

**FACTORS THAT AFFECT FOUNDATION PHASE ENGLISH SECOND  
LANGUAGE LEARNERS' READING AND WRITING SKILLS**

by

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*DECLARATION*

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I declare that **Factors that affect foundation phase English second language learners' reading and writing skills** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

February 2015

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(Researcher)

*DEDICATION*

I dedicate this thesis to

my parents:

**MR A. GOVENDER AND MRS S. GOVENDER**

who have consistently supported me throughout my studies

&

my siblings:

**my brother Seelan and my sister Saras**

who financially and morally supported me in my endeavours

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## *ABSTRACT*

During the 1990s, many low-income countries were committed to the United Nations Education for All (EFA) goals of ensuring universal access to primary education and learners' completion of all primary grades (Gove & Wetterberg 2011:1). Since then some countries, including South Africa, have made impressive strides towards expanded access to schooling. Much of the progress has stemmed from additional inputs such as classrooms, educators, and textbooks and this has created the assumption that with sufficient inputs, learning will naturally flow. However, increases in enrollment rates alone have not always translated into high quality education or even basic learning.

Additionally, South Africa's unique politically burdened history has had profound effects on the education system. Due to its multifarious population and the amalgamation of various sectors, including education, the Department of Basic Education was and still is faced with the daunting challenge of providing quality education to its diverse citizens. This has resulted in the establishment of multiracial, multilingual, and multicultural schools. The corollary is that schools have become more inclusive. However, the ability of South Africa to educate its learners cannot be measured by access to schooling or enrollment rates alone, but rather by its ability to impart to learners the knowledge and skills necessary to function as literate and numerate members of the broader society.

Within the context of EFA several international organisations began to conduct early grade reading assessments in many developing countries in Africa and Asia. These studies include SACMEQ, PIRLS and prePIRLS, EGRA, and ASER. The aim of these assessments is to facilitate the expansion of quality education by providing the necessary data to monitor educational quality, and by improving the research capacity and technical skills of educational planners.

Within the context of major transitions throughout the world, the organisations mentioned above perspicaciously focused on countries that encounter major challenges in literacy. The extensive studies on reading and writing that were conducted by some of these organisations amplify the crisis in education and the plight of early grade learners. Nationally and internationally the situation appears to be relatively bleak, especially for L2 learners.

Literacy, specifically reading literacy, forms the backbone of scholastic success at primary, secondary and tertiary levels and research consistently shows that learners who are good readers also tend to perform well academically (Pretorius & Machet 2004:129). Emanating from the above, this study focused on the factors that affect foundation phase English second language learners' reading and writing skills. The study was conducted at five English medium primary schools in Port Shepstone.

A literature study on second language acquisition and the factors that impact on the English second language learners' reading and writing achievements was undertaken. Furthermore, the expansion of the English language, the significance of the primary language in second language acquisition, insights and issues focusing on bilingualism and multilingualism, theories on second language acquisition, reading and writing in the home language, and factors related to English second language learners' reading and writing achievements were examined.

A mixed-method research design was utilised. In order to obtain an in-depth perspective both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used to collect data from foundation phase educators, and the parents of isiZulu-speaking foundation phase learners. Survey questionnaires, which were the main research instruments for gathering data, were distributed to the parents of isiZulu-speaking learners and the educators. Additionally, individual interviews were conducted with educators and reading and writing observations were also conducted. Quantitative data analysis was done by means of tables, frequencies, and graphs. Qualitative data was subjected to analysis by means of an eclectic approach.

This study found that cultural, psychological, social, cognitive, school, and developmental factors do indeed affect the second language learners' reading and writing skills. It was found that the learners' home language background significantly affected their pronunciation of words in English, their ability to use phonics to read and write, and their ability to differentiate between

male and female when writing sentences. Moreover, no specific model of acculturation was found to be apparent in this study. However, the processes of integration and separation did play a role in the learners' acculturation. On the other hand, the processes of assimilation and marginalisation were not found amongst isiZulu-speaking learners.

Two prominent psychological factors, anxiety and motivation, were apparent in this study. This study revealed that isiZulu-speaking learners do experience reading and writing anxiety but do not experience writing test anxiety. It was also found that isiZulu-speaking learners do enjoy reading in English and they demonstrate relatively positive attitudes towards reading. Their attitudes towards writing in English were somewhat varied. Although integrative motivation and instrumental motivation were seen to play a dual role in the learners' experiences, the parents' views were strongly influenced by instrumental motivation.

IsiZulu-speaking learners have good social relationships with their peers. Educators affirmed that these learners interact relatively well with both their English-speaking peers and their isiZulu-speaking peers. The amiable relationships were also observed by the researcher during the classroom reading and writing observations. None of the isiZulu-speaking learners experienced social isolation or alienation at any of the five English medium schools.

IsiZulu-speaking learners' ability to speak and understand isiZulu is relatively good. However, their ability to read and write in isiZulu is generally poor. IsiZulu-speaking learners usually cope well with conversational skills in the English language. However, their ability to read English texts fluently with understanding and to write simple stories in English ranges from fair to poor. Generally, at the five schools similar approaches were used to teach reading and writing. The dominance of the phonic approach was observed during several reading lessons.

In general, educators expressed their absolute dissatisfaction with the CAPS document and the CAPS English home language workbook. They were not content with the manner in which the phonics is structured in the CAPS workbook and document. Educators asserted that CAPS is too challenging for most isiZulu-speaking learners, too much of emphasis is placed on assessments, and due to the large learner/educator ratio educators experience frustration when teaching reading and writing.



Educators emphasised the significance of Grade R attendance and the Grade R curriculum. Furthermore, they asserted that learners who enter Grade 1 at the age of five are not ready for formal schooling and they generally experience reading and writing difficulties. Moreover, this study reproduced those found in literature that showed that generally girls significantly outperform boys on reading and writing tasks.

There were various reasons for the parents wanting their children to learn to read and write in English. Two of the prominent reasons advanced by the parents were: parents want their children to learn more than one language and learning English at school will help their children to continue their studies at colleges or universities.

Overall, this study has demonstrated that the English language has significantly impacted on all aspects of the isiZulu-speaking foundation phase learners' lives, and more especially has considerably influenced their reading and writing achievements at English medium schools.

## *ABBREVIATIONS*

❖ ANA	Annual National Assessment
❖ BICS	Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills
❖ CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
❖ CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
❖ CPB	Chalo Parrho Barrho
❖ DIBELS	Dynamic Indicators of Basic Literacy Skills
❖ DST	Dynamic Systems Theory
❖ EFA	Education for All
❖ EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
❖ ELU	Early Literacy Unit
❖ ESL	English Second Language
❖ FAL	First Additional Language
❖ FET	Further Education and Training
❖ GET	General Education and Training
❖ HLE	Home Language Environment
❖ ICT	Information and Communication Technology
❖ IEA	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational

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	Achievement
❖ IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning
❖ IL	Interlanguage
❖ IP	Information Processing
❖ KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
❖ L1	Primary language or home language
❖ L2	Second language
❖ LAD	Language Acquisition Device
❖ LB	Literacy Boost
❖ LIEP	Language-in-Education Policy
❖ MILL	Molteno Institute of Language and Literacy
❖ MLE	Multilingual Education
❖ NGO	Non Government Organisation
❖ PIRLS	Progress in International Literacy Study
❖ PRAESA	Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa
❖ RTI	Research Triangle Institute
❖ SACMEQ	Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
❖ SCT	Sociocultural Theory
❖ SIL	Summer Institute of Linguistics International
❖ SLA	Second Language Acquisition

- ❖ SMRS                      Systematic Method for Reading Success
- ❖ UG                            Universal Grammar
- ❖ UNESCO                  United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
- ❖ UNICEF                    United Nations Children's Fund
- ❖ US                            United States
- ❖ ZAD                         Zone of Actual Development
- ❖ ZPD                         Zone of Proximal Development

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

We live in a world of language, where language is the centre of human life. We use it to express our love or hatred, to achieve our goals and further our careers, to gain artistic satisfaction or simple pleasure. Through language we plan our lives and remember our past, we exchange ideas and experiences, and we form our social and individual identities (Cook 2008:1). Language offers a window into cognitive function, providing insights into the nature, structure and organisation of thoughts and ideas (Evans & Green 2006:5). Furthermore, language is a vehicle through which people's culture is transmitted and it is viewed as an indispensable cultural legacy with which all forms of human interactions are carried out (Olaoye 2013:748; 750).

Language can be defined as a complex symbol system (Allen & Cowdery 2012:418). Barber, Beal and Shaw (2012:26) view human language as a signaling system which operates with symbolic vocal sounds, and which is used for the purposes of communication and social co-operation. Titone and Danesi (in University of South Africa 1999:45) define language as follows:

- ❖ Language is a communication system by which people are able to express their thoughts. It does not consist of a variety of random series of speech sounds but of language symbols that form a connected set of relationships and patterns.
- ❖ It is a set of conventionally arbitrary symbols (oral and written) that do not necessarily relate directly to the world of objects and ideas that they represent.
- ❖ It is related to a specific speech community and communicated on a cultural basis.
- ❖ Different languages have common characteristics and striking similarities.

Language can be characterised as an extension of man, as a medium of communication, thought, learning and expression, and as a means of socialisation, exploration and actualising intelligence

(De Witt & Booysen 2007:95). A simplified definition of language would entail a system of symbols that enables people to communicate with each other.

There are over six thousand human languages spoken in the world today, which all fall under the above definitions (Barber et al. 2012:26). The existence of a multitude of languages spoken in the world is estimated at between six thousand and seven thousand (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation 2003:12). Although all people communicate by means of language, language is culturally bound and no universal language exists (De Witt & Booysen 2007:94). However, of all the languages in the world, English is the most widely-spoken international language which has a high status and role as a language of wider communication, in the media, education, trade, science and technology, research and diplomacy (Young 1995:64). As a language of modernisation, English has become a major national language or lingua franca as well as a medium of instruction in schools and universities in many countries including South Africa. It is also the language of finance and trade in South Africa.

For some South African learners English might be their home language; but for many learners English has acquired the status of a second language, while it is a third language to others. The first language children usually learn is that spoken by their parents, the home language. Children develop the language of their immediate surroundings automatically in accordance with their physiological capabilities. The language of the young infant develops as a form of communication intended to awaken the interest of others in the immediate environment. On the basis of the influence from within his or her environment the child then successfully begins to develop a more correct and goal-orientated language (Skutnabb-Kangas as cited in Giota 1995:309).

Saville-Troike (2012:4) perceives home language as the language which a child acquires during early childhood; normally beginning before the age of three years and that the language is learned as part of growing among people who speak it. Jenkins (2009:15-16) posits that English as a second language refers to the language spoken in a large number of territories such as India, Bangladesh, Nigeria and Singapore, which were once colonised by the English. Giota (1995:309) regards a second language as a language which is not used as a day to day vehicle of communication and, therefore is not acquired on an automatic basis. Saville-Troike (2012:4)

asserts that a second language is typically an official or societally dominant language needed for education, employment and other basic purposes. Mahabeer (2003:14) affirms that a second language refers to another language used by people who are proficient in their home language.

A second language affects people's careers and possible futures, their lives and their very identities. In a world where probably more people speak two languages, the acquisition and use of the second language is vital to the everyday lives of millions of people. Helping people acquire a second language more effectively is an important task for the twenty first century (Cook 2008:1).

Learning a second language is a long and complex undertaking. The learner is affected as he or she struggles to reach beyond the confines of his or her home language and into a new language, a new culture, a new way of thinking, feeling and acting. Total commitment, total involvement, a total physical, intellectual and emotional response are necessary to successfully send and receive messages in a second language (Brown 2007:1).

## **1.2 EDUCATION FOR ALL AND THE LAUNCH OF THE SOUTHERN AND EAST AFRICAN CONSORTIUM FOR MONITORING EDUCATIONAL QUALITY**

The United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), Article 26 states that "everyone has the right to education..."; "education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms..."; and "parents have the right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children" (United Nations 1949:6). Thus, the concept Education for All (EFA) originated during the last few decades as the conviction grew that all learners have the right to enjoy equal access to quality education, irrespective of their perceived potential or circumstances. Education for All implies ensuring that all children have access to basic education of good quality (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation 2005:10). This implies creating an environment in schools and in basic education programmes in which children are both able and enabled to learn. Such an environment must be inclusive of children, effective with children, friendly and welcoming to children, healthy and protective for children and gender sensitive. Thus, the fundamental principle of EFA is that all children should have the opportunity to learn (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation 2005:29).

It is important to highlight that EFA does not automatically imply inclusion. Inclusion is precisely about reforming schools and ensuring that every child receives quality and appropriate education within these schools. Inclusion is critical to EFA since without it, a group or groups of children are excluded from education. Thus, EFA cannot be achieved if these children are excluded. Both EFA and inclusion are about access to education. However, inclusion is about access to education in a manner that there is no discrimination or exclusion for any individual or group within or outside the school system.

The EFA initiative was created as a vehicle to facilitate and monitor the expansion of primary education in developing countries (Spaull 2011:3). The commitments to universal primary education that were outlined at the education conferences in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990, and reiterated in Dakar, Senegal in 2000, have been met with widespread approval both within developing countries, and by external stakeholders. What began as an almost single-minded focus on access – “Education for All”, has slowly developed into a much more nuanced concept of “meaningful” access – that is, “Quality Education for All”.

It is now widely accepted that the ability of a country to educate its youth cannot be measured by access to schooling or enrollment rates alone, but rather by its ability to impart to learners the knowledge and skills necessary to function as literate and numerate members of the broader society. While access is most certainly a necessary condition for this type of education, it is by no means a sufficient one. Spaull (2011:3) asserts that despite the shift in consensus from a sole focus on one that includes a measure of what learners actually learn, thus the quality of learning, there remains a dearth of appropriate data with which one can measure changes in educational quality.

It is within this context that the Southern and Eastern Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) was created. In 1991 several Ministries of Education in Eastern and Southern Africa began working closely with UNESCO’s International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) on the implementation of integrated educational policy research and training programmes (Moloi & Strauss (2005:2). In 1995 these Ministries formalised their collaboration by establishing a network that is widely known as SACMEQ. The aim of SACMEQ is to facilitate the expansion of quality education in Sub-Saharan Africa by providing the necessary

data to monitor educational quality, and by improving the research capacity and technical skills of educational planners (Spaull 2011:3). Fifteen Ministries comprising of Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania (Mainland), Tanzania (Zanzibar), Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe are now members of SACMEQ (Moloi & Strauss 2005:2).

As a member of the SACMEQ, South Africa upholds the values and shares the goals of the Consortium. As a result of major transition and democracy in its infancy, South Africa did not participate in SACMEQ 1. However, when the opportunity presented itself in 2000, South Africa seized it and participated in SACMEQ 2. The target population was Grade 6 learners attending registered mainstream government or non-government schools. Only Government or public schools were targeted in South Africa.

The SACMEQ 3 Project was conducted in 2007 and represented South Africa's second participation. The purpose of the SACMEQ 3 Project was amongst other things, to gather information that could be used by Ministries of Education to track trends in the reading achievement of Grade 6 learners (Department of Basic Education 2010:7). The reading performance of South Africa's Grade 6 learners in the SACMEQ 2 and SACMEQ 3 studies will be discussed in section 1.5.2.

### **1.3 LANGUAGE, EDUCATION AND CHANGE IN SOUTH AFRICA**

#### **1.3.1 The Constitutional context**

South Africa, a country consisting of 51 770 560 people (Statistics South Africa 2012:18), situated at the southern-most tip of the African continent became a constitutional democracy in April 1994 after many decades of racial discrimination, colonialism and apartheid rule. The cornerstone of the country's democracy is its constitution, passed by Act 108 of 1996 which upholds the inviolability of human rights for all. The constitution affords everyone the right "to a basic education including adult basic education ... and to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where that education is reasonably practical" (Republic of South Africa 1996:14).



South Africa provides a complex and intriguing picture of multilingualism, due to its broad spectrum of both indigenous and non-indigenous languages and to its politically burdened history of apartheid. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa 1996:4) recognises eleven official languages, to which the state guarantees equal status. These languages are the two former official languages, Afrikaans and English and nine African languages: isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda and Xitsonga. Besides the eleven official languages, several other languages are also spoken in South Africa and mentioned in the constitution. These include the Khoi, Nama and San languages, sign language, Arabic, German, Greek, Gujarati, Hebrew, Hindi, Portuguese, Sanskrit, Tamil, Telegu and Urdu. In addition, providing for the status of the eleven official languages, the Constitution also addresses the transformation of the historically marginalised languages.

South Africa's linguistic diversity means that all eleven official languages have had a profound effect on each other. Thus, language has always been and still is a contentious issue in education in South Africa. This extends on a continuum from support for the use of home language in education to the ever increasing need to be able to use an international language such as English.

### **1.3.2 The rise of Afrikaans, English and Bantu Education**

In order to understand the language and education situation in South Africa it is necessary to examine the historical background of languages in schools in this country.

The first people in Southern Africa were the San and the Khoikhoi, and they evolved over a very long period. They were then followed by the Bantu-speaking people. Little is known about the ways in which language was transferred by these people. Most written evidence of language in education comes from the arrival of the Europeans in the Cape; in particular the Dutch settlement in 1652.

Since English speakers came to South Africa from 1795 onwards the English language has had an influence. The English language became more influential, especially after the political power shifted from the Dutch to the English-speaking colonists during the British occupation in the 1800s. From 1814 English has been an official language (Olivier 2009:1). With the arrival of

the Dutch and British in South Africa, both languages (Dutch and English) were used in schools. In 1914 Afrikaans was used in schools.

In 1860, more than 150 years ago, the Indian indentured workers arrived in South Africa. Indians were regarded by the British as a “temporary investment”, thus, for almost a decade no educational provisions were made for the children of these workers (South African History Online 2014:3). Discriminated by the apartheid legislation, they were, as a matter of state policy, given an inferior education compared to White South Africans (Wikipedia Encyclopedia 2014:4). According to the Wikipedia Encyclopedia (2014:6), in post-apartheid South Africa, English is the primary language of most Indian South Africans. By 1990, 97,5% of Indians regarded English as their first language (South African History Online 2014:11). Consequently, most young Indian inhabitants do not speak any other languages, besides English and the compulsory second language taught at school, such as Afrikaans or isiZulu.

Approximately six decades ago, in 1953 the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) published the expert report on *The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education* (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation 2003:7). This report reconfirmed earlier international support for the use of mother tongue; which is the use of home language in education. This internationally accepted principle provided the National Party government with a plausible argument in support of the home language principle which culminated in the passing of the Bantu Education Act by parliament in 1953 (Heugh 1995:42). The word ‘Bantu’ in the term Bantu Education is highly charged politically and has derogatory connotations (Bantu Education policy 2013:1). The aim of the Bantu Education Act was to prevent Africans receiving an education that would lead them to aspire to positions they would not be allowed to hold in society (Bantu Education Act No 47 of 1953 2013:1). Education was viewed as part of the overall apartheid system including homelands, urban restrictions, pass laws and job preservations. The Bantu Education Act was one of apartheid’s most offensively racist laws (Bantu Education 2013:1). It brought African education under the control of the government and extended apartheid to Black schools. The African community vehemently opposed the creation of a separate and unequal system of Black education.

The ideological framework for Bantu Education had its origins in a manifesto crafted in 1939 by Afrikaner nationalists (Bantu Education 2013:1). Based on the racist view that the education of Blacks was a special responsibility of a superior White race, this document called for 'Christian National Education' and advocated separate schools for each of South Africa's population groups: Whites, Africans, Indians and Coloureds.

Heugh (1995:43) explicates the Bantu Education system as follows: Bantu Education served the interests of White supremacy. It denied Black people access to the same educational opportunities and resources enjoyed by White South Africans. Home language instruction was coupled with an impoverished curriculum for children in the Bantu Education system. Under the Bantu Education system, home language education was extended to the first eight years (to Grade 8). Thereafter a 50-50 policy took over where half of the subjects were taught through the medium of Afrikaans and the other half through English. From 1975, learners had to make the change from home language to two media of instruction a year earlier in Grade 7. It was this inflexible attempt to implement the 50-50 policy after 1975 which contributed to the 1976 uprising of the learners in Soweto. In 1979, the Education and Training Act came into being and home language instruction was curtailed to the first four years of schooling, which is to the end of Grade 4. Thus, African language learners were faced with the sudden transition to an English medium of instruction for content subjects when most learners did not have an adequate proficiency in English to meet the requirements of Grade 5. Also, the cognitively impoverished curriculum of the early years made it more difficult for African language learners to cope with the demands of Grade 5 and beyond.

Additionally, it is imperative to take cognisance of the educators' command of the English language during the apartheid and post apartheid eras. Heugh and Siegrühn (1995:96) argue that well-trained but monolingual educators will probably have a low degree of success. Research conducted by Dowling and Maseko (1995:105) indicates that educators are trained according to their (home language) L1 status. L1 speakers receive training to enable them to teach L1 speakers. Second language (L2) speakers get trained to teach L2 speakers. As a result of this streamlining, students who are training to become educators do not acquire opportunities to learn L1 and L2 methodologies concurrently. This also influenced learners' performances at schools.

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### 1.3.3 The promotion of multilingualism in education

South Africa has a unique and complex history of apartheid and post-apartheid, in which linguistic issues play a central role. The shift in 1996, from South Africa as a bilingual English-Afrikaans country to a multilingual country was conceived as a critical imperative to reconfigure the language landscape of the country to which the then newly elected democratic government promptly responded. The conflation of languages was extended to all sectors, including education. Presently, South Africa has an excellent post-apartheid Language-in-Education Policy (LIEP), among the most attractive and feasible in the world (Wright 2012:1). The LIEP is conceived as an integral and necessary aspect of the government's strategy of building a non-racial nation in South Africa (Department of Education 1997:1). It is meant to facilitate communication across barriers of colour, language and region, while at the same time creating an environment in which respect for languages other than one's own would be encouraged. The policy stresses that being multilingual, should be a defining characteristic of being South African. The underlying principle of the LIEP is to maintain home language(s) while providing access to and the effective acquisition of additional language(s). Hence, the Department's position is that an additive approach to bilingualism be seen as the orientation of the LIEP.

The LIEP also makes provision for the protection of individual rights (Department of Education 1997:3). The policy states that the parent exercises the language choice on behalf of the minor learner and that learners must choose the language of teaching upon admission to a school. Only official languages may be used for instruction. From Grade 3 onwards, all learners will have to study the language they are taught in, and at least one other approved language. Furthermore, language may not be used as a barrier to admission. However, according to CAPS learners from Grade 1 onwards learn an additional. This became effective from 2011.

Despite the government's commitment to multilingualism and the promotion of language rights in all spheres of public life, the education sector does not totally reflect the multilingual nature of South Africa. Thus, the Department of Basic Education is implementing a programme where primary school children in government schools will have to learn an indigenous African language (Magcaba 2013:1). Davis (2013:1) reports that in May 2013 the Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga, upon delivering her department's budget speech announced that "a

new policy will come into effect in 2014 mandating the learning of an African language in all schools beginning with the introduction of an African language to learners in Grade R and Grade 1”. Few details have been forthcoming up to now as to the Department of Basic Education’s proposed new language policy.

It appears that the sense of urgency around the Department of Basic Education’s move to accelerate the quality and quantity of African language teaching at this point is due to an increasing belief that many of the problems in the country’s education system can be placed at the feet of the language issue. There is skepticism over the time-frames given that the policy was supposed to be implemented in 2014, and the draft policy has not yet been released for public comment. A final policy still has to be decided on, and only then can implementation begin.

The move within basic education is paralleled by at least one initiative in higher education, as the University of KwaZulu-Natal has announced its intention to make isiZulu language classes compulsory for all first year students from 2014 (Davis 2013:1). Despite concerns from educational experts, the department insists implementation would not be a problem as there are sufficient African language teachers (Magcaba 2013:1). The foremost linguistic problem, however, lies in making literary an unwritten language, fixing first its grammatical and phonemic structures, giving it a working vocabulary and then providing it with a practical script and orthography (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation 1953:13). It is an equally difficult task to recondition for general educational purposes a language with an old aristocratic literary tradition but unfitted for modern school teaching, or to improve a written vernacular so that it can become an official language as well as a suitable instrument for scientific and technological education.

Heugh and Siegrühn (1995:97) postulate that the most common excuses used to argue that African languages cannot function as languages of teaching and learning, are that the relevant concepts and vocabulary are not present in these languages. These issues impact on both classroom practice and the provision of resource materials. This argument is linked to the belief that languages like English, for example, “naturally” have these. Heugh and Siegrühn (1995:97) assert that there is no linguistic reason why any language cannot be elaborated to include modern terminology relevant to science and technology. Afrikaans is one of the languages which has

gone through a process of elaboration to the point where it functions very successfully in all modern contexts. In Bangladesh, India, Thailand and China linguists assisted in developing writing systems for minority languages (Young 2005:32-33). Thus, in South Africa, writing systems for indigenous African languages that do not have written forms of language can be developed with assistance from the community members and linguists. According to Young (2005:30) people involved in developing writing systems should have knowledge of the national orthography policy and existing, related orthographies; the language and its variants; and the reading process, acquisition of literacy and familiarity with methods of teaching literacy.

Although South Africa's LIEP is viewed as one of the most feasible and attractive in the world, the question that arises is: What purpose does an excellent policy serve if it does not assist in providing sufficient improvements in the learners' performances? Attractive policies become unproductive if they do not provide positive results. On the other hand, another question to consider is: Is the LIEP effectively implemented at schools? Thus, the problem may lie not with the LIEP itself but with the non-implementation or persistently incorrect implementation of the policy. To counteract this problem the Department of Education should consider structuring procedures in order to monitor the implementation of the LIEP.

#### **1.4 THE RESEARCH SETTING AND DEMARCATION OF THE RESEARCH**

The province of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) has been home for centuries to South Africa's largest ethnic group, the Zulus. Nestled in the southern coastline of this province is the constantly developing and booming town of Port Shepstone in which this study was undertaken. Port Shepstone is situated at the mouth of the largest river on the south coast of KZN, the Mzimkulu River, one hundred and twenty kilometres south of Durban. It forms the administrative, educational and commercial centre for Southern Natal. The population in this town consists of people from various points of origin in the world. This forms the basis of its multilingual and multicultural community.

Port Shepstone houses all the provincial departments and is the seat of the Ugu Regional Council. The infrastructure is well developed with many excellent schools. The first school in Port Shepstone was opened in 1883 but by 1950 the school could not accommodate the increasing number of learners. The Port Shepstone School split into two, the Port Shepstone

Primary School and the Port Shepstone High School. Later, during the apartheid regime, due to segregation being solidified learners were compelled to attend schools based on their racial status. The five English medium primary schools in the five suburbs that formed part of my research were schools that previously fell under the House of Delegates. Thus, only Indian learners were enrolled in these schools.

In the 1990s and more especially after 1994, due to the dismantling of the divisive apartheid structures in all spheres of life including education, learners from other race groups were admitted at these schools. What were exclusively Indian schools became multiracial, multicultural and multilingual schools that accommodate all learners, irrespective of race or language.

Presently, four of the five English medium primary schools are situated in the midst of predominantly Indian suburbs. Disparities in language, class and culture led to the relocation of most of the Indians from the one other suburb to neighbouring suburbs. The educators are predominantly Indian. While the learner population had changed rapidly since 1994, the Indian educator population remained fairly constant, with only a few changes incorporating educators from other race groups. The educator-learner ratios in the schools vary from 1:38 to 1:45.

Due to the significant changes in the racial make-up of each class, learners come from myriad backgrounds educationally, linguistically, and culturally. Some learners enter school with several years of preschool supported by rich experiences with literacy and a broad base of knowledge. Others arrive at school speaking a language other than English, although some of these ESL learners have had rich linguistic and cultural experiences. Some children come to school understanding how to learn based on their specific culture, while others attend school with little or no preschool experience, limited home literacy experiences, or little broad-based knowledge. Some children arrive at the doorstep of education with a cultural schema, that is, an organised knowledge of the world based on their previous experiences.

Furthermore, the learners' socio-economic backgrounds vary greatly. Some learners live in urban areas; some in rural areas; others in townships; and still others in informal settlements, such as squatter camps or temporary shelters, which are unhygienic and dangerous. The distances learners travel to school also vary. Some learners live close to school, while others

travel long distances to get to school. The learners who travel long distances will have to get up very early and arrive home late in the afternoon. Many of these learners do have access to schools that are situated close to their homes but their parents prefer to enroll their children in the urban English medium schools.

The five schools in this research study are well resourced in terms of catering for the educational needs of the learners. They have the infrastructure and the necessary resources at their disposal. They also have very competent principals, and highly qualified and skilled educators with varying degrees of experience, not only in the foundation phase but also in the intermediate and senior phases. These schools also embody the principles of Education for All.

## **1.5 ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM**

This section will focus on the preliminary literature investigation and the exploration of the problem.

### **1.5.1 Preliminary literature investigation**

Learning the English language requires English second language learners to learn or acquire the four language skills in a new language. These skills entail listening, speaking, reading and writing. A broad perspective of language includes the oral form [listening and speaking] and the written form [reading and writing] (Gunning 2002:68). The four components have an interdependent relationship.

Lyons (1995:11) reinforces that one of the cardinal principles of modern linguistics is that spoken language is more basic than written language. Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams (2007:505) perceive the human language faculty to be biologically and genetically determined. However, this is not true for the written forms of languages. Children learn to speak naturally through exposure to language, without formal teaching. To become literate, that is to learn to read and write, one must make a conscious effort and receive instruction (Fromkin et al. 2007:505).

Reading is a skill that is consciously learnt and must be practised (University of South Africa 2003: 288). Lesaux (2012:73) postulates that reading is a dynamic and multifaceted process that requires continued development if learners are to keep pace with the increasing demands of



school texts and tasks. Lesaux (2012:74) also stresses that reading at age three is not the same as reading at age five; and reading for a nine year old is different from reading for a college student. Maturing readers will have to keep pace with the changing demands of the text and the purpose for reading. To read effectively, readers not only decipher words on a page, but also use accumulating knowledge to assess, evaluate, and synthesise the presented information. Richek, List and Lerner (1983:7) condense the definition of reading by highlighting the fact that reading is not one task, but a variety of complex tasks which serves many functions for society and the individual. Thus, reading can be thought of as the ability to gather meaning from printed symbols, taking into consideration the individual's level of reading and the purpose for reading.

The way we learn to read and write differs from the way we acquire spoken language. Under normal circumstances children learn to talk at a very young age while reading and writing typically begins when the child is school-age (Fromkin et al. 2007:521). Thus, educators should focus on developing learners' reading and writing skills simultaneously at this early stage. If they learn the basic reading skills at this stage, they learn to read more easily and better than illiterate older learners and adults (University of South Africa 2003:288). Thus, people who learn to read as adults find it more difficult to read fluently. Learners from Grade 1 to 3 are at the stage where they are learning to read. At this stage learners begin to develop pre-reading, emergent reading and basic reading skills (Hungu, Makuwa, Ross, Saito, Dolata, Cappelle, Paviot & Vellien (2010:6). However, learners from Grade 4 onwards are reading to learn. This implies that these learners begin to reach higher levels of reading competencies. These levels include reading for meaning, interpretive reading, inferential reading, analytical reading, and critical reading (Hungu et al. 2010:6-7).

It is important to recognise, however, that even illiterate children and adults have a mental grammar of their language and are able to speak and understand it perfectly well (Fromkin et al. 2007:521). Thus, the most important respect in which spoken language development differs from learning to read and write is that reading and writing require specific instruction and conscious effort, whereas language acquisition does not. However, reading is envisaged as being less demanding than writing. The written language reflects, to a certain extent, the elements and rules that together constitute the grammar of the language (Fromkin et al. 2007:519). Reading

and writing are structured and purposive arts (Olajide 2010:195). How a text is written affects how it will be read. Both skills are fundamental to intellectual development.

English home language learners have already acquired the listening and speaking skills of the English language. However, English second language (ESL) learners who enter English medium schools will have to learn or acquire all four skills of the new language. As a result there is a gap in knowledge between English home language learners and ESL learners and this is observable at school entry. Research studies conducted by Kieffer (as cited in Lesaux 2012:76) suggest that although children entering school with limited English proficiency may demonstrate age-appropriate, even relatively rapid, growth in English reading achievement from early childhood through early adolescence, the growth is not sufficient to compensate for the substantial early gaps.

Research findings demonstrate that many learners who enter school with limited English proficiency or with low scores in early literacy or reading readiness measures, or both, never catch up (Lesaux 2012:76). Therefore, it is of vital importance that ESL learners receive appropriate reading instruction. Grade 2 is viewed as a pivotal time in a learner's life for reading. It is propagated that a child's ability to learn from reading is solidified by the time he or she is in Grade 2 and if that is not rectified early, that child will experience difficulties in reading throughout his or her academic career (Thompson 2012:C1). Therefore, it is critical to identify children in Grade 2 at that essential transition from learning to read to reading to learn (The Bugle-Observer 2013:A4).

When children fail to learn how to read correctly, the path ahead can be very rough. They will not be able to complete their school work adequately, which leads to frustration. Frustration could lead to poor behaviour (The Bugle-Observer 2013:A4). That experience of frustration and fear could lead to self-esteem issues, and later in life, to a lack of education and job choices and ultimately, poverty.

Virtually all school subjects require some form of reading, which means that the frustration and poor achievement permeates to all aspects of school life. Research findings reveal that reading in content areas is generally difficult for ESL learners (Brown 2007:185). ESL learners often lack background information that textbook authors assume readers have. Also, ESL learners in

the process of learning a new language do not have grade-level-appropriate vocabulary that is required for content learning.

To a large extent, educators have the ability to determine which young learners will experience problems reading advanced texts in the later grades. In fact, research indicates that it is possible to predict in early childhood who is at risk for later reading difficulties (Lesaux 2012:77).

Lesaux (2012:73) draws a distinction between skills-based competencies and knowledge-based competencies. She defines the former as those that allow learners to master the mechanics of reading. They are highly susceptible to instruction, are learned in the primary grades by the average learner, and for the great majority of learners are not a lasting source of difficulty. These skills include the reader's need to sound out and recognise words. Knowledge-based competencies, in contrast, must be developed over many years and are key sources of lasting individual differences in reading ability. In order to derive meaning from a text, the reader needs relevant background knowledge related to the text's vocabulary, topic and structure.

This implies that skills-based competencies are not sufficient to support text comprehension. Learners also require knowledge-based competencies, including understanding the meaning of words in their contexts and other relevant language. However, the latter appears to be a persistent source of difficulty for many ESL learners. Lesaux (2012:78) emphasises that large-scale observational research conducted in high-poverty, linguistically diverse elementary schools suggests that systematic instruction focusing on knowledge-based competencies is limited.

Being able to comprehend what is read, helps learners to develop their writing skills. Writing which is an important literacy skill, allows communication across space and time. Writing permits a society to permanently record its literature, its history and science, and its technology. The creation and development of writing systems is therefore one of the greatest of human achievements (Fromkin et al. 2007:505). Yet writing has received the least amount of attention from researchers as compared to other facets of early literacy (Canizares as cited in Anderson 2013:1), and many professional educators and researchers are cognisant of the fact that much of a child's success as a writer is due to the fact that they have received early writing experiences. There is a strong link between reading and writing. While reading, learners are exposed to a variety of writing styles and the correct use of grammar. With the assistance of the educator they

will also be able to distinguish the differences between spoken language and written language and develop their own styles of writing. Thus, an avid reader will be more able to master the skills of writing.

Writing involves both lower-level skills and higher-order structures. Writing begins from physical skills involving forming letters, to higher-level skills such as spelling, and then to the highest level of discourse skills involved in writing essays (Cook 2008:87). Fromkin et al. (2007:521) emphasise that written language is more conservative than spoken language. When we write we are more apt to obey prescriptive rules taught in school than when we speak. Therefore, writing is the most productive activity for second language learners to develop if they will use the language for academic purposes (Saville-Troike 2012:172)

Saville-Troike (2012:172) stresses that production of written knowledge requires prior knowledge of vocabulary, morphology, phonology, syntax and discourse structure to access words and combine them into phrases, clauses and longer units of text. The relatively limited linguistic knowledge of second language learners at early language learning levels can create problems in production of meaning.

Writing is a common medium for testing knowledge. Second language learners who pursue degrees in English medium universities typically must display a high level of writing proficiency through standardised entrance examinations. Once enrolled, students must complete written assignments, and essay examinations are commonly used to judge students' progress. Many professions and occupations also require a high level of English proficiency in writing for purposes of formal correspondence or for preparing applications and reports. However, second language writing outside of academic and professional situations typically do not have the same demanding standards of accuracy in production as do the more formal contexts of academic writing.

Reading and writing in the ESL context need to be developed and promoted in the educational system because they have implications for national reconstruction, integration and progress. Assessment is also an important issue. The degree to which educators are comprehensive and timely in supporting struggling readers and writers varies as a function of whether they are comprehensive and timely in assessing reading and writing competencies. Until schools in South

Africa consistently perform such assessments, many of the nation's most vulnerable readers and writers will have to struggle for years because no one has identified their significant weaknesses in understanding and writing texts. By that point, a cycle of academic failure and its ripple effects are entrenched, years of opportunities for intervention and support have been squandered, and reading and writing problems may have caused great harm to a child's school experience and identity.

### **1.5.2 Exploration of the problem**

Extensive research indicates that many learners in South Africa experience reading and writing difficulties. These widespread studies have revealed that South African learners perform poorly when tested on their reading competencies (See table 1.1). These unacceptably low levels and quality of competencies demonstrated by many South African learners in the foundational skills of literacy (reading and writing) could have catastrophic consequences not only for the learners themselves but also for the country.

In 2001 and 2004, the Department of Education in South Africa conducted two national systemic evaluations to establish literacy and numeracy levels in primary schools. These surveys revealed shockingly low levels of reading ability across the country (South African Department of Education 2008:4). The above study also found that large numbers of South African children simply do not read.

Plüddemann (2005:203) maintains that the literacy levels in South Africa are notoriously low which is related to the failure of the education system to cater adequately for African-language speakers and its failure to develop reading and writing capacity. Studies conducted by the Department of Education, Provincial Departments of Education as well as international bodies reflect that learners in South African schools performed poorly when tested for their ability to read at age-appropriate levels (South African Department of Education 2008:5). A systemic evaluation of language competence of intermediate phase learners in South Africa in 2005 reflected that only 14% of the learners were outstanding in their language competence, 23% were satisfactory or partially competent, but a large majority – 63% were below the required competence for their age level (South African Department of Education 2008:6).

South Africa's Grade 6 learner performance in SACMEQ 2 and SACMEQ 3 also revealed unacceptably low levels of reading competency. The overall mean Rasch scores in SACMEQ 1 and SACMEQ 2 for Grade 6 learners in reading tests for South Africa in 2000 and 2007 is summarised in table 1.1. (Department of Basic Education 2010:42-43). Mean scores are shown for the nine provinces in South Africa.

**Table 1.1: Mean Rasch scores in SACMEQ 1 and SACMEQ 2 for Grade 6 learners in reading tests for South Africa in 2000 and 2007.**

<b>Learner performance in all test items</b>		
<b>Province</b>	<b>Mean reading score (2000)</b>	<b>Mean reading score (2007)</b>
Eastern Cape	444,1	447,8
Free State	446,2	491,1
Gauteng	576,4	573,1
KwaZulu-Natal	517,5	485,6
Mpumalanga	428,1	473,6
Northern Cape	470,3	505,6
Limpopo	436,7	425,3
North West	427,7	506,3
Western Cape	629,3	583,4
<b>South Africa</b>	<b>492,3</b>	<b>494,9</b>

(Department of Basic Education 2010:42-43)

Table 1.1 indicates that the overall mean scores for learners in reading in South Africa were 492 in 2000 and 495 in 2007. In 2000 and 2007 the reading achievement scores were below the pre-determined SACMEQ average of 500. In both years, Western Cape had the highest mean scores

in reading. The Western Cape reading scores were 629 and 583 in 2000 and 2007 respectively. In 2000 the lowest reading score (428) was in the North West, whilst in 2007 Limpopo had the lowest reading score (425).

The overall reading achievement of South African Grade 6 learners increased slightly, by three Rasch points. The province with the highest increase, by 78 Rasch points in reading scores was North West. The other provinces in which there were improvements in reading scores were Mpumalanga (46), Free State (45), Northern Cape (36), and Eastern Cape (4). For the remainder of the provinces, reading achievement decreased in this period. In KZN there was a notable decline in achievement (32). It is also disconcerting to note that the vast majority of learners in KZN, Eastern Cape and Limpopo provinces did not reach acceptable levels of reading performance [level 4 (reading for meaning) and above] (Department of Basic Education 2010:46).

Cross-national comparisons between Botswana, Namibia, Mozambique and South Africa indicate that learners from Botswana and Namibia performed considerably better in SACMEQ 3 than learners from South Africa and that South African learners performed reasonably better than learners from Mozambique (Spaull 2011:30). This cross-national comparability also indicates that South Africa has the second best performing province (Western Cape), and the worst performing province (Limpopo) of the 40 provinces in all four countries (Spaull 2011:28). This provides some evidence that South Africa has the greatest variation in learner performance of all four countries. Additionally, the country averages for Namibia, South Africa and Mozambique for reading are below the SACMEQ average. Botswana, by contrast, performed marginally better than the SACMEQ average for reading.

Since international and national studies have demonstrated that South African learners achieve lower levels in reading, writing and counting, the curriculum was revised. The new curriculum which is referred to as the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) is currently being implemented incrementally per phase in the General Education and Training (GET) and Further Education and Training (FET) bands (Department of Basic Education 2011:5).

Linked to the revised curriculum is the Annual National Assessment (ANA). Based on the results of ANA 2011 and 2012, the national average learner performance in literacy for Grades 1, 2 and 3 are as follows (South African Department of Basic Education 2012:2):

**Table 1.2: National average learner performance in literacy**

<b>GRADE</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>
1	59%	58%
2	52%	55%
3	35%	52%

(South African Department of Basic Education 2012:2)

Although the 2012 ANA report revealed an improvement in the foundation phase learner performance with regard to literacy, widespread criticism of the content and level of the ANA has been levelled at the Department, though testing of this nature is still in its infancy and currently underfunded (Howie, van Staden, Tshele, Dowse & Zimmerman 2011:4). The term literacy implies being literate, that is, being able to read and write.

Additionally, in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2006, Grade 4 and Grade 5 learners from South Africa achieved the lowest scores of the 40 participating countries, with approximately 80% failing to reach the Low International Benchmark, meaning that they had not mastered the basic reading skills (Howie et al. 2011:6). Thus, the National Reading Strategy takes as its focus that reading begins in the early grades, and it is at that level that interventions must be made (South African Department of Education 2008:19).

In PIRLS 2011, only Grade 5 Afrikaans and English learners were tested. With the International Association for the Evaluation for Educational Achievement's (IEA) introduction of prePIRLS to provide countries that had underperformed in 2006 with an opportunity to obtain more accurate estimates of achievement, the South African study tested Grade 4 learners in all 11 official languages (Howie et al. 2011:41). Grade 4 learners who wrote in Afrikaans or English achieved average scores of 525 and 530 respectively, higher than the international centre point of



500; while the average scores obtained by learners from all the African languages were well below the international centre point of 500 (Howie et al. 2011:29).

Furthermore, the PIRLS study also found that in South Africa and internationally, a persistent gap in reading achievement between girls and boys remains, with girls outperforming boys (Howie et al. 2011:42). This is consistent with the results obtained from the SACMEQ 2 and SACMEQ 3 studies. In the SACMEQ studies there were significant gender differences in reading achievement with more girls at the upper end of the reading scale and more boys at the lower end (Spaull 2011:186). At national level in South Africa as a whole, reading performance for both girls and boys did not change in any meaningful measure between 2000 and 2007 with girls performing reasonably and consistently better than boys (Department of Basic Education 2010).

At provincial level, North West, Northern Cape, Mpumalanga and Free State provinces saw notable improvements (with both boys and girls) between 2000 and 2007, again with girls tending to perform observably better than boys. While the scores of boys in Gauteng declined, the scores of girls improved between 2000 and 2007, resulting in a large gender difference. In the remainder of the provinces learner scores either remained unchanged or declined in this period. This included Western Cape which, although registering the highest overall scores for both boys and girls, experienced significant drops in performance of both genders in this period. In KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) and Western Cape, a very big drop by girls has led to a marginal gender difference. While gender equality in Grade 6 participation has improved in some SACMEQ countries, gender disparity in achievement is an area which shows very slow progress.

Spaull (2011:36) illuminates the fact that there is an alarmingly high percentage of functionally illiterate [unable to read and write] learners in KZN [28%]. He stresses that in KZN, the number of functionally illiterate learners ranges from approximately one in three learners to one in two learners. Furthermore, there are significantly more functionally illiterate learners in rural areas than in urban areas, as one might expect. Also, in 2007 KZN had the lowest percentage of schools where the average Grade 6 learner had exclusive access to a reading book; was one of four provinces in which the classes were particularly overcrowded; was one of five provinces in which educator attendance of classes was irregular (Department of Basic Education 2010:26,

39); and was one of three provinces that had majority of quintile 1 and 2 learners (Spaull 2011:18). Quintile 1 and 2 learners come from poor economic backgrounds. It appears that the wealthiest quintile of learners outperform the lower quintiles (Spaull 2011:18).

Additionally, in my eighteen years of experience as a foundation phase educator, I have noticed that in the area where I teach many isiZulu-speaking foundation phase learners face a daunting challenge when it comes to reading and writing in English. My observations and my conversations with several foundation phase educators indicate that the majority of the English second language learners experience reading and writing difficulties. It is observed that these learners perform poorly in reading and writing assessments. Their assessment scores are indicative of their poor performances. Furthermore, it is my opinion that the reading and writing problems of the foundation phase learners are exacerbated by the fact that they are not taught these skills in their home language but in English as their second language. My increasing concern provided an impetus to embark on this study.

Taking the above into consideration, this study aims to investigate the factors that affect isiZulu-speaking foundation phase learners' reading and writing skills in English medium schools. The aim will eventually assist educators increase their understandings of the learners' unique reading and writing needs in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms, which in turn will make the foundation phase learners' academic experiences and lives more meaningful and enjoyable.

## **1.6 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

### **1.6.1 The general scientific problem**

The central problem of this study is as follows:

- ❖ What are the distinguishing factors that affect isiZulu-speaking foundation phase learners' reading and writing skills in English medium schools?

### **1.6.2 The research questions**

The research questions for this study are as follows:

- ❖ Which learning theories have been formulated in the field of second language acquisition and what are their implications for this study?
- ❖ What did other researchers worldwide and in South Africa find with regard to factors that affect young second language learners' reading and writing skills?
- ❖ Currently, in selected English medium primary schools, which factors are significantly related to isiZulu-speaking foundation phase learners' reading and writing achievements?
- ❖ What can be recommended to improve the reading and writing achievements of isiZulu-speaking foundation phase learners?

## **1.7 THE AIM AND SUBSIDIARY AIMS OF THE STUDY**

### **1.7.1 Research aim**

The aim of this study is to investigate the factors that affect isiZulu-speaking foundation phase learners' reading and writing skills in English medium schools.

### **1.7.2 Subsidiary aims**

The subsidiary aims of this study are as follows:

- ❖ To determine which learning theories have been formulated in the field of second language acquisition and what their implications are for this study.
- ❖ To ascertain what other researchers have found with regard to factors that affect second language learners' reading and writing achievements.
- ❖ To investigate, in selected English medium primary schools, which factors are significantly related to isiZulu-speaking foundation phase learners' reading and writing achievements.
- ❖ To recommend methods to improve the reading and writing achievements of isiZulu-speaking foundation phase learners.

## 1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A mixed-method research design will be used. Methodological triangulation, which denotes the use of multiple methods to study a single topic, for example combining quantitative and qualitative methods in a single study (Padgett 1998:97 as cited in De Vos 2005:362) will be utilised. Qualitative and quantitative data will be collected simultaneously or concurrently. The qualitative component will be used to supplement and validate the quantitative study. Thus, data will be triangulated. Data triangulation denotes the use of more than one data source (De Vos 2005:362). The purpose of triangulation is to provide a more comprehensive and complete picture of data by converging data analysis methods and offsetting the strengths and weaknesses of each method (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:405).

The quantitative component of the research will consist of a survey for which questionnaires will be specifically constructed and validated through the process of pilot studies. The stratified random sampling technique will be employed. The samples (parents [which will include caregivers and guardians of the learners] and educators) will consist of ten percent of the population. If parents, guardians or caregivers are illiterate, they will obtain assistance from members of the community. Quantitative data analysis will be done by means of frequency distributions and percentages that will eventually be supported by pie graphs; line graphs or tables (Kruger, De Vos, Fouché & Venter 2005:222-232).

The qualitative component will consist of a phenomenological study. This will include participant observation (Strydom 2005:274-285) and interviewing (Greef 2005:286-313). Purposeful sampling will be employed to select educator and learner participants from the five English medium primary schools. Purposeful sampling will ensure that “information-rich key informants” will be selected (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:319). These samples will be chosen because they are likely to be knowledgeable and informative about the phenomena that will be investigated. Individual interviews will be conducted with learners and educators, using interview schedules or guides. A pilot study will be conducted before the main investigation commences. An eclectic approach will be used to analyse qualitative data. This implies that data from various sources, such as observations and interviews will be analysed. Qualitative data analysis will be done by the use of categories and themes.

In his Three Worlds framework Mouton (2005:137-142) distinguishes between three “worlds”, “frames” or “contexts”. World 1 is viewed as the world of everyday life and lay knowledge. Thus, Mouton (2005:139) perceives World 1 as having pragmatic interest. De Vos (2005:359) maintains that in education research, authors have presented the compatibility thesis [Qualitative and quantitative methods are compatible] based on a different paradigm, which some have referred to as pragmatism. Pragmatism suggests that the methods in which one investigates a series of well constructed research questions will result in better understanding of human learning (Szyjka 2012:111). Patton (in De Vos 2005:359) reiterates that being pragmatic implies that one is allowed to use methodological appropriateness as the primary criterion for judging methodological quality, recognising that different methods are appropriate for different situations. Tashakkori and Teddlie ( in De Vos 2005:359) illuminate the fact that pragmatically oriented theorists and researchers now refer to mixed methods, which contain elements of both the quantitative and qualitative approaches. Mixed methods research is seen as adopting a pragmatic philosophy, based on the premise that the researcher in order to answer complex research questions must make use of all the tools and methods at his or her disposal, thus an interplay of methods as opposed to a compromise (Nudzor 2009:119). Thus, mixed methods research and design has set the stage for what some consider a dualistic method based on pragmatism (Szyjka 2012:111).

Although there are numerous characteristics of pragmatism, the one that will appear to be influential in this study is based on the principle of context, or that questions of research dictate the use of mixed methods. In this view, combining methods is deemed the preferential manner in which one can expect to arrive at knowledge of greater completeness (Szyjka 2012:111). Since this study incorporates a mixed methods research design the study will utilise pragmatism as its philosophical departure.

## **1.9 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS**

This section of the research consists of clear descriptions and explanations of the various concepts that are referred to in the investigation. The following elucidations will eliminate any ambiguities and will also provide the reader with a clear understanding of what is being investigated.

### **1.9.1 Inclusive Education**

In order to understand the link between my research and Inclusive Education it is important to define the concept “Inclusive Education”. The notion “Inclusive Education” has emerged in response to a growing consensus that all children have the right to a common education in their locality regardless of their background, attainment or disability (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation 2000:18). The term “Inclusive Education” has superseded “Special Needs Education” as the preferred name. Inclusive education is viewed as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation 2005:13). It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies; with the conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children. This is applicable to and accepted in South Africa as well.

In defining inclusion, it is important to highlight the following elements: welcoming diversity, benefiting all learners and providing equal access to education. Thus, “the fundamental principle of Inclusive Education is that all children should have the opportunity to learn together” (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization 2005:29). This also includes the English second language learner. Therefore, this research aimed to distinguish factors that affect Foundation phase English second language learners’ reading and writing skills. The aim eventually will help educators increase their understanding of the learners’ unique reading and writing needs in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms, which in turn will make the foundation phase learners’ lives and experiences at school more meaningful and enjoyable.

### **1.9.2 Barriers to learning and development**

Linked to the coinage of the concept Inclusive Education is the term barriers to learning. Barriers to learning are anything that prevents or makes it difficult for the learner to learn effectively or to participate fully in the curriculum. Barriers to learning may be caused by intrinsic or extrinsic factors. Intrinsic factors refer to deficiencies within the learners themselves (University of South Africa 2003:6). These include physical and physiological impairments. Physical impairments are sensory, intellectual and neurological impairments. Physiological

impairments refer to chronic illnesses such as, Aids, diabetes, cancer and tuberculosis. Extrinsic factors are factors that are located in the education of the learners at home, at school or in the environment as a broader context, for example, the social, political and economic contexts, which may restrain the realisation of the learner's potential (University of South Africa 2003:6). Examples of extrinsic factors are poor teaching, an inadequate upbringing, unfavourable socio-economic conditions or an unsatisfactory environment and emotional abuse. One of the most significant barriers to learning for learners is the curriculum (Department of Education 2001:19). Barriers to learning may arise from different aspects of the curriculum such as the language or medium of instruction. Thus, for many isiZulu-speaking learners, learning English is an extrinsic barrier.

Barriers refer to those factors which (University of South Africa 2003:75-76):

- Lead to the inability of the system to accommodate diversity.
- Lead to exclusion from the regular education system.
- Prevent learners from accessing educational provision.
- Lead to learners “drop out” from the system.
- Lead to learning breakdown.
- Prevent learners from engaging optimally in learning – to achieve excellence.
- Prevent inclusion principles to be realised.
- Thus: prevent building an inclusive education and training system.

Barriers can be caused by, amongst other factors, inappropriate language and communication (South African Department of Education 2005:11). One of the three main barriers associated with language and communication is: learners are often forced to communicate and learn in a language which they do not usually use at home and are not competent to learn effectively (South African Department of Education 2005:12). Teaching and learning for many learners may take place through their second language. That inhibits communication in class.

In view of the above, this study views barriers as factors that impede the English literacy progress of the isiZulu-speaking learner in the English medium classroom.

### **1.9.3 Linguistic Diversity**

Meier (2008:119) maintains that diversity refers to differences or variety. Linguistic diversity reflects the existence of the multitude of languages spoken in the world (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation 2003:12). Thus, in the South African context, linguistic diversity will reflect the existence of a variety of languages spoken in the country.

### **1.9.4 IsiZulu-speaking learners**

By “isiZulu-speaking learners” this study refers to learners whose primary language is isiZulu. Mahabeer (2003:14) uses the term “mother tongue”. De Witt and Booysen (2007:96) define “mother tongue” as the primary language used by the individual’s cultural group. However, the researcher would prefer to use the term “primary language” or “home language” rather than the terms “vernacular”, “mother tongue” or “first language”. Although there is a degree of overlap among these terms, Heugh, Siegrühn and Plüddemann (1995:V111) view the above terms as follows: “Vernacular” has fallen into disfavour because it implies a language of low status. The term “mother tongue” is also often a misnomer since it is often the language of the father that becomes the primary language of the family. In South Africa, the term “mother tongue” has a second disadvantage in that it is associated with an inferior education of African-language speaking learners under Bantu Education. However, the term “primary language” is used to include both the learner’s first language and the possibility of the dominant language of the immediate community.

### **1.9.5 Indigenous languages**

Indigenous languages refer to languages which, according to historical record, originated in South Africa (Government Gazette No. 24893 2003:3). Thus, all the South African official languages except for Afrikaans and English are indigenous languages.

### **1.9.6 English second language (ESL)**

When focusing on the context where second language acquisition takes place, it is important to consider that the target language can be either a second language or a foreign language. Kramsch (in Cenoz & Gorter 2008:270) defines a second language as “a language other than the



mother tongue (primary or home language) learned in an environment in which that language is the dominant language or where the language is an international language of commerce and industry”. In contrast, a foreign language “is a language that is learned in an instructional environment or during a temporary sojourn abroad as part of general education or for professional purposes”. Cenoz and Gorter (2008:270-271) emphasise that the role of English is special and it can be regarded as a second language rather than a foreign language in many contexts.

Mahabeer (2003:14) maintains that a second language refers to “another language used by people who are proficient in their mother tongue” (primary or home language). For the purpose of this research English second language (ESL) refers to English that is learnt as a second language by learners whose primary language is isiZulu.

### **1.9.7 Foundation phase learners**

The term “learner” refers to all learners and replaces the terms pupils and students at schools (South African Department of Education 1997:vii). The term “foundation phase learners” refers to learners from Grade R to Grade 3 (South African Department of Education 2004:4). For the purpose of my research foundation phase learners will refer to learners from Grade 1 to Grade 3.

