findings indicated that teachers had a lot of these as opposed to positive ones. This confirmed the finding by Nomlomo (2013) who found that pre-service teachers had more negative experiences than positive ones when training to teach isiXhosa. These challenges faced by teachers in this study were interrelated and were teacher, learner and school oriented. With regards to teacher-related negative experiences, the finding revealed that teachers had an enormous workload, as they did not specialise to teach all the subjects in the grade they taught. This is tallied with findings by Ramdan (2015:184), Dlamini (2018:209) and Khohliso (2015:83) who also found that teachers faced intense workload which negatively affected teaching and learning. In this study, this was accompanied by a lot of clerk-work with teachers having to prepare portfolios for each learner and every subject although they taught overcrowded classrooms with an average enrolment of 61 learners per class. This affected pedagogy as teachers never used learner-centred methods like group work, and the assessment conducted was ineffective and feedback was not prompt, as it took many days for teachers to mark and return learners' work. Rudwick (2018:264) and Cruickshank *et al.* (2006:12) contend that the number of learners in a class impact learning positively or negatively. If the number of learners is reasonable, teachers can attend to the individual needs of learners, thus supporting the learning of language, but if it is huge and unmanageable, the opposite happens. Besides, the issue of the intense workload experienced by teachers in this study is an interesting

one. Unlike in other situations where a heavy workload is caused by the shortage of qualified human resources, in Eswatini this is not the case. As a teacher educator, I have witnessed the production of plenty ECE and general diploma holders who are qualified to teach SL1. However, most of them have not been employed, with the government cutting costs by not replacing retirees and deceased teachers to the detriment of teachers and learners. This is the case because an intense workload impedes teacher effectiveness, which eventually affects the quality of education and the nature of the future society, which will be a product of the current education system.

Another negative experience of teaching SL1 teachers mentioned was the negative attitudes towards the teaching and learning of SL1 by parents and teachers of other disciplines in the schools. Ironically, teachers received much distress from parents and teachers who were L1 speakers of the language, not from parents who were non-native speakers of the language. According to the participant teachers, Swati parents and teachers of other subject areas did not see the importance of learners studying SL1, since it did not have many career prospects like English and other languages of European descent. This confirmed the findings by some researchers who observed that HL speakers and learners around the world undervalue their languages and focus on the language considered to be of opportunities (Cunningham, 2019; Kwon, 2017; Nkosi, 2011; Pludderman, 2002). However, such thinking shows the power of linguistic imperialism. Actually, many people in former British colonies like Eswatini still believe that their languages are inferior to European languages, and such thinking has persistently marginalised these languages (Nomlomo, 2013; Bamgbose, 2011; Adegbija, 1994).

I found this finding reminiscent of Eswatini society today, as English hegemony is still much alive in all official domains of government. Although siSwati is regarded to share equal status with English in principle (Ministry of Justice & Constitutional Affairs, 2005:10), English is the LoLT from Grade 5 to tertiary level (EMoET, 2011, 2018) and has been the passing subject in schools for decades up until 2020 when EMoET declared that it will no longer be a passing subject. However, it remains to be seen if this declaration will be implemented by schools. Interestingly, the University of Eswatini, the institution of higher learning in the country has maintained that it will not change its admission requirements, and it will continue to admit only students who have a credit in English (Dlamini, 2020). This explains why parents look down upon siSwati, as this subject has little academic value because even if a student fails it in Form 5 (the matriculation level in Eswatini), s/he can still be admitted to the institution of higher learning in the land, as long as s/he has credited English. Therefore,

it appears that no matter how much effort a teacher can put, if the parent is unwilling to support their child, the child's learning can be affected, as they are bound to copy their parents and have negative attitudes towards the subject.

The consequence of parents' negative attitudes towards SL1 was that they hardly involved themselves in assisting their children with homework. Interestingly, most parents who did not involve themselves in the work of their children were Swati native speakers, which affirms my thinking that most people do not see the academic value of siSwati, despite research evidence about the numerous benefits of a learner's L1, including its facilitation of cognitive development and providing a stepping stone for learners to learn their L2 (Evans & Mendez Acosta, 2020; Trudell, 2016; UNESCO, 2015; Cummins, 2005; Macdonald, 2002; Cummins, 1991). Ironically, teachers stated that parents of learners who were non-native speakers of siSwati made effort to involve themselves in their children's learning. They did this by securing tutors to help their children learn SL1, thus non-native speakers of siSwati performed better than native speakers. This finding affirmed the results by scholars who found that parental involvement or a lack of it has a positive or negative effect on learners' academic achievements (Cabus & Ariës, 2017:294; Dlamini, 2018:206; Erlendsdóttir, 2010:31; Ramdan, 2015:219)

This theme also showed that teachers experienced learner-related hardships when teaching SL1. For teachers, teaching learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds meant that they had to spend a lot of teaching time teaching one concept and switching codes from siSwati to English and ensuring that the teaching-learning environment was conducive to SL1 learning as suggested by Krashen (1982:31). Thus, these teachers used a lot of code-switching as a way of catering for the needs of learners who were from diverse settings, as suggested by some scholars that teachers need to understand the types of learners they work with and endeavour to shape their pedagogical practices to meet their learning needs (Milner, 2012:700; Muijs & Reynolds, 2005:185; Cruickshank *et al.*, 2006:11). However, as mentioned earlier, teachers seemed to struggle with the fact that they were teaching learners from diverse linguistic settings, as code-switching was the only strategy used and it was inefficiently used. Teachers struggled to use diversity, participatory, discovery pedagogy and sociocultural approaches which are appropriate approaches when working with learners from different backgrounds.

I also found that the fact that learners were from different socio-economic backgrounds posed a great challenge for teachers, as they narrated their experiences of how the

economic divide among learners in the school negatively affected their practice. This was because most learners who were native speakers of siSwati were from poor families while the non-native speakers were from affluent families. The latter group received adequate support from parents and had all the learning resources while the former lacked these resources and some were orphaned and vulnerable children staying with grandparents who did not have an education and others were living in child headed homes. This finding gave another explanation why the non-native speakers of siSwati performed well in the subject, and this is proof that socio-economic forces can boost or impede the academic achievements of learners regardless of whether they are native or non-native speakers of the language subject. This confirms the findings that learners from a well-to-do environment typically perform better academically than those from a poverty-stricken environment, as the former offers numerous resources for learners to learn as opposed to the latter (Cabus & Ariës, 2017:292; Wilder, 2014:392; Erlendsdóttir, 2010:31).

Another negative experience of teachers when teaching SL1 related to the unparalleled school starting point for learners. This pertained to the inconsistencies in admitting learners to Grade One or any grade of primary school. Admitting learners to any grade of primary school happened when immigrant families introduced their children to the Eswatini education system after having left their country of origin, and these learners had to study SL1. Teachers expressed that there were inconsistencies in admitting learners, particularly in Grade One as others had done Grade Zero while some just got admitted without attending it. These two situations allegedly affected teachers' practice, as they had to use a lot of teaching time acclimatising the learners who were unfamiliar with the school environment while learners who had this understanding were left frustrated. This practice did not augur well with the sociocultural theory which posits that effective learning occurs when learners learn in an environment they are familiar with (Vygotsky, 1978:118) and where there is low anxiety (Krashen, 1982:32). This finding highlighted the serious incongruity between government policies and their implementation in schools as according to the ENCFGE by EMoET (2018a:19), Grade Zero is an essential part of the foundation phase that provides a smooth transition from Grades Zero to One. However, this finding of the study indicated that the government through the EMoET was not doing much to ensure that all learners attend Grade Zero before they begin Grade One. This is proof of the government passing policies and failing to ensure that they are implemented.

I also found that teachers experienced hardships as a result of the action and inaction of the school. Teachers cited overlapping challenges, including insufficient teaching-learning

resources and overcrowded classrooms, the latter earlier discussed in this theme. The issue of inadequate teaching-learning resources negatively impacted teachers' pedagogical practices as discussed in Theme 3 under Section 6.4. Indeed, the NCC, the wing of the government responsible for the production of teaching and learning resources provides basic teaching-learning resources such as the teacher's guide, learners' textbooks, workbooks and charts. Additionally, teachers found these resources insufficient because there were no other resources available such as children's reading books to facilitate the development of SL1 among learners. Even though the school lacked a library, it did not make much of a difference because according to the participants, even college and national libraries lacked literature in siSwati, let alone material appropriate for learners of the FOMIPs. This confirmed the observations by Cruickshank *et al.* (2006:13) that education systems in developing countries like Eswatini lack fundamental teaching-learning resources like textbooks, furniture and digital devices.

Furthermore, teachers lamented the insufficiency of basic technological gadgets like computers, as, at the time of data generation, COVID-19 had forced most of the teaching to be done online. The absence of siSwati learning programmes on local television and internet media platforms like YouTube made learning SL1 impossible, even for the learners whose parents could afford to secure learning material online. The absence of these teaching-learning resources demonstrates the degree and the plight of the underdevelopment of the siSwati language regarding published work that could be used for teaching-learning SL1. This partly explains why teachers relied on teacher-centred pedagogy and confirms the findings by some researchers about the scarcity of teaching-learning resources among AHLs (Mkhwanazi, 2014:156; Mcaba, 2014:59; Stroud, 2003:18; Nomlomo, 2013:212).

6.3.5 Theme 5: Teachers' suggestions for improving the teaching and learning of SL1

The findings revealed teachers' ideas on how the teaching and learning of SL1 can be improved. One such idea was that foundation phase teachers should specialise and teach only SL1 to better their skills. This was because teaching all the subject areas did not offer them opportunities to develop professionally, thus they were a jack of all trades but a master of none. However, according to EMoET, teachers at primary school should be able to teach all subjects offered at primary, but teachers' suggestions were based on the fact that all teachers who taught in the foundation phase were unqualified to teach there and they were untrained to teach learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds. This is tallied with work by

Shawe (2015:55) who found that teachers who taught isiZulu first additional language in schools with multilingual learners were untrained for that. Furthermore, all teachers had no training in ECE but were general diploma holders, yet teaching in the foundation phase requires teachers with specialised training or teachers who have exclusive ECE training. The teachers' ideas confirm findings in the literature that effective teaching and learning occur when teachers are qualified to teach a subject area and possess PCK to facilitate learning (Burns, 2018:1250; Leach & Moon, 2008:6; Shulman, 1987:127).

