

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROFICIENCY IN ENGLISH, GRADE 12 ENGLISH
RESULTS AND THE ACADEMIC SUCCESS OF FIRST YEAR STUDENTS**

by

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SUMMARY

Key words: Second language, Second language learning, language proficiency, language of instruction, academic success

This research investigated the possible correlation between English proficiency and academic success in Internal Auditing 1 of learners registered at the Vaal Triangle Technikon.

Acquisition of a Second language was investigated with reference to Additive and Subtractive bilingualism, Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills, and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency. Factors that influence the acquisition of a L2 were also discussed.

Factors that influence learning through a Second language, problems experienced by learners learning through a Second language and the coping mechanisms they use were investigated.

The specific language situation in South African education was explained starting with a short historical background of English in South African schools. General problems experienced at schools, language problems experienced at schools, the language proficiency of teachers and how they cope with the language problems were discussed. Language problems experienced by the learners and its effect on higher education were also investigated.

A questionnaire was used to gather information regarding respondents' school history, First language, experiences with English as a subject at school, experiences of English as language of instruction, and their views on Internal Auditing 1 as a subject.

Respondents' English proficiency was determined through three instruments, namely Grade 12 English Second language results, an English proficiency test and an English writing performance test. There is a discrepancy between the respondents' own perception of their English proficiency and their English proficiency as reflected by their Grade 12 English Second language results, the proficiency test and the writing performance test. While respondents felt that their English proficiency is average or above average, the tests indicated that their English proficiency is very low.

Despite the respondents' very low levels of English proficiency they reported that they did not find the English used in different situations relating to Internal Auditing 1 difficult and no significant correlation could be determined between their English proficiency levels and their academic success in Internal Auditing 1.

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BICS	Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills
CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
SPSS	Statistical Programme for the Social Sciences
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language

CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION

1.1 BACKGROUND / INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

Language is critical to learning and it can influence academic achievement (Parkinson 1989:13; Lemmer 1993:146; Rademeyer 2001:1). As many South African learners are learning through medium of English, which is not their First Language (henceforth written as L1, but to be read as First Language) it is important to try and determine what influence this has on their learning and their academic success.

1.1.1 Language in South Africa

Although South Africa has eleven official languages, namely Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, SeSotho sa Lebowa, SeSotho, siSwati, Xitsonga, Setswana, Tshivenda, isiXhosa and isiZulu, English is used widely as the lingua franca in government, business, education and socially (Meshtrie 1995:xvii; Moonsamy 1995:4; Titlestad 1996:163; Wright 1993:1,3; Young 1995a:64). English is seen as an instrument of upward economic mobility (Bosch & De Klerk 1996:235; Lazenby 1996:30-35; Lemmer 1995:83; Mathiane 1989:7). It is also seen as the language of education (Bosch et al 1996:235; De Klerk 1995:8-9; Mawasha 1987:107,111,113; Moonsamy 1995:5) and the language that will lead to a better quality of life (Moonsamy 1995:8; Young 1995a:64). According to the National Education Co-ordinating Committee (1992:18 as quoted in Lemmer 1995:84):

...in this climate parents, learners and some teachers often seem to believe that English has an almost magical power: 'If you know English well, desired things will follow'.

In a lecture delivered by Turner (1966:9) he stated that knowledge of a major international language is important for every country in Africa if it is to develop to

the full, economically, socially and politically, and assume its proper place in the world. It seems that the major international language preferred by most South Africans is English.

1.1.2 Language at the Vaal Triangle Technikon

During 1998 the Senate of the Vaal Triangle Technikon adopted a new language policy, stating that English is the principal language for teaching, learning, tests, assignments, examinations and study material. This policy makes provision for assignments, tests and examinations to be answered in a language other than English, provided the examiner and the moderator can understand the other language. In the class situation, learners can ask questions in any language if the lecturer can understand the language and the lecturer may also answer in that language. However, all questions and answers must be translated into English to include all participants.

1.1.3 Language and Internal Auditing

The ability to communicate both orally and in writing is of vital importance in auditing (Sawyer, Dittenhofer & Scheiner 1996:926; Institute of Internal Auditors 2001). Sawyer et al (1996:932) even suggests that applicants for auditing positions should be given a test of writing ability before being appointed. In an article explaining the new Standards for Internal Auditing, Sinason and Tidrick (2001:7) mention that according to Performance Standards 2420 and 2440 all communication should be accurate, clear, concise, constructive, complete and timely. As most of the business communication in South Africa is conducted through the medium of English, it is therefore important that learners who obtain a Diploma or a Degree in Internal Auditing from the Vaal Triangle Technikon should not only be prepared to perform tasks related to auditing, but should also be able to communicate effectively through the medium of English if they are to be of value to their prospective employers.

1.1.4 Language background of learners at the Vaal Triangle Technikon

The learners registering at the Vaal Triangle Technikon have very diverse language backgrounds as they come from all over South Africa and some even comes from outside South Africa.

The majority of learners studying at this institution come from traditionally black schools where they receive instruction through their L1 up to Grade 4, but the language of instruction changes to English for all their subjects from Grade 5 onwards (Heugh 1995:43; Lemmer 1993:149). At this stage the learner has not gained proper grounding in his L1 (Lemmer 1995:85) and does not have adequate proficiency in English to meet the requirements of the Grade 5 syllabuses either (Lemmer 1993:149-150; MacDonald 1990:137-144). The learner will, however, receive teaching, has to study and will be tested in a language that is almost foreign to him/her. To make the problem worse, many teachers themselves are not sufficiently proficient in English to teach the different content subjects effectively through English (Lemmer 1995:88).

Table 1: First language of learners registered during 2001

First Language	% of total Learner population
Southern Sotho	19.40
Tswana	14.73
Zulu	14.26
Northern Sotho	12.80
Afrikaans	10.05
English	6.71
Tsonga	6.68
Venda	5.99
Xhosa	5.17
Swazi	1.92
Unknown	0.81
Other Black Languages	0.70
Afrikaans/English	0.31
Other European Languages	0.25

Ndebele	0.08
Gujerati	0.06
French	0.05
German	0.01
Latin	0.01
Dutch	0.01
Total	100.00

Table 1 (Vaal Triangle Technikon IT System, printed August 2001) confirms the language diversity of learners registered at the Vaal Triangle Technikon during 2001. Only 6,71% are L1 English-speakers, which means that 93,29% of learners at the Vaal Triangle Technikon are studying through English mastered as a Second Language (henceforth written as L2, but to be read as Second Language).

As learning through English as a L2 is thought to impede learning and also to cause poor mastery of both English and the L1, the poor Grade 12 results and the general lack of academic skills and intellectual growth among black learners at secondary and tertiary levels, are most often attributed to the use of English as medium of instruction (Banda 2000:51).

1.2 MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH

1.2.1 Language proficiency at other local and international institutions

Many teachers and researchers observe low levels of English L2 proficiency among South Africans. Bruckmann (1998:180) reports findings from a study done by Proctor (1996) that has shown that fewer than half of the learners enrolling at a college of education had a reading level of Grade 7 or higher. Rademeyer (2001:1) and Van der Linde (2001:3) also report that 30% and 25%, of learners at the University of Pretoria and learners at the Vaal Triangle Campus of the University of Potchefstroom respectively had a language proficiency of Grade 7.

In a study done by Ayaya (1996:112) at the National University of Lesotho, he found that communication skills in English language taught to first-year B.Comm learners, had a significant positive influence on their academic performance. Vinke and Jochems (1992:282) conducted an institution-specific study to clarify the relationship between English proficiency and academic success in the Netherlands. They used the Test of English as a Foreign Language (henceforth written as TOEFL) as an indicator of English proficiency. The results indicated a weak correlation between English proficiency and academic success for learners with a TOEFL score of 450 and above. Although a TOEFL score of 450 indicates limited English proficiency, learners in this category seem to overcome this with greater effort or greater academic ability.

For learners with TOEFL scores below 450, the correlation between English proficiency and academic success came close to zero, indicating that in this category lack of English proficiency can be a real problem for academic success. In these instances it seems that the lack of English proficiency is such a problem that “even greater learner effort or greater academic abilities will not increase the chance of academic success” (Vinke et al 1992:282)

If English proficiency is a problem for learners from other institutions in South Africa, for Lesotho, which is just across the borders, and for international learners studying through medium of English as a L2 in the Netherlands, the success rate of learners at the Vaal Triangle Technikon could also be affected by their proficiency in English or lack thereof.

1.2.2 Implications of failure for learners

Failure has a negative impact on a learner's self-concept and self-confidence. Learners also suffer financially because they have to pay for supplementary examinations and sometimes even have to register for the same subject a number of times. Learners also change from the Internal Auditing diploma to other diplomas where they do not have to continue with this subject because they feel

that it is too difficult. They have then spent large amounts of money registering for subjects not needed for the other courses and on textbooks that they will not need anymore.

1.2.3 Implications of failure for the Vaal Triangle Technikon

From a financial perspective, it is important to the Vaal Triangle Technikon that learners who enrol for the courses, complete them in the minimum time. State subsidies to technikons are based on throughput of learners and not on learners registered for a subject. Every time a learner fails a subject, the institution loses part of its subsidy.

Because of growing limitations on financial resources for tertiary education in South Africa, institutions cannot afford to spend large sums of money on prospective learners who have little or no chance of being academically successful (De Boer & Van Aardt 1998:55).

Although many factors will influence learners' academic success, it is important to determine what influence proficiency in English and learning through the medium of English as a L2 has, if any.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND HYPOTHESES

1.3.1 Problem 1

How do learners feel about various aspects regarding English as a subject at school, English as language of instruction at school, English as language of instruction for Internal Auditing 1 and Internal Auditing 1 as a subject?

1.3.2 Problem 2

Is there a significant correlation between English proficiency and academic success in Internal Auditing 1?

In order to conduct a thorough investigation into problem 2, the following hypotheses are formulated:

Null-hypothesis (H_{01}): There is no significant correlation between Grade 12 English results and academic success in Internal Auditing 1.

Experiential hypothesis (H_1): There is a significant correlation between Grade 12 English results and academic success in Internal Auditing 1.

Null-hypothesis (H_{02}): There is no significant correlation between the results of the English proficiency test and academic success in Internal Auditing 1.

Experiential hypothesis (H_2): There is a significant correlation between the results of the English proficiency test and academic success in Internal Auditing 1.

Null-hypothesis (H_{03}): There is no significant correlation between the results of the English writing performance test and academic success in Internal Auditing 1.

Experiential hypothesis (H_3): There is a significant correlation between the results of the English writing performance test and academic success in Internal Auditing 1.

Null-hypothesis (H_{04}): There is no significant correlation between the results of the English proficiency test and Grade 12 English results.

Experiential hypothesis (H_4): There is a significant correlation between the results of the English proficiency test and Grade 12 English results.

Null-hypothesis (H_{05}): There is no significant correlation between the results of the English writing performance test and Grade 12 English results.

Experiential hypothesis (H_5): There is a significant correlation between the results of the English writing performance test and Grade 12 English results.

Null-hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant correlation between Grade 12 English results and Grade 12, L1 results.

Experiential hypothesis (H_6): There is a significant correlation between Grade 12 English results and Grade 12, L1 results.

1.4 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aims of this study are the following:

- ◆ To gather information regarding learners' experiences of English as a subject during different phases of their school careers.
- ◆ To gather information regarding learners' experiences with English as language of instruction during different phases of their school careers.
- ◆ To gather information about learners' habits regarding watching television, listening to the radio and reading.
- ◆ To gather information regarding learners' opinion of English as language of instruction for Internal Auditing 1.
- ◆ To gather information regarding learners' opinion of Internal Auditing 1 as a subject.
- ◆ To determine whether there is a significant correlation between Grade 12 English results and academic success in Internal Auditing 1.
- ◆ To determine whether there is a significant correlation between the results of the English proficiency test and the English writing performance test and academic success in Internal Auditing 1.
- ◆ To determine whether there is a significant correlation between the results of the English proficiency test and the English writing performance test and Grade 12 English results.
- ◆ To determine whether there is a significant correlation between Grade 12 English results and Grade 12 L1 results.

- ◆ If a positive correlation is found, to determine whether it is strong enough to justify implementing a pre-requisite for learners who wish to register for Internal Auditing 1 at the Vaal Triangle Technikon.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research method for the study consists of a literature study and quantitative research involving the administration of language proficiency tests and a questionnaire.

1.5.1 Literature study

An extensive literature study was undertaken to gather information regarding the learning of a L2, learning through a L2 and the situation regarding English as a L2 in South African schools.

Primary as well as secondary literature was used and four computer database searches were done, namely: Australian Education Index, ERIC, NEXUS, and PsycINFO. The following keywords were used for the computer database searches: second language learning, second language learning theories, academic achievement and language proficiency. Internet searches were also undertaken and official publications of the South African government, departments in government and professional bodies were also used to develop this research. The questionnaire was designed, based on the information gathered from the literature study.

1.5.2 Quantitative research

Quantitative research was done using a survey research design as well as a correlational research design. Quantitative research designs originated from research in agriculture and the hard sciences, and they maximise objectivity by

using numbers, statistics, structure, and experimental control (Schumacher & McMillan 1993:32).

The survey research was done by means of a questionnaire, compiled by the researcher from information collected through the literature study. The questionnaire included dichotomous questions, multiple-choice questions and scaled questions.

For the correlational research, the results of two language proficiency tests, the Grade 12 English symbol, the Grade 12 L1 symbol and results of Internal Auditing 1 were used.

All learners registered for Internal Auditing 1 as part of the Internal Auditing Diploma at the Vaal Triangle Technikon were included in the study.

1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Academic success is influenced by many different factors, for example learner effort, age, gender, previous knowledge and experience, parent involvement, etcetera. In this study, the researcher concentrates specifically on the influence of proficiency in the language of instruction, which is a L2, on the success of the learner.

This study was conducted with learners from one specific higher education institution in South Africa and the situation might well be different for learners from different provinces or different higher education institutions.

1.7 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1 is an introduction to the study. A motivation for the study is given, the problems are stated, the aims of the investigation are listed and the methods of research are explained. The limitations of the study are also briefly outlined.

Chapter 2 deals with the acquisition of a L2. Additive bilingualism, subtractive bilingualism, the difference between Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (henceforth written as CALP) and Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (henceforth written as BICS), CALP across languages and factors that influence the acquisition of a L2 will be investigated.

Chapter 3 will investigate factors that influence learning in a L2, problems experienced by learners learning through a L2 and some coping mechanisms they use.

Chapter 4 gives a short history of language in South African schools, general and language problems faced by schools, language proficiency problems relating to teachers and learners at school and problems faced by higher education learners.

Chapter 5 focuses on the research methods. It includes a motivation for the specific methods used and explanations of the various instruments that were used. Techniques used for data-collection and for the statistical analysis are also discussed.

Chapter 6 reports and discusses the results achieved.

Chapter 7 closes the study with a short summary of the most important findings. Recommendations and suggestions for possible further research are made.

CHAPTER 2

ACQUISITION OF A SECOND LANGUAGE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

According to Lemmer and Squelch (1993:41), language is a crucial means of gaining access to important knowledge and skills. From Chapter 1 (see paragraph 1.1.2) it is evident that most of the learners at the Vaal Triangle Technikon are studying through the medium of English which is their L2. It is also clear from paragraph 1.4.1 that many lecturers blame learners' limited L2 proficiency as being one of the factors responsible for their poor academic performance. Although Chapter 1 referred to English as a L2, this chapter will investigate some aspects of the L2 in general. The researcher will investigate whether learning a L2 always results in bilingualism and whether being able to *speak* a language entails a person's ability to use that language in academic situations. It will also investigate whether conceptual knowledge in a L1 can be transferred to a L2 and finally it will look at some factors that influence L2 acquisition.

2.2 BILINGUALISM: ADDITIVE OR SUBTRACTIVE?

When a person is learning a L2, the intention is usually to become fluent in both L1 and L2 and not to replace the L1 with the L2. According to The Concise Oxford Dictionary (1982, s.v. 'bilingual') bilingualism refers to a person's ability to speak two languages fluently. According to the research done, this does not always happen.

Studies on bilingualism differentiate, among other things, between additive bilingualism and subtractive bilingualism (Lambert 1977:15-28; Lambert & Taylor 1983:268; Lockett 1995:75; Norton 1998:4; Pierce 1995:10; Roseberry-McKibbin & Brice 2000:1; Taylor, Meynard & Rheault 1977:101). Additive bilingualism takes place when a second socially relevant language is added to the individual's linguistic repertoire without reducing or disrupting the proficiency in the L1 (Norton 1998:4; Wright, Taylor & Macarthur 2000:65). Subtractive bilingualism, on the

other hand, takes place when a L2 is learnt at the cost of the L1 and the development of the L1 is slowed down or even reversed (Norton 1998:4; Wright et al 2000:65).

As language is essentially a human activity for the purpose of communication and is inextricably bound up with culture (Cann 1992:14), the loss of a learner's L1 (i.e. subtractive bilingualism) could also lead to the loss of the learner's culture. There is much literature in the field of bilingual education (see Cummins 1996; Cummins & Swain 1986; Genesee 1994; Skutnabb-Kangas 1984) which demonstrates convincingly that the validation of a learner's language, culture and history not only serves to maintain the L1 amongst learners, but can also promote their learning of the L2.

In a study done by Norton (1998) she compared the language practices of two immigrant families in Canada. In one of the families subtractive bilingualism took place, while additive bilingualism took place in the other. Where subtractive bilingualism took place, it resulted in a loss of respect for speakers of the L1, even if those people were the parents (Norton 1998: 7,8). The L2 became a language of power in the home and it had devastating effects on the family structure because the mother and grandparents were not proficient in the L2 (Norton 1998:8,11). It also caused the father, who was proficient in the L2, to look down on other members of his own culture and to see himself as part of the L2 culture (Norton 1998:7,8,11).

In the home where additive bilingualism took place, the importance of the L2 for social and job opportunities was accepted, but at the same time the importance of the L1 for family and cultural reasons was acknowledged (Norton 1998:10). Here the family stayed strong and they accepted the diversity in the community without looking down on people of other cultures (Norton 1998: 10,11). This family did not feel inferior or left out, because they were immersed in their L1 community by having L1 friends, going to L1 classes and attending L1 church services (Norton 1998:12).

The results of several studies (Bialystok 1991; Cummins et al 1986; Mohanty 1994; Ricciardelli 1992) suggest that additive bilingualism entails no negative consequences for learners' academic, linguistic, or intellectual development. Although the evidence is not conclusive, it clearly points in the direction of metalinguistic, academic and intellectual benefits for bilingual children who continue to develop both their languages.

Ideally then, learners should experience additive bilingualism, learning a L2 while their L1 and culture are maintained and reinforced. Teachers should support learners' L1 and culture and encourage them to become fully proficient bilinguals so that they can have a better chance of growing up to become successful citizens who are invaluable assets to the society and the economy (Roseberry-McKibbin et al 2000:3).

2.3 PROFICIENCY IN A L2: THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BASIC INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS (BICS) AND COGNITIVE ACADEMIC LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY (CALP)

Proficiency in a language is a factor that shows the extent to which the language has been understood by the learner and made part of his cognitive scheme (Cann 1992:38). It is not a single achievement, marking some quantitative level of progress, but rather the ability to apply specific processing skills in problems bearing identifiable cognitive demands (Bialystock 1991 cited in Perkins, Brutton & Gass 1996:65). Cavagnoli and Nardin (1999) explain that "knowing" a language demonstrates not only grammatical competence, but also the ability to use the grammar correctly in the appropriate situation. Hymes (1981:125) refers to communicative competence as "the ability to say the right thing in the right way at the right time in the right place".

Bruner (1975), Cummins (1981a), Donaldson (1978), Johnson (1991), McLaughlin (1985), Olsen (1977), Snow and her colleagues (Davidson, Kline & Snow, 1986,

Snow, Cancino, De Temple & Schley 1991) and others have all argued that the context-embedded everyday communications make fundamentally different demands on a person than do discussions of abstract ideas, reading a difficult text or preparing an essay. Gibbons (1991:3) has given a very good description of what she termed “playground language” and “classroom language”. According to her, playground language includes the language which enables children to develop and maintain social contacts in a variety of day-to-day activities, to make friends or to join in games. As this communication usually occurs in face-to-face contact, it is thus highly dependent on the physical and visual context, and on gesture and body language. Fluency with this kind of language is an important part of language development; without it, a child is isolated from the normal social life of the playground.

But playground language is very different from the language that teachers are supposed to use in the classroom and from the language that we expect children to learn to use. Playground language is not the language associated with learning mathematics, or social studies, or science. The playground situation does not normally offer children the opportunity to use such language as: “*if we increase the angle by 5 degrees, we could cut the circumference into equal parts*” (Gibbons 1991:3). It does not normally require the language associated with higher order thinking skills, such as hypothesising, evaluating, inferring, generalising, predicting or classifying either. Yet these are the language functions which are related to learning and cognitive development; they occur in all areas of the curriculum, and without them a learner’s potential in academic areas cannot be realised.

This distinction is also consistent with Vygotsky’s developmental differentiation between language used for social communication and that used as a medium for organising thought and ordering the components of an abstract and decontextualised symbol system (Vygotsky 1962). In a discussion of the acquisition of a L2, it is therefore important to make a distinction between proficiency in everyday conversational language and the more academic language referred to above.

Cummins (1981a:24) makes a very useful distinction between everyday communication language and academic language. The everyday communication language, known as BICS allows learners to converse fluently in undemanding everyday situations. During the use of BICS, the context or situation provides a great deal of information about the meaning of what is said. This can occur through the place where the communication takes place, who the person is, the person's gestures and expressions, what the communicators are doing, and the other activities happening around them (Wright et al 2000:66). BICS will be used in everyday conversations, when playing games or when there are visuals present (Freeman & Freeman 1998:74).

CALP, on the other hand, is defined as the proficiency needed to understand academic concepts and to perform higher cognitive operations that are required of a person at school or at higher education level. CALP allows for context-reduced settings that require manipulation of abstract forms of the language (Wright et al 2000:66) and will be used when reading textbooks or novels without photos or pictures, writing long compositions, understanding a long presentation without visuals or understanding new concepts (Freeman et al 1998:74).

The distinction between BICS and CALP can be portrayed in the image of an iceberg (Cummins 1984:138):

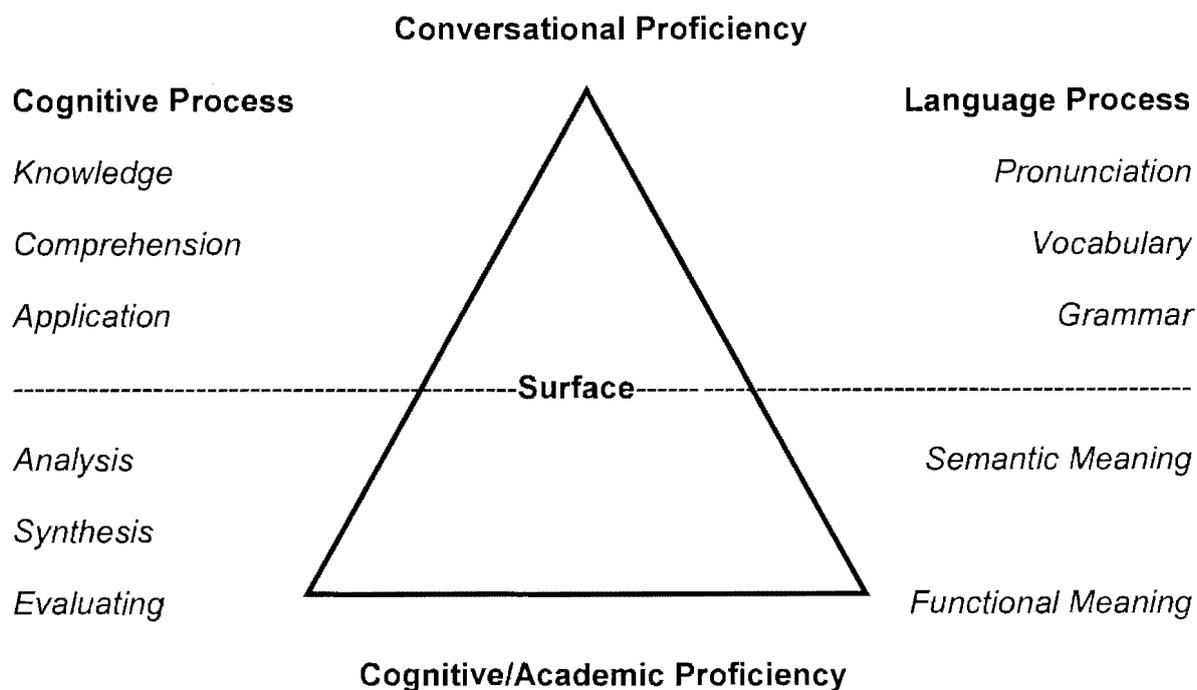


Figure 1: The Iceberg of language proficiency

A person will be proficient in BICS if he can perform the cognitive processes that appear above the surface line and if he has mastered basic pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary. In general terms, conversational proficiency is a level of proficiency required to carry on context-embedded interactions with other speakers of the language that do not require demanding cognitive processing.

To be proficient in CALP, a person should be able to perform the cognitive processes of analysis, synthesis and evaluation that appear beneath the surface line, and he/she should be able to understand semantic meaning and functional meaning in the language, that are much more significant for academic progress. Cognitive proficiency includes the ability to use language in context-reduced situations where a high level of cognitive involvement is required (Cummins 1996:58). It is important to keep in mind that the term *academic* may imply as much, but academic proficiency is not limited to school-based skills and knowledge (Wright et al 2000:65).