### **1.9.8 Educator**

An educator is one who educates, who takes the responsibility of leading the learner into adulthood and one who is concerned with the learner as a totality and not simply with the learning of a specific subject (Van Den Aardweg & Van Den Aardweg 1999:77). The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 defines ‘educator’ as “any person, excluding a person who is appointed to exclusively perform extra-curricular duties, who teaches, educates or trains other persons or who provides professional educational services, including professional therapy and education psychological services, at school”. For the purpose of this study the term educator refers to foundation phase educators at English medium primary schools.

### **1.9.9 Parents, guardians or caregivers**

In the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 the involvement of parents is endorsed. This means that parents not only have the right but also the responsibility to be involved in the education of their children. This also includes selecting schools in which to enroll their children.

In terms of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, the term “parent” refers to:

- (a) the parent or guardian of a learner;
- (b) the person legally entitled to custody of a learner;
- (c) the person who undertakes to fulfill the obligations of a person referred to in paragraphs (a) and (b) towards the learner’s education at school.

This definition therefore includes any combination of adult care-givers and thereby acknowledges the reality of a society in which a variety of family types and parents are found, such as nuclear or extended families, grandparents, divorced parents and recombined families (University of South Africa 1999:32).

Thus, in terms of this research, the concept “parent” includes all of the above-mentioned care-givers.

### **1.9.10 English medium school**

An English medium school refers to a school in which the language of instruction is English from Grade R. In other words, the language of teaching and learning is English.

## **1.10 RESEARCH PROGRAMME**

The contents of the research programme are allocated to chapters as follows:

### **Chapter 1**

The background, analysis of the problem, statement of the problem, research aims, research methods, the research setting and demarcation of the research, clarification of concepts and the research programme are discussed.

**Chapter 2**

Of major importance in the literature study are the theories in the field of second language acquisition. The expansion of English throughout the world and the significance of the primary language are also discussed.

**Chapter 3**

This chapter focuses on the psychological, affective, social, cognitive, cultural, school factors that impact on the foundation phase English second language learners' reading and writing skills, with reference to inclusive education.

**Chapter 4**

This chapter concerns the empirical investigation. This includes the research design, discussion of the sample, description of the measuring instruments that were used in the investigation, as well as the procedures that were used to analyse data.

**Chapter 5**

This chapter reflects the findings of the study. Findings from the literature study and the empirical investigation are discussed in order to provide insight into the investigation.

**Chapter 6**

In this chapter, conclusions are drawn, limitations of the study are discussed, recommendations are made and a summary of the preceding chapters is presented.

**1.11 CONCLUSION**

Language is viewed as a significant communication tool that distinguishes homo-sapiens from animals. For several decades language has played a crucial role in education in South Africa. The rise of Afrikaans, English and Bantu Education created contention in education. The shift from two official languages to eleven official languages has also created much controversy in education even though South Africa has an excellent Language in Education Policy that caters for its linguistically diverse society.

The demise of apartheid in South Africa has resulted in several transitions in the education system. Some of these transformations include adopting the official languages at schools, welcoming inclusive education and reinforcing the Education for All goals. The advent of democracy also created opportunities for South African learners to participate in international reading studies. These extensive reading studies indicate that South African learners perform poorly when tested on their reading competencies. Cross-national studies reflect that these learners fall behind their international counterparts. In industrialised countries, the gender gap with domination by girls has widened throughout the years for reading.

An investigation of factors that affect isiZulu-speaking foundation phase learners' reading and writing skills in English medium schools will provide valuable information into what interventions can be implemented to improve the reading and writing competencies of these learners.

This chapter focused attention on the orientation of the problem. The problem was analysed and a preliminary literature investigation was outlined. The statement of the problem, the aims of the study, the research methods, the research setting and demarcation of the study, and various relevant concepts were explained. In the next chapter a literature study of English second language acquisition will be explained. The expansion of English throughout the world and the significance of the primary language will also be investigated.

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## CHAPTER 2

### SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter an overview of and the rationale for undertaking the study was presented. The purpose of this literature chapter is to investigate the approaches to second language acquisition. However, it is necessary to first provide a succinct understanding of the expansion of English throughout the world and the role of the primary language in second language acquisition. The aforementioned aspects are essential for this study since the review of literature emphasises the importance of primary language competence as a benchmark for second language acquisition, and the significance of being literate in English.

#### 2.2 THE EXPANSION OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

##### 2.2.1 English as a global language

Crystal (2003:8) postulates that from a lexical perspective, English is in fact far more a Romance language [one descended from Latin] than a Germanic language. It is widely learned and used extensively as a second language in Commonwealth countries, and many international organisations, where it is often the preferred language. Modern English, sometimes described as the first global lingua franca (Hilmansson-Dunn 2009:50) is the dominant international language in communications, media, education, trade, science, technology, and diplomacy (Cenoz & Gorter 2008:268-270). Its expansion beyond the British Isles began with the growth of the British Empire, and by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century its spread was truly global. It is a dominant language in the United States (US), whose growing economic and cultural influence and status as a global superpower since World War 2 have significantly accelerated the expansion of the English language throughout the world (Horne & Heinemann 2009:7).

According to the Crystal (2003:65) approximately 329 million people speak English as their home language [L1]. English today is probably the third largest language by number of native speakers, after Mandarin Chinese and Spanish. However, when combining native and non-native speakers English is the most widely spoken language in the world. Estimates that include

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English second language speakers vary greatly from 430 million to over a billion depending on how literacy or mastery is defined and measured (Crystal 2003:65). English is by far the most common second language [L2] (Saville-Troike 2012:9).

Because English is so widely spoken, it has often been referred to as a “global language” (Crystal 2003:3), the lingua franca of the modern era. Crystal (2003:3) asserts that a language achieves a genuinely global status when it develops a special role that is recognised in every country. He adds that such a role will be most evident in countries where large numbers of people speak the language as an L1 – in the case of English, this would mean the United States of America, Canada, Britain, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, several Caribbean countries, and a sprinkling of other territories. While English is not an official language in most countries, it is currently the language most often taught as a second language around the world. It is the language most often studied as a foreign language in over 100 countries, such as China, Russia, Germany, Spain, Egypt and Brazil; and in most of these countries it is emerging as the chief foreign language to be encountered in schools, often displacing another language in the process (Crystal 2003:5). In 1996, for example, English replaced French as the chief foreign language in schools in Algeria [a former French colony]. English is, by international treaty, the official language for aerial and maritime communications, an official language of the United Nations and many other international organisations, including the International Olympic Committee.

English has become a central language of communication in education, business, politics, government administration, the judiciary, economics, legislation, science and academia, as well as being the dominant language of globalised advertising (Sawir 2005:567; Olaoye 2013:752). Books, magazines, and newspapers written in English are available in many countries around the world. Thus, it is viewed as an indispensable international language (Honna & Takeshita 2005:375). English is associated with favourable aspects like job opportunities, status, prestige, modernity and even social mobility. A study conducted in a College of Engineering at Anna University in Chennai, India, revealed that a large number of students [86%] realised the importance and the role of English in securing jobs (Bhaskar & Soundiraraj 2013:114).

In another study conducted in a private language institute in the state of São Paulo, Brazil, the respondents indicated that they believed that people who know English have better job

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opportunities and an advantage over others in many areas of study (Friedrich 2000:219). The desire for learning English to get a better job or promotion indicates that English works as a means of social ascension. It also implies that in Brazil, there is a social attitude that draws people to learn the language. The social attitude equates knowing English with being more materially successful. Having status and being intelligent are associated with the knowledge of English. A possible connection between the level of English proficiency and the belief in the status of English speakers was found. This study also reflected the link between career success and good English skills. In general, the respondents pointed out that they have a feeling of uneasiness and dependence when travelling abroad for not being communicatively competent in English.

The dominance of English in higher education is viewed as a “prime driver” of language shift (Hilmarrsson-Dunn 2009:40). This shift is occurring globally because more people wish to reap the benefits of learning English, resulting in an increase in English teaching throughout the world. The fact that English is increasing as a medium of instruction at higher education levels, and it is the language of most academic publications; results in the need to teach English to a high level in schools. Thus, the policy for language education in many countries, particularly in Europe, is to teach English as the first and compulsory foreign language in schools (Hilmarrsson-Dunn 2009:41). Although the medium of instruction in most Thai schools is Standard Thai, English is a required subject from upper elementary school (Huebner 2006:33). At the higher levels of education, it is the language of specialised knowledge.

English is the vehicle of globalisation and through it came information and communication technology [ICT] which has a pervasive influence on education delivery (Olaoye 2013:752). Information and communication technology, through television, radio and satellite communication, on-line services, e-mail, and computer teleconferencing, has brought the world to the doorstep of the youth and other computer literate people. These advances in technology have implications for national languages versus English. Many academic journals are now on-line. These journals reach a wider audience if they are in English than if published in other languages.

The global trends towards the use of English have been exacerbated by various governmental initiatives as a result of a demand for more English. Learning English is demand-driven

(Hilmarsson-Dunn 2009:42). People will choose to learn it if it can bring positive benefits. In Japan, for instance, there is a realisation that globalisation means that the Japanese people need a far higher level of English proficiency than has hitherto been the case (Honna & Takeshita 2005:363). Honna and Takeshita (2005:363-365) emphasise that the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology has felt the need now, even more than ever, to make drastic changes in the nation's English education. The above authors affirm that Japanese nationals are all expected to acquire certain levels of English abilities, English is to be used frequently as a medium of instruction in English classes and that all English teachers are to acquire English skills.

The expansion of English in the Nordic countries [Iceland, Finland, Denmark, Sweden and Norway] has been especially significant in the last twenty years (Hilmarsson-Dunn 2009:39). The consequence of globalisation on the language education policies of the Nordic countries is that the teaching of English is increasing at primary and secondary levels. English has also gained high status in several other countries. Some of these countries include Brazil (Friedrich 2000:215-223), Vietnam (Walkinshaw & Duong 2012:1-17), India (Bhaskar & Soundiraraj 2013:111-116), Bangkok (Huebner 2006:31-51), Hong Kong (Kan & Adamson 2010:167-176), and Nigeria (Olaoye 2013:748-753).

### **2.2.2 The English language in South Africa**

South Africa's language policy has already been discussed in chapter one. However, in this Chapter it is imperative to contextualise our language diversity. The 1996, 2001 and 2011 South African census reflected the following numbers of home language speakers [N = 40 583 573 in 1996; N = 44 819 778 in 2001; and N = 51 770 560 in 2011], according to the 11 official languages (Statistics South Africa 2006:1-5, Statistics South Africa 2003:16; Statistics South Africa 2012:18).

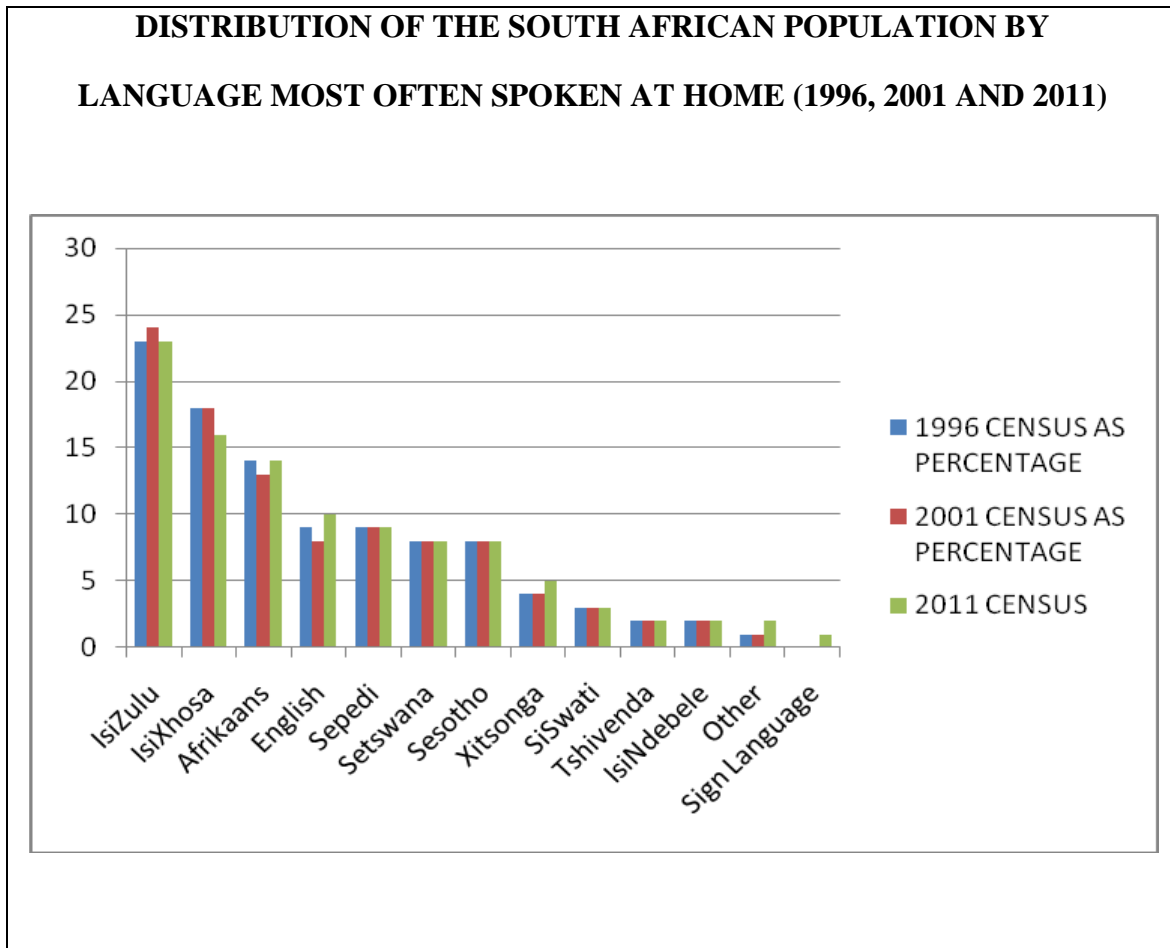


**Table 2: The 1996, 2001 and 2011 South African census according to home language.**

<b>HOME LANGUAGE</b>	<b>1996 CENSUS AS A PERCENTAGE</b>	<b>2001 CENSUS AS A PERCENTAGE</b>	<b>2011 CENSUS AS A PERCENTAGE</b>
Afrikaans	14,4	13,3	13,5
English	8,6	8,2	9,6
IsiNdebele	1,5	1,6	2,1
IsiXhosa	17,9	17,6	16,0
IsiZulu	22,9	23,8	22,7
Sepedi	9,2	9,4	9,1
Sesotho	7,7	7,9	7,6
Setswana	8,2	8,2	8,0
SiSwati	2,5	2,7	2,6
Tshivenda	2,2	2,3	2,4
Xitsonga	4,4	4,4	4,5
Other	0,6	0,5	1,6
Sign Language	n/a	n/a	0,5
Total	100	100	100

(Statistics South Africa 2006:1-5; Statistics South Africa 2003:16; Statistics South Africa 2012:18)

**Figure 2: Distribution of the South African population by language most often spoken at home (1996, 2001 and 2011).**



The above statistics unequivocally reveal that the vast majority of South Africans (76,5% in 1996; 77,9% in 2001; and 75% in 2011) have an African language as a home language. English is spoken as a home language by almost 10% of the population. When comparing the distribution of the South African population by language most often spoken at home in the 2011 Census, English is fourth. It is also important to note that the 2011 Census data indicate that the most commonly-spoken home language is undoubtedly isiZulu, which is spoken by 22,7% of the population, followed by isiXhosa (16%), and Afrikaans (13,5%).

When considering the English language in relation to the other ten official languages as indicated in the 2011 Census data, it should be noted that English has no greater status. However, it can be explicitly stated that in practice English is far more widely used. Although English is the

primary language of only 8,6% in 1996, 8,2% in 2001, and 9,6% in 2011 of the general South African population, it is the most commonly used second language, making it a lingua franca within the country (Horne & Heinemann 2009:2). Given the fact that currently only 9,6% of the South African population speak English as a primary language, it is surprising that South Africa features sixth when comparing countries with the highest populations of native English speakers [3,7 million] (Crystal 2003:62-65). Additionally, because of its role as a unifying and integrating force in South Africa, it can be viewed as one of the major South African official languages.

Furthermore, as a result of its expanding dominance internationally, learning English can be considered as an essential need to promote the language even further. However, it is worth taking cognisance of a situation in which the ongoing, surreptitious depletion of the indigenous languages may in the long term create a division between those who can speak English and those who cannot. Indigenous languages may become an obstacle. They may no longer function as independent and rich languages of the various communities. Ultimately, this may threaten South Africa's democracy and it may be too late to introduce indigenous languages. Nevertheless, the above discussion provides substantial evidence supporting the view that it is important for learners to learn English. Being able to speak the language is not sufficient to compete globally. It is crucial that learners also develop reading and writing skills in English.

### **2.3 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PRIMARY LANGUAGE IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION: INSIGHTS AND ISSUES FOCUSING ON BILINGUALISM AND MULTILINGUALISM**

The coalescence of the aspects discussed in this section will assist the reader in further understanding the link between the languages used in the classroom [L1 and L2], and reading and writing difficulties. This relationship is further extended to bilingualism and multilingualism.

#### **2.3.1 Home language education**

It is apparent that language plays a pivotal role in learning. Since language is the main medium of communicating meaning in most learning activities, it is essential that a language that learners understand and speak is used in education. To adequately express their experiences through reading and writing and articulate their knowledge, children require an environment that uses the

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language they speak (Gacheche 2010:7). Usually people understand their home language best, and are most comfortable speaking it. Generally, the home language is a language one has learned first; one identifies with or is identified as a native speaker of by others; or one knows best (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation 2005:v).

The home language is regarded as the language that carries educational benefits if used in schools. The value of home language education has been superfluously studied and has been known for numerous years. As early as 1953, a UNESCO committee of experts examining issues regarding language and education established many advantages to home language education. The UNESCO report endorses that it is axiomatic that the best medium for teaching a child is his or her home language (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation 1953:11). The report adds that psychologically, it is the system of meaningful signs that in his or her mind works automatically for expression and understanding. Sociologically, it is a means of identification among the members of the community to which he or she belongs. Furthermore, educationally, he or she learns more quickly through it than through an unfamiliar linguistic medium. Moreover, the home language is the most effective engine of a person's culture and indigenous languages are treasures of culture and self-identity (Olaoye 2013:748). Consequently, reading and writing which is context-embedded in the primary language will be less cognitively challenging than reading and writing in an L2.

The United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF] vehemently reiterated UNESCO's support for the use of home language in learning. The UNICEF report states that "there is ample research showing that students are quicker to read and acquire other academic skills when first taught in their mother tongue. They also learn a second language more quickly than those initially taught to read in an unfamiliar language. ... Early mother-tongue instruction is a key strategy to reach the more than 130 million children not in school – and help them succeed" (United Nations Children's Fund 1999:41, 45).

Many linguists argue that when it comes to learning a second language it is crucial to first have a solid foundation in one's first language (Taylor & Coetzee 2013:4). Consequently, home language is considered to be an important component of quality education, particularly in the early years. However, most indigenous learners and learners in post-colonial contexts in the world are being taught through the medium of dominant languages in submersion programmes,

at least after the first few grades, often from the start (Skutnabb-Kangas 2009:3). It is also apparent that many developing countries are characterised by individual as well as societal multilingualism, yet continue to allow a single foreign language to dominate the education sector (Benson 2005:1).

A growing body of complementary research studies reveals that ESL learners learn more quickly and effectively if they maintain and develop their proficiency in their L1 and justifies the use of the L1 as the most beneficial medium of education. Hakuta's (1990:54) study conducted in 1990 clearly showed that learners with high levels of development in Spanish [L1] also developed high levels of ability in English [L2]. In Dixon's (2010:162) research on English vocabulary in Singaporean kindergartens it was found that children with higher home language vocabulary tended to have higher English vocabulary. This finding opens the question of whether high home language vocabulary aids directly in acquiring English vocabulary, or the practices within families that produce high-vocabulary children encourage the acquisition of vocabulary in both of the child's languages.

Also, several studies on home language instruction in developing countries such as Cameroon, Eritrea, Guatemala and the Philippines conducted by Walter (2013:1-25) elucidates the immeasurable benefits of home language instruction. Walter's research (2013:9) indicates that learners in second language instructional models in developing countries [especially in Africa] require four to five years to learn to read and even after six years, read with low levels of comprehension. In contrast data from Eritrea, Cameroon and the Philippines are consistent in demonstrating that good to average learners read fluently with good comprehension by the end of Grade 2 and even below average learners are reading well by the end of Grade 3 when being taught to read in their home language. Thus, there is more support for the claim that home language education programmes are capable of producing capable readers in two to three years rather than the five reported for many second language medium programmes.

Furthermore, Walter's study (2013:10-12) on the development of reading skills in home language versus second language programs was conducted in Eritrea and Cameroon. In this case, the performance of Grade 3 children in Eritrea, all of whom were taught reading in their home language, was compared with the reading performance of children in Cameroon being instructed in a second language programme. In the case of Cameroon, the study affirmed that it

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was not until Grade 4 that a substantial portion of learners began to show progress in learning to read though less than 15 percent could be characterised as good readers and by the end of Grade 5 about 47 percent of children had become fluent readers. By contrast, 85 percent of learners from Eritrea being taught in their home language were in either the early reading or fluent reading categories at the end of Grade 3. In sum, this study conclusively demonstrated that it takes five or six years in a second language instructional model to approximate the reading skills developed in three years [or less] in a home language instructional model.

### 2.3.1.1 The South African situation

In South Africa, there have been studies which do show the correlation between high levels of achievement and home language education, and low levels of achievement and premature use of a second language as medium of instruction. Heugh, Benson, Bogale and Yohannes (2007:24) provide the following example: From 1955 to 1975 when African language speaking learners had eight years of home language education followed by transition to mainly English medium the overall pass rate at the end of secondary school increased to reach 83,7% in 1976, and pass rate in English as a subject reached 78% in 1978. However, the number of years of home language education decreased from eight to four years from 1977, and this was followed by a serious drop in achievement in English as a subject and across the entire curriculum. The pass rate in English as a subject fell to 38,5% by 1984, and by 1992 the average overall pass rate for African learners at the end of Grade 12 dropped to 44% in 1992 (Heugh as cited in Heugh et al. 2007:24). However, the matric results could also have been affected by the large scale disruption of secondary schooling in the 1970s and 1980s.

Additionally, Heugh (2005:7) reinforces that it is almost impossible for learners to learn enough of the L2 in three years to switch to a second language medium of instruction by Grade 4. She reiterates that in countries where there are well-trained educators and sufficient classrooms and schoolbooks, children usually require between six and eight years to learn a second language before they can use it as a medium of instruction. This implies that under optimal conditions they should not switch language medium before Grade 7. Heugh (2005:7) adds that in less well-resourced schools, the research evidence shows that it may be possible to switch medium in Grade 9. Switching medium several years earlier results in educational failure, as countless studies demonstrate.

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Moreover, in South Africa, Taylor and Coetzee (2013:6) analysed data from approximately 9000 primary schools that serve predominantly black children who come from the poorest households. These researchers found that among children in schools of a similar quality and coming from similar home backgrounds, those who were taught in their home language during the first three years of primary school performed better in the English tests in Grades 4, 5 and 6 than children who were exposed to English as the language of instruction in Grades 1, 2 and 3.

### 2.3.1.2 The situation in the United States

Solid research results indicate that the longer the indigenous language children have their own language as the medium of instruction, the better the general school achievement and the better they become in the dominant language, provided that they have good teaching in it, preferably given by bilingual educators (Skutnabb-Kangas 2009:5). In addition, they learn their own primary language. Prior studies by Thomas and Collier (1997:32) analysed the length of time that it takes learners who have no proficiency in English to reach typical levels of academic achievement of native speakers of English when tested on school tests given in English. These researchers' study was based on Cummins's (1981:132-149) research that analysed 1210 immigrants who arrived in Canada at age six or younger and at that age were first exposed to the English language. In this study, Cummins found that when following these learners across the school years, with data broken down by age on arrival and length of residence in Canada, it took at least five to seven years, on average, for them to approach grade-level norms on school tests that measure cognitive academic language development in English.

The findings of Thomas and Colliers' (1997:33) research in the US were consistent with Cummins's study in Canada. Thomas and Collier (1997:33) found a similar five to seven year pattern to which Cummins found, for certain groups of learners. These researchers found that learners who arrived between ages eight and eleven, who had received at least two to five years of schooling taught through their primary language in their home country, took only five to seven years to achieve academic proficiency in English. Those learners who arrived before age eight required seven to ten years to achieve academic proficiency. In addition, those learners who arrived after age 12 with good formal schooling in L1, were making steady gains with each year of school, but by the end of high school, they had run out of time to catch up academically to the native English-speakers, who were constantly progressing. Although learners of all ages in this

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study reached grade-level achievement in Mathematics, they required many years to reach grade-level in reading in English. These studies confirm that home language schooling is a key variable in academic success.

Thomas and Collier (1997:34) emphasise that in all their data analyses they have continuously found the same general pattern when ESL learners are schooled all in English and tested in English. When schooled all in English in the US, the shortest period of time for typical ESL learners to match the achievement of typical native-English speakers is five years, among the most advantaged immigrant learners who have had at least two to three years of on-grade-level schooling in their primary language in their home countries before they arrived in the US. However, many ESL learners schooled all in English rarely reach grade-level achievement, as measured by typical native-English speaker performance.

Furthermore, Thomas and Collier (1997:34) have found that ESL learners being schooled all in English initially make dramatic gains in the early grades, whatever type of programme learners receive, and this misleads educators and administrators into assuming that the learners are going to continue to do extremely well. Educators need to take cognisance of the fact that these initial gains are merely incipient and thus, ephemeral. As these ESL learners move into cognitively demanding work of increasing complexity, especially in the middle and high school years, their rate of progress becomes less than that of native-English speakers, and thus their performance measure relative to native-English speaker performance deteriorates (Thomas & Collier 1997:35).

When comparing groups, Thomas and Collier (1997:35) found that ESL learners who have received all their schooling exclusively through English might achieve six to eight months' gain each school year as they reach the middle and high school years, relative to the ten month's gain of typical native-English speakers. Thus, an achievement gap with native-English speakers that was partially closed in elementary school becomes wider with each passing year as typical native-English speakers inexorably advance by making ten month's gain in ten month's time.

### **2.3.2 Bilingual and multilingual education**

In order to reduce the achievement gap of ESL learners, bilingual and multilingual programmes have been advocated. UNESCO has a strong commitment to support home language instruction



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and bilingual or multilingual education to improve the quality of education, especially for the disadvantaged groups, and to promote cultural and linguistic diversity in all societies (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation 2005:v). Thus, UNESCO has supported Member States of Asia and the Pacific in undertaking action research on using the home language or bilingual approach in pilot literacy projects for ethnic minority communities in nine Asian countries; namely Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Nepal, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam. In most of these countries local languages are used in education, but the extent varies significantly. Of the Asian countries, China provides the most elaborate forms and widest range of local language education models (Kosonen 2005:7). Many local languages are used at various levels of education, in some cases up to the university level.

Multilingual education respects cultural differences and affirms pluralism which learners, their communities and educators bring to the learning process. It is founded on the belief that a school curriculum which promotes the ideals of freedom, justice, equality and human dignity is most likely to result in high academic achievement and quality education (Nyati-Saleshando 2011:567).

Key clauses in South Africa's constitution illustrate that equal access to education for all children is intended (Republic of South Africa 1996:4[6], 7[9], 14[29], 15[30]). Heugh's (2011:113) subsequent critique of subtractive bilingual models, including ESL programmes in South Africa, demonstrates that these are incompatible with the constitutional goal of equal access to education. Heugh (2011:107-117) clearly demonstrates various components of language education models which spells out different policy planning and possibilities and their implications. According to these models, only a multicultural policy which views multilingualism as a valuable resource, and which implements additive bilingual education for all, will result in equal access to meaningful education and in economic benefits beyond education. This is also echoed by Wolff (2006:36, 54) who perceives multilingualism as an important asset and resource.

Lyons (1995:282) defines perfect bilingualism as the full range of competence in both languages that a native monolingual speaker has in one. However, perfect bilingualism, if it exists at all, is extremely rare, because it is rare for individuals to be in a position to use each language in a full range of situations and thus to acquire the requisite competence. Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams

(2007:342) view bilingual language acquisition as the simultaneous acquisition of two languages beginning in infancy or before the age of three years. On the other hand additive bilingualism refers to bilingualism associated with a well-developed or high-level proficiency in two languages and with positive cognitive outcomes (Heugh 2011:114). The term is applied to a context in which speakers of any language are introduced to a second language in addition to the continued educational use of the primary language as a language of learning. The second language is never intended to replace the primary language in education; rather, it is seen as complementary to the primary language throughout.

Benson (2005:14) asserts that strong models take an additive approach. She mentions two strong forms of bilingual programmes that function only in particular contexts. The first, immersion education, was developed in Canada where the L1 and L2 are both relatively prestigious and where formally educated parents who can assist their children choose for their children to become biliterate. The other, two-way bilingual education, combines native speakers of two different language groups in one classroom so that they learn from each other. Benson (2005:14) states that neither model is likely to work in most developing countries due to highly asymmetric power relations and the fact that there are few native speakers of the L2. It is also important to note that most research on bilingual education that reflect the benefits of using the home language comes from developed countries in Europe and North America (Kosonen 2005:87) and that most of the bilingual programmes draw on literature from the North. If we consider the Southern African, South American and Asian countries we will be compelled to explore multilingual contexts in which trilingual schooling policies may have to be implemented.

Skutnabb-Kangas (2009:5) emphasises that the most important educational Linguistic Human Right in education for indigenous language children is an unconditional right to primary language medium education, at least during the whole primary education [minimally six but preferably eight years]. Accordingly, as far back as 1995, Young (1995:68) propagated a widespread public educational awareness campaign which stresses the importance and value of additive bilingual education for all South African learners. He believes that such an awareness campaign needs to spell out clearly the role of the L1 in education and the long term advantages of having a solid foundation in its teaching and learning. This form of bilingualism can only develop in social contexts where both languages [and their cultures] are valued and reinforced.

Most researchers agree that additive bilingualism usually has a positive effect on a child's social and cognitive development (Cummins 1996:165-168).

The following study reflects the cognitive benefits of additive bilingualism. Walter's (2013:7-8) research in Cameroon was conducted in a setting where a relatively small population of Fulfulde-speaking people live in the midst of a larger population group speaking a language called Kom. In this kind of setting, a mechanical application of a home language strategy for education would state that the Fulfulde-speaking children should attend a Fulfulde medium school while the Kom-speaking children should go to a Kom medium school. However, a home language medium of instruction was not an option in such a setting. In actuality, Fulfulde children are attending both Kom medium schools and English medium schools.

The study revealed that the Fulfulde-speaking children in the Kom medium schools substantially outperformed their Fulfulde-speaking peers in the English medium schools. It was also found that, in the case of English medium scores, more than 70 percent of Grade 1 learners demonstrated zero reading comprehension. According to Walter (2013:8) the most logical explanation for this finding is that the Fulfulde-speaking children are sufficiently bilingual in Kom [and not English] so that they are learning much more in Kom medium schools than are those attending English medium schools. From the data that was gleaned, Walter (2013:8) concluded that home language strategies for education are best suited to settings where there is a high degree of both linguistic homogeneity and monolingualism, and that children can be effectively educated in a second language if and only if they speak that language well when they begin school.

In 1995, Heugh (1995:42-51) viewed the attempts to improve ESL methodologies in South Africa as having superficially-improved results. She believes that subtractive programmes, where the L2 replaces the L1, must be replaced with additive ones. Subtractive bilingualism often occurs when the L1 is not valued and supported by the education system. It is likewise generally agreed that subtractive bilingualism has a negative effect on a child's social and cognitive development and is believed to be culturally alienating and harmful to the child, effectively cutting off the child's traditional and cultural roots and destroying the child's sense of identity.

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Subtractive education completely through the medium of a dominant language and early-exit transition can and often do have harmful consequences socially, psychologically, economically, and politically (Skutnabb-Kangas 2009:5). Subtractive and early-exit transitional programmes are strongly viewed by Skutnabb-Kangas (2009:5) as models that belong to weak models or non-models of bilingual education. Likewise, Benson (2005:13) claims that weak models take a subtractive approach to the primary language, undervaluing the home language and culture and prioritising the second language.

As early as 1995, Heugh (1995:51) argued that if we in South Africa continue to implement subtractive bilingual programmes in education for any group of learners, then inequality is a foregone conclusion. She emphasises that since subtractive bilingualism in transition-to-English programmes is linked to linguistic racism (linguistic racism) and discrimination against speakers other than English, one of the guiding principles in the constitution is violated by such programmes. Heugh also stresses that removing the L1 from the educational process, represents a drive towards monolingualism, not multilingualism, hence another constitutional provision; namely the provision of multilingualism will be violated. Furthermore, Skutnabb-Kangas (2009:5) highlights the fact various forms of subtractive education are in clear violation of a range of human rights standards and amount to ongoing violations of fundamental rights.

Reiterating Heugh's (1995) affirmation, Plüddemann (2005:203) argues that the deficit approach [subtractive bilingual approach] to learners' home languages has for years had devastating consequences for the educational performance of African-language speakers. The outcome of the deficit approach is related to the failure of the educational system to cater for African-language speakers and its failure to develop a reading and writing capacity. Studies that reflect the poor reading performance of South African learners, which were discussed in Chapter 1 confirms the negative effects of the subtractive bilingual approach.

Heugh (2011:113) reinforces that the objective of a subtractive model is to move the learners from the home language and into the second language as a medium of learning as early as possible. Sometimes this involves a straight-for-second language as the medium of instruction from the first year at school. Heugh (2011:113) adds that the subtractive model is sometimes referred to as the submersion model which literally means that the child is submerged in the second language which leads to a "survival of the fittest" or "sink or swim" scenario. Heugh,

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Siegrühn and Plüddemann (1995:viii) maintain that subtractive bilingualism is applied to a context in which speakers of usually low-status languages are expected to become proficient in an L2 which is usually a dominant language of high status, such as English. During the process of acquiring the L2, the L1 is either abruptly or gradually replaced as a language of learning in the school. This type of bilingualism is often associated with negative cognitive outcomes.

In the past, English- and Afrikaans-speaking learners in South Africa have been exposed to a limited form of additive bilingual education and African-language speakers have been exposed to a subtractive form of bilingual education. This type of education system greatly disadvantaged and marginalised African-language speakers, denying them the right to quality education. This meant that the South African education system failed to cater for the educational needs of majority of the learners. As a result poor Literacy results were and still are prevalent in many parts of the country. The poor performances of learners in Literacy are exacerbated by the relatively small number of books and environmental print available in the African languages, in relation to English. Although “the Ithuba books, local supplementary reading materials written by South African classroom educators, were created to engage children with high-quality stories representative of the 11 official languages and the South African experience” (Sailors, Makalela & Hoffman 2010:11), it is not sufficient to cater for the thousands of indigenous language learners. Nevertheless, it is an initiative signifying support for home language instruction.

The absence of a “culture of reading” is thus most apparent in under-resourced disadvantaged areas. Moreover, Gacheche (2010:11) points out that there have been reservations about the lexical capacity of indigenous languages to express the realities of modern science and technology and thus to be effective in classroom instruction. Clearly, the challenges facing the national and provincial education departments to upgrade literacy levels are enormous, but not insurmountable. Therefore, it is imperative that the Department of Education as well as the school management, when implementing language policies, consider the language barriers that exist in schools. It is also crucial for the Department to take heed of the fact that instituting an effective home language-based education system is expensive, but the cost of not having one is greater. Gacheche (2010:34) reports that some of these costs are: dropouts, repetition, keeping children out of school thus breeding ignorance, low self esteem for learners and linguistic communities, and political and ethnic tension. Although each school is unique and languages

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will vary, ultimately schools will consist of a diversity of learners speaking a variety of languages. Thus, it would be important for schools to select the most appropriate language programmes for their learners; as Benson (2005:16) affirms that the selection of appropriate bilingual models is the key to educational quality.

As early as 1995, De Klerk (1995:61) recommended a full additive bilingual programme, for children who speak African languages; since it is likely to improve academic performance dramatically. Although bilingualism and multilingualism have enormous positive gains it is extremely important to note that before a local language can be viewed as worth being literate in, it must first have a written and standardised form; as Blommaert (as cited in Gacheche 2010:31) stresses that written language is valued more than spoken and standard language more than dialects. One of the greatest challenges may lie in the fact that local languages are not developed well enough to work effectively in all domains of society.

Thomas and Colliers' (1997:53-57) examination of six bilingual programmes in a longitudinal study of 42 317 learners in the USA demonstrated that learners who built a strong and long-lasting foundation in their home language while also learning, and learning in, the majority language [English], achieved higher test results than those who moved quickly to the majority language. However, there appears to be a dearth of research studies regarding the above six bilingual programmes that were examined by Thomas and Collier, in South Africa. Research in schools indicates that the advantages of bilingualism seem to take effect in an additive bilingual environment; where the L2 is added to the L1, which is maintained (Cummins 1996:165-168). Benson (2005:12) contends that in effective bilingual programmes learners become bilingual, or communicatively competent, in the L2 as well as the L1, and biliterate, or able to read, write and learn in both languages. Since these skills take some time to develop, what is noticeable in the early years is the ease at which children learn beginning literacy and content through their L1. After three to four years the effects of biliteracy are more measurable (Benson 2005:12).

Skutnabb-Kangas's (2009:6) comparison of four types of programmes based on research studies reveals the following: children who follow the completely dominant-language medium submersion education from Grade 1; and early-exit transitional programmes, with home language medium education for the first one to two years, followed by using a dominant language as the teaching language are never likely to learn their own language properly [they do

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not learn to read and write it]. Early-exit programmes are very weak, but even some time spent in the L1 is preferable to submersion because there are so many affective benefits associated with validation of the primary language and culture, and educator-learner interaction is automatically facilitated to some degree by L1 use (Benson 2005:14). Children who are in the late-exit transitional programmes where the transition from the home language medium programme to a dominant language medium programme is more gradual but is mostly completed by Grade 5 or 6 fare somewhat better, but even their results are much below what they could be. However, children who are in programmes where the home language is the main medium of education at least for the first eight years, perform better across the curriculum than those with four or six years of home language medium. The above findings will most definitely assist policy makers in selecting the most appropriate language policies for their schools. Unfortunately, policy decisions about which language to teach in schools are rarely made based on the needs of the majority but rather favour the dominant class (Gacheche 2010:8).

Even when children have a year or two of home language education [early-exit transitional models] before being transitioned to education through the medium of the dominant language, the results are disastrous educationally, even if the child may psychologically feel a bit better initially (Skutnabb-Kangas 2009:4). Ideally the L2 should be introduced in a gradual and systematic manner. Skutnabb-Kangas (2009:4) reiterates that dominant language medium submersion education for indigenous children prevents access to education, because of the linguistic, pedagogical and psychological barriers it creates. It may lead to the extinction of indigenous languages, thus contributing to the disappearance of the world's linguistic diversity. Contrarily, L1 classrooms allow children to express themselves, contribute to discussions and develop their intellects as conversations are carried out in a familiar language; thus decreasing failure and repetition rates (Gacheche 2010:7). L1 classrooms also contribute to the validation of learners' cultures and keep them grounded in their identity while enabling them to integrate with the wider society.

The above discussion has provided credence for the use of additive bilingual and multilingual models. This conviction is supported by an impressive number of research studies which have documented a moderately strong correlation between bilingual learners' L1 and L2 literacy skills in situations where learners have the opportunity to develop literacy skills in both languages.

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### 2.3.3 Cognitive processes

Many research studies have documented that cognitive processes work less efficiently through the additional language. Comprehension tasks take about twice as long in the L2 as in the L1, and production tasks (tasks that require the learner to produce creative language through speech or writing) take about three times as long. People are much worse at mental arithmetic in their L2 than in their L1. In general, the mind is less efficient in an L2 in whatever it is doing. This is sometimes referred to as “cognitive deficit” (Horne & Heinemann 2009:14). In addition, a child taught in the L1 will learn to read in the L2 faster than a child who has to learn the oral language of the L2 and then try to read in the L2 without any reading skills to transfer from the L1 (Rodriguez & Higgins 2005:241). Since oral language skills develop faster than cognitive and academic skills, it appears that bilingual children will benefit from the use of their L1 during their education.

Walter and Morren (in Walter 2013:18-19) analysed data from Guatemala in an effort to determine whether home language medium education increased the likelihood that children would continue schooling beyond the primary level. One thousand two hundred and two Mayan secondary school learners were asked whether they received their primary education in an L2 or in a Mayan language [home language]. Almost 50 percent of the Mayan learners surveyed indicated that they had graduated from a bilingual school, even though only about 33 percent of all Mayan children attend such schools. These data provide strong statistical evidence that in such contexts, receiving L1 [bilingual] schooling increases the likelihood of going on to secondary schooling. In this case, attending a bilingual school increased the likelihood of proceeding to a higher level of education by 48 percent.

Luckett’s (1995:75) earlier report on South African research on the Threshold Project (1990) reflects that many black learners suffer ill effects of subtractive bilingualism owing to the sudden changeover from L1 to L2 medium of instruction. The Project found that learners could not explain in English what they already know in their L1; nor could they transfer into their L1 the new knowledge they have learnt through English. The results of the research indicated that learners had failed to achieve cognitive academic proficiency in either language.



In the same vein, Walter's (2013:1-25) research evidence consistently contradicts the claim that heavy reliance upon the home language for instructional purposes in the early grades will compromise ability to learn and use the second language. It appears that gains in mastery of basic educational skills coming from L1 instruction more than compensate for reduced exposure to the L2 in a classroom context.

### **2.3.4 Concluding annotations**

From the above discussion it can be deduced that learners who begin schooling in a language they do not speak at home experience failure and often drop out before attaining even minimal literacy (Dixon 2010:141) and that much educational research illuminates the importance of a child receiving, at least the foundation phase of education through the medium of his or her L1. Thus, a policy of national bilingualism would try to avoid the pitfalls of subtractive bilingualism by ensuring that all learners have the opportunity to operate at cognitively demanding levels in their L1. It also means that learners should not be compelled to operate in the L2 (that is, use it as a medium of instruction) before they have achieved academic proficiency using their L1 as a medium of instruction. Only when learners have achieved academic proficiency in their L1 should they begin to operate in an L2 at cognitively demanding levels.

Heeding these principles, Horne and Heinemann (2009:13) state that presently the South African education policy follows the additive bilingual model. Unfortunately, the low literacy levels in South Africa continue to persist. Thus, it makes one wonder whether schools are implementing the additive bilingual model or whether ESL learners are continuing to learn, even though they have not achieved academic proficiency in their L1 and from as early as Grade R, through the medium of English. Within the context of this study, it should be kept in mind that although isiZulu is taught in some urban schools in KZN, it is not taught as an L1 or used as a medium of instruction. As a result isiZulu-speaking learners who have not achieved academic proficiency in isiZulu will experience barriers to learning; more especially reading and writing difficulties.

## **2.4 SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION**

Prior to discussing second language acquisition it is incumbent to provide a succinct explication of first language acquisition. Language acquisition is one of the most fundamental human traits. A child acquires any natural languages within a few years without the aid of analytical thinking

and without explicit grammar instruction as usually taught in school (Sakai 2005:815). Sakai (2005:815) thus ascribes the origin of grammatical rules to an innate system in the human brain. Children are not given explicit information about the rules, by either instruction or correction. They must somehow extract the rules of the grammar from the language they hear around them, and their linguistic environment does not need to be special in any way for them to do this (Fromkin et al. 2007:319). Saville-Troike (2012:12) endorses the aforementioned provenance by stating that humans are born with a natural ability or innate capacity to learn language.

However, not all L1 acquisition can be attributed to innate ability, for language specific learning also plays a crucial role (Saville-Troike 2012:15). All “normal” children acquire the language that they hear spoken around them without special instruction. They start talking at roughly the same age and they go through the same stages of language development. Their progress is, on the whole, unaffected by differences of intelligence and by differences in social and cultural background (Lyons 1995:253). The ability to acquire language could not be dependent upon intellectual powers alone, since children with clearly superior intelligence do not necessarily begin to speak earlier, or with better results, than children of ordinary intellect (Saville-Troike 2012:15). Thus, the acquisition of L1 is not simply a facet of general intelligence. Observations of children acquiring different languages under different cultural and social circumstances reveal that the developmental stages are similar, possibly universal (Fromkin et al. 2007:319). These factors led many linguists to believe that children are equipped with an innate template or blueprint for language; which is referred to as Universal Grammar [UG] (Fromkin et al. 2007:319).

Linguists regard speaking, signing, and language comprehension as primary faculties of language, that is innate or inherent and biologically determined, whereas they regard reading and writing as secondary abilities (Sakai 2005:815). The L1 is acquired during the first years of life through such primary faculties while children are rapidly expanding their linguistic knowledge. Children master the basic phonological and grammatical operations in their L1 by the age of about five or six, regardless of what the language is (Saville-Troike 2012:13). In contrast, reading and writing are learned with much conscious effort and repetition, usually at school.

Contrarily, it is conceivable that the acquisition of a second language whether it is learned systematically at school or not, proceeds in quite a different manner. Therefore an understanding

of second language acquisition can improve the ability of mainstream educators to assist and support the culturally and linguistically diverse learners' reading and writing skills in their classrooms. The term second language acquisition [SLA] generally refers to the acquisition of a second language by someone who has already acquired a first (Fromkin et al. 2007:342). A basic knowledge of SLA theories is extremely valuable for mainstream educators because it provides insights into why language learners respond to instruction in certain ways. Also, they directly influence educators' ability to provide appropriate reading and writing instruction to learners. In view of the above exposition some of the central theories of SLA will be discussed.

### **2.4.1 Universal Grammar and second language acquisition**

There are rules of particular languages, such as English and isiZulu, that form part of the individual grammars of these languages, and then there are rules that apply to all languages. Those rules representing the universal properties of all languages constitute a Universal Grammar [UG] (Fromkin et al. 2007:17). Chomsky and Halle (1968:43) affirm that UG is a system of conditions that characterise any human language; a theory of essential properties of human language. Universal Grammar is a theory of the human faculty of knowledge (Chomsky 1997:2) and its concern is with the internal structure of the human mind (Cook & Newson 1996:1-2). The linguist, Chomsky (1977:2), who is a leading proponent of UG, views human languages as being genetically determined and species-specific. He proposed the theory that all people have an innate, biological ability to acquire language (Escamilla & Grassi 2000:1) and UG is part of that innate biologically endowed language faculty (White 1998:1).

Chomsky and his followers have claimed since the 1950s that the nature of linguistic competence in the L1 can be accounted for only by innate knowledge that the human species is genetically endowed with (Saville-Troike 2012:49). This accounts for how children are able to acquire their L1 despite a mismatch between the linguistic input and the complex unconscious mental representation of language that children achieve (White 2012:309). Chomsky theorised that people possess a Language Acquisition Device (LAD), a sort of neurological wiring that, regardless of the language to be acquired, allows a child to listen to a language, decipher the rules of that language, and begin creating with the language at a very young age (Escamilla & Grassi 2000:1). With the LAD they are able to make or understand utterances that they have not previously heard. Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams (2007:17) support Chomsky's assertion that

there is a UG that is part of the human biologically endowed language faculty. These researchers consider UG as a system of rules and principles that characterise all grammars.

The UG model bases its general claims on the principles and parameters of grammar. Universal Grammar theory holds that the speaker knows a set of principles that apply to all languages, and parameters that vary within clearly defined limits from one language to another (Cook & Newson 1996:2). This implies that UG includes universal principles and parameters which allow for constrained variation across languages (White 2012:309). Cook (2008:215) explains the principles and parameters grammar as follows: What we have in our mind is a mental grammar of a language consisting of universal principles of language, such as the locality principle which shows why a sentence such as “Is Sam is the cat that black” is impossible in all languages, and of parameters on which languages vary, such as the pro-drop parameter that explains why “Shuo” [speaks] is a possible sentence in Chinese, but “speaks” is not possible in English.

When parameters grammar is extended to isiZulu and English one would notice that the pronouns “he” and “she” have definite references to male and female, respectively but in isiZulu the word “yena” refers to both male and female. Also, the isiZulu word “umshana” refers to both niece and nephew. Thus, principles account for all the things that languages have in common; and parameters account for their differences. The UG model claims that these principles and parameters are built into the human mind. Children do not need to learn the locality principle because their minds automatically impose it on any language they encounter, whether it is English, isiZulu or isiXhosa. However, it is the parameter settings that have to be learnt. All the learner requires in order to set the values for parameters are a few samples of the language, for example English sentences must have subjects. Acquiring language implies learning how these principles apply to a particular language and which value is appropriate for each parameter (Cook & Newson 1996:2).

Although UG is based on L1 acquisition, some researchers have extended the UG theory to SLA. Chomsky did not study how people acquire an L2 (Malone 2012:2) but he suggested that, if provided with the correct input, the LAD predisposes all people to the acquisition of a second language in basically the same manner (Escamilla & Grassi 2000:1).

Saville-Troike (2012:52) mentions three important aspects in SLA from a UG perspective. They are the initial state, the nature of interlanguage [IL] and the final state. In the initial state some L1 knowledge is clearly transferred to L2, although exactly which features may transfer and to what degree appears to be dependent on the relationship of the L1 and L2 [perhaps involving markedness of features], the circumstances of L2 learning, and other factors. Markedness refers to language features that differ from the universals (Peker 2014:3). When the L1 and L2 parameter settings for the same principle are the same, positive transfer from the L1 to the L2 is likely. When L1 and L2 parameter settings are different, negative transfer or interference might occur. Saville-Troike (2012:53) maintains that L2 learners may still have access to UG in the initial state of SLA as well as knowledge of L1. Four possibilities have been suggested:

- ❖ Learners retain *full access* to UG as an innate guide to language acquisition, even when they are learning languages subsequent to their L1.
- ❖ Learners retain *partial access* to UG, keeping some of its components but not others.
- ❖ Learners retain *indirect access* to UG through knowledge that is already realised in their L1 but have no remaining direct access.
- ❖ Learners retain *no access* to UG and must learn the L2 through entirely different means than they did the L1.

If L2 learners attain knowledge that goes beyond the input, this suggests that UG must play a role, providing constraints on interlanguages (White 2012:309). If at least some access to UG is retained by L2 learners, then the process of IL development is in large, part of resetting parameters on the basis of input in the new language. Learners change the parameter setting [usually unconsciously] because the L2 input they receive does not match the L1 setting they have. At the same time, L2 learners can draw on properties of their L1 grammar. If access to UG is still available, then that will limit their choices [as it does in the L1] and their IL grammars will never deviate from structures that are allowed by UG. If learning principles that are part of the language faculty are also still available, then sufficient information to make these changes is available from the positive evidence they receive, that is the input that is provided from experiencing the L2 in natural use or formal instruction. Negative evidence, including explicit correction, is often also provided to L2 learners [especially if they receive from language instruction], and this probably plays a role in parameter resetting for older learners.

For basic L1 acquisition, all children achieve a native final state (Saville-Troike 2012:54). However, for SLA there is great variability which is found in the ultimate level of attainment by L2 learners. The following possibilities within the UG framework should be considered:

- ❖ All learners may not have the same degree of access to UG.
- ❖ Some learners may receive qualitatively different L2 input from others.
- ❖ Some learners may be more perceptive than others of mismatches between L2 input and existing L1 parameter settings.

Although some researchers have extended UG to the L2, Peker (2014:4) believes that the theory may not be applicable to the L2 teaching environment. This is because UG is based on L1 theory and learners may require different types of exercises or activities in class depending on their L1, since they have different marked features. The UG theory claims that if a learner can transfer language universals from L1 to L2, he or she can be successful. However, in view of the fact that English and isiZulu are so dissimilar and markedness is an enormous feature, it can be presumed that isiZulu-speaking learners will experience difficulties in speaking and writing. In this respect, I would agree with the behaviourist view that being a successful learner depends on how similar or different the L1 is to the L2.

#### **2.4.2 Krashen's theory of second language acquisition**

A concept endorsed by most language acquisition theorists is Stephen Krashen's theory of second language acquisition. Krashen who is an expert in the field of linguistics, specialising in theories of language acquisition and development, created a theory of SLA which is widely known and has had a large impact on all areas of second language research and teaching since the 1980's. Krashen's theory explicitly and essentially adopts the notion of an LAD, which is a metaphor Chomsky used for children's innate knowledge of language (Saville-Troike 2012:47; Escamilla & Grassi 2000:2; Malone 2012:2). An understanding of this theory is crucial to understanding the field of SLA theory and research as a whole. Krashen's theory of SLA consists of five main hypotheses (Krashen 2009:9-32). They are the acquisition-learning distinction, the natural order hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the input hypothesis, and the affective filter hypothesis.

### 2.4.2.1 The acquisition-learning distinction

The acquisition-learning distinction is the most fundamental of all the hypotheses in Krashen's theory. According to Krashen (2009:10) there are two ways of developing a second language: the "acquired system" and the "learned system". The acquired system or acquisition is the product of a subconscious process very similar to the process children undergo when they acquire their first language (Schütz 2007:2). For this system to develop, a child requires significant interaction and contact with the L2. This interaction with the new language allows the learner to concentrate on the act of communication rather than the appropriate use of grammar (Rodriguez & Higgins 2005:237). According to this theory, the optimal way a language is learned is through natural communication. This implies that isiZulu-speaking learners will have to require numerous opportunities to informally, spontaneously and naturally interact with English-speaking learners in order to develop the acquired system.

The learned system or learning is the product of formal instruction and it comprises a conscious process which results in conscious knowledge about the L2, for example knowledge of grammar rules (Krashen 2009:10). According to Krashen learning is less important than acquisition. Therefore it is important for a learner to develop the acquired system before he or she develops the learned system. However, in most classrooms learning is emphasised more than acquisition (Abukhattala 2013:128). In the traditional classrooms learners are given practice in providing correct answers either structurally or functionally, but always remaining conscious of what they want to say. In more conservative classes they are evaluated on their grammatical and lexical knowledge.

### 2.4.2.2 The natural order hypothesis

The natural order hypothesis states that acquisition of grammatical structures proceeds in a predictable order (Krashen 2009:11). For a given language, some grammatical structures tend to be acquired early, others late, regardless of the first language of the speaker. However, this does not imply that grammar should be taught in this natural order of acquisition.

### 2.4.2.3 The monitor hypothesis

The monitor hypothesis explains the relationship between acquisition and learning. The language that we have subconsciously acquired initiates our utterances in a second language and is responsible for our fluency, whereas the language that we have consciously learned acts as an editor in situations where the learner has sufficient time to edit, is focused on form, and knows the rule, such as in a grammar test or when carefully writing a composition (Krashen 2009:15-16). The conscious editor is referred to as the monitor. The monitor acts in a planning, editing and correcting function when three specific conditions are met: that is, the second language learner has sufficient time at his or her disposal, he or she focuses on form or thinks about correctness, and he or she knows the rule (Schütz 2007:3; Hong 2008:65). The role of the monitor is viewed as being minor, being used only to correct deviations from “normal” speech and to give speech a more “polished” appearance.

Krashen (2009:18) suggests that there is individual variation among language learners with regard to monitor use. He distinguishes those learners who always use the monitor and end up so concerned with correctness that they cannot speak with any real fluency [over-users]; those learners who have not consciously learned or who prefer not to use their conscious knowledge [under-users]; and those learners who use the monitor when it is appropriate and when it does not interfere with communication [optimal users].

Educators should aim to produce optimal monitor users. Optimal monitor users do not use their conscious knowledge of grammar in normal conversation, but will use it in writing and planned speech. These learners can therefore use their learned competence as a supplement to their acquired competence. Schütz (2007:3) posits that an evaluation of a person’s psychological profile can help to determine to what group they belong. Usually extroverts are under-users, while introverts and perfectionists are over-users. Lack of self-confidence is frequently related to the over-use of the monitor.

### 2.4.2.4 The input hypothesis

The input hypothesis is Krashen’s attempt to explain how the learner acquires a second language (Schütz 2007:3); which is the most significant of his five hypotheses (Abukhattala 2013:130) and of fundamental importance in my review of literature. The input hypothesis is only concerned



with acquisition, and not learning. According to this hypothesis, the learner improves and progresses along the “natural order” when he or she receives an L2 “input” that is one step beyond his or her current stage of linguistic competence (“i + 1”). “i” represents the current competence of the learner or the learner’s current level of English proficiency and “1” represents the next level (Krashen 2009:20-21) or the more advanced input the educator will provide the child so that he or she may progress beyond the present stage (Escamilla & Grassi 2000:3). Thus, comprehensible input is “i + 1” (Mitchell & Myles 2004:47). For example, if a learner has mastered the present tense, information can be provided in the past tense. The corollary to this is that input should neither be so far beyond the learner’s reach that he or she is overwhelmed, nor so close to his or her current stage that he or she is not challenged at all (Brown 2007:295).