Teachers also suggested the integration of information technology in teaching and learning SL1 and their subsequent training on how to use technology when teaching. Teachers' suggestions were consistent with results by Hannaway and Steyn (2017:11) who established that foundation phase teachers believed that integrating technology in teaching and learning was not only beneficial to improving teacher PCK, but also helped administrators in efficiently running the school. Although teachers had a narrow understanding of information technology, they understood its importance and its potential in supporting and improving the teaching and learning of SL1. This is tallied with ideas by authors (Moore-Hart, 2010; Leach & Moon, 2008; Mishra & Koehler, 2006) that 21st century teachers should not only possess PCK but should also have a thorough understanding of TPACK to be successful in their teaching practice. This idea about the integration of information technology augurs well with a language learning programme where corpus-based language instruction, discovery and other learner-centred pedagogies can be instrumental in supporting the teaching of learners from diverse linguistic settings in the context of the study. The literature also showed that language teaching methods, such as corpus-based language instruction, require teachers to have technological skills to facilitate the teaching and learning of language (Ma, Tang & Lin, 2021; Chambers, 2019; Boulton, 2017).

Likewise, to counteract the issue of negative attitudes towards SL1 by parents and teachers of other subjects, teachers suggested that the status of siSwati in education be elevated. This elevation of SL1 would be through making siSwati a LoLT not only in the FOMIPs, but also a passing subject in schools and a gate pass for admission at university as is the case with English. The participants reported that this action could probably make people appreciate siSwati as a valuable subject, instrumental for basic and higher education. Teachers' ideas are consistent with AHL advocates who champion the use of these languages as LoLT not only to elevate their status but because learners learn best through

their L1 (Bamgbose, 2011; UNESCO, 2010; Thondhlana, 2002; Brock-Utne, 2001; Adegbija, 1994).

Lastly, teachers suggested the establishment of parent-teacher clubs or associations. This would be a platform through which parents and teachers discuss and share ideas about the importance of learners studying SL1 and advise each other on how they can support learners in studying the subject. The importance of teacher-parent clubs or associations is of great importance among education systems around the world nowadays, with developed nations (United States, United Kingdom, Australia and others) having introduced them (Wilder, 2014:378). Teachers' suggestions are backed by research which has documented that teacher-parent partnership goes a long way in supporting student learning (Ramdan, 2015:219; Dlamini, 2018:206; Erlendsdóttir, 2010:31; Cabus & Ariës, 2017:294).

6.4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Theme 1: Teachers' understanding of teaching the siSwati language

Teachers understood teaching SL1 to foundation and middle phase learners as:

- Equipping all foundation and middle phase learners with the four language skills so that they have functional use of the language in both oral and written forms;
- Assimilating learners who are non-mother-tongue speakers of siSwati into the culture and language of the majority (Swati).

Theme 2: Pedagogical practices in teaching SL1

This theme related to the pedagogical practices employed by teachers in their SL1 classroom ranging from the strategies teachers used to teach oral and written language, and how they used the classroom environment, knowledge learners bring to class, instructional resources and assessment:

- Teachers mainly used expository pedagogy to teach both oral and written language. In all the lessons I observed, the teacher controlled the teaching-learning process and they showed a deficiency in using sociocultural approaches appropriate for teaching SL1 to FOMIPs learners. Thus, both oral and written language were taught in isolation and unauthentic ways where a concept was explained in a decontextualised fashion and did not connect with learners' experiences. Teachers' application of code-switching to respond to the communicative needs of the non-MT

learners was incorrect, as I discerned that most teachers used the strategy because of the deficiency in the siSwati metalanguage;

- The classroom psychological environment was conducive to learning, as it was characterised by teacher warmth and good teacher-learner rapport. Also, the physical aspect of the classroom environment had teaching-learning resources displayed on the classroom walls, but teachers failed to utilise the displayed resources even when opportunities to do so arose in the teaching-learning process;
- Teachers' use of learners' prior knowledge to teach SSL1 was discriminatory, as only learners who were native speakers of siSwati were engaged. Thus, it was only these learners whose current level of knowledge was gauged, and the non-native speakers of siSwati remained passive;
- Teachers revealed that they lacked the skill to assess learning of SL1 in the newly introduced CBE curriculum, hence they used the old system of assessing, which is the objective based curriculum. This did not tally with the purpose of the former. This also showed the lack of the appropriate pedagogy to teach and assess SL1.

Theme 3: Justification for teachers' choice of pedagogical practices

Teachers revealed that their choice of a pedagogical practice was influenced by several factors, which were teachers' beliefs about teaching SL1, personal preference and curriculum requirements, pre-service and in-service-training and teaching and learning resources.

- **Teachers' beliefs:** teachers held beliefs about the teaching of SL1 which influenced them to teach the way they did. One such belief was the important value ascribed by teachers to siSwati as LoLT and a core subject. This belief made teachers determined to facilitate learners' acquisition of oral and written language. To achieve that, teachers used pedagogical practices which they hoped would facilitate the quick development of oral and written language among learners. For teachers, that method was the lecture method which did not help much in language development, as it does not provide social interactive opportunities such as the sociocultural pedagogies.
- **Personal preference and curriculum requirements:** teachers alluded to using a pedagogical practice because they preferred it; they knew which methods work best for their learners and because they were required by the curriculum. Moreover, personal preferences outshone curriculum standards, as the commonly preferred

methods by teachers were the lecture method, question and answer and demonstration which were teacher-centred and were not advocated by the CBE curriculum.

- **Professional development:** teachers' choices of pedagogical practices were also influenced by professional development. Teachers taught the way they did because of the way they were prepared for practice in tertiary institutions, thus, they used the lecture method because it worked for their instructors at college and they used a lot of English when teaching SL1 because they were trained to teach siSwati in English at college. This indicated that there was a misalignment in policies guiding the training of SL1 teachers and their actual school practice where they are supposed to teach siSwati in siSwati. Furthermore, teachers revealed that they did not get any in-service training on the CBE curriculum.
- **Teaching-learning resources:** Teachers revealed that they chose a pedagogical practice depending on the available learning resources. They also revealed that there were insufficient books to foster reading skills among learners, as both text and online literature in siSwati was scanty or almost non-existent.

Theme 4: Teachers' experiences of teaching SL1 in the FOMIPs

This finding revealed that teachers had more negative than positive experiences:

Positive experience

- The only positive experience teachers reported was the satisfaction they felt when learners eventually know how to use the language functionally, particularly the non-native speakers of siSwati who come to school unable to speak the language. This motivated teachers to work hard despite the many challenges they faced in teaching SL1.

Negative experiences:

These were teacher-oriented, learner-oriented and school-oriented.

- With regards to teacher-oriented challenges, teachers decried that they were overworked as the workload was huge. They taught all subjects in classes that under normal circumstances had huge class numbers. Teachers revealed that parents and other colleagues within the teaching profession had negative attitudes towards SL1 as a subject and held the view that this subject has limited career prospects. Negative attitudes of parents towards SL1 led to a lack of

parental involvement and this affected learners' performance in the subjects, as parents are the first teachers of language and their support or lack of can promote or hinder learning;

- Teachers also experienced challenges due to the nature of learners. The fact that learners were from diverse linguistic settings yet they were taught the same language curriculum as L1 challenged them. This was a challenge as the learners did not have equal levels of proficiency in the language. Furthermore, the socio-economic background of learners challenged teachers, as some learners were from poverty-stricken families and lacked basic resources fundamental for learning SL1. Besides, the fact that some learners in Grade One began school having attended Grade Zero while others had not affected teaching and learning, as teachers spent a lot of teaching time familiarising the learners who had not attended Grade Zero with the school environment.
- The findings also indicated that teachers experienced challenges when teaching SL1 because the school lacked enough resources for a language programme.

Theme 5: Teachers' suggestions for improving the teaching and learning of SL1

Teachers had the following ideas to improve pedagogy in SL1:

- Foundation phase teachers should be allowed to specialise and teach SL1 as this subject is essential for learners' learning other subjects;
- Information technology should be integrated into SL1 and subsequent training on how to use technology be provided to teachers;
- Making SL1 a passing subject in schools and an entry requirement at university so that parents can see the value of the subject;
- Formation of parent-teacher associations where teachers and parents can discuss ideas centred on learners learning SL1.

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6.5 CONCLUSIONS BASED ON THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS, LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As stated in Chapter 3, the purpose of the theoretical framework was to guide me on which questions to ask in the research and on which literature to review related to language pedagogy and to highlight my stance in relation to the literature reviewed as guided by (Grant & Osanloo, 2014; Troudi, 2010). The sociocultural theory which anchored this study guided me in formulating three research questions on which I base my conclusions, thus reflecting on the findings, the literature review and the SCT as the theoretical framework.

6.5.1 How are pedagogical practices used in teaching SL1?

Since the literature showed current trends in teaching language in general, and also to learners from different linguistic backgrounds such as participatory, discovery, diversity, social-constructivists and communicative pedagogies (Waring & Evans, 2014:104; Vygotsky, 1978:57; Sheets, 2009:11; Cheng, 2015:711; Whong, 2013:122), I discovered that teachers used expository pedagogy, particularly the lecture and question and answer methods. Both oral and written language were taught in isolation and in unauthentic ways where a concept was explained in a decontextualised fashion and did not connect with learners' experiences. This confirmed the finding by Mbele (2019:81) and Mngomezulu (2014:76) who found that teachers did not use integrative approaches to teach isiZulu reading but taught it in decontextualised ways that did not benefit the learners. Also, I observed that what happened in SL1 classrooms was contrary to the literature I reviewed and the sociocultural perspective which regards language teaching-learning as anchored in social practice (Kalina & Powell, 2009:244; Krashen, 1982:58). For Vygotsky, the founder of the SCT, reading and writing, which are forms of written language should be contextualised to the learners' environment (Vygotsky, 1978:117-118).