In answer to critics, Cummins and Swain (1983:36) admitted that the dichotomy BICS versus CALP is too simplistic. Cummins (1984:12) therefore proposed the following “framework of language proficiency” which is two-dimensional:

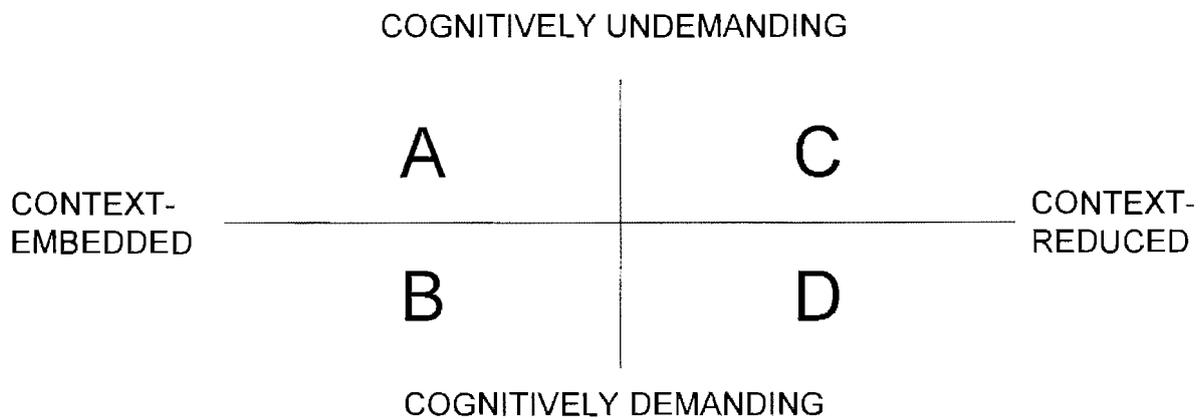


Figure 2: Range of Contextual Support and Degree of Cognitive Involvement in Communicative Activities

The one continuum relates to the range of contextual support that is available for expressing or receiving meaning. Context-embedded communication, as found at the one end of the continuum, is communication where the participants can actively negotiate meaning and the language is supported by a wide range of meaningful paralinguistic and situational cues. During context-embedded communication, a person could be having a discussion, write a letter or provide feedback that a message is not understood.

At the other extreme of this continuum, context-reduced communication can be found. This is communication where a person has to rely heavily on linguistic cues to find meaning and it "may in some cases involve suspending knowledge of the 'real world' in order to interpret (or manipulate) the logic of the communication appropriately" (Cummins 1984:12). Where higher-order thinking skills (such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation) are required in a curriculum, language is context-reduced.

The vertical continuum addresses the developmental aspects of communicative proficiency in terms of the degree of active cognitive involvement in a task. It can be conceptualised in terms of the amount of information that must be processed by a person simultaneously or in close succession in order to carry out an activity (Cummins 1984:13).

At the cognitively undemanding end of the continuum, one would find activities and communicative skills in which one's linguistic tools have become largely automatised and you would need little active cognitive involvement to perform these tasks satisfactorily. An example of communication that would be at this end of the continuum would be: having a conversation with a friend about one's sport, where the processing of information is relatively simple and straightforward.

Those tasks and activities in which one's communicative tools have not become automatised and in which one would need a lot of active cognitive involvement, would be found at the cognitively demanding end of the continuum. Examples of this kind of activity are: persuading another person that one's point of view is correct or writing an essay in an examination (Cummins 1984:13). As specific linguistic skills improve, they will travel from the bottom to the top of the vertical continuum.

Casual conversation is context-embedded, cognitively undemanding and often develops relatively quickly among L2-learners, because these forms of communication are supported by interpersonal and contextual cues and make relatively few cognitive demands on an individual (Cummins 1996:58). This form of communication will fall into quadrant A and can be classified as BICS.

CALP, on the other hand, will be at the other extreme of the horizontal continuum, in quadrant D. Mastering the academic functions of a language will take much longer, because such uses require high levels of cognitive involvement and are only minimally supported by contextual or interpersonal cues (Cummins 1996:58).

Examples of communication activities that would fall into this quadrant would be reading an academic text or writing an essay. A learner who has acquired CALP in a language should be able to use that language in cognitive problem-solving and also to analyse his own thoughts (Wright et al 2000:66).

The distinction between context-embedded (quadrants A and B) and context-reduced (quadrants C and D) language should not be seen as a distinction between oral and written language (Cummins 1996:59). It could happen that some context-embedded activities are just as cognitively demanding as context-reduced activities. For example, writing a letter to a close friend will be cognitively undemanding and context-embedded, while writing an essay on an academic topic will be context-reduced and cognitively demanding (Cummins 1996:59).

As this framework is based on two continua, it would be logical to assume that development of proficiency will happen gradually and cannot jump from one point on a continuum to another. BICS generally develops prior to CALP (Vygotsky 1962) and BICS is also acquired more quickly than CALP (Collier 1989; Cummins et al 1986).

One should be careful not to extrapolate a learner's overall proficiency in L2, from his/her proficiency in BICS (Cummins 1996:52). It could happen that a learner's face-to-face conversational skills appear adequate and that poor academic performance is then blamed on deficient cognitive abilities or poor motivation, while the real problem is that the learner has not developed adequate levels of CALP to cope with the academic work (Cummins 1996:54-55). According to Lemmer (1993:152-153), authentic language proficiency implies mastery of both BICS and CALP.

2.4 CALP ACROSS LANGUAGES

When investigating the acquisition of a L2, it is important to consider Cummins's linguistic interdependence principle (Cummins 1981a:21). The linguistic

interdependence principle has been confirmed in several studies according to Krashen & Biber, (cited in Cummins 1996); Malherbe 1946; McLaughlin 1986; Ramírez 1992; Snow, Cancino, Gonzalez and Shriberg 1987; Thomas and Collier 1995 (cited in Cummins 1996:120); Verhoeven 1991 and 1994 and it can be formally stated as follows:

To the extent that instruction in Lx is effective in promoting proficiency in Lx, transfer of this proficiency to Ly will occur provided there is adequate exposure to Ly (either in school or environment) and adequate motivation to learn Ly.

This principle means that instruction that develops L1 reading and writing skills is not only developing L1 skills, but a deeper conceptual and linguistic proficiency that is strongly related to the development of literacy in the L2, is also developed. Although the surface aspects of the languages, like pronunciation, fluency and vocabulary are clearly different and separate, there is an underlying cognitive/academic proficiency that is common across languages (Cummins 1996:111). This linguistic interdependence principle is presented by Cummins (1996:111) as a dual iceberg:

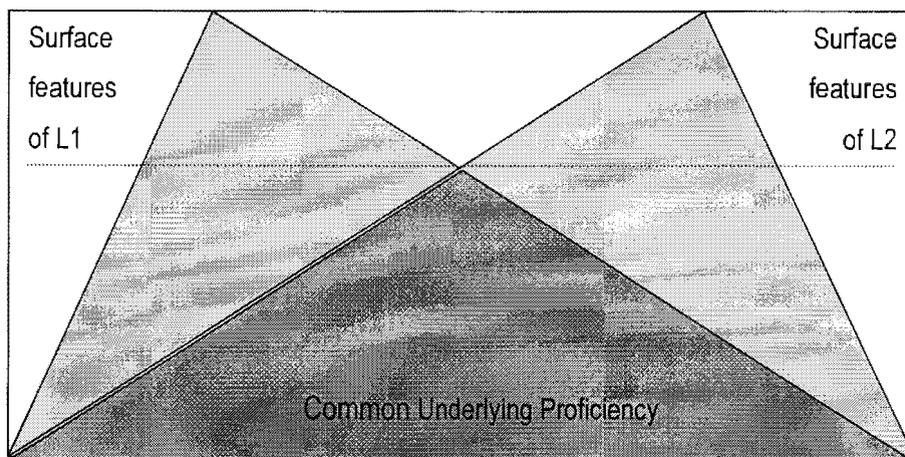


Figure 3: The “Dual Iceberg” representation of bilingual proficiency

Cummins et al (1986:103) argue that transferring cognitive skills to a L2 is made easier if literacy-related skills have been adequately developed in the L1 through a

gradual learning process conducted over a number of years. Cummins (1984:144) gives the following example of literacy-related skills that are involved in the common underlying proficiency between L1 and L2:

*An immigrant child who arrives in North America at, for example, age 15, understanding the concept of "honesty" in his or her L1 only has to acquire a new **label** in L2 for an already-existing concept. A child, on the other hand, who does not understand the meaning of this term in his or her L1 has a very different, and more difficult, task to acquire the **concept** in L2.*

In the same way, subject matter knowledge, higher-order thinking skills, reading strategies, writing composition skills, etcetera, developed through L1 can transfer or become available to L2, given sufficient exposure and motivation (Cummins 1984:144).

2.5 FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE L2 ACQUISITION

Many researchers have suggested different factors that could influence the acquisition of a L2. Some of these factors are: level of oral competence and literacy in the L1; stage of education reached in the L1; attitudes towards fellow students, teachers and learning the L2; teachers' attitudes towards learners and their L1; parents' attitudes towards learning the L2 and towards the school community; general intelligence and self-esteem; previous experience of the L2 and of L2 learning; teachers' and parents' expectations of learners' progress; age, sex and socio-economic status; motivation; learning strategy and personality (Baker 1993:82, Wales 1990:170).

In this study the researcher has concentrated only on some of the factors that are related to the learner's L1 and the L2. The general factors like sex, socio-economic status, learning strategies and personality have been ignored for this study.

2.5.1 Proficiency in L1

According to the interdependence principle discussed in paragraph 2.4, transferring cognitive skills to a L2 is made easier if literacy-related skills have been adequately developed in the L1. Some of the researchers who agree with this are Appel (1989:204) and Hornsnell (1987:8) who conclude that a child should not learn a L2 before he is literate in his L1, as the basic concepts of his L1 are extremely useful when learning a L2. McLaughlin (1984:10) and NEPI (1992:80) also state that a child will experience greater success in acquiring a L2 at school if he has already developed conceptual and academic skills in the L1. This is supported by research done by Nieto (1992) that indicates that competency in the L1 enhances the learning of additional languages, as well as the learner's cognitive development. Cann (1992:110) also concludes that proficiency in the L1 appears to be a significant predictor of proficiency in the L2.

Versfeld and Morrison (1992:7) suggest that children should be given at least four years of education in their L1 in order to retain reading and writing skills in that language. According to Wales (1990:174), learners who are already literate through their L1 understand the reading process and can transfer the process skills to reading in the L2. Some bilingual educators and theorists agree with him, because they blame the high rate of reading failure in the L2 on a lack of effective reading instruction in the L1 (Crawford 1999; Snow, Burns & Griffin 1998). Hudson and Smith (2001:3) suggest that, if teachers teach the essential elements of successful reading in the learner's L1, they will be supporting the development of the learner's L1 cognitive academic language proficiency, which will then transfer both to acquiring a L2 and to developing L2 literacy skills.

As proficiency in the L1 seems to have a significant influence on proficiency in the L2, parents should be encouraged to promote the development of the L1 through such activities as telling or reading stories to their children and generally spending time with them (Cummins 1981a:27; Schofield 2002:1).

2.5.2 Age of acquisition of the L2

Many studies examining L2 acquisition have focused on the influence of age. In these studies there is a debate on whether a critical period for learning a L2 exists. The critical-period-hypothesis rests on the assumption that the age-related effects seen in L2 studies are the result of maturational changes in brain structures that are used to learn and/or process language. It hypothesises that as the brain matures, it becomes less “plastic” and that lost neural plasticity impedes L2 learning (Patkowski 1980, 1990, 1994; Scovel 1988). The studies of Eubank and Gregg (1999), Hurford and Kirby (1999), Johnson and Newport (1989) and Weber-Fox and Neville (1999) all support the critical-period-hypothesis.

Research by Bialystok and Hakuta (1994, 1999), Birdsong (1992, 1998), Birdsong and Molis (2001) and Flege, Yeni-Komshian and Liu (1999) do not support the critical-age-hypothesis. Results in these studies indicate that learners who started learning a L2, earlier performed better in only one language outcome, namely their accent. In studies of Birdsong et al (2001) and Bongaerts (1999) they even found significant numbers of late learners who perform like native-speakers in various linguistic tasks.

A study conducted with respect to Dutch subjects learning English as L2 (Bongaerts, van Summeren, Planken & Schils 1997) and one in respect of learning Dutch as L2 at a later age (Bongaerts, Mennen & Van der Slik 2000) both replicate the findings of the study by Bongaerts, Planken and Schils (1995) in which they conclude that some learners, whose exposure to a L2 begins after 12 years of age, can still achieve a nativelylike accent in the L2. In Moyer’s study (1999) one subject started learning German L2 at the age of 22 and was largely self-taught. This person was mistaken as a native speaker of the L2 by the raters in the study. These studies do not support the idea of a neurologically based critical period, which, as Bialystok (1997:118) says, ought to reveal itself in an unambiguous linkage between L2 proficiency levels and the age of first exposure “consistent across studies”.

Although researchers do not agree on the idea of a specific critical age after which it becomes very difficult or impossible to acquire a L2, several researchers found that learners should not start learning a second language too early. Snow and Hoefnagel-Hohle (cited in Hakuta & Gould 1987:41) postulate that the fourth-to-seventh-graders are faster than the first-to-third-graders in acquiring a L2. Burstall (cited in Harley 1986:62) compared the achievements in French as L2 of a large sample of learners, some of whom began to learn French at the age of eight and the others at the age of eleven. After three years, having learnt French for the same amount of time, the older learners were ahead in three of the four skills tested (listening, reading and writing) while the younger learners achieved more highly only in a speaking test. Collier (1989:514) states that learners acquire early L2 skills faster when they start at eight to twelve years and that, over a period of time, they maintain a greater cognitive advantage over learners who start L2 acquisition at four to seven years of age.

In a more recent study by Muñoz (2000:166-175), the results confirmed that older learners advance at a higher rate in the first stages of language acquisition. In this study 12-year-old learners, who started learning the L2 at the age of 11, and 10-year-old learners, who started learning the L2 at the age of 8, were compared. When they were given the test, both groups of learners had 200 hours of instruction in the L2. This study concluded that learners who started learning the L2 at the age of 11 did significantly better in the cloze test, grammar test and dictation, than those learners who started learning the L2 at the age of 8.

Other researchers stress that starting to learn a L2 should not be left too late either. According to Wales (1990:181), L2-learners who do not have any background of the L2, experience great difficulty with the literacy demands made on them. She also states that these problems are intensified for learners who are not literate in their L1, and the older the learners are, the more acute the problem becomes. Cummins (1984:133) found that learners who arrive in a L2 environment at 8 - 15 years perform considerably below grade norms and that the acquisition of the L2 becomes progressively more difficult.

From the above-mentioned research, it is clear that there is not as yet consensus on the optimum age at which learners should start learning a L2. Although acquisition of the L2 might become more difficult with age, evidence of acquiring the L2 on a par with native speakers even after late exposure (Birdsong et al 2001; Bongaerts 1999; White & Genesee 1996), could suggest that later is better than earlier.

2.5.3 Time available for acquisition of the L2

Asher (cited in James 1988:213) says that one can learn a foreign language by any method or technique, as long as enough time is devoted to achieving proficiency. The question is therefore: How much time is enough time?

Age-appropriate BICS can be achieved within two years after immigration into the L2 community (Collier 1989:526; Cummins 1981b:148; Klesmer 1994:9; Skutnabb-Kangas 1984:113). Cummins (1996:54) confirms his earlier finding that learners can develop a relatively high degree of BICS within about two years of exposure to L2-speaking peers, television and schooling.

In a study done by Ramsey and Wright in 1974, they found that it would take a learner an average of five to seven years to approach grade norms in L2 academic skills after arriving in L2 environment. Other studies support the view that a learner will need five to seven years to acquire proficiency in CALP in a L2, provided they had at least two years of schooling in their L1 (Collier 1989:527; Cummins 1981b:148; Skutnabb-Kangas 1984:113).

According to Collier (1989:527), it can take a learner without any schooling in a L1 as long as seven to ten years to reach the level of average performance by native speakers on L2 standardised tests in reading, social studies or science. In order to use the L2 to learn, read and write academic materials such as science and history, a learner will need four to nine years (Freeman et al 1998:74).

2.5.4 Exposure to the L2

According to Daweti (1999:58), “social interaction is seen as a vehicle for language acquisition and language as a system mediating all social and cognitive functions”. Exposure to the L2 is important for more than one reason. Wright (1996:156) explains that ranges of meaning exists – connotative, collocative or stylistic- which are largely unstructured and therefore difficult for non-native speakers to comprehend and use appropriately. They are also very difficult to teach formally. He also refers to “extra meaning” that should be derived from reflexive linguistic or extra-linguistic context and argues that the cognitive and affective frames within which extra meaning becomes interpretable, are normally acquired through exposure and are not readily conveyed through formal instruction, even under ideal educational conditions. It could then be said that the absence of exposure to the L2 could lead to communication breakdown between native speakers of the L2 and non-native speakers of the L2, because much of the meaning of what is said might be lost. Brown (1994:69) states that “contextualized, appropriate, meaningful communication in the L2 seems to be the best possible practice the L2-learner could engage in”.

There are studies that suggest that the presence of the L2-speaking group is not a necessary requirement, because L2-learning can take place in a monolingual setting (Gardner & Clément 1990; Gardner & Smythe 1975). However, research also suggests that a person’s degree of contact with the L2 group will have an influence on the extent to which the L2 is learned (Clément 1980; Clément & Kruidenier 1983; d’Anglejean & Renaud 1985; Gardner et al 1975). Muñoz (2000:165) even states that, in a context with little exposure, the ultimate attainment of the L2 cannot be very high.

L2-learners need opportunities to practise the L2, because a language is not learned by only listening to the teacher, but by practising it themselves (Baur 1995 (cited in Cavagnoli et al 1999); Cann 1992:60). According to Cann (1992:102), language acquisition by learners who always or often spoke the L2 at home was significantly higher than that of learners who seldom or never spoke the L2 at

home. Mackay (1999:575-577) concludes that conversational interaction does facilitate L2 development, that active participation in conversational interaction has a positive effect on the production of developmentally more advanced structures and that the extent of the increase is related to the nature of the interaction and the role of the learner. Cavagnoli et al (1999:38) also conclude that people's competency in the L2 will swiftly diminish, however good it may have been, when they do not need to speak the L2 and do not have occasion to use it.

Much of the work done by Flege and his colleagues has demonstrated the importance of exposure to the L2 for L2 pronunciation, with time spent in a country where the L2 is in use (Riney & Flege 1998) and time spent in the company of native-speakers of the L2 (Flege, Frieda & Nozawa 1997) emerging as major determinants of the quality of the L2 accent.

Baker, Bisson, Blum, Creamer, Koskinen and Phillips (2000:23-24) carried out a study to explore the influence of a book-rich classroom environment and home re-reading, with and without an audiotape, on reading motivation, comprehension and fluency in L2. They state that L2-learners, who have limited opportunities to practise spoken L2 and few experiences to read L2 storybooks at home are likely to be at a disadvantage in their ability to develop literacy skills in the L2. The study concluded that having many multilevel shared project books available to learners for reading and providing opportunities for reading practice with easy texts played a major role in the learners' increased comprehension and their motivation to read (Baker et al 2000:33). The audiotapes had a two-fold positive influence. Firstly, teachers noted that hearing fluent models on the audiotapes of the books was beneficial and influenced self-confidence, and secondly, parents were happy because they felt the tapes helped not only the learner, but the whole family who could benefit by listening and learning to speak the L2 (Baker et al 2000: 33-34).

Exposure to the L2 is further important because research supports the conclusion that most vocabulary-learning occurs naturally when learners attempt to

understand new words they hear or read in context (Huckin & Coady 1999:181; Paribakht & Wesche 1999:196). This kind of learning is known as incidental learning, because it happens as a by-product, not the main target, of the main cognitive activity (Huckin et al 1999). According to Huckin et al (1999:190), the primary means by which L2-learners develop their vocabulary beyond the first few thousand most-common words, is incidental acquisition.

A good reader can guess the meaning of an unfamiliar word in a text if he understands most of the other words in the text. In a study by Horst, Cobb and Meara (1998), which involved exposure to a graded reader over six days, the learners achieved a very high level (about 22%) of incidental acquisition of the targeted words. Their study involved oral as well as written input, as the learners followed in their books while the story was read to them. There is more evidence that incidental vocabulary-learning takes place from reading, oral and mixed language input in Ellis (1994), Joe (1995), Krashen (1989) and Paribakht and Wesche (1997,1999).

Incidental vocabulary-learning can also occur through watching subtitled television programmes. In a study by d'Ydewalle and Van de Poel (1999:327), Dutch L1-learners between the ages of 8 and 12 watched a 10-minute movie. The L2's they used were Danish and French. The researchers had different versions of the film, one for each experimental condition, depending on the L2 used (French or Danish) and whether the L2 was in the sound track or in the subtitles. They concluded that younger learners perform better when the L2 is in the sound track and not in subtitles, while previous studies (d'Ydewalle & Pavakanun 1997) with older learners and adults, concluded that older learners and adults perform better when the L2 is in the subtitles (d'Ydewalle et al 1999:242).

Penno, Wilkinson and Moore (2002: 31) conclude that young learners can learn vocabulary from listening to story presentations. They also found that repeated exposure to a story and the additive effects of explanation of the meaning of target words contributed significantly to vocabulary growth.

Another way of learning vocabulary is through music. Ibrahim (1999:356) studied young black Canadians of whom some were immigrants, but most were refugees. He concluded that the young females (12-14) and all the boys were influenced by rap lyrics, syntax and morphology. This influence is visible in three features of the youths' language:

- the absence of the auxiliary *be* ("they so cool" as opposed to "they are so cool");
- a double negative ("he is not doing nothing" as opposed to "he is doing nothing" or " he is not doing anything"); and
- the distributive *be* ("I be saying dis dat you know") (Ibrahim 1999:363-364).

This study shows that although the youths might be learning new vocabulary, it might not always be a good thing. They will be learning a non-standard variety of the L2 (Ibrahim 1999:351,363) and some of the learners expressed their disapproval of the crude, sexist, racist and abusive language that exists in the music (Ibrahim 1999:362).

In a study conducted by Xin, Glaser and Rieth (cited in Foil & Alber 2002:3) they introduced 30 new words to learners through video clips of the 1989 San Francisco earthquake. Learners also participated in activities that allowed them to associate this vocabulary with the content of the videos. The study concluded that learners were able to give the correct meaning to 60% of the target words they introduced through video, compared to only 27% when video was not used.

2.5.5 Teachers' attitude toward learners of the L2

When learning a L1, a child is encouraged to communicate. In return, people will try to understand what the child wants to say, they will repeat what they think the child is trying to communicate, and if it is not correct, the whole process will start all over again. In the beginning stages of learning a L1, what is said is more

important than how it is said. The rules of the language are acquired gradually and subconsciously over a number of years (Wales 1990: 171).

The same encouragement and understanding should be present when learners are learning a L2. Cheng, Horwitz and Schallert (1999) did an analytic study to differentiate anxieties related to different L2 skills and found that in both oral and written language activities learners with higher levels of anxiety tended to have low self-concepts as language-learners. These findings underline the importance of the classroom atmosphere and support of the teacher. Class teachers can assist language development in L2-learners by establishing a caring, supportive and stimulating classroom atmosphere in which L2-learners feel confident and are motivated to communicate in the L2 (Brown 1994:86, Wales 1990:171).

Unfortunately learners are not always encouraged to communicate and they do not always experience a supportive classroom environment. In a study done by Foster and Leibowitz (1998:86), a significant majority of learners reported that they had a very negative perception of their teachers' methods, especially of those with an authoritarian approach. They were sometimes beaten if they made mistakes and were shy and reluctant to speak the L2 in the classroom for fear of being laughed at (Foster et al 1998:87).

Freeman et al (1998:241-242) mention two L2-learners who at first did not perform well in school in general, or in the L2 specifically. One of them became involved in a gang and the other one considered dropping out of school altogether. Fortunately they encountered teachers who cared and supported them. Margie had a L2 teacher who, in her own words, "totally had faith in me" and Francisco had a soccer coach and a bilingual advisor who encouraged him. Both these learners' future turned out better because of teachers who believed in them and supported and encouraged them to learn the L2.

2.5.6 Learners' attitude towards the L2

Egger (cited in Cavagnoli et al 1999:29); Ellis (1990:132-133); Marina-Todd, Marshall and Snow (2000:27); Pulvermuller and Schumann (1994:688) and Skehan (1989:120) all regard individual motivation and attitudes as key factors in successful language learning. Lemmer (1995:94) states that L2 input can only result in language development when motivation is high, self-confidence is strong and anxiety is low.

The learner's attitude towards the L2 and his motivation to learn the L2 can be influenced by several factors. Parents' attitude towards the L2 plays an important role in learners' attitude, and studies have shown a positive relationship between the learners' perception of parental encouragement and motivation to learn a L2 (Gardner et al 1975; Gardner et al 1990).

The prestige and need for the L2 also influence learners' motivation. When learners feel that a certain language does not have status or prestige, or is not necessary in the community, they are not motivated, and might even refuse to learn the L2 (Cavagnoli et al 1999:26-27).

In a study done by Foster et al (1998:86) it was reported that families or communities were in favour of learning the L2, because the L2 was associated with prestige, wealth or economic mobility, but the learners themselves did not always have a positive attitude. Many students reported that they hated the L2 at first because it was so difficult to learn, but their attitude changed towards their teenage years when they became aware of its economic and educational importance (Foster et al 1998:86). In this study a L2-learner said that he was motivated to learn the L2 because he felt confident about himself when speaking the L2. He also reported that he did not feel inferior, because he could speak the home language of the other children, but they could not speak his home language (Foster et al 1998:86).

2.6 CONCLUSION

Learning a L2 does not always result in additive bilingualism. Subtractive bilingualism can take place when the learners' L1 is not maintained and further developed while learning the L2. It is important for teachers to validate the learners' language, culture and history, because this serves to maintain the L1, which can lead to the development of additive bilingualism instead of subtractive bilingualism.

When learning a L2, the learner must be aware of the difference between BICS and CALP. Being able to maintain a L2 conversation in a context-embedded cognitively undemanding situation does not mean a learner is proficient enough in the L2 to be successful when he/she has to use the L2 in academic situations. A learner should be able to use the L2 in context-reduced cognitively demanding situations before he will be able to use the L2 successfully in academic situations.

The development of proficiency in the L1 is important for the development of proficiency in the L2, because of the linguistic interdependence principle. When literacy skills have been adequately developed in the L1 and concepts are formed in the L1, those skills and knowledge can easily be transferred to the L2.

Although there is no conclusive evidence of the existence of a critical age at which a L2 should be learned, the research evidence proves that there is no significant advantage in starting to learn the L2 very early. When considering the dangers of subtractive bilingualism, together with the evidence that a L2 can be learned successfully after the age of 12, it seems better to allow enough time for CALP in the L1 to develop properly, before starting to learn a L2.