Comprehensible input is an essential aspect of Krashen’s Input hypothesis. Krashen proposes that children require only comprehensible input to activate the LAD and begin acquisition of an L2 (Escamilla & Grassi 2000:20). This hypothesis maintains that in order to acquire an L2, the learner must understand what is said to him or her. Learners should receive input that is appropriate to their age and language level. This language should be just beyond the learners’ current proficiency but easy enough for them to understand. Sufficient comprehensible input is a necessary condition for acquisition of a second language (Cummins 1996:87).

Krashen posits that without comprehensible input, the L2 learner is left with a group of words that are perceived as incomprehensible noise and cannot be processed in the LAD (Escamilla & Grassi 2000:3). Educators need to develop background knowledge, deliver content that is contextualised, and utilise gestures and pictures to make input comprehensible. When ESL learners are assigned to mainstream classrooms and spend most of the day in this environment it is especially critical for them to receive comprehensible input from their teachers and classmates. The notion of comprehensible input, elaborated by Krashen (2009:20-21), is described by Cummins (1996:88) as the central casual variable that determines the extent to which the SLA process is more or less successful. Research has shown that the quality and not quantity of English exposure is a major factor in English acquisition; that is the L2 must be comprehensible (Crawford 1998:2).

From the input phase to the production phase there is a period when learners do not produce any original statements. This is referred to as the “silent period”; a phenomenon most noticeable in

child SLA (Krashen 2009:26). Learners require the silent period to internalise the information appropriately. One of the challenges that educators encounter is that the length of the silent period varies from learner to learner. Some learners may have very short periods and begin producing immediately after something has been presented in class. Others seem to take much longer and never volunteer to speak freely in class.

Research has revealed that children acquiring an L2 in a natural, informal linguistic environment may say very little for several months following their first exposure to the L2 (Krashen 2009:26). Children's L2 consists of memorised language; whole sentences learned as if they were one word. Krashen (2009:27) views the silent period as an epoch in which the child is building up competence in the L2 through listening and understanding the language around him or her. In accordance with the input hypothesis, speaking ability emerges on its own after sufficient competence has been developed by listening and understanding.

Learners in formal language classes are usually not allowed a silent period. They are often asked to produce, not only orally but also in writing, very early in an L2, before they have acquired adequate syntactic competence to express their ideas. At present it is very challenging for educators to cope with learners who exhibit long silent periods, especially when terms are short, the syllabus has to be completed and final evaluation is required. In future, it is suggested that the evaluation systems should be modified to give long-silent-period acquirers the opportunity to codify all the new input presented in the class.

#### 2.4.2.5 The affective filter hypothesis

The affective filter hypothesis embodies Krashen's view that a number of "affective variables" play a facilitative role in SLA. These variables include motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety (Krashen 2009:31). It is postulated that learners with high motivation, self-confidence, a good self-image and a low level of anxiety are better equipped for success in SLA (Krashen 2009:31; Thomson 2000:139; Schütz 2007:4). This implies that these learners are susceptible to developing better reading and writing skills. Conversely, low motivation, low self-esteem, and debilitating anxiety can combine to raise the affective filter and form a "mental block" that affects the learner's ability to read fluently, to write freely, and prevents comprehensible input from being used for language acquisition. Krashen (2009:32) reinforces that those whose

attitudes are not optimal for SLA will not only tend to seek less input, but they will also have a strong or high affective filter. Even if these learners understand the message, the input will not reach the part of the brain responsible for language acquisition, or the language acquisition device. Those whose attitudes are more conducive to SLA will not only seek and obtain more input; they will also have a lower or weaker filter.

The affective filter hypothesis claims that the effect of affect is “outside” the LAD (Krashen 2009 31-32). It still maintains that input is the primary causative variable in SLA and affective variables act to impede or facilitate the delivery of input to the LAD. The affective filter hypothesis implies that our pedagogical goals should not only include supplying comprehensible input, but also creating a situation that encourages a low filter. Thus, the effective language teacher is someone who can provide comprehensible input in a low anxiety situation.

#### 2.4.2.6 Criticisms leveled against Krashen’s theory

Krashen’s theory has frequently been criticised because there are problems in what researchers call operationalisation of the constructs [for example, there is no independent way of confirming which knowledge source – acquired or learned – a learner is using as the basis of use and what constitutes comprehensible input], specifically that they are vaguely defined, making empirical testing difficult (Van Patten & Williams 2007:32), the claimed distinction between acquisition and learning is vague and imprecise, and several of its claims are impossible to verify (Peregoy 2009:55; Saville-Troike 2012:47).

Perhaps the most crucial difficulty in Krashen’s input hypothesis is found in his explicit claim that comprehensible input is the only causative variable in SLA (Brown 2007:297; Peregoy 2009:55). In other words, success in an L2 must be attributed to input alone. Pedagogy based on direct instruction generally contains little comprehensible input (Van Patten & Williams 2007:31). Such instruction can only contribute to learned knowledge, which is of limited use. In fact, it can obstruct acquisition by limiting learner access to comprehensible input. Also, the importance of output, that is, speaking and writing, cannot be ignored in a balanced view of language acquisition (Swain as cited in Peregoy 2009:55). Although it may sometimes be difficult for educators to establish whether something is being “acquired” or “learned”, comprehensible input is crucial to both processes.

Brown (2007:297) argues that the notion that speech will emerge in a context of comprehensible input appears to be promising for some learners who are bright, highly motivated and outgoing; speech will indeed emerge. However, we are left with no significant information from Krashen's theory on what to do about the other language learners for whom speech does not emerge and for whom the silent period might last forever.

Escamilla and Grassi (2000:11) provocatively emphasise that while Krashen's Monitor Theory offers numerous linguistic explanations for the acquisition of an L2, it fails to completely address the social and psychological aspects of learning a second language. These additional factors are important in L2 learning. Too often educators are confronted with linguistically capable learners whose feelings of alienation, fear or frustration towards the target culture prevent them from acquiring high proficiency in the L2.

#### 2.4.2.7 Concluding annotations – focusing on the quintessential features of Krashen's theory

Although Krashen's theory has not gone unchallenged (Thomson 2000:139) and was considered one of the most controversial theoretical perspectives in SLA (Brown 2007:294; Altenaichinger 2003:8), it is viewed as the most ambitious and influential theory in the field of SLA (Van Patten & Williams 2008:25). Peregoy (2009:55) posits that Krashen's theory has been influential in promoting language teaching practices that focus on communication, not grammatical form; that allow learners a silent period rather than forcing immediate speech production; and creating a low anxiety environment.

Although the UG theory highlights the fact that errors should be corrected, Krashen's theory emphasises that error correction should be minimal because it causes a high affective filter (Peker 2014:4-6). Krashen's theory is particularly prominent among practitioners and has made an insightful and useful contribution to the ESL classroom. It has also laid the foundation for important ideas in contemporary theorising within SLA. Understanding Krashen's theory can assist educators develop appropriate instructional teaching strategies and assessments that guide learners along a continuum of language development, from cognitively undemanding, context-embedding curricula, to cognitively demanding, context-reduced curricula.

We can assume that an English medium classroom which establishes a safe, non-threatening atmosphere and which draws on relevant, meaningful and authentic language context and use,

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will promote second language acquisition more effectively than one that is not characterised by these features. This will certainly include the development of reading and writing skills.

### **2.4.3 Cummins's theory of second language acquisition**

An ESL learner may appear to be able to handle the demands of functioning in an English-only classroom because he or she is competent in a variety of school settings such as talking to a friend in the corridor, playing on the playground, or speaking with the teacher one on one. It might seem natural to assume that a child learning English as a second language becomes fully fluent quickly. But researchers have found that, although ESL learners can develop peer-appropriate conversational skills in about two years, developing academic proficiency in English can take considerably longer.

One of the prominent researchers who played an instrumental role in second language acquisition and bilingual research is Jim Cummins. More than 30 years ago, he proposed a framework that has become a widely accepted explanation of how children who appear to get by quite well in conversational English, nonetheless struggle when they need to use it for academic purposes (Cummins in Aukerman 2007:626). Hence, Cummins' theory of second language acquisition consists of two major dimensions: Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency.

#### **2.4.3.1 Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills**

Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) are the communicative capacity that all individuals acquire in order to be able to function in daily interpersonal exchanges (Brown 2007:219). According to Cummins (2008:71) BICS refer to conversational fluency in a second language. Conversational fluency is the ability to carry on a conversation in familiar face-to-face situations (Cummins 1996:65). Brown (2007:33) describes conversational language as unedited speech, full of "choppy" and often incomplete sentences. Thus, conversational abilities often develop relatively quickly among ESL learners because these forms of communication are embedded in the learner's familiar everyday life worlds (Gee as cited in Cummins 1996:68). In conversations, instantaneous clarification or feedback is possible. If one of the interlocutors perceives that the other person does not comprehend the conversation, more efforts to explain or clarify will be used to allow the conversation to continue. Also, the vocabulary used in daily

conversation is somewhat limited in scope, it is devoid of technical terms, and syntax is simpler than that used in academic language. Cummins (1996:65) reinforces that this is the kind of proficiency that the vast majority of native speakers of English have developed when they enter school at age five. It involves the informal language of conversation, often referred to as the “language of the playground” in that most children learn BICS through informal interaction with their peers (Rodriguez & Higgins 2005:237).

This beginning communicative level is typically context embedded and cognitively undemanding (Williams 2001:751). It involves use of high frequency words and simple grammatical constructions and communication of meaning is typically supported by cues such as facial expressions, gestures and intonation (Cummins 1996:65). These extra-linguistic features provide ESL learners with cues that can assist in comprehending the conversation and, as a result make relatively few cognitive demands on the learner. Examples of this level include simple greetings, information requests, descriptions, and expressions of feelings (Williams 2001:751). It is the language a person requires to function in society or to socialise with family and friends (Escamilla & Grassi 2000:4).

Cummins (1996:65) maintains that ESL learners generally develop fluency in conversational aspects of English within a year or two of exposure to the language either at school or in the environment. Williams (2001:751) asserts that it usually takes an ESL learner two to three years to develop proficiency in communicative language and Brown (2007:33) affirms that it generally takes ESL learners two to three years to be on grade level for conversational English. Escamilla and Grassi (2000:4) contend that it usually takes a learner two to five years to acquire a high proficiency in BICS.

#### 2.4.3.2 Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency

According to Cummins (2008:71) Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) refers to the learner’s ability to understand and express, in both oral and written modes, concepts and ideas that are relevant to success in school. It refers to the language skills that are associated with literacy [being able to read and write] and cognitive development (Rodriguez & Higgins 2005:237). Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency is that dimension of proficiency in which the learner manipulates or reflects upon the surface features of language outside of the immediate

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interpersonal context (Brown 2007:219). The notion of CALP is specific to the social context of schooling, hence the term “academic”.

Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency is academic language, or the language of texts (Avalos, Plasencia, Chavez & Rascón 2007:320), which fundamentally differs from conversational language. The term CALP is used interchangeably with academic language proficiency. Academic language proficiency refers to the ability not only to use language for reading and writing but also to acquire information in content areas (Drucker 2003:23). It includes knowledge of the less frequent vocabulary of English as well as the ability to interpret and produce increasingly complex written and oral language (Cummins 1996:65). As learners progress through the grades, they encounter far more low frequency words, complex syntax, and abstract expressions that are virtually never heard in everyday conversation. Learners are required to understand linguistically and conceptually demanding texts in the content areas [for example, Science and Mathematics] and to use this language in an accurate and coherent manner in their own writing.

Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency develops through social interaction from birth but becomes differentiated from BICS after the early stages of schooling to reflect primarily the language that children acquire in school and which they need to use effectively if they are to progress successfully through the grades (Cummins 2008:72). Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency relies heavily on decontextualised language. In decontextualised language there is no shared social context that one can rely upon in figuring out what something means, or what one should say (Aukerman 2007:627). Thus, Aukerman (2007:627) and Williams (2001:751) perceive CALP as the decontextualised or context-reduced, cognitively demanding language used in school.

Mastery of the academic functions of language is a formidable task. Learners are required to step outside the familiarity of their everyday life-world and carry out tasks that are only minimally supported by familiar contextual or interpersonal cues (Cummins 1996:68). These tasks also typically require high levels of cognitive involvement for successful completion. As learners progress through the grades, they are increasingly required to manipulate language in cognitively-demanding and context-reduced situations that differ significantly from everyday conversational interactions. This level of language development includes such skills as

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comparing, classifying, inferring, problem solving, and evaluating. Success in school depends on proficiency of this level. Moreover, Escamilla and Grassi (2000:5) maintain that if the educator uses comprehensible input in the lessons while simultaneously developing CALP vocabulary, the majority of the learners will meet the cognitive challenges presented by the educator.

Several large-scale studies have reported that, on average, at least five to seven years is required for ESL learners to attain grade norms on academic aspects of English proficiency (see 2.3). Although there is a conceptual difference between BICS and CALP, they are developmental in nature, in that CALP is developed after BICS. Typically, proficiency in BICS is an indicator of a learner's ability to process the language of CALP (Rodriguez & Higgins 2005:237). Thus, a child who has already acquired BICS can proceed to learn CALP skills, but a child who does not have BICS is unprepared to obtain the cognitive skills necessary for CALP acquisition. Hence, to assume that learners who demonstrate a beginning level of language proficiency understand the more difficult academic language of content lessons is problematic. To summarise, BICS is the foundation from which CALP develops.

#### 2.4.3.3 Criticisms leveled against Cummins's theory

Although Cummins's influential BICS/CALP framework is considered as one of the major contributions to SLA, several criticisms have been leveled. Aukerman (2007:626-629) explains why she is no longer convinced that the BICS/CALP framework helps us understand ESL learners as well as we need to. Given how it is interpreted, she believes that it may do a disservice to children by categorising them as unready to learn. Aukerman (2007:629) provides the following example which explains her criticism of the BICS/CALP distinction. In kindergarten, a child who spends time in buses and subway trains might find discussing means of transport easy (BICS), but another child without such experiences would find the same discussion quite cognitively challenging (CALP), yet the second child might know far more than the first child about animals, hospitals, or fairy tales. Thus, it would be iniquitous to say that one learner has more CALP than another. Similarly, it would be unfair to say that an ESL learner has less CALP than a learner whose primary language is English; especially if the ESL learner is proficient in the L1 and not the L2.



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Context is always in some crucial sense about what is familiar to the child; and having a context for understanding depends precisely on what is considered to be BICS. Thus, Aukerman (2007:632) believes that it is ultimately destructive to view proficiency in decontextualised language as a prerequisite for successful participation in school. Language must be in context, to be meaningful at all. Cummins himself has recognised that good teaching is context-embedded, not decontextualised. But because CALP-oriented instruction seeks to move learners gradually away from context-embedded linguistic activities towards ever more decontextualised language use (Cummins 1996:66-72), context is principally viewed as a temporary steppingstone on the way to serious academic learning (Aukerman 2007:633). Also, context is considered primarily from the educator's point of view, as if it was transparent and meant just one thing to everybody, rather than being something that is figured out from multiple angles by different children (Aukerman 2007:633).

Although Cummins (2008:77) mentions that the BICS/CALP distinction has been critiqued by numerous scholars who view it as oversimplified, reflective of an "autonomous" rather than an "ideological" notion of literacy, an artifact of "test-wiseness", and a "deficit theory" that attributes bilingual learners' academic difficulties to their "low CALP", he (Cummins 2008:77-79) has responded to these criticisms by providing substantial evidence and perceptions on the relevance and validity of the BICS/CALP framework. Furthermore, Cummins (2008:79) stresses that the BICS/CALP distinction was not proposed as an overall theory of language proficiency but as a very specific conceptual distinction that has important implications for policy and practice. It has drawn attention to specific ways in which educators' assumptions about the nature of language proficiency and the development of L2 proficiency have prejudiced the academic development of bilingual learners. However, this distinction is likely to remain controversial, reflecting the fact that there is no consensus regarding the nature of language proficiency and its relationship to academic development.

#### 2.4.3.4 Concluding annotations

By applying Cummins's theory of BICS and CALP to isiZulu-speaking foundation phase learners in English medium schools in KwaZulu-Natal, the following deductions can be made:

- ❖ If isiZulu-speaking learners have not achieved BICS in English, they will most definitely experience difficulties in achieving CALP in English. This implies that learners who experience difficulties achieving CALP will find reading with comprehension and writing extremely challenging.
- ❖ If an isiZulu-speaking learner has achieved BICS in English, the learner may still experience difficulty in achieving CALP in English. The attainment of BICS does not automatically guarantee the achievement of CALP skills. Hence, an isiZulu-speaking learner may have developed the informal language of conversation but may struggle to read and write in English.
- ❖ IsiZulu-speaking learners will have to gain more English language proficiency each year than their English speaking peers in order to catch up. English language proficiency includes reading and writing in English.

By comparing the views of learners, educators, and parents with regard to isiZulu-speaking learners' abilities to read and write in English, this research study explored the factors that affect isiZulu-speaking learners' reading and writing skills in relation to the BICS/CALP framework proposed by Cummins.

#### **2.4.4 Chaos Theory, Complexity Theory and Dynamic Systems Theory within second language research**

Saville-Troike (2012:86) mentions that what she chose to call Complexity Theory, is closely related to what others in SLA refer to as Dynamic Systems Theory (Van Geert 2007), Complex Systems Theory and Chaos Theory. It is important to note that in many publications the labels Chaos, Complexity, Complex Adaptive Systems, Nonlinear Systems, and Dynamic Systems are often used almost interchangeably to refer to a class of theories (De Bot 2008:167). What they have in common is a focus on the development of complex systems over time. Although I provide a brief elucidation of these theories, for the purpose of my research the term Dynamic Systems Theory [DST] will be used. It is interesting to note how similar the three theories are. Thus, the strong similarities have permitted researchers to use these labels interchangeably.

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De Bot (2008:167) contends that chaos is unpredictability rather than lack of order. He cites Lorenz who showed that, in complex systems, small differences in initial conditions can lead to larger and unpredictable differences over time. As a result of sensitivity to initial conditions, the behaviour of systems that exhibit chaos appears to be random, even though the system is deterministic in the sense that it is well defined and contains no random parameters (De Bot 2008:167). The two main lines within Chaos Theory are that chaos can emerge out of the interaction of variables and differences in initial conditions, and that there is universal order in seemingly chaotic patterns (De Bot 2008:167).

Complexity Theory looks at “what happens at the edge of chaos” (Lewin in De Bot 2008:167). Research on chaos has shown that complex systems develop more or less predictably for some time and then more or less suddenly begin to show chaotic behaviour (De Bot 2008:167). A basic concept of Complexity Theory as it applies to SLA is that all languages, and varieties of language, are complex systems with interconnected components and stages of learner language (Saville-Troike 2012:86). Saying that a complex system has interconnected components implies that levels of language like phonology, vocabulary, and discourse are interdependent in their development. In the process of development, the different components become more orderly, more structured or organised, over time (Saville-Troike 2012:86).

A major assumption underlying a great deal of L1 acquisition research has been that the acquisition of language has a clear beginning and end state, and a somewhat linear path of development for each individual (De Bot, Lowie & Verspoor 2007:7). Similarly, in much SLA research, an L2 learner no matter what his or her L1, is predicted to go through highly similar stages in acquiring the L2 (Ionin 2007:27; De Bot et al. 2007:7). Such a view of language learning is often associated with an Information Processing (IP) model. While it is certainly true that linguistic research over the last decades has substantially contributed to our understanding of the universal and specific properties of languages, the alleged uniformity and predictability of language development is challenged by the evidence of variation in different types of language acquisition and diachronic language change (Plaza-Pust 2008:250-251). The data reveal that language development in its multiple forms is characterised by a succession of stable and unstable states, which does not fit into the linear models of change conceived of within the generative paradigm.

There have been a preponderance of linguistic and language acquisition studies that have not adhered to the linear view. They have shown that language, language acquisition, and language attrition are much more intricate, complex, and even unpredictable than a linear position will allow. For example, Larsen Freeman (2007:35) asserted that the SLA process was more complex, gradual, nonlinear, dynamic, social, and variable than had been recognised; and Lantolf and Thorne (2007:219) affirm that variability in the development of any given learner and across learners is a characteristic of L2 acquisition.

Verspoor, Lowie and Dijk's (2008:229) case study on variability in L2 development revealed that, even for an advanced learner, the system can be far from stable. These researchers report that although a general increase over time is apparent, the development is nonlinear, showing moments of progress and regress. Additionally, De Bot (2008:171) cites Larsen-Freeman who emphasises that learning is not simple linear growth on the basis of input; there are backslides, stagnations, and jumps, and like the unpredictability of avalanches, it is not clear which instances of input or instruction lead to which instances of learning.

Also, Verheyden (2011) (as cited in Verspoor 2012:533) argues that variation between learners is the norm. When she tested three different multilevel growth models against the writing development of 30 L2 learners, she found that a dynamic model in which no growth curve was imposed at all worked significantly better than two models that did impose such a growth curve on the data. This implies that these young L2 writers each follow their own changeable developmental path, as one would expect from a DST perspective.

Linguistic theories such as cognitive linguistics and functional linguistics, acquisition theories such as the competition model recognise that there are independent variables, not only within the language system, but also within the social environment and the psychological make-up of an individual (De Bot et al. 2007:7). What these theories have in common is that they recognise the crucial role of interaction of a multitude of variables at different levels: in communication, in constructing meaning, in learning a language and among languages in the multilingual mind.

Dynamic Systems Theory developed as a branch of mathematics (Van Geert 2007:47). Dynamic systems are systems that change over time (De Bot 2008:167) and are characterised by what is called complete interconnectedness (De Bot et al. 2007:8). This implies that all factors or

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variables involved in language development are interrelated, interact with each other over time, and therefore changes in one variable will have an impact on all other variables that are part of the system. For example, although bilinguals clearly are able to separate their languages in use, cross-linguistic effects, such as interference, mean that the languages must be connected at some level (Opitz 2012:702).

Dynamic systems are nested in the sense that every system is always part of another system. Systems tend to settle in what are referred to as “attractors” (De Bot 2008:167). An attractor state is a relatively stable state of a system, and the error is relatively stable in that it remains fixed for a long time [or forever] (Van Geert 2007:47). An attractor state is insensitive to small perturbations. Van Geert (2007:47) provides the following example: If an L2 speaker is made aware of the error in reading or writing, it is likely that he or she is capable of correcting it once, but then spontaneously falls back on the error state.

An attractor state can be reached from many different starting points. The typical error of the L2-speaker may also result from different acquisition trajectories in different speakers. Finally, an attractor state may change if the system is dramatically altered or enriched or if a significant perturbation is applied. Thus, a typical error may disappear if the speaker receives extensive training or moves to a different linguistic environment in which the exposure to the L2 by L1-speakers is considerably greater. An attractor emerges spontaneously, or self-organises as a result of the interplay or interconnectedness of all the variables or “forces” that constitute the dynamic system at issue (Van Geert 2007:47). The attractor state can be associated with fossilisation. Brown (2007:270) defines fossilisation as the relatively permanent incorporation of incorrect linguistic forms into a person’s L2 competence. In this regard, some errors become permanent and are resistant to change if not corrected.

Since the development of some dynamic systems appears to be highly dependent on the initial state, minor differences at the beginning may have dramatic consequences in the long run. This is referred to as the “butterfly effect” (De Bot et al. 2007:15). The following research evidence points towards the occurrence of the butterfly effects in SLA. It has been shown that L1 literacy is a crucial condition for the successful acquisition of an L2 (Cárdenas-Hagan, Carlson & Pollard-Durodola 2007:255), and that phonological awareness and word recognition skills in L1 affect recognition in L2 (Durgunoglu, Nagy & Hacin-Bhatt in De Bot et al. 2007:15). It has been

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argued repeatedly that a problem in one particular area of language learning affects other areas (De Bot et al. 2007:15). Consequently, the effect of phonemic coding difficulties may not be limited to reading and writing skills, but is likely to proliferate to the development of oral language. From the above evidence it can be tentatively inferred that very subtle problems in early childhood, like a middle-ear infection, may have a long lasting effect at all levels of SLA. Although this assumption is speculative, there is a growing body of evidence pointing to the casual relationship between problems in L1 acquisition and the acquisition of an L2 which is a strong indication that difficulties in SLA are at least partly due to the initial conditions butterflying their way through the process of SLA (De Bot et al. 2007:15)

The “butterfly effect” can be aptly linked to Cummins’s developmental interdependence hypothesis. The inference here is that if an isiZulu-speaking learner experiences difficulty in reading and writing in isiZulu then that learner will most certainly experience difficulty in reading and writing in English. Thus, the difficulties experienced in reading and writing in isiZulu are seen to be butterflying their way throughout the process of reading and writing in English. Additionally, if a learner experiences reading difficulties he or she will unquestionably experience writing difficulties; because the development of reading skills is a prerequisite for the progress of writing skills.

Van Geert (2007:47) asserts that the major idea behind the cognitive and language growth model discussed in his article is that cognitive growth occurs under the constraint of limited resources, with either mutual support or competition for resources among the cognitive growers that constitute a person’s cognitive and language system. Chief among De Bot et al’s. (2007:11-12) article are the concepts: “limited resources”, and “connected growers”. The notion that resources, such as attention span and memory capacity are limited is critical in explaining certain aspects of SLA. The fact that resources are limited helps to explain why learners allocate different amounts of attention to different subsystems or dimensions of language (Larsen-Freeman 2007:36). As these DST researchers, De Bot et al. (2007:12) note that although sometimes the resources compete; at other times, it is possible for them to cooperate. There can also be compensatory relations between different types of resources. For example, effort can compensate for lack of time, or motivation can compensate for limited output from the environment. The relationship that exists and its changing nature is a key concept in explaining

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the dynamism, stability, and variation to account for different patterns in learner language (Larsen-Freeman 2007:36).

Not all subsystems require equal amounts of resources. Some “connected growers” support each other’s growth. The following example of the relationship between lexical development and the development of listening comprehension is mentioned in De Bot et al. (2007:12): with increasing listening comprehension, words are understood and interpreted more easily, stimulating development of lexical skills. Knowing more words makes the understanding of spoken language in turn easier. In this way the two connected growers need fewer resources than two growers that are unconnected.

#### 2.4.4.1 Criticisms leveled against the Dynamic Systems Theory

The IP model is often associated with a UG approach to language by assuming that creativity in language use cannot be accounted for without some innate mechanisms particular to language learning. Thus, a DST approach to communication is incompatible with an IP model. From a DST perspective, language acquisition emerges through interaction with other human beings within a social context.

UG-based approaches typically do not take social factors into consideration, focusing instead on linguistic and age-related factors and it is possible that the DST approach should pay more attention to social and cognitive factors (Ionin 2007:28). Thus, it appears that UG-based and DST approaches focus on very different aspects of SLA. However, Plaza-Pust (2008:250-269) argues for a link between a DST approach and UG. She uses the metaphor of the turbulent mirror to describe the order and chaos that characterises systems. As Plaza-Pust (2008:250) indicates, “linguists have not been very keen on entering turbulent mirror worlds and their unpredictable landscapes”. She argues for a mediation function of UG between stability and change with universal principles or constraints as stabilising factors and functional categories as potential agents in change. This leads to a more open perspective on UG as a part of the language system that is not completely encapsulated but interacts with other aspects of language and the social environment in which it is used (De Bot 2008:176).

Ionin’s (2007:28) critique of the DST model and UG-based approaches is based on De Bot et al.’s (2007) article. She argues that it does not seem very fair to criticise existing, developed

theories for not incorporating all possible factors, when no alternative theory is presented that does incorporate these factors. Given the lack of a concrete model of SLA, it may be a good idea to limit the potential scope of the DST model. She contends that instead of treating the DST framework as an alternative to UG-based approaches, it may be more productive to view L2 approaches as dealing with very different phenomena. Additionally, Weideman (in Verspoor 2012:534) warned that as time passes DST will reveal its own blind spots, and should be treated with the equivalent critical circumspection as the linguistic paradigms it will soon replace. He reiterates that it will take experimenting, meta-analyses and results [with their associated degrees of variation and variability], before DST finds a stable theoretical framework.

However, Van Geert (2007:47) supports the views of De Bot et al. (2007:7-21). He emphasises that these authors view DST as a promise for the future, an overarching theory in SLA that takes into account the interconnectedness that is so characteristic of complex, developing systems, including the cognitive and social factors that help shape the process of SLA. Van Geert (2007:47) considers DST as a quintessential future approach to human action, cognition and behaviour, including language; Larsen-Freeman (in Verspoor 2012:534) argues that DST offers a new set of concepts; Opitz (2012:701) reinforces that a helpful perspective for holistically capturing language acquisition and attrition in bilinguals may be found in dynamic approaches to language development; and De Bot et al. (2007:7) claim that because DST takes into account both cognitive and social aspects of language development, it can provide a coherent approach to various issues in SLA.

#### 2.4.4.2 Concluding annotations

DST has profound implications for this study. This theory emphasises the need for educators to recognise the nonlinear process of SLA, which reveal moments of progress and regress; and to take cognisance of the variability in development of learners and across learners, with regard to L2 acquisition.

It would be imprudent to neglect the impact of attractor states, initial conditions, and limited resources for this study. The compounded effects of attractor states, initial conditions, and limited resources can have devastating consequences to L2 learners' reading and writing achievements. For example, if an isiZulu-speaking learner is made aware of errors in reading or



writing an English text, he or she may correct it only once. Hence, the errors may recur and result in fossilisation. Initial difficulties in word recognition may lead to difficulties in reading and writing. If resources are limited, the L2 learners are at a disadvantage.

This study will generate data that will reflect whether any of the variables, such as reading, written communication, or comprehension that are relevant in learning an L2 [English], will impact on all other variables that are part of learning an L2.

#### **2.4.5 Sociocultural Theory and second language acquisition**

Over the past decade or so, there has been a notable increase in SLA research that is informed by a Sociocultural Theory of the mind [thereafter, Sociocultural Theory {SCT}] (Swain & Deters 2007:820; Lantolf 2007:31). For example, the seminal article of Firth and Wagner (2007) argued for a re-conceptualisation of SLA research; incorporating a balance between the cognitive and the social. They argued that SLA research was too dominated by psycho-linguistic thinking and called for research that made sense in the socially embedded experiences of L2 speakers in their own worlds.

Also, researchers such as De Bot, Lowie and Verspoor (2007) and Van Geert (2007) interested in DST, and its variants [emergentism, and chaos and complexity theory] of which Larsen-Freeman (2007) was a major contributor have shown an interest in the implications of their theoretical stance for SLA. This theoretical perspective has its origins in the writings of the Russian psycholinguist Lev Semenovich Vygotsky (1896-1934), who argued that it was essential to incorporate the study of human culture and history into the effort to understand the development of the human mind.

Since the 1980s, the foremost figure advocating the relevance of Sociocultural Theory to SLA has been James Lantolf (Mitchell & Myles 2004:193). Lantolf (2007:31) is of the opinion that SCT makes an even stronger claim than DST with regard to the role of social processes in cognitive and linguistic development. In Lantolf's (2000:31) view, Vygotsky's argument is that specifically human mental activity emerges as a result of the internalisation of social relationships, culturally organised activity, and symbolic artifacts, in a particular language.

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The theory of development from a Vygotskian perspective proposes an interaction between the child's social world and his or her cognitive development (Seng 1997:4). Great emphasis is placed on the culture in which the child develops, and in particular, on the effect of the constructive role of peer interactions in relations. Interaction is viewed as a means of providing comprehensible input to the learner and also as fundamental to an individual's cognitive and affective growth (Clark & Clark 2008:104).

The central claim of SCT is that individuals are fundamentally socially organised entities and that therefore the very source of human development resides in the environment (Lantolf 2007:32). Supporting Vygotsky's influential views, Firth and Wagner (2007:768) state that language is not only a cognitive phenomenon, the product of the individual's brain, it is also fundamentally a social phenomenon, acquired and used interactively, in a variety of contexts for myriad practical purposes.

The higher voluntary forms of human behaviour have their roots in social interaction, in the individual's participation in social behaviours that are mediated by speech (Rieber & Carton 1987:21). Thus, Lantolf (2000:1) emphasises that the most fundamental concept of SCT is that the human mind is "mediated". SCT takes into account the complex interaction between the individual acting with mediational means and the socio-cultural context (Swain & Deters 2007:821). Following Vygotsky's writings, Van Compernelle and Williams (2013:279) distinguish between two broad categories of mediation. Firstly, 'psychological tools', the culturally constructed artifacts that are integrated into human mental functioning. Secondly, "human mediation", that supports an individual's internalisation of psychological tools.

Lantolf and Thorne (2007:205) express the view that language is the most powerful cultural artifact that humans possess to mediate their connection to the world, to each other, and to themselves. Cook (2008:230) posits that language learning is a social mediation between the learner and someone else during which socially acquired knowledge becomes internal. Language is viewed as a socially constructed intellectual tool, a "mediation" used in action; and participation in social activities is importantly mediated by the use of language (Toohey 2000:12). This implies that, according to SCT, the development of the individual always passes through [that is, is mediated by] others, whether they are immediately present as in the case of parents guiding their children or educators guiding learners, or displaced in time or space, as

when we read texts produced by others, or participate in activities such as work, organised in specific ways by a culture (Lantolf 2007:32). Clark and Clark (2008:104) elucidate this view. They maintain that SLA is facilitated by interaction between the learner and a more proficient English speaker. Through interaction with more able English speakers, L2 learners have access to models of language structure and are provided with opportunities to practise what they are learning, therefore moving forward in SLA. Likewise, Toohey (2000:12) affirms that from a Vygotskian perspective, an L2 could be seen as one among many mediating means people use to participate in social activities.

Besides mediation by symbolic artifacts, Lantolf and Thorne (2007:203) maintain that another form of mediation is regulation. These researchers distinguish between three stages of regulation. In the first stage, children are often controlled by the use of objects in their environment to think. This stage is referred to as object-regulation. The second stage, termed other-regulation, includes implicit and explicit mediation by parents, siblings, peers, and educators. This involves varying levels of assistance and is sometimes referred to as scaffolding. Self-regulation, the final stage, refers to the ability to accomplish activities with minimal or no external support. Self-regulation is made possible through internalisation – the process of making what was once external assistance a resource that is internally available to the individual. To be a proficient user of a language is to be self-regulated. However, self-regulation is not a stable condition. Even the most proficient communicators, including L1 speakers, may have to reassess earlier stages of development when confronted with challenging communicative situations.

A significant facet of Vygotsky's theory is the Zone of Proximal Development [ZPD]. The ZPD is defined as “the difference between a child's actual development level as determined by independent problem solving” and “potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Adamson 2005:146; Gifford & Mullaney 1997:9; Lantolf & Thorne 2007:210; Seng 1997:6; De Bot, Lowie & Verspoor 2005:59; Lantolf & Appel 1998:10; Mitchell & Myles 2004:196). Hence, the ZPD characterises the difference between what the learner is capable of himself and what he can become capable of with the assistance of an educator (Rieber & Wollock 1997:29).

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Gifford and Mullaney (1997:10) describe the two main characteristics of ZPD. First, the task that the learner undertakes must be a little above that individual's current level of ability; it should stretch his or her capabilities, but not be completely beyond him or her. In this respect, Krashen's comprehensible input theory aligns with Vygotsky's ZPD. In Krashen's terms, the task must be at the  $i + 1$  level [see 2.4.2.4]. Second, there must be an adult or a more skilled peer to mediate between the learner and the task or problem at hand.

Contrarily to the above, Lantolf and Thorne (2007:213) highlight the two general misconceptions about the ZPD. The first is that the ZPD is the same thing as scaffolding or assisted performance, and the second is that it is similar to Krashen's notion of  $i + 1$ . Scaffolding refers to any type of adult-child or expert-novice assisted performance, where the goal is to complete the task rather than to help the child develop, and therefore the task is usually carried out through other-regulation (Lantolf & Thorne 2007:213).

Scaffolding, unlike ZPD, is thought of in terms of the amount of assistance provided by the expert to the novice rather than in terms of the quality. With regard to the misconceptions about the ZPD and Krashen's  $i + 1$ , the fundamental problem is that the ZPD focuses on the nature of the concrete dialogic relationship between expert and novice and its goal of moving the novice towards greater self-regulation through the new language, while Krashen's concept focuses on language and the language acquisition device, which is assumed to be the same for all learners with very little room for differential development.

Saville-Troike (2012:119), and Lantolf and Appel (1998:10) assert that the ZPD is an area of potential development, where the learner can achieve that potential only with assistance. Thus, in view of the above Lantolf (2007:32) contends that it is in the ZPD that individuals are able to perform at high levels of ability than they can alone. According to SCT, mental functions that are beyond an individual's current level must be performed in collaboration with other people before they can be achieved independently.

Gifford and Mullaney (1997:10) emphasise the interesting aspect of ZPD. They propagate the idea that what individuals can do today with the collaboration of an adult or more capable peer; they can do competently on their own tomorrow. Thus, the potential developmental level of the learner becomes the next actual developmental level as a result of the learner's interactions with

others and the concomitant expanding of cognitive abilities. Therefore, it is important that learners work together in pairs and groups. Clark and Clark (2008:3-4) also acknowledge this view when they argue that input from the educator is not the only factor that creates the opportunity for SLA; peer-peer interaction also facilitates effective learning. Lantolf and Thorne (2007:211) mention that one of Vygotsky's most important findings is that learning collaboratively with others, particularly in instructional settings, precedes and shapes development.

An essential teaching skill that is involved in Vygotsky's theory is "scaffolding". Watts-Traflet and Truscott (2000:261) describe "scaffolding" as thoughtful ways of assisting learners in experiencing successful task completion. "Scaffolding" is an instructional process by which the educator adjusts or modifies the amount and type of support offered to the child that is best suited to his or her level of development (Seng 1997:11). The concept implies that educators intervene more at tougher parts, so that task difficulty is always within the ability range of the learner. Language within scaffolding performs the function of a tool that assists in mediating the minds of those involved in the task (Luria in Mantero 2003:255). The implication is that the educator has to be familiar with the learner's ZPD in order for supportive scaffolding to occur. A distinction is drawn between the ZPD and the Zone of Actual Development [ZAD] (Lantolf & Appel 1998:10; Mantero 2003:255). Whereas the ZPD determines the success of what a person can do with some assistance; the ZAD includes the tasks that an individual can successfully perform without assistance.

Scaffolding in reading and writing is paramount in that it is regarded as an integral part of reading and writing instruction. If we know that all readers and writers require scaffolding at some point, it seems obvious that ESL learners would need even more of it. According to Brown and Broemmel (2011:35) there are two basic premises to the way we conceptualise deep scaffolding. Firstly, the core of deep scaffolding is to regard ESL learners as "glass half-full", not "half-empty" by recognising ESL learners' potential as readers [and writers] based on the fact that they are competent speakers of their L1. ESL learners are often perceived as learners who are deficient of language and skills. Thus, looking at the "glass half-full" is to acknowledge ESL learners' personal backgrounds and prior knowledge as strengths not as weaknesses because they have age-appropriate life experiences in their L1. ESL learners' linguistic and cultural

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knowledge in their L1 should be taken as a steppingstone to build success. Secondly, deep scaffolding benefits both L1 and L2 learners. It is important to note that L1 learners who read and write below grade level will also require more scaffolding than their proficient peers and even those learners who are reading and writing on or above grade level can gain from highly interactive discussions that arise from deep scaffolding. Consequently, Brown and Broemmel (2011:35) stress that educators must not only provide more scaffolding, but more meaningful scaffolding.

Brown and Broemmel (2011:35) explain how deep scaffolding can be linked to Krashen's comprehensible input. If texts are written at  $i + 1$ , they will be easily comprehensible to ESL learners. However, most texts are written up to two grade levels above the grade for which they are intended. Thus, in practice, ESL learners who read well below grade level encounter texts written far beyond their  $i$  level, even as much as  $i + 10$  or  $i + 20$ . By applying Krashen's comprehensible input to scaffolding, the goal becomes raising the comprehensibility of a text. Therefore, deep scaffolding specifically focuses on reducing the difficulty of texts through multiple scaffolding efforts. Hence, educators can no longer afford to think that ESL learners can learn to read and write once they master English. Educators now have a responsibility to be informed that many of the instructional practices that assist ESL learners understand can also support L1 learners, and that all learners can benefit from the active instruction that is a critical part of deep scaffolding.

Overall, SCT claims that language is learned through socially mediated activities. The socio-cultural framework supports the view that some learners may be more successful than others because of their levels of access to or participation in a learning community, or because of the amount of mediation they receive from experts or peers, and because of how well they make use of that help (Saville-Troike 2012:123).

A decade after Firth and Wagner (1997) called for a better balance between the cognitive and the social in SLA research, substantial progress has been made in developing models of L2 acquisition that document the impact of social context on the cognitive processes presumed to underlie SLA (Tarone 2007:845). One such model is the sociolinguistic approach.

In her article, “Sociolinguistic approaches to second language acquisition”, Tarone (2007:848) presented empirical evidence to demonstrate the relationship between social context and L2 use. This evidence provides support for the view that L2 use is not just about cognition in a vacuum. Rather, the learner’s L2 input and processing of the L2 input in social settings are socially mediated; and social and linguistic contexts affect L2 acquisition, use, choice, and development.

SCT provides a crucial perspective on SLA. The emphasis is on the culture in which the child develops. Since language and culture are related, culture plays a major role in language development. Hence, educators need to acquire knowledge on the learners’ cultures in order to provide appropriate reading and writing instruction to L2 learners. This will assist in appropriate mediation and scaffolding, which will provide opportunities for learners to reach the ZAD and which will eventually lead to self-regulation.

#### **2.4.6 Concluding annotations on the five theories**

The five theories on SLA, discussed in this chapter provide clear insight into SLA. Each theory is unique and emphasises different aspects of SLA. Universal Grammar is based on the premise that humans are born with a natural ability or innate capacity to learn languages. Krashen’s theory of SLA consists of five hypothesis; all of which have had major influences on language teaching in the USA in the 1980s and 1990s. Cummins’s BICS/CALP framework explains how children who appear to get by quite well in conversational English, nonetheless struggle when they need to use it for academic purposes. Dynamic Systems Theory focuses on how one variable can affect other variables in language learning. Sociocultural Theory emphasises the culture in which the child develops.

It would be iniquitous to view any one of the above mentioned SLA theories as presenting a full alternative to any other SLA theories. All five theories provide interesting and vital insights into SLA research. However, it would be more valuable if these theories are viewed as complementary approaches in the study of second language processing and second language development. It may well be that the development of SLA theories should take into consideration multiple cognitive, social, psychological, cultural and linguistic factors. This will lead to a fuller understanding of SLA that is not only of theoretical but also of applied importance.

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It is also important not to conceive pedagogies as the application of theoretically informed teaching techniques. Instead, pedagogical intervention should be part and parcel of further developing theories and of continuing to understand the nature of human cognition and language learning. The integration of theory and practice is crucial to SLA; whereby theory provides a basis to guide practical activity, but at the same time practice informs and shapes theory. This is referred to as “praxis” (Van Compernelle & Williams 2013:278).

## **2.5 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter the expansion of English and the significance of the primary language were reiterated. The ubiquitous nature of the English language makes it a global lingua franca and the most common second language. Educating children first through their primary language and then through the language of wider communication is indispensable to the development of an educated global citizenry. The level of development of children’s home language is a strong predictor of their second language development.

Children who come to school with a solid foundation in their primary language develop stronger literacy abilities in the school language. Children’s knowledge and skills transfer across languages from the primary language they have learned at home to the school language. Research demonstrates that the longer a child can learn reading and academic content in his or her primary language while learning the second language, the better the chances of success beyond elementary school (Center for Applied Linguistics 2004:3). Bilingualism has positive effects on children’s linguistic and educational development. The additive bilingual model appears to be the most suitable model that could lead to cognitive benefits and to high-level multilingualism.

This chapter also presented a theoretical framework of the approaches to SLA which was used to interpret the data generated in this study. Five prominent approaches were discussed. Universal Grammar is part of that innate biologically endowed language faculty. This model which bases its general claims on the principles and parameters grammar has been extended to SLA. Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills and CALP are viewed as crucial to the development of reading and writing skills. Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills involve the informal language of conversation and CALP involves the language skills that are associated with



cognitive development. Of great significance in Krashen's theory is comprehensible input. This means that in order to learn an L2, the learner must understand what is said to him or her. Affective variables such as motivation, self-confidence, and low levels of anxiety relate to success in SLA. The emphasis of DST is that all variables are interrelated, and therefore changes in one variable will have an impact on all other variables that are part of the system. Sociocultural Theory places great emphasis on the culture in which the child develops. It proposes an interaction between the child's social world and his or her cognitive development.

In the next chapter the psychological, social, cognitive and cultural, and schools factors that affect second language learners' reading and writing achievements will be discussed.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **ILLUMINATING READING AND WRITING DEFICITS: FACTORS THAT IMPACT ON THE ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS' READING AND WRITING ACHIEVEMENTS**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter focused on the significance of the primary language in education and the approaches to second language acquisition. This literature chapter attempts, more specifically, to illuminate the reading and writing deficits in developing countries and to focus on the cultural, psychological, affective, cognitive, and social factors that impact on the ESL learners' reading and writing achievements in the English medium school. Although these factors are discussed independently, my review of literature clearly indicates their interconnections. Before discussing the above factors, an explication of reading and writing will be presented. Although an overview of reading and writing was presented in Chapter 1 (See 1.5.1), it is crucial to discuss these two essential skills in this chapter.

In the context of this study, reading and writing constitute literacy. The ability to read and understand a simple text is one of the most fundamental skills a child can learn. The quality of writing skills is exacerbated, particularly when learners cannot read. It is indisputable that school work becomes more cognitively challenging with each succeeding grade. Learners who cannot meet these cognitively challenging demands espoused at schools will either drop out of school or continue to repeat grades. Unfortunately for these learners without basic literacy skills there is little chance that they can escape the intergenerational cycle of poverty.

#### **3.2 READING AND WRITING IN THE HOME LANGUAGE: PREREQUISITES FOR ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT**

Literacy in the home language is the key to educational success. This conclusion is supported by voluminous research studies on home language education (See 2.3.1). Consequently, this section will attempt, more specifically, to focus on reading and writing in the home language.

Trudell, Dowd, Piper and Bloch (2012:5) argue that of all the core competencies recognised to contribute to lifelong learning and sustainable development, none is quite as central as the ability to read and write. Of all school learning, success in literacy, especially reading, is certainly among the most important achievements for all learners due to its key role in academic learning and consequently social and economic opportunities (Peregoy & Boyle 2000:237). Reading involves the decoding of language from written forms. The spoken form of a language provides the relevant linguistic units: phonological strings, morphemes, and words (Droop & Verhoeven 2003:78). Reading in general is a complex cognitive skill, involving many sub-skills, processes, and knowledge sources ranging from the basic lower level processes involved in decoding the print to higher level skills involving syntax, semantics, and discourse, and even to skills of text representation and integration of ideas with the reader's global knowledge (Nassaji 2011:173).

Jhingran (2011:17) affirms that reading is a foundational skill on which all formal education depends. Good reading skills assist learners to access the curriculum. Reading with comprehension leads to learning. Reading forms the basis of all language skills, particularly writing, because the ability to write depends on the ability to read, and what is written can only be meaningful if it can be read (Stahl in Phajane & Mokhele 2013:463). Therefore reading and writing are mutually supportive and intertwined.

On the other hand, writing goes from physical skills involving forming letters, to higher level skills such as spelling, to the highest level of discourse skills involved in writing essays (Cook 2008:87). The main reason for writing is to communicate meaning and ideas. From the earliest mark-making children are showing an understanding that messages can be recorded. As they realise that print carries a constant message they recognise the need for more conventional forms of handwriting which other people can read (Northern Ireland Curriculum 2014:10).

As two of the four language skills which learners need to acquire in their earliest years in formal schooling, reading and writing builds the foundation for all formal learning in school. Additionally, literacy [reading and writing] is a central component of the economy, transformative democracy and an individual's life competencies (De Vos & Van der Merwe 2014:3).

However, generally, reading and writing problems are endemic in South Africa. In recent years, a plethora of research studies has revealed that majority of South African learners cannot read and write at grade level. For example, the SACMEQ 2 and SACMEQ 3 studies, the PIRLS study, the ANA results and several other studies discussed in Chapter 1 (See 1.5.2). The most shocking result is that many South African learners are illiterate after 3 years of schooling (De Vos & Van der Merwe 2014:3). This implies that learners have not achieved grade level reading and writing competence in the foundation phase.

During the 1990s, many low-income countries committed to the United Nation's Education for All (EFA) goals of ensuring universal access to primary education and learners' completion of all primary grades (Gove & Wetterberg 2011:1). Education for All has become synonymous with high enrollment and completion rates (Jhingran 2011:16). However, improvements in enrollment rates have not always translated into high quality education or even basic learning (Gove & Wetterberg 2011:1). Thus, the crisis in learning needs to be the focus now; since the most basic expectation from primary education is that the child should be able to read and write (Jhingran 2011:16). Moreover, Gove and Cvelich (2010:ii) reiterate that for too long, low-income countries and the international education community – so focused on universal access – have neglected reading as a gauge of education quality. As a result, nearly whole generations of children at a time are falling behind the learning curve.

A proliferation of research studies from around the world demonstrates that literacy is fundamental to success in the formal education system, and in most cases the principal site for learning to read and write is assumed to be the primary school, usually the early grades (Trudell, Dowd, Piper & Bloch 2012:5). Consequently, several reading assessments such as the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA), Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and Pre-PIRLS, and the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) have been implemented in numerous countries. ASER and EGRA assess basic literacy skills; and PIRLS and SACMEQ are international assessments of literacy skills (United States Agency for International Development 2013:2). In most international assessments [for example, PIRLS, Pre-PIRLS, and SACMEQ] children's reading skills are not assessed before fourth grade (United States Agency for International Development 2013:2).

Additionally, other non-government organisations that focus on literacy learning include Save the Children, Research Triangle Institute International [RTI], Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa [PRAESA], and Summer Institute of Linguistics International [SIL]. For learners in the latter grades who are poor readers, it is often too late to carry out efficient and effective remedial instruction. To complement and overcome the flaws of existing international assessments, a new protocol, EGRA has been developed to assess the main skills that are known to predict success within the early grades of primary school [grade 1 to grade 3] (Sprengr-Charolles 2008:1)

Save the Children has pioneered an intervention called Literacy Boost [LB], which supports the development of reading skills in young children (Trudell, Dowd, Piper & Bloch 2012:5). LB is an innovative, evidence-based response to an alarming global trend – the rise in the numbers of children completing primary school who are unable to read well enough to learn (Save the Children 2011:1). Literacy Boost uses assessments to identify gaps in the core reading skills [letter knowledge, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, reading fluency, and comprehension], trains educators to teach the national curriculum with an emphasis on these skills, and mobilises communities for reading action (Trudell et al. 2012:5). Currently, LB is being implemented in more than 12 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean (Save the Children 2011:1). World Vision and Save the Children's literacy partnership goal is by 2015, literacy results for 5000 000 girls and boys in 1 000 primary schools are improved in Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, and Rwanda (Save the Children and World Vision International 2013:1).

Research Triangle Institute (RTI) International, in collaboration with other implementing organisations, several donor organisations, and African education researchers, has been involved in the development of a tool called EGRA. EGRA assesses children's acquisition of basic literacy skills (United States Agency for International Development 2013:2). EGRA assessments have been implemented in at least 50 countries [as of July 2011], with 23 of them in Africa (Trudell et al. 2012:6). The results being found through EGRA indicate a widespread lack of reading skills among early grade primary school learners (Trudell et al 2012:6). Given these disappointing findings, RTI has worked with Ministries of Education in several African countries to develop reading interventions.

In 1992 PRAESA's Early Literacy Unit (ELU) began its work – first in alternative education and thereafter in multilingual education (Bloch 2006:25). PRAESA's ELU has worked to help transform the way young children are taught to read and write in the multilingual school and community settings of South Africa as well as in other Sub-Saharan countries (Trudell et al. 2012:6). The focus is on the learner's primary language. PRAESA promotes emergent biliteracy with a focus on the value of using stories for learning. The ELU research programmes have included the Battswood Biliteracy Project (Bloch 2006:29-32) and the Free Reading in Schools project (Bloch 2006:32-34).

For over 30 years SIL has done significant work in piloting bilingual and multilingual education projects around the African continent (Trudell et al. 2012:6). Collaborating with a range of partners in government, non government organisations, community-based organisations, and national universities, SIL contributes to Multilingual Education (MLE) programmes in Senegal, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Burkina Faso (Trudell et al. 2012:6).

Within the context of major transitions throughout the world, the organisations mentioned above perspicaciously focused on countries that encounter major challenges in literacy. The extensive studies on reading and writing that were conducted by some of these organisations amplify the crisis in education and the plight of early grade learners. Internationally the situation appears to be relatively bleak, especially for L2 learners. It is anticipated that these organisations will continue to provide interventions and support to early grade learners in countries that are experiencing challenges working with L2 learners.

The state of education in some of the developing or underdeveloped countries [referring to countries in Africa, Asia, and South America] of the world seems to be persistently appalling. An attributing factor is the fact that many children in these countries are learning through the medium of an L2. To illustrate the crisis in education attention will now be focused on some of these developing countries in Asia and Africa.

### **3.2.1 Literacy in Asia**

Although Asia comprises a vast number of countries, attention will be focused on India. For several years South Africa and India have had strong ties. This began more than 150 years ago,

when the first group of Indians arrived in South Africa. The strong relationship between these two countries is still continuing with the recent formation of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa). These countries have amalgamated to form an association of five major emerging national economies. The coalescence of these countries has created strong partnerships in trade and industry. Furthermore, India and South Africa encounter similar challenges in their education systems, especially when it comes to languages in education.

For more than two decades, India has demonstrated its determination to meet the EFA goals (Banerji, Bhattacharjea & Wadhwa 2014:3). Accordingly, the education system has focused on access to school. The country's education budget has more than tripled in the last five years (Banerji et al. 2014:3). Billions of dollars had been invested by the federal and state governments to build classrooms, recruit educators, provide school lunches, and buy books (Gove & Cvelich 2010:3). With almost 90% of children having a primary school within one kilometre (Banerji et al. 2014:3), and more than 95% of all children in the 6 to 14 age group now enrolled in schools (Annual Status of Education Report 2013:69), India's picture of an "Education for All" was beginning to come into focus in 2005 (Gove & Cvelich 2010:3).

However, when Pratham, an Indian non government organisation (NGO), conducted its first Annual Status of Education Report [ASER] in 2005, the picture was less encouraging. Bhattacharjea et al. (2011:1) emphasise that ASER, conducted each year since 2005 in all rural districts of India, shows that in 2010, 53% of Grade 5 children in rural India could read a Grade 2 level text. In 2013, Pratham analysed data from households in 550 districts out of 585 districts (Annual Status of Education Report 2013:69). Nationally, the situation has hardly changed over the eight year period for which ASER data is available. According to ASER (2013:69) in 2013 majority [47,3%] of the Grade 1 learners could not read letters, and only 4,4% of the learners could read a Grade 1 level text. In Grade 2 only 11,8% and 11% of the learners could read a Grade 1 level and Grade 2 level text, respectively. Shockingly, even learners in Grade 3 could not read letters [12,7]; 18,5% could not read a Grade 1 level text, and 21,6% could not read a Grade 2 level text. For further analysis, the following table indicates the percentage of children by grade and reading level in rural schools in India in 2013. The table reflects information related to the foundation phase only.

**Table 3.1: The percentage of children by grade and reading level in rural districts in India**

GRADE	CANNOT EVEN READ LETTERS	CAN READ LETTERS BUT NOT MORE	CAN READ WORDS BUT NOT GRADE 1 LEVEL OR HIGHER	CAN READ GRADE 1 LEVEL TEXT BUT NOT GRADE 2 LEVEL TEXT	CAN READ GRADE 2 LEVEL TEXT	TOTAL
1	47,3	32,3	12,6	4,4	3,6	100
2	23,1	33,4	20,8	11,8	11,0	100
3	12,7	25,0	22,2	18,5	21,6	100

(Annual Status of Education Report 2013:70)

Although research conducted by ASER (2011:2-3) in India showed that children's learning levels improved over the course of a year, in every state most children are at least two grades below the level of proficiency assumed by their textbooks. For example, a total of 7,85% of grade 2 learners in the provinces of Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Rajasthan could only fluently read a grade 1 level text when baseline assessments were conducted. An even stark finding was that only 21,33% of grade 3 learners from the above regions could fluently read a grade 1 level text at end line. When assessments were conducted six months in to the school year in 19 schools in India, only 4,5% of grade 1 learners and 33,6% of grade 2 learners could only read a simple sentence (Jhingran 2011:4). Furthermore, Jhingran (2011:3) adds that when grade 2 learners were tested a mere 1,61%, 1,8%, and 1,7% of learners in India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, respectively could comprehend what they have read.

