CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Linguistic and cultural competence will be the mark of the well-educated citizen of the 21st century (Genesee & Cloud, 1998:65).

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The global population has passed the six billion people mark and is rapidly increasing towards seven billion (Cunningham, 2001:201). In order to satisfy global needs, the different nations of the world have become interdependent (Smit, 1993:162), necessitating communication between people from diverse backgrounds. Although technology, in particular the internet, has increased, if not maximised, global communication possibilities, it has not diminished the need for language competency. Languages still have a key role to play in harmonising contact between culturally and linguistically diverse individuals. Education, communication, and languages have in fact never been more important, despite the explosion of knowledge in science, medicine, and technology (Genesee & Cloud, 1998:62).

Education is no longer merely a priority for educators and parents or caregivers, but business leaders increasingly recognise the connection between global competitiveness and education. Economic forces exercise considerable influence on decision-making in education, in particular language decision-making. Many economists concede that language competence in more than one language has become imperative because of the integral place of language competency in the global market-place (Cunningham, 2001:218; Gumbo, 2001:240; Genesee & Cloud, 1998:62). As global multilingualism becomes a reality, there is an ongoing awareness worldwide that education

will have to play a role in preparing learners for the challenges of language diversity.

Although South Africa is a young democracy, it has already accomplished the formulation of a language policy that enshrines in its constitution the equality of all the South African languages (Cunningham, 2001:215; Bosman, 2000:226; Steyn, 2000:48). Different official languages, however, are used in different contexts (LANGTAG, 1996:24), and language in education is one such context. While parents or caregivers can currently choose the Medium of Instruction (MoI) for their children, there appears to be general consensus in education that mother tongue (L1) instruction is not sufficient and that all South Africans need to be introduced to an additional language (L2) with wider communication functions, enabling them to interact in all spheres of life whether social, political, economic or educational (Peirce & Ridge, 1997:181; LANGTAG, 1996:22; Smit, 1993:157). English appears to be the preferred language across cultural barriers in South Africa (Peirce & Ridge, 1997:182), and has emerged as the most likely international *lingua franca* (Cunningham, 2001:201), therefore it is rightfully regarded by some as the first choice of L2 (Smit, 1993: 157-158).

In South Africa, the government and, in some communities, the parents or caregivers, as well as the learners, have an overwhelmingly positive attitude towards English (De Klerk, 2002a:2). It is the most frequently used official language in education and is regarded by some as the key to tertiary institutions (Cele, 2001:187). Arguably English also poses the biggest threat to L1 education because of its popularity among parents or caregivers and learners (Cunningham, 2001:201; Bosman, 2000: 224; Lemmer, 1993:82). However, poor educational performances owing to an inability to speak, read, and write adequately in English by some learners who have English as Language of Learning and Teaching (ELoLT) may call for the early introduction thereof as an L2 to allow learners more time to become proficient in English. While Bosman (2000:224) regards L1 education as crucial for academic success, Cele (2001:184) holds the opinion that young learners need to be given the wherewithal to maximise their future choices, as

enormous sources of information, knowledge, and opportunities will be lost to people with poor or no command of English as L1 or L2. It may therefore be in the interest of the learners' future to support their acquisition of English as L1 or L2.

This dominance of English in education is one of the issues that captures the attention of both policy-makers and scholars (Peirce & Ridge, 1997:180). The opinion exists that English should be accepted as the dominant language in education in the interest of equality and democracy, but ethical and pedagogical questions concerning the efficacy in education arise when the vast majority of children have limited exposure to English (Peirce & Ridge, 1997:173). The question is raised whether parents or caregivers who favour the use of English are not perhaps hindering their children, rather than helping them. Is it possible for all learners to become proficient in English in the foreseeable future? Another unanswered question is whether the focus on English, to the detriment of the L1, will not result in failure and delay intellectual development.

As multilingualism is clearly a challenge in South African education, the Department of Education (DoE), in White Paper 5 (RSA, 2001a:18), called for collaboration between all the professionals involved in Early Childhood Education (ECE) when addressing the language needs of young learners acquiring ELoLT. Such collaboration in services to preschool learners are in line with global trends in service delivery over the past decade (Du Plessis, 1998b:63). In collaboration, the specific expertise of individual team members needs to be recognised and utilised. Although teachers are the most important link in the adjustment process of ELoLT learners to the English classroom (NAEYC, 1996:7), it is accepted that educational support professionals, such as speech-language therapists, need to be included as team members.

In view of the challenge that multilingualism within the South African education poses to both educators and education support professionals, the following

discussion aims to provide the background against which decisions regarding language in education need to be taken.

1.2 THE GLOBAL AND LOCAL CHALLENGES OF MULTILINGUALISM

As a result of major developments in social, economic, and political sectors (Smit, 1993:160), societies all over the world have become linguistically and culturally diverse, with homogeneous societies being the exception rather than the rule. Worldwide, policy-makers have been faced with the challenge of dealing with diversity and have had to adapt in an effort to cope with a variety of languages, religions, ethnic groups, and socio-economic backgrounds, as well as a variety of political views within their boundaries (Genesee & Cloud, 1998:62).

In the United States of America (USA), multiculturalism grew dramatically during the 1980s and numerous sources noted the increase in numbers of the non-English-speaking population (Gumbo, 2001:235; Genesee & Cloud, 1998:62; Montgomery & Herer, 1994:130; Roseberry-McKibbin & Eicholtz, 1994:156; Waggoner, 1993:1). The linguistically diverse population resulted in an increase in the number of learners with limited English proficiency, placing demands on schools to meet the needs of these learners (Garcia & Stein, 1997:141). When illiteracy and limitations in vocabulary, reading, and writing skills increased and high school drop-out rates escalated in the nineties, the education of non-English learners in the USA was placed high on the education agenda (Garcia & Stein, 1997:142; Cheng, 1996:349; Montgomery & Herer, 1994:131-134).