Just as important as the age at which a learner starts to learn a L2, is the length of time that is allowed to learn the L2. Developing BICS in a L2 can happen within 2-3 years, but developing CALP in a L2 can take 5-7 years, provided there is adequate exposure to the L2 through L2-speaking peers, television and schooling.

✓ If there is little exposure to the L2, it might even take as long as 10 years to develop CALP in a L2. It is especially important to allow enough time for CALP to develop if it will be expected of the learner to use the L2 in academic situations.

✓ There is evidence that a L2 can be learned without exposure to the L2 in the community, but this seems to be exceptional. Exposure to the L2 is important because it gives the learner the opportunity to experience the different ranges of meaning that exist in a language, which is not always possible in formal teaching situations. There is also proof that exposure to the L2 has a positive influence on the extent to which the L2 is learned, as well as on the pronunciation of the L2. Exposure to the L2 through stories, books, television, film and the Internet can also lead to incidental vocabulary learning, which is very important as vocabulary cannot be learned extensively through formal instruction alone.

✓ As a L2 should be practised, it is also important that teachers should create a positive and supportive classroom environment where learners will feel motivated and safe to experiment in the L2. If learners are not motivated to learn the L2, their chances of acquiring the L2 is almost zero, as motivation and attitude play an important role in the acquisition of a L2.

In this chapter the researcher has looked at different aspects related to learning a L2 in general. In many parts of the world learners not only learn a L2 as a subject, but receive all their schooling through a L2. The next chapter will therefore investigate learning through a L2.

from here

CHAPTER 3

LEARNING THROUGH A SECOND LANGUAGE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Language is the key to cognitive development and can promote or impede scholastic development. It is a vital component of the learning process (Cann 1992:14) and probably the most important cognitive resource for any higher education learner (Miller 1997:12).

Although language and cognition are not the same, the two coexist in the human mind in complex ways (Scarino 1995:9). Language is the major means by which the human mind constructs, represents and communicates conceptual, procedural and metacognitive knowledge.

In Chapter 2 the researcher concentrated on the learning of a L2 in general. As this research is looking at learners who are studying through English as a L2 at higher education level, this chapter will concentrate on learning through a L2. It will investigate factors that influence learning through a L2, problems experienced by L2-learners and coping mechanisms L2-learners often use to cope when they experience problems with learning through a L2.

3.2 FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE LEARNING THROUGH A L2

What is learning? The Dictionary of Empirical Education and Educational Psychology (1988, s.v. 'learning') describes it as follows:

Learning is the process of acquiring meaning from the potential meaning present in the learning material. Between the 'I can't' and the 'I can', the 'I don't know' and the 'I know', something takes place and this is learning. Learning brings about a change in behaviour which is not fleeting but has a degree of permanence. We learn not

only facts, concepts and principles, but also attitudes, emotions, feelings and skills.

When learning has to take place through a L2 it presents certain unique problems that L1-learners do not always encounter.

3.2.1 Culture

Teachers' beliefs about learners and their abilities strongly affect learners' success at school (MacSwan 2000:4). Although teachers might feel that their job is to teach their subject in a climate that is comfortable for the learners and not to learn about the backgrounds of their learners, it is not completely true. In order to create a climate that is comfortable for the learners, it is sometimes necessary to understand what presuppositions learners bring to the classroom (Speck 1997:39).

The languages and cultures learners bring to school inevitably affect how and what they learn (Goduka 1998:36). Furthermore, language is not just a tool, it always carries cultural meanings (Berry 2002:2) and culture is the lens through which everyone sees the world (Viadero 1998a:17).

According to Johnson (1997:47), one does not only learn grammar, vocabulary and sounds when learning a language, one must also learn the cultural rules that govern oral communication, such as acceptable amounts of talk, volume of speech, turn-taking processes and pauses between speakers. One's culture influences one's norms for oral communication and this can also affect the learner's expectations about the role of public speaking. These differences in expectations and speaking patterns may lead to misinterpretations because of differences in emphasis, politeness and attitude, as indicated by tone, pitch, linking of words and pauses (Bowers & Flinders 1990:87).

In Polynesian cultures, for example, “the act of setting oneself above others, without some group-initiated and prior consent, infringes a complex cultural value” that is basic in that society (Corson 1992:474). Learners from these backgrounds will be reluctant to answer questions in class, while teachers might interpret this lack of response as a lack of knowledge or comprehension (Johnson 1997:48).

Contrary to this, learners from Middle Eastern cultures may try to answer even before the teacher finishes the question, as this apparent interruption is tolerated and even encouraged in their culture as a sign of full engagement in the conversation (Johnson 1997:48).

Learners from cultures where the sexes rarely interact, like the Navajo and many Muslims, may experience their first situation of coeducation at higher education level. These learners may be uncomfortable when they have to work together in a group with learners from the opposite sex and may perform better in same sex groups (Johnson 1997:50).

Word meanings are culturally constrained and different meanings may be attached to a word in different cultures. Where L2-learners have built up concepts of the world in their L1, these concepts will be correlated with the way in which that language encodes perceived realities (Wales 1990:175). Such encoding may or may not coincide with the way in which L2-speakers refer to the world they perceive, and teachers will have to be aware of cultural differences in semantics.

L2-learners need to understand how a reference in the L2 differs from that in their L1, and what the gross and fine distinctions are within the L2 itself. Wales (1990:175) uses the words *bush*, *tree* and *shrub* for learners who learn in English as a L2 to illustrate this point. If a learner understands the meanings of these words, the learner will understand a sentence like “the bird is not in the tree, it’s in the bush.” The learner will, however, not necessarily understand a sentence such as “Stop beating about the bush”. In South Africa “bush” can also refer to an

undeveloped rural area. Lack of understanding words and sentences and their range of meanings which vary in relation to textual and cultural context, can thus impede the L2 reader from making informed predictions in the reading process and prevent the learner from comprehending the text fully. Idioms and proverbs are especially problematic as they mean something completely different from what a L2-learner could guess from the literal meaning of the words or could find out by looking up the words individually in a dictionary (Kameda 2001:148; Maylath 1997:34).

According to Choate (2000:19), the teacher's knowledge of and attitude towards multicultural issues will determine, in part, the extent to which cultural differences impede or facilitate academic performance.

3.2.2 Concept formation

Concept formation is the first step to meaningful learning (Slabbert 1997:50). Learners form concepts and attach meaning to words from a very early age. Concepts are formed by chunks of information that are stored as cognitive structures made up of knowledge structures. Learners build their knowledge structures by understanding the input and by being able to build bridges between the new incoming information and what they have already stored (Garaway 1994:107).

According to Cummins (1996:122), developing conceptual knowledge in a learner's L1 is important, because the conceptual knowledge developed in the L1 can easily be transferred to the L2. Saville-Troike (1984:216) found that learners who had the opportunity to discuss concepts they were learning with other learners in their L1, achieved best in content areas, as measured by tests in the L2.

Wood (1998:88), on the other hand, warns that because the conceptual structures of languages differ, it is not always easy to translate concepts into another language.

3.2.3 The size of the learner's vocabulary

A learner receives instruction through language, he has to understand, assimilate knowledge and memorise through language, and he has to supply answers through language – every day and everywhere, verbally and in writing. If the language that he has to do this in, is a L2 and he does not know a specific word, he cannot read that word or write it or use it sensibly in any way. It must first become a word in the true sense in that it means something for the learner before it can be used to communicate (Engelbrecht, Kok & van Biljon 1982:139).

The results of a study conducted by Cooper (1995:35) suggest that there is a direct relationship between a learner's academic performance and the learner's vocabulary proficiency, as vocabulary size is likely to be reflected in the learner's productive use of language.

The number of words a learner should understand in order to guess the meaning of the unfamiliar words in a text will increase through the different levels of education. The higher the academic level, the greater the knowledge of basic vocabulary should be. Coady (1997:287) proposed that "good knowledge of at least 5 000 words" in the L2, as well as significant reading skills, is needed for understanding "advanced, authentic academic" texts. In order to cope with academic reading requirements at first year university level in the Netherlands, Hazenberg & Hulstijn (1996:145) concluded that a learner of Dutch L2 needs at least 10 000 words.

A further problem when considering vocabulary is that many subjects have very specific subject vocabulary, for example mathematical terms such as "numerator", "denominator" and "product of", which might have very different meanings in

everyday life. It often happens that learners do not understand subject matter simply because they have not yet mastered the subject vocabulary (Avenant 1990:36). A further problem is that learners often do not know the difference between a word used in the natural everyday language and that same word used specifically as part of the subject terminology (Garaway 1994:103).

The fundamental differences among subject areas make it necessary for both teachers and learners to have highly differentiated systems of complex knowledge (August & Hakuta 1998:27). Because of the differences among the various subject areas, certain disciplines may lend themselves more easily than others to the transfer of knowledge across languages, depending on the structure of knowledge within the domain (August et al 1998:27). The absence, in the learner's L1, of a necessary word, expression or concept that is equivalent to the one in the L2, causes many problems for L2-learners (Stevens 1976:56).

3.2.4 Proficiency in the L1

In order to avoid academic problems when learning through a L2, learners require a high level of proficiency in their L1 (Lemmer 1993:154). It has been found that the discontinuation of cognitive development in the L1 during the acquisition of the L2, may result in the lowering of the L2 proficiency levels and cognitive academic growth (Collier 1989:511). In a situation where a learner has not developed his L1 academically, his cognitive skills will not develop properly and he will not know the L1 or the L2 well enough to use it on advanced cognitive levels (Van Staden 1997:292).

If a learner is still at the BICS level in the L1 and is only able to use the L1 to recognise and use information, then learning to use the L2 to express more challenging CALP concepts will take much longer (Fueyo 1997:62). According to Cummins (1980:184), L2 cognitive/academic proficiency will manifest faster in L2-learners whose L1 CALP is better developed than it does in younger L2-learners,

because the cognitive/academic proficiency already exists in the L1 of the older L2-learners and is thus available for use in the new context.

If a learner is learning through a L2 at school, it is therefore important that his L1 be supported and developed by the family, as the family is a fundamental source of linguistic development (Papadaki 2002:2).

3.2.5 Proficiency in the L2

According to Feuerstein (1979:51), language inability leads to a lack of academic involvement. If learners have to function in a classroom through a poorly developed L2, the quality and quantity of what they learn from complex curriculum materials and what they produce in oral and written form may be relatively weak and impoverished (Baker 1993:135).

If learners are not fluent in the language of instruction, every academic class is also a language class (Stalker 1997:7). Learners who learn through a L2 are thus at a distinct disadvantage relative to what they would have been if they learned through their L1, because of the limitations in what can be presented to learners and their inability to grapple with complex and abstract ideas in a L2 they have not yet mastered (Marsh, Hau & Kong 2000:307).

If subjects involve relative new content areas it will require learners to learn new terminology in order to understand the conceptual underpinning of these subjects. If they have to do this through a L2 that they have not mastered well, the learners will have to pay a lot of attention to mastering the basic terminology and that may hinder them in gaining deeper conceptual understanding of the subject matter, in actively participating in classroom discussion and even in reading the textbook (Marsh et al 2000:335).

3.2.6 The character of academic language usage

From paragraph 2.3, it is evident that academic language is different from everyday language. Academic functions of language require learners to stretch their linguistic resources to the limit as academic language requires high levels of cognitive involvement and is usually minimally supported by contextual or interpersonal cues (Cummins 1996:58).

Academic instruction is often context-reduced and relies heavily on written and verbal explanations in the absence of concrete clues (Brown 1994:227; Fueyo 1997:63). Classroom tasks require thinking and are cognitively demanding (Fueyo 1997:63) and academic tasks will become increasingly context-reduced and cognitively demanding as learners advance through school and into higher education studies (Cummins 1989:27).

3.2.7 Language of the text books

Wales (1990:182) identifies two problems with textbooks for L2-learners. While the language of the textbook may be completely comprehensible to a native-speaker, it may contain assumptions, structures, and vocabulary which present difficulties to the L2-learner. A further problem is that the textbook itself may not be written well. It is not suggested that simplified textbooks should be used, but that subject teachers should be aware of these problems and that the language of the textbook should be taught, and taught effectively, with preliminary activities leading towards that goal (Wales 1990:182).

Johnson (in Marsh et al 2000:312) found that teachers in early high school years tended to simplify the vocabulary and discourse of the textbooks and that they emphasised statements of facts and relied on pictures to convey meaning.

3.2.8 The language of instruction

According to Collison (1974:441), learners must have a good command of the language of instruction, as language is the main vehicle for communication. Dropout rates among culturally diverse school populations in multicultural societies such as the United States show that minority pupils with a limited proficiency in the medium of instruction are most at risk of school failure (Lemmer et al 1993:41). The same applies to learners at higher education level. If instruction is through their L2 and they do not have quite a high standard of proficiency in the L2, they will experience real difficulty in succeeding in higher education studies (Beasley 1990:16).

Collison (1974:445,448,454) used the Investigation-Colloquium method of science teaching to investigate the concept attainment of school learners as they function in their L1 and in a L2. Learners in this study came from schools that were situated in L1 dominant communities and the L2 was studied only at school. His study revealed consistently that when the L2 was the language of education, the majority of the learners were not able to exercise their conceptual potential.

In a study on subtractive bilingualism by Wright et al (2000:64) the subjects were learners from societies where the L2's, namely French and English, were the societal dominant languages. They found that although instruction exclusively through the L2 was associated with lower conversational L1 proficiency, it was the academic development in the L1 that suffered most for learners who were instructed exclusively through a L2 and that on all five test occasions L1-learners who received instruction through their L1, scored significantly higher than learners for whom the language of instruction was a L2 (Wright et al 2000:70,71).

Marsh et al (2000:302) conducted a study to investigate the effect of instruction through the L2 on the achievement of late immersion learners in their L1 the L2, and four content subjects (mathematics, science, geography, and history). Instruction through the L2 had moderate positive effects on the L2 and, to a smaller extent, on the L1 achievement (Marsh et al 2000:335). Although there

was a very strong negative effect on the achievements in history, science and geography, they did find that in the content subjects, learners who initially had better L2 skills were somewhat less disadvantaged by instruction through the L2 (Marsh et al 2000:336). In mathematics they found a smaller negative effect, which they attributed to the fact that mathematics is based largely on symbolic terminology that may not be so dependent on the language of instruction and that may also have been more adequately mastered (Marsh et al 2000:335).

At higher levels of education and in more abstract content areas it might be necessary to supplement L2 instruction with L1 instruction (Marsh et al 2000:307). According to Wales (1990:171), the mainstream teacher can help build the L2-learners' confidence by encouraging the use of the L1, and learners may assist one another in grasping new ideas, words, etcetera, by means of discussion in their L1.

Two university professors and eight 4th grade teachers worked together to promote science instruction by building on the teachers' insight into their learners' languages and cultures. The study focused on Hispanic and Haitian teachers in 4th grade classes where learners were learning through English as their L2 (Fradd, Lee, Cabrera, del Rio, Leth, Morin, Ceballos, Santella, Cross & Mathieu 1997:35). They found that teachers moved back and forth between the learners' L1 and L2, for learners with little proficiency in the L2 translating and restating ideas in different ways and that, although hands-on activities were used to promote active engagement, discussion of the activities often required additional class periods to ensure that learners comprehended the concepts (Fradd et al 1997:36). The teachers were reluctant at first to use the learners' L1, but found that the more they communicated terms, phrases and full discourse in the learners' L1, the more they were able to make instruction meaningful and relevant, and the more effectively the learners responded (Fradd et al 1997:39).

The idea of switching between the learners' L1 and the L2 when explaining work is confirmed by Freeman et al (1998:266) when they list several things done by

teachers who have faith in their learners. One of the things they list is that these teachers find ways to provide primary language support, because they understand that bilingual learners learn more of the L2 when they can first develop concepts in their L1.

Although receiving instruction in the L2 can be a problem, Lemmer (1995:91) says that learners who have acquired broad fluent L1 skills make better progress at school than those learners who have not developed their L1 at all, regardless of the medium of instruction. Young (1995a:12-13) advocates that strong cognitive and academic development through the L1 at least up to Grade 5 or 6, as well as through the L2, is very important as only those learners who have received this kind of development do well at school as they reach the last of their high school years.

Roseberry-MacKibbin et al (2000:2) advocate that L2-learners should be taught through their L1 90% of the time and through the L2 10% of the time during pre-school and Grade 1. The time spent teaching through the L1 should gradually be decreased until teaching is done 50% through the L2 and 50% through the L1 by Grade 6. Learners in this ideal situation do well because they understand what they are hearing and are then able to build their underlying conceptual-linguistic foundation.

3.2.9 The teacher's language usage

Teaching is essentially a linguistic activity that requires teachers to have an excellent command of the medium of instruction if they want to teach effectively (NEPI 1992:81; Taylor & Vinjevold 1999:234). Scarcella (1990:x) states that "when students do not understand their teachers, they do not learn, no matter what may be the subject area". According to Cole and Chan (1994:30), the most important dimension of effective teaching is proficient communication, which not only requires a fluency with words, but also the ability to present messages in ways that learners can understand.

When trying to establish what constitutes adequate teacher language proficiency, Viete (1998:175) and Elder (1994:9) revealed that teacher language proficiency encompasses everything that “normal” language users might be expected to be able to do in context of both formal and informal communication, as well as a range of specialist skills. These specialist skills include command of subject-specific/metalinguistic terminology on the one hand, and the discourse for effective classroom delivery on the other hand. Effective classroom delivery requires command of very specific linguistic features, such as: directives which are crucial in establishing classroom procedures and learning tasks, a range of questioning techniques to be able to monitor learner understanding, rhetorical signalling devices and simplification strategies to communicate specialist areas of knowledge and render them comprehensible to learners.

In the light of all the specialist skills necessary in order to teach effectively, one can agree with Bruner (1983:32) who states that it is very important that the teacher of the L2 should be teaching his/her first language as the learner's second language or is competent “to the extent of having fully internalised all the gestures and utterances peculiar to the language”. Marina-Todd et al (2000:28) states that investment in elementary L2 instruction will be worthwhile only if the teachers themselves are native- or native-like speakers and well trained in the needs of younger learners. Elder (1994:17) even recommends that, for teachers who will be teaching in immersion programmes where specialist subject content is taught, language proficiency which is in all respects native-like, should be a prerequisite.

The speaker's intonation will often determine the meaning which is attached to a sentence or a word (Avenant 1990:35). He gives the example of the word “walk”. This word can imply a question when it is said “Walk?”, it can be an insult when said “Walk!” or it can even serve as encouragement to an athlete. The meaning attached to the words by the learners will be determined by the speaker's pauses, exclamations, facial expressions, etcetera.

If teachers are not proficient enough in the language of instruction, it could lead to a situation where interaction in the classroom is severely hindered, because of a “mismatch in language competences of teachers and learners” (Vinjevold 1999:221). According to Frencken (1988:62), the teacher’s lack of proficiency in the L2 contributes to a classroom practice of rote learning and extensive note writing.

It is also important for learners to interact with more competent speakers of the L2 who can provide a model for them (Gibbons 1991:26-27). According to Baker (1998:4), an important ingredient of teaching through the L2 is that the teacher should have a good command of the standard variety of the L2 in order to model the L2 well.

Fueyo (1997:64) recommends that teachers should slow down the rate of speech during instruction, articulate more, use longer pauses, use high-frequency words, use fewer pronoun forms, use more gestures and visuals to accompany words, use shorter sentences and increase repetition and rephrasing, in order to increase comprehension during instruction. Sheppard (2001:133) calls this kind of instruction “listener-friendly lectures” and also adds the use of demonstration, or modelling and scaffolding (building on learners’ prior knowledge) as factors that could help learners who are learning through a L2.

3.2.10 Attitude of the teachers towards L2-learners

Nieto (1999:130,167) maintains that teachers’ beliefs and expectations about learners’ abilities, culture and language have a tremendous effect on learners, and especially on learners from language-minority backgrounds. Freeman et al (1998:250) and Scarcella (1990:12) agree that when teachers lack faith in their learners, they limit their potential, as learners might then live up to the low expectations of the teachers. Bempechat (cited in Terrill & Mark 2000:152) suggests that Catholic schools have historically succeeded with learners from low

socio-economic backgrounds due, in part, to the Catholic teachers' focus on high expectations for all learners and their emphasis on home school partnerships.

Learners are often labelled wrongly and their lack of fluency in the L2 is interpreted as a lack of understanding (Freeman et al 1998:249). It also happens that learners who speak a non-standard variety of the L2 are frequently thought to be handicapped educationally and less capable of logical thinking (Cummins 1996:51).

This point is proven by a Hispanic education candidate who wrote about her own painful experiences at school when her fourth grade teacher called her parents in for a meeting to discuss her progress (Freeman et al 1998:248). As her mother could not understand English, the language of the school, very well, she had to accompany her mother to translate for her. The teacher told her mother that she was a very slow learner, that she was mentally retarded and might need to be transferred to a "special class". She then hated school, but fortunately she had a different teacher in the fifth grade. He recognised her shyness and insecurity and found her strengths. By showing his faith in her, he helped her develop the self-confidence needed to become a bilingual teacher herself.

Labelling learners can have different impacts on the learners. Learners who are labelled often begin to see themselves as somehow limited and they develop low expectations, which can lead them to perform poorly, which will then confirm the teachers' beliefs that the learners are somehow deficient (Freeman & Freeman 1994:115). Or, as Ibrahim (1999:359) reports, it could put pressure on the learners to learn the L2 faster.

The problem of being labelled does not stop at school, but seems to continue during higher education studies. Hall, Rex and Sutherland (1995:27) as well as Mugoya (1991:11) report that learners do not ask lecturers for help or participate in classroom discussions, because they are afraid of making mistakes in English,

being labelled “problem black students” or receiving patronising responses from staff members. Learners may also be seen as less qualified or less intelligent if their L2 is flawed (Hodne 1997:86).

If learners’ competence in the L2 skills is far less developed than that of their peers for whom it is a L1, teachers should be careful not to assume that they are suffering from a deficit of language *per se*. These learners do have *language*: it is just that the language does not happen to be the L2 (Wales 1990:171).

3.3 PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED BY LEARNERS LEARNING THROUGH A L2

According to Miller (1997:17), writing and reading at higher education level are not just “skills” or “competencies” that facilitate the learning process, like familiarity with the library or computers. They are also not auxiliary tools for learning, but constitute the very processes through which higher education learning occurs.

3.3.1 Writing problems

In order to minimise the possibility of misunderstanding, written discourse requires conformity to the language norms of academic culture (Moyo 1994:59). Learners are evaluated largely on the basis of their written work and if teachers cannot comprehend what a learner is trying to convey, the examiner will be left with a very low impression of the learner’s linguistic competence, as well as a skewed idea of the learner’s knowledge of the content (Moyo 1994:59).

Hubbard (1989:3) points out that a learner’s writing of academic essays is directly relevant to his academic achievement, and according to Miller (1997:12), what distinguishes successful learners in those disciplines in which essays constitute the main means of assessment, is their ability to write skilfully.

Mosoeunyane (2002:1) observed that many high school learners could not present their written answers in clear academic language to make concepts understandable to the reader, and he subsequently conducted a study to determine if there is any statistically significant correlation between learners' L2 performance and their science performance. His results showed that significant correlations occur between the L2 passing marks and science passing marks for learners.

According to Boughey (1997:126-127), all texts are written for an audience and the linear form of a finished piece of writing requires that the writer should examine and manipulate thoughts thoroughly so as to render thoughts that are ordered and organised. One of the writing problems she came across during her study was the extent to which the learners' writing exhibited characteristics of their spoken language. Learners assumed that the context the lecturer created in the classroom would also hold true for their writing during tests or examinations, which caused their writing to lack the necessary explicitness (Boughey 1997:129).

Ho (1997:32) performed a study with learners from Singapore, Uganda and Guyana, who all studied through a L2, in order to investigate the effect of pronunciation on writing. He concludes that there is a close relationship between spoken and written communication. This study gives several examples where learners wrote the words as they pronounced them, but as this was not the correct spelling of the intended word, the wrong spelling changed the meaning of the sentences completely (Ho 1997:24-23).

Hammond (1990:32) explains that spoken text is usually created by speakers in conjunction with other speakers within the same physical context, while written text, on the other hand, is normally produced in contexts removed by time and distance from those in which they are read. During spoken communication, although one person might do most of the talking, as in a lecturing situation, the presence of the other people is important in that they share the same context of situation with the speaker. They can contribute in some way to the construction of

the text, verbally or even non-verbally, by way of body language. With written communication, the writer and the reader do not share the same context and the writer cannot depend on a shared context to convey any of the meaning. Therefore the meaning must be contained within the text itself (Hammond, 1990:32).

Sometimes learners also have difficulties in presenting arguments simply and logically. They may know what they want to say, but cannot find the words in which to express their ideas (Agar 1990:450). They may feel intimidated by other learners.

3.3.2 Reading problems

As academic success depends on learners comprehending the language of text which is found only in books, learners' knowledge of academic language and ability to use it coherently will depend crucially on the amount and variety of what they read (Cummins 1996:80).

Acquisition of knowledge, especially at higher education level, depends on written text and therefore reading constitutes a major part of schooling (Chen & Donin 1997:209). A lack of specific language skills to cope with the complexity of academic texts and jargon is associated with a lack of confidence and misunderstanding, and learners who experience problems with reading speed, find it very difficult to concentrate on texts for any length of time (Agar 1990: 450). Cohen, Glasman, Rosenbaum-Cohen, Ferrara and Fine (cited in Scarcella & Zimmerman 1998:29) found that L2-learners spent 1-2 hours reading an assignment, while the native-L1-speakers spent only 20 minutes reading the same assignment.

Learners who study in a L2, reported that they had to read a text several times before understanding it and they did not know when they were studying or extracting material that was relevant (Agar 1990:450). Since academic language

is found primarily in written text, extensive reading is crucial for a learner's academic development (Cummins 2000:79).

When learning through a L2, a learner will take more time to process information and will much more easily be intimidated by the required reading and the demands of written assignments (Wood 1998:88). Learning through a L2 means that the learner must master the academic content and then learn the L2 on top of that, while learners learning through their L1 have to master only the academic content (Baker 1998:5; MacSwan 2000:26).