In the literature and the SCT, I discovered that decontextualising the teaching of language is discouraged, as Vygotsky (1986:150) made it clear that teaching in a direct way was unproductive and he stressed the role played by the child's social environment on learning. Therefore, the teaching and learning of language requires an interdisciplinary approach where teachers employ cooperative and collaborative practices anchored in the SCT. In the language class, there should be a situation where learners learn from the teacher and among themselves. As facilitators, teachers are expected to create interactive and communicative opportunities in their SL1 language classrooms where learners and teachers will engage in rich talk because language acquisition and learning are a result of social interaction. Thus, learners can gain linguistic knowledge through collaborative and cooperative learning strategies (McKinley, 2015:186; Kalina & Powell, 2009:244; Wood & Bennett, 1998:19).

From the literature and the SCT, it is evident that language teaching and learning can be made meaningful when teachers tap into learners' prior knowledge and use that knowledge as a scaffold to build in new knowledge as shown by the literature that learners' pre-existing knowledge supports the acquisition of new knowledge by linking the known to the unknown

(Shangguan *et al.*, 2020:1088; Dong, 2017:146). Additionally, in the case of the study, teachers' use of learners' prior knowledge was discriminatory, as only learners who were native speakers of siSwati were engaged. Hence, it was only these learners whose current level of knowledge was tested, and the non-native speakers of siSwati remained passive. By so doing, teachers assumed a mono-cultural approach towards teaching SL1 where the experiences of the learners who did not speak siSwati were disregarded.

It can be thus concluded that pedagogical practices used by teachers to teach SL1 were contrary to the requirements of the Eswatini national curriculum framework, as teachers employed teacher-centred expository pedagogy, in total contrast to the curriculum framework which requires teachers to use learner-centred pedagogical practices. For the curriculum framework and the SCT, the learning of language can be made meaningful to learners when it is taught in a realistic way and when the content addresses real life situations in the learners' environment. Furthermore, the ideal pedagogy for SL1 is to use integrative approaches. This very conclusion tallies with the foundations of the SCT which views language as a semiotic tool responsible for development. Therefore, pedagogical practices used in teaching SL1 should be practices that encourage communicative and practical activities and learners must not be made to learn SL1 mechanically. That being said, pedagogical practices used to teach language among the foundation phase learners should mirror learners' social setting and these could be interactive practices like play and storytelling to adapt their utilisation of the target language to diverse social environments (Cheng, 2015:711; Whong, 2013:122; Celce-Murcia, 2001:6), practices which are realistic and mirror real-world situations and expectations.

6.5.2 Why are these pedagogical practices used in the teaching of SL1?

The findings from the above research question indicated that there were several factors justifying teachers' choice of pedagogical practices and these ranged from personal to professional factors, such as teachers' beliefs, personal preference and curriculum standards, pre-service training and teaching-learning resources. Also, I observed that these factors influenced teachers to either employ pedagogy effectively or ineffectively. For instance, the beliefs teacher held about their learners, the SL1 content and the pedagogy influenced the way they taught and it did not matter if those beliefs were irrational or unsubstantiated. Teachers in the study believed that all learners in the country should study siSwati. Although this is good, such a belief included assimilating non-native speakers of the language into the siSwati culture, yet educators teaching language in multilingual settings should be culturally sensitive and assimilation should not be their main objective

(Cummins, 2005). Teachers' actions in the study tallied with the literature, as they revealed that teachers' beliefs may result in attitudes that may render their pedagogy effective or ineffective (Cunningham, 2019; Sichula, 2018; Sayed, 2018; Watson, 2015; Durán & Palmer, 2014; Nkosi, 2011; Cruickshank *et al.*, 2006). Additionally, I also observed that the beliefs of teachers did not always align with their actual classroom practices when teaching SL1. This was based on the belief of teachers that they had to employ learner-centred pedagogy so that learners could acquire communicative competence in siSwati, but realistically they employed teacher-centred pedagogical practices which did not help much in language development, as they did not provide social interactive opportunities such as the sociocultural pedagogies. These are similar conclusions reached by Hos and Kekec (2014) that what teachers believed and espoused did not always obtain on the ground when teaching language.

Also, from the literature, I observed that the vital determinant of teacher pedagogy, not only in language instruction but across all subject curricula should be technological, pedagogical and content knowledge (Mishra & Koehler, 2006; Leach & Moon, 2008; Dewey, 2018; Martin *et al.*, 2007). We are living in a biotechnology era and the mere knowledge of PCK is insufficient nowadays, as the advent of COVID-19 showed education systems around the world the importance of using digital media in teaching-learning. I discern that there should be no gaps between the teacher's CK, PK and TK as observed by scholars (Schaffler *et al.*, 2021; De Vos *et al.*, 2014; Schaffler, 2015) and as per findings of this study that teachers knew the language content but lacked the technological and pedagogical knowledge to transfer that content to the learners. Therefore, it can be concluded that the 21st century language teacher should be a total package conversant in technology, linguistic content and pedagogy knowledge. That is why it is important for the language teacher to know and understand the social context of the learner that is, his /her sociocultural background, including the linguistic background, socio-economic background of the home, pre-school context, community and the larger society as a whole. All these views are anchored in the sociocultural theory, which holds the view that understanding the social context is vital for teaching, so SL1 teachers should adapt and change with the times and reshape their pedagogical practices to be in line with the prevailing conditions.

6.5.3 How do teachers experience the teaching of SL1?

The findings of data sourced from this question revealed that teachers had more negative than positive experiences when teaching SL1. These were numerous as provided in Chapters 5 and 6 respectively. As much as there is not much research on African languages

pedagogy, I observed that the common challenging experience teachers reported was the issue of inadequate teaching and learning resources, particularly books published in AHLs (Mcaba, 2014:59; Mkhwanazi, 2014:156; Nomlomo, 2013:212; Nkosi, 2011:298). However, a language programme just like in the case of the study can be implemented effectively when there is plenty of literature on the language being studied. In the context of the study, even though the government through the national curriculum centre produces enough prescribed books to be used by teachers and learners in teaching-learning, the finding revealed a lack of siSwati books in school libraries and other siSwati learning material on the internet. The absence of siSwati literature then restricts learning within the school and classroom, yet it should be extended to the home. One strength of the SCT that made me employ it as an anchor guiding this research was its views of the importance of collaboration in the teaching-learning exercise. For the SCT, learning should not be restricted to the classroom environment, but also to home and in the larger community. I then observed that if language learning resources are insufficient, learners cannot be able to work among themselves to improve their language skills, parents cannot be in a position to support their children to learn language and teachers cannot collaborate with parents to help learners acquire critical thinking and problem-solving skills by reading at home and coming to school to share orally or in writing what they read.

Likewise, if teachers who are the drivers of teaching and learning face numerous challenges in their practice such as scanty resources, huge workloads, large class numbers, lack of in-service training and negative attitudes from parents, the teaching-learning of any language programme are bound to be riddled with challenges. According to the SCT, the teacher as the more knowledgeable individual has a crucial role in teaching and learning (Vygotsky 1978). The language teacher is a scaffold and drives the teaching and learning in the classroom and as such her/his work can be made easier when she receives all the necessary support s/he needs from all education stakeholders, such as learners, colleagues, school administration, parents, communities and the government.

6.6 MY CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

The following are a few things to learn from the study:

The study revealed that although strenuous, the teaching of the first language of the majority of people is not an anomaly and can be made possible if the sole purpose of teachers is to support all learners to acquire communicative competence and use culturally responsive

pedagogical practices instead of aiming to aggressively assimilate non-native speakers into the language of the majority learners as was the case in the study. The ideal first language pedagogical practice is for teachers to contextualise any language component to the real-life experiences of learners such that no learner feels like their language does not matter. That is why Milner (2010) and Milner (2017) contend that teaching and learning is sometimes problematic to learners when teachers typically operate from a de-contextualised cultural experience.

The study also contributed to research in African home language pedagogy, an under-researched area. As earlier stated, most studies in African home languages focus on policy matters such as using these languages as LoLT. This is true in the context of Eswatini. The literature reviewed showed that no research has been conducted in Eswatini addressing SL1 pedagogy in primary school, let alone in an environment where learners are from diverse linguistic settings. Although exploring how AHLs can be used in learning is valuable to student learning, if pedagogy in AHLs like siSwati is not investigated to improve teachers' practice, the status of these languages as LoLT will be insignificant, as the learners will lack the essential language skills which are supposed to be learnt in these languages to study other subjects in the school curriculum. Therefore, the research gave an insight into the pedagogy used to teach the AHL, siSwati and the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of these pedagogical practices. Moreover, the nature of the pedagogy employed by teachers, that is expository pedagogy and the manifold challenges teachers experienced when teaching the language subject also gave an idea and an explanation into why learners' academic performance in African home languages like siSwati is poor as Wang (2008) and Grossman (1990) point out that the success of any curriculum innovation also depends on the effectiveness of the pedagogy used in its implementation.

This study further offered insight not only into the discipline of AHL pedagogy, but language pedagogy as a whole as it showed that a language teacher should be a complete package and have TPACK, having not only knowledge of the subject matter, but also knowledge of pedagogy and technological knowledge as the world has become a biotechnical village.

Furthermore, it showed that teachers' drive and hunger to see learners attain communicative competence in language help teachers to be resilient despite all challenges they may encounter in their practice as was the case with the study.

6.7 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

Drawing from the findings of the study, I formulated the following recommendations which need to be addressed. They include recommendations for action and further study. I begin this section by first offering the recommendations for action which are directed to teachers, schools, institutions of higher learning and the EMoET.