More than 20 years ago, during the eighties, speech-language therapists in the USA reported an increase in their case-loads of so-called non-native English speakers, and requested clarification of their role. Subsequently the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) issued a Position Paper in 1983, followed by a Position Statement in 1998, stating that speech-language therapists are indeed qualified to accept these clients and serve as

consultants to educators regarding the acquisition of additional languages (ASHA, 1998:24; ASHA, 1983:24).

In contrast with the USA, where divergent views are held by American individuals on multilingual education (Gumbo, 2001:236), the European community generally encourages the acquisition of foreign languages and views multilingualism as a positive opportunity (De Groof & Lauwers, 2001:49). This may be ascribed to the close proximity of European countries as opposed to the relative isolation of the USA, as well as the richness of Europe's linguistic heritage (Cunningham, 2001:216). The introduction of unrestricted freedom of movement within the European community from 1 January 1993 further stimulated and motivated the learning and promotion of foreign languages in Europe (Smit, 1993:161). Smit (1993:161) reports that the freedom of movement in Europe has increased European learners' motivation to become multilingual in view of greater opportunities for working and studying abroad.

Europe's engagement with Africa and its people can be traced back to the seventeenth century and the time of colonialism, when Africa was a vast multilingual continent with a rich heritage of indigenous languages. Under colonial governments, indigenous languages were largely ignored and European languages like English, Dutch, German, and Portuguese were introduced to African countries (Peirce & Ridge, 1997:171). Since their independence that started in the early 1960s, many African countries have wanted to move beyond their colonial heritage (Peirce & Ridge, 1997:181) and multilingualism in education is currently drawing new interest. Language practices as well as policies are being developed to solve pressing practical problems. There is also an increasing awareness of the importance of L1, as well as proficiency in the ex-colonial languages which is preferred as MoI at their tertiary institutions (Sarinjeive, 1999:129).

Multilingualism in South Africa, as in the rest of the African continent, is a fact of life. Most South Africans are bi- or multilingual, especially those in the lower income and previously disadvantaged communities. As a result of

recent socio-political changes in this country, there are eleven official languages, namely Afrikaans, English, IsiZulu, IsiXhosa, SiSwati, IsiNdebele (the Nguni cluster), SeSotho, SePedi, SeTswana (the Sotho cluster), XiTsonga and TshiVenda (Sarinjeive, 1999:128; Peirce & Ridge, 1997:172). By adopting this creative and original policy of multilingualism in an effort to do away with the legacy of state bilingualism, the South African Government has demonstrated its support for language diversity in the country.

Like other countries in the Southern African region that gained democracy and independence, South Africa also recognises its previous colonial language (English) as one of the official languages. In South Africa, English enjoyed prominence during the struggle against apartheid, both politically and ideologically (Kamwangamalu, 1997:243). This trend towards English as preferred language of communication in South Africa is continuing currently because of its international and commercial attraction. English is generally viewed as the language of the workplace that could assist employees to work efficiently and communicate effectively across all cultural barriers (Peirce & Ridge, 1997:182). The perception also exists that English is the only means to success because the world of opportunity is essentially English speaking (Sarinjeive, 1999:130). According to Sarinjeive (1999:136), the desire for English is further fuelled in some Black students by a deep-seated resistance to L1 education. The L1 is stigmatised as inferior and associated with inferior apartheid education and limited employment opportunities, as documented by history (Sarinjeive, 1999:136).

History bears evidence that the language policies in South Africa, prior to 1991, were determined by political and ideological agendas. From 1652, government officials spoke Dutch and indigenous languages were not valued as media of communication. During the British colonisation of the Cape in the eighteenth century, English was positioned as primary language and all children were taught in English to ensure that the next generation of South Africans would be *English*. In 1825, English was recognised as official language, and nearly a century later, the Smuts Education Act of 1907

endorsed this trend and stipulated that *all* children had to learn English at school. After the Second South African War, the Afrikaans Language Movement started a campaign for the recognition of Afrikaans as an official language and eventually succeeded when the Nationalist Government took control in 1948. At that time, a language policy recognising only Afrikaans and English as official languages on all levels was adopted (Cele, 2001:182; Peirce & Ridge, 1997:178; Lemmer, 1995: 84-85).

In retrospect, it is clear that the *language in education* policy formed part of the struggle for political dominance. In 1953, Black education was separated from White education and regulated by the Department of Bantu Affairs. Compulsory L1 instruction was introduced to Black learners from Grade One and it was stipulated that both Afrikaans and English be taught as subjects. In the senior primary and secondary school years, only Afrikaans and English instruction was allowed in Black schools. In 1974, the province of Transvaal further stipulated that social studies and mathematics be taught in Afrikaans (Lemmer, 1995:85). Black learners had to master difficult subject content in languages other than their L1. This policy directly led to the Soweto uprising in 1976, resulting in the disruption of education for a whole generation of Black learners. When the government finally reversed this decision under tremendous pressure from the Black community, parents, for the first time, had the freedom to choose the MoI for their children from the Fourth Grade. In 1991, the De Klerk government took a step closer to democracy and allowed White government schools to enrol learners of all races, leaving the decision on MoI to the parent body of each school (Peirce & Ridge, 1997:171-179; Lemmer, 1995:84-85). The language options they could choose from were:

- *straight for* the long-term MoI from the first year at school, which could be L1 or L2;

- *sudden transfer* from L1 to L2, after the fourth year at school;

- *gradual transfer* from L1 to L2 during the first four years at school.