Bhattacharjea, Wadhwa and Banerji (2011:9) reiterate that in language there is a substantial gap between what textbooks expect and what children can actually do. In 2010, ASER conducted assessments in 13 000 government primary schools across India; tracking approximately 30 000 children over a period of one year; in five states across the country (Bhattacharjea et al. 2011:2-3). In each district 60 government schools with primary sections were sampled, and up to 25 learners from Grade 2 and 25 learners from Grade 4 were randomly sampled from the enrollment registers from each of these schools. The sample was drawn from 15 districts located in five



states, and consisted of a total of 900 schools and close to 30 000 learners (Bhattacharjea et al. 2011:3). Although children's learning levels did show improvement over the course of a year, most children were at least two grades below the level of proficiency assumed by their textbooks. For example, out of more than 11 500 Grade 2 learners tested, less than 30% could read simple words. A year later, when tested in Grade 3, about 40% of these children could do so. However, children are expected to read simple words in Grade 1. Out of about 11 000 children tested early in Grade 5, only 3 out of every 10 children were able to comfortably and fluently read a Grade 3 level text. A substantial majority of children thus could not read a text designed for children two grades below them. By the beginning of Grade 2, over half of all the children could write letters that were dictated to them. This number rises to over 70% by the end line. However, Grade 1 textbooks expect these children to be writing these simple words on their own by the end of Grade 1. Even by the end line when children had moved to Grade 3 in most states, barely more than 50% could correctly write a simple word that was dictated to them (Bhattacharjea et al. 2011:14).

In India's neighbouring country Pakistan there is a severe access to education problem, but access to education is not the end in itself. ASER Pakistan's 2010 assessment of 54 062 rural children, 5-16 years old learners for up to Grade 2 and Grade 3 competencies, revealed poor results in reading (Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi 2011:2). This data demonstrated that a significant percentage of children could not read and write. Thus, a learning enhancement campaign, Chalo Parrho Barrho [Lets Read and Grow] [CPB], was introduced in two rural villages, Rawani and Wahid Buksh Lar (Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi 2011:3). An encouraging result that came forward was the increase in overall learner enrollment. In Rawani there was a 41% and 31% increase in the girls and boys primary schools, respectively. In Wahid Buksh Lar there was a 57% and 14% increase in the girls and boys primary schools, respectively. The combined final reading assessment results for both the villages in Urdu and English showed increases in achievement at sentence and story levels (Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi 2011:21-22).

Furthermore, in 2010 Save the Children began implementing the LB programme in Allai, Pakistan (Save the Children 2011:1). Save the Children identified 15 schools [ten LB schools and five comparison schools] in Allai. While LB learners started the year with lower reading scores than comparison learners, they significantly outperformed their comparison peers in end

of year scores and overall gain in scores for each of the five core reading skills. The greatest progress was made in fluency and accuracy in both the languages, Urdu [the language of instruction] and Pashto [the dominant home language of both the LB and comparison learners] (Save the Children 2011:1). Moreover, the number of non-readers in LB schools dropped significantly at end line when compared to non-readers in comparison schools. Also, LB has led to important learning benefits for girls, who often confront more difficult hurdles in their access to quality education in Pakistan. Girls in LB schools ended the year with higher skill levels across all reading skills and greater learning in both Urdu and Pashto compared to girls in comparison schools. It can be deduced that CPB and LB have assisted in improving the literacy results of both boys and girls in Pakistan.

When referring to other countries in South Asia Jhingran (2011:11) asserts that the common issues surrounding literacy are that in these countries, a majority of learners are not learning to read even simple sentences by grade 2; in no country do children reach grade level expectations; writing ability is very low in all countries; and there is high disparity in reading levels from Grade 2 onwards. The above conclusions are based on literacy assessments conducted in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

There is substantial evidence suggesting that India and its neighbouring countries are making notable efforts to ensure the right to education for all. However, at the same time these countries face daunting problems when it comes to education, particularly reading and writing. Studies conducted by ASER revealed deplorable results in reading. Critical questions to consider are: What are the factors that contribute to these disastrous results in India and its neighbouring countries, and is the situation similar in Africa?

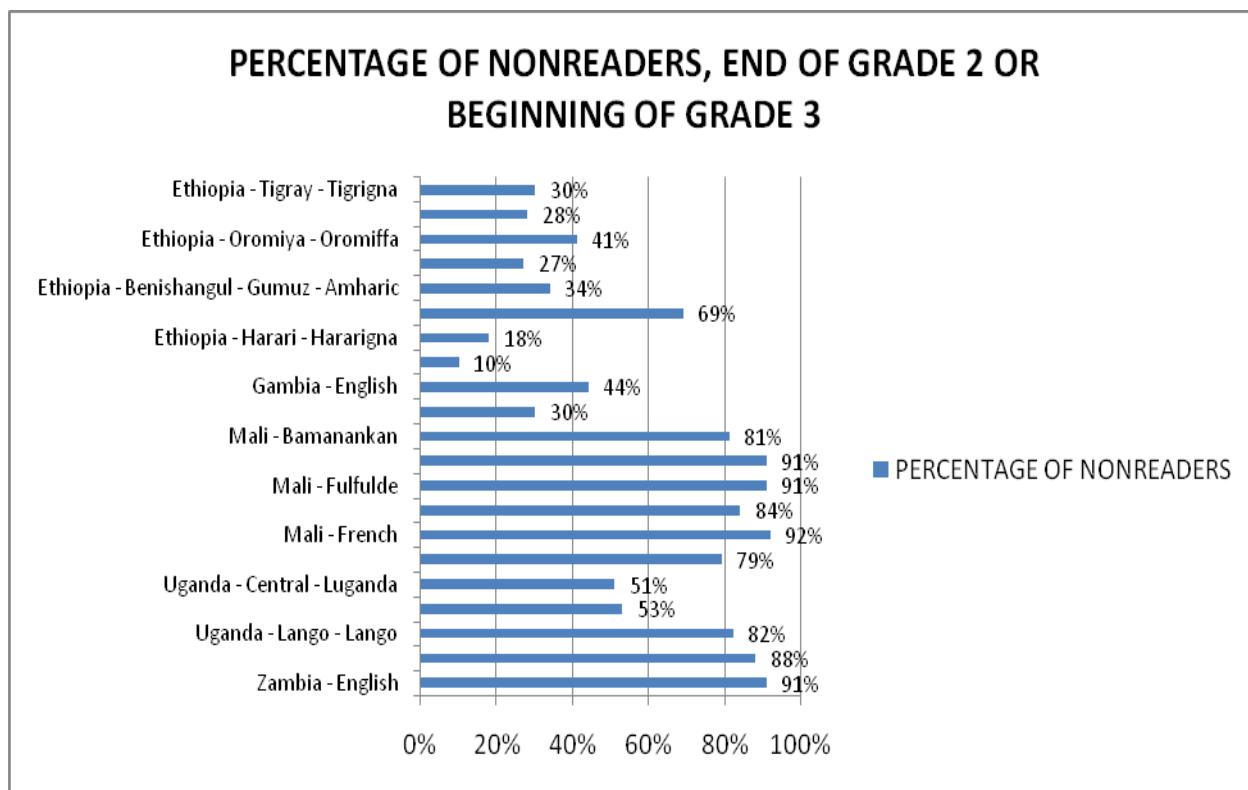
### **3.2.2 Literacy in Africa**

While primary school enrollments have increased considerably in Africa throughout the past decade, a growing body of complementary research studies from regional and international assessments of academic achievement indicate that a significant percentage of learners have not mastered content knowledge (United States Agency for International Development 2013:1). EGRA results in Africa provide information on whether learners have mastered key reading skills necessary for fluent reading and comprehension. Overall, EGRA results from Africa

demonstrate that most learners have not yet acquired a basic level of reading proficiency by the end of Grade 2 [or beginning of Grade 3] to allow them to transition from learning to read to reading to learn in later grades (United States Agency for International Development 2013:1).

Figure 3.1 shows the percentage of learners tested, at the end of Grade 2 or the beginning of Grade 3, who were unable to read a single word in the reading fluency component of the assessment, which requires learners to read a short text in the language in which they are being taught to read. A worrisome finding is that in several countries, not only have most learners not acquired a basic level of proficiency, but a large proportion is unable to read at all. For example, the United States Agency for International Development (2013:1-2) provides the following results, in Mali [where the following languages are used in the education system: French, Songhoi, Fulfulde, Bomu, and Bamanankan], between 81% and 92% of learners tested were unable to read a single word. In addition, significant differences in reading outcomes exist by region within countries. Such is the case in Uganda where approximately half of the learners in Central Province are unable to read compared to more than 80% in Lango Province. In Ethiopia, there is a much lower percentage of nonreaders in Addis Ababa (10%) than in all the other regions in the country, where between 18% and 69% of learners are unable to read a single word.

**Figure 3.1: Percentage of learners who could not read a single word, 2013**



United States Agency for International Development (2013:2)

Another important factor to consider is reading comprehension. According to the United States Agency for International Development (2013:2) EGRA surveys in Africa reveal that a very small percentage of learners in the early grades are able to sufficiently comprehend what they read. In Liberia, Mali, and Uganda the percentage of learners that read with at least 80% comprehension was less than 4%. In Ethiopia, between 0,5% and 13% of learners could read with comprehension, depending on the language and region in the country. The percentage of learners who could read with comprehension at the end of two years of schooling was 23% in Gambia. Although this was higher than in other regions and countries surveyed in Africa, it is still very low.

### 3.2.2.1 Early Grade Reading Assessments in Gambia

A large-scale reading assessment was conducted in Gambia with 1 200 Grades 1, 2, and 3 learners [randomly selected from 40 schools] who were learning to read in English (Sprengr-

Charolles 2008:1). This study revealed that 80% of the Gambian first graders were unable to read a word and 91% a pseudoword [invented word]. In third grade, this was still the case for approximately 50% and 76% of the children for word and pseudoword reading, respectively (Sprenger-Charolles 2008:21). Eighty two percent of Gambian children were unable to correctly read more than five words per minute of the text used to assess reading comprehension (Sprenger-Charolles 2008:23).

#### 3.2.2.2 Early Grade Reading Assessments in Egypt

In Egypt, EGRA for Grade 3 was implemented in March 2013 in a nationally representative sample of 200 schools: 40 Ministry of Education primary schools selected randomly from each of five sub-national regions encompassing 25 of Egypt's 27 governorates (LaTowsky, Cumiskey & Collins 2013:X). The 1 992 tested learners were randomly selected from Grade 3 enrollment lists prior to each school visit. Five boys and five girls were tested in each school. The results are representative nationally and for each of the five regions. LaTowsky et al. (2013:10-11) state that the key findings of this national baseline assessment demonstrated that most Grade 3 learners had limited pre-reading skills, too few learners could read with sufficient fluency to comprehend the texts, less than 20% of the learners performed at or above proposed benchmarks for all the subtasks, the average learner scores on nearly all subtasks were less than half the proposed benchmark, and many learners whom educators observe reading quickly and smoothly are "mechanical" readers who do not comprehend well what they read.

Overall, 297 learners or 14% of the sampled Grade 3 learners were nonreaders. Nonreaders were learners who scored zero on all three of the letter-sound identification, non-word reading, and oral reading fluency tests. These learners could not read correctly a single word nor correctly identify a single letter sound on the first line of each test. Generally, learners had weak scores on all reading comprehension tests, accurately answering just 32% of reading comprehension questions (LaTowsky et al. 2013:13). These results indicate that most Grade 3 learners are struggling to recognise the sound associated with each letter, to decode unfamiliar words, and to recognise known words. Their low scores reflect both low accuracy and slow reading speed.

### 3.2.2.3 Early Grade Reading Assessments in Ethiopia

In May and June 2010, EGRA was performed in eight regions in Ethiopia (Piper 2010:1). The assessment was developed in six languages for Grade 2 and 3 learners. The findings revealed that a significant percentage of children in Grade 2 read zero words correctly in the eight regions (Piper 2010:3). In the province of Sidama the percentage of nonreaders was 69,2%, and in Oromiya it was 41,2%. Only Harari [17,9%], and Addis Ababa [10,1%] have percentages of zero scores less than 20%, with the largest regions all having Grade 2 zero scores above 25% (Piper 2010:3). Even in Grade 3 significant percentages of children remained nonreaders.

For Somali [21,4%], Amhara [17%], Sidama[54%], and Oromiya [20,6%], it is striking that after three years of school, such large proportions of children remained completely illiterate in their primary language (Piper 2010:3-4). In each of the eight regions, at least 80% of the learners – and in the case of Sidama, 100% - were not reading at the expected oral reading fluency rate (Piper 2010:4). When it comes to reading comprehension, scores are extremely low, with more than 50% of the children in most regions unable to answer a single simple comprehension question (Piper 2010:8). The exceptions are for urban areas and regions, and in some schools in Grade 3, where children are only starting to understand what they read.

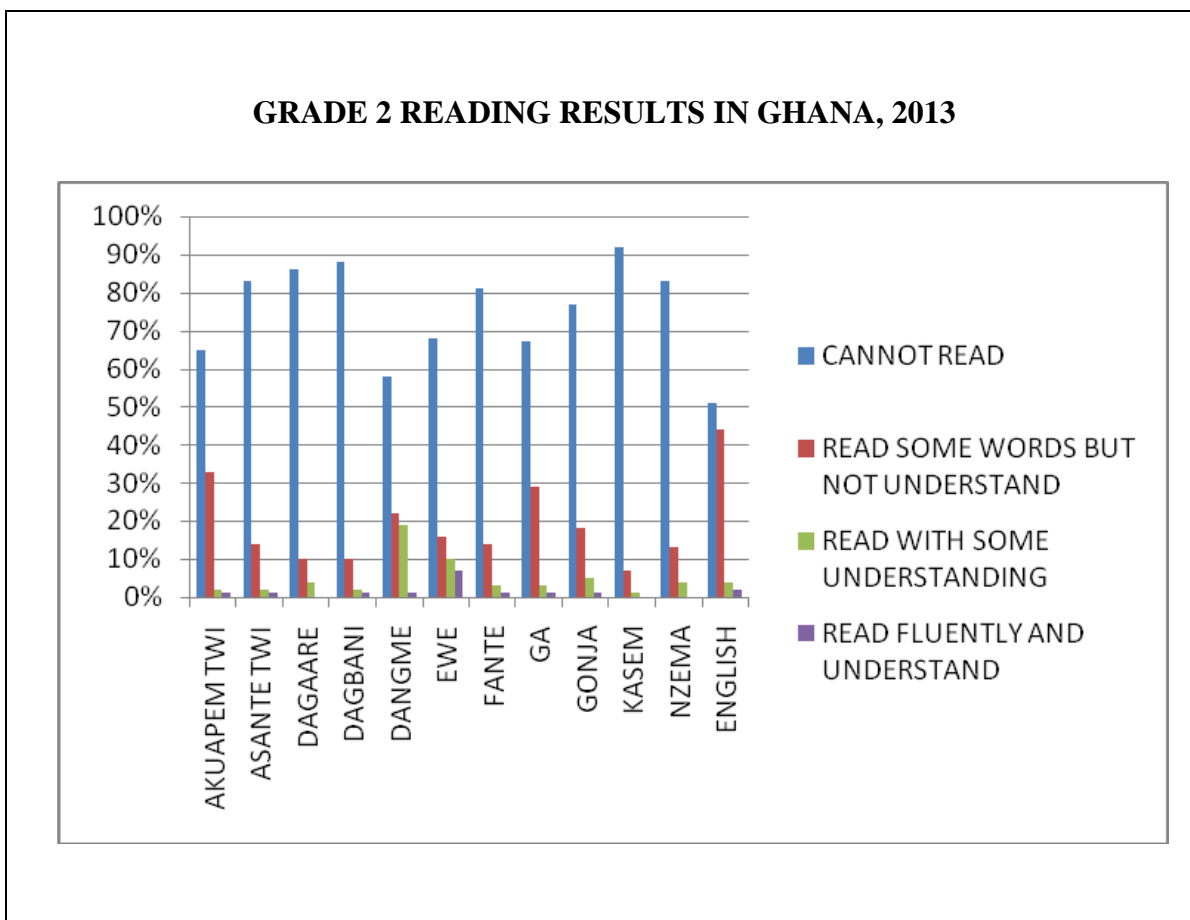
In 2011, Save the Children began its second year of LB in the Dendi district of Ethiopia. In nearly every skill assessed, learners in LB schools statistically significantly outperformed comparison school learners. A large portion of learners from both the LB and comparison groups could not read a single word of connected text at baseline. At end line, a dramatic rise in readers was seen in the LB schools versus the comparison schools. The 32 percentage point gain for LB learners was significantly higher than the 10 percent point gain for comparison learners (Save the Children 2012:2).

### 3.2.2.4 Early Grade Reading Assessments in Ghana

In Ghana, EGRA assessments were conducted in 805 schools and with 7 923 learners; with most schools in the sample [80,4%] being classified as rural, and nearly a third [32,1%] were in deprived districts (Kochetkova & Brombacher 2013:9). The study revealed that by the end of Grade 2 the majority of public school learners could not yet read with comprehension – neither

in a Ghanaian language nor in English (Kochetkova & Brombacher 2013:11). In every language, at least half, and often more, of the learners assessed could not read a single word correctly. Some learners had the ability to recognise a few words, but most of these learners could not yet understand what they read. Of the learners assessed in each language, in general only the top 2% or fewer were able to read with fluency and comprehension. The following figure indicates an overview of the reading results in Ghana. Figures are indicated in percentage.

**Figure 3.2: An overview of the Grade 2 reading results in Ghana, 2013**



Kochetkova & Brombacher (2013:A2-A60)

### 3.2.2.5 Early Grade Reading Assessments in Malawi

In Malawi, the 2010 data revealed that both a school-wide effect as well as evidence that LB effectively promoted reading skills in all class sizes (Trudell et al. 2012:12). Learners in LB schools achieved similar results, on average, whether they were in classes of 75 learners or 175

learners, while learners in comparison schools struggled in larger classes. However, according to the sample data from EGRA 2012, it is clear that Malawian learners are not learning how to read in the first year of primary school and are learning very little in the two years that follow (Pouezevara, Costello & Banda 2012:10).

The average learner beginning Grade 4 is reading only 15 words per minute of a short story, with 13% comprehension. A child in Grade 2 is only beginning to learn letter names and syllable reading, and 90% of the learners could not read a single word of a short story (Pouezevara et al. 2012:10). In 2012, none of the Grade 1 benchmarks set have been met by learners starting Grade 2. Even learners commencing Grade 4 are only just meeting the Grade 1 benchmarks in most areas. For a large proportion of learners the assessment was discontinued due to their inability to answer any questions correctly.

#### 3.2.2.6 Early Grade Reading Assessments in Senegal

In Senegal, EGRA assessments were conducted in 32 schools that offered teaching in French and Wolof (Sprenger-Charolles 2008:5). For learners learning how to read in French, the assessments were conducted in the first, second and third grades of primary school; for children learning to read in Wolof, the assessments were conducted in the first and third grades of primary school. For the task of reading familiar words in context, about one child out of two [45% for the test in French, and 51% for the test in Wolof] were unable to correctly read more than five words of the 60-words text in one minute. For the reading comprehension task, 4% [for the test in French] and 8% [for the test in Wolof] of these children achieved scores between one and five [correct answers to the comprehension questions] (Sprenger-Charolles 2008:7).

On the whole it is disheartening to discover the catastrophic reading and writing results in the African continent. All the ten African countries [Egypt, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Senegal, Uganda, and Zambia] surveyed and included in this literature chapter have conclusively demonstrated that reading and writing deficits are endemic in many parts of Africa. There appears to be conspicuous similarities in the findings of studies conducted in Asia [India and its neighbouring countries, Pakistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka] and Africa. These two continents which comprise of developing countries have to accelerate their educational progress in order to keep up with rest of the world.



The fact that the sheer quantity of information available in the world – much of it relevant to survival and basic well-being – is exponentially greater than that available only a few years ago, and the rate of its growth is accelerating, implies that learners who cannot read and write will not be able to access this important information. Although South Africa is in the African continent, literacy in South Africa will be discussed independently. This is because the present study is conducted in South Africa.

### **3.2.3 Literacy in South Africa**

Prior to discussing the literacy levels in South Africa, it is important to highlight the main aspects of the latest available basic school data. In 2012, there were 25 826 ordinary schools [schools that are not special schools] in South Africa. KwaZulu-Natal [6 176, or 23,9% of the national total] and the Eastern Cape [5 754, or 22,3% of the national total] had the highest and second highest number of schools, while the Northern Cape [580, or 2,2% of the national total] had the lowest number (Department of Basic Education 2014:5).

Additionally, in 2012, there were 12 428 069 learners in ordinary schools in the country as a whole. Three provinces – namely, the Free State, the Northern Cape and North West – respectively showed less than a million learners in ordinary schools. In KZN and Gauteng more than two million learners were enrolled in ordinary schools, comprising, respectively of 23,2% and 16,7% of the national total (Department of Basic Education 2014:5). From the above data, it is clearly evident that KZN has the most schools and the most learners. Since this study is conducted in KZN this study could provide valuable insights on the factors that affect foundation phase ESL learners reading and writing skills; and recommendations on how to possibly improve majority of the country's foundation phase learners' reading and writing achievements.

Furthermore, the survey revealed that in 2012, the highest proportion of learners in ordinary schools was located in the foundation phase [32,3%] (Department of Basic Education 2014:11). As one moves up to the higher levels within the schooling system, the proportion of learners decreases; the intermediate phase comprised of 22,9%, the senior phase 24%, and the Further Education and Training Band 20,4%. This could imply that many learners do not progress beyond the foundation phase. This has serious repercussions for the country, and more especially for the learners themselves. These learners would have developed only the most basic

literacy skills. This would make it extremely difficult for them to get high-quality occupations or reach any worthy professional levels. In order for these learners to advance beyond the foundation phase they need to develop adequate proficiency in reading and writing.

For South Africa, in-depth statistics and analysis regarding ANA, PIRLS, Pre-PIRLS, and SACMEQ were presented in Chapter 1 [See 1.5.2 for the most recent available data]. Hence, to avoid repetition this chapter will present additional information concerning the reading and writing deficits in South Africa. In the National Systemic Evaluation in 2007 the overall literacy score for Grade 3 learners in South Africa was 35,9% (Jhingran 2011:6). Only 44,2% of Grade 3 learners could read and 33,6% of Grade 3 learners could write. This implies that the writing performance is significantly lower than reading.

In late January 2009, RTI International collaborated with the South African Department of Education and the Molteno Institute of Language and Literacy [MILL] to collect a baseline EGRA in Limpopo, Mpumalanga, and North West provinces (Piper 2009:1). Ten treatment schools and five control schools were selected in each province. Depending on the size of the school, the evaluators then selected between 10 and 20 Grade 1 learners at random. In total, the baseline sample included 650 learners [450 treatment and 200 control], with 546 assessed again at the end of the project [283 treatment and 263 control] (Ralaingita & Wetterberg 2011:88). The assessment was carried out in three languages: Setswana [North West], Sepedi [Limpopo], and isiZulu [Mpumalanga]. In each school all the Grade 1 classes were included.

The achievement scores of learners for the four sub-tasks of EGRA provided very disheartening results. Deeper analysis showed that only four out of 650 learners in the sample [0,6%], met the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Literacy Skills [DIBELS] international benchmark for learners not at risk for reading difficulties (Piper 2009:7). This implies that 99,4% of South African learners sampled are at risk. This suggests that very few of the learners in the baseline sample had much, if any, introduction to basic phonemic awareness skills. Notably, 65,2% of learners sampled were unable to identify a single letter sound at the baseline (Piper 2009:1).

Of the 650 learners who attempted the letter sound task, only 524 undertook the common word identification task. Of those that did, the mean score was only 0,18 (Piper 2009:7). When asked to identify commonly used words, 90,2% of the sample did not identify any words at all, and

none met the international benchmark for word identification (Piper 2009:1). Only two learners attempted to read the short passage, and one of those was unable to correctly read any words. Only one learner attempted the comprehension questions associated with the passage reading but was not successful.

These statistics provide strong evidence that the reading skills of the learners in the baseline sample were quite low, and for most learners, largely nonexistent. Most learners showed few literacy skills at the beginning of Grade 1. An important factor to consider is that data was collected at the very beginning of Grade 1, less than a month into the school year. However, these findings buttress the ANA, PIRLS, and SACMEQ findings presented in Chapter 1.

Sadly, the results being found by EGRA in most developing countries are nothing less than disastrous. It is hoped that promising programmes such as LB expand to reach more developing countries in order to improve these results. It is encouraging to note that in South Africa the Department of Education has already taken the initiative to develop locally appropriate versions of EGRA in six primary languages, which save evaluators the effort of further adaptation and piloting (Ralaingita & Wetterberg 2011:101). For countries where an EGRA has not been implemented previously, the instrument will require adaptations.

From the discussion of the above catastrophic results it can be concluded that the best opportunity to teach children the skills of reading and writing is in the early grades [1-3] (Gove & Cvelich 2010:ii). If this window is missed, then children who have not begun to read and understand what they read will continue to fall behind unless swift action is taken. In this context it is crucial that foundation phase literacy be taught effectively and that there be structures in place that can identify reading and writing difficulties as early as possible. Because reading and writing involves linguistic, cultural, psychological, sociological, developmental, and cognitive domains, the roots of the problem are consequently diverse and multifaceted. In an attempt to understand these problems, the cultural, psychological, developmental, cognitive and social factors that impact on the ESL learners' reading and writing achievements will be explored.

### **3.3 FACTORS RELATED TO ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS' READING AND WRITING ACHIEVEMENTS**

English second language learners are generally confronted with a multiplicity of challenges when they enter English medium schools. Apart from receiving instruction and content knowledge in the L2 they encounter other difficulties. Thus, it is expedient to acknowledge that ESL learners who are not proficient in the home language will most likely experience reading and writing difficulties. The fact that reading and writing in a second language is more complex than reading and writing in a primary language poses a major challenge to these learners. In order to provide appropriate support for these learners, it is imperative that educators are aware of the factors that could be related to the ESL learners' reading and writing achievements. In this section, various factors that could influence learners' success in reading and writing will be discussed.

#### **3.3.1 Cultural factors and acculturation**

Vygotsky's influential views on the relationship between language and culture have been the quintessential feature in many studies. Hence, Watts-Taffe and Truscott (2000:258-263) assert that in addition to the challenges involved in learning a new language, ESL learners are also confronted with the challenges in learning a new culture. The predominant concept of culture is "culture as the way of life" which is the sociological sense of culture (Rajabi & Ketabi 2012:707).

Lyons (1995:302) describes culture as socially acquired knowledge. Rajabi and Ketabi (2012:705) maintain that the term culture refers to the systems of knowledge shared by a group of people, including a group's values, beliefs, and attitudes, notions of appropriate behaviour, statuses, role expectations, and worldview. Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1999:60) describe culture as a system of symbols which are transmitted, that is they are passed on from one generation to another; which are learned, that is they are not innate but are acquired by persons in association with others, and which are shared, that is there is a fair degree of consensus concerning what is proper and improper behaviour, and what meanings are attached to objects, situations or events.

According to Brown (2007:188) culture is the context within which we exist, think, feel, and relate to others. The fact that no society exists without a culture reflects the need for culture to fulfill certain biological and psychological needs. A language is part of a culture, and a culture is part of a language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture (Brown 2007:189). There is no doubt that one's knowledge of one's primary language is culturally transmitted (Lyons 1995:303). It is acquired, though not necessarily learned, by virtue of one's membership of a particular society.

It is apparent that culture, as an ingrained set of behaviours and modes of perception, becomes highly important in the learning of a second language [L2] (Brown 2007:189). A typically general education classroom comprises of learners who have varying skill levels and diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Sheppard 2001:132). Chamberlain (2005:196) claims that language is central to culture, but culture is much broader than language. Thus, one cannot understand a culture without understanding its language (Peck 1991:7).

The relationship between language and culture is important in determining the degree of acculturation (Tong & College 1996:524). Mitsutomi and MacDonald (2005:232) asserted that "learning a language equals learning a culture which birthed it". Fishman (2005:6) acknowledges this view when he states that "language carries culture; language is symbolic of culture; and language is itself part of the culture that it carries and symbolises". Einhorn (2002:55) endorses the above assertions when she emphasises that L2 learning is also second culture learning. Thus, Rajabi and Ketabi (2012:707) affirm that learners who are said to have acquired a language are those who are able to align themselves with the culture of the target language.

A prominent feature that permeates the ESL classroom is acculturation. Acculturation is a process whereby continuous flow of traits, behaviours, ways of life, pass between people of different cultures resulting in new life styles (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg 1995:8). It is the change which occurs in the lives of people when exposed, over a period of time, to the influence of another more dominant group.

Watts-Taffe and Truscott (2000:259) postulate that the terms acculturation and assimilation are often used to describe processes by which people establish membership in a new culture that is to

establish themselves to be like the rest of the group. These researchers further distinguish between acculturation and assimilation. While acculturation allows people to become part of a new culture at the same time as maintaining aspects of their native culture, assimilation requires people to choose one cultural group over another – to discard aspects of native culture and replace them with aspects of the new culture, which is often described as “mainstream” culture. Rajabi and Ketabi (2012:705) argue that generally, there is a tacit agreement that the assimilation of the target culture which results in acculturation will encourage communicative competence which in turn will encourage language learning. On the contrary, Watts-Taffe and Truscott (2000:259) emphasise that in a truly multicultural classroom, acculturation should be encouraged over assimilation.

Berry (in Noels, Kimberly, Clement & Richard 1996:215) claims that four models of acculturation can be identified depending on the degree of engagement in each group. These include:

- ❖ Separation (rejection of the target group and identification with the native group).
- ❖ Assimilation (rejection of the native group and identification with the target group)
- ❖ Deculturation or marginalisation (rejection of both cultures as ethnic reference groups).
- ❖ Integration (identification with both the native group and the target group).

A review of research by Rafieyan, Orang, Bijami, Nejad and Eng (2014:115) provides substantial evidence that indicate the preference for acculturation by L2 learners. For example, in one study that explored the acculturation strategies of 450 ethnic Russian adolescents in Latvia, the results suggested that integration was the most preferred strategy while marginalisation was the least preferred strategy. Moreover, Latvian language knowledge and use were positively correlated with assimilation and integration strategies but negatively correlated with separation and marginalisation strategies. Another study regarding the acculturation attitudes of three Polish learners in an educational sojourn in England that was reviewed by the above researchers revealed that both assimilation and integration were chosen as acculturation strategies by the three Polish learners.

In their investigation of attitudes towards the process of acculturation, Berry, Kim, Power, Young, and Bujaki (in Noels et al. 1996:215) have generally found that individuals prefer integration as an acculturation experience. Tong and College (1996:523-543) examined the factors related to acculturation. Their study consisted of 190 Chinese immigrants living in a large metropolitan area in the US. Of interest to the study is how the strength of the social networks enabled the group to resist linguistic and social pressure to acculturate to the larger society. This resistance suggests that the respondents were able to maintain their native culture and language while becoming acquainted with a new second culture and language. The use of English for school or every-day encounters with members of the society reveals a motivation on the part of the students to integrate into the mainstream culture. However, they also remained closely connected to their primary language. Students used their preferred primary language with family members and friends, and at native-culture activities.

Rafieyan et al. (2014:114-119) examined the acculturation attitudes of Iranian undergraduate students of English as a second language, following a one semester academic sojourn in the United States. Findings of this study suggested that the sojourners tended to have close contact with the people of the target culture while maintaining their original culture. The acculturation strategies adopted by Iranians, in order of preference, were integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalisation. Among the mentioned acculturation strategies, integration and assimilation received the highest preference by sojourners while separation and marginalisation strategies received the lowest preference.

However, these findings were not congruent to those of Mitsutomi and MacDonald (2005). A study conducted by Mitsutomi and MacDonald (2005:230-236) with 30 immigrant learners at a Southern California high school revealed that not all learners felt that they were acculturating or wanted to do so.

Generally, several studies thus far have provided sufficient evidence for the necessity of having a high level of acculturation attitude towards the target language culture and having a high level of contact with the target language speakers in order to obtain optimal proficiency in the L2. Although these studies were conducted with young learners, there is a dearth of research studies focusing on the foundation phase learners. If we apply this to the foundation phase learners it

would mean that the sooner learners acculturate towards the L2 the easier it would be for them to attain linguistic competence. Foundation phase learners are young, vulnerable, and amenable to change. Consequently, they will be able to acculturate easily. However, this could lead to neglect of one's own culture and language. Thus, integration appears to be the most suitable acculturation strategy for these young learners.

Schuman (in White 2006:96; Tong & College 1996:524; Larsen-Freeman 1983:6) describes acculturation as the social and psychological integration of L2 learners with the target language group. Thus, restating the acculturation hypothesis, the learner will acquire the L2 only to the degree he or she integrates socially and psychologically with the target language group (Larsen-Freeman 1983:6). Within the acculturation model, social adaptation is an integration strategy which involves L2 learner' adjustments to the lifestyles and values of the target language group while maintaining their own lifestyles and values for intra-group use (Tong & College 1996:524).

From the acculturation perspective, social and psychological distance is used to explain the degree of SLA (Ellis 2000:40; Tong & College 1996:525; Stauble 1980:43). Ellis (2000:40) points out that the main reason for learners failing to acculturate is "social distance". Ellis describes social distance as the extent to which individual learners become members of target-language group, and therefore achieve contact with them.

Psychological distance pertains to the individual as an individual, and involves psychological factors such as language shock, culture shock, and motivation (Stauble 1980:43). The assumption here is that the more social and psychological distance there is between the L2 learner and the target group the lower the degree of the learner's acculturation towards the group; and the more social and psychological proximity will yield a higher degree of acculturation. From the above, one can then anticipate that the degree to which L2 learners succeed in socially and psychologically adapting or acculturating to the target group will determine their level of success in learning the target language (Stauble 1980:44).

According to the culture shock explanation, once individuals are confronted with an alien environment, feelings of disorientation and hopelessness are generated (Sue in Dao, Lee & Chang 2007:288). Einhorn (2002:56) defines culture shock as a psychological reality for all



newcomer children. It involves anger, anxiety, estrangement, homesickness, and frustration. These negative feelings evolve when learners discover that their formerly adaptive behaviours and skills are no longer effective in coping with new environmental stressors. Moreover, these learners often have to adapt quickly to the different values and beliefs that they are not accustomed to in their homes and communities. Consequently, here is an increased possibility of experiencing psychological distress when ESL learners are exposed to rapid changes and often disparate values and beliefs between the home and the school.

For ESL learners, the issue of acculturation is acute. These children are not only learning a second language, they are also learning a second culture or set of cultures (Watts-Taffe & Truscott 2000:259). They seek membership in the culture of the classroom. Thus, schools have to accommodate and understand the whole process of acculturation as children from other cultures are admitted to schools. Cultural understanding should not be disregarded but should be at the heart of second language learning.

As mentioned earlier, Vygotsky has always recognised the significance of language and culture in child development and growth. Seng (1997:11) mentions two messages that are evident in Vygotsky's theory. Firstly, cultures vary in terms of the institutions and settings they provide to facilitate children's cognitive development. Developmentally and culturally appropriate activities in schools can transform the ways in which young children organise their thoughts. Consequently, Rajabi & Ketabi (2012:706) stress that educators should be more selective in choosing appropriate items for reading and writing according to the learners' cultures. A second implication is the importance of considering cultural contexts in our assessment of children's cognitive development. Thus, it is not surprising that researchers have found that children had better reading comprehension and reading efficiency with texts that were culturally familiar (Drucker 2003:25).

In a study on factors affecting the learning of English as an L2 in Israel, Abu-Rabia (1996:589-595) concluded that the Israeli learners understood significantly more of the culturally familiar stories than of the culturally unfamiliar stories. The implication of this study that is relevant to the field of L2 learning and multicultural education is that language curricula are more meaningful when they relate to learners' personal lives and cultural backgrounds and that

culturally familiar items do facilitate L2 reading and writing. Additionally, Doganay, Ashirimbetova & Davis (2013:15) reiterate the importance of culturally-orientated classroom instruction. The results of their study revealed that culture-based activities have an effective influence on the development of linguistic and communicative competencies of L2 learners. During the study it was observed that culture-based exercises stimulated and improved learners' interaction skills and made them use the target language more efficiently.

### **3.3.2 Psychological and affective factors**

Igoa (in Watts-Taffe 2000:259) has studied the emotional and psychological aspects of entering a new culture on immigrant learners in the US. Immigrant learners spoke of extreme loneliness, frustration and fear; all of which are associated with navigating a world in which everything is new and nothing is familiar. They described periods of feeling mentally and emotionally exhausted during times when they are "caught between two cultures". Two important psychological factors that play either a facilitative or debilitating role in Second Language Acquisition [SLA] are anxiety and motivation.

#### **3.3.2.1 Language anxiety**

A crucial psychological factor that plays an important affective role in SLA is language anxiety (Huimin 2008:33). Language anxiety has significantly sparked great concern in the second language learning world (Kamarulzaman, Ibrahim, Yunus & Ishak 2013:20). Anxiety is a psychological state of apprehension, fear or dread without a realistic threat of danger (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg 1999:23). Three of the prominent, influential, and exceedingly recognised researchers on anxiety, more specifically language anxiety, are Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope. As early as 1986, Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986:125) defined anxiety as a subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system. Anxiety is caused by a combination of cognitive, emotional, psychological and behavioural cues (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg 1999:23).

In recent years, it is widely recognised and accepted by language researchers that anxiety has a close relationship with L2 learning (Huang 2012:1520). Therefore it is frequently and extensively employed to perform L2 research. Looking at anxiety from a language perspective,

the essence of ESL anxiety can be viewed as a threat to an individual's self-concept caused by the inherent limitations of communicating in an imperfectly mastered L2 (Saito, Horwitz & Garza 1999:202). Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1991:31) conceive L2 anxiety as a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process. Leaver, Ehrman and Shekhtman (2005:93) express the view that "anxiety uses up cognitive and emotional resources that are then not available for learning". They maintain that a small amount of anxiety can be helpful when we need to complete a project, but when there is too much, it gets in the way. Because the limbic system can trigger a variety of physiological responses through the autonomic nervous system, physiological measures have long been used as an easily quantifiable indicator of a learner's emotional state (Scovel 1978:135).

Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1999:23) reiterate that anxiety in childhood is quite common as new situations are encountered and it is often accompanied by physiological signs such as sweating, tension and increased pulse rate, enuresis, stomachache, headache and other complaints. Horwitz et al. (1986:126) emphasise that the subjective feelings, psychophysiological symptoms, and behavioural responses of the anxious L2 learner are essentially the same as for any specific anxiety. They experience apprehension, worry, even dread. They have difficulty concentrating, become forgetful, sweat, and have palpitations. They exhibit avoidance behaviour such as missing class and postponing homework.

Traditionally, the nature of anxiety has been differentiated into trait anxiety, situational anxiety or situation-specific anxiety, and state anxiety (Zeng 2008:2). Huang (2012:1520) contends that trait anxiety is a more permanent or stable predisposition to be anxious; people with high levels of trait anxiety are generally nervous people in a wide range of circumstances. State anxiety is "an apprehension expected at a particular moment in time as a response to a definite situation" (Spielberger as cited in Huang 2012:1520). Situation-specific anxiety represents the probability of becoming anxious in a particular type of situation, such as writing a test, reading aloud, public speaking, class participation, and talking with a foreigner in a foreign language (Zeng 2008:2; Huimin 2008:34; Huang 2012:1521). When anxiety is limited to the language learning situation, it falls into the category of situation-specific anxiety (Horwitz et al. 1986:125).

Furthermore, Scovel (1978:139) differentiates between facilitating anxiety and debilitating anxiety. Facilitating anxiety motivates the learner to “fight” the new learning task; it gears the learner emotionally for approach behaviour. Hence, it affects learning and performance positively (Jafarigohar 2012:159). Contrarily, debilitating anxiety motivates the learner to “flee” the new learning task; it stimulates the individual emotionally to adopt avoidance behaviour. Thus, it hinders learning and performance.

As far back as 1986, Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986:127) outlined a theoretical framework relating to three general sources of anxiety: communication apprehension, tests, and fear of negative evaluation. Communication apprehension occurs when L2 learners have mature thoughts and ideas in their L1 but an immature L2 vocabulary with which to express themselves (Huimin 2008:34). The inability either to express themselves or to comprehend one another in communication leads to anxiety.

Second language learners who have high communication anxiety reported that they are afraid to speak in the L2, showing feelings of nervousness, confusion and even panic (Horwitz et al. 1986:129-130). Too much anxiety about a test is commonly referred to as test anxiety (Huimin 2008:34). A major problem of test anxiety can be its effect on thinking ability; it can cause a person to blank out or have racing thoughts that are too difficult to control.

Fear of negative evaluation is defined as “apprehension about others’ evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectations that others would evaluate oneself negatively” (Horwitz et al. 1986:128). Although similar to test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation is broader in scope because it is not limited to test-taking situations; it may occur in any social, evaluation situation such as speaking or reading aloud in an L2 in class. Zhang (2001:58-59) found that when learners’ levels of proficiency increase, their levels of anxiety decrease, that is, they have more confidence in themselves and in using that particular language.

When anxiety relates to the use of an L2, it often arises in speaking and listening, which reflects the learner’s apprehension at having to communicate spontaneously in the L2 (Huimin 2008:34; Saito et al. 1999:202). Horwitz (2001:120) claims that L2 language anxiety has been almost entirely associated with the oral aspects of language use. Consequently, research on language anxiety has mainly studied the oral aspects of language anxiety [speaking and listening], and

relatively underestimating the other two components of language anxiety [reading and writing] (Jafarigohar 2012:160).

At first glance reading and writing would appear to be the components of L2 performance least susceptible to anxiety effects, since one would automatically assume that reading and writing are done privately with unlimited opportunity for reflection and reconsideration. However, this would be applicable to silent reading only and to writing activities that do not require time constraints. In the foundation phase learners generally read aloud individually, in pairs or in groups and there are also instances when learners have to write or compose under time pressure, for example tests and ANA.

Saito, Horwitz and Garza (1999:202) mention two aspects of L2 reading that would seem to have great potential for eliciting anxiety. These are unfamiliar scripts and writing systems, and unfamiliar cultural material. With respect to unfamiliar writing systems, it seems likely that the less the learner can depend on the reliability of a specific system of sound-symbol correspondences, the more anxiety he or she would be expected to experience in the act of reading. In this case, the reader would experience anxiety as soon as he or she attempts to decode the script because the reader would immediately experience difficulty in processing the text.

Unfamiliar cultural concepts would seem to have an impact at a point in the reading process that is less immediate than that of unfamiliar scripts and writing systems. The reader would first encounter the symbols, decode them into sounds, and associate the sounds with words, and then attempt to process the meaning of a text. It is at the point when the reader realises that the words he or she has decoded do not constitute a comprehensible or logical message entity that one would expect anxiety to set in. In other words, anxiety is also anticipated when a reader can decipher the words of an L2 text, but not its sense, because of incomplete knowledge of the cultural material underlying the text.

Tabatabaei and Hekmatipour's (2013:65-72) study on learners' anxiety in reading comprehension with 40 female ESL learners in two English classes of a language institute in Shiraz supports the notion that high reading anxiety affects ESL learners' reading comprehension. Unfamiliar writing scripts and unfamiliar cultural background were influential

factors concerning the results of this study. Fifty percent of the control group in the posttest reported that they are nervous when they are reading a passage in English, especially when they are not familiar with the topic. Huang (2012:1521) highlights the fact that cultural differences may lead to stress and anxiety. He postulates that some practices that may prove to be relaxing and interesting to one group of learners may be difficult and boring for another group of learners from a different cultural background.

Ahmad, Al-Shboul, Nordin, Rahman, Burhan and Madarsha (2013:89-110) studied the potential sources of L2 reading anxiety at Yarmouk University in Jordan. The study verified from the informants and respondents that learners found unknown vocabulary, unfamiliar topics, unfamiliar culture, being afraid of making errors, and worrying about reading effects as sources of English language reading anxiety. Moreover, learners focused on the act of reading rather than understanding even when the text was easy enough for them to understand.

Research on foreign language reading anxiety conducted with 383 French, Japanese and Russian learners by Saito et al. (1999:202-218) suggests that reading in an L2 is indeed anxiety provoking to some learners. The study also found that learners' reading anxiety levels increased with their perceptions of the difficulty of reading in their L2, and that their grades decreased in conjunction to their levels of reading anxiety. Thus, the more anxious the learners become, the worse their performances are.

A review of literature by Tabatabaei and Hekmatipour (2013:63-64) on the relationship between language anxiety and reading revealed that the more anxious learners tended to recall less passage content than those participants that claimed to experience minimal anxiety. Furthermore, learners with higher levels of overall language learning anxiety reported higher levels of reading anxiety. In a close look at anxiety ratings, findings revealed that more students indicated feeling somewhat anxious about L2 reading than any other rating. Also, a negative relationship was found between reading anxiety and L2 reading comprehension. Huang's (2012:1524) study on the correlation of foreign language anxiety and English reading anxiety proved that L2 reading does provoke anxiety among L2 learners. The study also concluded that most learners have no confidence in reading English because of high levels of anxiety.

Whereas general second language anxiety has been found, in Saito, Horwitz and Garzas' (1999:215) study, to be independent of target language, levels of reading anxiety were found to vary by target language and appeared to be related to the specific writing systems. It is important to note that in this study, the participants experienced anxiety as a result of actual difficulties in text processing rather than the reading difficulties stemming from anxiety reactions. This compelled the researchers to believe that many of the anxious readers have normal language processing abilities. Saito et al. (1999:216) contend that although language teachers have generally assumed that reading is the least anxiety-provoking part of the curriculum, their findings argue for the recognition of L2 reading anxiety.

Second language reading anxiety is intricately linked to L2 writing anxiety. When ESL learners encounter writing systems that are unrelated to their L1 writing system they may not only experience reading anxiety but also writing anxiety. Studies have repeatedly shown that L2 learners utilising the productive skill of writing are found to experience a considerable amount of anxiety in the process of learning (Zhang 2001:51-62; Negari & Rezaabadi 2012:2578-2586). There is a relationship between writing anxiety and writing performance. The issue to be addressed in writing anxiety is whether anxiety is a cause or result of poor performance. In order to explain this controversy the deficit model claims that a learner fails to perform well due to insufficiently developed skills (Kara 2013:104).

Daud, Daud and Kassim (2014:1-19) conducted a study on L2 writing anxiety at MARA University of Technology, Terengganu Branch in Malaysia. Their study supports the deficit model in that learners with low proficiency were found to be more anxious, and their anxiety was caused by their lack of writing skills. Of the different dimensions studied lack of vocabulary knowledge and experience of language use were identified to be the causes for anxiety. Limited exposure to the language and the print media was mentioned as the main reason for their lack of vocabulary and language skills.

Kara (2013:108) investigated L2 learners' reasons for writing anxiety. The reasons were related to writing itself, writing as a skill, the teacher, and course book. The learners claimed that they had writing anxiety, they occasionally wrote in their previous experience, and they were not used to writing and expressing themselves in writing. When writing as a skill was considered,

learners thought that they lacked the necessary strategies like organising ideas, gathering information, and combining ideas. Moreover, they assumed that their English was not enough to express themselves clearly. The teachers did not encourage them, did not provide feedback on writing activities, and were not interested in their writing problems. Also, the course book did not provide sufficient examples and exercises for learners.

Negari and Rezaabadi (2012:2578-2586) investigated the effects of facilitative anxiety on the writing ability of ESL learners in Sistan and Baluchestan University in Iran. The study aimed to prove that by taking advantage of the facilitative aspect of anxiety [final test anxiety]; learners can improve their concentration and finally their writing performances. This study measured the degree of learners' anxiety levels in two L2 writing situations namely "low writing anxiety" and "writing test anxiety". Learners experienced less anxiety in their low writing environment when they were told that there is no evaluation for them than their final writing test. The study found that the learners' writing marks were higher in the case of having higher anxiety in the final writing test compared to their writing performances in the case of having low writing anxiety. It was concluded that most the learners need some degree of anxiety and suggests that writing requires some kind of concentration that happens by some amount of facilitative anxiety.

Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1991:30) assert that the anxious learner is also inhibited when attempting to utilise any second language fluency he or she has managed to acquire. The resulting poor test performance and inability to perform in class can contribute to a teacher's inaccurate assessment that the learner lacks either some necessary aptitude for learning a language or sufficient motivation to do the necessary work for a good performance.

Lin and Ho's (2009:307-318) qualitative study on second language writing anxiety at a college in Southern Taiwan revealed that the learners' writing anxiety might be aggravated due to face problems which could be caused by teacher's evaluation and peer competition. The participants pointed out that they felt fearful when thinking of the teacher's negative comments or low score graded for them and the peer competition sometimes becomes a factor of apprehension.

The above studies can be aptly linked to Krashen's affective filter hypothesis which emphasises that "low motivation, low self-esteem, and very high anxiety can combine to raise the affective filter and result in a mental block that prevents input from being used for language acquisition



(see 2.4.2). When such a blockage occurs, it often obstructs SLA (Smith 2004:49). Gifford and Mullaney (1997:15) endorse Krashen's affective filter hypothesis when they state that "for some learners, the resulting fear of making errors raises the affective filter so high that they are unwilling to take the risks involved in real communication".

Huang (2012:1521) emphasises that cultural differences may also lead to stress and anxiety. In the process of L2 learning it is natural for the learner to encounter a large amount of culture shock. The culture shock may easily create anxious feelings in L2 learners because they are afraid of losing their own language and ethnic identity in cross-cultural circumstances (Clement in Huang 2012:1521).

It has been found that female learners are generically more worried and anxious than male learners. This difference is most clear for older children and less clear for preschool and elementary school children and worry becomes prominent in children at about seven years of age and becomes more complex and varied as children develop (Wicks-Nelson & Israel 2006:125). Jafarigohar (2012:163) found that female learners are more concerned about language difficulties than males, and females tend to be more worry-oriented than males.

Contrarily, Zhang (2001:51-62) found that male learners are more prone to anxiety and have stronger feelings of language anxiety than their female counterparts. His study on learners' anxiety in the ESL classroom in Singapore revealed that during the English class, the male learners were more reticent than the female learners. Additionally, the females were more interested in assimilating into the larger social context and perceived that they were more proficient in English, a view that increases self-confidence and reduces anxiety levels. Generally, data from this study suggested that ESL learners have a higher level of language anxiety than is necessary, which, if not carefully considered, could have a negative effect on their successful learning of the language.

Academically, it seems clear that high levels of language anxiety are associated with low levels of academic achievement in L2 learning (Zeng 2008:5). Conversely, learners who do poorly in language classes would naturally and logically become anxious (Horwitz 2001:117). The question that arises is: Is anxiety a cause or result of poor achievement in language learning? Language difficulties, Sparks and Ganschow (in Horwitz 2001:118) propose, are likely to be

based in L1 learning and that facility with one's language codes [phonological, syntactic, and semantic] is likely to play an important casual role in learning an L2. It is often difficult to determine if anxiety has actually interfered with learning, thus influencing achievement levels, or if anxious learners simply have difficulty displaying the language competence they have attained (Horwitz 2001:121). Either way, it can be concluded that anxiety does affect an L2 learner's reading and writing.

### 3.3.2.2 Motivation and depression

Another affective factor that reached an unprecedented boom in the 1990s, with over one hundred journal articles published on the topic, is the study of L2 motivation (Dörnyei & Skehan 2003:613). One reason for some L2 learners performing better than others is undoubtedly because they are better motivated (Cook 2008:136). Dörnyei (1994:273) asserts that motivation is one of the main determinants of L2 learning achievement. According to Dörnyei & Skehan (2003:614) motivation concerns the direction and magnitude of human behaviour. These researchers perceive motivation as more specifically relating to the choice of a particular action, the persistence with it, and the effort expended on it. Motivation, from an L2 perspective, involves the attitudes and affective states that influence the degree of effort that learners make to learn an L2 (Ellis 2000:75).

Although Ellis (2000:75) identifies 4 types of motivation – instrumental, integrative, resultant, and intrinsic; and Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1999:140-141) distinguishes between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation; Saville-Troike (2012:90) reports that the most widely recognised types of motivation are integrative and instrumental. This is supported by Leaver et al. (2005:104). They cite Gardner and Lambert (1972) who state that within the language learning field, the classic model is the distinction between integrative and instrumental motivation. Whereas, integrative orientation involves learning a language because one strongly identifies with or wishes to become part of its associated culture (Midraj, Midraj, O'Neill & Sellami 2008:44; Adamson 2005:60; Leaver et al. 2005:104); instrumental orientation is based on learning a language for its practical value, such as to pass an examination, to get a better job, or to get a place at university (Ellis 2000:75; Adamson 2005:60-61; Leaver et al. 2005:104).

Integrative motivation is associated with a positive disposition towards the L2 group and the desire to interact with and even become similar to valued members of that community; and instrumental motivation is related to the potential gains of L2 proficiency (Dörnyei 1994:274). According to Gardner (2007:19), when we say that an individual is integratively motivated we mean that the individual is motivated to learn the other language, the individual is learning the language because of a genuine interest in communicating with members of the other language [either because of positive feelings towards that community or members of that community, or because of a general interest in other groups], and the individual has a favourable attitude towards the language learning situation.

Gardner (1997:35) asserts that the concepts of attitudes and motivation are often treated together in the area of L2 learning, since attitudes have motivational properties and motivation has attitudinal implications. Gardner (in Abu-Rabia 1996:590) argued that, because language is an important part of culture, the learning of an L2 is dependent on the learner's willingness to identify with the culture of the target language and to incorporate aspects of the target language culture, including linguistic repertoire, into his or her behaviour. Gardner's argument is consistent with the acculturation process explained earlier.

Ellis (2000:75) in contradiction to Gardner's argument contends that in some learning contexts, an instrumental motivation appears to be the major force determining success in L2 learning, for example, in a setting where learners are motivated to learn an L2 because it opens up educational and economic opportunities for them. However, Saville-Troike (2012:92) affirms that neither of these orientations have an inherent advantage over the other in terms of L2 achievement. She stresses that the relative effect of one or the other is dependent on complex personal and social factors for example, L2 learning by a member of the dominant group in a society may benefit more from integrative motivation, and L2 learning by a subordinate group member may be more influenced by instrumental motivation.

Gardner (2007:10) emphasises that it really is not possible to give a simple definition of motivation, though one can list many characteristics of the motivated individual. For example, the motivated individual is goal directed, expends effort, is persistent, is attentive, has desires [wants], exhibits positive affect, is aroused, has expectancies, demonstrates self confidence [self-

efficacy], and has reasons [motives]. Some of these characteristics are cognitive in nature, some are affective, and some are behavioural. In Gardner's (2007:19) opinion, the distinction between integrative and instrumental motivation, or between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation does not help to explain the role played by motivation in L2 learning. His research has demonstrated that it is the intensity of the motivation in its broadest sense, incorporating the behavioural, cognitive, and affective components, that is important.

The findings of a study on affective factors and English language attainment that was conducted with learners from the United Arab Emirates by Midraj, Midraj, O'Neill and Sellami (2008:49) showed that motivation makes a substantial difference in language proficiency test scores. The learners in this study who were integratively motivated, [who wanted to become familiar with the societies who speak English, who were willing to communicate with other people and who made time for learning] had higher English language attainment than learners who learned the language for utilitarian reasons and were extrinsically motivated. The findings of this study support Gardner's theory that integratively motivated learners tend to be higher achievers than instrumentally motivated ones.

In a study on integrative motivation in a school in a provincial capital on the Indonesian island of Sumatra, Lamb (2004:12) found that none of the learners expressed pleasure in actually learning English in school classrooms [as opposed to using the language for their own purposes]. Additionally, nine out of the twelve learners interviewed said that many of their friends were not interested in learning English; a frequent estimate was that only about half the class liked English or wanted to learn it. On the other hand Mohammadian's (2013:2042) study on shyness, motivation and willingness to communicate in Shiraz, Iran revealed that the majority of the learners were relatively motivated to learn English in their required English courses. Cook's (2008:138) study on motivation in several countries such as Belgium, Poland, Singapore and Taiwan showed that the majority of the learners were integratively motivated. Integrative motivation appeared to be more important than instrumental motivation.