In the study of Chen et al (1997:219), they found that reading time is consistently affected by the L2 proficiency of the learners. The differences in reading time did not result in differences in comprehension for logical relations, actions or processes, but it did have an affect on the learners' abilities to construct a description or a definition successfully (Chen et al 1997:219). They speculate that the lack of difference between the less and more proficient L2-learners for comprehension of logical relations, actions and processes could be interpreted as an indication of lack of effect of L2 proficiency, but it could also mean that, had the less proficient L2-learners not spent more time on the reading, their comprehension would have been affected negatively (Chen et al 1997:219). Interestingly, they found that learners who were less proficient in their L2, but had high background knowledge of the specific subject, could read just as fast as learners with more L2 proficiency. The background knowledge seems to provide a compensatory processing effect (Chen et al 1997:220).

Learners who need more time to complete their work or their learning are often labelled failures (Smith 2001:573). Although Smith (2001:573) does not specifically refer to a L2-learner, the same problems experienced by a L1-learner who needs more time, for whatever reason, will also be experienced by a L2-learner who needs more time. These learners fall further behind all the time, they are expected to work harder to keep up, the work is harder for them, they have less stress-relieving playtime, and if they get angry or frustrated by all of this, they are labelled emotionally and behaviourally dysfunctional (Smith 2001:573-574).

3.3.3 Problems with understanding test or examination questions in the L2

In order to be able to answer a test or examination question a learner first needs to understand the question. One factor that will have a great influence on whether a learner understands what the examiner requires of him, is his L2 vocabulary (Barkhuizen 1995:111; Day 1994:21). Barkhuizen (1995:111) uses the following example to explain this point: “scores of elephant are culled”. If a learner does not know that “scores” means “many”, he will not understand the rest of the question.

The syntactic structure of the sentences, as well as the length of the questions, will also influence the readability and understandability of test and examination questions (Barkhuizen 1995:112-114). From paragraph 3.3.2 it is clear that L2-learners already need more time to understand L2 text. These learners might find it even more difficult to understand what they read if the grammatical construction of questions is too complex, ambiguous or ungrammatical (Barkhuizen 1995:112).

3.4 POSSIBLE COPING MECHANISMS OF L2-LEARNERS

3.4.1 Silence

In a study of classroom inquiries and professional growth conducted by Torres, she reported that the most frequent manner of coping adopted by limited L2-learners in a classroom where only the L2 was used, is to fall into silence and do nothing (Torres 2001:286). The learners can then be marginalised and isolated within their classrooms and although it may seem like self-isolation, it may well be the only recourse they have in a situation to which they have no connection (Torres 2001:286).

3.4.2 Rote learning

The learning strategy that weaker learners use almost exclusively is that of memorisation (Oxford & Cohen, cited in Kilfoil 1996:206). Chick (1992b:288), Frencken (1988:62), Lemmer (1995:88) and MacDonald (1990:141) agree that learners' inability to express themselves in a L2, leads to loss of comprehension,

rote learning, drill, extensive note writing and other undesirable memorising practises.

In a study performed by Watkins, Biggs and Murari (1991:338) with Hong Kong higher education learners and Nepalese secondary school learners, they found that learners who are less confident in using the L2 in their study situations are also more likely to rely on rote learning, without trying to understand what they are learning.

More proof of rote learning was found when learners at Santa Cruz High School had to give oral reports on science through English, which is their L2. They were so concerned about their performance in the L2, that they apparently did a lot of memorising to get through the report. Two weeks after giving the report, many had trouble recalling what their presentations were about (Viadero 1998b:121).

When learners do not understand what the teacher is saying, they cannot internalise new knowledge and fall back on rote memorisation in their content subjects. They might then pass these subjects and be able to express knowledge, but they will not be able to use the knowledge (NEPI 1992:143-144). Understanding content is very important, as neither reading, writing, mathematics or anything else can be learnt by drilling, unless there is an underlying understanding, which will then make the drilling unnecessary (Smith 2001:576).

In an investigation by Paxton (1998:143), he reported that many of the concepts of economics learned in the first year of study are complex, and students relying on their old rote-learning strategies will not fare well. Learners need to learn to organise the information they have learnt and to build conceptual models for themselves, so that they can see the meaning of what they are doing, otherwise they will not be able to apply their theoretical knowledge or retain what they have learnt (Paxton 1998:143).

Although this method seems to be used extensively by L2-learners, rote learning of facts is the most difficult way to learn and the most common cause of forgetting (Smith 2001:576).

3.5 CONCLUSION

A learner's cultural background can influence his/her understanding of classroom discourse and academic text. If the cultural background of the teacher differs from that of the learner it can influence what the teacher expects of the learner and how the teacher perceives the learner.

Concept formation in the L1 is important, as it will be easier just to label an already familiar concept in the L1 with a new label from the L2. Building knowledge structures through words of a L2 that are not yet fully mastered will be much more difficult.

In order to understand advanced academic text, learners need quite a large vocabulary of the language of instruction and should also have a thorough knowledge of the subject specific vocabulary.

If learners have to use a L2 as language of teaching and learning, they should first become literate in their L1 and then maintain cognitive development in their L1, as this will enhance the development of proficiency in the L2. Proficiency in the L2 is also important, because learners who have to learn content subjects in an underdeveloped L2 will spend a lot of time trying to understand the language before even getting to the content.

As the academic language contained in textbooks can already present problems for L2-learners who have not mastered the L2 completely, textbook writers should ensure that their books are written very well. Learners could struggle with the subject content of textbooks, but should not struggle with the language of the textbook.

The language of instruction plays a very important role in the academic success of L2-learners and in all the studies mentioned, learners did better if the language of instruction was also their L1. As this is not always possible, strong cognitive and academic development of the L1 is crucial. Instruction through the L2 can also be supplemented with instruction through the L1.

As teaching is done primarily through language, the teacher should either be a native-speaker of the L2, or be just as competent in the L2 as a native-speaker. The teachers should also use a standard variety of the L2 as they have to model the L2 to the learners. If teachers cannot communicate effectively in the L2 they will not be able to teach effectively.

Teachers should be careful not to label L2-learners hastily. Learners are often labelled wrongly as learning-disabled when the only problem they have, is that they have not mastered the L2 yet. Labelling learners does not influence teachers' expectations of them only, but can also demoralise the learners.

Learners who learn through a L2 experience writing problems because they do not conform to the language norms of academic discourse and experience difficulties in presenting their arguments logically and thoroughly. They sometimes misspell words because they spell as they pronounce. This could then change the meaning of the words completely and render their answers in examinations wrong.

L2-learners also experience reading problems. They take much longer to read and understand academic text and because of limited vocabulary, they might also misunderstand some of the text. Slow reading also means slow learning as the learner has to master the language before mastering the content. The fact that they need more time in order to read and understand the text again puts them in danger of being labelled wrongly as learning-disabled.

Understanding questions in texts or examinations can create problems if words are used that L2-learners do not know. Examiners should also ensure that the syntactic structure of their questions are correct, that they are grammatically correct and that sentences are not too long. Examiners should, after all, be testing learners' knowledge of the content, not their ability to decipher difficult language.

Two coping mechanisms L2-learners use are silence and rote learning. Both these methods have the same result. Learners will fall back more and more academically. Rote learning might result in passing a test or an examination, but it will not result in learning. It will not change the "I cannot" into "I can" and it will not change the "I do not know" into "I know".

CHAPTER 4

THE SOUTH AFRICAN SITUATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

From Chapter 3 it is clear that learning through a L2 presents specific problems for learners and it was also pointed out that strong cognitive and academic development of the L1 is crucial for academic success. Teaching learners who study through a L2 also requires special skills from teachers.

In South Africa many Black parents still perceive L1 instruction as discriminatory and as a political ploy (Heugh 1995:42; Vinjevold 1999:208; Young 1995a:68), while English is seen as the language of power, upward social mobility, access to learning, employment and improved quality of life (Young 1995a:64). These perceptions lead to an almost unquestioned view held by teachers, learners and parents that English should be the language of learning and teaching (Probyn 2001:250), although it is a L2 for 80% of all secondary school learners (Prins & Ulijin 1998:139).

In this chapter the researcher will look at the following: brief history of English at South African schools, general problems at schools, language problems at schools, language proficiency problems relating to the teachers, how teachers cope with the language problems, language problems relating to the learners and problems faced by higher education learners due to the language situation at schools.

4.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF ENGLISH IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

Sibaya (1999:74) and Young (1995a:68) indicate that decisions on language in education were often taken on "pragmatic, political and economic grounds rather than on the basis of what is educationally and linguistically sound and best for all

learners". In the minds of the black community, the advantages of L1 instruction were overshadowed by the perception that educational motives were secondary to political motives (Chick 1992b:275; Rossouw 1999:100).

A very small number of South African blacks received a formal education in Christian mission schools during British rule and they gained a good command of English (Lanham 1976:289). From the early 1900's the existing mission schools could not cope with the increasing demand for schooling among the black population (Molteno 1984:62). Although new schools were built, the quality of instruction offered was much poorer than that offered by the mission schools because very little money was channelled into these schools as they were especially built for the needs of the black population (Ntlhakana 2000:12).

In 1948 the National Party government began to implement its policy of separate development, and Whites, Indians, Coloureds and Blacks were to receive schooling in separate schools run by different administrative bodies (Ntlhakana 2000:12). The language of instruction for White learners was their L1, English or Afrikaans, the language of instruction for Indian and Coloured learners had to be the L1 of the local White population, but Black learners received instruction through their L1 until the fourth year of schooling and thereafter had to switch to the L1 of the local White population (Hartshorne 1986:87).

The Bantu Education Act of 1953 legislated apartheid education, but extended L1 instruction for Black learners from the first 4 years of schooling to the first 8 years of schooling (Hartshorne 1995:310; Probyn 2001:249) and from the ninth year of schooling, Black learners had to choose between Afrikaans or English instruction (Kloss 1978:41). The principle of L1 instruction is accepted pedagogically all over the world (Danesi 1988:452; Gersten 1999:41) and is also consistent with the recommendations of the 1953 UNESCO report. Unfortunately policies concerning language in education have been so politicised since the early 1800's that decisions were based on politics and not on educational and linguistic arguments (Vermeulen 2000:12). The Bantu Education Act of 1953, which was educationally

sound, also became politicised because of the strong protest against it (Desai 1992:113; Kloss 1978:41).

Most black schools chose English as the language of instruction because Afrikaans was synonymous with the apartheid policy of the National Party (Ntlhakana 2000:12; Verhoef 1998:186). The grievance within the Black communities concerning the L1 instruction and Afrikaans and English at schools intensified in 1975 when the Minister of Bantu Education issued an instruction which compelled African schools to use L1 instruction during Grades 1 to 6 and then to switch to English and Afrikaans on a 50:50 basis for all subjects from Grade 7 to Grade 12 (Desai 1992:113; Kloss 1978:46). This attempt to enforce the use of Afrikaans as a language of instruction resulted in the Soweto Riots of 16 June 1976 (Harber 2001:33; Ntlhakana 2000:12; Probyn 2001:249; Verhoef 1998:186).

The language in education policy for Black schools reverted to L1 instruction up to Grade 4 and a switch to English as language of instruction from Grade 5 to Grade 12 from 1979, but for almost two decades from 1976 onwards, these schools became sites of political struggle and little real education took place (Probyn 2001:249-250).

Desegregation of state schools, which had started to a limited extent in 1984, increased from 1990 with the introduction of "Model C" schools - state schools which were formerly for white learners only (Ntlhakana 2000:13). By 1993, 60 000 black learners were enrolled at Model C schools and 40 000 black and coloured learners at Indian schools (Ntlhakana 2000:13), but these figures doubled within two years (Naidoo 1996:1-2).

The New Constitution (1996) tries to promote language equality through the recognition of 11 official languages (NEPI 1992:22), but English remains the language of power and access – economically, politically and socially (Probyn

2001:250). Most black schools move towards introducing English as language of instruction at an earlier age (Taylor et al 1999:215) and Mkabela and Luthuli (1997:53) note that, even in the new South Africa, African languages appear to be gradually ceding importance to English. Although the Language-in-Education policy (Department of Education, 1997a) now allows schools to choose their language medium, many schools still lean towards English as language of instruction (Balfour 1999:107; Banda 2000:60) despite the research evidence which points out the difficulties that this creates for classroom learning and teaching (Macdonald 1990:141).

4.3 GENERAL PROBLEMS AT SCHOOLS

4.3.1 Breakdown of the culture of teaching and learning

One legacy of apartheid education in South Africa is commonly termed as the “breakdown of the culture of teaching and learning”. This refers to the poor functioning of a large number of previously black schools and Christie (1998:283) found that these schools share a number of common features. These include: disputed and disrupted authority relations between principles, teachers and learners; sporadic and broken attendance by learners and often by teachers; general demotivation and low morale of learners and teachers; poor school results; conflict and often violence at and around schools; vandalism, criminality, gangsterism, rape and substance abuse; school facilities in a generally poor state of repair. Fourie (1999:282) also lists high learner teacher ratios, large numbers of un- or underqualified teachers, poorly resourced schools and the traditional focus on rote learning, memorisation and theoretical knowledge as problems faced by many schools.

Christie (1998:290-291) reports that stakeholders at these schools feel unfairly treated by the system and unable to perform their tasks. Their anxieties, fears and dissatisfaction are then masked by blaming others and performing their tasks at a minimum level. They also show no interest or initiative in breaking out of these

demoralising patterns and schools seem to stifle what few proactive opportunities there are.

4.3.2 Resources

Another legacy of apartheid is the poor physical condition of many schools and the lack of resources. In May 2001 a report from the auditor-general indicated that the state of most schools in the country was very bad (Monare & Sapa 2001:1). The audit was performed over the period September 1998 to January 2000 and found that 78% of the schools in Limpopo did not have electricity and 50% were without water. In Eastern Cape 75% of schools were without electricity and almost 33% were without water. 25% of all state schools did not even have toilets and 94% did not have a science laboratory.

It was also found that 93% of schools did not have a library (Monare et al 2001:1). The inadequate supply of an appropriate stock of English reading material is preventing the development of the cognitive and reading skills which are crucial to the overall progress of the learners (Bouwer & Guldenpfennig 1999:95).

4.4 LANGUAGE PROBLEMS AT SCHOOLS

From paragraph 4.2 it is clear that the social, economic and political situations in South Africa have changed drastically over the last few years. This new situation requires from teachers the delivery of intellectually challenging instruction while meeting the diverse needs of learners who bring varying experiences, resources and beliefs to the classroom (Ball 2000:491).

4.4.1 Language of instruction

L1 schooling is important because learners, especially young learners, learn best through their L1, but also because their cultural identity is affirmed when they hear their language spoken by teachers, when they read it in textbooks and when they

write it as part of the education system (Farrell, Homer & Patterson 1998:76). It is also clear from the Third International Mathematics and Science literacy study that learners who use the language of instruction as their home language perform significantly better overall than those students who do not speak the language of instruction at home, or do so infrequently (HSRC 2002).

The language of instruction at most South African schools is English which, for the majority of learners, is not their L1 (Prins et al 1998:139). In South Africa, where there are eleven official languages, it is possible that English will be a learner's third or even fourth language. Furthermore, what is termed a "second language" may in effect even be a "foreign language", because the learner may not have any exposure to it outside the classroom (NEPI 1992: xi).

MacDonald (1990:131) showed that black learners know only 800 English words at the end of Grade 4, while the minimum vocabulary needed to master the content subjects of Grade 5 is 8 000 words. This difference can lead to serious problems when the learner has to master complicated subject matter.

As learning through English is thought to impede learning and also to cause poor mastery of both English and the L1, the poor Grade 12 results and the general lack of academic skills and intellectual growth among black learners at secondary and higher education levels, are most often attributed to the use of English as medium of instruction (Banda 2000:51).

Many learners in South Africa generally spend twelve years learning English as a subject while using it as a medium of instruction for eight of those years. Yet several teachers and researchers observe low levels of English proficiency among South African learners (Bruckmann 1998:180, Rademeyer 2001:1, Van der Linde 2001:3, Webb 1996:180). These observations indicate that the level of English proficiency achieved during the 12 years of schooling is still not enough to

facilitate access to some domains, such as higher education studies, effectively (Coetzee-Van Rooy 2000:4).

Despite the difficulties experienced as a result of English as a language of instruction, Verhoef (1998:189) states that learners express an overwhelmingly positive response towards English as a school subject and as a language of instruction.

4.4.2 Language of the textbooks

According to Meyer (1998:16), all Secondary school textbooks are currently only available in English. Many South African books use formal language, are seldom written with L2-learners in mind, are often translated from Afrikaans and display impoverished text – that is, they are too concise and do not have enough of the linking sentences and explanations that are necessary for easy understanding (Van Rooyen 1990:104). MacKay and de Klerk (1996:215) agree that textbooks are mostly written by L1-speakers for L1-speakers and add that the complex level of sentence construction and grammar, as well as the use of idiomatic and figurative expressions makes it difficult for L2 readers to understand.

Makalela (1999:69) also notices that the English of the textbooks is usually very different from the English of the teachers.

One of the reasons for this situation is that the necessary terminology and textbook resources in the African languages have not been developed, as these languages have not been used for academic purposes (Probyn 2001:250). Although this could be overcome, it would require “a massive deployment of intellectual and financial resources” to make them available in all nine indigenous official languages, and it is probably not feasible given the current economic constraints in South Africa (Meyer 1998:16; Probyn 2001:250).

On the other hand, Cahill and Kamper (1989:26) and Vinjevold (1999:220) have determined that teachers have been using the African languages as languages of teaching and learning in traditional black schools for years, and authors, translators and publishers are just waiting for the green light to make learning materials in the African languages available.

Kamwangamalu (cited in Vermeulen 2000:19) feels that, to regard the translation of examination papers and learning materials as "just too expensive at this moment", is tantamount to using economic criteria to oust educationally sound arguments and at least one researcher, Tsabalala (cited in Pillay 2002:1), blames the disappointing Grade 12 results partly on poorly presented textbooks.

4.4.3 Level of teachers' training

According to Adams (1996:315), the difficulties experienced by learners in the learning of school subjects are compounded because many teachers have only a basic command of English, which is the language of instruction, and an equally basic understanding of their subject matter. Teachers are not properly trained and many teachers are teaching content subjects they were not even taught themselves, let alone trained to teach (Collins 1999:7,12).

Only between 37% and 42% of mathematics and science teachers are properly qualified to teach these subjects (Makhanya 2002:1). According to Ndabandaba (cited in Makhanya 2002:1) most teachers have low levels of conceptual knowledge of their subjects and the range of errors made in content subjects is alarmingly high. Thousands of teachers do not have an appropriate qualification, and research conducted during 1997 in Eastern Cape revealed that 42% of teachers either had no qualification or were under-qualified, while 3 527 principals did not have a minimum three year qualification (Monare et al 2001:2).

4.4.4 Curriculum 2005

The new “outcomes-based” curriculum seeks to move teachers and learners away from a transmission style of teaching and rote-learning to a more learner-centred, constructivist approach and the development of critical thinking skills through discussion, group work and cross-curricular project work (Department of Education 1997b). However, the document does not address the issue of the constraints that the language of instruction places on classroom interaction or how teachers and learners are to overcome these. Curriculum 2005 sees the enhancement of the learner’s thought processes, as envisaged by the critical and specific outcomes, as the main objective of the school, but without adequate language proficiency this becomes unattainable (Vermeulen 2000:15).

Teachers do not have the necessary training in outcomes-based education or the conceptual development that would enable them to practice outcomes-based education either (Makhanya 2002:1).

4.5 LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY PROBLEMS RELATING TO THE TEACHERS

The language used by teachers serves as linguistic input on which learners can base their learning of English, as the teacher’s language is often the only regular exposure to English that many L2-learners get (Olivier 1998:59). At most schools, however, this input seems to be impoverished.

A survey done at some of the teacher training colleges in North-West Province indicated that the average reading age in English of incoming learners was equivalent to that of the average English L1-learner half-way through Grade 3 (Saunders 1991:14).

Rural areas have an undersupply of language teachers (O’Conner 2000:2), teachers in these areas do not speak Standard English (Webb 1996:179) and they

experience great difficulties with reading English (Bouwer cited in Bouwer et al 1999:96). Even teachers from some urban schools are unable to read English well (Guldenpfennig cited in Bouwer et al 1999:96).

Not only researchers think that teachers' language proficiency is inadequate. Teachers feel so themselves. Kotecha, Rutherford and Starfield (1990:216) quoted a lecturer at a black teacher training college who said:

Students or pupils fail to understand the subject matter clearly because the teacher cannot explain or express himself effectively. Take for instance a science teacher with all the necessary information becoming frustrated in front of his class as a result of his inadequacy in language use.

The lack of English proficiency of most teachers can partly be blamed on the education system. In the main report of the Threshold Project, MacDonald (1990:39) explains that the apartheid system has ensured that most teachers in black education do not speak English with confidence or fluency, use outmoded materials and have almost no contact with English-speakers. The teaching of English has been in the hands of non-native-speakers of English, who have often been unqualified or under-qualified for the task (Buthelezi 1995:242; Webb 1996:179). As most teachers are products of Bantu education, they themselves became English L2-speakers whose English is often inadequate (MacKay et al 1996:201).

The teacher's English proficiency, or lack of proficiency, also influences the learning of content subjects. According to NEPI (1992:18), learners might not perform well in their content subjects if the teachers' proficiency in English is too limited to deal effectively with the concepts and content of those subjects. Many researchers state that the teachers teaching content subjects through English lack the necessary proficiency in English to teach the different school subjects

effectively through English (Lemmer 1995:88; Meyer 1998:13; NEPI 1992:81; Strauss 1996:240; Van der Walt 1999:84; Webb 1996:179). Vinjevold (1999:221) refers to a “mismatch in language competences of teachers and learners” that can lead to a situation where interaction in the classroom is severely hindered.

The lack of English proficiency compounds the didactic problems faced by teachers (Bouwer et al 1999:96), and Chick (1992b:x) states that many of the problems already present in education will not be solved unless the quality of English teaching does.

4.6 HOW TEACHERS COPE WITH THE LANGUAGE PROBLEMS

Most teachers experience feelings of frustration at the learners’ inability to understand, guilt at the thought of some learners being left behind and sadness and helplessness at not being able to change this (Probyn 2001:262). Teaching through English as a L2 is also stressful, difficult and extremely time-consuming, no matter how good the teacher is or how sensitive to the learners’ learning needs (Probyn 2001:264).

4.6.1 Code switching

The language of the classroom is often not English, but a mixture of English and the L1 (Meyer 1998:15; Probyn 2001:257; Tucker 1999:3; Vinjevold 1999:220; Young 1995b:108). Teachers often use the L1 to explain new words or concepts, for discipline and management, for affective purposes and when working with learners individually (Probyn 2001:258-259; Slabbert & Finlayson 1999:70).

4.6.2 Rote learning

As learners often do not understand what they are learning, teachers translate texts into learners’ L1 and provide them with simplified notes in English which they must learn by heart (Probyn 2001:251; Vermeulen 2000:16). Teachers also use

rote learning as an attempt to solve the difficulties they experience due to large classes, the whole range of pupil ability and the varying backgrounds of learners who are sitting together in one class (Adams 1996:315).

Although the outcomes-based education system was supposed to be implemented in all schools, many teachers have not been retrained, learner-support material never materialised, and the old habits of teaching and rote-learning still persist (Business day online 2001:1).

4.6.3 Adapting level of language

Probyn (2001:257) mentions several ways that teachers use to modify their English to accommodate their learners' understanding: they deliberately use simpler vocabulary, speak more slowly, repeat and allow a longer waiting time for answering questions. They also draw examples from the learners' everyday lives, and employ active learning, visual aids and body language.

4.6.4 Iscamtho

Ntshangase (1995:291-293) explains the new form of language, known as Iscamtho, that reflects the world of the young and urban-wise. Iscamtho seems to cut across all linguistic, political and ethnic barriers created in the past by the apartheid state, and it is a language that is used "through" another language, while still retaining its own defining features. Research shows that when young, particularly male, teachers who grew up in Soweto want to explain something learners find difficult to understand in class, they switch to Iscamtho for clarification (Ntshangase 1995:295).

4.7 SPECIFIC LANGUAGE PROBLEMS RELATING TO THE LEARNERS

Language problems sometimes masquerade as misconceptions (Clerk & Rutherford 2000:715; Moyo 1994:59). As learners are evaluated largely on the

basis of their written work, their chances of success become very slim if their language deviates from the standard forms, because the examiner may not be able to comprehend what they are trying to convey (Moyo 1994:59). Many learners think that academic English is spoken language written down, and deciphering the meaning from text which is written in such a manner, is very time-consuming for the teacher (Moyo 1994:59).

4.7.1 No CALP in L1 or L2

Many learners only receive instruction through their L1 for the first four years of schooling, which is insufficient time for the acquisition of context-reduced, cognitively demanding skills (Starfield 1994:177). Learners then have to acquire CALP through English which is normally their L2, but can sometimes even be a third or fourth language.

According to Luckett (1995:75), the Threshold Project (1990) showed that many learners could not explain in English what they already knew in their L1, nor could they transfer the new knowledge that they acquired in English into their L1, because they did not develop CALP in either language.

4.7.2 Reading skills

Poorly developed reading skills in the L1 impede the processing of both narrative and academic text in another language (Bouwer et al 1999:94). As learning to read competently requires sustained effort over several years from teachers and learners, teachers should work together to engage and maintain the interest, enjoyment and involvement of their learners in reading activities (Bouwer et al 1999:96). Unfortunately many teachers at traditional black schools fail to apply the communicative, integrative approach to L2-learning which is especially important to learners who have little exposure to English outside school, and they still place undue emphasis on drills and getting learners to memorise the pronunciation and the meaning of an endless list of words occurring in the new "lesson" of an outdated basal reader (Bouwer et al 1999:96).

4.7.3 Exposure to English

Luckett (1995:74) and Van der Walt (1999:85) state that the frequency of using English in most of the traditional black schools and in the homes and communities where these schools are situated, is so low that one can in no way call it exposure to English. According to Carey (1990:34) many learners, even if they receive their entire schooling in English, will not develop their literacy to a level sufficient for higher education schooling due to their low literacy situations at home and the shortage of teachers.

Where the parents cannot speak or understand English, the learner's acquisition of English is not supported and reinforced after school hours and the parents may feel ill-equipped to assist with homework (Lemmer 1995:91). Learners from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds also frequently experience a lack of books, magazines, newspapers, educational radio and television in the home (Lemmer 1995:93).