Parents from the Black communities were overwhelmingly in favour of *sudden transfer* to English after the fourth year at school (Lemmer, 1995:85).

The South African history cannot be undone, but it is clear that the country's language policies complicated the provision of education in the past. Currently, the core ideological aims of democracy, racial tolerance, human rights, and peaceful conflict resolution enshrined in the South African constitution, are guiding educational reform, and emerging educational policies aim to rectify the wrongs of the past and focus on the needs of society (Le Grange, 2002:36; Cele, 2001:182; Gumbo, 2001:240; Harber, 1999:7).

In the transformation process of South African education, language in education has become a key issue (Peirce & Ridge, 1997:172; Alexander, 1995:37; Harlech-Jones, 1990:91). The South African government realises the importance of language proficiency and consequently the Department of Education (DoE) has announced that language instruction (development) will be one of the main components of the new education curriculum (Curriculum 2005). Thís is a refined curriculum following recommendations by the Chrisholm Commission. A further revision of Curriculum 2005 resulted in the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) (RSA, 2002:2). A decision was made that English will be introduced gradually to learners from Grade R to Grade Three, with compulsory English teaching from Grade Four onwards (Sarinjeive; 1999:130; Peirce & Ridge,1997:172). The MoI in all governmental secondary schools will be English, with the exception of Afrikaans-medium schools. To gain entrance to a university in South Africa, it is currently required of students to pass a school-leaving examination in English as first or additional language (Peirce & Ridge, 1997:173). This language policy adopted by the government is reflected in Figure 1.1.

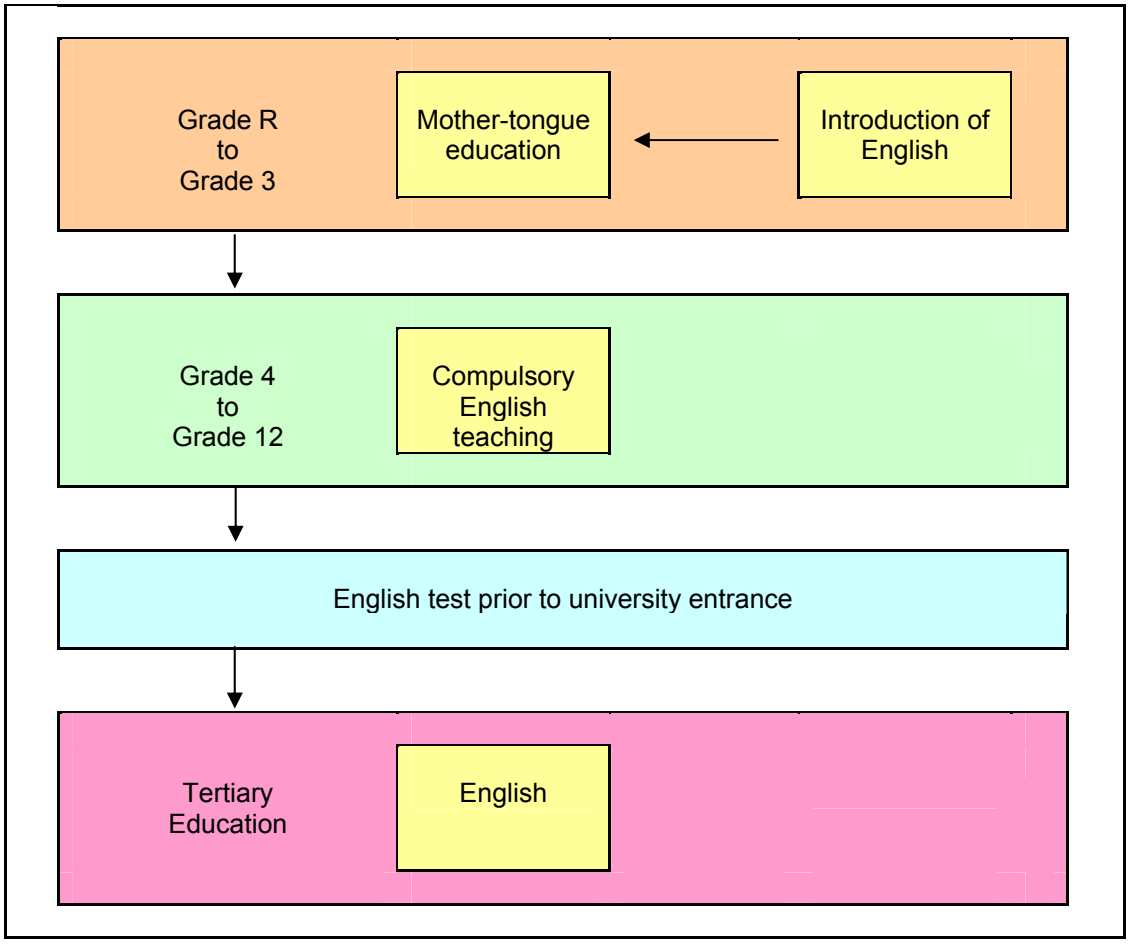

FIGURE 1.1: LANGUAGE POLICY ADOPTED FOR BLACK SOUTH AFRICAN LEARNERS

Sources: Sarinjeive, 1999:130; Peirce and Ridge, 1997:172; Macdonald, 1991:53.