6.7.1 Recommendation for SL1 teachers

The main finding of the study was that teachers used expository pedagogy to teach SL1. This approach is teacher-centred and does not strike a balance in the teaching-learning process, as teachers assume the role of master of knowledge and learners remain perpetually inactive in their learning. Through teachers' use of expository pedagogy, SL1 was taught in a mechanical and decontextualised way and language content was taught in isolation which did not support the acquisition of the language. Based on the foregoing, I recommend that teachers:

- a) Engage in professional development to be at par with the evolving educational terrain. My suggestion is in line with the Eswatini national curriculum framework which categorically states that teachers need to acquaint themselves with current and learner-centred pedagogies, thus, they need to constantly re-model, upgrade and re-shape their academic and professional knowledge (EMoET, 2018a:36);
- b) Employ culturally responsive pedagogical practices. Teachers should positively view diversity. Instead of adopting a mono-cultural approach and working towards assimilating non-mother tongues speakers of siSwati into the siSwati culture and language, a comparative approach to teaching the language should be adopted by teachers teaching in diverse linguistic settings so that learners learn SL1 and also appreciate their languages as important in society. My thinking is informed by Richards *et al.* (2007:64) that culturally responsive approaches such as diversity pedagogy and social constructivist approaches facilitate and support language learning among diverse learners;
- c) Employ learner-centred pedagogies which will encourage communicative and practical activities in the siSwati language classroom. My suggestion is informed by SCT, which regards language learning as a social construct (Vygotsky, 1986:150) and it is anchored in pedagogical practices that encourage social interaction, thus learners learn best when educators teach language in authentic ways and

contextualise it so that whatever is learnt is related to learners' everyday life experience (Vygotsky, 1978:118);

- d) Acquaint themselves with the Eswatini national framework and the SL1 syllabus as I observed that some did not know the curriculum requirements, which was proof that they had not taken time to read these important documents, thus, they employed pedagogical practices which were contrary to the specifications of the national curriculum framework and the SL1 syllabus.

6.7.2 Recommendation for the schools

I also recommend that schools establish parent-teacher associations, as is the practice of schools in developed countries. These associations would offer a platform where both parents and teachers can come up with solutions on how best learners can learn SL1. The findings of the study revealed that parents had negative attitudes towards siSwati. Probably this could be caused by the gap in knowledge among parents about the value of a learner's first language in learning in general and also in learning other languages. Therefore, these associations would be the ideal platform for teachers to capacitate parents about the value of their children studying SL1. It could also be an important platform to educate parents about the importance of supporting their children. Thus, the learning of SL1 would not be restricted within the classroom and school wall, but extended to the home environment, hence helping both teachers and parents easily identify gaps in learning among the learners and providing them with prompt remedial action.

6.7.3 Recommendations for training institutions

- a) It was the finding of the study that teachers are trained to teach siSwati in English at colleges, the latter is the LoLT to teach the former, yet in schools, teachers have to revert to teaching SL1 in the language they were not trained in. Therefore, the practice in pre-service training does not align with the practice in schools where they are supposed to teach siSwati in siSwati and above all, it does not even align with their primary and high school education. This is an abnormal situation where a people's first language is taught in their second language. This implies that it is essential that the pre-service training offered to SL1 student-teachers be evaluated. Thus, I recommend that the training of siSwati teachers in training institutions be looked into because it is an anomaly that an L1 be taught in an L2. Usually, it is the other way round;

- b) The study's findings also revealed that teachers employed expository pedagogy which was in total contrast with the curriculum framework, sociocultural theory and the SL1 curriculum documents, which require that learner-centred pedagogy be used to teach in primary school. Teachers' pedagogy in their SL1 classrooms was heavily reliant on personal preferences and pre-service influence. This implies that there is a misalignment between the theories learnt by teachers during pre-service and teachers' practice in school. Thus, I recommend that the training of SL1 in colleges be evaluated to determine if their training aligns with the SL1 curriculum standards and requirements. Furthermore, teachers should be trained to teach learners from diverse linguistic settings so that they can be culturally responsive.

6.7.4 Recommendations for the ministry of education and training

The findings of the study revealed that several EMoET's actions and inactions affected the teaching of SL1. I make the following recommendations cognisant that they will require a lot of financial support from the Eswatini government for them to be realised:

- a) The NCC, the wing of government responsible for developing the curriculum should diversify the siSwati language curriculum at primary school such that there is siSwati as a second language as is the practice at junior and senior secondary. This will be a component of siSwati taught to learners who are non-native speakers of the language. This could help teachers teach the basic social language needed by these learners to function in Eswatini, instead of assimilating them to another language, yet they already have their L1.
- b) The government should embark on a mission of extensive production of appropriate teaching and learning resources, be it in form of reading textbooks and digital material that will be easily accessible to all learners in hardcopy or soft copies online. This can be achieved by empowering siSwati writers and providing them with funds for publishing their manuscripts and monetary incentives. This could develop the siSwati language as suggested by Ndebele (2018:93) that AHLs can be at par with languages of European descent like English, only when they provide the very knowledge contained by these languages. This could be achieved by making material on AHLs available on the internet;
- c) The NCC should integrate technology to teach SL1. This suggestion is based on the finding that teachers lacked technological knowledge. Yet, when the

- study was conducted, a lot of teaching and learning was supposed to be done online as a result of COVID-19 but teachers lacked the skills to teach virtually;
- d) The in-service training department should administer formal workshops regularly to support teachers in teaching SL1 and equip them with current trends and technological skills, thus equipping teachers in teaching language. This is based on the finding that most teachers used teacher-centred methods of teaching, methods inappropriate for teaching language at the FOMIPs and the fact that teachers revealed that when the CBE curriculum was launched in 2018 and introduced in schools in 2019, not all of them were trained in preparation for it;
 - e) The government needs to employ more teachers to replace retired and deceased teachers. This could relieve the heavy workload on teachers as being overloaded leads to teacher ineffectiveness and can affect the quality of teaching. On the same note, it is recommended that EMoET hires teachers who are trained in ECE to teach the foundation phase instead of placing general diploma holders who lack the expert skills required to teach the foundation phase learners;
 - f) Make siSwati a passing subject in schools and a gate-pass to tertiary training to elevate the status of the national and official language as is the practice in neighbouring South Africa;
 - g) Implement Grade Zero in all schools and ensure that it is enforced by all schools. This could alleviate the problem of unparalleled starting points among learners and also assist teaching and learning by saving teaching time spent by teachers trying to acclimatise the learners who did not do Grade Zero into the school environment.

6.8 RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

As this research explored pedagogical practices in teaching SL1 in two urban schools in the Shiselweni region of Eswatini characterised by learners of diverse linguistic backgrounds and the focus was on the FOMIPs, the results are only generalisable to the context of these schools. Besides, the findings have the potential of influencing future research (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014:143; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:348). Therefore, based on the above view, I make the following recommendations for further study:

- a) A longitudinal study focusing on pedagogical practices in teaching SL1 focusing on a wider population be carried out. That is, the research should

include all FOMIPs classes from all the schools in the four regions of the country which are from different environmental contexts to get a broader insight into the phenomenon;

- b) Research exploring pedagogy in SL1 at both primary and high school levels be conducted in Eswatini to provide new knowledge and insight into SL1 pedagogy as it remains an under-researched area;
- c) The issue of teaching SL1 should be studied from the perspective of government officials such as school inspectors and parents and learners themselves who, according to the SCT, play a huge role in children's learning. This is the case because this study only gave a voice to teachers and getting the perspective of other stakeholders would add new insight into SL1 teaching and learning;
- d) Action research that will focus on the development of TPACK among teachers be conducted so that they acquire this essential knowledge required to teach in the 21st century;
- e) Research be conducted to determine the rationale for using English as the language of teaching and learning siSwati in colleges, yet both the instructors and students are mother tongue speakers of the language studied in a foreign language.

6.9 SUMMARY

This chapter presented the discussion, summary of findings and conclusion of the research whose primary aim was to explore pedagogical practices in teaching SL1 in diverse linguistic settings. In conducting the study, I explored how pedagogical practices were used in teaching SL1, the determinants of teachers' choice of these pedagogical practices and ultimately learnt about the experiences of teachers in teaching SL1 in the two Eswatini urban primary schools. The findings indicated that teachers believed that teaching SL1 meant teaching learners to have functional use of the language and to assimilate non-native speakers of siSwati into the siSwati culture and language. The study further concluded that teachers engaged in teacher-centred pedagogical practices to teach SL1 as opposed to the diverse learner-centred pedagogies appropriate for teaching language shown by the literature, the SCT and advocated by the Eswatini curriculum framework. Expository pedagogy which is characterised by teaching language concepts and skills in isolation dominated SL1 classrooms, yet according to the SCT, language learning and acquisition are social constructs and learner-centred pedagogical practices, such as participatory, social constructivist and diversity pedagogies, should be used to teach language. Therefore,

the study revealed that teachers lacked the appropriate pedagogy to teach SL1 to FOMIPs learners. The study further revealed that personal factors such as teachers' beliefs, personal preference and professional factors like pre-service and in-service training determined teachers' choices of pedagogical practices. Also, although the research showed that teachers had several negative experiences in teaching siSwati as a first language, such as too much workload, lack of in-service training, and negative attitudes towards siSwati and others, they got fulfilled and motivated when learners who come to school lacking proficiency in the language eventually acquire communicative competence in it.

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APPENDIX A: LETTER SEEKING AUTHORISATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FROM EMOET

The Director of Education
Eswatini Ministry of Education and Training
P.O. Box 39
Mbabane

Dear Sir/ Madam

Permission to conduct a research in the Shiselweni region on teaching siSwati

I am Tholakele Constance Mngometulu a PhD student enrolled at the University of Pretoria in the Faculty of Education Department of Humanities Education. I hereby request for permission to collect data in schools under the Shiselweni region. The title of the academic research is: **Pedagogical practices in teaching siSwati as a first language in diverse linguistic settings.**

The purpose of the study is to explore the pedagogical practices in teaching siSwati and also to ascertain their appropriateness and suitability in helping learners acquire core literacy skills in the language. The study regards a home language as the first language an individual learns to speak. It is the learners' mother tongue and the language of the family and community. It is a language that defines the learners' national identity and heritage. However, research has shown that the teaching of African home languages like siSwati is an under-researched area despite research findings of the significant role played by the mother tongue in a child's cognitive development and academic achievements. Most studies on African home languages focus on the issue of how African home languages like siSwati can be used as the medium of instruction in schools without looking into how these languages are taught in class. It is against this backdrop of the gap in research that I saw the need to conduct the research with the hope that it will offer a new contribution to research in this field of study that is under-researched.