If English is spoken in the learner's community, it might not be Standard English, but "black" English or heavily accented "foreign" English (Gough 1996:13; Lemmer 1995:91).

For many learners the teacher is the chief role model for English and it is thus extremely important that teachers, especially those for the early stages of English, must have some knowledge of the nature of English rhythms and pronunciation and of how this can lead to problems with spelling (Titlestad 1999:346). As many teachers are not fluent in English (see paragraph 4.5) and many of the learners have very limited exposure to English other than through the teacher, it leads to learners' acquiring the non-standard English of their teachers as if it were Standard English (Nwaila 1997:4).

According to Chick (1992a:32) and Malefo (cited in Bouwer et al 1999:95) the learners' limited exposure to English outside the classroom compounds their difficulties in developing comprehension skills, as it restricts incidental learning

and extension of core vocabulary and grammar. Differences in the style of social interaction also remain unexplored and can be an obstacle in reading even simple narrative text with ready understanding.

4.7.4 Stress relating to learning through English

Many learners experience stress that can be connected to the learning of English L2. Although the importance of English is recognised, there is also a fear among older people that the L1 will fade away, that learners will develop an ignorance of and disrespect for their L1, and an even bigger fear that the children will adopt inferior foreign customs along with English, such as the habit of disrespect that seems to be flowing everywhere that American television reaches (Mathiane 1989:7; WakaMsiming cited in Balfour 1999:106).

Apart from adopting new behaviour patterns at school which are not understood by older family members, learners are also frustrated by knowing the answer, but not having adequate vocabulary to express it, they are pressured by parents and school to learn English quickly and sometimes they are even encouraged to abandon the use of the mother-tongue completely (Lemmer 1995:93-94; Vinjevold 1999:214).

English will suffer the schizophrenia of being a resented necessity, at least until English competence enters homes and schools (Chapman 1997:89).

4.7.5 Rote learning

Information is not the same as knowledge. Information can be seen as “raw data”, while knowledge is the ability to use information for specific means and to evaluate its value (Gregory 1987:104). Many teachers are unaware that, although it is possible to transfer information, it is not possible to transfer knowledge (Jacobs and Gravett 1998:54).

According to Bower et al (1999:93), many African learners still appear to be orientated towards spoken communication and rote learning instead of using books spontaneously for learning. Learners who do not understand what the teacher is saying, cannot internalise new knowledge and fall back on rote memorisation in their content subjects. They might then pass these subjects, but they will not be able to use the knowledge (NEPI 1992:143-144).

Although this problem could reflect the teaching style maintained in many African classrooms, it could also be related to the African tradition of oral narrative, a lack of printed material in many African homes and schools, and failure to endorse a culture of literacy (Bower et al 1999:94).

4.8 PROBLEMS FACED BY HIGHER EDUCATION LEARNERS

According to Wood (1998:88), higher education institutions have a two-fold problem: on the one hand they are pressured to maintain high levels of throughput of students, because of the financial implications, and on the other hand there is the need to ensure that the qualifications that learners receive will be accorded the proper degree of respect in the workplace. This problem is intensified by the problems experienced in the school system (see paragraphs 4.3 - 4.7). Craig and Kernoff (1995:24) also argue that many black learners are underprepared for higher education study in that literacy is not well entrenched in the practices and institutions of African people who have their social and historical roots in orality.

4.8.1 Problems with lectures

Lecturers often complain that, no matter how slowly they lecture or how carefully they adapt the vocabulary they use, learners still do not understand the content of the lectures (Olivier 1998:59). If learners fail to comprehend lecture input, they have little to fall back on, except perhaps rote learning and plagiarism, as learners often find most recommended reading too difficult to work through independently (Olivier 1998:57).

This problem multiplies because learners do not ask lecturers for help or participate in classroom discussions, as they are afraid of making mistakes in English, being labelled "problem black students" or of receiving patronising responses from staff members (Hall et al 1995:27; Mugoya 1991:11).

4.8.2 Rote learning

Learners whose initial educational training emphasised rote learning may have developed quite effective memory strategies, but might be rather inexperienced with comprehension strategies, taking notes or engaging critically with material (Agar 1990:449; Dreyer 1998:24). In an investigation by Paxton (1998:143) at the University of Cape Town, he reported that many of the concepts of economics learned in the first year of study are complex, and students relying on their old rote-learning strategies will not fare well. Learners need to learn to organise the information they have learnt and to build conceptual models for themselves so that they can see the meaning of what they are doing, otherwise they will not be able to apply their theoretical knowledge or retain what they have learnt (Paxton 1998:143).

4.8.3 Language of instruction

The fact that the medium of instruction in higher education is, for the majority of learners, a second or even third language has a detrimental effect on their ability to conceptualise properly (Fourie 1999:282).

Despite this, learners prefer English as the only language of instruction at higher education level, because they fear that the use of dominant regional languages as media of instruction might rekindle the spectre of apartheid by excluding speakers of other L1's (Dyers 1999:81).

4.8.4 Proficiency in English

Lecturers from all disciplines complain about the lack of critical thinking and the poor formulation, expression and organisation in learners' writing (Swart 1995:2). The main writing requirement at South African higher education institutions is expository writing: to inform or to instruct, to present ideas and general truths as clearly and objectively as possible in examinations or assignments (Swart 1995:2).

Learners sometimes express satisfaction with their proficiency in English while their lecturers are of the opinion that they have poor proficiency with regard to written academic English (Foster et al 1998:87; Lanham 1996:31).

4.8.5 Other problems

According to Nichols (1998:85), black learners are likely to fail in disproportionate numbers because they have not fully acquired the language or culture dominant in the tertiary institution. Although they may have very rich experiences of life, they soon discover that very little of this experience is counted as valuable or academically relevant at higher education institutions (Wood 1998:89).

Apart from the language problems experienced, Agar (1990:451) also lists the following as severe and general types of problems experienced by black English L2-speakers at traditionally white higher education institutions:

- A general shortage of cash for paying academic and personal expenses. A particular consequence of this problem is difficulty in purchasing prescribed texts.
- Learners experience the workload as excessive. Some consequences of this perception are low levels of motivation and difficulty in passing examinations.
- Accommodation and transport are usually a big concern and learners have difficulty to balance family commitments with their academic work.

- Library arrangements are usually not appropriate. Learners need extended times for library loans, they need to be able to take out more books at a time and they also need guidance in using the library.

4.9 CONCLUSION

The breakdown of the culture of teaching and learning, the lack of resources at many South African schools that was caused by the apartheid policy of more than forty years, the lack of properly trained teachers and the status that English now enjoys cannot be solved instantly or cheaply.

Despite research results that clearly indicate that L1 schooling is in the best interest of learners, the language of learning and teaching in most South African schools is English, which is a L2 for the majority of learners.

When learners switch to English as language of instruction in Grade 5, there is a huge difference between the English vocabulary they know and the English vocabulary they need to master the content subjects. Without specific intervention, this gap between needed vocabulary and obtained vocabulary will only increase with every level of schooling.

It is important for learners to develop CALP in their L1 before they have to use a L2 for academic purposes. Many learners cannot transfer knowledge obtained in one language to another language, because they switch to English as language of instruction before they have developed CALP in their L1.

Learners do not develop proper reading skills in English because they did not develop proper reading skills in their L1 and because teachers still use outdated teaching methods and materials.

Teachers and textbooks should help to facilitate the learning process. Unfortunately many teachers are not proficient enough in English to use it

effectively as language of instruction, and are furthermore not sufficiently qualified to teach the content subjects they are teaching. Textbooks also become more of a hindrance than a help as the level of English used in textbooks is often too difficult for L2-learners.

Learners who have to learn through English before having CALP in their L1, and who are not proficient in English, are thus faced with the following situation:

- They have to receive instruction in a language they do not fully comprehend and they cannot transfer knowledge acquired in their L1 to English to help them, because they do not have CALP in their L1.
- They receive this instruction from teachers who are also not proficient in English.
- They receive this instruction from teachers who are not suitably qualified to teach the concepts and content of the subject.
- They have to use textbooks written in a type of English that they do not understand.
- They have to write all tests and examinations in English.

Is it then any wonder that our learners struggle at school, that we have many learners that drop out of school before passing Grade 12, that we have a very low pass rate in Grade 12, and that those learners who do pass Grade 12, face even bigger problems in higher education studies?

In trying to overcome the problems of not being able to understand content properly and not being able to express themselves adequately through English during examinations, learners fall back on rote learning. Although many teachers try to overcome the language problems by code switching, adapting their level of English and even using Iscamtho, they too have to rely on rote learning if all else fails. The bad habit of rote learning is enforced because it is sometimes seen as the only method to help their learners pass subjects they themselves do not

understand completely and also because they are not proficient enough in English to help learners otherwise.

Curriculum 2005 concentrates more on critical and specific outcomes, while trying to move away from the old rote learning. This, however, cannot be obtained in the current situation of large classes, teachers and learners that all struggle with the language of instruction and with the many schools without even the most basic of resources.

Learners do not get the kind of exposure to English that is necessary for them to learn it sufficiently so that they can use it as language of teaching and learning. For many learners, especially in the rural areas, the teacher is the only regular exposure to English they have. As these teachers are themselves not L1 users of English and are not proficient in English, the learners will learn the teacher's non-standard English as if it is standard English that will be acceptable in all spheres of life.

When learners come to higher education institutions, the problems they experienced with English at school become even more intense. Classes at higher education institutions are normally larger than those of schools, lecturers might use a higher level of English than teachers did and the level of English used in the textbooks might be even higher or more difficult to understand, as these books are often imported. Learners who then fall back on their old rote learning methods, do not pass their courses as they are not able to apply their theoretical knowledge. Because they do not understand what they have learned, their written answers are sometimes so confused that examiners cannot decipher the meaning of what they tried to convey.

CHAPTER 5

METHOD OF RESEARCH

5.1 INTRODUCTION

From Chapter 4 it is clear that many teachers and researchers observe low levels of English L2 proficiency among South African learners. The poor Grade 12 results and the general lack of academic skills and intellectual growth at secondary and higher education levels are also most often attributed to the use of English as language of instruction. This study attempts to investigate the level of English proficiency of learners at the Vaal Triangle Technikon and to determine if there is any correlation between learners' English proficiency and their academic success in Internal Auditing 1.

5.2 SPECIFIC RESEARCH PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESES

5.2.1 Problem 1

How do learners feel about various aspects regarding English as a subject at school, English as language of instruction at school, English as language of instruction for Internal Auditing 1 at higher education level and Internal Auditing 1 as a subject? In order to answer these questions, information regarding the following will be gathered and analysed:

- ◆ Learners' history regarding matriculation, their L1 and their future plans.
- ◆ Learners' experiences of English as a subject during different phases of their school careers.
- ◆ Learners' experiences of English as language of instruction during different phases of their school careers.
- ◆ Learners' habits regarding watching television, listening to the radio and reading.
- ◆ Learners' opinion regarding English and Internal Auditing 1.

5.2.2 Problem 2

Is there a significant correlation between English proficiency and academic success in Internal Auditing 1? In order to answer this question the following hypotheses were formulated:

Null-hypothesis (H_{01}): There is no significant correlation between Grade 12 English results and academic success in Internal Auditing 1.

Experiential hypothesis (H_1): There is a significant correlation between Grade 12 English results and academic success in Internal Auditing 1.

Null-hypothesis (H_{02}): There is no significant correlation between the results of the English proficiency test and academic success in Internal Auditing 1.

Experiential hypothesis (H_2): There is a significant correlation between the results of the English proficiency test and academic success in Internal Auditing 1.

Null-hypothesis (H_{03}): There is no significant correlation between the results of the English writing performance test and academic success in Internal Auditing 1.

Experiential hypothesis (H_3): There is a significant correlation between the results of the English writing performance test and academic success in Internal Auditing 1.

Null-hypothesis (H_{04}): There is no significant correlation between the results of the English proficiency test and Grade 12 English results.

Experiential hypothesis (H_4): There is a significant correlation between the results of the English proficiency test and Grade 12 English results.

Null-hypothesis (H_{05}): There is no significant correlation between the results of the English writing performance test and Grade 12 English results.

Experiential hypothesis (H₅): There is a significant correlation between the results of the English writing performance test and Grade 12 English results.

Null-hypothesis (H₀₆): There is no significant correlation between Grade 12 English results and Grade 12, L1 results.

Experiential hypothesis (H₆): There is a significant correlation between Grade 12 English results and Grade 12, L1 results.

5.3 SUBJECTS

The subjects of this study were first year learners at the Vaal Triangle Technikon registered for Internal Auditing 1 as part of the Internal Auditing Diploma during 2001. Originally all learners (115) took part in the study. However, those learners who were absent when the second battery of tests was administered were excluded when the statistical analysis was done.

The population can be regarded as all learners with the same attributes at all similar higher education institutions. The researcher used convenience sampling, as the learners included in the study fitted into the time frame allowed for the study and could be reached relatively easily when they had to complete the different tests and complete the questionnaire.

The researcher had direct access to the subjects and administered the survey and tests personally with the help of field workers. The personal handling of the tests helped to ensure that all subjects received the same instructions and that the same procedures were followed for all subjects.

5.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

Schumacher et al (1993:31) describe research design as the plan and structure of the investigation used to obtain evidence that will answer research questions.

When doing quantitative research, the researcher can use different research strategies. These strategies include hypothesis-developing, quantitative-descriptive designs, associative designs and explanatory designs (De Vos 1998:78). In this study, quantitative research is done by using a survey research design and a correlational research design.

5.5 SURVEY RESEARCH DESIGN – QUESTIONNAIRE AS RESEARCH METHOD

The survey research design makes use of a questionnaire. According to Schumacher et al (1993:36), questionnaires are used frequently in educational research to describe attitudes, beliefs and opinions. A questionnaire can also ensure anonymity, it is relatively economical and the questions can be written for specific purposes (Schumacher et al 1993:238).

5.5.1 Type of questionnaire

In this study group-administered questionnaires were used where each respondent received a questionnaire to complete on his/her own, but the researcher was present to clear up any uncertainties. According to De Vos (1998:155), the biggest advantages of this type of questionnaire is that it saves cost and time, because a group of respondents is handled simultaneously and is consequently exposed simultaneously to the same stimulus.

5.5.2 Response systems

Structured closed-form items, where respondents had to choose between predetermined responses, were used in the questionnaire. It included dichotomous questions, multiple-choice questions and scaled questions.

5.5.3 Construction of the questionnaire

The information gathered in the literary study regarding the learning of a L2 and using a L2 as language of instruction was used to design the questionnaire.

Section A (questions 1 – 8) was designed to gather information regarding the respondent's school history and L1. Information required concerning school history included year of matriculation, province of matriculation and average size of matric class. Questions regarding the L1 included what the respondent's L1 was, when the respondent started learning to read and write in the L1, up to what stage the respondent continued to learn the L1 as a school subject and how competent the respondent was in the L1. The respondent also had to indicate what he/she planned to be doing 5 years from the time that he filled in the questionnaire.

Section B (questions 9 – 33) focused on English as a subject. In the first nine questions the respondents had to indicate when reading and writing in English was introduced at school, until when it was continued as a subject and how competent they were in English. The respondent also had to indicate how often English was used to communicate in the community, with parents, with siblings and with friends.

For the remainder of Section B, the 12 school years were divided as follows: Grade 1 – 4 (questions 16 – 21), Grade 5 – 7 (questions 22 – 27) and Grade 8 – 12 (questions 28 – 33). The respondents had to answer the same questions concerning each phase of their schooling. Questions included what language the teacher used most during the English period, what the English teacher's L1 was, if the English teacher spoke English well and encouraged learners to speak English. The respondents had to indicate further whether they felt comfortable using English with the English teacher and with friends during the English language period.

Section C (questions 34 – 54) consisted of questions regarding English as language of instruction for all content subjects and the 12 school years were divided in the same way as for Section B: Grade 1 – 4 (questions 34 – 40), Grade 5 – 7 (questions 41 – 47) and Grade 8 – 12 (questions 48 – 54). For each phase of their schooling the respondents had to indicate what language was used most in class, what the L1 of the teacher was, in what language tests and examinations were taken, if the teacher spoke English well, if they were encouraged to speak English during class, and if they felt comfortable using English in discussions with the teacher and with their friends.

Section D (question 55 – 66) was concerned with the respondent's habits of watching television, listening to the radio and reading. This section was divided only into two phases, namely Grade 5 – 9 (questions 55 – 60) and Grade 10 – 12 (questions 61 – 66). For each of these two phases the respondents had to indicate how much television they watched per day, what kind of programmes they watched, how much they listened to the radio per day, what kind of programmes they listened to, how much time they spent reading per day and what kind of material they read for pleasure.

Section E (question 67 – 72) gathered information regarding the respondent's view of English as language of instruction for Internal Auditing 1. The respondent had to indicate through what language they preferred to be taught, how difficult it was to understand the English of the textbooks, the English used during lectures and the English used in tests and examinations. In the last two questions the respondent had to indicate what kind of questions they preferred during tests and examinations and whether they found Internal Auditing to be difficult or not.

5.6 CORRELATIONAL RESEARCH DESIGN

The researcher wants to determine if there is a correlation between a learner's proficiency in the language of instruction, which is English, and his/her academic success in Internal Auditing 1. Three different instruments were used to determine

the level of English proficiency, namely Grade 12 English, “Proficiency test English Second language Advanced level” (Chamberlain & Van der Schyff 1991) and “Writing performance test in English Advanced level” (Roux 1997). Henceforth the researcher will refer to these tests as the Proficiency test and the Writing performance test respectively.

5.6.1 Instrumentation

5.6.1.1 Proficiency test English L2 Advanced level

The Proficiency test is often used at the Vaal Triangle Technikon as part of a battery of tests to assist in admissions and other testing procedures. This standardised test forms part of a series of language proficiency tests developed by the Human Sciences Research Council (henceforth written as HSRC) in response to requests from various sectors of the South African society for tests that can establish the general language development of a respondent (Chamberlain et al 1991:15). The purpose of the test is “to determine the general proficiency level of English L2 respondents within the range of senior secondary proficiency levels (i.e. Standards 8,9 and 10)” (Chamberlain et al 1991:15).

The aim of this test is to test the general English proficiency of respondents. It aims to test knowledge of and skills in a defined field of experience or subject matter not attached to a specific syllabus. The test compilers, Chamberlain et al (1991:15), declare that “It was attempted to make the test widely applicable by avoiding specific learning content”. The operational level of “advanced level” is standards 8, 9 and 10, or in terms of current terminology, Grades 10, 11 and 12.

The test is conducted in the multiple-choice mode and therefore relies on respondents’ ability to read English as a L2 and select the most appropriate answer from four options. The test duration is 40 minutes and the test provides a raw score out of 40 for each respondent. The raw scores can be converted into stanines where 1 depicts very poor advanced level English L2 proficiency and 9 depicts very good advanced level English L2 proficiency. The following table from

Chamberlain et al (1991:16-17) indicates which knowledge and skills are regarded as related to “general English L2 proficiency” in this test:

Table 2: Specification of the contents of the test

	Skills being tested	No. of items
1	Recognising paraphrased meaning of common idioms	2
2	Making <i>general</i> inferences based on the given text	8
3	Making inferences related to <i>diction</i> – writer’s choice of words in the context	1
4	Making inferences related to writer’s <i>intention</i>	3
5	Making inferences related to <i>setting or atmosphere</i>	1
6	Selecting appropriate language for audience/situation/circumstances	2
7	Accurately communicating summary of intended meaning: headlines, recognising redundancy	2
8	Accurately conveying expanded meaning of summarised text	2
9	Editing: Being consistent about time, i.e. recognising incorrect use of tenses	3
10	Combining of simple sentences to form complex sentences	1
11	Meaningful paragraphing – selecting best opening or concluding sentence or arranging sentences meaningfully	2
12	Selecting precise word to describe something in context	1
13	Selecting words/phrases used deliberately to express or stir emotions	1
14	Recognising correct idiomatic and functional use of verbs	3
15	Recognising correct idiomatic and functional use of conjunctions	1
16	Prefixes and suffixes	1
17	Punctuation	2
18	Word order	2
19	Changing actives to passives	1
20	Changing statements to questions	1
	Total	40

The researcher decided to use the Proficiency test, because the test claims to be a measure of general English L2 proficiency, it uses the reading mode, which is an

important component of academic language proficiency, it is available to the researcher at little cost and it is very time-effective.

5.6.1.2 Writing performance test English Advanced level

The Writing performance test is a standardised test developed by the HSRC in response to requests from the English Academy and in response to the perceived needs of education departments and various sectors of the South African society (Roux 1997:1). The test forms part of a series of language tests that can be used separately or in conjunction with one another in order to establish a candidate's level of language development in each of the four modes (listening, speaking, reading and writing) (Roux 1997:1).

According to Roux (1997:1) a performance test is a test in which the candidate has to "perform" in the language mode that is being tested in order to "demonstrate" his/her ability in the specific mode. It intends to indicate a person's knowledge and skill with reference to a specific domain of human experience that is not limited to the domain defined by a specific syllabus (Roux 1997:1).

The purpose of the test is "to determine a candidate's writing performance level in English within the range of Senior Secondary Performance Levels (i.e. Grades 10, 11 and 12)" and the language content of the test is designed to be as universal as possible (Roux 1997:1-2). The test can be used for both L1 and L2-learners as different norms have been computed and two Norm Tables are supplied.

There is no strict time limit and the researcher has to decide if, after approximately 60 minutes, those that are still writing would benefit by continuing. The test consists of four writing tasks. Task 1 and Task 2 are marked according to a 3-point scale and Task 3 and Task 4 are marked according to a 9-point scale. All four tasks combined provide a raw score for each respondent, calculated out of 24 that can be converted into stanines where 1 depicts very poor English proficiency in comparison with that of the norm population and 9 depicts very good English

proficiency in comparison with that of the norm population. The following table indicates skills tested with each task:

Table 3: Test content and the skills tested (Adapted from Roux (1997:2-3))

Task	Test content	Skills tested
1	Describing a picture of an accident scene	The ability to give a detailed description and to develop the description in a detailed way
2	Reporting an incident in a shop	The ability to organise and express facts clearly and concisely, omitting insignificant details
3	Requesting more information in response to an advertisement in the form of a formal letter	The ability to respond clearly and correctly in a given format to information given or requested
4	Writing an essay of at least three paragraphs on the advantages of modern transport	The ability to express views and discuss issues on a given topic

The researcher decided to use the Writing performance test because the test specifically claims to test a learner's English writing skills, which forms an important part of the subject Internal Auditing 1.

5.7 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

The Proficiency test, as well as the Writing performance test, has been standardised by the HSRC and is considered suitable for Grade 10 and higher.

Test validity can be regarded as the extent to which the test serves its purpose, that is: the degree to which a set of test scores measures what it ought to measure. Although content validity is not normally expressed statistically, it is very important in proficiency tests. Since all possible items relating to a domain cannot be included in one test, the validity of the test depends on the representativeness of its content. A committee of subject experts accepted the items in the Proficiency test (Chamberlain et al 1991:19). The tasks in the Writing

performance test were accepted by a committee of subject experts after a specification table had been drawn up and a thorough study had been made of the suitability of the tasks to test writing performance (Roux 1997:5).

The test statistics for the Proficiency test were obtained during 1989 and the test statistics for the Writing performance test were obtained during 1994 and are as follows:

Table 4: Test Statistics

	Proficiency test	Writing performance test (for L2)
Number of items in test	40	4
Number of subjects	489 Grade 10 486 Grade 11 426 Grade 12	1 630 learners
Mean score	52,5%	52,18%
Standard deviation	8,53	3,089
Reliability coefficient	KR-20 = 0,89	KR-20 = 0,950

A test with a mean score between 50% and 70% is usually acceptable and the mean for both tests that were used falls within this range. The standard deviation of both tests is higher than the expected standard deviation in a normal distribution. This means that the test discriminates well between respondents. Reliability coefficients of 0,8 or higher can be regarded as satisfactory and the reliability coefficients for these tests are 0,89 and 0,95 respectively. It can thus be concluded that the tests used are reliable.

5.8 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection was conducted by the researcher with the co-operation of colleagues who helped with the handing out of test material and with maintenance of discipline. The Proficiency test was administered during scheduled periods at the beginning of June 2001. The respondents received uniform instructions on

how to complete the answer sheets and all the requirements stipulated regarding the testing atmosphere, instructions, materials and time limit were strictly adhered to.

The questionnaire was not administered at the same time as the Proficiency test, because respondents had to complete the subject Internal Auditing 1 before they would be able to answer sections of the questionnaire. Because of various problems at the HSRC, which had to supply the Writing performance test, this test could also not be administered during June 2001.

During August 2002 the Writing performance test and the questionnaire were administered. It was again administered in scheduled periods. Respondents who completed the first test, but would not normally be present in the period when the questionnaire and second test had to be completed, were given personal letters to request them to be present at the time. Some respondents were absent when the first test was administered and some did not arrive to complete the questionnaire and the second test. Only the data for respondents who completed the questionnaire and both tests were used in the final statistical analysis.

Respondents were given uniform instructions on how to complete the answer sheets and were told that there was no strict time limit for the completion of either the questionnaire or the Writing performance test. The questionnaire was handed out first. As soon as a respondent handed back the questionnaire, the Writing performance test was given to him/her. Respondents handed in as they completed the test. All the requirements stipulated regarding the testing atmosphere, instructions and materials were strictly adhered to. Most respondents finished the questionnaire within 30 minutes and the handing in times for the Writing performance test ranged from 45 minutes to one hour and 15 minutes.

5.9 DATA PROCESSING

The statistical analyses reported in this study were done by means of the Statistical Programme for the Social Sciences (SPSS) which was used to analyse the data. The following techniques were used: frequencies, percentages and correlation.

- Pearson product-moment correlations were used to determine the direction and strength of any possible correlations between the dependent variable (academic success in Internal Auditing 1) and the independent variables (English proficiency as measured by Grade 12 English, the Proficiency test and the Writing performance test). The following cut-off point applies for the determination of the level of statistical significance when reporting Pearson Product-moment correlations: $p < 0,01$ or $p < 0,05$.