Figure 1.1 indicates that English (as MoI in schools) seems to be a reality for South African learners. An interesting trend currently emerging is that more and more non-English parents or caregivers are selecting English preschools and primary schools for their children (Lemmer, 1995:89; Jordaan, 1993:11). Learners are consequently forced to cope with ELoLT from their preschool years (Jordaan, 1993:ii). Sarinjeive (1999:138) described this decision of parents or caregivers as hardheaded resistance to the common sense of L1 education. Researchers, for example Heugh (2005), have warned that three years of English acquisition before the learners' sudden transfer to ELoLT in Grade Four are not enough to acquire sufficient skills in English to use it as

MoI. Some ELoLT learners' academic progress may therefore be impeded by their poor linguistic abilities.

It is clear that multilingualism is a challenge, not only in the South African context, but across the globe. South Africa, with eleven official languages, presents a unique context and can contribute to the global debate on multilingualism. As a result of the former apartheid regime, and in contrast to the developed countries, the Black *majority* language communities are seeking recognition, as opposed to *minority* language groups internationally (LANGTAG, 1996:218). To address the demand for local solutions, extensive research on multicultural education in South Africa is currently under way (Viljoen & Molefe, 2001:121). Although international research results on bilingual education supply a useful framework, these results need to be tested under local conditions before application (Lemmer, 1995:90). South Africa can undoubtedly learn from educational practices implemented in developed countries, as well as developing African countries, but application once again needs to be selective and adaptive (Harber, 1999:3).

The learners and families served in urban South African preschools reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of the nation. To allow the optimal development of multilingual preschool learners, all professionals involved in education need to be prepared to meet the learners' diverse developmental, cultural, linguistic, and educational needs. The challenge to everyone involved in education lies in seeking solutions to local problems. In the light of global trends over the past decade, speech-language therapists, as members of the educational support team, need to participate actively in the quest for information on multilingualism in South Africa. They need to increase their knowledge and explore their role in addressing the demand for answers in this field. This is also the focus of the current study.

1.3 THE ROLE OF SPEECH-LANGUAGE THERAPISTS IN THE ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH AS LANGUAGE OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN SOUTH AFRICA

Although ASHA (ASHA, 1998:24; ASHA, 1983:24) issued a position statement in 1983, clarifying the association's viewpoint on speech-language therapists' role when serving multilingual clients in the USA, the South African Speech-Language and Hearing Association (SASLHA) only published guidelines regulating local speech-language therapists' intervention with multilingual learners 20 years later (SASLHA, 2003). These guidelines clearly indicated that speech-language therapists need to get involved in the language acquisition of multilingual learners.

Traditionally, speech-language therapists in South Africa have had two professional functions in the preschool setting, namely direct intervention, as well as consultation and training (Du Plessis, 1998:53; Venter, 1998:4). Jordaan (1993:2) recommended that the role of speech-language therapists in the acquisition of English be consultative in nature, in other words it needs to be a role in which knowledge is shared (Du Plessis, 1998:13). However, this consultative role in the educational support team needs to be defined to determine the specific responsibilities of the speech-language therapists in supporting the multilingual preschool learner acquiring ELoLT (Prelock, 2000:217). Speech-language therapists have the training and knowledge to assist multilingual preschool learners in acquiring language-learning skills in English. Simon (1994:127) stated that speech-language therapists can make a contribution to language learning even without being proficient in the learner's L1, because they are familiar with language acquisition methodologies and knowledge of the *process* of language acquisition is much more critical when assisting the learner to move from total reliance on L1 to learning the L2. Jordaan (1993) conducted research on language intervention by speech-language therapists in facilitating the acquisition of ELoLT by preschool learners in the South African context and established that speech-language therapists can indeed accelerate preschool learners' acquisition of English (Jordaan, 1993:iii).

Since L2 development, assessment, and intervention are acknowledged professional functions of speech-language therapists (Venter, 1998:v), it is widely accepted that speech-language therapists are the ideal educational support professionals to intervene in the process of language acquisition by preschool learners. A comprehensive knowledge of language development in young children and intervention strategies to facilitate the process of language acquisition (Jordaan, 1993:2) provide speech-language therapists with the expertise to offer focused language stimulation (Jordaan, 1993:180). Apart from understanding the nature of language and the interaction between a child and his or her environment (Jordaan, 1993:2), speech-language therapists also have specific skills and are trained to support the preschool teacher, as one of the team members, in structuring the language curriculum according to the needs of the learners. According to Wadle (1991:277) and Elksnin and Capilouto (1994:259), these skills are:

- The ability to focus on language to help team members and parents or caregivers develop insight into the influence of language on school performance and social behaviour;

- The ability to do task analyses that enable team members and parents or caregivers to determine the required skills and prior knowledge for the task;

- The awareness of and insight into individual differences in preschoolers that can be shared with team members and parents or caregivers to facilitate the development of preschool learners;

- The knowledge and experience of activities which motivate preschoolers to take part in activities, as well as the use of exciting and challenging techniques to realise aims;

- The ability to organise, adapt to situations, and be flexible.

(Compiled from Wadle, 1991:277; Elksnin & Capilouto, 1994:259.)

These skills, combined with the speech-language therapist's expertise in language development and language impairment, may be utilised in the preschool classroom to facilitate multilingual preschoolers' development of English. Given their specialised store of information and their skills, as well as their clinical sensitivity to psycho-social factors that may influence the learners' development (Gerber, 1987:108), speech-language therapists are in a position to assist preschool teachers in structuring the learning environment to encourage the acquisition of ELoLT (NAEYC, 1996:8). This assistance may also expand the knowledge base and skills of preschool teachers on the whole process of L2 acquisition.