Negative and unhealthy feelings while acquiring L2 reading and writing skills may contribute to a psychological state of depression. In everyday usage, the term depression refers to the experience of a pervasive unhappy mood (Wicks-Nelson & Israel 2006:165). A comprehensive

review of literature by Stanard (2000:204) suggests that a lack of sense of belonging has shown to be a good predictor of depression. Hence Washburn (2008:249) emphasises the importance of the need for learners to feel that they belong, have a place, and know their environment. They need to feel they are unique, are recognised as themselves, belong socially, and have rights and duties of membership in the English medium school; irrespective of their home language and culture.

Research with Taiwanese international learners in the Southern United States by Dao, Lee and Chang (2007:287-295) reflected that the individuals who were at risk of depressive feelings were more likely to be female learners, learners who have lower perceived English fluency, and those who have the perception of limited social support. Much research illuminates that gender appears to be the crucial factor in depression. Girls seem to be more prone to depression than boys (Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg 1999:82-83). The review of literature by Aubé, Fichman, Saltaris and Koestner (2000:297) indicates that research has consistently shown that females are twice more likely to be depressed than males. This has serious implications for female ESL learners who are experiencing cognitive, social and emotional difficulties, since Dubuque (1998:66) mentions that depression can appear during childhood.

### **3.3.3 Cognitive and social factors**

English second language learners encounter a plethora of difficulties as they begin their schooling in English medium schools. Miller and Endo (2004:787) maintain that these problems stem primarily from linguistic and cultural differences and that language shock is perhaps the most common phenomenon that L2 learners experience when adjusting to their new environment. Washburn (2008:247-250) reports on the experiences of learners after been given a language shock class in Chinese. A surprising response in Washburn's study is that learners felt alone. These learners were in a room with approximately 55 classmates with whom they were acquainted and shared the same L1, who also did not understand Chinese and were undergoing the same experience, yet many felt excluded, out of place, left out, and alone. A learner in a setting in which he or she is the linguistic minority must feel so much more isolated and alienated from their classmates.

In the classroom, linguistic isolation can make learners feel unsafe, insignificant, and friendless, which affects participation in classroom activities. These psychological and social factors sometimes outweigh the cognitive challenges of learning a new language (Sheets 2002:46). These learners do not have the luxury of an extended time frame to become accustomed to reading and writing the new language. They experience great cognitive demands as they are asked to quickly learn both language and content in order to participate fully in the school curriculum (Vardell, Hadaway & Young 2006:734). Since writing is an exacting job which requires too much time to master it skillfully (Negari & Rezaabadi 2012:2578) it is difficult for L2 learners, as they struggle to express what they really want to say.

Sheppard (2001:133) discusses the characteristics of learners who are learning English as an L2 and how it affects their academic achievements. She argues that L2 learners often exhibit the problems associated with learning a new language, such as comprehension and articulation difficulties, limited vocabulary, and grammatical errors in their writing and speaking. She states that too often, L2 learners are referred to and placed in special education settings. This is perhaps, because if a learner who is learning English as an L2 has not yet achieved a particular level of language acquisition and proficiency, then transmission of knowledge and information becomes difficult and, in turn, teaching and learning become challenging.

In addition to these difficulties, the learner's background knowledge could influence SLA. Peregoy and Boyle (2000:239) reiterate that background knowledge is a powerful variable for both L1 and L2 English readers. However, it becomes doubly important in L2 reading because it interacts with language proficiency during reading, alleviating the comprehension difficulties stemming from language proficiency limitations. Miller and Endo (2004:789) add that when lack of background knowledge that is required to learn new information is added to language difficulties, learners experience a heavy "cognitive load", which is usually lightened if the learners are at least able to draw on their own experiences and knowledge. Therefore, it is imperative that educators select books that connect to children's lives. This is important to remember for all learners at every level, but more so for young children who enter school with no prior attachment to books (Meier 2003:247). Books are not meaningful to children who do not see themselves represented in them. Especially for young children, learning occurs most productively and profoundly in a context of familiarity (Meier 2003:248).

Dao et al. (2007:288) point out that the common stressors found by international learners is overcoming the language barrier. International learners, not fluent with the English language, encounter unique difficulties not experienced by English-speaking learners. Some of the unique challenges facing international learners include extra time required to read assigned readings, difficulties understanding class discussions, and difficulties which are all cognitive factors, in communicating concerns and viewpoints.

This is also applicable to isiZulu-speaking learners in English medium schools. Since language acquisition is essentially a social phenomenon (Goren 2003:23), the inability to converse fluently in the English language deters individuals from becoming socially involved in the English medium school. This inability to communicate often leads to miscommunication and the unpleasant experience of forming new support networks in the English medium school which in turn leads to feelings of disappointment and discontent. Ultimately, these feelings may give rise to social isolation and solitude. One component of language difficulty is that it inhibits social interactions. The more ESL learners avoid social interactions, the less their social and language skills develop. As a result, a negative cycle occurs in which a negative perception of English fluency continues to be reinforced. Over time, these negative perceptions may lead to chronic somatic problems (Dao et al. 2007:293).

In order to prevent L2 learners from falling behind their L1 counterparts, it is imperative that educators understand the development aspects that all children go through as they develop facility with language. Sheets (2002:47), posits that children might understand incoming language but may not be able to produce language that expresses their understanding. Likewise, Mohr and Mohr (2007:444) argue that language learners certainly can understand more than they can produce, especially at the beginning stages. Therefore, just because learners do not speak out does not mean that they do not comprehend the discussion or have something to contribute. Also, many young children are in transition from the casual communication style [Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills {BICS}] used at home to the more formal one [Cognitive Academic language Proficiency {CALP}] of the school and society (See 2.4.3). As children advance their language abilities – speak, listen, read, and write they learn that language is a powerful tool (Sheets 2002:47).

A crucial factor to consider is the transfer of skills from the L1 to the L2. Peregoy and Boyle (2000:241) state that when they make the claim that L1 literacy provides a good foundation for English literacy, they are suggesting that various aspects of reading and writing transfer across languages. Transfer of literacy ability from one language to another depends on the similarities and differences between their writing systems, including the unit of speech symbolised by each character. For example, alphabetic writing systems, such as English, represent speech sounds or phonemes with letters or letter sequences. In contrast, in logographic writing systems, such as Chinese, each written character represents a meaning unit or morpheme.

In addition to differences in the unit of speech represented, directionality and spacing conventions differ across writing systems. For example, Hebrew reads from right to left, whereas English and other European languages read from left to right. Consequently, learners who have a strong primary language literacy base tend to have an easier time learning English, while those who lack strong primary language skills, tend to struggle as they learn English (Walter 2010:28-29).

Historically, there have been questions pertaining to the transfer of skills from one language to another. With regard to ESL learners, there is a growing field of evidence that literacy skills do indeed transfer from one language to another [See 2.3]. In other words, if a learner has learned a concept in the L1, the learner will either already know it in the L2, or will be able to more easily learn it in the L2. The transfer of skills includes academic skills such as decoding, concept development, and comprehension strategies (Goldenberg in Walter 2010:29).

Peregoy and Boyle (2000:241) assert that a difference that L2 learners bring to their reading is the quantity and kind of literacy knowledge and experiences they have in their L1, if any, a variable that ties in closely with the age of the learner, prior educational experiences in the L1, and the socioeconomic status and educational level of the parents. Learners who are literate in their L1 have some knowledge of the functions of print. While the purposes of literacy in the L1 may differ from those they are learning for English, learners literate in their L1 have nonetheless experienced the value, utility, and perhaps pleasures of print. In terms of reading, per se, they have exercised the process of making sense from print, and, depending on their reading abilities, they are more or less automatic at decoding and comprehending texts in their L1. In addition,



learners who are literate in the L1 are typically accustomed to the discipline and demands of school. Thus, education in the primary language facilitates academic adjustment while providing a solid experiential base for literacy development in the L2. The power of L1 literacy as a foundation for L2 literacy provides the cornerstone for many bilingual programs worldwide.

Linguistic dimension which is related to the cognitive aspects in learning a language is an important factor to consider when acquiring an L2. No two children will develop their reading skills in exactly the same way, in the same time frame, but all readers will progress through a series of phases in reading development, some simultaneously (Gove & Cvelich 2010:5). Fluency in reading plays a crucial role. Children must read fluently in order to comprehend what they are reading. Children arrive at fluency at different rates. This depends on the complexity of the language; including consistency of spelling, and pronunciation rules. For instance, children learning Italian, Greek and Spanish, with the simple and consistent links between letters and sounds in these languages, if instructed well, can master recognition of familiar words with near-perfect accuracy by the end of Grade 1 (Gove & Cvelich 2010:6). Meanwhile, learning English as their primary language, with all its irregularities, often takes two and a half years of schooling to cover the same ground, even if they receive good instruction (Abadzi in Gove & Cvelich 2010:6). This process can also take longer in low-resource settings, where children are not exposed to print in their primary language before they are challenged to begin reading in an L2, such as English.

The question of orthography plays a significant linguistic role. In languages of transparent or “shallow” orthographies [also called phonetically spelled languages], one can learn how to read in less than a year; in languages with more complex or “deeper” orthographies this process can take several years (Research Triangle Institute International in McEachern, 2013:18). Sprenger-Charolles (2008:27-28) stress that the scores of the Gambian children who were learning to read in a language with a deep orthography [English] were lower than those of the Senegalese who were learning in a shallow orthography [French] in all assessments involving written language processing. These results reproduced those found in the literature showing that in languages with shallow orthographies [such as Spanish and French], the learning progression is more rapid than in languages with a deep orthography [such as English] where the correspondences between graphemes and phonemes are more complex (Sprenger-Charolles 2008:28).

Research comparing reading acquisition in 13 European languages provides evidence in support of the assertion that the regularity or complexity of a language affects the speed of acquisition of foundation reading skills (Gove & Wetterberg 2011:10). It was found that children learning to read in English required two to three times the amount of instruction as children learning to read in languages that are more regular in their construction. Furthermore, the level of complexity of a language appears to affect reading acquisition from the very beginning of the learning process; acquisition of even basic foundation skills [such as letter naming] occurs at a slower rate in languages with more complex constructions. Thus, the opacity of orthography exerts an effect on reading acquisition.

Peregoy and Boyle (2000:242) maintain that when the writing systems of the L1 and L2 are similar, then positive transfer can occur in decoding. Clearly, some learners may begin English reading instruction accustomed to a writing system that bears little or no resemblance to the one they must learn for English. For example, learners who are literate in a logographic system such as Chinese are faced with learning the English convention of representing speech sounds instead of meaning units, and the practice of reading from left to right instead of right to left.

In contrast to learners with logographic literacy, some L2 learners may be literate in alphabetic writing systems that nonetheless use letters and print conventions that are very different from English, such as Arabic and Hebrew. These learners are apt to be well-versed in the alphabetic principle, which they acquired in the process of learning to read in the L1, and that understanding should transfer easily to English reading. They are more or less aware of various functions of print and have had considerable experiences constructing meaning from text, another source of positive transfer. What will be new for these learners are the specific letters and letter/sound correspondences used in English. To learn to read in English, they need to learn the specific conventions of how English is represented in print while at the same time developing English language proficiency to facilitate reading comprehension.

It is well known that all the indigenous African languages spoken in South Africa are agglutinative in nature (De Vos & Van der Merwe 2014:4). This implies that a whole sentence can be expressed in a single word, and consequently the nature of the “word” differs from the

“word” in English. This means that words are multisyllabic and much longer than their English equivalents. The table below indicates some of the English words and the isiZulu equivalents.

**Table 3.2: English words and the isiZulu equivalents**

ENGLISH	ISIZULU
I am reading.	Ngiyafunda.
I am not reading.	Angifundi.
He/She is writing.	Uyabhala.
You are writing.	Uyabhala or Ubhala
He/She is not writing.	Akabhali.
You are not writing.	Awubhali.
They are reading.	Bayafunda.
They are not reading.	Abafundi.
We are writing.	Siyabhala.
We are not writing.	Asibhali.

(Gumede & Cawood 2006:11, 46-49)

The above are merely a few examples of pronouns and sentences that indicate the complexity of the isiZulu language. A sentence in English is written as a word in isiZulu. The isiZulu language and other indigenous languages often use fewer words in a sentence because one or two words denote a number of words, a phrase or even a sentence in English. This has consequences for ease of acquisition or word recognition and automaticity. Additionally, the indigenous languages do not have the pronouns he, him, she, and her to indicate gender. In isiZulu, the word “yena” is used. The gender of the person is inferred from the sentence. The following type of mistake is commonly made in sentences: “The boy she reads a book”.

Of all the South African Official languages, Afrikaans most closely resembles English with regard to the basic language structures, as both languages are of Germanic origin (University of South Africa 1999:182). Despite these resemblances, many Afrikaans-speaking learners still experience difficulties when they learn English. Because the language structures of the indigenous languages differ from English even more than Afrikaans, learners from the various indigenous language groups will find it more difficult than Afrikaans-speaking learners to master English.

It is apparent that all these cognitive and social factors are clearly perceptible when it comes to L2 learners' reading and writing achievements. In an attempt to relate these factors to this study, a pragmatic philosophy will be adopted. This will allow for the use of a concomitant use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

### **3.3.4 The Institutional context: School factors**

The school which is an institution of learning and teaching comprises of various aspects that are conducive to providing quality education to all learners. In order for learners to develop their literacy skills and function effectively in the classroom several factors must be taken into consideration. These factors include, amongst other things, the curriculum, and the educators' competences, expectations and attitudes.

#### **3.3.4.1 The curriculum**

The most crucial factor in education is that children need to understand the medium of instruction [Language of Learning and Teaching] in order to learn. Dutcher (2004:9) reinforces that schools have failed to provide quality education to children in a language the children understand and in which their parents can relate to school authorities. L2 children arrive on the first day of school with thousands of oral vocabulary words and considerable phonemic awareness in their primary language, but are unable to use and build upon their skills (Gove & Cvelich 2010:14). Dismissing this prior knowledge, and trying to teach children to read and write in a language they are not accustomed to hearing or speaking, makes the teaching of reading and writing difficult, especially in under-resourced schools in developing countries. As

a result, many learners repeat or drop out of school, while those who stay in school lack basic literacy skills and have not mastered content knowledge.

Dutcher (2004:9) adds that school authorities and parents do not understand the difficulties children encounter in learning an L2 for academic purposes. They believe that children learn language easily, and they have confused the process of learning a language with that of learning through a language [which has to be known to both the educator and the learner]. Children do learn oral languages easily when they have good models for the language and when they are motivated, but learning academic languages takes much more time [See 2.4.3]. School authorities and parents do not always understand the importance of the primary language, first as the basis for learning the skills of reading and writing, and then as a basis for acquiring a second academic language.

In the United States and elsewhere, studies are accumulating that demonstrate that the longer a child can learn reading and other content subjects in his or her L1 while learning the L2 in a cognitively demanding way, the better the chances of success after elementary school. One very important large-scale study is that conducted by Thomas and Collier [See 2.3]. While ESL learners are in the process of learning to read in English, the L1 is important to the development of their English language proficiency (Harr 2008:13). For L2 readers, it can be expected that the network of connections between the various graphemic, phonological, and semantic nodes needed to read will be weaker than for the L1 readers (Droop & Verhoeven 2003:79). Droop and Verhoeven (2003:79) assert that limited exposure to the L2 may lead to qualitatively weaker word representations and both slower and less accurate reading. Thus, the question that arises is: Is the curriculum suitable for L2 learners?

Surprisingly, the South African government has only recently become aware that children cannot read, and that part of the problem applies to the L1 and the L2 (Phajane & Mokhele 2013:463). Trudell et al. (2012:21) reiterate that reading instruction needs to specifically be in the curriculum. Too often, reading instruction is subsumed under the curriculum subject of "language". Yet, improved proficiency in the L1 or L2 is not at all the same as acquisition of reading and writing skills. Trudell et al. (2012:21) add that the curriculum needs to reflect that

fact, and time must be allocated for reading instruction in a language that the child speaks fluently.

The new Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) is extremely challenging. For example, if we consider the English home language curriculum for Grade 1 learners, they learn English for seven hours per week. Of the seven hours, 45 minutes per week is utilised for listening and speaking, 1 hour and 15 minutes per week for phonics, 45 minutes per week for shared reading, two hours and 30 minutes per week for group reading, one hour per week for handwriting, and 45 minutes for writing (Department of Basic Education 2011:9). It is clear that most of the instructional time is allocated for reading. All of the aspects mentioned above are formally assessed in the classroom. Thus, marks are allocated for each aspect. Since reading consumes most of the instructional time, more marks are allocated for reading as compared to the other aspects. Approximately 50% of the English mark is for reading. The implication is that if learners struggle to read they will score poorly in English. On the other hand, one hour is used for hand writing and 45 minutes for writing. This implies that approximately 25% of the English marks comprises of writing. These deductions are a result of my understanding of CAPS which is based on the training that I received in my district and this is the way it is applied in my school.

Since reading and writing are meaning-filled activities, learning to read and write must also be meaning-based; this means, amongst other things, that it must be done in a language the learner understands (Trudell et al. 2012:7). Use of the learner's primary language as the medium of instruction and the language of reading accelerates learning, and allows the learner to develop the skills and knowledge that will enhance his or her potential for lifelong learning (Trudell et al. 2012:7). However, an important fact to consider is that isiZulu-speaking learners are currently learning English as a home language in several schools.

#### 3.3.4.2 The educators' competences, expectations, and attitudes

The foundation phase is the beginning of the learners' academic life. Hence, foundation phase educators play a major role in developing these young learners. They assist in establishing the foundational skills that learners require in order to succeed in school and to achieve their full potential. This demanding task entails amongst other things, teaching learners the basics of

reading and writing. Although these educators should be commended for their invaluable contributions towards developing young minds, research has shown that most foundation phase educators in South Africa are uncertain about the methods and approaches that they need to use in order to teach reading and writing to beginning readers at school (Phajane & Mokhele 2013:463) and educators are not trained to teach reading (Gove & Cvelich 2010:ii). This implies that educators do not have the capacity to teach reading and writing. Because of the limited qualifications of educators, they are not familiar with the different methods of instruction of English as an L2.

Furthermore, Chamberlain (2005:197) argues that general education teachers lack the ability to discern between underachievement due to a disability and underachievement due to other reasons such as learning English as a second language. Moreover, apartheid in South Africa has left an inadequately trained teaching force lacking the capacity to develop learners' literacy to effective levels (Hart 2014:2). However, it has been over twenty years since the demise of apartheid. How much longer are we going to use apartheid as an excuse? This situation is exacerbated because universal primary education expansion has pushed some systems to the brink in terms of teacher supply; for example, pupil-teacher ratios are on the rise in Sub-Saharan Africa (Gove & Cvelich 2010:13).

Trudell et al. (2012:17) reinforce that Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa's researchers have identified that educators were poorly trained to teach reading and writing in the primary language [in this instance either isiXhosa or Afrikaans] and to teach English as an additional language. They often do not speak well, nor do they read and write much as part of their daily life activities, either in their primary language or in English. Thus, many teachers' knowledge of English and the English language system is not up to standard (University of South Africa 1999:191). The English they use in the classroom therefore does not serve as an ideal example to the learners. Their pronunciation is often unclear, which makes it difficult for learners to learn the language. For example, if teachers pronounce a word such as "ship" as "sheep", the learners will have difficulty in understanding the meaning of the following: "The sheep [ship] is sailing on the sea. They may think that it refers to a sheep instead of a boat. This can affect the learner's comprehension of texts when reading.

Furthermore, because assessment is a critical part of effective literacy instruction, it is important for educators to know how to evaluate L2 learners' literacy development. Many educators are unprepared for the special needs and complexities of fairly and appropriately assessing L2 learners and have little experience with ESL learners and may not understand the challenges faced by learners in the process of acquiring English (Lenski, Ehlers-Zavala, Daniel & Sun-Irminger 2006:24). This has implications for how educators assess reading and writing in the foundation phase.

In addition, educators who have negative attitudes towards the environment, home language and cultural backgrounds of learners from other language backgrounds alienate these learners from their environment, language and cultural values (University of South Africa 1999:191). By instilling the sense that these learners' home languages, environments, and cultures are inferior, an inferiority complex is created. This damages their self-image and often creates behavioural problems which, in turn, lead to learning difficulties. Thus, when educators support learners' primary language in meaningful ways, learners feel recognised and validated in the mainstream classroom, which results in a strong sense of self (Sumaryono & Ortiz 2004:17).

The findings from a study conducted by Garia-Nevaraz, Stafford and Arias (2005:311-312) revealed that the type of certification or endorsement educators have has an effect on their attitudes towards their ESL learners. Bilingual-certified educators had the highest and most positive attitudes towards the learners' L1, and were more receptive to using the L1 for instructional purposes. The traditional educators expressed more negative attitudes towards learners' L1 and generally were against using the L1 for instructional purposes.

Peyton's (1990:196) review of literature indicated that learners' development as writers depended a great deal on their teachers' expectations of what they could do. Learners whose teachers focused on phonics and spelling and correct writing conventions produced neat and correctly spelled papers that completely lacked life and originality and resembled workbook exercises. Learners whose teachers believed that quantity of writing was a mark of writing development produced long pieces, with large open spaces between words and multiple repetitions of words, phrases, and longer chunks of text. Children whose teachers believed that



they were capable of expressing their thoughts and opinions effectively in a variety of types of extended writing wrote stories, poems, jokes, and thoughtful pieces about personal experiences.

Too often teachers are expected to teach without adequate training and supervision, and to determine by themselves how to implement changes in policy or recommended pedagogical methods (Trudell et al. 2012:21). The EGRA study in Ethiopia revealed that two-thirds of the teachers reported not having in-service teacher professional development in reading methods and pedagogical techniques, and 61% reported not having any in-service training at all (Piper 2010:51).

Teacher training and support are crucial to reading and writing success among learners. However, in a study in rural India it was found that the current nature of qualifications and usual types of teacher training are not sufficient to guarantee effective teaching (Annual Status of Education Report 2011:3). Neither higher educational qualifications nor more teachers' training were associated with better student learning. Nor are teacher background characteristics such as age, gender, or experience. What does matter is the teacher's ability to teach. On the other hand, a review of literature by Garia-Nevaraz et al. (2005:298-299) indicates that the higher the education level of educators, the more positive their language attitudes. Additionally, it was found that formal training gave educators skills and knowledge to work effectively with L2 learners.

The pre-service training of educators is also an imperative factor to consider. There are several colleges and universities in South Africa that offer teacher training courses through correspondence. This implies that these university students do not attend lectures on a regular basis and are not provided with sufficient guidance and support as compared to the students who are registered for full time teacher training courses. The student teachers who are not exposed to comprehensive training, particularly training related to the teaching of L2 learners, will not be equipped to teach L2 learners effectively.

Irrespective of the findings from the studies mentioned in this section, educator capacity is central to the entire endeavour of early-grade literacy learning. When they are well trained, mentored and supported, educators can help make the difference between failure and success for

the early-grade learner's literacy acquisition. When new pedagogical methods are being introduced on a broad scale, training and support for the educators are particularly important.

### **3.3.5 Gender differences among learners**

In EGRA administrations across Sub-Saharan Africa, RTI has found that in most instances, girls significantly outperformed boys on early reading tasks (Piper 2010:5). The EGRA assessment for Grade 3 learners in Egypt points to gender differences in reading proficiency (LaTowsky et al. 2013:21). Girls out-performed boys in their knowledge of letter sounds, reading non words, oral reading fluency, and reading comprehension. A higher percentage of boys [16%] than girls [13%] were nonreaders. These Grade 3 results are consistent with findings of previous Egyptian EGRA's in Grades 1 and 2. This may be due to the fact that girls often develop the cognitive capacity for reading earlier than boys. Better school attendance by girls might, however, also explain this difference. In the 200 sampled schools, 88% of enrolled girls were present on the day of EGRA implementation, compared to 85% of boys.

In Ethiopia, the EGRA study found that across regions, there was a statistically significant difference between boys' and girls' achievements in almost all the reading tasks (Piper 2010:5). While rural boys outperformed rural girls on all the tasks except for listening comprehension, urban girls outperformed urban boys on every task except for listening comprehension (Piper 2010:31). In Ethiopia, it appears that rural girls have lower achievement than girls in urban areas and much lower than girls in other African countries (Piper 2010:31).

In the South African study of Grade 1 learners in January 2009, no statistically significant differences in reading skills were found between boys and girls; although a handful of higher-achieving learners on the letter sound recognition tasks were all girls (Piper 2009:1).

In the EGRA study conducted in Ghana, differences in performance between boys and girls were very minimal across the EGRA subtasks, with boys performing only slightly better than girls (Kochetkova & Brombacher 2013:14). The differences in performance were not statistically significant.

In Senegal, among children learning to read in French, girls performed better than boys in four of the ten tasks. Among children learning to read in Wolof, there were no significant differences between boys' and girls' reading scores (Sprenger-Charolles 2008:9).

In almost all these studies conducted in Africa it was found that girls perform better than boys in reading. Although several factors could have contributed to these results, it appears that girls are more inclined and receptive to reading than boys. Educators need to take cognisance of these findings and provide appropriate and sufficient reading support to boys so that they can reduce this reading deficit or even catch up with their female counterparts.

### **3.3.6 The home environment**

The learners' linguistic landscape in the home plays a critical role in developing learners' literacy skills. Vast differences exist in ESL learners' opportunities they have had to develop high-level language and literacy in the L1 and L2. Hence, children vary in the availability of learning support outside of school. A study conducted with Grade 2 and Grade 4 learners in five states in rural India showed that across both grades, close to 10% of the sampled children came from families whose home language is different from the school's medium of instruction (Annual Status of Education Report 2011:2). More than 60 % came from families where no adult woman has ever been to school. Less than half of the learners have any print materials available at home. Although parents understand the importance of schooling, most are unable to provide effective support for learning at home.

Bhattacharjea, Wadhwa and Banerji (2011:8) found that in rural India less than half of all households have any print material available, children do not have any print materials to read at home; and children whose home language is different from the school language of instruction learn less. Across the sample it was found that higher economic status correlates positively with children's attendance and learning outcomes, educational levels of families were generally low across the sample; and parents', particularly mothers' education was strongly related to children's learning (Bhattacharjea et al. 2011:63). It was also noted that educational levels were generally low. Even among younger adults [18 to 40 years], well over half of all women in these households have never been to school; this proportion is close to 90% among older women. The most worrying fact is that 5,1% of all the children age 6 to 14 years in the households of sampled

children were married. Almost 40% of children in the sample came from homes where the father had never been to school; two-thirds had mothers who had never been to school. Out of a list that included calendars, religious texts, newspapers, magazines, and other books, about 40% of the sampled children came from homes with none of these items and another 40% from homes which were observed to have a single item - almost invariably a calendar.

The Ethiopian EGRA study found that few classrooms were stocked with reading books and few children had many reading materials at their homes; with Oromiya [17,8%], Somali [17,3%], Benishangul-Gumuz [17,2%], and Sidama [16,1%] reporting particularly low rates (Piper 2010:9,18). Thus, children have limited exposure to reading and engaging in interesting materials appropriate for their developmental levels. Mothers' literacy varied with low rates in Somali [22,7%], Amhara [27,2%], and Benishangul-Gumuz [27,25%]. The EGRA study in Ethiopia also showed that at family level, many wealth factors were related to achievement [having a radio, having a nice house, a phone, electricity, and family helping with homework] (Piper 2010:ES7).

As far back as 1981, Cummins (1981:20) already affirmed that a way in which home environment affects the learner's school performance is through the linguistic stimulation [or lack of it] that children receive in the L1. He argues that if parents are ashamed of their cultural background or feel that they speak an inferior dialect of the L1, they may not encourage their children to develop L1 skills in the home. For example, they may communicate with the child only when necessary, or use a mixture of L1 and L2 in the home. Thus, children's L1 abilities that is, the development of concepts and skills in the L1 may be poorly developed on entry to school. This leaves children without a conceptual basis for learning L2 in an L2 only school situation, and consequently they may achieve only low levels of proficiency [for example, reading and writing skills] in both the languages. In this case, children's performances in school, as well as the proficiencies they develop in both languages, will tend to reflect the ambivalent attitudes of their parents and the pattern of linguistic interactions they have experienced in the home.

Although the above studies point towards a strong relationship between socio-economic status [SES], Thomas and Collier (1997:39) have found that the generalised SES variable is less useful

than they had anticipated as an explanatory learner background variable. These researchers have repeatedly illuminated that a more powerful variable is more specific and educationally relevant – the amount of schooling in the L1 that the learner has experienced. On the other hand, Gömleksiz (2001:220) perceives motivation to be one of the most important aspects of SLA. From my experience as a child who lived in a totally rural area with no electricity, taps, television, and print media in my community, and attended a school with limited resources I strongly believe that motivation to learn plays a more critical role in learner achievement than SES.

### **3.3.7 The age factor in second language acquisition: The critical period hypothesis**

Butler and Hakuta (2006:126) argue that the age factor is one of the most frequently discussed variable for explaining individual differences in L2 acquisition and Gömleksiz (2001:218) emphasises that a learner's age is one of the most important factors affecting the process of SLA. While L1 acquisition usually starts at the same time for all L1 learners, there is tremendous variation as to when individuals commence learning an L2.

There is a special relationship between language and the left hemisphere of the brain. Generally speaking we can say that language is controlled by the left hemisphere of the brain. The process whereby one hemisphere of the brain is specialised for the performance of certain functions is known as lateralisation (Lyons 1995:249). The process of lateralisation is maturational, in the sense that it is genetically preprogrammed, but takes time to develop. Lateralisation, which appears to be specific to human beings, is generally thought to begin when the child is about two years old and to be complete at some time between the age of five and the onset of puberty (Lyons 1995:249). Lyons (1995:249) maintains that it is a widely held view nowadays that lateralisation is a precondition of the acquisition of language. A crucial point to consider is the fact that language acquisition begins at about the same time as lateralisation does and is normally complete by the time that the process of lateralisation comes to an end (Lyons 1995:249-250).

Further support comes from the fact that it becomes progressively more difficult to acquire language after the age at which lateralisation is complete. Moreover, behavioural tests and brain imaging studies show that late exposure to language alters the fundamental organisation of the brain for language (Fromkin et al. 2007:53). In fact there seems to be what is frequently referred

to as a critical age for language acquisition in the sense that language will not be acquired at all, or at least not with full mastery of its resources, unless it is acquired by the time the child reaches the age in question.

The critical period hypothesis assumes that language is biologically based (Fromkin et al. 2007:53) and claims that it is not possible to acquire a native-like level of proficiency when learning of an L2 starts after a critical period, normally associated with puberty (Adamson 2005:33, De Bot et al. 2005:65). This position is most strongly associated with acquiring the phonological system of an L2. Long (in Bongaerts 2005:259) argues that studies conducted to date warranted the conclusion that “ability to attain native-like phonological abilities in an L2 begins to decline by age six in many individuals and to be beyond anyone beginning later than age twelve, no matter how motivated they might be or how much opportunity they might have. Native-like morphology and syntax only seem to be possible for those beginning before age fifteen”. Children deprived of language during this critical period show atypical patterns of brain lateralisation (Fromkin et al. 2007:53).

This hypothesis was grounded in research which revealed that people who lost their linguistic capabilities, for example as a result of an accident, were able to regain them totally before puberty [about the age of twelve] but were unable to do so afterwards (Ellis 2000:67). The concept of critical period has been extended to L2 acquisition in that English proficiency declines after the age of seven when Chinese or Korean speakers move to the United States (Sakai 2005:816; Adamson 2005:33).

There is also considerable evidence to support the claim that L2 learners who begin learning as adults are unable to achieve native-speaker competence in either grammar or pronunciation. For example, studies of immigrant learners in the United States indicate that if they arrive before puberty they go on to achieve much higher levels of grammatical proficiency than if they arrive after. Sometimes they become indistinguishable from native speakers (Ellis 2000:68).

Mc Laughlin (in Fathman & Precup 1983:152) states that there is no conclusive evidence that there is a critical [sensitive] period of language or that there are, indeed, definite child-adult differences in language learning. However, there is a preponderance of research evidence that supports the critical period hypothesis. For example, the case of Genie, an abused girl who was

totally isolated from all language input and interaction in the early years of her life and consequently did not start learning language [English] until the age of thirteen. Genie never developed linguistic knowledge and skills for her L1 that were compatible to those of speakers who began acquisition in early childhood (Curtiss in Hyltenstam & Abrahamsson 2003:543; Ellis 2000:68; Saville-Troike 2012:88; Lyons 1995:250; Fromkin et al. 2007:53).

Another example is the case of Isabelle which illustrates the effects of being severely deprived of linguistic input (Curtiss in Hyltenstam & Abrahamsson 2003:543). Isabelle had been hidden away in an attic and given only minimal attention until she was discovered at the age of six. While Isabelle reached native-like level of fluency after only one year of exposure, Genie stopped at a level similar to that of two-year-olds. The differences between the two cases of Isabelle and Genie support the view that a pronounced decrease in potential to acquire native-like proficiency in an L1 occurs between the age of seven [Isabelle] and puberty [Genie].

Furthermore, Schachter (1997:13) reinforces her argument that adults have so much difficulty learning an L2 and almost never reach the level of completeness that would let them pass as native speakers of the L2. Accordingly, Long (in Bongaerts 2005:264), after reviewing literature on the critical period hypothesis affirmed his position: "My position was then, and remains, that in terms of absolute language learning capacity, only young child starters can [not necessarily will] attain native-like proficiency levels". He argues that, while counter-evidence to the critical period hypothesis has been advanced in a number of studies, there are various problems with this counter-evidence, for example measurement of age of acquisition, unreliable or invalid measures, faulty interpretation of statistical patterns, and so forth.

There is a major paradox when comparing the acquisition of L2 by children and adults. Children learn an L2 more slowly than adults, yet the earlier an individual begins to learn an L2 the better he or she will speak it (Oyama, Seliger, Krashen & Ladefoged in Snow 1983:144-145). Snow (1983:145) considers an example of a five-year-old and a fifty-year-old both learning an L2. The five-year-old learns much slower than the fifty-year-old. Nonetheless, five years later, the five-year-old now ten speaks the L2 much better than the fifty-year-old, now fifty five. In other words, children can learn more slowly but keep going longer, to the point where they ultimately catch up with and surpass adult learners. Thus, it is important to distinguish between two aspects

of L2 acquisition when considering age differences: speed of acquisition, and ultimate level of achievement. Child L2 learners excel in the second aspect, ultimate level of achievement, but adult L2 learners excel in the first aspect, speed of acquisition.

Following the critical period hypothesis, it has often been concluded that educators should take advantage of this ease of learning by teaching an L2 as early as possible (Cook 2008:147). However, educators need to be cautious not to submerge L2 learners in English medium classrooms and take cognisance of the fact that L2 learners can benefit tremendously by early exposure to additive bilingual or multilingual programmes in the formative years. In this way these young L2 learners would be able to ultimately achieve higher levels of L2 proficiency; not only the development of speaking skills but also reading and writing skills.

The inference drawn from the critical period hypothesis indicates that the ability of isiZulu-speaking learners to attain native-like phonological abilities in English will begin to decline by age six in many learners and to be beyond any learners beginning later than age twelve. Although this research study focuses on learners between ages five and ten this study via the observation and questionnaires will help to provide evidence either supporting or refuting the critical period hypothesis.

Another fundamental aspect related to age is the age at which the child is enrolled in Grade 1. Banerji (2013:6) analysed the reading level of Grade 1 learners by age and school type in India. Based on the 2013 ASER, she emphasised that age matters in the early grades within the same types of schools [government and private]. She stresses that older children seem to have a definite advantage in learning. If we compare across school types, the differences are also clear. The comparison is most stark when we compare the two extremes in age in Grade 1 – youngest children in government schools with oldest children in private schools. When Banerji (2013:7) compared the cohort that was in Grade 1 in 2009, moved to Grade 3 in 2011 and Grade 5 in 2013, it was found that the learning disadvantages of the youngest children in the cohort that was visible in Grade 1 persists over time. Banerji (2013:7) concluded that the youngest children in government schools simply never catch up with their older counterparts or those in private schools. Relatively speaking, this group of children [who were five when they started their



formal schooling {Grade1} in government schools] continued to be the weakest group two years later in Grade 3 and another two years later in Grade 5.

In South Africa learners are admitted to Grade 1 at the age of five. This early entry level has implications for all learners' educational achievements which are compounded as the years progress. The situation becomes even more complex when it involves L2 learners. From Banerji's (2013:7) conclusion regarding the age of Grade 1 learners, one can only deduce that L2 learners entering Grade 1 at age five will most definitely experience academic difficulties. When it comes to more demanding tasks such as reading and writing, the problems are exacerbated. Banerji (2013:7) reinforces that one of the factors that contribute to early enrollments is the rising educational aspirations and the assumption that more schooling is better often leads parents to enroll their children early in school. This study will generate information on age that will either lend support or refute Banerji's conclusions.

### **3.3.8 Concluding annotations on the factors that impact on the English second language learners' reading and writing achievements**

It is clearly evident that the factors discussed in this section could possibly affect ESL learners' reading and writing skills. Although culture is much broader than language; the two are intricately interwoven. The model that the learner chooses in the process of acculturation will determine, to a certain extent, his or her proficiency in the L2. Integration, as an acculturation model, appears to be the preeminent option. If learners identify with both the native group and the target group, they would be in a better position to develop high levels of proficiency in both L1 and L2 literacy. Hence, if isiZulu-speaking learners identify with the isiZulu culture and the English culture it is probable that they will become proficient in both the languages.

Apart from the cultural factors, there are crucial psychological factors that need to be considered. Anxiety and motivation are two important psychological factors to consider when learning to read and write in an L2. Although a small amount of anxiety can be helpful at certain times; too much of anxiety can affect a learner's thinking ability. Reading and writing anxiety can be linked to unfamiliar cultural material. For example, an isiZulu-speaking learner may become anxious when he or she is asked to read a text that has unfamiliar cultural content or to write a story on an unfamiliar topic.

Another psychological factor is motivation. Motivation plays a crucial role when learning an L2. If isiZulu-speaking learners are motivated to read and write in English they will definitely perform better. On the other hand if they are not motivated they will not reach grade level performance in reading and writing. Parents and educators play a major role in motivating learners. It is their task to ensure that learners are provided with sufficient age appropriate reading materials. Integratively motivated parents will be better equipped to provide reading and writing support to their children.

Another widely recognised aspect to consider is the cognitive factor. A learner who has a good L1 foundation will be more prepared to read and write in the L2. It is presumed that IsiZulu-speaking learners who do not have good literacy skills in isiZulu will experience difficulties when confronted with reading and writing in English. These cognitive challenges are exacerbated as the learners progress through the grades.

Associated with the cognitive challenges are school factors. The curriculum may not conducive to teaching learners whose home language is not English. For example, several isiZulu-speaking learners are learning English home language at school. Their difficulties are compounded when they have to learn through the medium of English and their teachers are not trained to teach them. It is apparent that isiZulu-speaking learners are in English medium schools because their parents want them to attend these schools but are their home environments conducive to developing literacy skills; especially in an L2? Somehow, the situation seems worse for isiZulu-speaking learners who are not receiving an additive bilingual or multilingual education and for boys since studies have shown that they are outperformed by girls.

### **3.4 CONCLUSION**

This chapter provided a literature study relating to reading and writing deficits and various factors that affect L2 learners' reading and writing achievements; which will be used to interpret data generated in this study. As two of the four language skills which learners need to acquire in their earliest years in formal schooling, reading and writing builds the foundation for all formal learning in school. Children who do not learn to read in the early grades risk falling further and further behind in later years, as they cannot absorb printed information, follow written instruction, or communicate well in writing (Gove & Wetterberg 2011:1). The importance of

reading cannot be ignored; since there is a 90% chance that a poor reader at the end of Grade 1 will continue to be a poor reader at the end of Grade 5; and reading deficits start building up from Grade 2 (Jhingran 2011:19). Any child who does not learn to read early and well will not easily master other skills and knowledge.

When assessments were conducted in various countries these two mutually supportive and intricately interwoven skills appear to be deficient. Data from various assessments such as PIRLS, EGRA, ASER, and LB in developing countries in Africa and Asia indicate that majority of foundation phase learners cannot read and write. This implies that children do not reach grade level expectations in reading and writing. There is also a high disparity in reading and writing levels from Grade 2 onwards. The most disturbing fact is that after three years of schooling a significant number of learners remain completely illiterate in their primary language.

Also, of considerable importance in this chapter are the cultural, psychological, cognitive, and social factors that impact on the ESL learners' reading and writing achievements. Learners' cultural background, anxiety, motivation, English language proficiency, prior knowledge and experiences, and primary language literacy are considered as important factors in determining learners' reading and writing achievements.

In the next chapter the research design and methodology of the empirical investigation of factors that affect foundation phase English second language learners' reading and writing skills will be discussed.

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## CHAPTER 4

### EXPLORATION OF RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapter reading and writing deficits in developing countries were highlighted. In addition, the cultural, psychological, cognitive, social factors that impact on the ESL learners' reading and writing achievements in the English medium school were explored. Attention was also focused on school factors, gender differences, home environment, and age of the learners. In this chapter a combined quantitative-qualitative research design and methodology will be used to investigate the factors that affect isiZulu-speaking foundation phase learners' reading and writing skills in English medium schools. This will be undertaken with specific reference to English as a second language.

Attention will be given to the selection of subjects and participants, the research technique, data collection, reliability and validity of data, analysis and interpretation of data, and ethical considerations.

#### 4.2 THE RESEARCH DESIGN

One of the most important choices made in the construction of any study is the research design. Mouton (2005:55) defines a research design as a plan or blueprint of how the researcher intends conducting the research. De Vos (2005:389) claims that a research design is a logical strategy for gathering evidence about knowledge desired. Durrheim (1999:29) asserts that a research design is a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between research questions and the execution or implementation of the research. McMillan and Schumacher (2006:22) maintain that a research design describes how the study should be conducted. They further indicate that it summarises the procedures for conducting the study, including when, from whom, and under what conditions the data will be obtained. In other words, the research design indicates the general plan: how the research is set up, what happens to the subjects, what methods of data collection are used, and how the data generated will be analysed and interpreted.

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### 4.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Mouton (2005:55) reports that researchers often confuse “research design” and ‘research methodology’. He emphasises that these are two very different aspects of a research project. Research methodology focuses on the individual steps in the research process and the kind of tools and most objective procedures to be employed (Mouton 2005:56). McMillan and Schumacher (2006:9) define research methodology as ways in which one collects and analyses data. These methods have been developed for acquiring knowledge by reliable and valid procedures. Data collection may be done with measurement techniques, extensive interviews and observations, or a set of documents. In this study data was collected via survey questionnaires, interviews, and observation.

The stated research problem was best investigated using a mixed-method research design. Mixed-method designs which combine quantitative and qualitative methods are becoming increasingly popular because many situations are best investigated using a variety of methods (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:27). The fundamental rationale behind mixed-methods research is that we can learn more about our research topic if we combine the strengths of qualitative research with the strengths of quantitative research while compensating at the same time for the weaknesses of each method (Punch 2009:290). Furthermore, Dörnyei (2011:47) emphasises that in most cases a mixed-methods approach can offer additional benefits for the understanding of the phenomenon in question. By using the above approach I wish to investigate the factors that affect isiZulu-speaking foundation phase learners’ reading and writing skills and how isiZulu-speaking foundation phase learners experience reading and writing in English medium schools.

The advantages of a combined quantitative-qualitative approach for this investigation are:

- ❖ A quantitative approach allows for generalisation and will yield information on the central research problem (Refer to Chapter 1, section 1.6.1).
- ❖ A qualitative approach allows for an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon and is also presumed to be suitable to yield information on the central research problem.

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### 4.3.1 The quantitative component of the research

Quantitative researchers collect data in the form of numbers and use statistical types of analysis (Durrheim 1999:42). McMillan and Schumacher (2006:23) postulate that quantitative research designs maximise objectivity by using numbers, statistics, structure, and control. Rosnow and Rosenthal (1999:81) view quantitative methods as those in which observed data exist in a numerical form. Therefore quantitative data are numerical; they are information about the world, in the form of numbers (Punch 2009:85).

The quantitative component of the research consisted of a survey. The survey is one of the most common methods of collecting data on attitudes and opinions from a large group of subjects and it has been used to investigate a wide variety of questions in second language research (Mackey & Gass 2008:92). A survey is a type of non-experimental design. Non-experimental research designs describe things that have occurred and examine relationships between things without any direct manipulation of conditions that are experienced (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:24).

In a survey research design, the investigator selects a sample of subjects and administers a questionnaire or conducts interviews to collect data (Dörnyei 2011:101; McMillan & Schumacher 2006:25). Surveys can be used to describe attitudes, beliefs, opinions, and so on. The research was designed so that information about a large number of people [the population] could be inferred from the responses obtained from a smaller group of subjects [the sample].

#### 4.3.1.1 Sampling

Sampling in quantitative research usually means “people sampling” (Punch 2009:251). Hence, Punch (2009:251) argues that the key concepts are the population [the total target group who would, in the ideal world, be the subject of the research, and about whom one is trying to say something] and the sample [the actual group who are included in the study, and from whom the data are collected]. Johnson and Christensen (2008:222) maintain that random sampling is frequently used in survey research. Hence, the stratified random sampling technique was employed in this study. In stratified sampling the population is divided into groups or strata, and a random sample of a proportionate size is selected from each group (Dörnyei 2011:97).

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Stratified random sampling is a type of probability sampling. In probability sampling subjects are drawn from a larger population in such a way that the probability of selecting each member of the population is known (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:119). Each member of the population as a whole has the same chance of being selected as other members in the same group. Thus, probability sampling was utilised to ensure adequate representation of the population.

The sample was drawn from five English medium primary schools in the Port Shepstone area within close proximity to each other. The schools that were selected met the following criteria: the schools service a large number of isiZulu-speaking learners, the demographics were ideal for investigating the above problem, and the medium of instruction as well as the curriculum were also taken into consideration. The learners at the five schools are learning English Home Language.

The population [isiZulu-speaking foundation phase learners] was divided into subgroups, or strata, on the basis of school, and gender. Once the population was divided, samples were drawn randomly from each subgroup. A table of random numbers (retrieved from McMillan and Schumacher 2006:494), which is a set of randomly assorted digits was used to select the sample.

According to Mackey and Gass (2008:123) when selecting a sample, the goal is usually that the sample be of sufficient size to allow for generalisation of results. McMillan and Schumacher (2006:127) argue that the general rule in determining sample size is to obtain a sufficient number to provide a credible result. It is generally accepted that larger samples mean a higher likelihood of only incidental differences between the sample and the population. Johnson and Christensen (2008:241) reiterate the advantage of a larger sample size. These researchers claim that larger samples result in smaller sampling errors, which mean that the sample values [the statistics], will be closer to the true population values [the parameters]. This usually means obtaining as many as possible.

However, in situations in which a random sample is selected from a large population, a sample size that is only a small percentage of the population can approximate the characteristics of the population satisfactorily (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:127). Dörnyei (2011:99) recommends that the sample size in survey research be in a range of one percent to ten percent of the

population, with a minimum of about one hundred participants. Seaberg, Grinell and Williams (in Strydom 2005:195) affirm that in most cases a ten percent sample should be sufficient for controlling sampling errors. This is also supported by McMillan and Schumacher (2006:127). Thus, the sample consisted of ten percent of the population.

Random sampling, by using the table of random numbers, ensured that no subject was involved in the investigation because the researcher knows, or does not know the person, or because it is merely convenient for the researcher to involve certain persons, or exclude them. However, as soon as the sample was drawn, each learner in the sample was given two questionnaires [one in English and one in isiZulu] to take home and ask one of his or her parents to complete either one of the questionnaires and return it.

Foundation phase educators were also included in the research process. Since each school generally has between nine and eleven foundation phase educators, it was not feasible to employ random sampling. Hence, the complete population was included in the study. This ensured a near zero percent sampling error. Johnson and Christensen (2008:241) recommend using the entire population when the population numbers are one hundred or less.

#### 4.3.1.2 The research instrument

The research instruments, questionnaires, were specifically constructed to obtain information on the factors that affect isiZulu-speaking foundation phase learners' reading and writing skills. Dörnyei (2011:101) considers questionnaires to be the main data collection method in surveys. Mackey and Gass (2008:92), and McMillan and Schumacher (2006:194) perceive the questionnaire to be the most common and most widely used technique for obtaining information from subjects. A questionnaire is relatively economical, has the same questions for all the subjects and can ensure anonymity (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:194). Rosnow and Rosenthal (1999:123) emphasise that questionnaires are convenient to use because they can be administered to a large number of people; they are relatively economical; and they provide a type of "anonymity".

Two sets of questionnaires were completed in the quantitative component of the study. The one set of questionnaires was completed by a group of parents and the other set of questionnaires was completed by foundation phase educators. The questionnaires comprised a few questions, all of



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which are relatively clear and simple in their meaning. Delpont (2005:166) stresses that the basic objective of a questionnaire is to obtain facts and opinions about the phenomenon from people who are informed on a particular issue. Questionnaires are probably the most generally used instruments of all. The advantage of a questionnaire is that it is less time consuming and the researcher may not influence these replies by revealing his or her opinions, as may be the case in interviews.

The parent questionnaire consisted of four sections, namely: A, B, C, and D (Refer to Appendices 5 and 7)

Section A : Biographical data or background information

Section B : Scaled responses – Measurements of parents’ views on the learners’ emotional behaviour when reading and writing in English

Section C : Scaled responses - Measurements of parents’ reasons for wanting their children to be able to read and write in English

Section D : Scaled responses – Measurements of parents’ views regarding their children’s performance in English and isiZulu

The educator questionnaire consisted of five sections, namely: A, B, C, D, and E (Refer to Appendix 9).

Section A : Biographical data or background information

Section B : Scaled responses – Measurements of educators’ views on the learners’ emotional behaviour when reading and writing in English

Section C : Scaled responses – Measurements of educators’ views regarding isiZulu-speaking learners’ performance in English

Section D : Scaled responses – Measurements of educators views regarding the Curriculum

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## and Assessment Policy Statement

### Section E : Scaled responses - General

#### 4.3.1.3 The pilot study

Rosnow and Rosenthal (1999:122) affirm that in developing a questionnaire, pilot testing is absolutely essential. This testing will enable the researcher to determine whether the items are worded appropriately.

A pilot study was conducted among three parents of isiZulu-speaking foundation phase learners and three foundation phase educators.

#### 4.3.1.4 Collection of data

Permission was requested from the school principals to distribute the questionnaires (Refer to Appendix 3). All the foundation phase educators and Heads of Department [HODs] in the five schools were given questionnaires to complete. Additionally, each learner in the sample was given two questionnaires [one in English and one in isiZulu] to take home and ask one of his or her parents to complete any one of the two questionnaires. Questionnaires were distributed to and collected from each school personally. The questionnaires were distributed to the sample with the assistance of class educators. Instructions were explained to the sample in English and isiZulu. This was necessary in order to avoid confusion and uncertainty. Educators and parents were given approximately a week to complete and return the questionnaires.

#### 4.3.1.5 Data analysis and interpretation

The data gleaned from the questionnaires were subjected to statistical analysis to determine the factors that affect isiZulu-speaking foundation phase learners' reading and writing skills. The parents' views were compared with the educators' opinions.

Quantitative data analysis was done by means of frequency distributions and percentages that were supported by either pie graphs, or tables. Quantitative data was analysed by means of simple frequency distributions as well as grouped frequency distributions. These are frequency distributions in table form. Quantitative data was also analysed in a graphical form. Frequencies were displayed by means of pie graphs.

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The following method was used to analyse quantitative data (Kruger, De Vos, Fouché & Venter 2005:222-225):

I firstly looked at original categories and wrote them down as they were stated in the question. A small vertical line was drawn for each one of the responses which could fit into a category. In this way I was coding data. After every four marks, the fifth crosses through the fourth, thus: 1111, which made it easy to add up later in multiples of five: five, ten, fifteen, etc.

The rough calculations were done in preparation for presentation in the formal research report. The contents of the frequency distribution were ordered from low to high frequencies. This procedure allowed for easy understanding of the tables.

#### 4.3.1.6 Issues of validity and reliability

In order to obtain valid and reliable data one must ensure, before implementing the study, that the measurement procedures and the measurement instruments to be used have acceptable levels of reliability and validity. Reliability and validity are the two most important concepts in the context of measurement (Delpont 2005:160).

##### ❖ Validity

Babbie (2004) in Delpont (2005:160) and Dörnyei (2011:51) maintain that validity refers to the extent to which an empirical measure accurately reflects the concept it is intended to measure. It refers to the truthfulness of the findings and conclusions (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:134). Validity, broadly speaking, refers to whether the measurements measure what they are supposed [or claim] to measure. This research study used two measures of validity: face validity and content validity.

##### ➤ Face validity

Face validity refers to the superficial appearance or face value of a measurement procedure and the relevant question in this regard is: Does the measurement technique “look as if” it measures the variable that it claims to measure (Delpont 2005:161).

Face validity was established by giving a draft questionnaire to approximately three parents and three educators, prior to pilot testing. They were asked to comment on

whether the instruments [questionnaires] would provide valid data for the purpose of the study.

➤ Content validity

Delpont (2005:160-161) and Mackey and Gass (2008:107) assert that content validity is concerned with the representativeness or sampling adequacy of the content of an instrument. Rosnow and Rosenthal (1999:145) posit that content validity means that the test or questionnaire items represent the kinds of material [or content areas] they are supposed to represent. Thus, a test or questionnaire with good content validity covers all the major aspects of the content areas that are relevant. To determine content validity two questions as suggested by Delpont (2005:161) could be asked:

- Is the measurement really measuring the concept we assume it is?
- Does the instrument provide an adequate sample of items that represent the concept?

In this research study, the possible factors that affect isiZulu-speaking foundation phase learners' reading and writing skills were validated by the literature study to sample the concepts adequately.

❖ Reliability

Reliability of a measurement procedure is the stability or consistency of the measurement (Johnson & Christensen 2008:14; Delpont 2005:162). This implies that if the same variable is measured under the same conditions, a reliable measurement procedure will produce identical [or near identical] measurements.

Reliability refers to the dependability of a measurement, that is, the extent to which the measurement yields the same results on repeated trials (Durrheim 1999:88). If the instrument is not reliable, it is often less likely to be valid, but it can be very reliable without at all valid (Rosnow & Rosenthal 1999:135).

To establish reliability and validity, the questionnaire was pilot tested before using it in the study. The pilot study was conducted with a sample of subjects with characteristics similar to

those that were used in the study. Since the purpose of the pilot study is to improve the success and effectiveness of the investigation, space was provided on the questionnaire for criticisms or comments by the respondents. These comments were carefully considered during the main investigation.

### **4.3.2 The qualitative component of the study**

McMillan and Schumacher (2006:315) postulate that qualitative research is inquiry in which researchers collect data in face-to-face situations by interacting with selected persons in their settings. These authors claim that qualitative research describes and analyses people's individual and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts and perceptions. In addition, they assert that in qualitative research the researcher interprets phenomena in terms of meanings that people assign to them. In this study qualitative research was used to "inductively explore phenomena and to provide 'thick' [that is, detailed] descriptions of phenomena" (Durrheim 1999:43).

Qualitative research designs emphasise gathering data on naturally occurring phenomena. McMillan and Schumacher (2006:26) classify qualitative research designs as interactive and non-interactive. Interactive methods consist of ethnography, phenomenology, case studies, grounded theory, and critical studies. Non-interactive methods comprise of concept analysis, and historical analysis.

For this investigation a phenomenological study was utilised. This approach aims to understand and interpret the meaning that participants give to their everyday lives (Fouché 2005:270). Johnson and Christensen (2008:48) maintain that the key element of a phenomenological study is that the researcher attempts to understand how people experience a phenomenon from their own perspectives. A phenomenological study describes the meanings of a lived experience (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:26) and the way in which the researcher puts the experiences together to develop a worldview (Marshall & Rossman 1995:82).

This qualitative component of the research entailed the researcher adopting dual roles. The first role was that of a participant observer in which the researcher created the role for the purpose of the study. The second role was that of the interviewer in which the researcher established a role with each person involved.

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Although McMillan and Schumacher (2006:345) maintain that the researcher as a participant observer will possibly utilise the ethnographic approach; Strydom (2005:276) asserts that the phenomenological approach is important in participant observation, as the researcher endeavours to gain an in-depth insight into the manifestations of reality. I preferred the phenomenological approach since my research aimed to understand and interpret the meaning that participants give to their everyday lives and not an intact cultural or social group.