The participants of the study will be teachers. The research will be conducted in four phases where data will be generated through: (1) interviews involving teachers who teach siSwati from Grades 1 to 4; (2) focus group discussions with all teachers who

teach siSwati in the school; (3) lesson observations where I will observe the teaching-learning of siSwati; and (4) document analysis of the curriculum framework, syllabus, textbooks, lesson plans, teacher made tests and learners' work. All interviews will take place outside school hours and at a time and place convenient to participants and the researcher. Interviews will be audio tape-recorded, whether they are conducted in person or via electronic means (telephonically or on-line).

The results of this study may be presented at conferences or published in scientific journals. If it is required, I will be available to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research to both Ministry of Education and Training officials and the schools concerned. All participants will be provided with letters that will elicit their informed consent and I will only commence with data gathering once this has been granted. With permission from the research participants, all data and recorded interviews will be stored in a safe repository at the University of Pretoria.

Participation is subject to the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria and the following will apply:

1. The names of the school and identities of the participants will be treated confidentially and will not be disclosed. All participants and schools will remain anonymous.
2. The interview transcripts and teacher made tests will be treated confidentially. Only the researcher (T.C. Mngometulu) and the supervisor (Dr. C Makgabo) will have access to the audio recordings and transcribed data.
3. Pseudonyms for schools and teachers will be used in all spoken and written reports.
4. The information provided by the teachers will be used for academic purposes only.
5. Participation in this project is entirely voluntary. Participants have the right to withdraw at any time and without any prejudice.
6. The teachers will not be exposed to acts of deception at any point in the research study.
7. The teachers will not be placed at risk of any kind.
8. No incentives will be offered to any of the research participants.

9. The decision to accept or decline the invitation will not have any adverse effect on the school or the educators.

We also would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

In case you would like clarification on some areas of this research, you can kindly address them to me and my supervisor using the details provided below. Your support in this matter and a written feedback to this request will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

(signature)

(signature)

Ms. T.C. Mngometulu (PhD candidate)

Dr. C. Makgabo (supervisor)

University of Pretoria

University of Pretoria

Humanities Education

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connie.makgabo@up.ac.za

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT – DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

INFORMED CONSENT

I _____ (your name) Director of Education agree/ do not agree (tick your decision) to allow Tholakele Constance Mngometulu to conduct an academic research under the Shiselweni region. The research is titled **Pedagogical practices in teaching siSwati as a first language in diverse linguistic settings.**

I understand that the academic research will involve interviewing primary school educators teaching siSwati as a first language at primary school. With permission from the participants, I understand that interviews will be audio tape recorded. I also understand that the research will involve focus group discussions with teachers, observations and the analysis of documents on teaching siSwati such as the syllabus, lesson plans, teacher made tests and learners' classwork.

I understand that the researcher adheres to the research ethical principles of:

- a. Voluntary participation: I understand that participants will voluntarily participate in the study and can withdraw at any time.
- b. Informed consent: I understand that participants have to be informed of every stage of the research and its purposes, and that they must consent to participate.
- c. Privacy: I understand that anonymity and confidentiality of participants should always be observed.
- d. Confidence: I understand that information provided by participants should be factual and participants should not be involved in any form of deception in the research process.

.....

Director of Education (signature)

.....

Date

APPENDIX C: LETTER FROM EMOET GRANTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

The Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini



Ministry of Education & Training

Tel: (+268) 2 4042491/5
Fax: (+268) 2 404 3880

P. O. Box 39
Mbabane, ESWATINI

28th September, 2020

Attention:

Head Teacher:

Evelyn Baring Primary School	Ngwane Practising Primary School
Nhlangano Central Primary School	Nsongweni Primary School
Mahamba Methodist Primary School	Tfokotani Primary School

THROUGH

Shiselweni Regional Education Officers

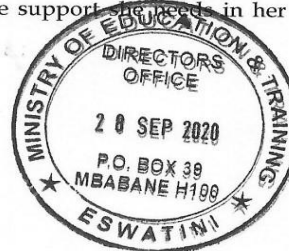
Dear Colleague,

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO COLLECT DATA FOR UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA, REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA STUDENT - MS. THOLAKELE CONSTANCE MNGOMETULU

1. The Ministry of Education and Training has received a request from Ms. Tholakele Constance Mngometulu, a student at the University of Pretoria, South Africa that in order for her to fulfill her academic requirements at the University she has to collect data (conduct research) and her study or research topic is: "*Pedagogical practices in teaching Siswati as first language in diverse linguistic settings*". The population for her study comprises of 28 teachers and 500 learners from the above mentioned schools in the Shiselweni Region. Teachers who have been teaching siswati as home language for more than five years and grade one up to grade seven learners. All details concerning the study are stated in the participants' consent form which will have to be signed by all participants before Ms. Mngometulu begins her data collection. Please note that parents will have to consent for all the participants below the age of 18 years participating in this study.
2. The Ministry of Education and Training requests your office to assist Ms. Mngometulu by allowing her to use above mentioned schools in the Shiselweni region as her research site as well as facilitate her by giving her all the support she needs in her data collection process. Data collection is one month.


DR. N.L. DLAMINI
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

cc: Regional Education Officer – Shiselweni
Chief Inspector – Primary
Head Teacher of the above mentioned school
Dr. M.C. Makgabo – Research Supervisors



Page 1

APPENDIX D: LETTER SEEKING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH; SGB-SCHOOL SEA

The Chairperson of the SGB
School SEA
P.O. Box xxx

Nhlangano

Dear Sir/ Madam

Permission to conduct a research in School SEA on teaching siSwati

I am Tholakele Constance Mngometulu a PhD student enrolled at the University of Pretoria in the Faculty of Education Department of Humanities Education. I hereby request for permission to collect data in your school. The title of the academic research is: **Pedagogical practices in teaching siSwati as a first language in diverse linguistic settings.**

The purpose of the study is to explore the pedagogical practices in teaching siSwati and also to ascertain their appropriateness and suitability in helping learners acquire core literacy skills in the language. The study regards a home language as the first language an individual learns to speak. It is the learners' mother tongue and the language of the family and community. It is a language that defines the learners' national identity and heritage. However, research has shown that the teaching of African home languages like siSwati is an under-researched area despite research findings of the significant role played by the mother tongue in a child's cognitive development and academic achievements. Most studies on African home languages focus on the issue of how African home languages like siSwati can be used as the medium of instruction in schools without looking into how these languages are taught in class. It is against this backdrop of the gap in research that I saw the need to conduct the research with the hope that it will offer a new contribution to research in this field of study that is under-researched.

The participants of the study will be teachers. The research will be conducted in four phases where data will be generated through: (1) interviews involving teachers who

teach siSwati from Grades 1 to 4; (2) focus group discussions with all teachers who teach siSwati in the school; (3) lesson observations where I will observe the teaching-learning of siSwati; and (4) document analysis of the curriculum framework, syllabus, textbooks, lesson plans, teacher made tests and learners' work. All interviews will take place outside school hours and at a time and place convenient to participants and the researcher. Interviews will be audio tape-recorded, whether they are conducted in person or via electronic means (telephonically or on-line).

The results of this study may be presented at conferences or published in scientific journals. If it is required, I will be available to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research to both Ministry of Education and Training officials and the schools concerned. All participants will be provided with letters that will elicit their informed consent and I will only commence with data gathering once this has been granted. With permission from the research participants, all data and recorded interviews will be stored in a safe repository at the University of Pretoria.

Participation is subject to the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria and the following will apply:

1. The names of the school and identities of the participants will be treated confidentially and will not be disclosed. All participants and schools will remain anonymous.
2. The interview transcripts and teacher made tests will be treated confidentially. Only the researcher (T.C. Mngometulu) and the supervisor (Dr. C Makgabo) will have access to the audio recordings and transcribed data.
3. Pseudonyms for schools and the teachers will be used in all spoken and written reports.
4. The information provided by the teachers will be used for academic purposes only.
5. Participation in this project is entirely voluntary. Participants have the right to withdraw at any time, and without any prejudice.
6. The teachers will not be exposed to acts of deception at any point in the research study.
7. The teachers will not be placed at risk of any kind.
8. No incentives will be offered to any of the research participants.

9. The decision to accept or decline the invitation will not have any adverse effect on the school or the educators.

We also would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

In case you would like clarification on some areas of this research, you can kindly address them to me and my supervisor using the details provided below. Your support in this matter and a written feedback to this request will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

(signature)

(signature)

Ms. T.C. Mngometulu (PhD candidate)

Dr. C. Makgabo (supervisor)

University of Pretoria

University of Pretoria

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u20689102@tuks.co.za

connie.makgabo@up.ac.za

APPENDIX E: INFORMED CONSENT – SGB - SCHOOL SEA

INFORMED CONSENT

I _____ (your name) Chairperson of School SEA governing body agree/ do not agree (tick your decision) to allow Tholakele Constance Mngometulu to conduct an academic research in School SEA. The research is titled **Pedagogical practices in teaching siSwati as a first language in diverse linguistic settings.**

I understand that the academic research will involve interviewing primary school educators teaching siSwati as a first language at primary school. With permission from the participants, I understand that interviews will be audio tape recorded. I also understand that the research will involve focus group discussions with teachers, observations and the analysis of documents on teaching siSwati such as the syllabus, lesson plans, teacher made tests and learners' classwork.