The professional expertise of speech-language therapists may also contribute to prevent academic failure and improve the academic performance of the learner acquiring ELoLT. Such intervention will focus not only on teaching basic communication skills, but also on the learners' acquisition of the complex cognitive language skills necessary for academic learning. The skills required for reading and writing, including the ability to understand the contents of the material, are regarded as higher level academic skills and need to be developed. Speech-language therapists may further intervene by improving weakness in language learning skills, including auditory processing problems, problem solving and the ability to follow sequenced instructions (NAEYC, 1996:8). Improving these language learning skills could accelerate the acquisition of ELoLT, intercept potential academic difficulties, and eliminate inappropriate classifications, such as *learning impaired* or *developmentally delayed* – classifications that often result in the placement of learners in inappropriate service settings.

Speech-language therapists' involvement with multilingual preschool learners may stimulate important collaboration between the professions of the speech-language therapist and the preschool teacher (Du Plessis & Naudé, 2003:128). Collaboration needs to include components such as consultation, role release, cross-disciplinary intervention, and support (Coufal, 1993:2). These are all characteristics of the transdisciplinary model of team

functioning, which is generally regarded as the most suitable model for service delivery by speech-language therapists, as discussed in Chapter Four.

Figure 1.2 illustrates an approach towards the acquisition of ELoLT in South Africa that may guide the speech-language therapist, as documented in the literature (Heugh, Siegrühn Plüddemann, 1995: vi).

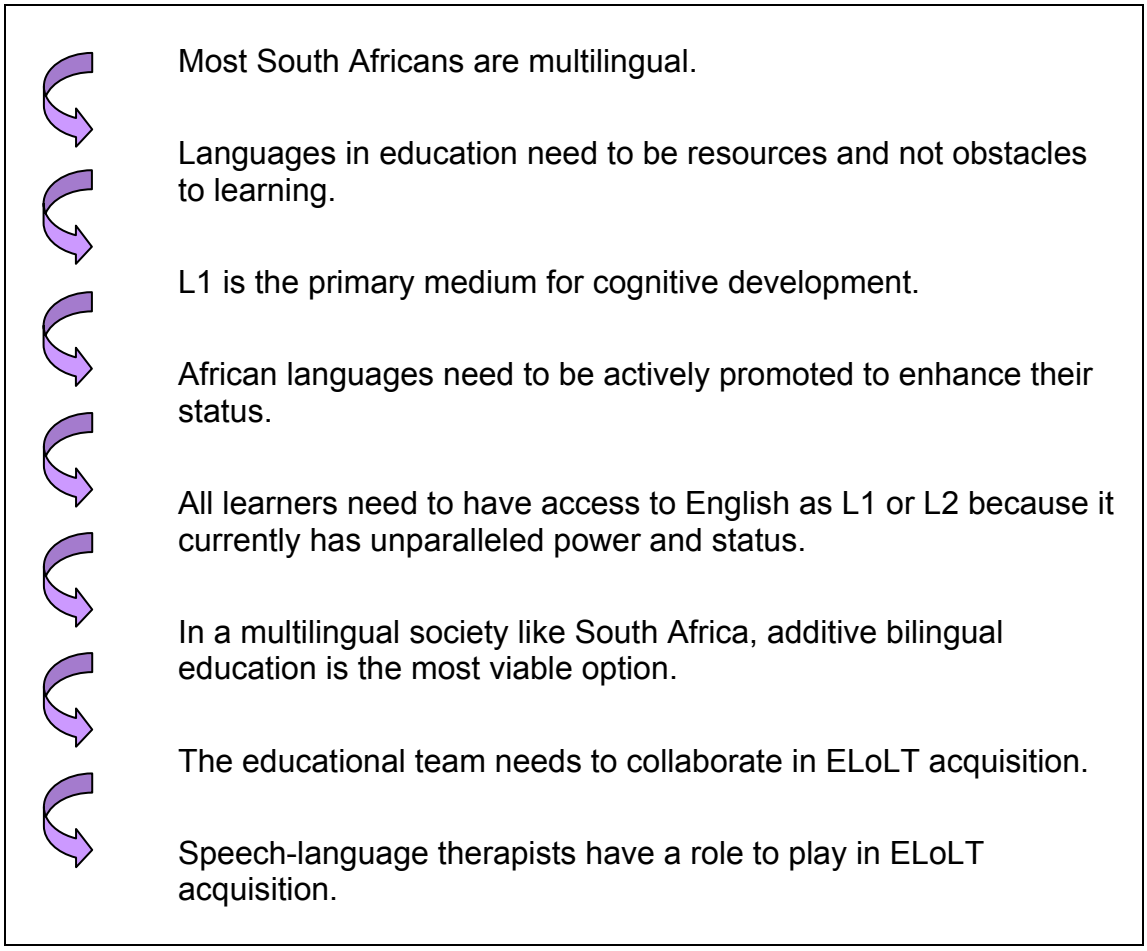

FIGURE 1.2: SCHEMATIC REPRESENTATION OF THE PROPOSED APPROACH TOWARDS ELoLT

Based on: Heugh, Siegrühn and Plüddemann (1995:vi).