In ethnographic studies the interactions are quite widespread but the researcher is less intrusive in data collection. Whereas, in phenomenological studies the interaction is more intrusive, close and personal. In this research the researcher preferred interacting with the learners and educators, and observing and interviewing them. Thus, the phenomenological approach was more appropriate.

Johnson and Christensen (2008:212) affirm that qualitative observation involves observing all relevant phenomena and taking extensive field notes without specifying in advance exactly what is to be observed. Observation is mainly done by means of naturalistic methods of study, analysing conversations and interactions that researchers have with participants. Fouché (2005:270) asserts that researchers using this strategy of interpretive inquiry will mainly utilise participant observation and long interviews as methods of data collection.

Participant observation and interviews were used as the main strategies of inquiry in this study. The interview is the most prominent data collection tool in qualitative research (Punch 2009:144). It is an effective way of accessing people's perceptions, meanings, definitions of situations, and constructions of reality. However, during the research process I created the research strategy best suited to my research, or even designed my whole research project around the strategy selected.

Strydom (2005:274-276) describes participant observation as a research procedure that is typical of the qualitative paradigm and that studies the natural and everyday set-up in a particular community or situation. McMillan and Schumacher (2006:347) state that participant observation enables the researcher to obtain people's perceptions of events and processes expressed in their actions and expressed as feelings, thoughts and beliefs. Participant observation is a combination of particular data collecting strategies: limited participation, field observation, interviewing, and

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artifact collection (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:346). In this research study, multiple strategies were used to corroborate data. Observation, limited participation and interviewing were utilised.

#### 4.3.2.1 Sampling

Sampling involves decisions about which people, settings, events, behaviours and/or social processes to observe (Durrheim 1999:44). Although Mouton (2005:101) argues that bias samples are common errors in data sources and access to data, this is mostly related to heterogeneous populations. Most qualitative researchers prefer to select a purposive sample (Gorman & Clayton 2008:128). Hence, the sampling technique that was employed in this study was purposeful sampling [sometimes referred to as purposive, judgement or judgemental sampling].

Purposeful sampling is a type of non-probability sampling (Strydom & Delpont 2005:328). According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006:125) non-probability sampling is the most common type of sampling in educational research. In non-probability sampling, the researcher uses subjects or participants who happen to be accessible or who may represent certain types of characteristics. This does not include any type of random selection from the population. In purposeful sampling, the researcher selects particular elements from the population that will be representative or informative about the topic of interest (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:126). In this case the elements that were selected were “information rich” cases. This was based on the researcher’s knowledge of the population.

The researcher used the same five schools as in the quantitative section since this is part of the same project. The sample was drawn from the five English medium primary schools. Both male and female foundation phase educators were selected. However, this did not ensure maximum variation; since it is noticed that majority of the foundation phase educators in the five schools are females. In selecting the educator sample, the researcher also took into consideration the educators’ post levels. Thus, foundation phase HODs and foundation phase level one educators were selected.

Paton (2002) (in Strydom & Delpont 2005:328) claims that there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry. Qualitative inquirers view sampling processes as dynamic, ad hoc, and

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phasic rather than static or a priori parameters of populations (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:321). While there are statistical rules for probability sampling size, there are only guidelines for purposeful sample size. Dörnyei (2011:127) reinforces that a well-designed qualitative study usually requires a relatively small number of participants to yield the saturated and rich data that is needed to understand even subtle meanings in the phenomenon under focus. Thus, Dörnyei (2011:127) draws from his experience in stating that an initial sample size of six to ten might work well and using computer-aided data analysis we can increase the sample size to as many as thirty; although that would be barely manageable for a single researcher.

Contrarily, McMillan and Schumacher (2006:321) argue that purposeful samples can range from one to forty or more. The logic of sample size is related to the purpose, the collection strategy and the availability of information-rich cases. In qualitative research sampling occurs subsequent to establishing the circumstances of the study clearly. Thus, sampling is undertaken after the investigation has commenced (Strydom & Delpont 2005:328). Furthermore, McMillan and Schumacher (2006:322) emphasise that the insights generated from qualitative inquiry depend more on the information richness of the cases and the analytical capabilities of the researcher than on sample size.

Against this background, sampling was conducted simultaneously as data was collected and continued until data saturation was reached.

#### 4.3.2.2 The research technique

Data collection was conducted simultaneously when the quantitative component of the study was done. Participant observation was one of the two main data collecting strategies in the qualitative component (Refer to Appendix 14 for observational grid). The primary interest was observing groups of learners and individual learners during reading and writing lessons and the physical settings in which reading and writing took place. Data collection entailed writing accurate and systematic observational notes during observation and as soon as the session had ended. Loose notes or jottings were converted into field notes at the end of every day. Field notes contained a comprehensive account of the participants themselves, the actual discussions and communication, and the observer's attitude, perceptions and feelings. Individual interviews were a corroborative data collection strategy. The form of interaction or role taken by the researcher



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during the qualitative interview was observer-as-participant. The observer-as-participant takes on the role of the observer much more than the role of the participant (Johnson & Christensen 2008:214). Classroom observation continued until data saturation was reached.

Since a phenomenological study was used, “the typical technique was for the researcher to conduct long interviews with the informants directed towards understanding their perspectives on their everyday experiences with the phenomenon” (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:26). By conducting individual interviews, the researcher attempted to understand the world from the participant’s point of view and unfolded the meaning of the educators’ experiences. I preferred individual interviews to focus groups so that each educator could, in private, express his or her feelings qualitatively.

Johnson and Christensen (2008:207) emphasise that qualitative interviews can be used to obtain in-depth information about a participant’s thoughts, beliefs, knowledge, reasoning, motivations, and feelings about a topic. The semi-structured one-to-one interview was used. Researchers use semi-structured interviews in order to gain a detailed picture of a participant’s beliefs about, or perceptions or accounts of, a particular topic (Greeff 2005:296). With the semi-structured interviews, the researcher will have a set of predetermined questions on an interview schedule, while still having the freedom to digress and probe for more information (Mackey & Gass 2008:173). Greeff (2005:296) points out that an interview schedule or guide is a questionnaire written to guide interviews. Although there were a set of prepared guiding questions [interview guide or schedule] and prompts, the format was open-ended and the interviewees were encouraged to elaborate on issues raised in an exploratory manner. Hence, the interview schedule merely assisted the researcher in directing the interview instead of being restricted to the predetermined questions.

The interview schedule or guide was constructed from the literature on the topic. The questions were carefully formulated, sequenced and based on the research questions, aims and objectives of the study. The interviews were conducted at the schools.

#### 4.3.2.3 The pilot study

A pilot study was conducted before the main investigation commenced. In qualitative research the pilot study is usually informal, and a few respondents possessing the same characteristics as

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those of the main investigation will be involved in the study, merely to ascertain certain trends (Strydom & Delport 2005:331). The pilot study in qualitative research allowed the researcher to test certain questions. By testing the nature of the questions in an interview schedule in the pilot study, the qualitative researcher was able to make modifications with a view to quality interviewing during the main investigation (Refer to Appendix 11).

#### 4.3.2.4 Analysis and interpretation of data

McMillan and Schumacher (2006:364) emphasise that there is no set of standard procedures for qualitative data analysis or for keeping track of analytical strategies. However, these authors claim that qualitative data analysis is primarily an inductive process of organising data into categories and identifying patterns among the categories.

In this study the researcher utilised an eclectic approach to qualitative data analysis. Firstly, predetermined categories were used from the following sources:

- ❖ The research question and sub-questions.
- ❖ The research instrument [the interview guide].
- ❖ Concepts and themes from the literature.
- ❖ Prior knowledge of the researcher or personal experience as an educator and a researcher.

For data analysis, this study used the topics embedded in the interview schedule. The pre-established categories provided a frame for the next phase of data analysis.

Secondly, each category was divided into subcategories as the data were analysed. The subcategories were provisionally applied and thereafter refined.

Thirdly, each participant's typed comments were cut according to the above categories, manually coded and stapled.

Fourthly, relationships among the categories were made by discovering patterns in the data. In this study the researcher used triangulation, which is the cross-validation among data sources and data collection strategies (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:374). To find regularities in the data,

the researcher compared different sources [educators and parents], and methods [interviews, observation, and the survey {quantitative}] to see whether the same patterns kept recurring.

Fifthly, in seeking for patterns in the data, the researcher also searched for discrepant and negative evidence that modified or refuted a pattern. Finally, the developed patterns and themes were used to report the experiences of the participants.

#### 4.3.2.5 Validity and reliability

McKay (2006:11) emphasises two qualities that are essential for sound research. They are validity and reliability. She stresses that these terms are defined differently in qualitative research because there is far less control and structure in qualitative research.

##### ❖ Validity

Validity in qualitative research is the degree to which the interpretations have mutual meanings between the participants and the researcher (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:324). Thus, the researcher and participants agree on the description or composition of events, and especially the meanings of these events.

In qualitative research, internal validity refers to credibility and external validity refers to transferability (McKay 2006:13; De Vos 2005:346). Lincoln and Guba (1985) (in Marshall and Rossman 1995:143; Dörnyei 2011:57) propose four alternative constructs that more accurately reflect the assumptions of the qualitative paradigm. They are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

De Vos (2005:346) states that the goal of credibility is to demonstrate that the inquiry was conducted in such a manner that the participant was accurately identified and described. In this study, credibility, or truth value of the study, was enhanced by continuing data collection over a long period of time to ensure that the participants had become used to the researcher and were behaving naturally.

Credibility or internal validity was achieved by carefully recording the interviews, transcribing the interviews verbatim, analysing all the data gathered, and presenting the data in a fair and unbiased manner. Strategies that were used to enhance internal validity

included prolonged and persistent fieldwork [this ensured match between findings and participant reality], verbatim accounts [literal statements of participants were obtained], multi-method strategies [data was collected using in-depth interviews and observation], mechanical recordings of data [interviews were recorded using a voice recorder], and participant review [educators were asked to review the researcher's synthesis of interviews for accuracy].

Transferability or internal validity refers to the degree to which the findings of the qualitative study can be applied to other contexts (McKay 2006:13). De Vos (2005:346) affirms that the transferability of a qualitative study to other settings may be problematic. However the degree of transferability depends to a large extent on the similarity of the learning contexts being examined.

In order for the readers to determine the transferability of this study, the researcher provided a complete description of the participants and the context of the research so that readers can determine to what extent the findings might be applicable to other contexts. This implies that transferability, or applicability of the results to other contexts, was achieved by reporting "thick descriptions". "Thick descriptions" refer to the process of using multiple perspectives to explain the insights gleaned from the study (Mackey & Gass 2008:180).

Interpretative validity refers to the degree to which the participants' viewpoints, thoughts, feelings, intentions, and experiences are accurately understood by the qualitative researcher (Johnson & Christensen 2008:277). Participant feedback was used in order to achieve interpretative validity. Participant feedback refers to discussion of the researcher's conclusions with the participants (Johnson & Christensen 2008:277). When writing the research report, interpretive validity was achieved by using many low-inference descriptors. These are helpful because the reader can experience the participant's actual language, dialect and personal meanings. A verbatim is the lowest inference descriptor of all because the participant's exact words are provided in direct quotations (Johnson & Christensen 2008:278). Direct quotations were used when writing the research report. This ensured interpretative validity.

#### ❖ Reliability

The reliability of qualitative research depends on what is termed dependability (McKay 2006:14). McKay (2006:14) defines dependability as the degree to which the results reported in the study can be trusted or are reliable. Dependability, or consistency of the findings, was achieved since the interviews were recorded. Electronically recorded data helped the researcher to make use of all interpretive cues in order to draw inferences and evaluate the dependability of the inferences that had been drawn (Mackey & Gass 2008:81). Additionally, in reporting the qualitative study, the researcher provided a rich description of the participants involved in the study, the context for the study, and, most importantly, all the steps that were taken to carry out the study.

Confirmability, or neutrality of the findings, was achieved since full details of the data on which claims or interpretations are based were made available. This will allow other researchers to be able to examine the data and confirm, modify, or reject my interpretations.

#### **4.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Empirical research in education inevitably carries ethical issues, because it involves collecting data from people, and about people (Punch 2009:49). Generally ethics involves beliefs about what is right or wrong, proper or improper, and good or bad (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:142). Ethics is a set of moral principles which is suggested by an individual or group, is subsequently widely accepted, which offers rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and respondents, employers, sponsors, other researchers, assistants, and students (Strydom 2005:57).

Qualitative research is more likely to be personally intrusive than quantitative research. This is because in qualitative research, more specifically interactive qualitative methods, the researcher uses face-to-face techniques to collect data from people in their natural settings. Thus, ethical guidelines include policies regarding informed consent, deception, confidentiality, anonymity, privacy, and caring (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:333).

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#### 4.4.1 Informed consent and autonomy

Obtaining informed consent implies that all possible or adequate information on the goal of the investigation, the procedures which will be followed during the investigation, the possible advantages, disadvantages and dangers to which respondents may be exposed, as well as the credibility of the researcher, be rendered to potential subjects or their legal representatives (Williams, Tutty & Grinnel (1995) as cited in Strydom 2005:59). Strydom (2005:59) stresses the voluntary nature of participation in research. He also emphasises that participant must be made aware that they would be at liberty to withdraw from the investigation at any time. Rosnow and Rosenthal (1999:59) describe autonomy as “independence”. They state that in the context of research ethics, autonomy refers specifically to a prospective subject’s right as well as ability “to choose” whether to participate in the study, to continue in the study, or to opt out of the research process at any time when the participants needs to.

For this study, the researcher obtained permission from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education [In order to maintain anonymity, the letter received from the KZN Department of Education is not attached – Refer to Appendix 2], the principals [In order to maintain anonymity, the letters received from the school principals are not included – Refer to Appendix 3], participating educators [Refer to Appendices 8, 10 and 13], and the parents of isiZulu-speaking learners from the five schools [Refer to Appendices 4, 6, and 12], and the school governing bodies. Durrheim and Wassenaar (1999:66) argue that obtaining consent from participants is not merely the signing of a consent form. This requires that participants receive a full, non-technical and clear explanation of the tasks expected of them so that they can make an informed choice to participate voluntarily in the research. Hence, in gaining permission, the researcher gave participants the assurances of confidentiality and anonymity and described the purpose of the study.

Both questionnaires [in English and isiZulu] consisted of covering letters in English and isiZulu. The covering letters also assured the subjects of confidentiality and anonymity and explained the purpose of the study. All the educators who were interviewed were asked to sign forms that explain the nature and purpose of the study. Additionally, educators who were observed during reading and writing lessons and the parents of learners who were observed were informed via letters and asked to sign consent forms [Refer to Appendices 12 and 13]. Furthermore, this

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research study has also received ethical clearance from the University of South Africa (Refer to Appendix 1).

#### **4.4.2 Confidentiality and anonymity**

Confidentiality means that subjects' disclosures are protected against unwarranted access; it is a way of ensuring subjects' privacy and may also be a way of improving the data they provide (Rosnow & Rosenthal 1999:66).

In this study, great care was taken to safeguard the privacy and identity of the research sites, respondents, and participants. The authorities of the research settings and the participants were assured that they would not be identifiable in print. Consequently, names were removed to protect the identity of the participants. All names in this study are pseudonyms. McMillan and Schumacher (2006:334) assert that researchers have a dual responsibility: to protect the individual's confidences from other persons in the setting and to protect the informants from the general reading public.

Respondents were assured of anonymity in the covering letters and also by verbal communication. To maintain confidentiality in this study, procedures were set in place for protecting the data. A coding system was devised; in which the names of the subjects were represented by a sequence of alphabets and numbers that made it impossible for anyone else to identify. This did not result in the violation of privacy, anonymity or confidentiality. However, the researcher felt that it was necessary that participants be identified because reminders had to be sent to persons who did not respond. This information was not made accessible to anyone. Only the researcher was aware of the identity of the participants. However, after data analysis no one, including the researcher was able to identify the subjects. This ensured anonymity of participants.

#### **4.4.3 Privacy and empowerment**

Deception violates informed consent and privacy (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:335). The researcher explained the interview and observation processes to the participants so that they were able to understand the power that they had in the research process.

#### **4.4.4 Caring and fairness**

In qualitative research some participants may experience humiliation and loss of trust (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:335). This is unacceptable. A sense of caring and fairness must be part of the researcher's thinking, actions, and personal morality. Thus, interviews were more or less open discussions that promoted fairness to the participants and to the research inquiry. The participants were provided with opportunities to express their feelings and views. However, when participants' discussions were not in keeping with the question, they were redirected.

#### **4.4.5 Actions and competence of researchers**

Strydom (2005:63) states that at present, much research is being undertaken in South Africa across cultural boundaries. He also mentions that in the past there was very little contact between the different cultural groups, which meant that people did not know and respect one another's cultural customs and norms.

In order to obtain apposite cooperation from the participants, the researcher understood and respected certain customs of isiZulu-speaking learners.

### **4.5 CONCLUSION**

The explanation and detailed discussion of the research design and methodology were the focus of this chapter. A combined quantitative-qualitative research design was the most suitable approach to investigate the research problems.

The quantitative component consisted of a survey research design. The stratified random sampling technique was employed. This ensured adequate representation of the population. The research instruments, questionnaires were constructed, piloted and distributed to the sample. Quantitative data analysis was done by means of frequency distributions and percentages that were supported by pie graphs, line graphs, or tables. To establish reliability and validity, the questionnaires were pilot tested before being used in the study.

In the qualitative component, a phenomenological study was used. Purposeful sampling was employed to select educator participants from the five English medium schools. Individual interviews were conducted using the interview schedule or guide, constructed from the literature



on the topic. An eclectic approach using predetermined categories was used to analyse qualitative data. Both internal and external validity; and reliability were achieved.

Ethical guidelines which include policies regarding informed consent, deception, confidentiality, anonymity, privacy, and caring were considered in this study.

The next chapter focuses on the data collected from the survey questionnaires, interviews, and observation. Attention is also given to the analysis and interpretation of the data obtained.

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## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The preceding chapter focused on a discussion of the empirical research design used to investigate the research questions. In this chapter the findings and interpretations of the empirical investigation will be presented. The aim of this chapter is to provide answers to the questions posed in Chapter 1, Section 1.6.

This study incorporated a mixed methods research design which utilised pragmatism as its philosophical departure. Since a combined quantitative-qualitative approach resulting in a mixed method approach was utilised in this study, data was analysed separately.

#### **5.2 QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

This section provides illustrations, interpretations, and discussion of the quantitative data. The data was collected via questionnaires. Two self-designed questionnaires were administered to obtain an in-depth perspective on the factors that affect foundation phase English second language learners' reading and writing skills. The first questionnaire was administered to the parents of isiZulu-speaking foundation phase learners and the second questionnaire was distributed to all the foundation phase educators in the five schools (See Appendices 5, 7, and 9).

This form of accessing information is expected to supply sufficient data to assess the views and opinions of the educators and parents of IsiZulu-speaking foundation phase learners. Analysis will be done by means of frequencies, distributions, and percentages that will be supported by pie graphs, bar graphs, line graphs, and tables.

Prior to discussing the data retrieved from the questionnaires it is incumbent to provide a succinct description of the population and the sample.

The population consisted of 1 574 isiZulu-speaking foundation phase learners.

**Table 5.1: The isiZulu-speaking foundation phase learner population in the five schools**

	POPULATION IN SCHOOL A	POPULATION IN SCHOOL B	POPULATION IN SCHOOL C	POPULATION IN SCHOOL D	POPULATION IN SCHOOL E	TOTAL
MALES	150	147	191	108	157	753
FEMALES	180	162	210	125	144	821
TOTAL	330	309	401	233	301	1574

Ten percent of the male population and ten percent of the female population from schools A, B, C, D, and E were selected. Hence, the following table illustrates the sample size in each school:

**Table 5.2: The sample size in the five schools**

	SAMPLE SIZE IN SCHOOL A	SAMPLE SIZE IN SCHOOL B	SAMPLE SIZE IN SCHOOL C	SAMPLE SIZE IN SCHOOL D	SAMPLE SIZE IN SCHOOL E	TOTAL
MALES	15	15	19	11	16	76
FEMALES	18	16	21	13	14	82
TOTAL	33	31	40	24	30	158

Thus, the sample size consisted of 158 isiZulu-speaking foundation phase learners.

In school A the male population consisted of 150 learners. The researcher needed to select 15 male learners by simple random sampling. Each male isiZulu-speaking foundation phase learner in school A was assigned a number from 001 to 150. Thereafter, the researcher randomly selected a starting point in the table of random numbers. Subsequently, the researcher read all three-digit numbers, moving down the columns. The researcher followed the three-digit columns while selecting 15 three-digit numbers from 001 to 150. The same procedure was used to select the male and female samples from the other four schools.

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### 5.2.1 Illustrations and interpretations of findings from the parent questionnaire

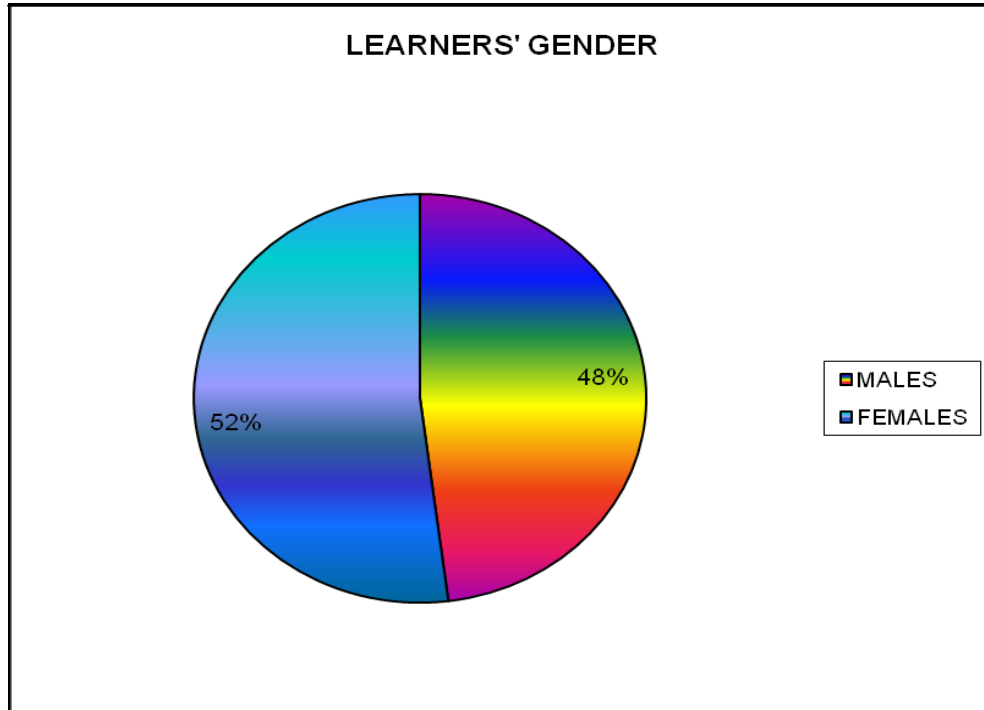
Data will be presented under the following headings:

- ❖ Biographical data
- ❖ Parents' views regarding their children's emotional behaviour when reading and writing in English.
- ❖ Parents' reasons for wanting their children to be able to read and write in English.
- ❖ Parents views regarding their children's performance in isiZulu and English.

One hundred and fifty eight questionnaires were administered to the subjects in all five schools and one hundred and forty three (91%) questionnaires were completed and returned.

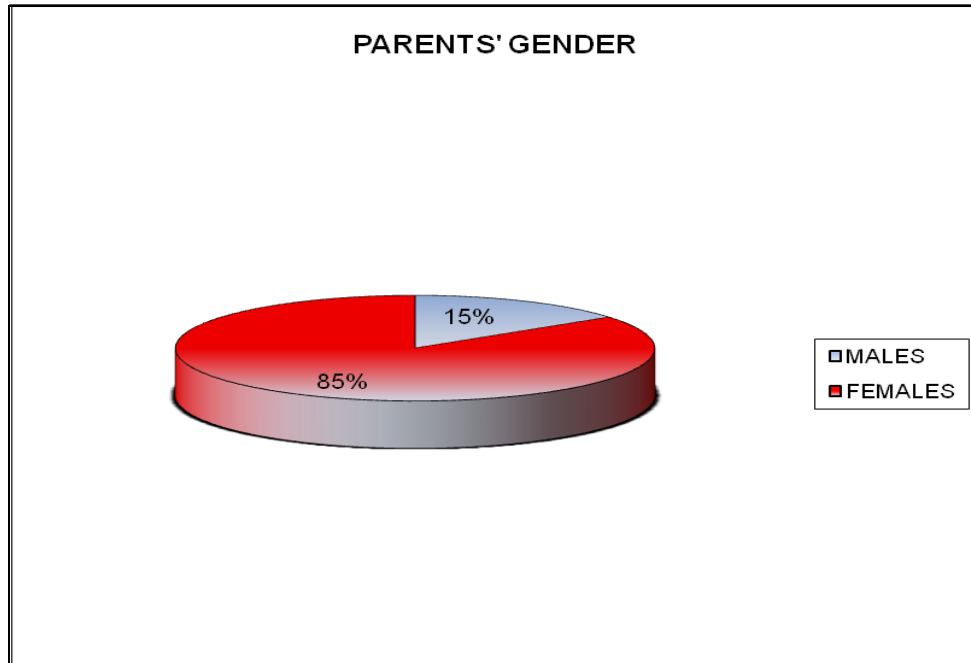
#### 5.2.1.1 Biographical data

This section provides illustrations and discussion on the biographical data presented in this study; using frequencies and percentages. It comprises of Section A of the questionnaire which solicited the children's and parents' gender and age, the grade in which the learners are, the level of education of the parents and their occupations, as well as the residential environment and linguistic development of the families.



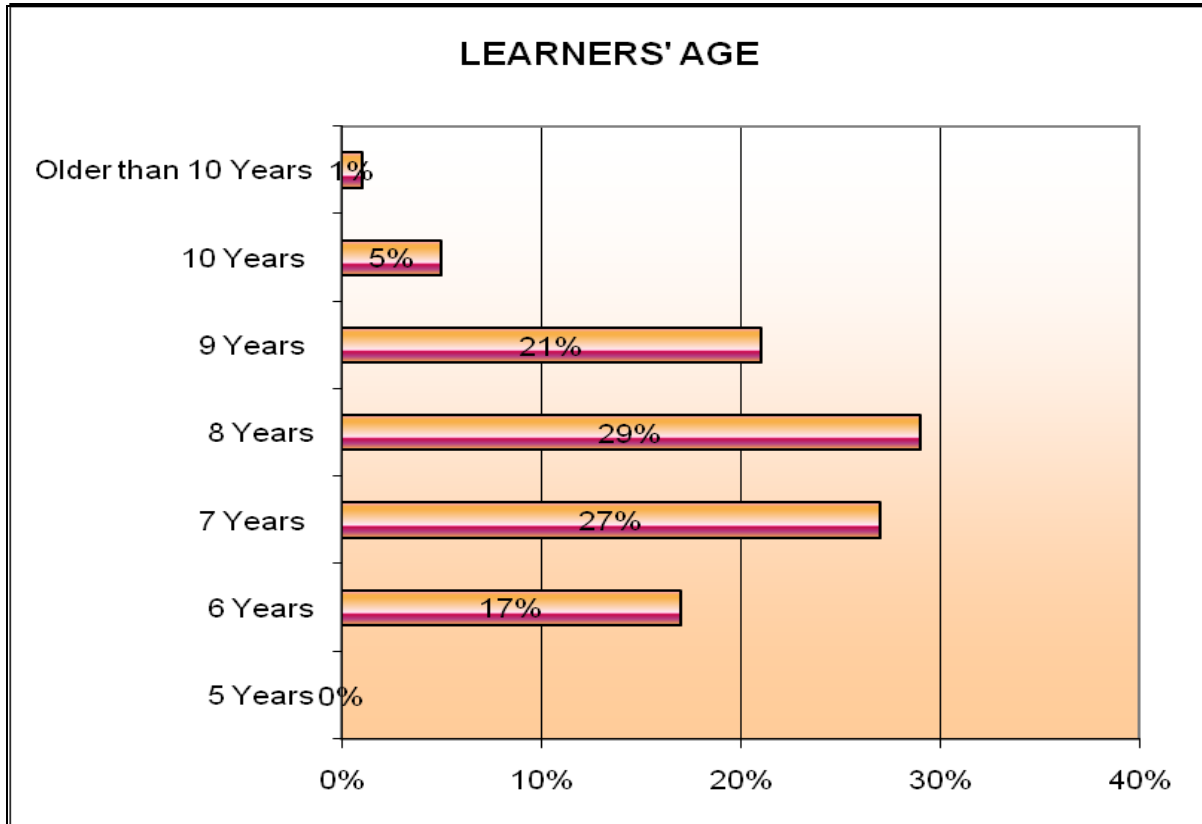
**Figure 5.1** Figure showing percentages according to the learners' gender

The target sample consisted of seventy six (76) male learners and eighty two (82) female learners, but the parents of only sixty nine (69) male learners and seventy four (74) female learners completed and returned the questionnaires. The figure above indicates that the majority of the learners (52%) included in this sample are female learners, with 48% being male learners. However, the difference of 4% is not a substantial disparity.



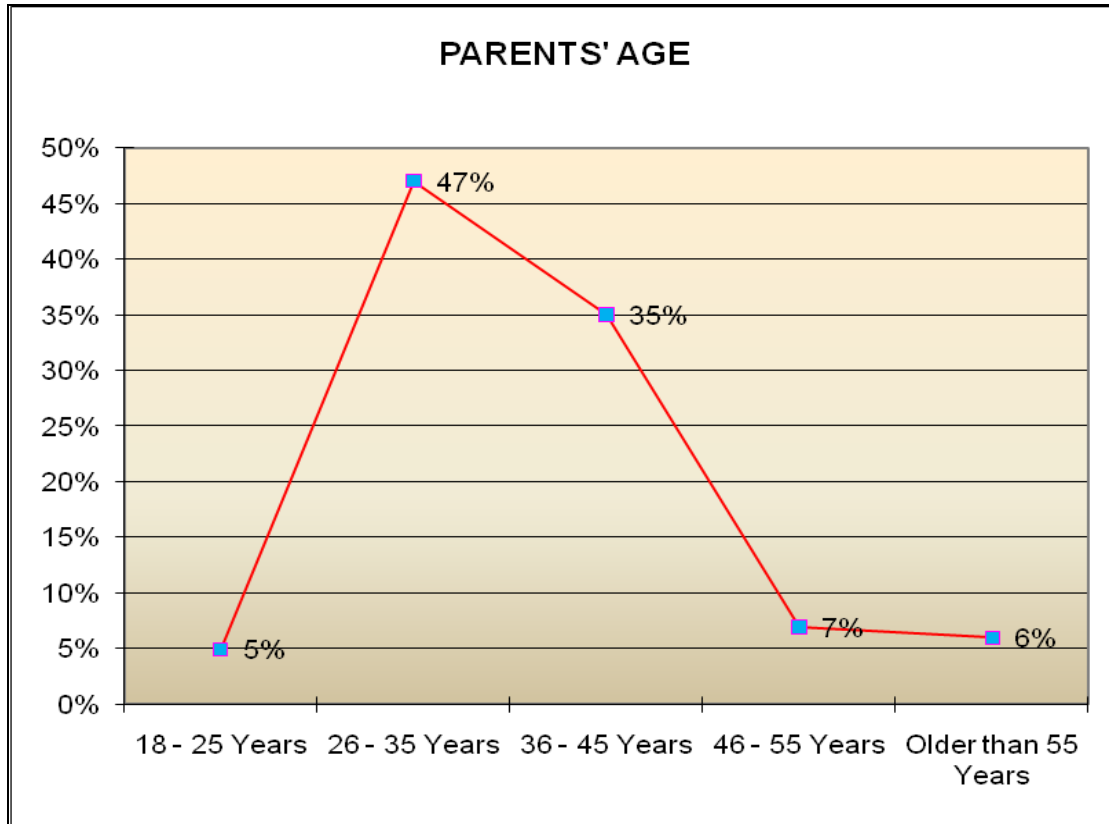
**Figure 5.2** Figure illustrating percentages according to parents' gender

The above figure reveals that a preponderance of the parent respondents in the sample are females since they constitute 121 (85%) of the sample of 143. The remaining 22 (15%) are males. This implies that more female parents were involved in completing the questionnaires. Several deductions can be made from the above data. First, the observation here is that the questionnaires, when taken home were given to the female caregivers (See 1.9.9) of the learners. Another inference could be that many of the learners in the sample do not live with their fathers or their fathers are deceased. A further observation could be that many fathers did not show any interest in completing the questionnaires. A critical and fairly valid insinuation here is that both parents may not be equally involved in their children's education. This inference could negatively affect the English reading and writing skills of isiZulu-speaking learners.



**Figure 5.3** Figure showing percentages according to learners' age

The figure above depicts that the majority, 41 (29%); of the learners are 8 years old. Of the remaining 102 learners; 0 (0%) are 5 years, 25 (17%) are 6 years, 39 (27%) are 7 years, 30 (21%) are 9 years, 7 (5%) are 10 years, and 1 (1%) is older than 10 years. The one learner who is older than 10 years is a 16 year old male in school E. He is in Grade 3. The learner's teacher mentioned that he was admitted to Grade 1 when he was 14 years old. This is a rather atypical situation.



**Figure 5.4** Figure showing percentages according to parents' age

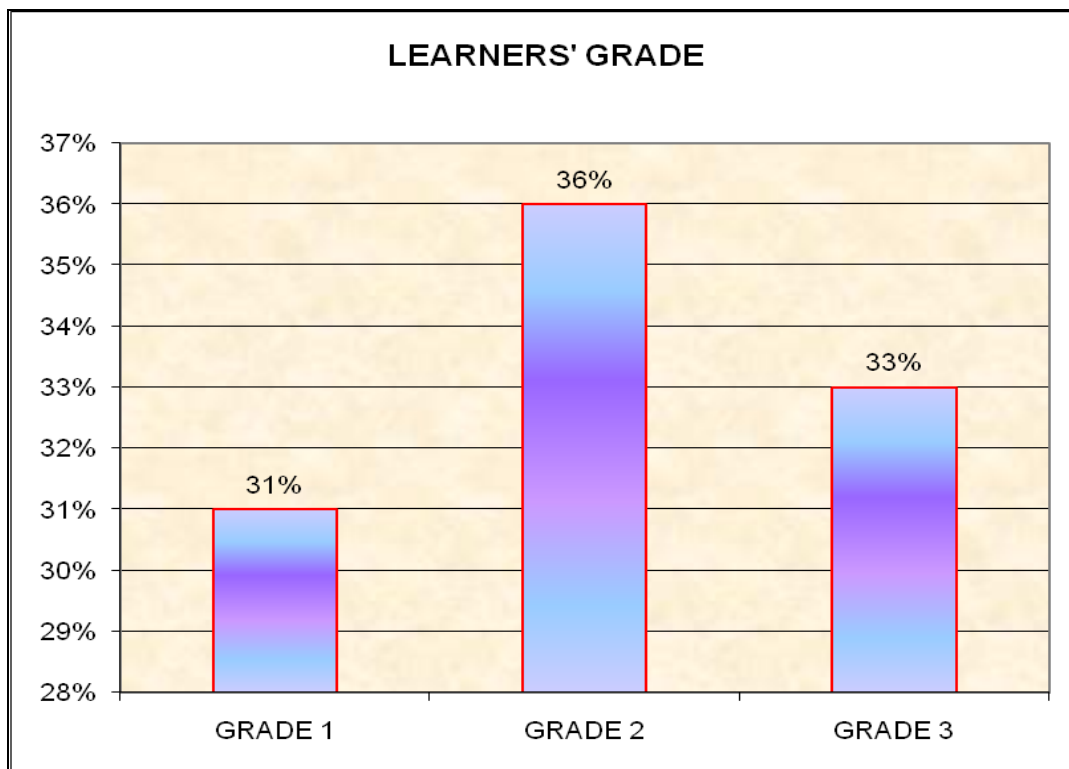
The above illustration provides an extensive variation in the ages of the one hundred and forty three (143) parents. Sixty eight (47%) parents are between the ages of 26 and 35 years. Eight (6%) parents have indicated that they are older than 55 years. Of the remaining 67 respondents, 7 (5%) parents are between the ages of 18 and 25 years, 50 (35%) parents are between the ages of 36 and 45 years, and 10 (7%) parents are between 46 and 55 years.

The majority of the parents are between the ages of 26 and 35 years. This implies that most of the parents in this study are at a stage where they should have relatively stable jobs and should be able to provide their children with extensive opportunities to develop their literacy skills. The parents in this age category should also be able see the need for their children to be literate in an international language, such as English. It is expected that these parents would have a more modern outlook to life and education, and this has probably inspired them to admit their children to English medium schools.



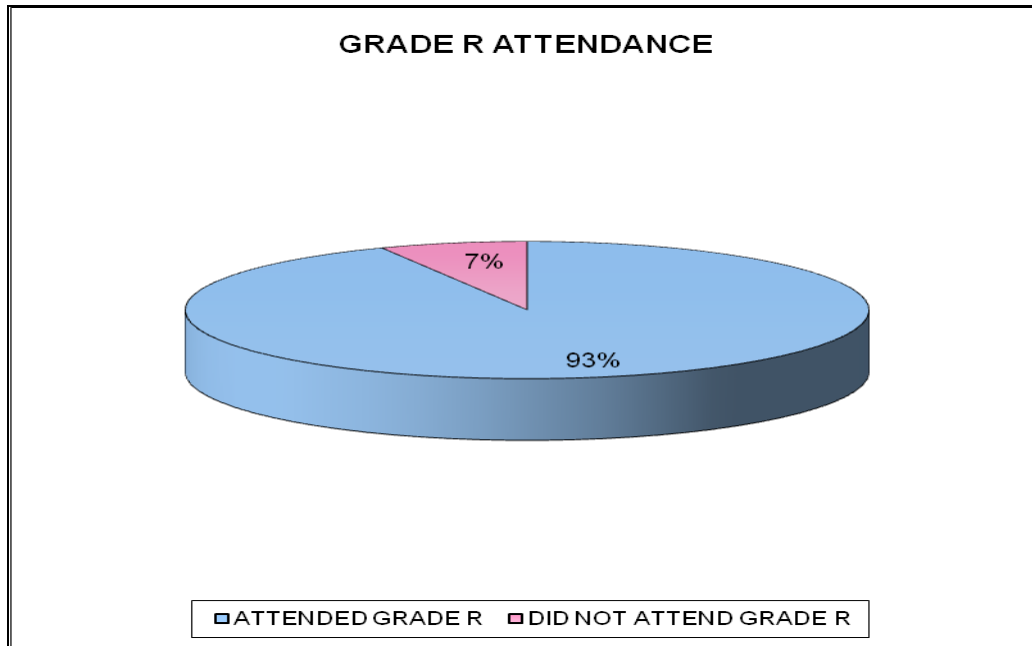
On the other hand, the parents who are between the ages of 18 and 25 years are relatively young and this could infer that they may not be able to secure stable jobs and provide adequate educational opportunities for their children. This could perhaps affect the quantity and quality of support they provide to their children with regard to reading and writing at home.

There are also those parents who are older than 55 years. Although we can assume that due to their age these parents may be able to provide sufficient enriching literacy experiences for their children, they are at a stage that is close to retirement. Thus, at this age it will be difficult for parents to provide continuous quality literacy support for their children. Older parents may perhaps be less interested in their children's school work and as a result of them being more mature they may be more interested in their children's wellbeing. Another factor to consider is illiteracy. Older parents may probably have low levels of literacy and this could affect the type of literacy support that they can provide for their children. In this regard it is important to take note of Educator 1's concern. He mentioned that the learners' literacy levels may be higher than their parents'. The age of the parents could possibly contribute to the learners' reading and writing deficits.



**Figure 5.5** Figure showing percentages according to learners' grade

The above depiction reflects that 51 (36%) learners in the sample are in Grade 2. Forty four (31%) and 48 (33%) learners are in Grade 1 and Grade 3, respectively.



**Figure 5.6** Figure showing Grade R attendance

The South African Department of Education has made good progress in providing to children five years and older (Grade R) access to quality educational programmes. The impact study of the Systematic Method for Reading Success (SMRS) using the Early Grade Reading Assessments (EGRA) in three provinces [Limpopo, Mpumalanga, and North West] in South Africa revealed that learners who attended Grade R scored higher in reading assessments than learners who did not attend Grade R (Piper 2009:12). The findings from the Ethiopian EGRA study reflect that the learner level factor that has the largest relationship with learner achievement was preschool attendance (Piper 2010:36).

Spaull (2011:54) emphasises that learners who have been exposed to at least one year of quality preschool education perform better than those with little or no preschool exposure. Preschools play a critical role in preparing the learner for primary education by imparting the emotional, intellectual, and social skills necessary to succeed at school. Learners who have attended preschool are more acclimatized to the schooling environment, socialise better with peers, and have a better relationship with educators than those who have no school exposure prior to Grade 1. The formative years of childhood are crucial for cognitive development, and deficits arising

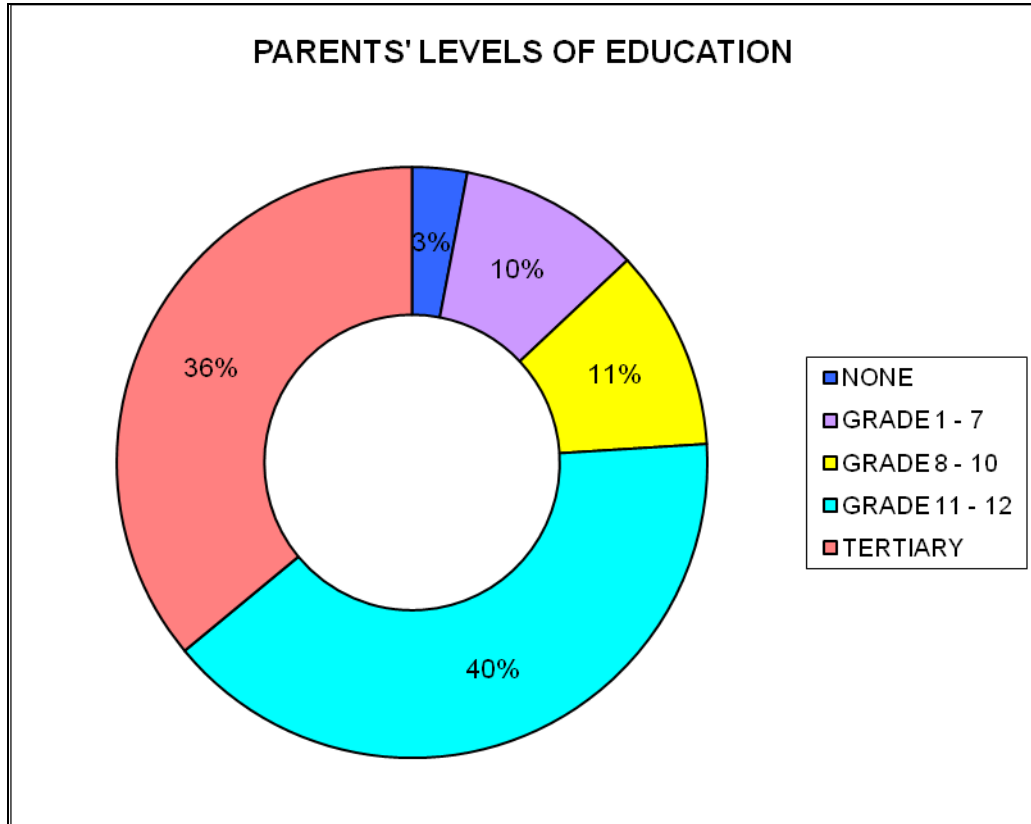
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from a lack of mental stimulation early on cannot be made up for in later schooling. These social and cognitive benefits imply that children, who have attended preschool, are less likely to repeat or drop out of school.

According to Bokova (2011:3) the results of SACMEQ 111 have telling implications for policy. They illuminate the positive impact of preschool on learning performance. In SACMEQ 111 the overall percentage of preschool exposure for South Africa (74%) was higher than the SACMEQ average (60%) (Department of Basic Education 2010:58). It was found that generally learners from urban areas had higher levels of preschool exposure than learners from rural areas and that learners with longer durations of preschool experience had higher scores in reading (Department of Basic Education 2010:58-59). In South Africa, in SACMEQ 111, more than 20% of learners indicated that they had no preschool experience, and it was found that preschool attendance has a positive impact on achievement in reading (Department of Basic Education 2010:82); and ultimately writing.

The findings of this study denote that an impressive number of learners in the sample attended Grade R. One hundred and thirty three (93%) learners attended Grade R and only 10 (7%) learners did not attend Grade R. The findings of this study contradict the general view that learners from urban areas have more exposure to preschools than learners from rural areas (See figure 5.8).

But as far as the acquisition of a second language for academic purposes when entering formal school, is concerned, the picture changes. Ball (2011:19) emphasises that it is a mistake to assume that providing day care or preschool programmes in a second language is sufficient to prepare children for academic success in that language. She adds that children who have this exposure may be better prepared for school, but will need ongoing support to acquire sufficient proficiency in the L2 to succeed in academic subjects, and they will require support to continue to develop their L1. Also, the findings from the ASER study in rural India illustrated that although children who had attended preschool were found to attend school more often, there was no consistent relationship between preschool attendance and learning outcomes (Bhattacharjea, Wadhwa & Banerji 2011:63).



**Figure 5.7** Figure showing parents' levels of education

The parents' levels of education will determine to a large extent the quantity and quality of support that they can give to their children in reading (Moloi & Strauss 2005:64); and it was found in a study conducted in India that parents', particularly mothers' education is strongly related to children's learning (Bhattacharjea et al. 2011:63).

The figure above reflects that 51 (36%) parents have completed tertiary education and 57 (40%) parents have completed either Grade 11 or 12. Of the remaining 35 respondents, 14 (10%) parents have completed schooling between Grade 1 and Grade 7; 16 (11%) parents have completed schooling between Grade 8 and Grade 10; while 5 (3%) parents had no schooling at all. During the interview Educator 1 very stridently asserted that *I know this may be a bit harsh but my Grade 3 learners' literacy level may be higher than their parents' ... I think that if the literacy levels among the adults in this area improve it will help the learners.*

Dixon (2009:143) elucidates the Singaporean context in which more highly educated mothers are more likely to have completed more years of English-medium schooling, potentially leading to a

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sharper difference in their children's English vocabulary compared to less educated mothers who may be much less proficient in English orally as well as academically. An assessment of English reading skills of learners in Grades 1, 2, and 3 was conducted in Gambia (Gove & Cvelich 2012:7). From the sample of 1 200 learners across 40 schools, nearly two-thirds of the learners were unable to read even a single word from a simple paragraph. A critical factor to consider in this study is that two-thirds of the learners' mothers were illiterate.

In South Africa, in SACMEQ 11 at national level the mean level of parents' education was 3,8 (Moloi & Strauss 2005:64). This indicated that the average Grade 6 learner had parents who had completed primary school but may not have completed secondary education. Further analysis showed that this mean masked huge differences in levels of parents' education. For instance, about eight (8) percent of mothers and six (6) percent of fathers had no schooling at all. Further, about 21% of the mothers and 22% of the fathers had not completed primary education whilst 16% of the mothers as against 24% of the fathers had a post-secondary qualification. In this analysis, according to Moloi and Strauss (2005:65), the reasons for the generally low levels of education can be sought in the political history of the country.

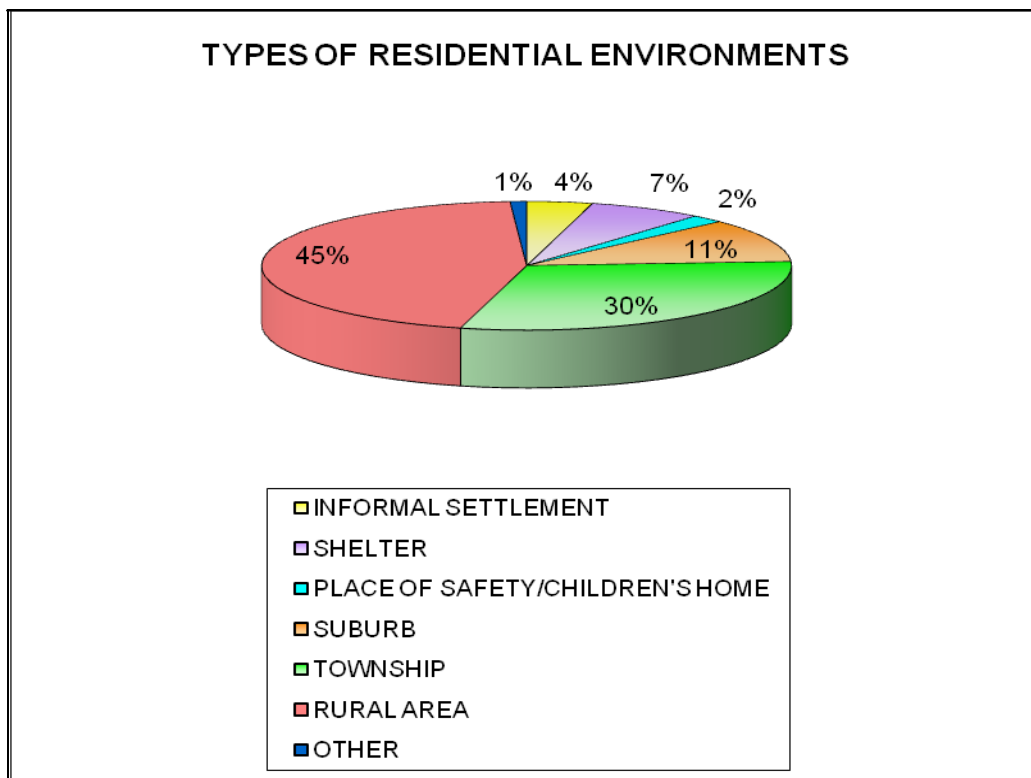
On the other hand, in this study majority of the parents have either completed Grade 11, 12 or tertiary education. Although it can be presumed that more literate parents will provide more and better quality support to their children in their school work, the question of whether parents' levels of education impact on the learners' reading and writing skills demands further research.

**Table 5.3: Respondents indicating their occupations**

OCCUPATION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Unemployed	41	29
Housekeeper/gardener/labourer/cleaner	24	17
Vendor/informal trader/self-employed	8	5
Secretary/clerk/receptionist/typist/sales	21	15
Security officer/police/traffic officer	3	2
Teacher/nurse/social worker	23	16
Doctor/engineer/accountant/computer programmer	2	1
Businessman/businesswoman	3	2
Other	18	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>100</b>

This distribution, although not at all representative of any particular geographical area, or of the IsiZulu-speaking population whose second language is English, nevertheless reflects some interesting trends. The comparatively high percentage of unemployed parents (29%) may reflect the poor living conditions of several isiZulu-speaking learners, but this deduction needs to be validated against the occupations of the entire isiZulu-speaking population whose second language is English. Also, the high proportion of respondents (24) (17%) who fall into the category housekeeper/gardener/labourer/cleaner may reflect their socio-economic status. The poor socio-economic background of several learners was reinforced by Educator 1 during the interview. He emphasised that many learners who come from poor socio-economic backgrounds are *still struggling a lot* to identify with the English language.

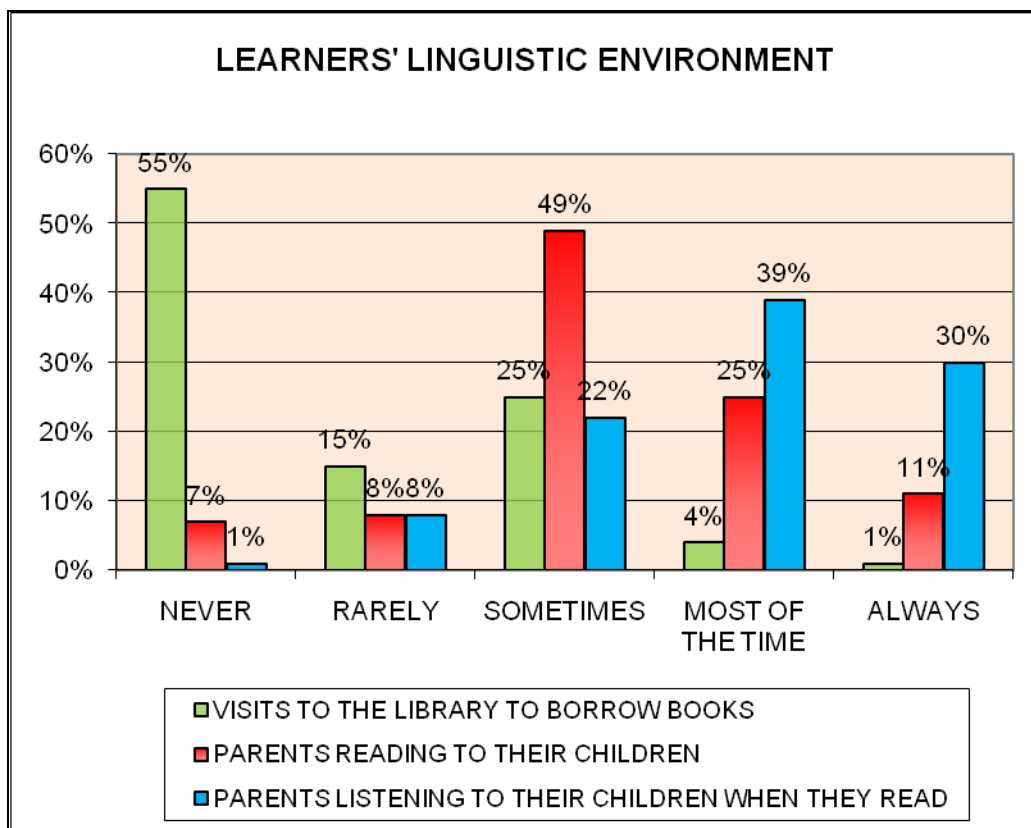
The professional group is also relatively high with 16% of the sample indicating their occupations as teachers, nurses, and social workers. The category of secretary/clerk/receptionist/typist/sales also represents a high frequency (21). However, occupations such as doctors, engineers, accountants, and computer programmers that are representative of a higher income bracket appear to be very rare in the sample, with a frequency of 2. Two other uncommon occupations in the sample are security officer/police/traffic officer and businessman/businesswoman; with each presenting a frequency of 3. Eight (8) respondents fell into the category of vendor/informal trader/self-employed. The remaining category (other) consisted of eighteen (18) subjects.



**Figure 5.8** Figure showing types of residential environments

The illustration above reflects that the majority of the respondents, 64 (45%), reside in rural areas. Forty three (30%) respondents live in townships, while 16 (11%) respondents live in suburbs. Ten (7%) respondents have indicated shelter as their residential environment and 6 (4%) parents have selected the category informal settlement. The remaining two categories, place of safety or children's home and other consisted of 2% and 1%, respectively.

The Grade 3 early grade baseline reading assessment in Egypt showed that rural/urban differences in reading proficiency are not that great (La Towsky, Cummisky & Collins 2013:XI). It was found that, on average, urban learners in Grade 3 outperform their rural peers; but the difference is not great and contributing factors are multiple. There is a wide range of reading performance in most primary schools, both urban and rural. However, Bokova (2011:3) reinforces that the results of SACMEQ 111 underscore the conclusions of other recent reports; that in any given country socioeconomic background and location are key causes for disparities in learning achievement. Although it is possible that English second language learners' residential environments could affect their reading and writing skills and their overall achievement at school, further validation focusing on residential environment and English second language learners' reading and writing skills is required. The fact that the majority of the respondents live in rural areas requires us to question whether the environment in which these learners grow up in, contributes to promoting and expanding their English reading and writing skills.



**Figure 5.9** Figure showing learners' linguistic environment



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It is axiomatic that the involvement of parents in their children's learning and the subsequent impact of the home learning environment is vital in improving outcomes for children. This is particularly so in reading and writing. The above illustration illuminates the fact that the majority of the respondents 78 (55%) do not take their children to the library to borrow books and only 1% of the subjects indicated that they always take their children to the library to borrow books. This is probably due to the fact that the majority of the subjects do not have a library close to their homes. When parents were asked whether they have a library close to their homes, 78 (55%) respondents stated that they do not have a library close to their homes and 65 (45%) subjects indicated that they do have a library close to their homes. The fact that the majority of the parents in the sample do not take their children to the library poses the question of whether this could affect their children's reading and writing skills.