5.10 CONCLUSION

In this chapter a description was given of the research design, the research methods used and the subjects who participated. Various measuring instruments were discussed and their reliability and validity for assessing specific variables were established. The various statistical techniques to be used in the study were discussed briefly in order to facilitate the logical explanation of the results in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The results of the empirical investigation are presented in this chapter. The aim of the chapter is to answer the research problems posed in chapter 1:

- ◆ How do learners feel about various aspects regarding English as a subject at school, English as language of instruction at school, English as language of instruction for Internal Auditing 1 and internal Auditing1 as a subject?
- ◆ Is there a significant correlation between English proficiency and academic success in Internal Auditing 1?

In order to ensure a logical order of discussion, the data will be presented under the following headings:

- ◆ Respondents' school history regarding matriculation, their L1 and future plans
- ◆ English as a subject at school
- ◆ English as language of instruction
- ◆ Respondents' habits concerning television, radio and reading
- ◆ Respondents' opinion regarding English and Internal Auditing 1 at higher education level
- ◆ English L2 proficiency as indicated by the different tests as well as their L1 proficiency
- ◆ Correlations between the different variables

6.2 RESPONDENTS' SCHOOL HISTORY AND THEIR FUTURE PLANS

Information about respondents' school history regarding matriculation, learning their L1 and their future plans are presented in tables 5 – 12 with a short discussion of it directly underneath each table. [See Appendix A, questions 1 – 8]

In table 5 the different L1's of the respondents are reflected.

Table 5: Distribution of respondents' L1

	Frequency	%
Sotho	31	34.0
Zulu	14	15.4
Venda	11	12.1
Tswana	10	11.0
Other	10	11.0
Tsonga	7	7.7
Xhosa	4	4.4
English	2	2.2
Afrikaans	1	1.1
Total	90	98.9
Missing System	1	1.1
Total	91	100.0

From table 5 it is clear that only 2 of the respondents are English L1-speakers. The remaining respondents all have a L1 that is not English and are thus doing their higher education studies through English as a L2.

The years in which the respondents matriculated appear in table 6.

Table 6: Year of matriculation of respondents

	Frequency	%
2000 or later	53	58.2
1999	27	29.7
1998 or earlier	11	12.1
Total	91	100.0

All the respondents were registered for Internal Auditing 1 as part of the Internal Auditing diploma during 2001 for the first time. The 53 respondents (58,2%) who matriculated in 2000 were therefore learners who registered at the Vaal Triangle Technikon directly after completing their school careers. The remaining 38 (41,8%) did not register at this higher education institution directly after Grade 12.

Table 7 reflects the different provinces in which the respondents completed matriculation.

Table 7: Province of matriculation of respondents

	Frequency	%
Gauteng	30	32.9
Limpopo	25	27.5
Free State	16	17.6
North West	9	9.9
Mpumahlanga	6	6.6
Kwazulu Natal	3	3.3
Eastern Cape	2	2.2
Total	91	100.0

The majority of the respondents matriculated in Gauteng (33%) and Limpopo (27,5%) province.

In table 8 the average size of the respondents' matriculation class is reflected.

Table 8: Average size of respondents' matriculation classes

	Frequency	%
50 or more	30	32.9
40-49	26	28.6
30-39	20	22.0
29 or less	15	16.5
Total	91	100.0

From table 8 it is evident that most matriculation classes were relatively large. Thirty respondents indicated that the average size of their matric class was 50 or more learners, while 26 respondents indicated that the average size of their matric class was 40 – 49 learners.

Respondents' plans for 5 years later appear in table 9.

Table 9: What respondents plan to do 5 years later

	Frequency	%
Work as an internal auditor	58	63.7
Work as an accountant	11	12.1
Do postgraduate studies	9	9.9
Work as an external auditor	9	9.9
Other	4	4.4
Total	91	100.0

Although all the respondents are registered for the Diploma Internal Auditing, only 58 plan to be working as internal auditors. Eleven respondents plan to be working as accountants, 9 as external auditors, 9 want to do postgraduate studies, while 4 plan to do something else.

The stage at which respondents started learning to read and write in their L1 is shown in table 10, until what stage they continued to learn their L1 as a subject at

school is shown in table 11 and table 12 indicates how proficient they perceive themselves to be in their L1.

Table 10: Stage when respondents started learning to read and write in their L1

	Frequency	%
Before school	42	46.2
Grade 1	45	49.4
Grade 2	2	2.2
After Grade 2	2	2.2
Total	91	100.0

The majority of respondents started learning to read and write in their L1 before they started school (42 respondents) and in Grade 1 (45 respondents).

Table 11: Stage until which the L1 was taken as a subject

	Frequency	%
Up to Grades 1-3	7	7.7
Up to Grades 4-7	8	8.8
Up to Grades 8-9	2	2.2
Up to Grades 10-12	72	79.1
Never had L1 as a subject at school	2	2.2
Total	91	100.0

Although 72 respondents continued to learn their L1 as a subject up to Grades 10 – 12, there were 2 respondents who never received tuition in their L1 at school. In table 10, all respondents indicated that they learnt to read and write in their L1. It can thus be deduced that the 2 respondents who never had their L1 as a subject at school, learnt it at home.

Table 12: Self-reported proficiency in L1

	Frequency	%
Not at all	0	0
Average	42	46.2
Better than average	49	53.8
Total	91	100.0

From table 12 it is clear that all respondents perceive themselves to be at least competent in their L1 and 49 out of 91 feel that they are better than average in their L1.

6.3 LEARNING ENGLISH AS A SUBJECT AT SCHOOL

Tables 13 to 15 indicate when respondents started learning to read and write in English, until what stage they continued to learn English as a subject at school and how proficient they themselves feel they are in English. [See Appendix A, questions 9 – 11]

Table 13: Stage when respondents started learning to read and write in English

	Frequency	%
Before school	15	16.5
Grade 1	33	36.2
Grade 2	16	17.6
Grade 3	17	18.7
Grade 4-7	9	9.9
Grade 8-12	1	1.1
Total	91	100.0

Quite a number of respondents started learning to read and write in English before school (15) and in Grade 1 (33), while 16 and 17 respectively started learning to

read and write in English in Grade 2 and in Grade 3. The 9 respondents who started learning to read and write in English during Grades 4 – 7 and the 1 who started in Grades 8 – 12 can be regarded as quite unusual for learners from South African schools.

Table 14: Stage until which English was taken as a subject

	Frequency	%
Grades 1-3	3	3.3
Grades 4-7	5	5.5
Grades 8-9	1	1.1
Grades 10-12	81	89.0
Never had English as a subject at school	1	1.1
Total	91	100.0

A large number of respondents had English as a subject up to Grades 10 – 12, but 9 respondents stopped doing English as a subject before they completed their schooling and 1 respondent never had English as a subject at school. As the language of instruction at South African schools are either English or Afrikaans, and all Afrikaans schools offer English L2, it is very unusual for learners from South African schools not to have English as a subject at school.

Table 15: Self-reported proficiency in English

	Frequency	%
Not at all	1	1.1
Average	67	73.6
Better than average	23	25.3
Total	91	100.0

From table 15 it is clear that most respondents perceive their proficiency in English as average, while 23 feel that their proficiency is even better than average. Only 1 respondent feels that he/she is not at all proficient in English.

Table 16 indicates how often it was necessary for respondents to use English for communication purposes in their communities while they were at school. [See Appendix A, question 12]

Table 16: Necessity to use English in the community

	Frequency	%
Often	9	9.9
Sometimes	69	75.8
Never	13	14.3
Total	91	100.0

Only 9 respondents had to use English in their community often, 69 had to use it sometimes and 13 never had to use it at all.

How often respondents communicated in English with different groups of people is reflected in table 17. [See Appendix A, questions 13 – 15]

Table 17: Communication in English with different groups

	Parents		Siblings		Friends	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Often	10	11.0	27	29.7	34	37.4
Sometimes	62	68.1	56	61.5	48	52.7
Never	19	20.9	8	8.8	9	9.9
Total	91	100.0	91	100.0	91	100.0

It is interesting that 34 respondents used English often when communicating with their friends, while only 10 used English often when communicating with their parents. Nineteen respondents never used English in communication with their parents, 8 never used it when communicating with siblings and 9 never even used it when communicating with friends.

The 12 years of schooling are divided into 3 phases, namely Grades 1 – 4, Grades 5 – 7 and Grades 8 – 12. It is done in this manner as learners in South Africa can receive teaching through their L1 up to Grade 4, after which the language of instruction is usually English. Grades 1 – 7 are usually offered at a primary school, while Grades 8 – 12 are offered at a secondary school. Many communities, especially in rural areas, do not have secondary schools and learners sometimes have to stay with family members or friends, in hostels or travel far every day to attend secondary schools. The language situation at the secondary school is therefore often quite different from what it was at the primary school.

Tables 18 – 20 indicate what language was used most during the English language period, the L1 of the teacher presenting English L2 as a subject and the respondents' perception of the teachers' English proficiency during different stages of schooling. [See Appendix A, questions 16 - 18, 22 - 24, 28 -30]

Table 18: Language that the teacher used most in class during the English language period

	Grades 1 - 4		Grades 5 – 7		Grades 8 – 12	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Respondent's L1 (not English)	18	19.8	13	14.3	4	4.4
Another African language (not respondent's L1)	5	5.5	7	7.7	1	1.1
English	61	67.0	70	76.9	85	93.4
Any other language	7	7.7	1	1.1	1	1.1
Total	91	100.0	91	100.0	91	100.0

During Grades 1 – 4, English was used most often during the English language period in 67% of the classrooms. This increased to 93,4% of the classrooms during Grades 8 – 12, while the use of a language other than English during the

English language period decreased from 33% (19.8 + 5.5 + 7.7) during Grades 1 – 4 to only 6,6% (4.4 + 1.1 + 1.1) during Grades 8 - 12.

Table 19: L1 of teacher who taught English language

	Grades 1 - 4		Grades 5 – 7		Grades 8 – 12	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Respondent's L1 (not English)	41	45.0	52	57.1	30	32.9
Another African language (not respondent's L1)	27	29.7	23	25.3	26	28.6
English	12	13.2	9	9.9	23	25.3
Any other language	6	6.6	1	1.1	4	4.4
Don't know	5	5.5	6	6.6	8	8.8
Total	91	100.0	91	100.0	91	100.0

Only 13,2% of the respondents had an English L1 person who taught them English language during Grades 1 – 4. Although this increased to 25,3% during Grades 8 – 12, the majority of the respondents were taught English language by a person who was not an English L1-speaker.

Table 20: Was the English language teacher proficient in English?

	Grades 1 - 4		Grades 5 – 7		Grades 8 – 12	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Yes	78	85.7	80	87.9	89	97.8
No	13	14.3	11	12.1	1	1.1
No response	0	0	0	0	1	1.1
Total	91	100.0	91	100.0	91	100.0

Despite the fact that the majority of the respondents' English language teachers were not English L1-speakers, all the respondents, except 1 who indicated "no"

and 1 who did not answer, felt that the teachers who taught them English language were proficient in English.

The issues around whether respondents were encouraged to use English during the English subject periods, and whether they had the confidence to use English when discussing work with the teacher and with friends appear in tables 21 – 23. [See Appendix A, questions 19 - 21, 25 - 27, 31 -33]

Table 21: Encouraged to use English during the English language period

	Grades 1 – 4		Grades 5 – 7		Grades 8 – 12	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Yes	78	85.7	82	90.1	89	97.8
No	13	14.3	9	9.9	2	2.2
Total	91	100.0	91	100.0	91	100.0

Most respondents were encouraged to use English during the English language period. The number of respondents (13) who were not encouraged to use English during the English language period in Grades 1 – 4 decreased to only 2 during Grades 8 – 12.

Table 22: Confidence to use English when communicating with English language teacher

	Grades 1 – 4		Grades 5 – 7		Grades 8 – 12	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Yes	63	69.2	68	74.7	80	87.9
No	28	30.8	23	25.3	11	12.1
Total	91	100.0	91	100.0	91	100.0

The respondents who felt comfortable to communicate in English with the English language teacher increased from 69,2% in Grades 1 – 4 to 87,9% during Grades 8

– 12. Although most respondents, as seen in table 21, were encouraged to use English during the English language period, 12,1% still did not feel comfortable to use it when communicating with the English language teacher during Grades 8 – 12.

Table 23: Confidence to use English when discussing work with friends during the English language period

	Grades 1 – 4		Grades 5 – 7		Grades 8 – 12	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Yes	56	61.5	64	70.3	84	92.3
No	33	36.3	26	28.6	7	7.7
No response	2	2.2	1	1.1	0	0
Total	91	100.0	91	100.0	91	100.0

The 61,5% of the respondents, who felt comfortable to discuss the work in English with their friends during the English language periods during Grades 1 - 4, increased to 92,3% during Grades 8 – 12. During Grades 8 – 12 only 7,7% of the respondents did not feel comfortable to discuss the work in English with their friends, which is less than the 12,1% (see table 22) of the respondents who still did not feel comfortable to discuss the work with the English language teacher.

6.4 ENGLISH AS LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

In a discussion of this part of the results, it should be kept in mind that L1 instruction is available to all learners for the first four years of schooling, that is for Grades 1 – 4. From Grades 5 – 12 the only languages of instruction that are available are English and Afrikaans. As only 2 respondents are L1 English-speakers and 1 is an Afrikaans L1-speaker, it can be assumed that the rest of the respondents would have attended schools where the language of instruction from Grades 5 – 12 was not their L1.

Tables 24 to 30 refer to all school subjects, for example Mathematics, Science, History or Geometry, excluding English. To avoid a lengthy explanation, all these subjects collectively will be referred to as content subjects. The 12 years of school are again divided into 3 phases, namely Grades 1 – 4, Grades 5 – 7 and Grades 8 – 12.

The language most often used by the teacher in class during content subject periods, the L1 of the teachers offering these subjects and their proficiency in English, as well as the language of the tests and examinations in these subjects, appear in table 24 to table 27. [See Appendix A, questions 34 - 36, 41 - 43, 48 - 50]

Table 24: Language that the teachers used most often in class during content subject periods

	Grades 1 – 4		Grades 5 – 7		Grades 8 – 12	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Respondent's L1 (not English)	33	36.2	17	18.7	8	8.8
Another African language (not respondent's L1)	8	8.8	8	8.8	3	3.3
English	41	45.1	62	68.1	78	85.7
Any other language	9	9.9	4	4.4	2	2.2
Total	91	100.0	91	100.0	91	100.0

Although L1 instruction is available for Grades 1 – 4, only 36,2% of the respondents received instruction through their L1 for this phase of their schooling, while 45,1% had already received instruction through English. From Grades 5 – 12 the language of instruction is officially English or Afrikaans, but in many classrooms the L1 was still the language that was used most during content subject periods. The number of classrooms, in which the L1 was the language that the teacher used most during content subject periods declined gradually over

the different phases of schooling. If we ignore the one respondent for whom the language of instruction, namely Afrikaans, was also his/her L1, the teachers of only 7 of the 91 respondents still used their L1 most often for content subjects by the time they reached Grades 8 – 12.

Table 25: L1 of teachers who taught content subjects

	Grades 1 - 4		Grades 5 - 7		Grades 8 - 12	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Respondent's L1 (not English)	50	54.9	49	53.8	28	30.8
Another African language (not respondent's L1)	27	29.7	27	29.7	26	28.6
English	8	8.8	9	9.9	23	25.3
Any other language	5	5.5	5	5.5	10	11.0
Don't know	1	1.1	1	1.1	4	4.4
Total	91	100.0	91	100.0	91	100.0

Even in Grades 1 – 4, relatively few content subject teachers had the same L1 as the respondents and this figure dropped sharply in the higher grades. In Grades 8 – 12 only 25,3% of the teachers who taught content subjects through English were also L1-speakers of English, while the remainder (74,7%) of the teachers were teaching content subjects through English as a L2. The percentage of content subject teachers who were English L1-speakers increased from 8,8% and 9,9% in Grades 1 – 4 and Grades 5 – 7 respectively, to 25,3% in Grades 8 – 12.

It is interesting to note that the number of teachers whose L1 is an African language, although not necessarily the same as the respondent's L1, decreased from 84,6% (54.9 + 29.7) in Grades 1 – 4 and 83,5% (53.8 + 29.7) in Grades 5 – 7, to only 59,4% (30.8 + 28.6) in Grades 8 - 12. The teachers whose L1 was not an African language increased from 14,3% (8.8 + 5.5) in Grades 1 – 4 and 15,4% (9.9 + 5.5) in Grades 5 – 7, to 36,3% (25.3 + 11.0) in Grades 8 - 12.

Table 26: Language in which tests and examinations were written

	Grades 1 - 4		Grades 5 – 7		Grades 8 – 12	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Respondent's L1 (not English)	11	12.1	4	4.4	3	3.3
Another African language (not respondent's L1)	2	2.2	0	0	1	1.1
English	78	85.7	87	95.6	86	94.5
Any other language	0	0	0	0	1	1.1
Total	91	100.0	91	100.0	91	100.0

In a discussion of this table, it is important to keep in mind that although L1 instruction is available for Grades 1 – 4, 45,1% of the respondents (according to table 24) used mostly English during content subject periods. Yet 85,7% of the respondents indicated that they already wrote their tests and examinations in English during this early phase of their schooling.

For Grades 8 – 12, when only the one respondent whose L1 is Afrikaans should have written tests and examinations in a language other than English, four (2 + 1 + 1) other respondents also still wrote tests and examinations in a language other than English.

Table 27: English proficiency of content subject teachers

	Grades 1 - 4		Grades 5 – 7		Grades 8 – 12	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Yes	78	85.7	78	85.7	86	94.5
No	13	14.3	13	14.3	5	5.5
Total	91	100.0	91	100.0	91	100.0

Despite the fact that the majority of respondents' content subject teachers were not English L1-speakers (see table 25), the majority of respondents felt that the teachers who taught them content subjects were proficient in English. While only one respondent indicated that the English language teacher in Grades 8 - 12 were not proficient in English (see table 20), five respondents felt that the content subject teachers for these same grades were not proficient in English.

The issues around whether respondents were encouraged to use English during the content subject periods and whether they had the confidence to use English in discussions of content subjects with the teacher and with friends, appear in tables 28 – 30. [See Appendix A, questions 38 - 40, 45 - 47, 52 -54]

Table 28: Encouraged to use English during content subject periods

	Grades 1 – 4		Grades 5 – 7		Grades 8 – 12	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Yes	66	72.5	77	84.6	84	92.3
No	25	27.5	14	15.4	7	7.7
Total	91	100.0	91	100.0	91	100.0

Again, as with the use of English during the English language periods (see table 21), the majority (72,5%, 84,6% and 92,3%) of the respondents were encouraged to use English during the content subject periods. The number of respondents who felt that they were not encouraged also declined during the later phases of schooling, but while only two respondents were not encouraged to use English during the English language periods in Grades 8 – 12 (see table 21), seven were not encouraged to use English during the content subject periods for these same grades.

Table 29: Confident to use English when communicating with teachers during content subject periods

	Grades 1 – 4		Grades 5 – 7		Grades 8 – 12	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Yes	59	64.8	63	69.2	78	85.7
No	32	35.2	28	30.8	13	14.3
Total	91	100.0	91	100.0	91	100.0

The number of respondents who were confident to use English when communicating with the teacher during the content subject periods gradually increased from 64,8% in Grades 1 – 4 to 85,7% in Grades 8 – 12.

Table 30: Confident to discuss work of content subjects in English with friends

	Grades 1 – 4		Grades 5 - 7		Grades 8 – 12	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Yes	45	49.5	56	61.5	80	87.9
No	46	50.5	32	35.2	9	9.9
No response	0	0	3	3.3	2	2.2
Total	91	100.0	91	100.0	91	100.0

During Grades 1 – 4 only 49,5% of the respondents felt comfortable to use English when discussing work with friends during the content subject periods. This increased to 87,9% during Grades 8 – 12. The number of respondents who felt comfortable to use English with their friends (87,9%) when discussing content subject work, is almost the same as the number (85,7%) who felt comfortable to use English when discussing the content subject work with the teacher (see table 29) .

6.5 RESPONDENTS' HABITS OF WATCHING TELEVISION, LISTENING TO THE RADIO AND READING

In this section the respondents' habits regarding watching television, listening to the radio and reading will be presented. This part of the questionnaire only concentrated on Grades 5 – 9 and Grades 10 – 12. [See Appendix A, questions 55 - 66]

The average hours per day that respondents spent watching television and the kind of programmes they watched appear in Tables 31 and 32.

Table 31: Average hours per day that respondents watched television

	Grades 5 - 9		Grades 10 – 12	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Did not have a Television set	4	4.4	3	3.3
Less than 2 hours	21	23.1	30	33.0
2-4 hours	27	29.7	27	29.7
More than 4 hours	39	42.8	31	34.1
Total	91	100.0	91	100.0

The time spent watching television during Grades 10 – 12 decreased marginally compared to the time spent watching television during Grades 5 – 9. The respondents who watched more than 4 hours of television during Grades 5 – 9 (42,8%) decreased to 34,1% during Grades 10 – 12, while the respondents who watched less than 2 hours of television during Grades 5 – 9 (23,1%) increased to 33% during Grades 10 - 12. A staggering 34,1% of the respondents watched television for more than 4 hours per day during Grades 10 - 12. If one considers that an average school day lasts for 6 hours and that one still has to allow time for travelling, sport and normal daily activities like eating and sleeping, a respondent who watched 4 hours of television a day could not have spent too much time on homework.

Table 32: Kind of television programmes that respondents watched

	Grades 5 - 9		Grades 10 – 12	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
News in English	2	2.2	10	11.0
News (not English)	3	3.3	2	2.2
Children's programmes in English	22	24.2	4	4.4
Children's programmes (not English)	6	6.6	2	2.2
Soap operas in English	22	24.2	28	30.8
Soap operas (not English)	3	3.3	0	0
Actuality programmes in English	2	2.2	9	9.9
More than 1 of the above	29	31.9	35	38.5
Did not watch TV	2	2.2	1	1.1
Total	91	100.0	91	100.0

As can be expected, respondents watched fewer children's programmes as they became older, but surprisingly few respondents specifically watched non-English programmes during both school phases. While the number of respondents who specifically watched non-English programmes also decreased from 13,2% (3.3 + 6.6 + 3.3) to 4,4% (2.2 + 2.2 + 0) as the respondents grew older, the number who specifically watched English programmes increased minimally from 52,8% (2.2 + 24.2 + 24.2 + 2.2) in Grades 5 – 9 to 56,1% (11 + 4.4 + 30.8 + 9.9) in Grades 10 – 12. The respondents who watched a variety of programmes (more than 1 of the above) increased from 31,9% in Grades 5 – 9 to 38,5% in Grades 10 – 12. Although table 31 indicates that 4 respondents did not have a television set during Grades 5 – 9 and 3 respondents did not have a television set during Grades 10 – 12, table 32 reflects that only 2 and 1 respondents respectively did not watch television during these phases. The respondents who did not have a television set, but watched television nevertheless probably did so at the homes of neighbours, friends or family members.

Tables 33 and 34 reflect the average hours per day that respondents spent listening to the radio and the kind of programmes they listened to.

Table 33: Average hours per day that respondents listened to the radio

	Grades 5 - 9		Grades 10 – 12	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Did not have radio	5	5.5	4	4.4
Less than 2 hours	25	27.5	35	38.5
2-4 hours	24	26.4	17	18.7
More than 4 hours	37	40.6	35	38.5
Total	91	100.0	91	100.0

Just as with watching television, the average time that respondents spent listening to the radio decreased as they got older. The number of respondents who listened to the radio for more than 4 hours a day during Grades 5 – 7 totalled 40,6% and this decreased with only 2,1% to 38,5% during Grades 10 – 12, while the number of respondents who watched television for 4 hours per day decreased by 8,7% (see table 31).

Table 34: Kind of programmes that respondents listened to over the radio

	Grades 5 - 9		Grades 10 – 12	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
News in English	15	16.5	17	18.7
News (not English)	10	11.0	3	3.3
Children's programmes in English	4	4.4	4	4.4
Children's programmes (not English)	7	7.7	5	5.5
Soap operas (not English)	9	9.9	6	6.6
Actuality programmes (in English)	12	13.2	20	22.0
More than 1 of the above	28	30.8	32	35.2
Did not listen radio	6	6.6	4	4.4
Total	91	100.0	91	100.0

Information in this table presents a few surprises. Firstly, 9,9% (4.4 + 5.5) of the respondents still listened to children's programmes during Grades 10 – 12. In contrast to the low number of respondents who specifically watched non-English

television programmes (see table 31), a relatively high 28,6% (11 + 7.7 + 9.9) of respondents specifically listened to non-English radio programmes during Grades 5 – 9. Unfortunately this figure, like the figure for watching non-English television programmes, decreased sharply to only 15,4% (3.3 + 5.5 + 6.6) during Grades 10 – 12. Table 33 indicates that 5 respondents did not have a radio during Grades 5 – 9 and 4 respondents did not have a radio during Grades 10 – 12. From the number of respondents who did not listen to the radio at all, it can be deduced that those who did not have a radio, did not listen to the radio, in contrast to those who did not have a television set, but found somewhere to watch television nevertheless.

The average hours per day that respondents spent reading for pleasure, that is: reading that is not required for school work, and the kind of material they read for pleasure, are reflected in tables 35 and 36.

Table 35: Average hours per day that respondents spent reading for pleasure

	Grades 5 - 9		Grades 10 – 12	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Did not read anything for pleasure	14	15.4	8	8.8
0-2 hours	52	57.1	46	50.6
3-4 hours	21	23.1	21	23.1
More than 4 hours	4	4.4	16	17.6
Total	91	100.0	91	100.0

While quite a number of respondents spent, on average, more than 4 hours per day watching television or listening to the radio (see tables 31 and 33), only 4 respondents spent more than 4 hours per day reading for pleasure during Grades 5 – 9. This number increased to 16 during Grades 10 – 12. The number of respondents who did not read anything other than schoolwork decreased from 14 during Grades 5 – 9 to 8 during Grades 10 – 12.

Table 36: Kind of material that respondents read

	Grades 5 - 9		Grades 10 – 12	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
English news	7	7.7	12	13.2
English magazines	34	37.4	27	29.7
English fiction	7	7.7	5	5.5
English facts	10	11.0	4	4.4
More than 1 of the above	12	13.2	17	18.7
All of the above	10	11.0	20	22.0
Only material in first language	5	5.5	2	2.2
Do not read	6	6.6	4	4.4
Total	91	100.0	91	100.0

In both school phases many of the respondents (37,4% and 29,7%) mostly read English magazines, while the number of respondents who read a variety of reading material (“More than 1 of the above” and “All of the above”) almost doubled from 24,2% Grades 5 – 9 (13.2 + 11) to 40,7% in Grades 10 – 12 (18.7 + 22).