In response to the call of the DoE for all professionals involved in ECE to respond passionately and effectively and work together in fulfilling the educational needs of young learners (RSA, 2001a:18), the current research was initiated to understand the role of the speech-language therapist in support of urban preschool learners and teachers in the acquisition of ELoLT,

based on the approach outlined in Figure 1.2. Since urban preschools have been identified as the context of the research, a discussion of the South African preschool context is justified.

1.4 THE SOUTH AFRICAN URBAN PRESCHOOL CONTEXT

It is currently often the case in South African communities that many young learners are placed in English preschools without any prior knowledge of English. Life for these learners entering a new preschool environment may be complicated as they are obliged to communicate and learn in an unfamiliar language while being isolated from their communities and culture (NAEYC, 1996:5). Furthermore, teachers have observed that the behaviour of these learners often affects class activities and discipline. Some learners may appear to be fluent in English, but are unable to understand and express themselves as competently as their English-speaking peers (NAEYC 1996:8; Lemmer, 1995:89). These multilingual preschoolers need to be managed appropriately to develop adequate English language skills, not only for communication but also for learning.

Preschool teachers have a demanding task in preparing multilingual preschoolers for formal schooling in English, and in addition they are pressurised by parents or caregivers who expect their children to be fluent in English by the time they enter primary school (Calitz, 1990:20). All preschool teachers, however, have not been trained in the theories of L2 acquisition (Lemmer, 1995:88; Nieman, 1995:297). To complicate classroom management even further, preschool teachers also have to cope simultaneously with English First Language preschool learners in the same classroom (Dawber & Jordaan, 1999:2). A situation thus exists where preschool teachers are required to teach on different language levels to individual learners in the same class. This may demand specific *language input* planning apart from their lesson planning, for which they may require support from specialists with knowledge on language acquisition in children.

According to Lemmer (1995:88), some teachers have sufficient knowledge of African languages to provide additional support to multilingual preschool learners by making use of code-switching or code-mixing. The situation becomes more complex when English is the only language of instruction to the multilingual preschool learners who are in the initial stages of ELoLT acquisition, when their English proficiency is often limited. Furthermore, many of the preschool teachers in South Africa teach in English without being fully proficient in English themselves (Lemmer, 1995:88). This creates stress, both on emotional and physical levels (Diedricks, 1997:46), and often leads to teachers feeling incompetent and unsure, especially when they have to solve language problems in isolation, rendering the educational process less effective (Ashton & Webb, 1986:92). It is therefore essential that the language teaching needs of preschool teachers be addressed by educational support professionals, such as speech-language therapists, to prevent academic failure when multilingual learners enter primary school.

In 1991, when White governmental schools in South Africa accepted learners from all races, the majority of teachers in English-medium schools in South Africa were caught off guard by the diverse language situation in their classrooms (Barkhuizen, 1993:269). Rapid political and demographic changes forced teachers to adapt to new situations (Peirce & Ridge, 1997:174). Currently preschool teachers are still facing the challenge of becoming knowledgeable about and learning to relate to learners from linguistically and culturally different backgrounds. The sudden and abrupt transition from the learners' L1 to English is a major problem that they need to address urgently. In the course of displaying creative problem-solving skills and implementing their own strategies (Diedricks, 1997:46), preschool teachers often express the need for additional input and support, as well as specific educational strategies (Soto, 1991:32), which may be provided by, among others, speech-language therapists already working in urban preschools.

More than a decade ago, it became apparent that new material, methods, and programmes were needed to meet the needs of the multilingual learners

(Burleigh, 1994:51), for which purposes existing educational material and practices could have been adapted (Nieman, 1994:15). Progress in the development of teaching materials and programmes has, however, been slow and the problem has escalated as the number of multilingual learners in schools are increasing. Owing to limited educational funding in South Africa, teachers have to experiment with scarce resources in complex linguistic situations. As this lack of teaching and learning material and poor ELoLT proficiency of learners generally have reduced the teachers' morale (Mafisa, 2001:35), solutions need to be found that include the establishment of pathways to accommodate the acquisition of English (Bosman, 2000:225; Lemmer, 1995:88). Nieman (1994:16) recommends that experts with the appropriate knowledge to ensure informed decisions and solutions, support preschool teachers in the task of teaching English. Such experts, like speech-language therapists, need certain important skills apart from academic knowledge, especially the ability to interact with the preschool learner (Nieman, 1994:14).

Educators, specifically preschool teachers, face numerous challenges when teaching multilingual learners. The following research problem was formulated to investigate the role of speech-language therapists in support of these teachers.

1.5 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM AND RATIONALE

Over the past decade parents or caregivers have increasingly enrolled Black learners in South African urban preschools where English is the only MoI in the school. The abrupt change from L1 to English instruction has created a challenging environment for both learner and teacher. From discussions the researcher had with preschool teachers in the Pretoria CBD and Sunnyside area during workshops, it became obvious that several preschools were struggling to prepare multilingual preschoolers for formal schooling in English. The learners' language deficiencies were reported as being a major obstacle to school readiness. The preschool teachers expressed feelings of frustration because they could not complete their daily educational programmes and they

were also concerned about the multilingual learners' academic performances and future. The teachers requested advice and support to respond effectively to the language needs of the multilingual preschool learners, and specifically requested intervention guidelines for the initial stages of the multilingual learners' acquisition of ELoLT. From these conversations, it was evident that the multilingual preschoolers acquiring ELoLT experienced difficulties on three levels: vocabulary (both receptive and expressive), syntactic structures, and communicative skills (especially pragmatic skills). It was in this unexplored multilingual context that a need was identified for speech-language therapists to make their expertise available to the multilingual preschool learners as well as to their preschool teachers. The current research was initiated in response to these needs of this specific community.