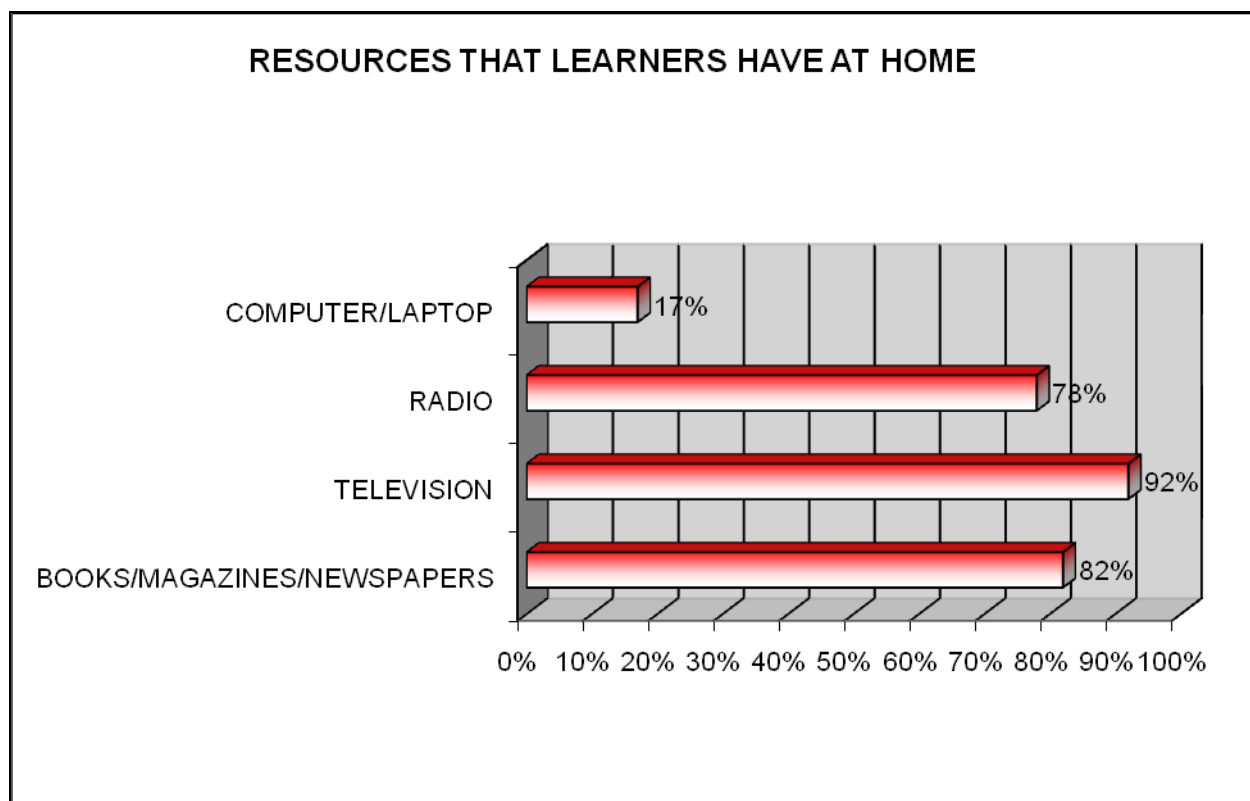
Earlier research studies by Cummins (1981:39) have shown that children who are consistently read to in the home tend to develop higher overall language ability and do better in school than children who are not encouraged to read. Research indicates that children who are read to at least three times a week read better (Krashen 2004:7) and young children learn how to write through, amongst other things, reading with an adult individually and/or in a group (Department for Education and Skills 2014:5). The EGRA study in Ghana showed that few learners (8,2%) said that someone at home read to them every day, while 29,1% said that no one ever read to them (Kochetkova & Brombacher 2013:11). Consequently, at least half, and often more, of the learners assessed could not read a single word correctly.

Seventy (49%) parents in this study indicated that sometimes they read to their children and only 15 (11%) indicated that they always read to their children. Gove and Cvelich (2010:ii) emphasise that parents do not demand that their children know how to read. Contrarily to the above, the majority, 56 (39%), of the respondents indicated that most of the time they listen to their children when they read and 42 (30%) parents indicated that they always listen to their children when they read. Trudell, Dowd, Piper and Bloch's (2012:8) review of literature encapsulates the verity that reading at home, parental attitudes towards reading and access to books lead to better reading outcomes in almost all the countries.

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In the ASER study in rural India, it was found that the availability of print materials correlates with better learning outcomes (Bhattacharjea et al. 2011:63). The learner's linguistic landscape plays a pivotal role in language acquisition and the parents' responsibility in providing an enriching language environment is fundamental. In this situation De Houwer's (as cited in Ball 2011:20) conceptualisation of "impact belief" is helpful. "Impact belief" is perceived as the extent to which parents believe that they have direct control over their children's language use. Hence, parents with strong impact beliefs make active efforts to provide particular language experiences and environments for their children, and to reward particular language behaviours. Conversely, parents with weak impact beliefs take a passive approach to their children's early language experiences, seeing the wider environment as determining whether their children acquire one or another language. Studies are still required on the impact of reading at home, parental attitudes towards reading and access to books in less print-rich environments, but according to Trudell et al. (2012:8) initial investigation indicates that the home and community environment do have an influence on reading achievement in the classroom.

A cross-country analysis from Save the Children Literacy Boost sites in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Nepal, Pakistan, and Zimbabwe indicated that overall, home literacy environment (HLE) has the most prevalent relationship with literacy skills for children in the analysis (Dowd, Friedlander, Guajardo, Mann, & Pisani 2013:5). Nepal's HLE data had no variation. Five of six countries that collected HLE information showed positive relationships between HLE and literacy skills. That is, in five of six countries assessed, children with stronger home literacy environments tended to score significantly higher on at least one emergent literacy skill than learners with weaker home literacy environments.



**Figure 5.10** Figure showing the resources that learners have at home

A substantial number, 131 (92%), of parents indicated that they have televisions at home. Having a television at home is generally associated with assisting children to develop their knowledge and skills. Thus, it is axiomatic that having a television at home will promote linguistic development. Dixon's (144:2009) review of literature on television viewing and vocabulary acquisition among L2 learners indicates that kindergarten and school-aged children can acquire L2 vocabulary through television viewing. Learners become aware of what is happening around the world when they watch the news. Also, they watch the weather, and numerous children's programmes on television. These programmes are most definitely beneficial to learners. It is also possible that isiZulu-speaking learners who watch television programmes in English more than in other languages will demonstrate higher English vocabulary because television may provide access to English vocabulary that children would not encounter through their interactions with limited-English or non-English-speaking caregivers.

However, having a television can inadvertently negatively affect learners' linguistic development. This is due to the fact that many advertisements on television have grammatical,

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spelling, and pronunciation errors. For example, in the OMO advertisement the sentence is written as “1 mighty OMO removes stains fasta, fasta” and in the Debonairs Pizza advertisement the word “amazing” is pronounced as “ama – zing”. The above are only two examples. There are several other advertisements that have linguistic errors. Children who are exposed to these advertisements may believe that the spelling and pronunciation of these words are correct and they learn to speak, read and write incorrectly.

The number of books to which a learner has access can influence learners’ reading habits and abilities (Moloi & Strauss 2005:66). For example, the EGRA results in Ghana showed that learners who could read were significantly more likely to have books and practise reading out aloud at home; and have someone at home who reads to them (Kochetkova & Brombacher 2013:20). The availability of books at homes can be related to the level of education of the parents and the economic ability to purchase books.

A considerable number, 118 (82%), of the parents stated that they have books, magazines, or newspapers at home. In order to enable parents to facilitate their children’s literacy skills, the provision of meaningful print-rich home environments and guidance from adults with high levels of literacy is essential. Any reading material that is appropriate for the learner’s age and developmental level can enhance reading and writing development.

Research studies on early grade literacy in African classrooms demonstrate that having books [textbooks, books at home and extra reading materials] is statistically more related to good learning outcomes than is being from a wealthy home (Trudell, Dowd, Piper & Bloch 2012:15). For instance, the Ghanaian EGRA study found that characteristics such as having books at home, reading out loud at home, and having someone at home who reads to children were significantly correlated with reading ability even when learners in the highest economic status category were removed from the analysis – meaning that wealth alone does not explain the results (Kochetkova & Brombacher 2013:20). An interpretation of this is that learner achievement in reading depends more on having access to reading materials than it does on being rich. The implication for this study is the fact that the majority of the respondents in this study live in rural areas (See figure 5.8) does not necessarily imply that the learner’s reading achievements will be negatively affected; since most of the subjects indicated that they have books, magazines, or newspapers at home.

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On the other hand the EGRA study in Ethiopia revealed that wealth factors were related to achievement (See 3.3.6) and studies in India also showed that higher socio-economic status correlates positively with learning outcomes (See 3.3.6). In the Gambian study that was mentioned earlier (See figure 5.7); where the majority of the learners were unable to read even a single word from a simple paragraph, three-quarters of the learners reported having no books at home. Also, the results of EGRA in Ghana showed that most of the learners were not learning to read in any language (Kochetkova & Brombacher 2013:34). The majority of these learners who lacked pre-reading and early reading skills did not have access to books and stated that they did not practise reading at home and at school. Gove and Cvelich (2012:12) reiterate the absence of books in the home contributes to the shocking reading results around the world. However, learners may have a variety of reading materials at home but may not be making effective use of them.

One hundred and twelve (78%) parents in this study affirmed that they have radios at home and only 24 (17%) parents avowed that they have computers or laptops at home. Although this is outside the scope of this study, it is worth mentioning that it is imprudent to believe that modern technology has contributed only positively to development in our society. The advent of modern technology has also resulted in learners becoming excessively indolent and languid.

#### 5.2.1.2 Scaled responses: Parents' views regarding their children's emotional behaviour when reading and writing in English

This section provides illustrations and interpretations of parents' views regarding their children's emotional behaviour when reading and writing in English, using frequencies and percentages. The descriptive statistics of the results are presented as follows:

For the purpose of this study, the following responses were combined. Always and most of the time combined to form most of the time; sometimes remained as a category on its own; and rarely and never combined to form rarely. This reduction in the categories assisted in the analysis and interpretation of data.

**Table 5.4****Respondents indicating how often their children feel anxious about reading in English**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Most of the time</b>	96	67
<b>Sometimes</b>	29	20
<b>Rarely</b>	18	13
<b>Total</b>	143	100

A considerable number of respondents, 96 (67%), indicated that their children always or most of the time feel anxious about reading in English. Although in recent years, it is widely recognised and accepted by language researchers that anxiety has a close relationship with L2 learning (Huang 2012:1520) it is beyond the scope of this study to decipher the type of anxiety that is experienced by these ESL learners. However, these results are consistent with several other studies conducted with secondary school learners and university students by Tabatabaei and Hekmatipour's (2013:65-72); Ahmad, Al-Shboul, Nordin, Rahman, Burhan and Madarsha (2013:89-110); Huang (2012:1521); and; Saito, Horwitz and Garzas (1999:202-218) [See 3.3.2.1]. Eighteen parents (13%) stated that their children rarely feel anxious about reading in English, while 29 (20%) parents selected the option sometimes.

**Table 5.5****Respondents indicating how often their children feel anxious about writing in English**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Most of the time</b>	88	61
<b>Sometimes</b>	31	22
<b>Rarely</b>	24	17
<b>Total</b>	143	100

A substantial number of respondents, 88 (61%), highlighted that their children always or most of the time feel anxious about writing in English. It appears that the subjects' views on anxiety are more or less congruent when it comes to reading and writing in English. Zhang (2001:58-59) found that when learners' levels of proficiency increase, their levels of anxiety decrease, that is, they have more confidence in themselves and in using that particular language. This could possibly imply that as these learners gain more confidence in written communication, their anxiety levels will decrease. Thirty one (22%) subjects felt that their children sometimes feel anxious about writing in English and a minority, 24 (17%), indicated that their children rarely feel anxious when asked to write in English.

**Table 5.6**

**Respondents indicating how often their children are excited about reading in English**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Most of the time</b>	105	73
<b>Sometimes</b>	24	17
<b>Rarely</b>	14	10
<b>Total</b>	143	100

A large number of respondents, 105 (73%), asserted that their children always or most of the time are excited about reading in English. This result, when compared to the preceding statistics on reading anxiety, implies that although majority of the learners feel anxious about reading in English, they are nevertheless excited about reading. This assumption, based on the above statistics appears to be rather complicated to assimilate. Twenty four (17%) subjects indicated that their children sometimes feel excited about reading in English and a small minority of fourteen (10%) believed that their children rarely feel excited about reading in English.

**Table 5.7****Respondents indicating how often their children are excited about writing in English**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Most of the time</b>	83	58
<b>Sometimes</b>	29	20
<b>Rarely</b>	31	22
<b>Total</b>	143	100

When respondents were asked about their children's writing, 83 (58%) of them affirmed that most of the time their children are excited about writing in English. This response, although a little dissimilar from table 5.6, still reaffirms that most of the subjects feel that their children are excited about writing in English; even though writing is an exacting task as compared to reading. Twenty nine (20%) respondents felt that sometimes their children are excited about writing in English and thirty one (22%) believed that their children are rarely excited about writing in English. These two responses were probable since writing is the most difficult task when learning any language.

#### 5.2.1.3 Scaled responses: Parents' reasons for wanting their children to read and write in English

This section provides illustrations and interpretations of the parents' reasons for wanting their children to be able read and write in English, using frequencies and percentages. The descriptive statistics of the results are presented as follows:

For the purpose of this study, the following responses were combined. Strongly disagree and disagree combined to form disagree; unsure remained as a category on its own; and agree and strongly agree combined to form agree. This reduction in categories assisted in the analysis and interpretation of data.



**Table 5.8**

**Respondents wanting their children to be able to read and write in English because English is an international language**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	10	7
<b>Unsure</b>	2	1,4
<b>Agree</b>	131	91,6
<b>Total</b>	143	100

People everywhere have very strong attitudes towards languages, particularly in terms of attributing and recognising status and prestige. Language attitudes reflect people's changing views on society and culture. Negative attitudes towards African languages are widely spread and shared – surprisingly – by many African people and expatriate government advisors (Wolff 2006:32). Acceptance of the perpetual dominance of “Western culture” often comes disguised in terms such as universalism or globalisation; and so has the English language.

An overwhelming majority of respondents, 131 (91,6%), indicated that they want their children to be able to read and write in English because English is an international language. This could possibly be because the English language is ubiquitous and is thus viewed as a global language. There is a growing body of evidence that points towards the dominance and increasing expansion of the English language throughout the world (See 2.2.1). Hence, this could have contributed to the subjects' responses.

**Table 5.9**

**Respondents wanting their children to be able to read and write in English because English is perceived as a language of development**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	6	4,2
<b>Unsure</b>	5	3,5
<b>Agree</b>	132	92,3
<b>Total</b>	143	100

According to table 5.9 a considerable number of subjects, 132 (92,3%), asserted that they want their children to be able to read and write in English because English is perceived as a language of development. Garcia, Skutnabb-Kangas and Torres-Guzmán (2006:40) quote Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) who refers to English as the “world’s most important killer language” and Cummins (2006:51-52) reinforces the “destructive influence” of English when he reports that “the general populations in the contexts as disparate as Hong Kong, India, South Africa, and throughout Europe accurately see English as associated with upward social and economic mobility, and that schools assign top priority to the teaching of English”. Edwards and Newcombe (2006:140) emphasise that in South Africa and other African countries fluency in an international lingua franca is associated with “being educated”, a pre-requisite for upward social mobility.

Additionally, it cannot be denied that educational progress and development are associated with being computer literate (See 2.2.1) and that language plays a pivotal role in accessing information from the internet. Crystal (2004:216) emphasises that in the mid 1990s a widely quoted figure was that just over 80% of the internet was in English. Thus, the majority of the respondents are probably sentient of the significance of being literate in English. A minority of respondents, 6 (4,2%) disagreed with the above statement, and 5 (3,5%) respondents indicated “unsure”.

**Table 5.10****Respondents wanting their children to be able to read and write in English because English is an important language in South Africa**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	12	8,4
<b>Unsure</b>	5	3,5
<b>Agree</b>	126	88,1
<b>Total</b>	143	100

African languages have long been and still are widely perceived as being “primitive” idioms with limited communicative value, only to be spoken by illiterate hunter-gathers, farmers or cattle-herders and for culturally highly restricted local matters only (Wolff 2006:43). According to this perception, African languages are in no way apt to be used for any advanced written communication pertaining to political, economic, cultural, and social matters of contemporary times, in particular not for anything to do with modern technology, science, and political philosophy. The widespread attitude of non-African provenance has dramatically damaged the image of any African indigenous language even in the eyes of some, if not many of their own speakers.

When respondents were asked whether they want their children to be able to read and write in English because English is an important language in South Africa, 126 (88,1%) parents affirmed this while 12 (8,4%) answered in the negative, and 4 (4,5%) stated “unsure”. My literature study has elucidated the importance of being literate in English and the significance of the English language in South Africa. English, being the most widely used additional language in South Africa is also promoted by the government for various reasons (See 2.2.1 and 2.2.2). The prominence of the English language in South Africa thus encourages more citizens to learn the language.

**Table 5.11**

**Respondents wanting their children to be able to read and write in English because they want their children to learn more than one language**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	7	4,9
<b>Unsure</b>	1	0,7
<b>Agree</b>	135	94,4
<b>Total</b>	143	100

It is not surprising to note that an impressive number of parents, 135 (94,4%), reflected that they want their children to be able to read and write in English because they would like their children to learn more than one language. Only 7 (4,9%) parents disagreed and 1 (0,7%) parent was unsure.

Bilingualism and multilingualism are conceived as valuable resources for learners throughout the world and UNESCO has a strong commitment to support bilingual and multilingual education (See 1.3.3 and 2.3.2). Accordingly, it appears that South African learners will benefit tremendously from being biliterate and this will unquestionably be more advantageous for South Africans. However, several studies have demonstrated that the advantages of bilingualism appear to take effect in an additive bilingual environment (See 2.3.2). Also, research confirms that children learn best in their home language as a prelude to and complement of bilingual and multilingual education; and to retain their primary language, children whose L1 is not the medium of instruction must have, amongst other things ongoing formal instruction in their L1 to develop reading and writing skills (Ball 2011:6).

**Table 5.12****Respondents wanting their children to be able to read and write in English because it will help their children to get better jobs**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	8	5,6
<b>Unsure</b>	5	3,5
<b>Agree</b>	130	90,9
<b>Total</b>	143	100

The above findings reflect that 130 (90,9%) parents want their children to be able to read and write in English because it will help their children to get better jobs. English, being an indispensable international language is associated with job opportunities and social ascension (See 2.2.1).

During the interview Educator 1 also stressed that at a parent meeting at School E the parents mentioned that *one of the main reasons to have it (the school) as an English home language school is when our children finish school and they enter the job sector, the first question is: Can you speak English?... If you look at job sectors they need to learn English.* Additionally, Educator 11 reiterated that *English is seen as an important language when choosing their careers.* Dutcher (2004:4) reiterates that “sometimes parents do not want their children instructed in their mother tongue. They ask, ‘Why would I send my children to school to learn the language they know? They need to learn Spanish or English to get a job.’”

The results of this study are congruent to numerous studies that revealed the importance and the role of English in securing jobs (See 2.2.1). This also points to instrumental motivation being a crucial contributing factor in selecting the most appropriate schools for admission. A small number of parents, 5 (3,5%) reflected a sense of uncertainty and 8 (5,6%) parents provided negative responses.

**Table 5.13****Respondents wanting their children to be able to read and write in English because it will help their children to continue their studies at colleges or universities**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	5	3,5
<b>Unsure</b>	3	2,1
<b>Agree</b>	135	94,4
<b>Total</b>	143	100

As early as 1981, Cummins (1981:3) found that parents have realised that proficiency in English is a prerequisite to academic success. Hence, they have been concerned that at any time if English is taken away it will interfere with their children's academic success.

These scores illustrate that a significant number of parents, 135 (94,4%), want their children to be able to read and write in English because it will help their children to continue their studies at colleges or universities. This may possibly be attributed to the fact that the medium of instruction in most of the colleges and universities in South Africa is English, and also most examinations at colleges and universities are written in English. Despite the fact that the University of KwaZulu-Natal has announced its intention to make isiZulu language classes compulsory for all first year students from 2014, English is still the prominent language at majority of the South African Universities (See 1.3.3). The majority of the parents thus, place their primary interest and emphasis on preparing their children for colleges or universities in South Africa and/or abroad.

Since most of the indigenous languages have not yet incorporated the vast array of western scientific words and concepts (University of South Africa 1999:187); there is a possibility of the belief that such schools would hinder their children's aspirations to enter tertiary education and the mainstream economy. Only five (3,5%) parents maintained negative responses. It is possible that these five parents do not intend sending their children to colleges or universities. Three (2,1%) parents were unsure.

**Table 5.14**

**Respondents wanting their children to be able to read and write in English because it will help their children to continue their studies abroad**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	8	5,6
<b>Unsure</b>	7	4,9
<b>Agree</b>	128	89,5
<b>Total</b>	143	100

A great number of subjects, 128 (89,5%), maintained that they want their children to be able to read and write in English because it will help their children to continue their studies abroad. Eight (5,6%) parents disagreed and seven (4,9%) parents were unsure.

Ball (2011:19) contends that instrumental language attitude focuses on pragmatic, utilitarian goals, such as whether one or another language will contribute to personal success, security, or status. Accordingly, results of the findings in tables 5.12, 5.13, and 5.14 demonstrate that the majority of the respondents' views were strongly influenced by instrumental motivation (See 3.3.2.2).

**Table 5.15**

**Respondents wanting their children to be able to read and write in English because their children will be able to understand the English culture**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	16	11,2
<b>Unsure</b>	16	11,2
<b>Agree</b>	111	77,6
<b>Total</b>	143	100

These findings reflect that a large number of parents, 111 (77,6%), claimed that they want their children to be able to read and write in English because their children will be able to understand the English culture. This is an indication of the preference for integrative motivation (See 3.3.2.2). A small number of subjects, 16 (11,2), displayed their disagreement and uncertainty.

**Table 5.16**

**Respondents wanting their children to be able to read and write in English because their children will be able to be friends with English-speaking children**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	9	6,3
<b>Unsure</b>	13	9,1
<b>Agree</b>	121	84,6
<b>Total</b>	143	100

An overwhelming majority of the respondents, 121 (84,6%) averred that they want their children to be able to read and write in English because their children will be able to be friends with English-speaking children. Few parents, 9 (6,3%) indicated their disagreement, while 13 (9,1%) respondents provided neutral views. These findings illustrate the prominence of integrative motivation (See 3.3.2.2).

**Table 5.17**

**Respondents wanting their children to be able to read and write in English because they want their children to think like and be like people who speak English**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	49	34,3
<b>Unsure</b>	11	7,7
<b>Agree</b>	83	58
<b>Total</b>	143	100



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The above table demonstrates quite varied responses from the subjects. Eighty three (58%) parents postulated that they want their children to be able to read and write in English because they want their children to think like and be like people who speak English. Forty nine (34,3%) parents indicated their disagreement, and 11 (7,7) parents were unsure. The above results indicate that integrative motivation did play a somewhat critical role in the parents' decision to want their children to be able to read and write in English. Ball (2011:19) posits that an integrative language attitude focuses on social considerations, such as the desire to be accepted into the cultural group that uses a language or to elaborate an identity associated with the language.

Tables 5.15, 5.16, and 5.17 affirm that the majority of the parents' views were greatly influenced by integrative motivation. However, when comparing instrumental and integrative motivation in this survey study, it can be deduced that these findings illuminate the dominance of instrumental motivation. It is important to note that a growing body of research studies reveals that integratively motivated learners tend to be higher achievers than instrumentally motivated ones (See 3.3.2.2). Although this study reflected that the majority of the parents were influenced by both instrumental and integrative motivation, further research in the field of reading and writing by ESL learners and motivation is required to demonstrate the relationship between motivation and proficiency in reading and writing in English.

#### 5.2.1.4 Scaled responses: Parents' views regarding their children's performance in isiZulu

This section provides illustrations and interpretations of parents' views regarding their children's performance in isiZulu. The descriptive statistics are presented as follows:

For the purpose of this study, the following responses were combined. Very poor and poor combined to form poor; fair remained as a category on its own; and good and excellent combined to form good.

**Table 5.18****Parents' ratings of their children's ability to speak isiZulu**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Poor</b>	11	7,7
<b>Fair</b>	22	15,4
<b>Good</b>	110	76,9
<b>Total</b>	143	100

The above table demonstrates that the majority of the parents, 110 (76,9%), have rated their children's ability to speak isiZulu as good. A minority of 11 (7,7%) parents rated their children's ability to speak isiZulu as poor, while 22 (15,4%) indicated fair. These results were undoubtedly anticipated since isiZulu is the learners' primary language and at this age it can be automatically assumed that these learners should be able to speak isiZulu fluently.

**Table 5.19****Parents' ratings of their children's ability to understand oral isiZulu**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Poor</b>	11	7,7
<b>Fair</b>	24	16,8
<b>Good</b>	108	75,5
<b>Total</b>	143	100

One hundred and eight parents (75,5%) believed their children's ability to understand oral isiZulu is good. A minority of 11 (7,7%) parents rated their children's ability to understand oral isiZulu as poor, and 24 (16,8%) parents indicated fair. It can also be presumed that foundation phase isiZulu-speaking learners should be able to understand oral isiZulu fairly well.

**Table 5.20****Parents' ratings of their children's ability to read isiZulu books**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Poor</b>	53	37
<b>Fair</b>	45	31,5
<b>Good</b>	45	31,5
<b>Total</b>	143	100

The above table reflects a variation in response as compared to tables 5.18 and 5.19. The majority of the parents reported that their children's ability to read isiZulu books is poor. An equivalent number of parents, 45 (31,5%), rated their children's ability to read isiZulu books as fair and good.

**Table 5.21****Parents' ratings of their children's ability to understand written isiZulu**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Poor</b>	56	39,2
<b>Fair</b>	37	25,9
<b>Good</b>	50	35
<b>Total</b>	143	100

When parents were asked to rate their children's ability to understand written isiZulu, 56 (39,2%) parents selected the option "poor". The other 50 (35%) and 37 (25,9%) parents chose the options good and fair, respectively.

**Table 5.22****Parents' ratings of their children's ability to write in isiZulu**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Poor</b>	62	43,4
<b>Fair</b>	37	25,9
<b>Good</b>	44	30,8
<b>Total</b>	143	100

A substantial number of parents affirmed that their children's ability to write in isiZulu is poor. Forty four (30,8%) parents rated their children's ability to write in isiZulu as good, while 37 (25,9%) selected the option "fair"

An analysis of the above data regarding isiZulu-speaking learners' proficiency in isiZulu reveals that the majority of the isiZulu-speaking learners are very competent when it comes to speaking in isiZulu and understanding oral isiZulu. As illuminated in Chapter one (See 1.5.1), listening and speaking are the basic skills in learning any language. Thus, it is unequivocal that most of the isiZulu-speaking learners should be able to speak and understand isiZulu fairly well.

On the other hand, learning to read and write requires conscious effort and instruction (See 1.5.1). The inference that can be drawn from these findings is that the majority of the isiZulu-speaking learners in this study have not yet learnt to read and write in their primary language. Accordingly, these learners would have achieved Basic Interpersonal Conversational Skills (BICS) (See 2.4.3.1) in isiZulu but would not have achieved Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) (See 2.4.3.2) in isiZulu. Basic Interpersonal Conversational Skills refer to the conversational fluency in a language whereas Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency refers to the language skills that are associated with literacy (being able to read and write) and cognitive development.

Research findings that are echoed by Cummins (2001:17) and Dutcher (2004:8-13) consistently reveal that the best predictor of cognitive academic language development in the L2 is the level

of development of cognitive academic language proficiency in the L1. Given the fact that proficiency in the primary language is crucial to second language development (See 2.3.1) implies that these isiZulu-speaking learners will probably experience difficulties learning to read and write in English.

#### 5.2.1.5 Scaled responses: Parents' views regarding their children's performance in English

This section provides illustrations and interpretations of parents' views regarding their children's performance in English. The descriptive statistics are presented as follows:

**Table 5.23**

#### **Parents' ratings of their children's ability to speak English**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Poor</b>	8	5,6
<b>Fair</b>	32	22,4
<b>Good</b>	103	72
<b>Total</b>	143	100

The above table illustrates that a considerable number of subjects, 103 (72%), rated their children's ability to speak English as good. A minority of 9 (5,6%) parents rated their children's ability to speak English as poor, while 32 (22,4%) indicated fair. This may be attributed to the fact that the majority of the learners in the sample are in Grade 2, (51) (36%), and Grade 3 (48) (33%). Being either in Grade 2 or Grade 3 would infer that these learners speaking skills would have improved. Furthermore, it is important to take cognisance of the fact that when L2 learners who have surpassed the critical period for L2 acquisition are enrolled in English medium schools, they will not be able to achieve native-like levels of proficiency in the L2 (See 3.3.7).

**Table 5.24****Parents' ratings of their children's ability to understand oral English**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Poor</b>	6	4,2
<b>Fair</b>	31	21,7
<b>Good</b>	106	74,1
<b>Total</b>	143	100

A significant number of parents, 106 (74,1%), viewed their children's ability to understand oral English as good. Only a few subjects, 6 (4,2%), rated their children's ability to understand oral English as poor. The other 31 (21,7%) parents rated their children's ability as fair.

**Table 5.25****Parents' ratings of their children's ability to read English books**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Poor</b>	14	9,8
<b>Fair</b>	39	27,3
<b>Good</b>	90	62,9
<b>Total</b>	143	100

A substantial number of respondents, 90 (62,9), perceived their children's ability to read English books as good. A small number of parents, 14 (9,8%), selected the option poor, and 39 (27,3%) subjects selected the option fair.

**Table 5.26****Parents' ratings of their children's ability to understand written English**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Poor</b>	12	8,4
<b>Fair</b>	42	29,4
<b>Good</b>	89	62,2
<b>Total</b>	143	100

Eighty nine (62,2%) parents asserted that their children's ability to understand written English is good. Only 12 (8,4%) subjects rated their children's ability to understand written English as poor. The other 42 (29,4%) parents rated their children's ability as fair.

**Table 5.27****Parents' ratings of their children's ability to write in English**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Poor</b>	11	7,7
<b>Fair</b>	45	31,5
<b>Good</b>	87	60,8
<b>Total</b>	143	100

When parents were asked to rate their children's ability to write in English, 87 (60,8%) parents indicated good; 45 (31,5%) indicated fair; while 11 (7,7%) parents stated poor.

Peregoy and Boyle (2000:239) reiterate that English language proficiency stands out as the defining difference between native and non-native English speakers. These researchers maintain that to the extent that a reader is limited in English language proficiency, the ability to make sense of a text written in English is likewise hindered. Fitzgerald (in Peregoy and Boyle 2000:239) reports that even ESL learners who are proficient in English have been found to read

more slowly than native English speakers, attesting to the comprehension difficulties related to English language proficiency during reading.

The results gleaned from tables 5.23, 5.24, 5.25, 5.26, and 5.27 reflect that the majority of the parents in the sample view their children's ability to speak in English, to understand oral English, to read English books, to understand written English, and to write in English, as good. Eight, six, fourteen, twelve, and eleven parents indicated that their children's performance in speaking English, understanding oral English, reading English books, understanding written English, and writing in English is poor; respectively. These results would imply that most of the parents in this study are generally content or satisfied with their children's ability to read and write in English; since they have rated their children's reading and writing ability as mostly good.

The parents' ratings of their children's ability to read and write in isiZulu are generally lower than their ratings of their children's ability to read and write in English. If the parents' views can be construed as accurate, the connotation here is that if these isiZulu-speaking learners were first taught to read and write in their primary language and then in English, they would be more proficient in reading and writing in English. This is precisely due to the fact that a preponderance of research studies have indicated that when it comes to learning a second language it is crucial to first have a solid foundation in one's first language (See 2.3.1). This includes reading and writing in the learner's primary language.

### **5.2.2 Illustrations and interpretations of findings from the educator questionnaire**

The quality of any education system is as good as its educators (Moloi & Strauss 2005:96). Educators set the tone of what happens in the classroom. In accessing information about isiZulu-speaking foundation phase learners' reading and writing skills it is, therefore, important that the viewpoints of educators be taken into consideration. The personal and professional characteristics of educators are presented in this chapter to explore whether there is a typical educator profile. This is followed by a presentation of an analysis of the educators' responses to questions concerning reading and writing in an L2 in the foundation phase.

Data will be presented under the following headings:

- ❖ Biographical data

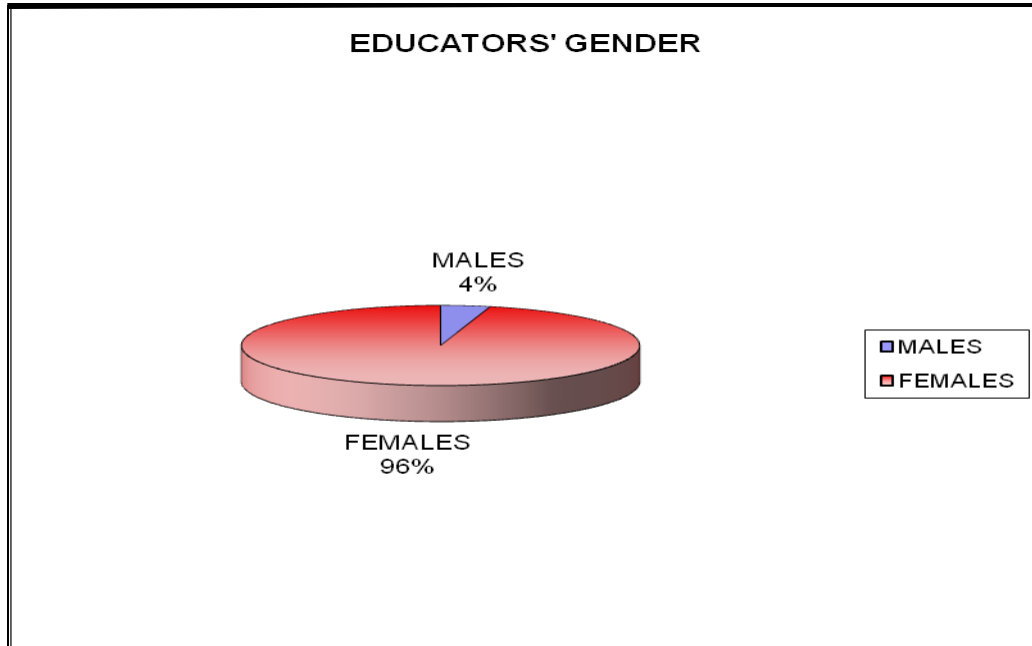


- 
- ❖ Educational background and training
  - ❖ School factors
  - ❖ Educator' views regarding isiZulu-speaking learners' emotional behaviour when reading and writing in English
  - ❖ Educators' views regarding isiZulu-speaking learner's performance in English
  - ❖ Educators' views regarding CAPS English home language
  - ❖ General questions pertaining to the teaching of reading and writing to isiZulu-speaking learners

Forty eight (48) questionnaires were administered to the subjects in all five schools and all (100%) the questionnaires were completed and returned.

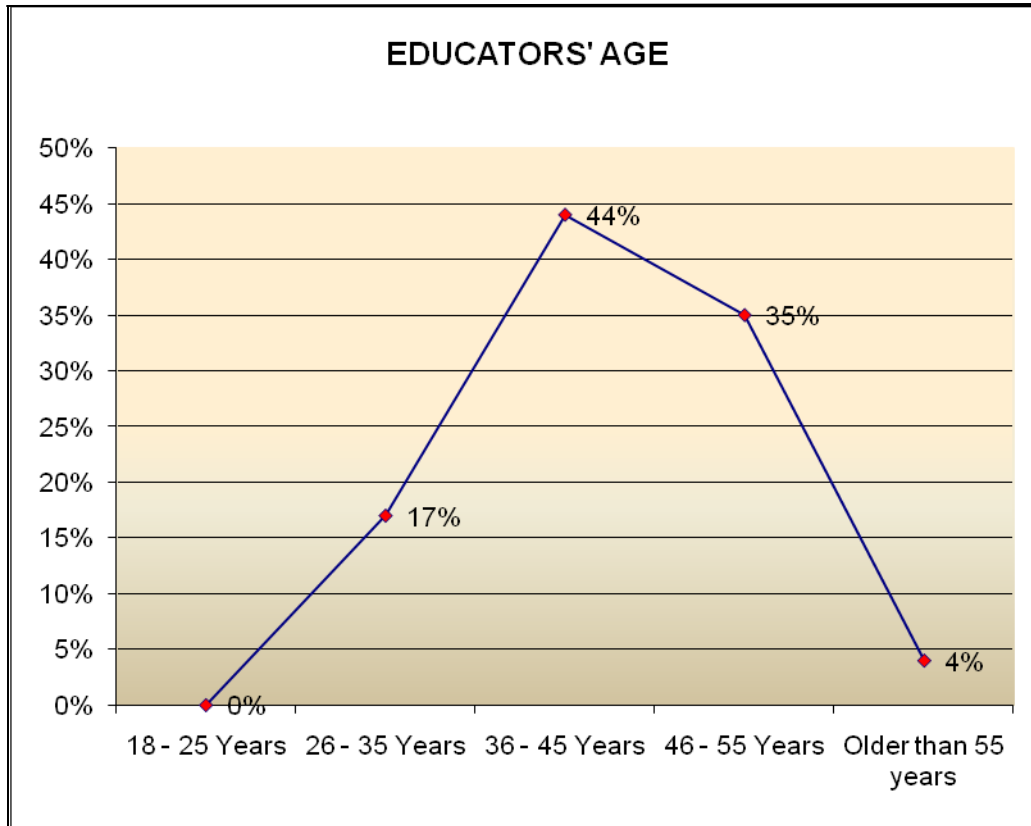
#### 5.2.2.1 Biographical data

This section provides illustrations and discussion on the biographical data presented in this study using frequencies and percentages. It comprises Section A of the questionnaire which solicited subject's gender, age, grade taught, home language, educational background and training, teaching experience, and school factors.



**Figure 5.11** Figure showing percentages according to educators' gender

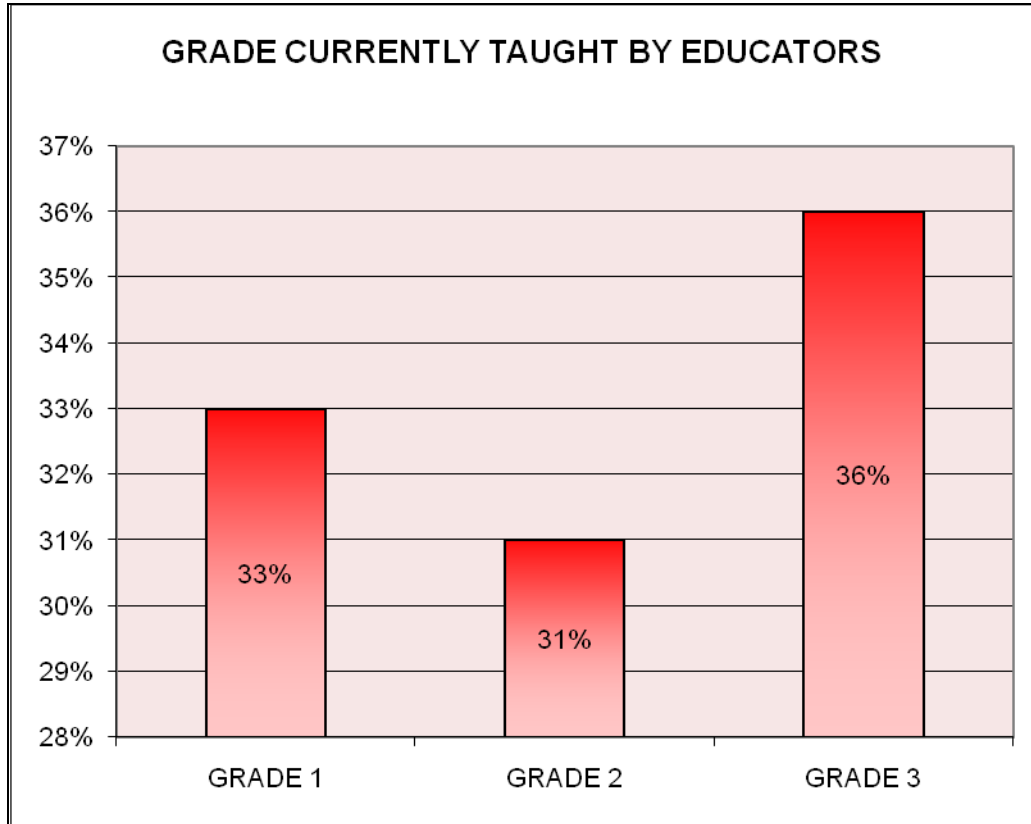
Generally, in South Africa female educators are in the majority at primary school level (Department of Basic Education 2010:40). There appears to be a huge discrepancy with regard to educators' gender. An overwhelming majority of the respondents, 46 (96%), are females; whereas only 2 (4%) educators are males. This is probably due to the fact that there is a tendency for more females to be choosing teaching as a profession as compared to males. It is also possible that there are generally more female educators than male educators in South Africa who teach foundation phase learners. Apart from equity considerations, a reasonable gender balance among educators has value in role modelling for learners.



**Figure 5.12** Figure illustrating percentages according to educators' age

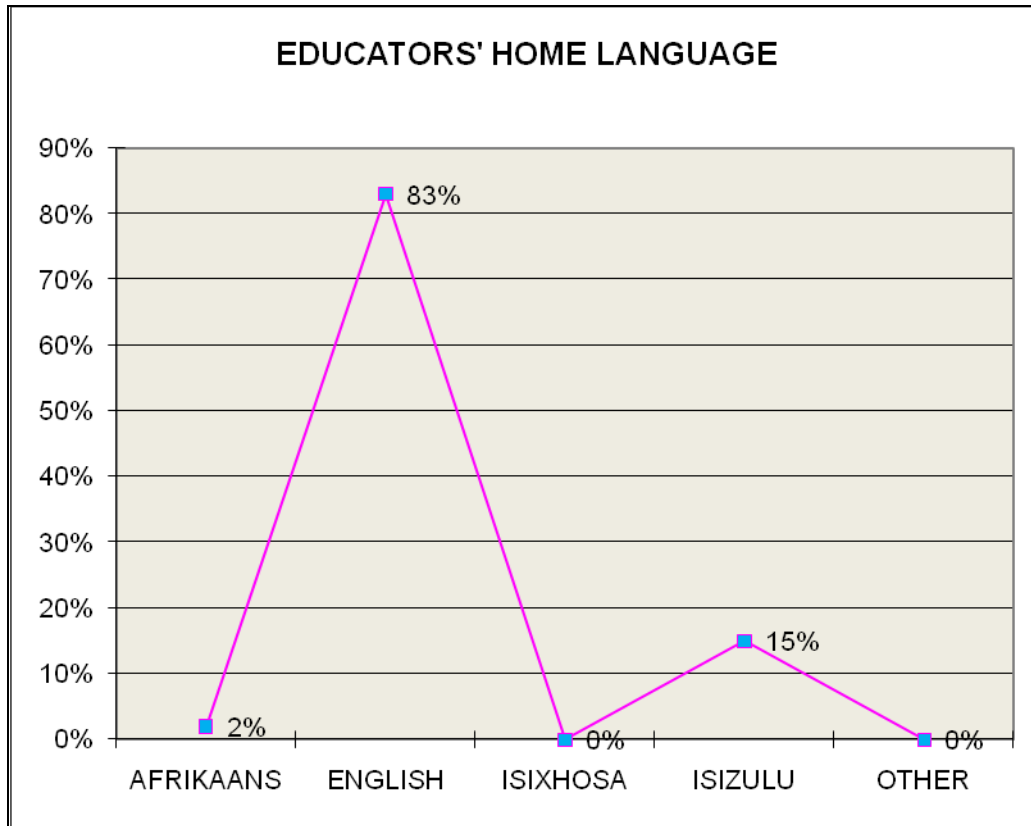
The majority of the educators in the sample, 21 (44%) are between the ages of 36 and 45. This could imply that 44% of the educators have several years of teaching experience. This will also depend on when the educators began their teaching careers. Seventeen (35%) educators are between the ages of 46 and 55. Only eight (17%) educators are between the ages of 26 and 35; and 2 (4%) educators are older than 55 years. There are no (0%) educators between the ages of 18 and 25.

The wide spread of educator ages is a strength that ensures that the school system does not only benefit from the experience of the older educators but there is potential for a refreshing inflow of new innovative ideas from the younger educators. The mix augurs well for the school system particularly during the transition from the traditional teacher-centred approach to the more current learner-centred approaches.



**Figure 5.13** Figure showing percentages according to grade currently taught by educators

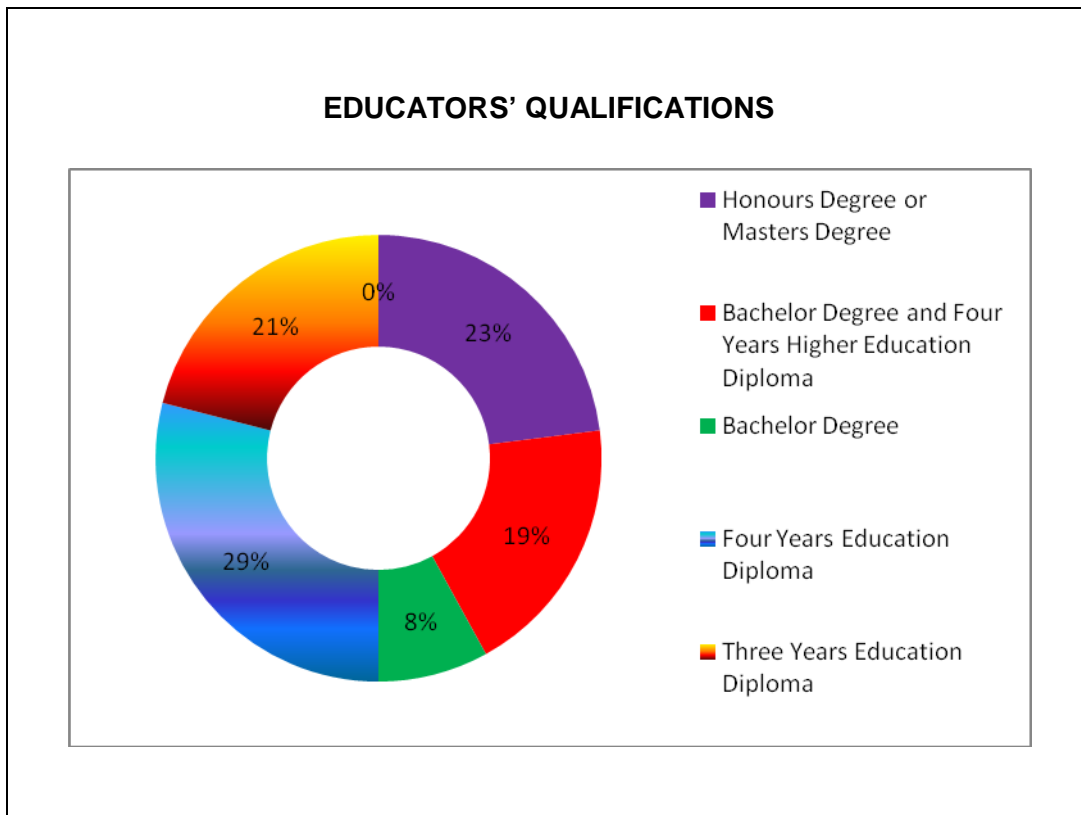
The above depiction illustrates that most of the educators in the sample, 17 (36%), are currently teaching Grade 3 learners. Sixteen (33%) and 15 (31%) educators are teaching Grade 1 and Grade 2, respectively.



**Figure 5.14** Figure illustrating percentages according to educators' home language

The above illustration reflects that a considerable number of educators in the sample, 40 (83%), have English as their home language. This implies that 83% English-speaking educators are teaching isiZulu-speaking learners through the medium of English. Seven (15%) educators' home language is isiZulu; and only 1 educator's home language is Afrikaans. There are no (0%), isiXhosa-speaking educators. Also, the "other" category has no (0%) respondents.

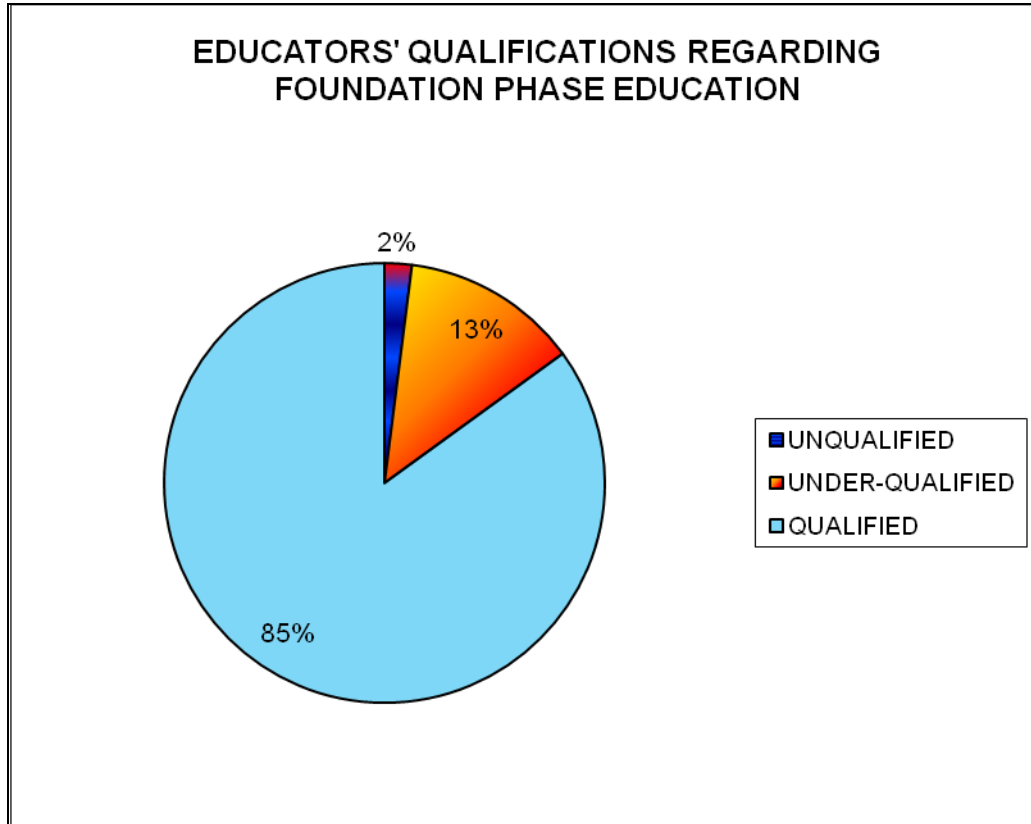
## 5.2.2.2. Educators' educational background and training



**Figure 5.15** Figure illustrating percentages according to educators' qualifications

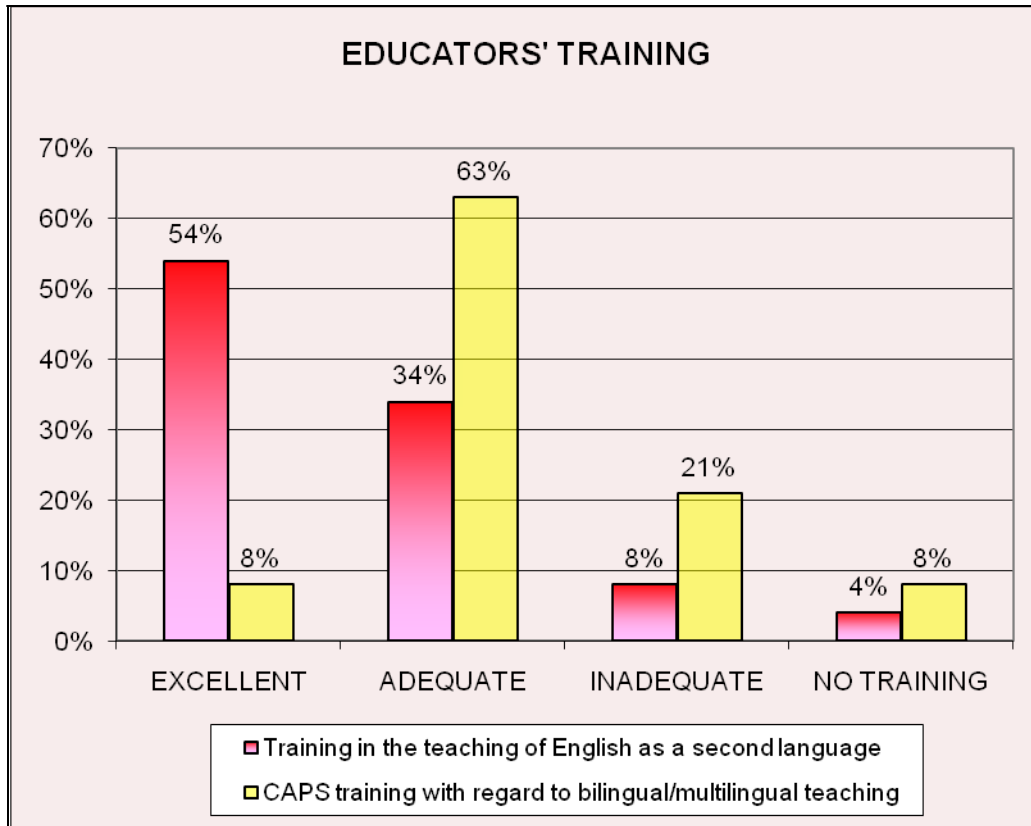
Gove and Cvelich (2010:13) stress that the inadequate supply of educators has resulted in recruiting and hiring unqualified educators in many countries. Contrarily, to the above all the educators (100%) in the study are qualified. However, there is great variation in their qualifications. Fourteen (29%) and 10 (21%) educators indicated that they have a four years education diploma and three years education diploma, respectively. Nine (19%) educators have Bachelor degrees and four years Higher Education Diplomas. Eleven (23%) educators have Honours or Masters Degrees. Four (8%) educators have Bachelor degrees, and no educators (0%) have lesser qualifications.

It is pivotal that educators are appropriately trained so that they will be able to provide quality education to learners. However, the ASER study in rural India revealed that teacher characteristics such as qualification/degree, length of training, and number of years of teaching experience made little difference to children's learning (Bhattacharjea et al. 2011:8).



**Figure 5.16** Figure illustrating percentages according to educators' qualifications regarding foundation phase education

These findings indicate that a large number of subjects, 41 (85%), are qualified foundation phase educators. Six (13%) educators are under-qualified. These six subjects are qualified educators, but they are not qualified to teach in the foundation phase. Only one educator is unqualified. However, this result seems to be in contrast with the results that are indicated in figure 5.15. According to figure 5.15 no (0%) educator has a lesser qualification than a three years diploma. It is possible that one of the subjects has a diploma or degree but not a teaching diploma or a teaching degree.



**Figure 5.17** Figure illustrating percentages according to educators' training in the teaching of English as a second language, and educators' CAPS training with regard to bilingual/multilingual teaching

Teacher capacity is central to the entire endeavour of early-grade literacy learning (Trudell et al. 2012:6). Dutcher (2004:44) emphasises that teacher training is the key to sustainability of any education programme. South Africa has developed a comprehensive teacher development strategy to meet the needs in the demand, supply, and utilisation of educators in the system (Department of Basic Education 2010:12). The strategy recognises and addresses equally the importance of both the initial (pre-service) and the continuous professional development (in-service) training of educators. While pre-service training is critical to give educators a sound theoretical basis for their profession, the dynamic nature of education makes it imperative that educators receive regular in-service training to keep abreast with new developments and approaches to teaching. The radical changes in education in general and in the curriculum in particular that South Africa underwent since 1994 presented more pressing challenges for major paradigm shifts in educator pre-service and in-service training.