I understand that the researcher adheres to the research ethical principles of:

- a. Voluntary participation: I understand that participants will voluntarily participate in the study and can withdraw at any time.
- b. Informed consent: I understand that participants have to be informed of every stage of the research and its purposes, and that they must consent to participate.
- c. Privacy: I understand that anonymity and confidentiality of participants should always be observed.
- d. Confidence: I understand that information provided by participants should be factual and participants should not be involved in any form of deception in the research process.

.....

Chairperson of the SGB (signature)

.....

Date

APPENDIX F: LETTER SEEKING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH; SGB-SCHOOL SEB

The Chairperson of the SGB
School SEB
P.O. Box xxx
Nhlangano

Dear Sir/ Madam

Permission to conduct a research in School SEB on teaching siSwati

I am Tholakele Constance Mngometulu a PhD student enrolled at the University of Pretoria in the Faculty of Education Department of Humanities Education. I hereby request for permission to collect data in your school. The title of the academic research is: **Pedagogical practices in teaching siSwati as a first language in diverse linguistic settings.**

The purpose of the study is to explore the pedagogical practices in teaching siSwati and also to ascertain their appropriateness and suitability in helping learners acquire core literacy skills in the language. The study regards a home language as the first language an individual learns to speak. It is the learners' mother tongue and the language of the family and community. It is a language that defines the learners' national identity and heritage. However, research has shown that the teaching of African home languages like siSwati is an under-researched area despite research findings of the significant role played by the mother tongue in a child's cognitive development and academic achievements. Most studies on African home languages focus on the issue of how African home languages like siSwati can be used as the medium of instruction in schools without looking into how these languages are taught in class. It is against this backdrop of the gap in research that I saw the need to conduct the research with the hope that it will offer a new contribution to research in this field of study that is under-researched.

The participants of the study will be teachers. The research will be conducted in four phases where data will be generated through: (1) interviews involving teachers who teach siSwati from Grades 1 to 4; (2) focus group discussions with all teachers who

teach siSwati in the school; (3) lesson observations where I will observe the teaching-learning of siSwati; and (4) document analysis of the curriculum framework, syllabus, textbooks, lesson plans, teacher made tests and learners' work. All interviews will take place outside school hours and at a time and place convenient to participants and the researcher. Interviews will be audio tape-recorded, whether they are conducted in person or via electronic means (telephonically or on-line).

The results of this study may be presented at conferences or published in scientific journals. If it is required, I will be available to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research to both Ministry of Education and Training officials and the schools concerned. All participants will be provided with letters that will elicit their informed consent and I will only commence with data gathering once this has been granted. With permission from the research participants, all data and recorded interviews will be stored in a safe repository at the University of Pretoria.

Participation is subject to the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria and the following will apply:

1. The names of the school and identities of the participants will be treated confidentially and will not be disclosed. All participants and schools will remain anonymous.
2. The interview transcripts and teacher made tests will be treated confidentially. Only the researcher (T.C. Mngometulu) and the supervisor (Dr. C Makgabo) will have access to the audio recordings and transcribed data.
3. Pseudonyms for schools and the teachers will be used in all spoken and written reports.
4. The information provided by the teachers will be used for academic purposes only.
5. Participation in this project is entirely voluntary. Participants have the right to withdraw at any time, and without any prejudice.
6. The teachers will not be exposed to acts of deception at any point in the research study.
7. The teachers will not be placed at risk of any kind.
8. No incentives will be offered to any of the research participants.
9. The decision to accept or decline the invitation will not have any adverse effect on the school or the educators.

We also would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

In case you would like clarification on some areas of this research, you can kindly address them to me and my supervisor using the details provided below. Your support in this matter and a written feedback to this request will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

(signature)

(signature)

Ms. T.C. Mngometulu (PhD candidate)

Dr. C. Makgabo (supervisor)

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APPENDIX G: INFORMED CONSENT – SGB- SCHOOL SEB

INFORMED CONSENT

I _____ (your name) Chairperson of School SEB governing body agree/ do not agree (tick your decision) to allow Tholakele Constance Mngometulu to conduct an academic research in School SEB. The research is titled **Pedagogical practices in teaching siSwati as a first language in diverse linguistic settings.**

I understand that the academic research will involve interviewing primary school educators teaching siSwati as a first language at primary school. With permission from the participants, I understand that interviews will be audio tape recorded. I also understand that the research will involve focus group discussions with teachers, observations and the analysis of documents on teaching siSwati such as the syllabus, lesson plans, teacher made tests and learners' classwork.

I understand that the researcher adheres to the research ethical principles of:

- a. Voluntary participation: I understand that participants will voluntarily participate in the study and can withdraw at any time.
- b. Informed consent: I understand that participants have to be informed of every stage of the research and its purposes, and that they must consent to participate.
- c. Privacy: I understand that anonymity and confidentiality of participants should always be observed.
- d. Confidence: I understand that information provided by participants should be factual and participants should not be involved in any form of deception in the research process.

.....

Chairperson of the SGB (signature)

.....

Date

APPENDIX H: LETTER SEEKING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH; PRINCIPAL - SCHOOL SEA

The Principal
School SEA
P.O. Box xxx

Nhlangano

Dear Sir/ Madam

Permission to conduct a research in school SEA on teaching siSwati

I am Tholakele Constance Mngometulu a PhD student enrolled at the University of Pretoria in the Faculty of Education Department of Humanities Education. I hereby request for permission to collect data in your school. The title of the academic research is: **Pedagogical practices in teaching siSwati as a first language in diverse linguistic settings.**

The purpose of the study is to explore the pedagogical practices in teaching siSwati and also to ascertain their appropriateness and suitability in helping learners acquire core literacy skills in the language. The study regards a home language as the first language an individual learns to speak. It is the learners' mother tongue and the language of the family and community. It is a language that defines the learners' national identity and heritage. However, research has shown that the teaching of African home languages like siSwati is an under-researched area despite research findings of the significant role played by the mother tongue in a child's cognitive development and academic achievements. Most studies on African home languages focus on the issue of how African home languages like siSwati can be used as the medium of instruction in schools without looking into how these languages are taught in class. It is against this backdrop of the gap in research that I saw the need to conduct the research with the hope that it will offer a new contribution to research in this field of study that is under-researched.

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The results of this study may be presented at conferences or published in scientific journals. If it is required, I will be available to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research to both Ministry of Education and Training officials and the schools concerned. All participants will be provided with letters that will elicit their informed consent and I will only commence with data gathering once this has been granted. With permission from the research participants, all data and recorded interviews will be stored in a safe repository at the University of Pretoria.

Participation is subject to the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria and the following will apply:

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- 2) The interview transcripts and teacher made tests will be treated confidentially. Only the researcher (T.C. Mngometulu) and the supervisor (Dr. C Makgabo) will have access to the audio recordings and transcribed data.
- 3) Pseudonyms for schools and the teachers will be used in all spoken and written reports.
- 4) The information provided by the teachers will be used for academic purposes only.
- 5) Participation in this project is entirely voluntary. Participants have the right to withdraw at any time, and without any prejudice.
- 6) The teachers will not be exposed to acts of deception at any point in the research study.
- 7) The teachers will not be placed at risk of any kind.

- 8) No incentives will be offered to any of the research participants.
- 9) The decision to accept or decline the invitation will not have any adverse effect on the school or the educators.

We also would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

In case you would like clarification on some areas of this research, you can kindly address them to me and my supervisor using the details provided below. Your support in this matter and a written feedback to this request will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

(signature)

(signature)

Ms. T.C. Mngometulu (PhD candidate)

Dr. C. Makgabo (supervisor)

University of Pretoria

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APPENDIX I: INFORMED CONSENT; PRINCIPAL – SCHOOL SEA

INFORMED CONSENT

I _____ (your name) School SEA Principal agree/ do not agree (tick your decision) to allow Tholakele Constance Mngometulu to conduct an academic research in School SEA. The research is titled **Pedagogical practices in teaching siSwati as a first language in diverse linguistic settings**.

I understand that the academic research will involve interviewing primary school educators teaching siSwati as a first language at primary school. With permission from the participants, I understand that interviews will be audio tape recorded. I also understand that the research will involve focus group discussions with teachers, observations and the analysis of documents on teaching siSwati such as the syllabus, lesson plans, teacher made tests and learners' classwork.

I understand that the researcher adheres to the research ethical principles of:

- a. Voluntary participation: I understand that participants will voluntarily participate in the study and can withdraw at any time.
- b. Informed consent: I understand that participants have to be informed of every stage of the research and its purposes, and that they must consent to participate.
- c. Privacy: I understand that anonymity and confidentiality of participants should always be observed.
- d. Confidence: I understand that information provided by participants should be factual and participants should not be involved in any form of deception in the research process.

.....

Principal, School SEA (signature)

.....

Date

APPENDIX J: LETTER SEEKING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH; PRINCIPAL-SCHOOL SEB

The Principal
School SEB
P.O. Box xxx

Nhlangano

Dear Sir/ Madam

Permission to conduct a research in School SEB on teaching siSwati

I am Tholakele Constance Mngometulu a PhD student enrolled at the University of Pretoria in the Faculty of Education Department of Humanities Education. I hereby request for permission to collect data in your school. The title of the academic research is: **Pedagogical practices in teaching siSwati as a first language in diverse linguistic settings.**

The purpose of the study is to explore the pedagogical practices in teaching siSwati and also to ascertain their appropriateness and suitability in helping learners acquire core literacy skills in the language. The study regards a home language as the first language an individual learns to speak. It is the learners' mother tongue and the language of the family and community. It is a language that defines the learners' national identity and heritage. However, research has shown that the teaching of African home languages like siSwati is an under-researched area despite research findings of the significant role played by the mother tongue in a child's cognitive development and academic achievements. Most studies on African home languages focus on the issue of how African home languages like siSwati can be used as the medium of instruction in schools without looking into how these languages are taught in class. It is against this backdrop of the gap in research that I saw the need to conduct the research with the hope that it will offer a new contribution to research in this field of study that is under-researched.