The exploration of the role of the speech-language therapist in the acquisition of ELoLT in the specific community is necessary to guide the training and practice of speech-language therapists. Such information will provide empirical evidence to facilitate the clinical implementation of service delivery to multilingual preschool learners. The purpose of this study was therefore to explore the existing situation and to interpret current opinions and perceptions in order to guide speech-language therapists towards the fulfilment of their role in the urban multilingual preschools. Contextual information on urban preschools will enable the speech-language therapists to take appropriate and innovative action, as and when their services are required.

The ultimate aim of the study is first, to describe the specific educational context of multilingual preschools in the Pretoria CBD and Sunnyside area in order to explain the local context, second, to describe the language needs of multilingual preschool learners acquiring ELoLT, and third, to explore the role of speech-language therapists in support of preschool teachers and multilingual preschool learners in the acquisition of ELoLT.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

An exploratory, descriptive, contextual research design, implementing the quantitative perspective, was selected for the purpose of the study.

In the descriptive survey, two survey techniques were employed, namely a questionnaire and a test battery in a checklist format (Leedy & Ormrod, 2004:185;186). The questionnaire was employed to collect information and investigate perceptions of preschool teachers on the acquisition of ELoLT, and the test battery (checklist) was employed to collect data on the language and communication characteristics of multilingual preschool learners acquiring ELoLT.

The research was conducted over three phases. Phase One determined the needs and strengths of preschool teachers and multilingual preschool learners from the preschool teachers' perspective, Phase Two determined the language and communication proficiency in ELoLT of multilingual preschool learners from the speech-language therapist's perspective, and Phase Three explored the role of speech-language therapists in ELoLT acquisition.

Multilingual preschools in the Pretoria CBD and Sunnyside areas were selected as the research context in response to a request from the preschool teachers in these areas for support and intervention guidelines. As the research was conducted in a demarcated geographical area and because of the small scale of the research, the findings were not generalised to the general population (Fetterman, 1998:29).

1.7 DEFINITION OF TERMS

The researcher selected the following frequently used terms and defined them according to their specific use in the study.

Speech-language therapist

The term *communication pathologist* is often used internationally to describe the profession of the speech-language therapist and audiologist. In South Africa the distinct terms *speech-language therapist* and *audiologist* are more common, whereas the term *speech therapist* is often used in the educational context (Du Plessis, Hugo & Soer, 2000:320). For the purpose of this study, the researcher selected the term *speech-language therapist* when referring to the profession of the communication pathologist.

Preschool

Two main types of ECE centres exist in South Africa, where the public (or government) centres are subsidised by provincial governments and independent centres are financially independent (RSA, 2001a:13). The term *preschool* includes both these categories and refers to schools that provide ECE programmes for learners aged three to six years.

Preschool learner and preschooler

In South Africa children may be placed in ECE centres from infancy. ECE centres or preschools may accommodate infants up to the age of three or, alternatively, children between the ages of three and six years. Both these age groups may also be accommodated in one centre, but different programmes are followed with each age group. Legally learners have to enter primary school the year in which they turn seven, setting the age limit for preschool learners at six years. The term *preschool learner* or *preschooler* thus refers to a young child between the ages of three and six years, attending a preschool centre.

Preschool teacher

Teachers at public or government preschools often have specialised formal training in ECE. At independent preschools, principals may employ teachers without this specific educational qualification. In this study, the term *preschool teacher* refers to the person teaching at a preschool centre to preschool learners. The preschool teacher may or may not have formal training to teach preschoolers.

Mother tongue *(L1)*

The term *mother tongue* (L1) has been used synonymously with concepts such as *first language* and *primary language. Mother tongue* refers to the first language the child has learned, usually from the parents (LANGTAG, 1996:219; Venter, 1998:5). Educators tend to use the term *first language* when referring to the mother tongue. In the South African context, the term *primary language* may also be used to include both the mother tongue and the dominant language of the immediate community (Heugh, Siegrühn & Plüddemann, 1995:viii). In this study, the researcher selected the term *mother tongue* to indicate the dominant language spoken at home.

Additional language *(L2)*, Multilingualism, and English as language of learning and teaching (ELoLT)

The term *additional language* (L2) is frequently used in education in South Africa. The language acquired after L1 development is generally referred to as a *second language*. In this study, the term *additional language* is preferred over *second language* as used internationally, since Black communities in South Africa often acquire more than two languages. An *additional language* may therefore be the second or third language of the speaker.

In keeping with the preceding discussion, *multilingualism* is preferred over *bilingualism,* as the latter does not accurately describe the South African

situation for the majority of the population. *Multilingualism* implies proficiency in two or more languages (LANGTAG, 1996:219; Heugh *et al.*, 1995:vii). The degree of proficiency may, however, vary from full proficiency in more than one language to a minimal degree of proficiency in one of the languages (De Klerk, 1995:53; Lemmer, 1995:92). In this research project, *multilingualism* therefore needs to be interpreted as the inclusion of two or more languages alternatively as medium of communication in different situations (Hoffman, 1991).

The terms *English second language* and *limited English proficiency* are familiar concepts from international literature in reference to non-English learners, but do not adequately describe the needs of Black learners attending English-medium schools in South Africa. The term *English as Language of Learning and Teaching* (ELoLT) was selected as it describes the situation in the South African context more accurately. The term will assist the researcher in this study to conceptualise the specific needs of learners and teachers alike (Lemmer, 1995:89).