6.6 RESPONDENTS’ OPINION REGARDING ENGLISH AND INTERNAL AUDITING 1

The issues around how respondents feel concerning English as language of instruction for Internal Auditing 1, their opinions regarding the English used in various study situations, their preference for certain types of questions and whether they regard Internal Auditing 1 to be a difficult subject are reflected in tables 37 to 40. [See Appendix A, questions 67 -72]

Table 37: L1 or English as language of instruction for Internal Auditing 1

	Frequency	%
English	78	85.7
First language	3	3.3
Combination	10	11.0
Total	91	100.0

The majority of respondents (85,7%) prefer English as language of instruction for Internal Auditing 1, while three respondents would prefer to use only their L1 as language of instruction. A minority (10 respondents) would like the instruction to be through a combination of their L1 and English.

Table 38: Difficulty of English used in different situations relating to Internal Auditing 1

	English of Textbooks		English used by Lecturers		English used in tests and examinations	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Not difficult at all	32	35.2	68	74.7	58	63.7
Moderate	52	57.1	22	24.2	30	33.0
Very difficult	7	7.7	1	1.1	3	3.3
Total	91	100.0	91	100.0	91	100.0

From table 38 it is evident that the majority of respondents do not have a problem with the English used in different situations regarding internal Auditing 1. While only 35,2% of respondents did not find the English used in the textbooks difficult, 74,7% felt that the English used by the lecturers was not difficult. The majority of respondents also felt that the English used in tests and examinations was either not difficult (63,7%) or moderate (33%).

Table 39: Preference for different types of questions

	Frequency	%
Multiple choice	19	20.9
Essay	44	48.4
Doesn't matter	28	30.8
Total	91	100.0

When asked about the type of questions they prefer, the majority of the respondents (48,4%) preferred the essay type of question, 20,9% preferred multiple choice questions, while 30,8% did not have any specific preference.

Table 40: Difficulty of Internal Auditing 1

	Frequency	%
Not difficult	55	60.4
Moderate	30	33.0
Very difficult	6	6.6
Total	91	100.0

60,4% of the respondents do not think that Internal Auditing 1 is a difficult subject.

6.7 L1 PROFICIENCY ACCORDING TO GRADE 12 RESULTS

The symbols on the Senior Certificate obtained after completing Grade 12 represent the following percentages obtained by the learners:

Table 41: Percentages represented by symbols on the Senior Certificate

%	Symbol
80 – 100	A
70 – 79	B
60 – 69	C
50 – 59	D
40 – 49	E
33 – 39	F

All the respondents wrote and obtained a Higher-grade symbol for their L1. The respondents' proficiency according to the results they obtained in the Grade 12 examination appear in figure 4.

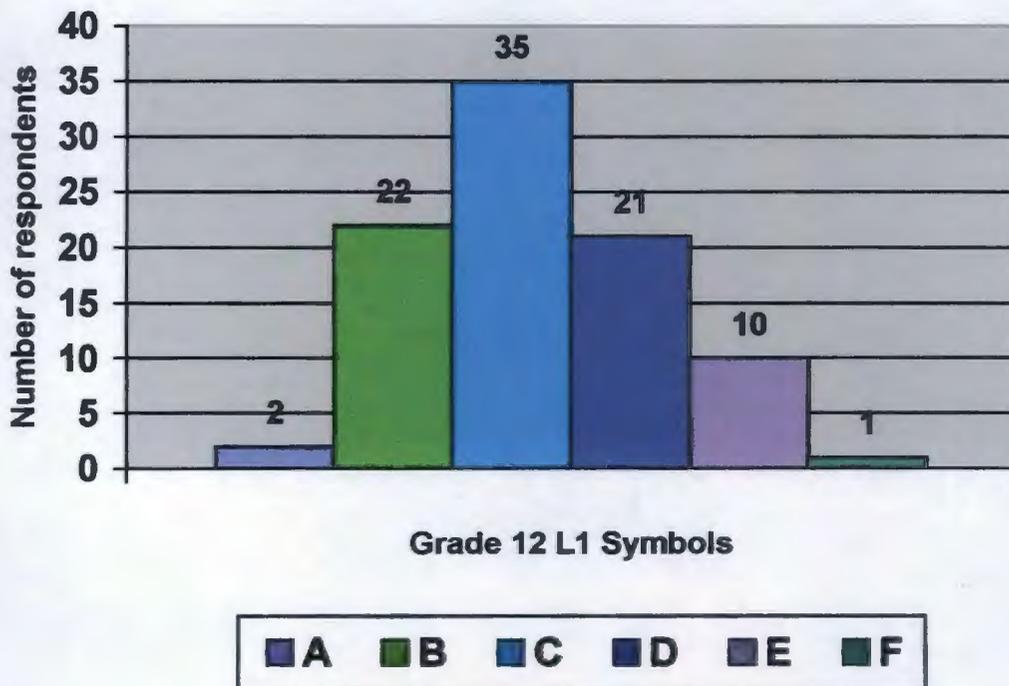


Figure 4: Distribution of Grade 12 L1 Symbols

Learners' perception of their own proficiency in their L1, as indicated in table 12, is confirmed by figure 4 that shows that only 11 of the respondents obtained a symbol of lower than 50%.

6.8 ACADEMIC SUCCESS ACCORDING TO RESULTS OF INTERNAL AUDITING 1, MODULE 1 AND MODULE 2

The respondents' academic success according to the results they obtained in the Internal Auditing 1 examinations appear in figure 5.

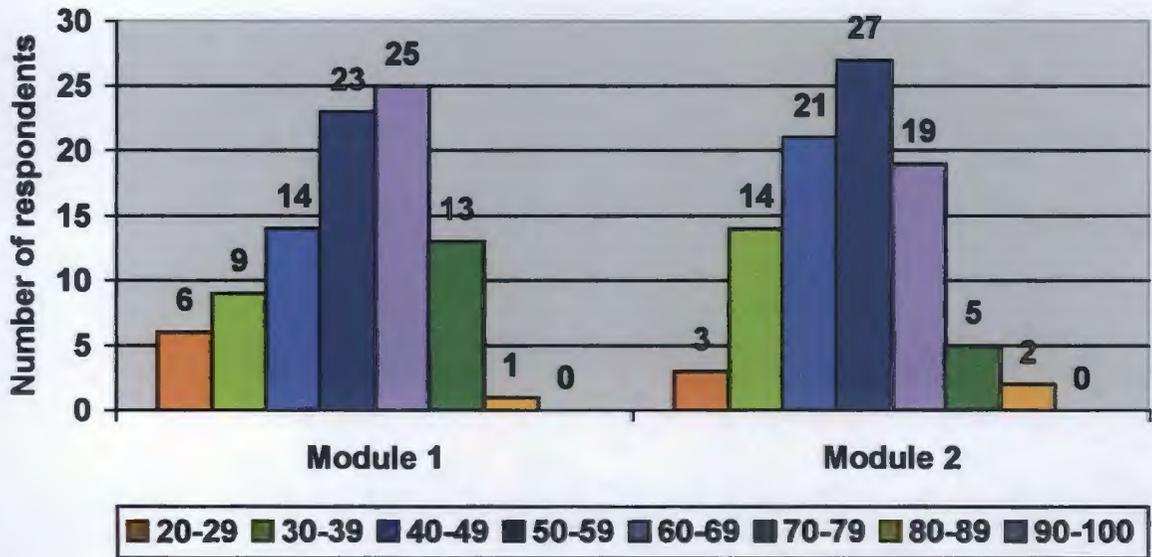


Figure 5: Distribution of respondents' Internal Auditing 1 Module 1 and Module 2 results

The respondents' opinion regarding the difficulty of Internal Auditing 1 is not supported by the results that they obtained in the examinations. Respondents need to obtain 50% in the examination to pass the module. In Module 1, 31,8% (6 + 9 + 14 out of 91) of the respondents did not pass the examination and 41,7% (3 + 14 + 21 out of 91) of the respondents did not pass Module 2. The respondents obviously did not regard language as a possible reason for the high failure rate, as only a few respondents found the English used in Internal Auditing 1 difficult (see table 38) and the majority of the respondents regarded Internal Auditing 1 as "not difficult" (60,4%) or "moderate" (33%) (see table 40).

6.9 ENGLISH PROFICIENCY ACCORDING TO DIFFERENT TESTS

6.9.1 English proficiency according to the Grade 12 English results

The symbols on the Senior Certificate obtained after completing Grade 12 represent the same percentages obtained by the learners as those given in table 41.

As 2 of the respondents were English L1-speakers their results are excluded from figure 4 as they wrote the English L1-examinations. The remaining respondents all wrote the English L2 Higher-Grade examination and their proficiency in English L2, as indicated by the results they obtained in the Grade 12 final examination is reflected in figure 6.

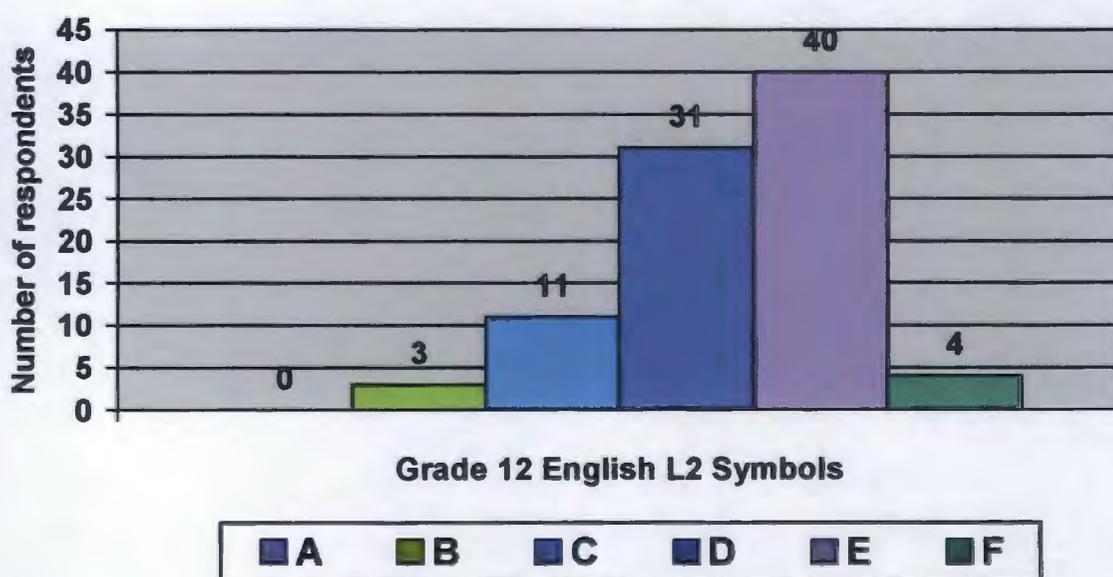


Figure 6: Distribution of Grade 12 English L2 results

Forty-five (3 + 11 + 31) respondents obtained a symbol of D and higher, which represents a percentage of 50% and higher, while 44 (40 + 4) respondents obtained a symbol of E and lower, which represents a percentage of 50% and lower.

6.9.2 English proficiency according to the Proficiency test

In this section, the respondents' English L2 proficiency, as measured by the Proficiency test is summarised. Respondents' English L2 proficiency is expressed in terms of a stanine. Information regarding the relationship between the stanine and the raw scores is presented in table 42.

Table 42: Norm table for Proficiency test

Raw score out of 40	Stanine	Description
36 – 40	9	Very Good
33 – 35	8	Good
28 – 32	7	Above average
23 – 27	6	High average
18 – 22	5	Average
14 – 17	4	Low average
11 – 13	3	Below average
8 – 10	2	Poor
0 – 7	1	Very poor

Respondents' proficiency in English, as reflected by the results they obtained in the Proficiency test is reflected in figure 7.

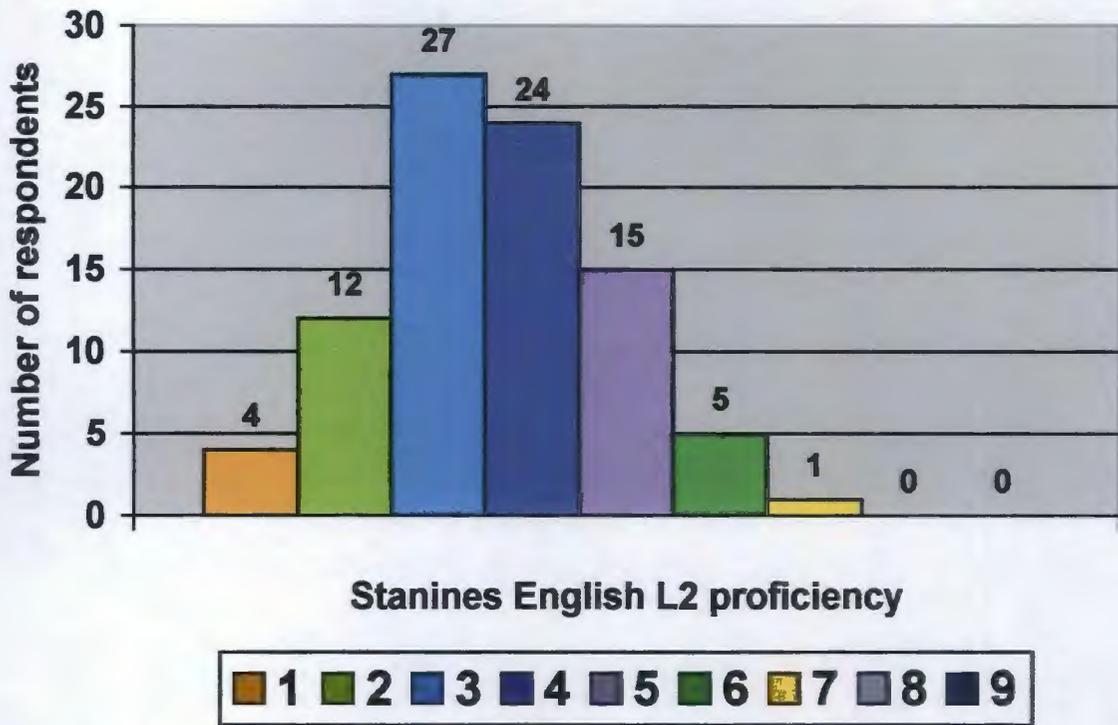


Figure 7: Respondents’ English proficiency as reflected by the Proficiency test

The respondents achieved relatively low English proficiency scores. Only one respondent achieved a score of “above average” and 5 respondents achieved a score of “high average”. Fifteen respondents’ English proficiency can be seen as “average”, while the remaining 67 (24 + 27 + 12 + 4) respondents’ English proficiency measured as “low average” to “very poor”.

6.9.3 English proficiency according to the Writing test

The respondents’ English L2 proficiency, as measured by the Writing Performance test, is summarised in this section. Respondents’ English L2 proficiency is expressed in terms of a stanine that is related to the raw scores achieved out of 24 as presented in table 43.

Table 43: Norm table for Writing test – L2

Raw score out of 24	Stanine	Description
19 – 24	9	Very Good
17 – 18	8	Good
15 – 16	7	Above average
14	6	High average
12 – 13	5	Average
11	4	Low average
9 – 10	3	Below average
8	2	Poor
1 – 7	1	Very poor

Respondents' proficiency in English L2, as indicated by the results they obtained in the Writing test, is reflected in figure 8.

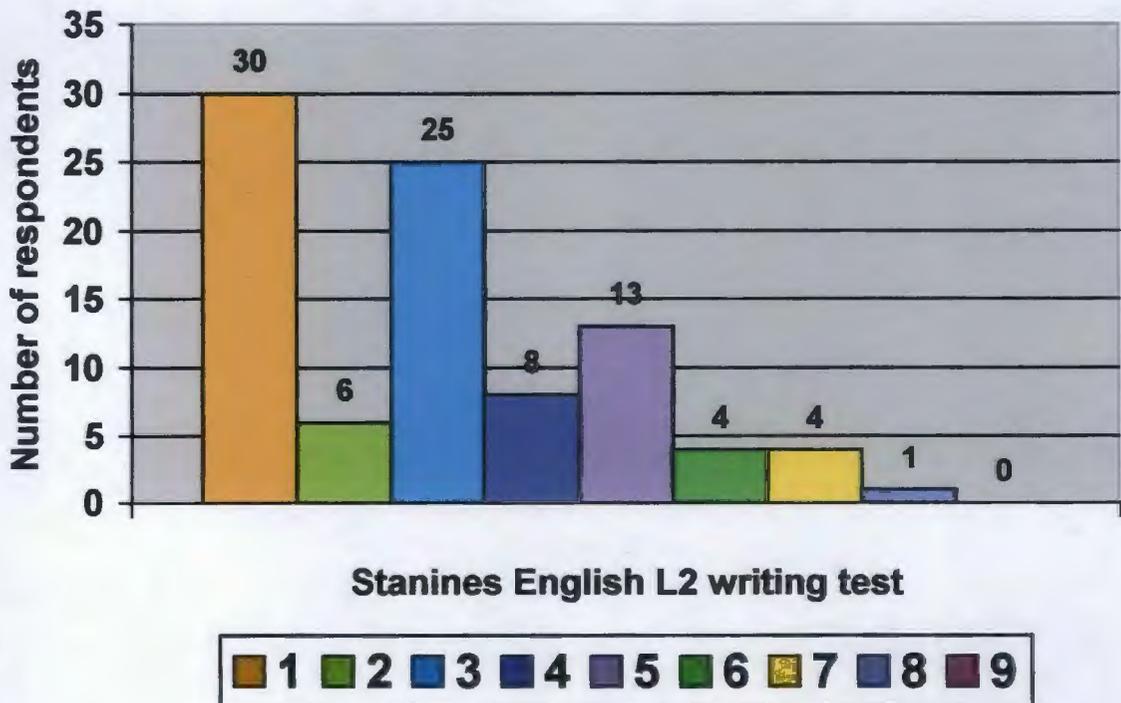


Figure 8: English proficiency as indicated by the Writing test

Results obtained in the Writing test indicate that the majority of respondents have a very low writing proficiency. Only 22 (13 + 4 + 4 + 1) respondents obtained

scores of “average” and higher, while the remaining 69 (8 + 25 + 6 + 30) respondents scored below average, with 30 obtaining a score of “very poor”.

There is a discrepancy between the respondents’ own perception of their English proficiency (see table 15) and their English proficiency as reflected by their Grade 12 English results (see figure 6), the proficiency test (see figure 7) and the writing test (see figure 8). Respondents regarded their English proficiency as at least average and 23 regarded it as above average. The Grade 12 English results (figure 6) still show an “around average” distribution with 45 (3 + 11 + 31) respondents above 50% and 44 (40 + 4) respondents below 50%, but this picture changes drastically when the results of the Proficiency test and the Writing test are considered. The Proficiency test scores (figure 7) indicate that 67 (4 + 12 + 27 + 24) respondents’ English proficiency is not at the average level, while the Writing test results (figure 8) indicate that 69 (30 + 6 + 25 + 8) respondents’ English proficiency is not at the average level. According to the results of the Proficiency test and the Writing test the respondents’ English proficiency is very low.

This finding is particularly alarming if one considers that these respondents, except for 2 who are English L1-speakers, are all taught and examined in English at higher education level.

On the other hand, this finding is puzzling. With such low English proficiency levels one would expect the respondents to experience a lot of problems with English as language of instruction and testing at higher education level, but according to table 38, very few respondents found the English used in textbooks, by lecturers and in examinations difficult.

One can ask how it is possible that the majority of the respondents could spend at least 10 years learning English as a language and experience it as language of instruction for at least 8 of those years, and still have such low English proficiency levels.

6.10 CORRELATIONS

Pearson Product-Moment correlations were calculated to determine the direction and strength of correlations between the different variables and they are presented in tables 44 to 46.

Table 44: Pearson Product-Moment correlations between English Proficiency, as indicated by various instruments, and Internal Auditing 1 (Semester 1 and Semester 2)

Variable	Internal Auditing 1 Semester 1	Internal Auditing 1 Semester 2
Grade 12 English results	-.200	-.155
Proficiency test	.021	-.030
Writing test	.194	.107

There is a low, negative and insignificant correlation between Grade 12 English results and Internal Auditing 1. The correlation between the Proficiency test and Internal Auditing 1 is low, positive and insignificant for Semester 1 and very low, negative and insignificant for Semester 2. Although the correlation between the Writing test and Internal Auditing 1 is higher than the correlation between the Proficiency test and Internal Auditing 1, it is also very low, positive and insignificant.

Neither Grade 12 English results, Proficiency test results nor Writing test results have a significant correlation with academic success in Internal Auditing 1. For all three variables the correlations are low and one is negative.

Table 45: Correlation between Grade 12 English L2 results and the 2 other English proficiency tests that were used in the study

Variable	Grade 12 English L2 results	Proficiency test	Writing test
Grade 12 English L2 results	1	-.380	-.417
Proficiency test	-.380	1	.489
Writing test	-.417	.489	1

From table 45 it is clear that the correlation between Grade 12 English L2 results and the proficiency test is low, negative and insignificant and the correlation between Grade 12 English L2 results and the writing test is moderate, negative and insignificant. Although the correlation between the proficiency test and the writing test is positive, it is still moderate and insignificant.

Table 46: Pearson Product-Moment correlation between Grade 12, L1 results and Grade 12, L2 results

Variable	Grade 12, L2 results
Grade 12, L1 results	.068

The correlation between Grade 12, L1 results and Grade 12, L2 results is very low and insignificant.

Because there is no significant correlation between any of the variables, all the null-hypotheses as stated in Chapter 5 can be accepted and all the experimental hypotheses can be rejected.

6.11 SUMMARY

This chapter presented the results of the survey and correlational research endeavours. In the next chapter conclusions and recommendations will be presented and the limitations of the current study will also be highlighted.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a brief summary of the conclusions from the literature study and the empirical investigation. The aim is to link the theoretical discussions from the literature study with the findings of the investigation. Limitations of the study will be highlighted and some recommendations will be made. During the course of the study certain problems were identified and recommendations will be made concerning possible further research.

7.2 CONCLUSIONS

In this section a short summary of the most important information from the literature study and the findings will be presented.

7.2.1 Conclusions regarding acquisition of a L2

When learning a L2, maintenance and further development of the L1 is necessary to ensure that learning the L2 results in additive bilingualism and not in subtractive bilingualism.

It is also necessary to understand the difference between BICS and CALP, as a person may have the ability to maintain a L2 conversation in a context-embedded cognitively undemanding situation without being proficient enough in the L2 to apply it successfully in academic situations.

According to the linguistic interdependence principle, the development of proficiency in the L1 is important for the development of proficiency in the L2. When literacy skills have been adequately developed in the L1 and concepts are formed in the L1, those skills and knowledge can easily be transferred to the L2.

Although there is no conclusive evidence of the existence of a critical age at which a L2 should be learned, the research evidence proves that there is no significant advantage in starting to learn the L2 very early. When considering the dangers of subtractive bilingualism, together with the evidence that a L2 can be learned successfully after the age of 12, it seems better to allow enough time for CALP in the L1 to develop properly, before starting to learn a L2.

The length of time that is allowed to learn the L2 is important. BICS can be developed within 2-3 years, but developing CALP in a L2 can take 5-7 years, provided there is adequate exposure to the L2 through L2-speaking peers, television and schooling. If there is little exposure to the L2, it might even take as long as 10 years to develop CALP in a L2.

Although there is evidence that a L2 can be learned without exposure to the L2 in the community, this seems to be exceptional. Exposure to the L2 is important because it gives the learner the opportunity to experience the different ranges of meaning that exist in a language, which is not always possible in formal teaching situations. Exposure to the L2 has a positive influence on the extent to which the L2 is learned, as well as on the pronunciation of the L2. As vocabulary cannot be learned extensively through formal instruction alone, incidental vocabulary-learning through exposure to different mass media is important.

If a person is not motivated, the chances of acquiring a L2 are very slim, as motivation and attitude play an important role in the acquisition of a L2.

7.2.2 Conclusions regarding learning through a L2

Learning through a L2 is influenced by many different factors. The cultural background of the learner can influence his/her understanding of classroom discourse and academic text, while the cultural background of the teacher can influence what the teacher expects of the learner and how the teacher perceives the learner.

Being literate in the L1 and maintaining cognitive development in the L1 will enhance the development of proficiency in the L2. Concept formation in the L1 is important, as it will be easier just to label an already familiar concept in the L1 with a new label from the L2, while building knowledge structures through words of a L2 that have not yet been mastered fully, will be much more difficult.

Learning content subjects in an underdeveloped L2 will be very time-consuming, because learners will have to spend a lot of time trying to understand the language before even getting to the content. In a higher education setting, learners need quite a large vocabulary in the language of instruction and should also have a thorough knowledge of the subject-specific vocabulary.

Learners who have not mastered the L2 sufficiently, will experience various difficulties with language-related activities. They will find the academic language contained in the textbooks difficult, it will take them much longer to read and understand academic text and because of limited vocabulary, they may also misunderstand some of the text. Writing can also be a problem, because their writing may not conform to the language norms of academic discourse and they may struggle to present their arguments logically and thoroughly.

Examiners should pay special attention to the syntactic structure, grammar and length of sentences in setting examinations for L2-learners, as they should be testing the learners' knowledge of the content, not their ability to decipher difficult language.

Learners do better if the language of instruction is also their L1, but when learning through a L2 is the only option, strong cognitive and academic development of the L1 is crucial. Instruction through the L2 can also be supplemented with instruction through the L1 and the teacher should either be a native speaker of the L2, or be just as competent in the L2 as a native speaker. Teachers should also use a

standard variety of the L2 as they have to model the L2 to the learners. If teachers cannot communicate effectively in the L2, they will not be able to teach effectively.

Teachers should be careful not to label L2-learners hastily as learning-disabled when the only problem they might have, is that they have not mastered the L2 yet. Labelling learners does not only influence teachers' expectations of them, but can also demoralise the learners.