The participants of the study will be teachers. The research will be conducted in four phases where data will be generated through: (1) interviews involving teachers who teach siSwati from Grades 1 to 4; (2) focus group discussions with all teachers who teach siSwati in the school; (3) lesson observations where I will observe the teaching-learning of siSwati; and (4) document analysis of the curriculum framework, syllabus, textbooks, lesson plans, teacher made tests and learners' work. All interviews will take place outside school hours and at a time and place convenient to participants and the researcher. Interviews will be audio tape-recorded, whether they are conducted in person or via electronic means (telephonically or on-line).

The results of this study may be presented at conferences or published in scientific journals. If it is required, I will be available to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research to both Ministry of Education and Training officials and the schools concerned. All participants will be provided with letters that will elicit their informed consent and I will only commence with data gathering once this has been granted. With permission from the research participants, all data and recorded interviews will be stored in a safe repository at the University of Pretoria.

Participation is subject to the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria and the following will apply:

- 1) The names of the school and identities of the participants will be treated confidentially and will not be disclosed. All participants and schools will remain anonymous.
- 2) The interview transcripts and teacher made tests will be treated confidentially. Only the researcher (T.C. Mngometulu) and the supervisor (Dr. C Makgabo) will have access to the audio recordings and transcribed data.
- 3) Pseudonyms for schools and the teachers will be used in all spoken and written reports.
- 4) The information provided by the teachers will be used for academic purposes only.
- 5) Participation in this project is entirely voluntary. Participants have the right to withdraw at any time, and without any prejudice.
- 6) The teachers will not be exposed to acts of deception at any point in the research study.
- 7) The teachers will not be placed at risk of any kind.

- 8) No incentives will be offered to any of the research participants.
- 9) The decision to accept or decline the invitation will not have any adverse effect on the school or the educators.

We also would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

In case you would like clarification on some areas of this research, you can kindly address them to me and my supervisor using the details provided below. Your support in this matter and a written feedback to this request will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

(signature)

(signature)

Ms. T.C. Mngometulu (PhD candidate)

Dr. C. Makgabo (supervisor)

University of Pretoria

University of Pretoria

Humanities Education

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connie.makgabo@up.ac.za

APPENDIX K: INFORMED CONSENT; PRINCIPAL – SCHOOL SEB

INFORMED CONSENT

I _____ (your name) School SEB Principal agree/ do not agree (tick your decision) to allow Tholakele Constance Mngometulu to conduct an academic research in School SEB. The research is titled **Pedagogical practices in teaching siSwati as a first language in diverse linguistic settings**.

I understand that the academic research will involve interviewing primary school educators teaching siSwati as a first language at primary school. With permission from the participants, I understand that interviews will be audio tape recorded. I also understand that the research will involve focus group discussions with teachers, observations and the analysis of documents on teaching siSwati such as the syllabus, lesson plans, teacher made tests and learners' classwork.

I understand that the researcher adheres to the research ethical principles of:

- a. Voluntary participation: I understand that participants will voluntarily participate in the study and can withdraw at any time.
- b. Informed consent: I understand that participants have to be informed of every stage of the research and its purposes, and that they must consent to participate.
- c. Privacy: I understand that anonymity and confidentiality of participants should always be observed.
- d. Confidence: I understand that information provided by participants should be factual and participants should not be involved in any form of deception in the research process.

.....

Principal, School SEB (signature)

.....

Date

APPENDIX L: LETTER OF PERMISSION AND INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

Dear Teacher

I am Tholakele Constance Mngometulu a PhD student enrolled at the University of Pretoria in the Faculty of Education Department of Humanities Education. I hereby request for your participation in a research that will be conducted in your school on the teaching of siSwati. The title of the academic research is: **Pedagogical practices in teaching siSwati as a first language in diverse linguistic settings.**

The purpose of the study is to explore the pedagogical practices in teaching siSwati and also to ascertain their appropriateness and suitability in helping learners acquire core literacy skills in the language. The study regards a home language as the first language an individual learns to speak. It is the learners' mother tongue and the language of the family and community. It is a language that defines the learners' national identity and heritage. However, research has shown that the teaching of African home languages like siSwati is an under-researched area despite research findings of the significant role played by the mother tongue in a child's cognitive development and academic achievements. Most studies on African home languages focus on the issue of how African home languages like siSwati can be used as the medium of instruction in schools without looking into how these languages are taught in class. It is against this backdrop of the gap in research that I saw the need to conduct the research with the hope that it will offer a new contribution to research in this field of study that is under-researched.

The participants of the study will be teachers. The research will be conducted in four phases where data will be generated through: (1) interviews involving teachers who teach siSwati from Grades 1 to 4; (2) focus group discussions with all teachers who teach siSwati in the school; (3) lesson observations where I will observe the teaching-learning of siSwati; and (4) document analysis of the curriculum framework, syllabus, textbooks, lesson plans, teacher made tests and learners' work. All interviews will take place outside school hours and at a time and place convenient to participants and the researcher. Interviews will be audio tape-recorded, whether they are conducted in person or via electronic means (telephonically or on-line).

The results of this study may be presented at conferences or published in scientific journals. If it is required, I will be available to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research to both Ministry of Education and Training officials and the schools concerned. All participants will be provided with letters that will elicit their informed consent and I will only commence with data gathering once this has been granted. With permission from the research participants, all data and recorded interviews will be stored in a safe repository at the University of Pretoria.

Participation is subject to the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria and the following will apply:

1. The names of the school and identities of the participants will be treated confidentially and will not be disclosed. All participants and schools will remain anonymous.
2. The interview transcripts and teacher made tests will be treated confidentially. Only the researcher (T.C. Mngometulu) and the supervisor (Dr. C Makgabo) will have access to the audio recordings and transcribed data.
3. Pseudonyms for schools and the teachers will be used in all spoken and written reports.
4. The information provided by the teachers will be used for academic purposes only.
5. Participation in this project is entirely voluntary. Participants have the right to withdraw at any time, and without any prejudice.
6. The teachers will not be exposed to acts of deception at any point in the research study.
7. The teachers will not be placed at risk of any kind.
8. No incentives will be offered to any of the research participants.
9. The decision to accept or decline the invitation will not have any adverse effect on the school or the educators.

We also would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

In case you would like clarification on some areas of this research, you can kindly address them to me and my supervisor using the details provided below. Your support in this matter and a written feedback to this request will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

(signature)

(signature)

Ms. T.C. Mngometulu (PhD candidate)

Dr. C. Makgabo (supervisor)

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APPENDIX M: INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPANTS

INFORMED CONSENT

I _____ (your name) hereby agree / do not agree (tick your decision) to participate in the research titled **Pedagogical practices in teaching siSwati as a first language in diverse linguistic settings.**

I do understand that this academic research will involve interviewing me and I consent to that. I will also take part in focus group discussions and with my permission the interviews and focus group discussion will be audio tape recorded. I also consent to be observed teaching and to provide the researcher with the siSwati curriculum resources including the syllabus, lesson plans, tests I have constructed for learners and their classwork exercise books for their analysis.

I understand that the researcher adheres to the research ethical principles of:

- a. Voluntary participation: I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and I willingly decide to participate and can withdraw at any time.
- b. Informed consent: I understand that I have to be informed of every stage of the research and purposes and I must consent to my participation.
- c. Privacy: I understand that this refers to anonymity and confidentiality of my participation. I will not discuss what was said in the focus group discussion with any other person.
- d. Confidence: I understand that the information I provide should be facts and I will not be involved in any form of deception in the research process.

.....

Participant signature

.....

Date

APPENDIX N: LETTER SEEKING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH - PARENT

Dear Parent

I am Tholakele Constance Mngometulu a PhD student enrolled at the University of Pretoria in the Faculty of Education Department of Humanities Education. I hereby request for permission to observe your child learning siSwati in School_____. The title of the academic research is: **Pedagogical practices in teaching siSwati as a first language in diverse linguistic settings.**

The purpose of the study is to explore the pedagogical practices in teaching siSwati and also to ascertain their appropriateness and suitability in helping learners acquire core literacy skills in the language. The study regards a home language as the first language an individual learns to speak. It is the learners' mother tongue and the language of the family and community. It is a language that defines the learners' national identity and heritage. However, research has shown that the teaching of African home languages like siSwati is an under-researched area despite research findings of the significant role played by the mother tongue in a child's cognitive development and academic achievements. Most studies on African home languages focus on the issue of how African home languages like siSwati can be used as the medium of instruction in schools without looking into how these languages are taught in class. It is against this backdrop of the gap in research that I saw the need to conduct the research with the hope that it will offer a new contribution to research in this field of study that is under-researched. I will be a non-participant observer and your child will not be asked any questions relating to the study.

The results of this study may be presented at conferences or published in scientific journals. If it is required, I will be available to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research to both Ministry of Education and Training officials and the schools concerned. All participants will be provided with letters that will elicit their informed consent and I will only commence with data gathering once this has been granted. With permission from the research participants, all data and recorded interviews will be stored in a safe repository at the University of Pretoria.

Participation is subject to the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria and the following will apply:

1. The names of the school and identities of the participants will be treated confidentially and will not be disclosed. All participants and schools will remain anonymous.
2. The interview transcripts and teacher made tests will be treated confidentially. Only the researcher (T.C. Mngometulu) and the supervisor (Dr. C Makgabo) will have access to the audio recordings and transcribed data.
3. Pseudonyms for schools and the teachers will be used in all spoken and written reports.
4. The learners will be observed only and information provided by the teachers will be used for academic purposes only.
5. Participation in this project is entirely voluntary. Participants have the right to withdraw at any time, and without any prejudice.
6. The teachers will not be exposed to acts of deception at any point in the research study.
7. The teachers and learners will not be placed at risk of any kind.
8. No incentives will be offered to any of the research participants.
9. The decision to accept or decline the invitation will not have any adverse effect on the school, educators or you as a parent.