Medium of Instruction (MoI)

Although the terms *Medium of Instruction* (MoI) and *language of learning* have been interchangeable in South Africa since 1993, neither term includes both the teaching and learning components of education (LANGTAG, 1996:218; Heugh *et al.*, 1995:vii). As a result of the language diversity in South Africa various languages are spoken on all school premises. Teachers may even use more than one language to communicate with learners, especially during explanations, provided they have sufficient knowledge of the learners' L1. Every school, however, has a specific language for formal communication and instruction. In this study, *Medium of Instruction* (MoI) refers to the official language used in schools to pass on information from the teacher to the learner (Heugh *et al.*, 1995:vii).

Code-switching and code-mixing

There are important distinctions between the terms *code-switching* and *code-mixing*. *Code-switching* occurs when one switches from one language to another between utterances or for part of an utterance that consists of at least one sentence (Heugh *et al.*, 1995:vii). *Code-mixing* refers to the *borrowing* of words from an L2 in an utterance (Kaschula & Anthonissen, 1995:73). Both these terms are used to describe the switching between languages, which is characteristic of multilingual language use (Hoff, 2004:411).

1.8 LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations will be used in the study:

ASHA	American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
BICS	Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills
CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
CBD	Central Business District
CUP	Common Underlying Proficiency
DoE	Department of Education
EAL	English as Additional Language
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ELoLT	English as Language of Learning and Teaching
GDE	Gauteng Department of Education
IEP	Individual Education Plan
IQMS	Integrated Quality Management System
ITPA	Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities (Kirk, McCarthy & Kirk, 1968)
KLST	Kindergarten Language Screening Test (Gauthier & Madison, 1998)
LANGTAG	Language Plan Task Group
LoLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
L1	First language or mother tongue

L2	Additional language
MoI	Medium of Instruction
NAEYC	National Association for the Education of Young Children
NCESS	National Committee on Education Support Services
NCSNET	National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training
PANSALB	Pan South African Language Board
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
SASLHA	South African Speech-Language-Hearing Association
SD	Standard Deviation
TACL-R	Test of Auditory Comprehension of Language – Revised (Carrow, 1985)
TALK	The Project for the Transfer of African Languages
USA	United States of America

1.9 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

The study is presented in the following format:

CHAPTER 1: PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Chapter One serves as an introduction to the study. The rationale for the study is provided and the research problem formulated. The justification and significance of the study are highlighted and relevant terminology is defined. An overview of the content of each chapter is given.

CHAPTER 2: THE ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH AS LANGUAGE OF LEARNING AND TEACHING: THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

In Chapter Two a review of the literature relating to additional language acquisition is provided. Relevant issues relating to the South African context

are discussed. An overview of different approaches, as well as individual and external influences in the acquisition process, is given.

CHAPTER 3: MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOL CONTEXT

Chapter Three focuses on the importance of language proficiency for learning in the early academic phases of schooling and highlights the challenges of learning in an L2. The role-players involved in the acquisition of ELoLT during the preschool years are discussed, with special attention to their individual roles.

CHAPTER 4: COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS IN AN INCLUSIVE APPROACH TO THE ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH AS LANGUAGE OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

Chapter Four discusses the collaboration between speech-language therapists and preschool teachers against the background of interactions in an eco-systemic model, inclusive education, and the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS). Consultation in a collaborative approach to intervention is described.

CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY

Chapter Five defines the research methodology of the study. It contains a description of the aims of the study, the research design, and the research phases. The participants, material and apparatus, research procedures, data recording, and data analysis procedures are described and the validity and reliability of the study are discussed.

CHAPTER 6: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Chapter Six provides the results of the study. An overview of the results is presented by means of tables and figures. The results are interpreted, evaluated, and compared to other research, and conclusions are reached.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

Chapter Seven provides the conclusion to the study. The final conclusions, recommendations, and implications of the study are highlighted and recommendations for further research discussed.

REFERENCES

A list of references used in the study is presented.

APPENDICES

The appendices supply additional information to support and improve insight into the research. The following is included: questionnaire; initial letter to teachers; follow-up letter to teachers; informed consent letter to parents; error analysis form; example of transcribed elicited language sample.

1.10 CONCLUSION

In accordance with *The rights of young children* (RSA, 2001a:39), which states that young children have the right to *appropriate* language stimulation, the DoE announced in White Paper 5 (RSA, 2001a:39) that educators have to employ developmentally appropriate practices to meet the language needs of learners at their particular stage of development. The classroom context, therefore, has to be constructed to meet the language needs of learners (Cele, 2001:190), which implies that an appropriate language curriculum should be presented in class (LANGTAG, 1996:27). In the *multilingual preschool classroom,* however, the needs of multilingual preschool learners

and preschool teachers have to be addressed. Consequently, it may be necessary for education support professionals to support the teachers and the learners. As speech-language therapists have the knowledge and training to support multilingual preschool learners and preschool teachers, they may become important role-players in the acquisition of ELoLT if they could determine and address the needs in specific educational contexts.

1.11 SUMMARY

This introductory chapter acts as justification for the study. The imminent probability of English becoming the international *lingua franca* and global trends towards multilingualism were discussed. The importance of proficiency in English to gain access to higher education levels in South Africa was highlighted. A need for collaboration among role-players in education was identified, while speech-language therapists are requesting the recognition of their skills in order to be part of the solution. The aim of the study was formulated to meet the challenge on contextual level, providing data on learners and educators in a specific context in order to assist preschool teachers in supporting the development of ELoLT in multilingual preschool learners. The chapter was concluded with an outline of the chapters and a definition of terms.