Two coping mechanisms L2-learners use are silence and rote learning. Both these methods have the same result. Learners will fall back more and more academically. Rote learning might result in passing a test or an examination, but it will not result in learning. It will not change the "I cannot" into "I can" and it will not change the "I do not know" into "I know".

7.2.3 Conclusions regarding the language situation in South Africa

The breakdown of the culture of teaching and learning, the lack of resources at many South African schools that was caused by the apartheid policy of more than forty years, the lack of properly trained teachers and the status that English now enjoys cannot be solved instantly or cheaply.

The language of learning and teaching in most South African schools is English, which is a L2 for the majority of learners, despite research results clearly indicating that L1 schooling is in the best interest of learners.

The majority of South African learners have to learn through English before having developed CALP in their L1 and without being proficient enough in English to handle the level of schooling that they are in. They are thus faced with the following situation:

- ◆ They receive instruction in English, which they do not fully comprehend, and they cannot transfer knowledge acquired in their L1 into English in order to help them, because they do not have CALP in their L1.
- ◆ They receive instruction from teachers who are also not proficient in English and who are not suitably qualified to teach the concepts and content of the subject.
- ◆ They have to use textbooks written in a type of English that they do not understand.
- ◆ They do not develop proper reading skills in English because they did not develop proper reading skills in their L1 and because teachers still use outdated teaching methods and materials.
- ◆ They have to write all tests and examinations in English.

In trying to overcome the problems of not being able to understand content properly and not being able to express themselves adequately through English during examinations, learners fall back on rote learning. Although teachers try to overcome the language problems by various means, many of them also rely on rote learning if all else fails. The bad habit of rote learning is enforced by many teachers because it is sometimes seen as the only method to help their learners pass subjects they themselves do not understand completely and also because they are not proficient enough in English to help learners in other ways.

The majority of learners do not get the kind of exposure to English that is necessary for them to become sufficiently proficient in English so that they can use it successfully as language of teaching and learning. For many learners, especially in the rural areas, teachers who are themselves not L1-users of English and are not proficient in English, provide their only regular exposure to English. Learners then learn the teachers' non-standard English as if it is Standard English and think that it will be acceptable in all spheres of life.

At higher education institutions, the English language problems experienced by learners become even more intense. Classes at higher education institutions are normally larger than those of schools, lecturers might use a higher level of English than teachers did and the level of English used in the textbooks might be even higher or more difficult to understand, as these books are often imported. Many learners who then fall back on their old rote learning methods, do not pass their courses as they are not able to apply their theoretical knowledge. Because they do not understand what they have learned, their written answers are sometimes so confused that examiners cannot decipher the meaning of what they tried to convey.

7.2.4 Conclusions regarding the findings of the investigation in relation to the literature study

Respondents in this investigation had relatively high levels of L1 proficiency. This could indicate that, although the language of instruction was English L2 for all respondents excluding 3, the fact that the majority continued to learn their L1 as a subject at school up to Grade 12 and used it extensively at home and in their communities, helped to ensure that additive bilingualism took place.

Although theoretically, literacy in the L1 will enhance the development of proficiency in the L2, this did not happen for the respondents of this study as the correlation between their Grade 12, L1 results and Grade 12 English L2 results was very low and insignificant (see table 46). The null hypothesis (H_{06} in paragraph 1.3.2) that there is no significant correlation between Grade 12 English results and Grade 12, L1 results was therefor accepted.

In contrast to relative high levels of L1 proficiency, respondents had very low levels of English proficiency, despite the fact that the majority learnt it at school as a subject for at least 10 years and experienced it as language of instruction for at least 8 years. According to the discussion in paragraph 2.5.3, learners should be able to develop BICS within 2 years and CALP within 5–7 years after arriving in a

L2 environment. One important difference between this investigation and the studies that concluded on these time frames, is that the respondents in this investigation did not arrive in a L2 environment. They stayed in a L1 environment and received schooling in the L2. Based on the respondents' low levels of English proficiency (see figures 6, 7 & 8), it could be deduced that many respondents definitely did not reach CALP levels in English and some may not even have reached BICS levels in English.

The discussion in paragraph 2.5.4 stresses the importance of exposure to the L2 for acquisition of the L2. Respondents in this investigation did not have much exposure to English in their communities and very few used English when communicating with parents, siblings or friends. The only regular exposure they had to English was at school through teachers who were not English L1-speakers, and who many researchers regard as not proficient in English, and through television, radio and reading.

English proficiency was measured by three different test instruments, namely Grade 12 English L2 results, the Proficiency test and the Writing performance test. The null hypotheses (H_{o4} and H_{o5} in paragraph 1.3.2) that there is no significant correlation between Grade 12 English results and either the Proficiency test or the Writing performance test were accepted as the correlations between these tests and the Grade 12 English results were not significant (see table 45).

As respondents displayed very low levels of English proficiency in all three tests that were used, one expects them to experience problems with the English they encounter in their textbooks, with the lecturers and in tests and examinations at higher education level. Surprisingly the majority of respondents prefer English as language of instruction and say that they do not have problems with the English they encounter at this level (see tables 37 & 38). There is also no significant correlation between their English proficiency and their academic success in Internal Auditing 1 (see table 44) and therefore the null hypotheses (H_{o1} , H_{o2} and H_{o3} in paragraph 1.3.2) that there is no significant correlation between either

Grade 12 English results, or the Proficiency test or the Writing performance test and respondents' academic success in Internal Auditing 1 were accepted. The fact that there is no correlation between the respondents' English proficiency and their academic success in Internal Auditing 1 seems to confirm that they do not experience their lack of English proficiency as a significant problem in Internal Auditing 1.

When trying to explain the unexpected finding that respondents with such low levels of English proficiency do not experience problems with the English they encounter in different situations of Internal Auditing 1, one can offer 4 possible explanations: the level of language used by the lecturers; the language used in tests and examinations; the way tests and examinations are marked; and rote learning.

Firstly, from the results of the investigation one can deduce the probability that lecturers of the respondents *do* have adequate language proficiency for teaching, as explained in paragraph 3.2.9, because respondents appear to understand the work sufficiently and do not find the language used by the lecturers too difficult.

Secondly, examinations in Internal Auditing 1 consist of multiple choice questions and essay questions. As lecturers are aware of the respondents' low levels of English proficiency, they concentrate on the language used in tests and examinations in order to ensure that the language *per se* does not add to the difficulty of the questions. They are apparently succeeding in their efforts, as the majority of respondents do not have a problem with the English used in tests and examinations.

Thirdly, when marking tests and examinations lecturers try to bear in mind that a test is only valid if it tests what it is supposed to test. In an Internal Auditing 1 test or examination the respondents' knowledge of Internal Auditing 1 is namely being tested and not their language skills. Marks will therefore be allocated if a

respondent has presented the correct facts, even if the language used is very poor. If lecturers have to mark everything as wrong when it is not grammatically correct, the results of this investigation would be very different. Internal Auditing lecturers experience a serious dilemma concerning this state of affairs: on the one hand they know that they are testing Internal Auditing 1 knowledge, but on the other hand communication is such an important part of Internal Auditing 1 that the low levels of English proficiency displayed by the respondents could be a serious impediment to their careers. Language mistakes may be tolerated in tests and examinations, but in the workplace language mistakes could cost a company millions of rands.

The final possible explanation that is offered here for the discrepancy between language proficiency levels and academic success is rote learning. Rote learning has been discussed as coping mechanism for a lack of proficiency in English in paragraphs 3.4.2, 4.6.2, 4.7.5 and 4.8.2. At first year level, tests and examinations do not contain many questions of the application or analysis type as these are only included at higher levels. Respondents can therefore still use rote learning and pass without having acquired real knowledge that they can transfer to practical situations or use in different contexts. As the volume of the work at higher education level is large, learners combine "spotting", where they guess what questions will be included in test or examinations, with rote learning. This practice can easily be identified on an answer sheet where a respondent obtains 100% for certain questions which may be regarded as 'difficult', but does not even attempt to answer questions that could be regarded as "easy".

7.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The aims of the study were to gather information regarding respondents' experiences with English as a subject, English as language of instruction, their habits of watching television, listening to the radio and reading and their opinion as to whether Internal Auditing 1 is a difficult subject. A further aim was to establish if there is any significant correlation between English proficiency as tested by various instruments and academic success in Internal Auditing 1. If any correlation could be found, the final aim was to determine if it is strong enough to

justify implementation of a language prerequisite for learners who want to register for Internal Auditing 1 at the Vaal Triangle Technikon.

As no significant correlation could be found between academic success in Internal Auditing 1 and English proficiency, there is no justification to implement a prerequisite regarding English proficiency for learners who wish to register for Internal Auditing 1 at the Vaal Triangle Technikon, based on this investigation.

Based on the findings of this investigation, the researcher can only make two recommendations.

Recommendation 1: that serious attention should be given to the low levels of English proficiency of learners registering for the Diploma or Degree Internal Auditing at the Vaal Triangle Technikon.

The ability to communicate both orally and in writing is extremely important in the auditing field and learners who leave the Vaal Triangle Technikon with a qualification in Internal Auditing need to be able to perform tasks related to internal auditing, but should also be able to communicate effectively if they are to be of value to their prospective employees (see paragraph 1.1.3). Based on the low levels of English proficiency, especially in the Writing test (see figure 6), learners might obtain their qualification in Internal Auditing, but might not be competent enough to perform their tasks effectively because they do not possess the necessary language skills.

Recommendation 2: that learners must be made aware of their level of English proficiency and the importance it will play in their prospective careers.

Although respondents are under the impression that they are proficient in English, the results of the Proficiency test and the Writing test prove otherwise. If learners are not aware of the discrepancy between their perceived levels of English proficiency and their real levels of English proficiency, they will not be motivated to participate in any effort to improve their English proficiency. Lecturers should also

concentrate on stressing the importance of the ability to communicate both orally and in writing in this particular field of study.

7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Based on the insight and findings of this investigation, the following issues warrant further research:

- ◆ Although no significant correlation could be found between English proficiency and Internal Auditing 1, it should be investigated whether the low levels of English proficiency established in this study have an effect on academic success at higher levels of study.
- ◆ This study offered 4 possible explanations for the fact that respondents with very low levels of English proficiency did not report any problems with the English they encountered in Internal Auditing 1. Further research should be undertaken to investigate whether the possible reasons offered are valid.
- ◆ As there seems to be no correlation between English proficiency and academic success in Internal Auditing 1, further research should be undertaken to establish what other possible factors play a role in the high failure rate of Internal Auditing 1.
- ◆ This study investigated a possible correlation between English proficiency and Internal Auditing 1, which is mostly a subject of theory. Further research should be undertaken to establish whether low English proficiency levels have an influence in subjects like Accounting where learners have to read questions accurately and interpret given information before they can answer the question successfully.
- ◆ Further research should be done to establish why learners learn English as a subject for at least 10 years and experience it as language of instruction for at least 8 years and then leave school with the low levels of English proficiency established in this study.

7.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

It has already been mentioned that this study concentrated specifically on the influence of English proficiency on academic success in Internal Auditing 1, although there are many other factors, for example learner effort, age, gender, previous knowledge and experience, parent involvement, etcetera, that also influence academic success.

This study was also conducted with learners from one specific higher education institution in South Africa doing one specific course, and the situation might well be different for learners who have different backgrounds in different provinces or at different higher education institutions.

Other factors that could be seen as limitations are the fact that the Grade 12 English L2 and Internal Auditing 1 examinations on which these findings are based, are not standardised. The level of difficulty could be different in different years. If the same study is therefore repeated with learners writing these examinations in different years, the results might be different.

7.6 SUMMARY

From the findings in this study, it is clear that the current language situation in South African schools does not lead to subtractive bilingualism, as learners are still proficient in their L1's.

In light of the discussion of the factors that influence the acquisition of a L2 (see paragraph 2.5), South African learners should become proficient in English before leaving school. However, the findings of this study show that the majority of learners are not proficient in English when they leave school and enter higher education.

Given the low levels of English proficiency determined in this study and the language problems at schools, as discussed in Chapter 4, the unexpected

conclusion, that the majority of learners do not experience problems with the English they encounter at higher education institutions, is a surprise that contradicts many of the points discussed in paragraph 3.2. For some, yet unknown, reasons many of the learners still succeed academically in Internal Auditing 1, although their levels of English proficiency, according to other studies, is so low that they are not expected to do so.

Regardless of the fact that many learners succeed academically at first year level at higher education institutions, the levels of English proficiency of school leaving South Africans is very low.

Although the South African situation is in many aspects different from the situations in which most of the available research on acquiring a L2 and learning through a L2 was carried out, the basic principles for acquiring a L2 to CALP level so that it can be used successfully in academic situations, are still valid. One should therefore be careful not to apply findings from other studies blindly in South Africa, but make the necessary adaptations to suit the South African situation.

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APPENDIX 1

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR LEARNERS

QUESTIONNAIRE

- ◆ Please remember to write your student number on the answer sheet provided.
- ◆ Although your student number is asked, the results will be published anonymously.
- ◆ This is a questionnaire for which you have all the answers.
- ◆ There are no correct or wrong answers, so please answer truthfully.
- ◆ Please do not write on the questionnaire.
- ◆ Decide which answer suits you best and write the number of that answer on the answer sheet.
- ◆ The questionnaire is divided in the following sections:
 - ⇒ Section A School history
 - ⇒ Section B This section will focus on English as a subject
 - ⇒ Section C This section will focus on all your other subjects (excluding English)
 - ⇒ Section D Information concerning your television, radio and reading habits
 - ⇒ Section E Your opinion concerning English and Internal Auditing 1

Section A – School History

1	Home language?	Sotho	=	1
		Tswana	=	2
		Zulu	=	3
		Afrikaans	=	4
		English	=	5
		Tsonga	=	6
		Venda	=	7
		Xhosa	=	8
		Other	=	9

2	In what year did you matriculate?	1998 or earlier	=	1
		1999	=	2
		2000 or later	=	3

3	In what province did you matriculate?	Gauteng	=	1
		Limpopo	=	2
		Mpumahlanga	=	3
		North West Province	=	4
		Free State	=	5
		Western Cape	=	6
		Eastern Cape	=	7
		Kwazulu Natal	=	8
		Other	=	9

4	What was the average size of your matric class?	29 or less	=	1
		30 – 39	=	2
		40 – 49	=	3
		50 or more	=	4

5	What do you plan to do 5 years from now?	Do Post graduate studies	=	1
		Work as an Internal Auditor	=	2
		Work as an External Auditor	=	3
		Work as an Accountant	=	4
		Other	=	5

6	When did you start learning to read and write in your first language	Before school	=	1
		Grade 1	=	2
		Grade 2	=	3
		After Grade 2	=	4
		Never	=	5

7	Until when did you continue doing your first language as a subject at school	Grade 1-3	=	1
		Grade 4-7	=	2
		Grade 8-9	=	3
		Grade 10-12	=	4
		Never did it as a subject	=	5

8	How competent (good) are you in your first language	Not at all	=	1
		Average	=	2
		Better than average	=	3

Section B – This section will focus only on English as a subject

9	When did you start learning to read and write in English	Before school	=	1
		Grade 1	=	2
		Grade 2	=	3
		Grade 3	=	4
		Grade 4-7	=	5
		Grade 8-12	=	6

10	Until when did you continue doing English as a subject at school	Grade 1-3	=	1
		Grade 4-7	=	2
		Grade 8-9	=	3
		Grade 10-12	=	4
		Never did it as a subject	=	5

11	How competent (good, proficient) are you in English	Not at all	= 1
		Average	= 2
		Better than average	= 3

12	When you were in school was it necessary for you to speak English in your community?	Often	= 1
		Sometimes	= 2
		Never	= 3

13	When you were in school did you communicate in English to your parents?	Often	= 1
		Sometimes	= 2
		Never	= 3

14	When you were in school did you communicate in English with your siblings?	Often	= 1
		Sometimes	= 2
		Never	= 3

15	When you were in school did you communicate in English with your friends?	Often	= 1
		Sometimes	= 2
		Never	= 3

The following questions will concern specific years of your school career and will focus on English as a subject.

Question 16 – 21 concerns the years that you were in Grade 1 – 4

16	What language did your teachers use most in class during the English language period?	My first language (not English)	= 1
		Another African language (not my first language)	= 2
		English	= 3
		Any other language	= 4

17	What was the first language of the teacher(s) who taught you English language?	My first language (not English)	= 1
		Another African language (not my first language)	= 2
		English	= 3
		Any other language	= 4
		I do not know	= 5

18	Did the teachers who taught you English language speak English well themselves?	Yes	= 1
		No	= 2

19	Did the teachers who taught you English language encourage you to speak English in class?	Yes	= 1
		No	= 2

20	Did you feel comfortable to speak English to the teachers who taught you English language?	Yes	= 1
		No	= 2

21	Did you feel comfortable to discuss the work, in English, with your friends during the English language period?	Yes	= 1
		No	= 2

Question 22 – 27 concerns the years that you were in Grade 5 – 7

22	What language did your teachers use most in class during the English language period?	My first language (not English)	= 1
		Another African language (not my first language)	= 2
		English	= 3
		Any other language	= 4

23	What was the first language of the teacher(s) who taught you English language?	My first language (not English)	= 1
		Another African language (not my first language)	= 2
		English	= 3
		Any other language	= 4
		I do not know	= 5

24	Did the teachers who taught you English language speak English well themselves?	Yes	= 1
		No	= 2

25	Did the teachers who taught you English language encourage you to speak English in class?	Yes	= 1
		No	= 2

26	Did you feel comfortable to speak English to the teachers who taught you English language?	Yes	= 1
		No	= 2

27	Did you feel comfortable to discuss the work, in English, with your friends during the English language period?	Yes	= 1
		No	= 2

Question 28 – 33 concerns the years that you were in Grade 8 – 12

28	What language did your teachers use most in class during the English language period?	My first language (not English)	= 1
		Another African language (not my first language)	= 2
		English	= 3
		Any other language	= 4

29	What was the first language of the teacher(s) who taught you English language?	My first language	= 1
		Another African language (not my first language)	= 2
		English	= 3
		Any other language	= 4
		I do not know	= 5

30	Did the teachers who taught you English language speak English well themselves?	Yes	= 1
		No	= 2

31	Did the teachers who taught you English language encourage you to speak English in class?	Yes	= 1
		No	= 2

32	Did you feel comfortable to speak English to the teachers who taught you English language?	Yes	= 1
		No	= 2

33	Did you feel comfortable to discuss the work, in English, with your friends during the English language period?	Yes	= 1
		No	= 2

Section C - Information concerning all your other subjects, for example Mathematics, Biology, Accounting (except English)

Question 34 – 40 concerns the years that you were in Grade 1 – 4

34	What language did your teachers use most in class when you were doing these subjects?	My first language (not English)	= 1
		Another African language (not my first language)	= 2
		English	= 3
		Any other language	= 4

35	What was the first language of most of the teacher(s) who taught you these subjects?	My first language (not English)	= 1
		Another African language (not my first language)	= 2
		English	= 3
		Any other language	= 4
		I do not know	= 5

36	In what language did you write your tests and examinations in these subjects?	My first language	= 1
		Another African language (not my first language)	= 2
		English	= 3
		Any other language	= 4

37	Did the teachers who taught you these subjects speak English well themselves?	Yes	= 1
		No	= 2

38	Did the teachers who taught you these subjects encourage you to speak English in class?	Yes	= 1
		No	= 2

39	Did you feel comfortable to speak English to the teachers who taught you the English language?	Yes	= 1
		No	= 2

40	Did you feel comfortable to discuss the work, in English, with your friends during these periods?	Yes	= 1
		No	= 2

Question 41 – 47 concerns the years that you were in Grade 5 – 7

41	What language did your teachers use most in class when you were doing these subjects?	My first language (not English)	= 1
		Another African language (not my first language)	= 2
		English	= 3
		Any other language	= 4

42	What was the first language of most of the teacher(s) who taught you these subjects?	My first language (not English)	= 1
		Another African language (not my first language)	= 2
		English	= 3
		Any other language	= 4
		I do not know	= 5

43	In what language did you write your tests and examinations in these subjects?	My first language (not English)	= 1
		Another African language (not my first language)	= 2
		English	= 3
		Any other language	= 4

44	Did the teachers who taught you these subjects speak English well themselves?	Yes	= 1
		No	= 2

45	Did the teachers who taught you these subjects encourage you to speak English in class?	Yes	= 1
		No	= 2

46	Did you feel comfortable to speak English to the teachers who taught you these subjects?	Yes	= 1
		No	= 2

47	Did you feel comfortable to discuss the work, in English, with your friends during these periods?	Yes	= 1
		No	= 2

Question 48 – 54 concerns the years that you were in Grade 8 – 12

48	What language did your teachers use most in class when you were doing these subjects?	My first language (not English)	= 1
		Another African language (not my first language)	= 2
		English	= 3
		Any other language	= 4

49	What was the first language of most of the teacher(s) who taught you these subjects?	My first language (not English)	= 1
		Another African language (not my first language)	= 2
		English	= 3
		Any other language	= 4
		I do not know	= 5

50	In what language did you write your tests and examinations in these subjects?	My first language (not English)	= 1
		Another African language (not my first language)	= 2
		English	= 3
		Any other language	= 4

51	Did the teachers who taught you these subjects speak English well themselves?	Yes	= 1
		No	= 2

52	Did the teachers who taught you these subjects encourage you to speak English in class?	Yes	= 1
		No	= 2

53	Did you feel comfortable to speak English to the teachers who taught you these subjects?	Yes	= 1
		No	= 2

54	Did you feel comfortable to discuss the work, in English, with your friends during these periods?	Yes	= 1
		No	= 2

Section D - Information concerning your television watching, radio listening and reading habits

Question 55 – 60 concerns the years that you were in Grade 5 – 9

55	On average, how much television did you watch per day?	We did not have a television	= 1
		Less than 2 hours	= 2
		2 – 4 hours	= 3
		More than 4 hours	= 4

56	What kind of programmes did you watch on television?	News in English	= 1
		News in any language, except English	= 2
		Children's programmes in English	= 3
		Children's programmes in any other language, except English	= 4
		'Soapies' in English	= 5
		'Soapies' in any other language, except English	= 6
		Actuality programmes in English	= 7
		More than 1 of the above	= 8
		I did not watch television	= 9

57	On average, how much did you listen to the radio per day?	We did not have a radio	= 1
		Less than 2 hours	= 2
		2 – 4 hours	= 3
		More than 4 hours	= 4

58	What kind of programmes did you listen to over the radio?	News in English	= 1
		News in any language, except English	= 2
		Children's programmes in English	= 3
		Children's programmes in any other language, except English	= 4
		'Soapies' in English	= 5
		'Soapies' in any other language, except English	= 6
		Actuality programmes in English	= 7
		More than 1 of the above	= 8
		I did not listen to the radio	= 9

59	On average, excluding schoolwork, how much did you read per day?	I did not read anything that were not for school	= 1
		0 – 2 hours	= 2
		3 – 4 hours	= 3
		More than 4 hours	= 4

60	What kind of material did you read for pleasure?	English News papers	= 1
		English Magazines	= 2
		English Books (Fiction)	= 3
		English Books (Facts)	= 4
		More than 1 of the above	= 5
		All of the above	= 6
		I only read material that was in my first language	= 7
		I did not read at all	= 8

Question 61 – 66 concerns the years that you were in Grade 10 – 12

61	On average, how much television did you watch per day?	We did not have a television	= 1
		Less than 2 hours	= 2
		2 – 4 hours	= 3
		More than 4 hours	= 4

62	What kind of programmes did you watch on television?	News in English	= 1
		News in any other language, except English	= 2
		Children's programmes in English	= 3
		Children's programmes in any other language, except English	= 4
		'Soapies' in English	= 5
		'Soapies' in any other language, except English	= 6
		Actuality programmes in English	= 7
		More than 1 of the above	= 8
		I did not watch television	= 9

63	On average, how much did you listen to the radio per day?	We did not have a radio	= 1
		Less than 2 hours	= 2
		3 – 4 hours	= 3
		More than 4 hours	= 4

64	What kind of programmes did you listen to over the radio?	News in English	= 1
		News in any other language, except English	= 2
		Children's programmes in English	= 3
		Children's programmes in any other language, except English	= 4
		'Soapies' in English	= 5
		'Soapies' in any other language, except English	= 6
		Actuality programmes in English	= 7
		More than 1 of the above	= 8
		I did not listen to the radio	= 9

65	On average, excluding schoolwork, how much did you read per day?	I did not read anything that were not for school	= 1
		0 – 2 hours	= 2
		3 – 4 hours	= 3
		More than 4 hours	= 4

66	What kind of material did you read for pleasure?	English News papers	= 1
		English Magazines	= 2
		English Books (Fiction)	= 3
		English Books (Facts)	= 4
		More than 1 of the above	= 5
		All of the above	= 6
		I only read material that was in my first language	= 7
		I did not read at all	= 8

Section E (on next page)

Section E - Your current opinion concerning English and Internal Auditing 1

67	If you could choose, would you prefer to be taught in English or in your first language?	English	= 1
		Your first language	= 2
		A combination of the above	= 3

68	How difficult is it for you to understand the English that is used in your textbooks for Internal Auditing 1?	Not difficult at all	= 1
		Moderate	= 2
		Very difficult	= 3

69	How difficult is it for you to understand the English that is used by your lecturers for Internal Auditing 1?	Not difficult at all	= 1
		Moderate	= 2
		Very difficult	= 3

70	How difficult is it for you to understand the English that is used in your tests and examinations for Internal Auditing 1?	Not difficult at all	= 1
		Moderate	= 2
		Very difficult	= 3

71	During tests or examinations of Internal Auditing 1, do you prefer multiple-choice questions or essay type questions?	Multiple choice	= 1
		Essay type	= 2
		It does not matter	= 3

72	Do you think that Internal Auditing 1 is a difficult subject?	Not difficult at all	= 1
		Moderate	= 2
		Very difficult	= 3

Thank you very much for your co-operation and good luck with your studies.

SURVEY RESPONSE SHEET

V1

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Office use

V2

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Student number

Question number	Number of your answer i.e. 1,2,3,4 or 5	OFFICE USE ONLY Variable
1		3
2		4
3		5
4		6
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9		11
10		12
11		13
12		14
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36		38
37		39
38		40

Question number	Number of your answer i.e. 1,2,3,4 or 5	OFFICE USE ONLY Variable
39		41
40		42
41		43
42		44
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