We also would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

In case you would like clarification on some areas of this research, you can kindly address them to me and my supervisor using the details provided below. Your support in this matter and a written feedback to this request will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

(signature)

(signature)

Ms. T.C. Mngometulu (PhD candidate)

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Dr. C. Makgabo (supervisor)

University of Pretoria

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connie.makgabo@up.ac.za

APPENDIX O: INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARENTS

INFORMED CONSENT

I _____ (your name) hereby agree / do not agree (tick your decision) to have my child _____ (name of child) observed while learning siSwati in the research titled **Pedagogical practices in teaching siSwati as a first language in diverse linguistic settings.**

I understand that the researcher adheres to the research ethical principles of:

- a. Voluntary participation: I understand that agreeing to my child being observed is voluntary and it is within my rights to decline the request and withdraw at any time.
- b. Informed consent: I understand that I have to be informed of the research and purposes and I must consent to my child being observed.
- c. Privacy: I understand that this refers to anonymity and confidentiality of her/his participation. I will not discuss with any other person about my child being observed in this study.
- d. Confidence: I understand that the researcher will be a non-participant observer and she will only observe my child learning siSwati. I understand that she will not be involved in any form of deception in the research process.

.....

Participant signature

.....

Date

APPENDIX P: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR SL1 TEACHERS

TITLE: PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES IN TEACHING SIWATI AS A FIRST LANGUAGE IN DIVERSE LINGUISTIC SETTINGS

Time of interview: _____ Duration: _____ Date: _____

Interviewer: _____ Interviewee Pseudonym: _____

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

This section gathers information on teachers' proficiency and experience in their occupation which includes the teaching of siSwati as a first language in Eswatini primary schools.

Please Tick next to the correct option

1. Indicate the grade you are currently teaching.

Grade 1 _____, Grade 2 _____, Grade 3 _____, Grade 4 _____

2. Indicate your gender.

Female _____

Male _____

3. Indicate your age range.

20-30 _____, 31-40 _____, 41-50 _____, 51-60 _____

4. What is your experience teaching SL1?

0-5 years _____, 6-10 years _____, 11-20 years _____, 21-30 years _____, 31-40 years _____

5. Your highest qualification

PTC _____, PTD _____, B.Ed. _____, PGCE _____, M.Ed. _____

6. What is the nature of your employment?

Permanent: _____ Temporary: _____

QUESTIONS

1. What is your understanding of teaching SL1 at the FOMIPs?
2. What do you think is the value of teaching siSwati literacy in the grade you are currently teaching?
3. Are there contextual dynamics with regards to the nature of learners in your class (linguistic and cultural diversity)? If yes, how do you deal with them?
4. The siSwati literacy curriculum comprises four skills to be imparted to learners, can you tell me which pedagogical practices you use to teach the following skills to both native and non-native speakers of siSwati?
 - a) Listening
 - b) Speaking
 - c) Reading
 - d) Writing
5. Can you tell me how you teach each of these skills?
6. Why do you teach these skills the way you do?
7. Are the pedagogical practices you use in line with those laid down in the curriculum standards stated in the syllabus?
8. In your experience, what prior knowledge do learners bring to school (both native and non-native speakers of siSwati)? How do you find this knowledge useful in your siSwati classroom?
9. What resources are available for your use in the teaching of siSwati?
 - a) Do you find these resources relevant, adequate and helpful? If yes, can you explain how?
 - b) If no, can you explain what you think needs to be done?
10. How do you conduct an assessment in your SL1 classroom?
11. Are there any beliefs you hold about the teaching and learning of siSwati, the home language? If yes, what are they and how do you think they influence your teaching of SL1?

12. In your opinion, what factors influence your choice of the pedagogical practices you use in your SL1 classroom?
13. How do you experience the teaching of SL1 to learners of diverse linguistic backgrounds in your school?
14. Are there challenges you encounter in teaching SL1? If yes, what challenges do you come across when teaching SL1?
15. How can the challenges facing the teaching of SL1 be mitigated?

APPENDIX Q: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION PROTOCOL FOR SL1 TEACHERS

TITLE: PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES IN TEACHING SISWATI AS A FIRST LANGUAGE IN DIVERSE LINGUISTIC SETTINGS

Time of discussion: _____ Duration: _____ Date: _____

Moderator: _____ FGD member pseudonym _____

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

This section gathers information on teachers' proficiency and experience in their occupation which includes the teaching of siSwati as a first language in Eswatini primary schools.

Please Tick next to the correct option

1. Indicate the grade you are currently teaching.

Grade 1 _____, Grade 2 _____, Grade 3 _____, Grade 4 _____

Grade 5 _____, Grade 6 _____, Grade 7 _____

2. Indicate your gender.

Female _____

Male _____

3. Indicate your age range.

20-30 _____, 31-40 _____, 41-50 _____, 51-60 _____

4. What is your experience teaching SL1?

0-5 years _____, 6-10 years _____, 11-20 years _____, 21-30 years _____, 31-40 years _____

5. Your highest qualification

PTC _____, PTD _____, B.Ed. _____, PGCE _____, M.Ed. _____

6. What is the nature of your employment?

Permanent: _____ Temporary: _____

QUESTIONS

1. What is your understanding of teaching SL1 in the FOMIPs?
2. As a teacher, may you explain the role siSwati-the home language plays in learners' education?
3. Are there contextual dynamics with regards to the nature of learners in your class (linguistic and cultural diversity)? If yes, how do you deal with them?
4. In your class, what pedagogical practices do you find ideal and employ to teach the following language skills in your class:
 - a) Speaking
 - b) Listening
 - c) Reading
 - d) Writing
5. How do you use the pedagogical practices you mentioned to teach the following skills?
 - a) Speaking
 - b) Listening
 - c) Reading
 - d) Writing
6. Why do you use the pedagogical practices you use to teach siSwati?
7. In your experience, are there any other factors you think influence the way you teach SL1? If yes, please elaborate.
8. After having taught siSwati at primary school for more than 5 years in classes which are linguistically and culturally diverse, what are your experiences of teaching and learning siSwati in the Grade that you are currently teaching?
9. How did you find pre-service in preparing you with the appropriate skills and knowledge to teach SL1?

10. How did you find in-service training preparing you with the appropriate skills and knowledge to teach SL1?
11. Are there challenges you encountered in teaching siSwati? If yes, what challenges do you come across and how can these challenges be mitigated?
12. How do you think the problem of poor performance in siSwati can be mitigated?

APPENDIX R: CLASSROOM LESSON OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

TITLE: PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES IN TEACHING SISWATI AS A FIRST LANGUAGE IN DIVERSE LINGUISTIC SETTINGS

Date: _____ Time: _____

Grade: _____ School (pseudonym): _____

Name of observer: _____ Teacher observed (pseudonym) _____

1. LEARNING ENVIRONMENT:

- Was the classroom environment conducive for siSwati literacy learning?

- Is there cultural and linguistic diversity in class?

- Were there educational charts on display around classroom walls?

- Was there any work written by learners displayed on the classroom walls?

- Was there any SL1 content displayed on the classroom walls?

2 LESSON PRESENTATION:

- a) Introduction- did it evoke interest among learners and link the known to the unknown? _____
- b) What pedagogical practices were employed by the teacher in teaching listening, speaking, reading and writing skills?

Instructional method and strategy	Comments
Frequently used method	
Least used method	

- c) Are the methods/ strategies learner-centred? _____

- d) Were methods employed diversified? _____
- e) Are the lesson delivery and language usage clear and appropriate for the grade?

- f) Was learners' prior knowledge used as a base for learning new SL1 content? _____
- g) Are the experiences provided to learners in line with curriculum goals and objectives? _____
- h) Did the teacher cater for learners of different languages and abilities? _____ If yes, how? _____
- i) Teacher-learner rapport, was it favourable for the learning of SL1 _____
- j) Did the teacher motivate learners to:
Listen _____, Speak _____, Read _____ and write siSwati _____?
If yes, how? _____

- k) Were the above skills taught in a contextualised manner? _____
If yes, How? _____
- l) What were the SL1 activities done by learners?

- m) Were learners provided with adequate and appropriate resources to learn the concepts of the day?

- n) Were learners encouraged to share their work by reading to the class?

- o) Did the teacher solve learning difficulties among struggling learners?
_____ If yes, how? _____
- p) Was there any remedial work given to learners?

3. ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION:

- a) Were instructions given to learners simple and clear?

- b) Did learners follow the instructions?

- c) Were tasks given to learners done independently or were the learners given support by the teacher? _____

-
- d) Did the teacher provide an opportunity to test for the achievement of objectives or the acquisition of a skill? ___ If yes, how?
-

4. Learner-learner interaction

Did learners engage in any form of communicative activities? _____. If yes, which language was used in those activities? _____. What was the nature of those activities _____

APPENDIX S: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS PROTOCOL

TITLE: PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES IN TEACHING SIKWATI AS A FIRST LANGUAGE IN DIVERSE LINGUISTIC SETTINGS

School pseudonym _____

Participant pseudonym _____

Documents and content to be analysed;

1. Curriculum Framework and siSwati Syllabus

- a) What informs teachers in teaching SL1?
- b) Are there any specific pedagogical practices laid down by the curriculum to be used in teaching siSwati?

2. Lesson plan

- a) Does the teacher prepare a lesson plan for every lesson?
- b) What is the nature of the class activities? Do those activities planned align with the nature of the lesson/aim at achieving the outcomes?
- c) Is the content in the lesson plan consistent with the content in the syllabus?
- d) Are teaching methods stated in the lesson plan in line with those stipulated by the siSwati syllabus?

3. Teacher made tests

- a) Are experiences provided to learners consistent with the objectives of the siSwati curriculum?
- b) Does the material covered in teacher made tests align with the content covered in curriculum objectives?
- c) Do these questions cover all cognitive levels?

4. Prescribed textbooks (*Teachers' Guide and Pupil's books*)

- a) Are there books available for SL1?
- b) Does the content in the books align with the syllabus?
- c) Does every learner have a book?

5. Learners' classwork

- a) What is the nature of the task given to learners?
- b) Do the tasks demonstrate contextual learning?
- c) Are the tasks aligned with curriculum objectives?