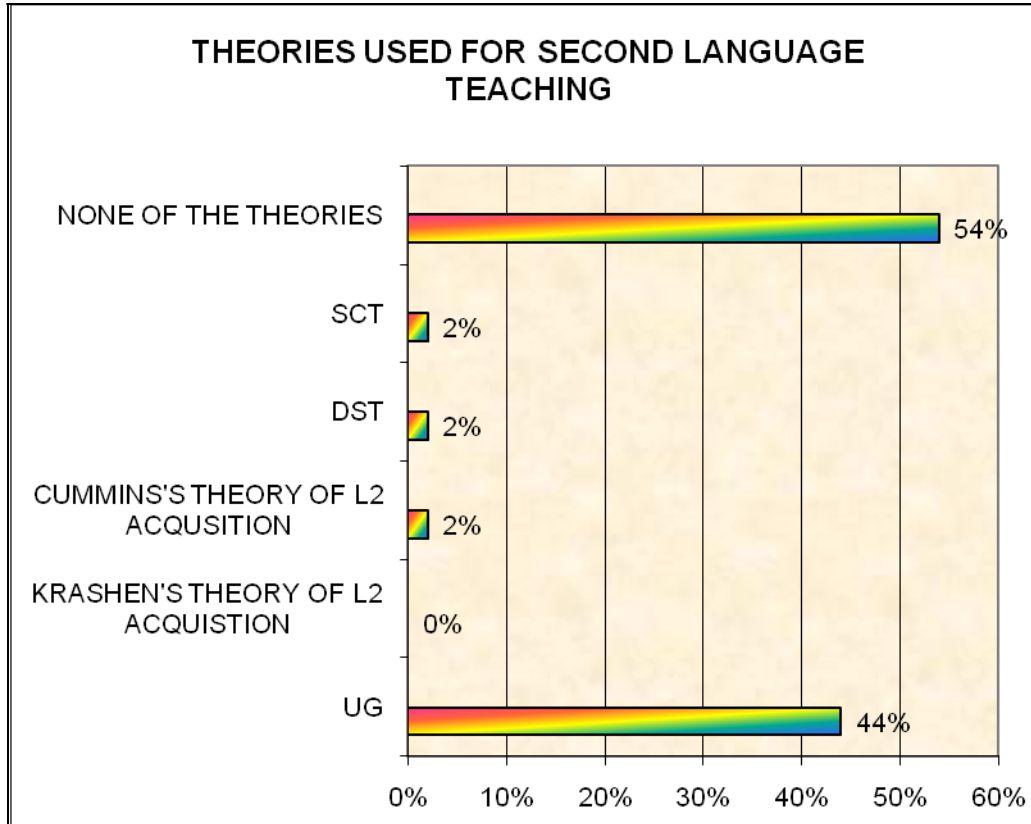


Trudell et al. (2012:22) highlight the fact that when educators are well trained, mentored and supported, they can help make the difference between failure and success in foundation phase literacy acquisition. When educators are not trained or supported appropriately, they can do little to facilitate literacy achievement in the foundation phase. Particularly when the teaching methods are new to the educators, careful and ongoing support of those educators is critical to ensure effective implementation.

The figure above illustrates that 26 (54%) educator respondents described their training in the teaching of English as a second language as excellent. Sixteen (34%) educators selected the option adequate; while 4 (8%) felt that their training is inadequate. A minority of 2 (4%) educators had no training.

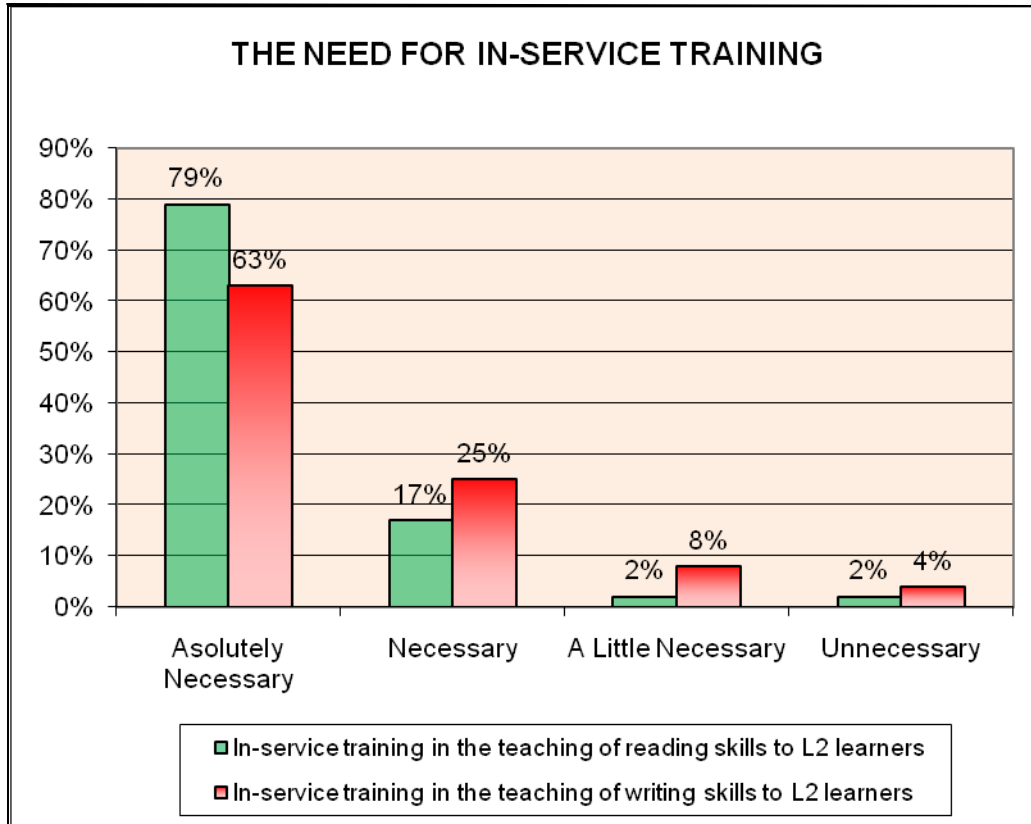
When educators were asked to describe their training with regard to bilingual/multilingual training, only 4 (8%) educators indicated that it is excellent. The majority of the educators, 30 (63%), felt that their training is adequate; and 10 (21%) educators described their training as inadequate. Only 4 (8%) educators stated that they had no training.

The views of several educators in this study are anomalous to several studies that reveal that educators are poorly trained in early childhood approaches and methods involving the teaching of reading and writing (See 3.3.4.2).



**Figure 5.18** Figure illustrating percentages according to the use of learning theories for second language teaching that educators use to teach English second language learners

When educators were asked to indicate all the learning theories for second language teaching that they use to teach ESL learners, 26 (54%) educators asserted that they do not use any of the theories mentioned in the above illustration. Universal Grammar emerged as the most popular theory, with 21 (44%) subjects. None of the educators (0%) indicated Krashen's theory. For each of the remaining three theories, there was only 1 (2%) educator. It is incongruous that the majority of the educators felt that their training is adequate (See figure 5.17); yet a few educators are knowledgeable about the common theories that are used to teach L2 learners.



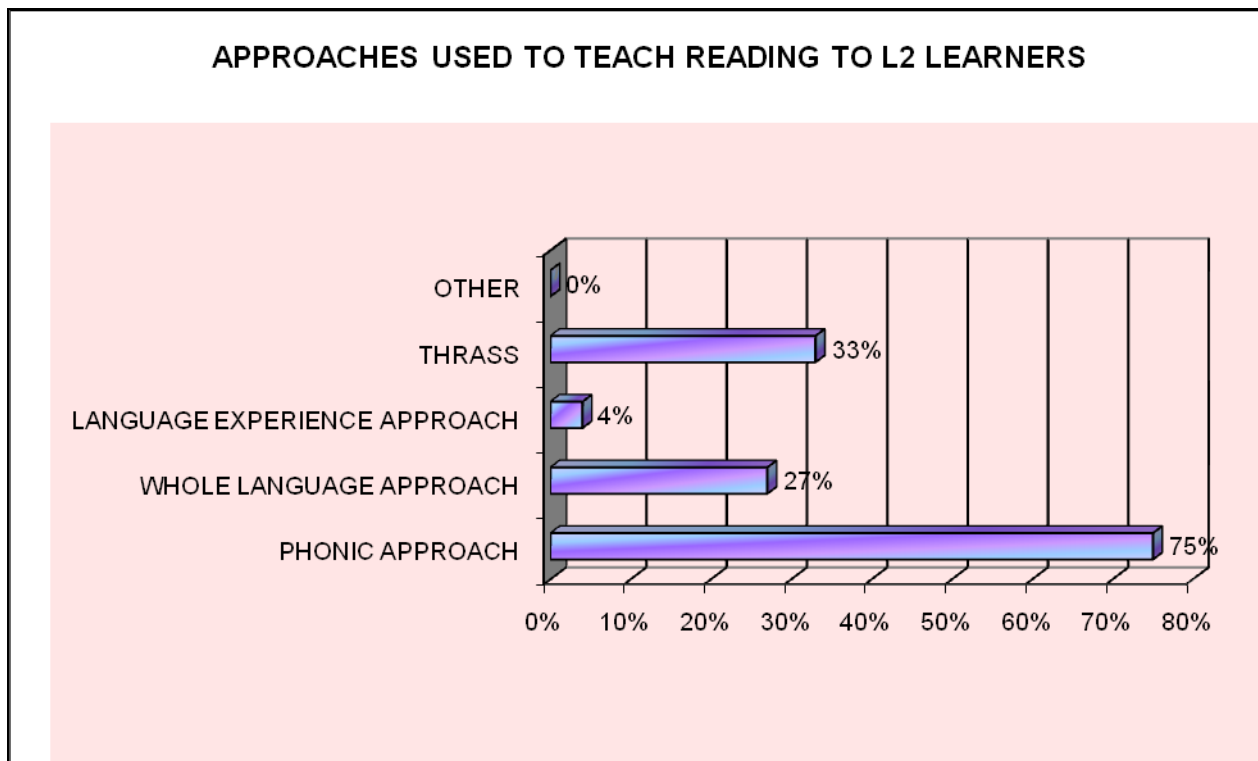
**Figure 5.19** Figure illustrating percentages according to the need for in-service training

One of the major problems highlighted in all the studies reviewed by Alidou, Boly, Brock-Utne, Diallo, Heugh and Wolff (2006:16) is the inadequacy of existing teacher training programmes. Educators are being prepared as hitherto to teach in languages that are unfamiliar to children. These researchers postulate that due to the lack of adequate training African educators do not know how to effectively monitor and assess student learning.

The above illustration provides a lucid indication of the dire need for in-service training in the teaching of reading and writing skills to L2 learners; with 38 (79%) and 30 (63%) respondents indicating that the need for in-service training in the teaching of reading and writing skills, respectively, as absolutely necessary. Eight (17%) subjects stated “necessary” for reading skills and 12 (25%) stated “necessary” for writing skills. Only one (2%) educator indicated that the need for in-service training in the teaching of reading skills as a little necessary and one (2%) educator selected the option “unnecessary”. A minority of one (2%) educator and two (4%)

educators felt that the need for in-service training in the teaching of reading and writing skills, respectively, is unnecessary.

There appears to be inconsistencies in the educators' views. While majority of the educators believed that their training in the teaching of English as a second language and CAPS training with regard to bilingual/multilingual training as adequate (See figure 5.17), the majority of the them emphasised that the need for in-service training in the teaching of reading and writing skills as absolutely necessary.

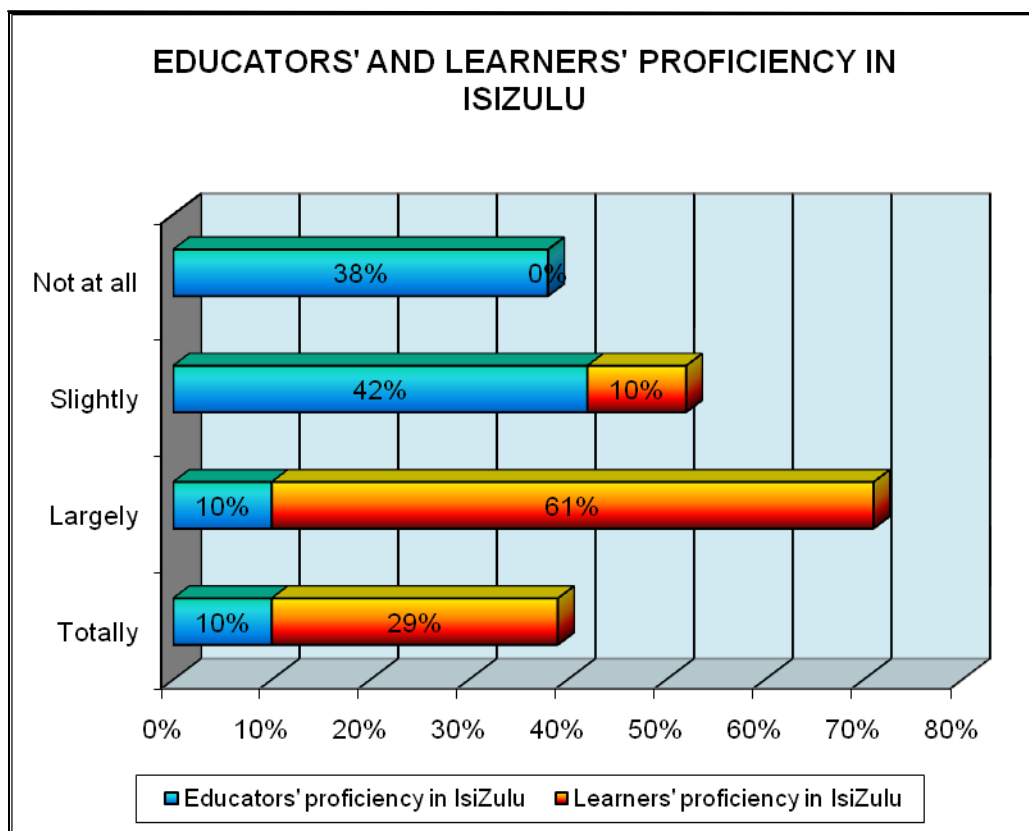


**Figure 5.20** Figure illustrating percentages according to approaches used to teach reading to second language learners

Learning starts with reading and the use of effective approaches to teach reading will categorically boost children's reading performance in leaps and bounds. Early grade reading assessments and school management surveys found that educators lack basic knowledge and support for how to teach reading (Gove & Cvelich 2010:39).

A great number of educators, 36 (75%), affirmed that they use the phonic approach to teach reading to L2 learners. THRASS is used by 16 (33%) educators, and the whole language

approach is used by 13 (27%) subjects. Only two (4%) educators posited that they use the language experience approach. None of the educators (0%) selected the option “other”. Hence, it can be deduced that educators do not use any other approaches or educators are not aware of any other approaches used to teach reading to L2 learners.



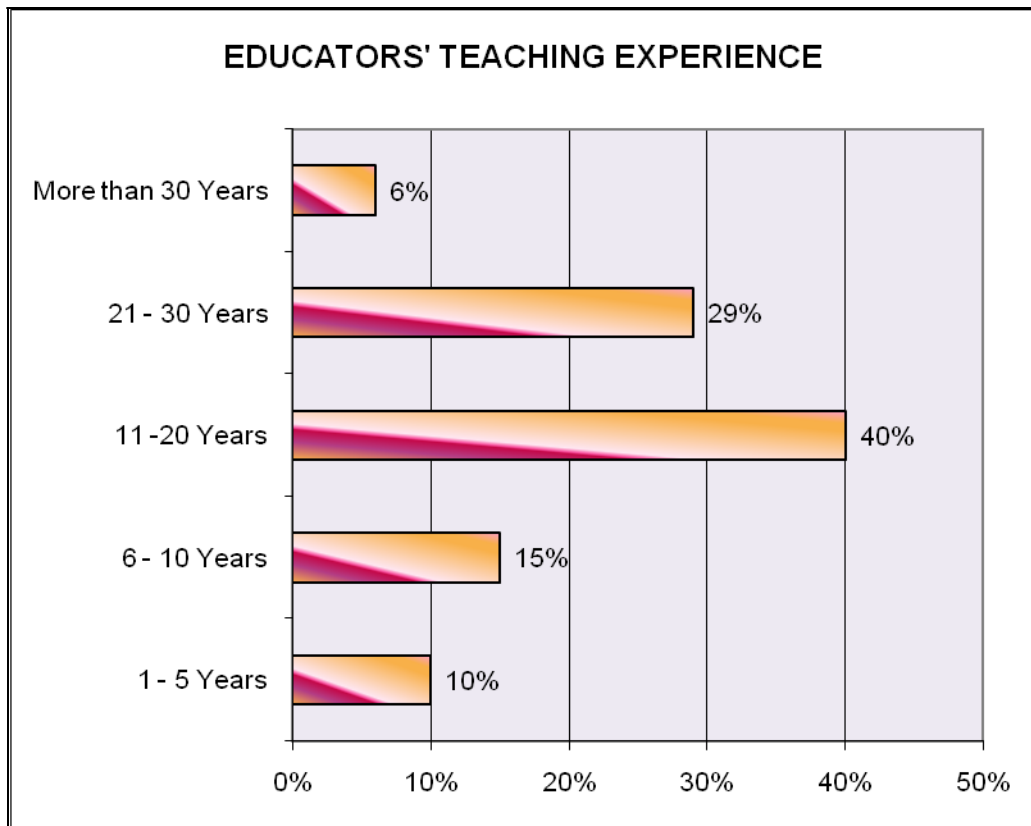
**Figure 5.21** Figure illustrating percentages according to educators' and learners' proficiency in isiZulu

According to figure 5.14, isiZulu is the home language of seven (15%) educators but it is surprising that only five (10%) educators stated that they are totally proficient in isiZulu. Five (10%) subjects felt that they are largely proficient in isiZulu. The majority of the educators, 20 (42%), asserted that they are slightly proficient in isiZulu; and a total of 18 (38%) educators are not at all proficient in isiZulu.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation stresses that it is an important task to “persuade parents that children can best learn the skills of reading and writing when the teacher uses a language that the children understand ... and that children who learn to

read and write in the language they know best – their mother tongue – can learn to read and write in a second language better and faster” (Dutcher 2004:4).

Twenty nine (61%) subjects believed that the isiZulu-speaking learners in their classes are largely proficient in isiZulu. Fourteen (29%) subjects maintained isiZulu-speaking learners in their classes are totally proficient in isiZulu. A few educators, 5 (10%), selected the option “slightly”; and no educator (0%) chose the option “not at all”.



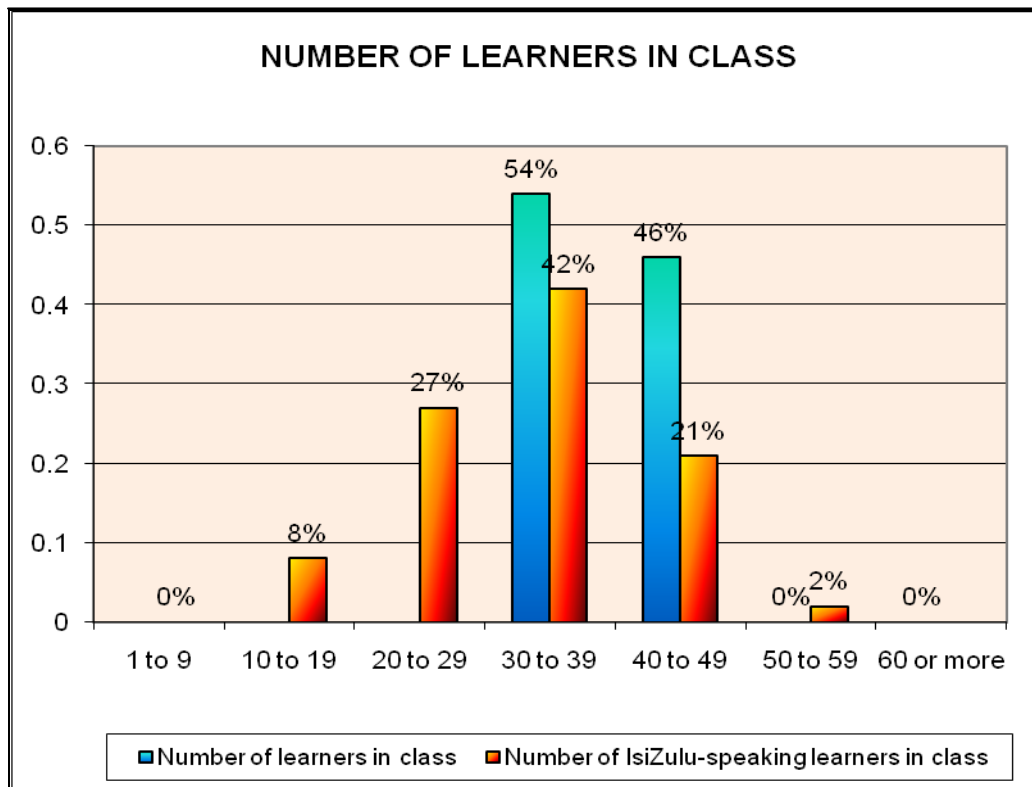
**Figure 5.22** Figure illustrating percentages according to educators' teaching experience

The above figure indicates that most of the educators, 19 (40%), in this study have between 11 and 20 years of teaching experience. Fourteen (29%) subjects indicated 21 to 30 years. Seven (15%) educators have between six to ten years of teaching experience. Five (10%) subjects posited that they have between one and five years of teaching experience; and only three (6%) indicated “more than 30 years”.

The fact that the majority of the educators have between 11 and 30 years of teaching experience implies that several educators in this study have been through various transformations in the education system; beginning with Outcomes-based Education and thereafter National Curriculum Statement which was then amended to Revised National Curriculum Statement, and more recently CAPS. Some of these educators would have also taught learners using the old curriculum. Consequently, these educators will be able to compare and evaluate the various education systems that have been implemented in South Africa. Thus, their views should be heeded.

The profile of the educator that emerged out of this analysis indicated that, on the whole, female educators were in absolute majority. The majority of the educators were between the ages of 36 and 45 and most of them had between 11 to 20 years of teaching experience. In terms of their academic qualifications, most of the educators met or exceeded the minimum requirements.

### 5.2.2.3 School factors



**Figure 5.23** Figure illustrating percentages according to total number of learners' in class and number of isiZulu-speaking learners in class

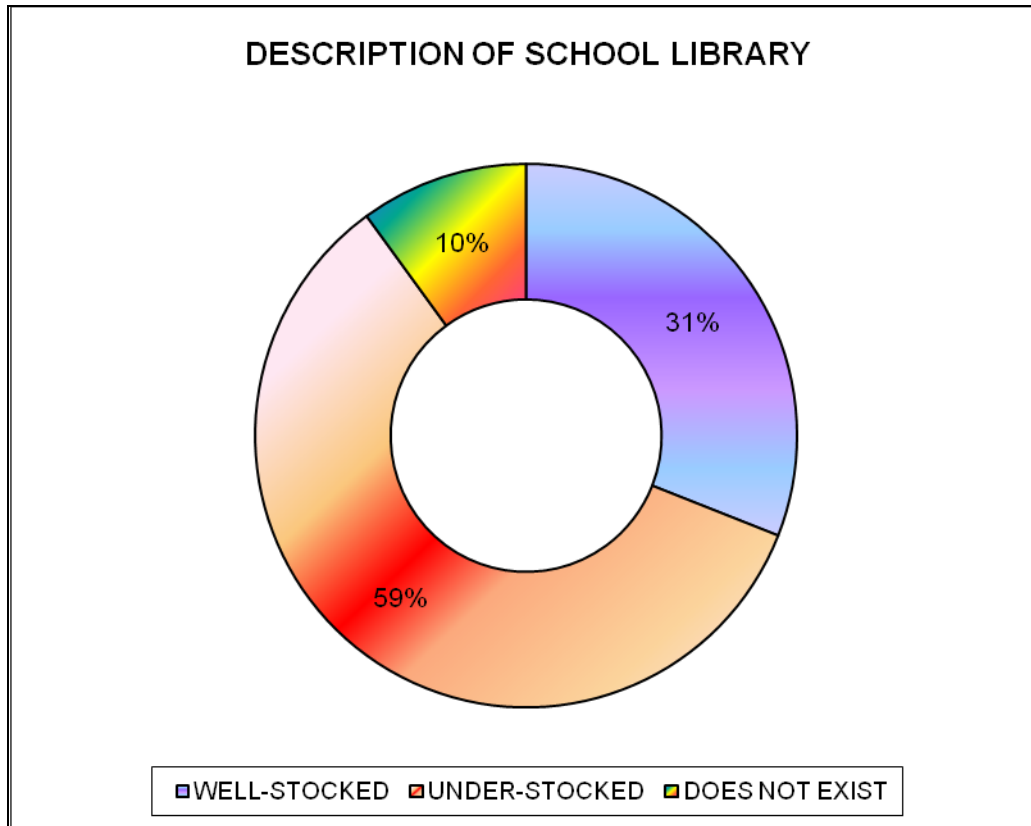
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Trudell et al. (2012:13) reinforce that education access has boomed; this has had the effect of increasing class size, but also has broadened education to target the masses, where it was previously more the domain of the elite. Furthermore, these researchers add that the rate for children entering primary education far outpaces the rate of training new teachers. The latest available data reveal that from 2009 to 2012 the national average learner-educator ratio at ordinary schools in South Africa decreased from 29,6:1 to 29,2:1, a net decrease of 1,4% (Department of Basic Education 2014:15). However, the learner-educator ratio appears to be higher than what these statistics reflect, in several schools in the country.

According to the Department of Basic Education (2010:39), in South Africa the class size norm is 40 learners in a primary school. This large class size and limited instructional time in the foundation phase complicates the task of providing individual reading and writing instruction to learners. The above illustration provides a clear indication that the majority of the classes, 26 (54%), have between 30 and 39 learners. Twenty two educators (46%) pointed out that their classes have between 40 to 49 learners. This means that in these classes the class size probably exceeds the norm of 40 learners and most certainly exceeds the national learner-educator ratio at ordinary schools. No educators (0%) have between one and nine, 50 and 59, and 60 or more learners in their classes.

When educators were asked about the number of isiZulu-speaking learners in their classes, 20 (42%) educators mentioned that they have between 30 and 39 isiZulu-speaking learners in their classes. Thirteen (27%) respondents indicated that they have between 20 and 29 isiZulu-speaking learners in their classes. Ten (21%) educators maintained that they have between 40 to 49 isiZulu-speaking learners in their classes. A minority of four (8%) subjects stated that they have between 10 and 19 isiZulu-speaking learners in their classes. Only 1 (2%) educator selected the option “50 or more”, and no educators (0%) selected the option “one to nine”.





**Figure 5.24** Figure illustrating percentages according to descriptions of the school library

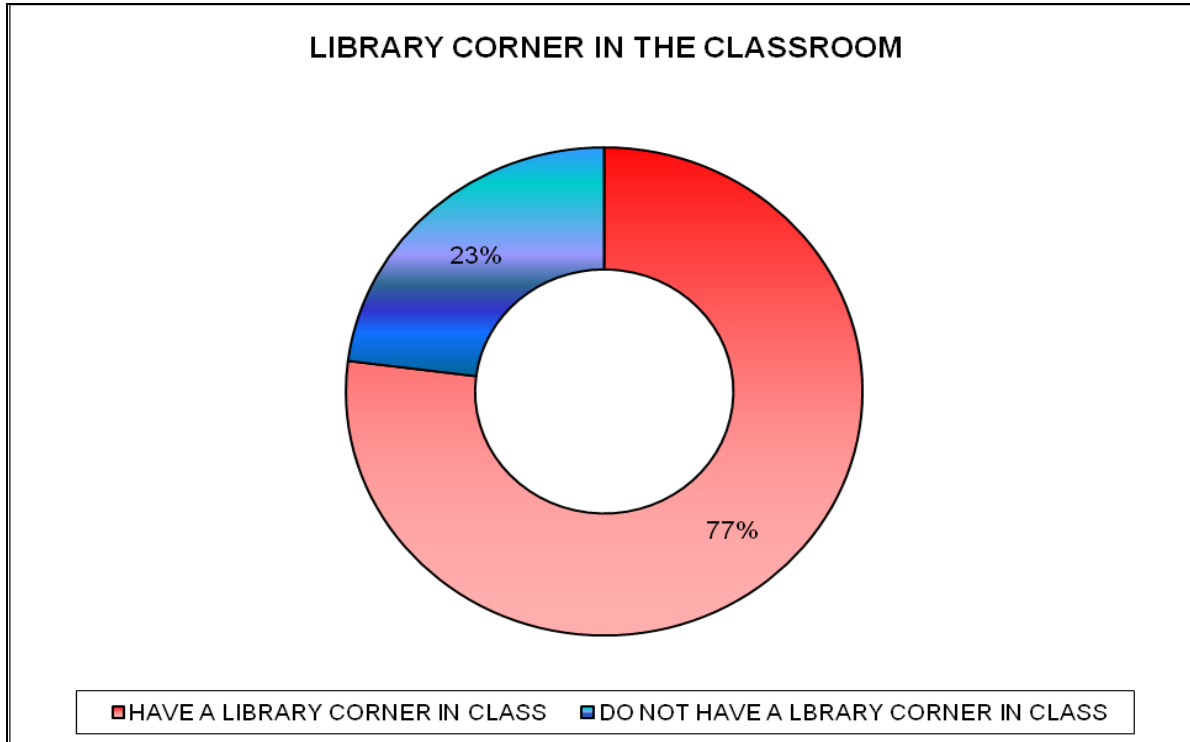
Krashen (2004:5) emphasises that better school libraries result in more reading; the more hours a library is open, the more reading is done by learners; more planned trips to the library with the teacher and class results in more reading; the physical environment of the library contributes to how much reading is done; the size of the school library is an accurate predictor of reading test scores; the more money invested in a school library, the higher the test scores; the higher the quality of the library staff, the better the achievement of learners; and book displays result in more reading. Yet the Ghanaian EGRA study revealed that less than a third (31%) of the schools had a library (Kochetkova & Brombacher 2013:10) and this has contributed to the poor reading results. The study showed that by the end of Grade 2, the majority of the public school learners could not yet read with comprehension – neither in a Ghanaian language nor in English.

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Trudell et al. (2012:17) highlight that the Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa's (PRAESA) research in African schools revealed that where there was a library, it was either not used or else it was used for another purpose, such as a storeroom. Books, which were mainly in English, were not displayed well, nor were they always appropriate. Furthermore, no one took responsibility for the life of the library in the school.

In School A it was observed that the library was very frequently used by one intermediate phase educator to teach her lessons that are not related to library resource education or English. Learners at the school were not allowed to visit the library to borrow books. Since library resource education is not in the CAPS curriculum it was commonly found that learners were not taken to the library. The library was merely used to store books and was used as a classroom by one educator.

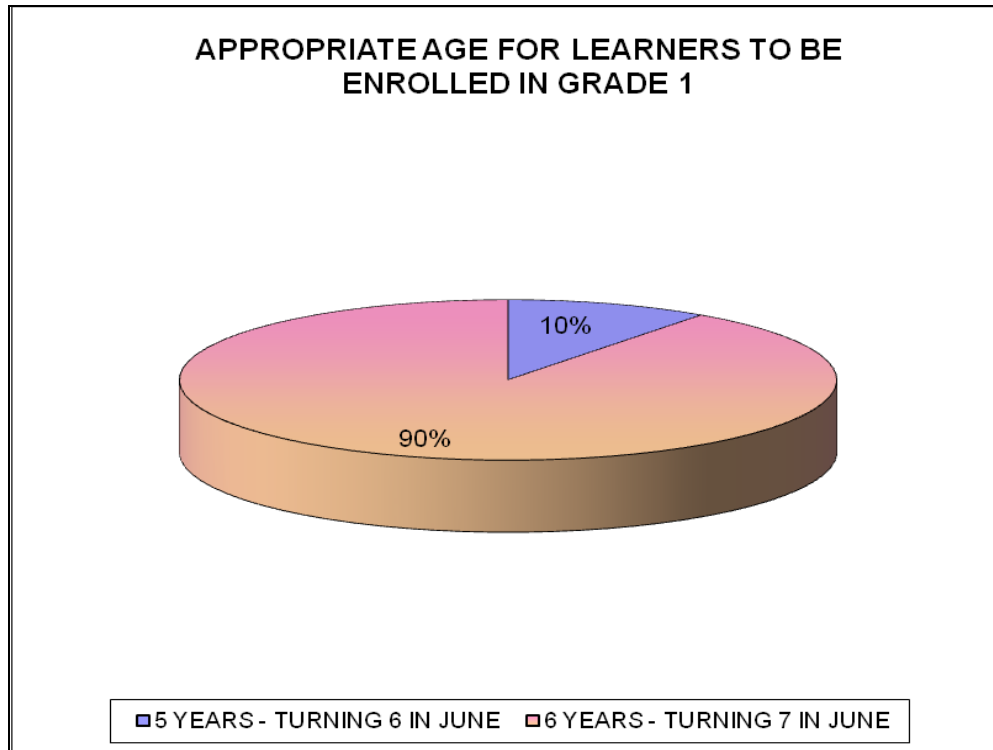
When educators, in this study, were asked to select the option that best describes their school libraries, the majority of the educators, 28 (59%), affirmed that their school libraries are understocked. Fifteen (31%) educators felt that their school libraries are well-stocked; and five (10%) subjects indicated that they do not have a library at their schools. Educator 1 who was interviewed mentioned that *we have been trying to establish a library for some time now but our biggest problem is space. We even tried to use one of the Wendy houses as a library ... moisture was getting in and all sorts of creepy crawlies were getting in and attacking and damaging the books. It was not very conducive to run a library from a Wendy house.*



**Figure 5.25** Figure illustrating percentage of educators who have and do not have library corners in their classrooms

Having a library corner in the classroom will most definitely encourage free voluntary reading. Lee and Krashen (2002:539) stress that free reading is an excellent predictor of writing competence. Of the 48 educators in this study, 37 (77%) of them reported that they have library corners in their classrooms; and 11 (23%) indicated that they do not have library corners in their classrooms.

Whilst the cost of providing each school with a library could be prohibitive, provision of adequate numbers of books for classroom library corners is a reasonable realisable goal. Library corners could provide a minimum resource at the disposal of every learner, especially because a significant number of learners do come from homes where age-appropriate books are not available.



**Figure 5.26** Figure illustrating percentages according to appropriate age for learners to be enrolled in Grade 1

Piper (2010:31) mentions age as a predictive factor that is of policy relevance and is related to learners' reading achievements. She emphasises that children who are underage for their grade perform worse than children who are of age or slightly older. The above figure illuminates the fact that a significant number of educators, 43 (90%), are of the opinion that the appropriate age for learners to be enrolled in Grade 1 is six years – turning seven by June. A marginal number of subjects, 5 (10%), felt that the appropriate age for learners to be enrolled in Grade 1 is five years – turning six by June.

5.2.2.4 Scaled responses: Educators' views regarding isiZulu-speaking learners' emotional behaviour when reading and writing in English.

This section provides illustrations and discussion on the educators' views regarding isiZulu-speaking learners' emotional behaviour when reading and writing in English using frequencies and percentages. The descriptive statistics of the results are presented as follows:

For the purpose of this study, the following responses were combined. Strongly disagree and disagree combined to form disagree; unsure remained a category on its own; and agree and strongly agree combined to form agree. This reduction in categories assisted in the analysis and interpretation of the data.

**Table 5.28**

**Educators' views: Most of the isiZulu-speaking learners in class are anxious when asked to read in English**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	23	47,9
<b>Unsure</b>	2	4,2
<b>Agree</b>	23	47,9
<b>Total</b>	48	100

A total of 23 (47,9%) educators believed that most of the isiZulu-speaking learners in their classes are anxious when asked to read in English. An equivalent number of subjects, 23 (47,9%), disagreed. Only 2 (4,2%) educators were unsure. It should be noted that the majority of the parents (67%) in this study felt that their children are anxious when asked to read in English (See table 5.4). Thus, a greater percentage of parents than educators viewed reading as anxiety provoking among isiZulu-speaking learners.

Reading in an L2 is anxiety provoking for some learners (See 3.3.2.1). Since learners in the foundation phase are expected to read aloud individually, in pairs or in groups, educators are able to easily identify the anxious L2 readers. Unfamiliar scripts and unfamiliar cultural material may result in learners becoming anxious about reading (See 3.3.1). This anxiety as well as their increased perceptions of the difficulty of reading in their L2 contributes to their poor reading performance (See 3.3.1).

**Table 5.29**

**Educators' views: Most of the isiZulu-speaking learners in class are anxious when asked to write in English**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	23	47,9
<b>Unsure</b>	2	4,2
<b>Agree</b>	23	47,9
<b>Total</b>	48	100

The results of the above table commensurate the findings reflected in table 5.28; with the same number of respondents, 23 (47,9%), agreeing and disagreeing with the above statement. Only two (4,2%) educators were irresolute. There appears to be a discrepancy when comparing the educator's and the parents' views. A greater percentage of parents than educators perceived writing as anxiety provoking among isiZulu-speaking learners (See table 5.5).

If we apply Krashen's affective filter hypothesis to this study it can be inferred that debilitating anxiety among isiZulu-speaking learners can raise the affective filter and form a "mental block" that could affect the learner's ability to read fluently, to write freely, and could also prevent comprehensible input from being used for language acquisition (See 2.4.2.5). On the other hand, those isiZulu-speaking learners who portray low levels of anxiety will be better equipped for success in their reading and writing.

**Table 5.30**

**Educators' views: Most of the isiZulu-speaking learners in class are excited when asked to read in English**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	16	33,3
<b>Unsure</b>	4	8,3
<b>Agree</b>	28	58,3
<b>Total</b>	48	100

According to table 5.30, a large number of educators, 28 (58,3), concurred with the above statement. Sixteen (33,3%) subjects disagreed and 4 (8,3%) were uncertain. In this regard, the educators' views buttress the parents' perceptions; since majority of the parents, 105 (73%), and educators viewed reading as an exciting task for isiZulu-speaking learners (See table 5.6).

**Table 5.31**

**Educators' views: Most of the isiZulu-speaking learners in class are excited when asked to write in English**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	18	37,5
<b>Unsure</b>	5	10,4
<b>Agree</b>	25	52,1
<b>Total</b>	48	100

The above findings reflect that 25 (52,1) educators felt that most of the isiZulu-speaking learners in their classes are excited when asked to write in English. Eighteen (37,5%) educators disagreed and five (10,4%) were uncertain. The results of table 5.31 are incompatible with the results attained from table 5.7. Most of the parents (58%) felt that their children are not excited

about writing in English; while most of the educators affirmed that the majority of the isiZulu-speaking learners in their classes are excited about writing in English.

5.2.2.5 Scaled responses: Educators' views regarding isiZulu-speaking learners' performance in English.

This section provides illustrations and a discussion on the educators' views regarding isiZulu-speaking learners' performance in English using frequencies and percentages. The descriptive statistics of the results are presented as follows:

For the purpose of this study, the following responses were combined. Very poor and poor combined to form poor; fair remained a category on its own; and good and excellent combined to form good. This reduction in categories assisted in the analysis and interpretation of the data.

**Table 5.32**

**Educators' ratings of isiZulu-speaking learners' ability to speak English fluently**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Poor</b>	10	20,8
<b>Fair</b>	20	41,7
<b>Good</b>	18	37,5
<b>Total</b>	48	100

Most of the respondents, 20 (41,7%), rated the ability of isiZulu-speaking learners to speak English fluently as fair. Eighteen (37,5%) educators stated that the ability of these learners is good. A total of 10 (20,8%) educators rated their ability as poor.

There appears to be a disparity when we compare the parents' views with the educators' views with regard to speaking in English. A greater percentage of parents in this study (72%) than educators (37,5%) felt that the learners' ability to speak English fluently is good (See table 5.23). This could possibly be that these parents do not focus too much on the grammatical structures when speaking. They could be focusing more on speaking in order to convey a message; which



these children may be able to effectively execute. On the other hand, educators could probably be focusing more on language structure.

**Table 5.33**

**Educators' ratings of isiZulu-speaking learners' ability to understand oral English**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Poor</b>	7	14,6
<b>Fair</b>	24	50
<b>Good</b>	17	35,4
<b>Total</b>	48	100

Half of the educators, 24 (50%), perceived the ability of isiZulu-speaking learners to understand oral English as fair. Seventeen (35,4%) educators rated the learners' ability as good. The other 7 (14,6%) subjects ratings were "poor".

There is also a discrepancy when a comparison is made with the parents' views. Whereas 74,1% of the parents felt that the learners' ability to understand oral English is good, 35,4% of educators views were comparable (See table 5.24).

The understanding of oral English can be aptly linked to Krashen's Comprehensible Input (See 2.4.2.4). In order to acquire a L2, the learner must be able to comprehend what is said to him or her. Thus, from the above views it can be inferred that isiZulu-speaking learners do receive sufficient comprehensible input from their parents and educators, thus making understanding easier. This implies that learners do receive input that is appropriate to their age and language level.

**Table 5.34****Educators' ratings of isiZulu-speaking learners' ability to read simple English words**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Poor</b>	7	14,6
<b>Fair</b>	18	37,5
<b>Good</b>	23	47,9
<b>Total</b>	48	100

Data elicited from the above table reveal that most, 23 (47,9%), of the educators rated the ability of isiZulu-speaking learners to read simple English words as good. Eighteen (37,5%) educators viewed the learners' ability as fair and seven (14,6%) educators indicated "poor".

By the third term even Grade 1 learners should be able to read simple English words. These words are the basic breakthrough words that educators use to initially teach reading in Grade 1. Grade 1 learners should also be able to use their phonic skills to break up simple words. Therefore, it is not surprising that most of the educators' ratings in this regard are "good".

**Table 5.35****Educators' ratings of isiZulu-speaking learners' ability to read English texts fluently**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Poor</b>	18	37,5
<b>Fair</b>	18	37,5
<b>Good</b>	12	25
<b>Total</b>	48	100

An equivalent number of subjects, 18 (37,5%), rated the ability of isiZulu-speaking learners to read English texts fluently as poor and fair. The other 12 (25%) subjects rated the learners' ability as good.

Here as well, there are inconsistencies when we compare the parents' views with the educators' views. A much greater percentage of parents (62,9%) than educators (25%) rated the learners' ability to read English texts fluently as "good" (See table 5.25). Whereas 37,5% of educators rated the learners' ability as poor, only 9,8% of parents rated the learners' ability as poor. It is possible that the parents and educators view the concept of "reading fluently" differently.

**Table 5.36**

**Educators' ratings of isiZulu-speaking learners' ability to read and comprehend English texts**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Poor</b>	18	37,5
<b>Fair</b>	26	54,2
<b>Good</b>	4	8,3
<b>Total</b>	48	100

The levels of reading comprehension among early grade learners are exasperating. The Ethiopian EGRA study revealed that the low early reading achievement of Grade 2 and Grade 3 learners is not only evident in the child's ability to read words fluently, but is even more stark in the percentage of children who were unable to correctly answer a single question in the reading comprehension test (Piper 2010:20). In the Sidama region of Ethiopia, nearly 75% of the children were unable to correctly answer one comprehension question. In the Tigrinya, Amhara, and Oromiya regions approximately 50% of the children could not correctly answer one comprehension question.

If we consider the Ghanaian EGRA study, for each of the languages, more than half of the learners assessed could not read a single word of the story; and when it came to reading comprehension the majority of the language groups [more than 90% of the learners] scored zero

(Kochetkova & Brombacher 2013:13-14). If comprehension is the ultimate goal of reading, then it is imperative to note that such high percentages of children are unable to comprehend simple stories.

More than half of the respondents in this study, 26 (54,2%), stated that isiZulu-speaking learners' ability to read and comprehend English texts is fair. Of the remaining respondents, 18 (37,5%) indicated poor and a minority of 4 (8,3%) indicated good.

Vast differences exist between the parents' views and the educators' views. Whereas majority of the parents (62,2%) felt that the learners' ability to read and comprehend English texts as good, only 8,3% of the educators had a similar view (See table 5.26).

However, if learners are rated poorly in reading it is inevitable that they will certainly experience difficulties understanding written English. This points to the "butterfly effect" proposed by the proponents of the DST approach (See 2.4.4).

**Table 5.37**

**Educators' ratings of isiZulu-speaking learners' ability to write simple English words**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Poor</b>	12	25
<b>Fair</b>	17	35,4
<b>Good</b>	19	39,6
<b>Total</b>	48	100

When educators were asked to rate the ability of isiZulu-speaking learners to write simple English words; 19 (39,6%) stated good. Seventeen (35,4%) subjects indicated fair, and 12 (25%) viewed the learners' ability as poor.

As early as Grade 1 learners are required to use their phonic skills to build simple words. This is a requirement as stated in the CAPS document. Thus, it is obvious that learners are taught how to build simple words in Grade 1. This elucidates the findings in table 5.37. The learners who

cannot write simple English words are almost certainly those who cannot recognise the single sounds. Therefore they cannot blend letters to form words.

**Table 5.38**

**Educators' ratings of isiZulu-speaking learners' ability to write simple sentences in English**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Poor</b>	16	33,3
<b>Fair</b>	16	33,3
<b>Good</b>	16	33,3
<b>Total</b>	48	100

Table 5.38 reveals that an equal number of respondents, 16 (33,3%) for each of the three categories.

This study was conducted in the third term (September and October). At this time in the year even Grade 1 learners should be able to construct simple sentences. They should be able to begin a sentence with a capital letter and end with a full stop. It is possible that the learners who cannot construct simple sentences are those who cannot read and use their phonic skills to build simple words. The Grade 2 and Grade 3 learners should be able to correctly construct simple sentences.

**Table 5.39**

**Educators' ratings of isiZulu-speaking learners' ability to write simple stories in English**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Poor</b>	22	45,8
<b>Fair</b>	19	39,6
<b>Good</b>	7	14,6
<b>Total</b>	48	100

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The complexity of writing can seem overwhelming because it draws upon a mix of knowledge, skills, and attitudes all at once: knowledge of the purpose of writing and the different ways writing can be represented, a wide range of skills, and a willingness and interest in writing. Since writing is the most complex form of communication learners were rated poorly in this regard.

When educators were asked to rate the ability of isiZulu-speaking learners to write simple stories in English, a large number of educators, 22 (45,8%), indicated poor. Nineteen (39,6%) educators asserted that the learners' ability is fair, and a small number of seven (14,6%), stated good.

There is a huge discrepancy when a comparison is made with the parents' views. While a minority of 14,6% of the educators rated the learners' ability to write simple stories in English as good; a majority of 60,8% of parents viewed the learners' ability as good (See table 5.27). Whereas a majority of 45,8% of the educators rated the learners' ability to write simple stories in English as poor; a minority of 7,7% of the parents viewed the learners' ability as poor.

As explained earlier the educators focus more on language structure and grammatical rules when writing. It is possible that the parents only focus on conveying a message in writing; irrespective of spelling errors, grammatical errors and errors in language structure. It is also imperative that we take cognisance of the fact that cognitive processes such as writing, work less effectively through the L2. This is supported by a profusion of research studies (See 2.3.3).

A crucial factor to consider is the "butterfly effect" (See 2.4.4). Difficulties experienced in reading in English could be seen to be butterflying their way throughout the process of writing in English. The implication here is that educators should focus on developing learner's reading skills and ultimately this will lead to improved writing skills. Reading and writing can be viewed as "connected growers" which support each other's growth (See 2.4.4). With increasing reading activities, various styles of writing are learnt, and words are understood in context and interpreted more easily; thus stimulating the development of writing skills.

Overall, the cognitive factors that impact on the ESL learner in the English medium school can be related to Universal Grammar (UG). Within the framework of UG and in the context of this study, it can be deduced that the innate capacity for L1 language acquisition may or may not be available for L2. Also, if isiZulu learners are enrolled in English medium schools after the

critical period for L2 acquisition has elapsed; they will most definitely experience language barriers and this will be most evident in the learner's reading and writing (See 3.3.7).

#### 5.2.2.6 Scaled responses: Educators' views regarding CAPS English home language

This section provides illustrations and discussion on the educators' views regarding CAPS English home language using frequencies and percentages. The descriptive statistics of the results are presented as follows:

For the purpose of this study, the following responses were combined. Strongly disagree and disagree combined to form disagree; unsure remained a category on its own; and agree and strongly agree combined to form agree. This reduction in categories assisted in the analysis and interpretation of the data.

**Table 5.40**

**CAPS is too challenging for most isiZulu-speaking learners.**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	9	18,8
<b>Unsure</b>	2	4,2
<b>Agree</b>	37	77,1
<b>Total</b>	48	100

A significant number of educators, 37 (77,1%), acknowledged that CAPS is too challenging for most isiZulu-speaking learners. Only 9 (18,8%) subjects disagreed and 2 (4,2%) were unsure.

These findings were expected considering the fact that isiZulu-speaking learners at the five schools are learning English home language and not English first additional language.

**Table 5.41**

**CAPS consists of too many reading assessments.**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	8	16,7
<b>Unsure</b>	5	10,4
<b>Agree</b>	35	72,9
<b>Total</b>	48	100

Thirty five (72,9%) educators agreed that CAPS consists of too many reading assessments. Of the remaining respondents, 8 (16,7%) stated their disagreement and 5 (10,4%) were tentative.

The CAPS document stipulates that each learner must be assessed for shared reading, independent reading, and group reading. This is time consuming for educators who have to assess 40 learners in each of these aspects.

**Table 5.42**

**Too much of emphasis is placed on assessments.**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	5	10,4
<b>Unsure</b>	0	0
<b>Agree</b>	43	89,6
<b>Total</b>	48	100

A considerable number of respondents, 43 (89,6%), affirmed that too much emphasis is placed on assessments. The other 5 (10,4%) subjects confirmed their disagreement and no (0%) educators selected the option “unsure”.



The English home language CAPS document stipulates the number of assessments and the areas or the content which must be tested for each term. Consequently, educators must prepare the learners for the large number of assessments. As a result much emphasis is placed on assessments.

**Table 5.43**

**The teaching of phonics is well-structured in the CAPS document.**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	30	62,5
<b>Unsure</b>	5	10,4
<b>Agree</b>	13	27,1
<b>Total</b>	48	100

Phonics is an important aspect when teaching English. If phonics are not taught appropriately learners may perhaps experience difficulties reading and writing in English. Therefore it is imperative that phonics be well-structured.

According to table 5.43, 30 (62,5%) educators announced their disagreement with the above statement. Thirteen (27,1%) subjects attested that the teaching of phonics is well-structured in the CAPS document and 5 (10,4%) educators maintained a neutral view.

**Table 5.44**

**CAPS caters for the individual learner's reading needs.**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	24	50
<b>Unsure</b>	9	18,8
<b>Agree</b>	15	31,3
<b>Total</b>	48	100

Half the number of educators, 24 (50%), believed that CAPS does not cater for the individual learner's reading needs. Fifteen (31,3%) subjects were of the opinion that CAPS caters for the individual learner's reading needs. Quite a few, 9 (18,8%), educators indicated that they were doubtful.

These findings could be related to the fact that most of the educators felt that too much emphasis is placed on assessments (See table 5.42).

**Table 5.45**

**CAPS caters for the individual learner's writing needs.**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	22	45,8
<b>Unsure</b>	12	25
<b>Agree</b>	14	29,2
<b>Total</b>	48	100

When respondents were asked whether CAPS caters for the individual learner's writing needs, 22 (45,8%) educators announced their disagreement; while 14 (29,2%) agreed and 12 (25%) were undecided. These findings are similar to the findings in table 5.44.

**Table 5.46**

**When implementing CAPS more time is spent on assessing than on constructive teaching.**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	4	8,3
<b>Unsure</b>	0	0
<b>Agree</b>	44	91,7
<b>Total</b>	48	100

An overwhelming majority of respondents, 44 (91,7%), asserted that when implementing CAPS more time is spent on assessing than on constructive teaching. A minority of four (8,3%) educators disagreed and no (0%) educators indicated “unsure”.

As a result of the large number of assessments that have to be completed each term, educators tend to focus more on assessing the learners than on authentic teaching.

5.2.2.7 Scaled responses: General factors – Educators views on additional factors that could affect isiZulu-speaking learners’ reading and writing skills.

This section provides illustrations and discussion on the educators’ views on a broad-spectrum of factors that could affect isiZulu-speaking learners’ reading and writing skills, using frequencies and percentages. The descriptive statistics of the results are presented as follows:

For the purpose of this study, the responses were combined.

**Table 5.47**

**My limited knowledge of approaches to teaching second language learners contributes to the difficulties I am experiencing in teaching reading and writing to isiZulu-speaking learners.**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	22	45,8
<b>Unsure</b>	5	10,4
<b>Agree</b>	21	43,8
<b>Total</b>	48	100

The results presented in table 5.47 indicate that 22 (45,8%) educators disagreed with the above statement; 21 (43,8%) educators agreed; and only five (10,45) educators were uncertain.

Figure 5.20 reflects that the majority of the educators (75%) use the phonic approach to teach reading. It is possible that some of the educators in this study are familiar with only one approach, which is the phonic approach.

**Table 5.48**

**My large class negatively affects the provision of extra individual lessons to isiZulu-speaking learners who experience reading and writing difficulties.**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	1	2,1
<b>Unsure</b>	0	0
<b>Agree</b>	47	97,9
<b>Total</b>	48	100

The above table denotes that almost all the subjects, 47 (97,9%), agreed that their large classes negatively affect the provision of extra individual lessons to isiZulu-speaking learners who experience reading and writing difficulties. Only 1 (2,1%) educator disagreed and no (0%) educators stated “unsure”.

Figure 5.23 indicates that all the educators have between 30 to 49 learners in their classes. Therefore, as expected, it would be a demanding task for educators to provide extra individual lessons to isiZulu-speaking learners who experience reading and writing difficulties. The problem is exacerbated especially when these learners retrogress. This can be foreseen since these learners are learning through the medium of English.

**Table 5.49**

**Due to the large learner/educator ratio I experience frustration when teaching reading and writing.**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	0	0
<b>Unsure</b>	2	4,2
<b>Agree</b>	46	95,8
<b>Total</b>	48	100

Table 5.49 reflects that a significant number of respondents, 46 (95,8%), believed that due to the large learner/educator ratio they experience frustration when teaching reading and writing. Only two (4,2%) educators were indecisive and no (0%) educators disagreed with the above statement.

These findings are analogous with the findings in table 5.48. It appears that the foremost contributing factor to the teaching of reading and writing in the foundation phase is the learner/educator ratio at schools.

**Table 5.50**

**The excessive amount of reading and writing assessments is frustrating.**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	4	8,3
<b>Unsure</b>	4	8,3
<b>Agree</b>	40	83,3
<b>Total</b>	48	100

The data gleaned from table 5.50 reveals that a considerable number of educators, 40 (83,3%), declared that the excessive number of reading and writing assessments is frustrating. An equal number of educators, 4 (8,3%), disagreed and were indecisive.

These findings were predictable. A typical example is in Grade 1, one English assessment consists of seven tasks. These tasks comprise of listening and speaking, shared reading, independent reading, group reading, phonic, writing, and handwriting. Of the seven tasks, six of them include reading and writing. Additionally, in the second, third and fourth terms there are two English assessments to complete in each term. This implies that in the second term a Grade 1 learner will have to complete a total of 14 tasks (two listening and speaking tasks, and 12 reading and writing tasks) for only English. This is an excessively demanding task not only for the young learners but also for the educators.

**Table 5.51**

**Learners who enter Grade 1 at the age of 5 are not emotionally ready for formal schooling.**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	4	8,3
<b>Unsure</b>	1	2,1
<b>Agree</b>	43	89,6
<b>Total</b>	48	100

Data generated from table 5.51 demonstrates that a significant number of respondents, 43 (89,6%), are of the opinion that learners who enter Grade 1 at the age of 5 are not emotionally ready for formal schooling. A few educators, 4 (8,3%), disagreed and only one (2,1%) educator was in doubt.

**Table 5.52**

**IsiZulu-speaking learners who enter Grade 1 at the age of 5 generally experience difficulties reading in English.**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	2	4,2
<b>Unsure</b>	2	4,2
<b>Agree</b>	44	91,7
<b>Total</b>	48	100

The above table illustrates that the majority of the subjects, 44 (91,7%), reported that isiZulu-speaking learners who enter Grade 1 at the age of 5 generally experience difficulties reading in English. A minority of two (4,2%) subjects fell into each of the other two categories.

**Table 5.53**

**IsiZulu-speaking learners who enter Grade 1 at the age of 5 generally experience difficulties writing in English.**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	2	4,2
<b>Unsure</b>	2	4,2
<b>Agree</b>	44	91,7
<b>Total</b>	48	100

The data presented in table 5.53 reveal responses that commensurate the responses in table 5.52. A considerable number of respondents, 44 (91,7%), were of the view that isiZulu-speaking learners who enter Grade 1 at the age of 5 generally experience difficulties writing in English. Two (4,2%) subjects selected each of the other two categories.

The findings of tables 5.51, 5.52, and 5.53 correlate with the results from figure 5.26. According to figure 5.26, 90% of the educators felt that at age five learners are too young to be enrolled in Grade 1. Consequently, according to the findings of the three tables it can be presumed that age of entry to Grade 1 appears to be a crucial factor in determining learners' academic progress.

Cummins emphasises that Basic Interpersonal Conversational Skills (BICS) is the kind of proficiency that the vast majority of native speakers of English have developed when they enter school at age five (See 2.4.3.1). This is typically context embedded and cognitively undemanding. However, with the implementation of CAPS, at Grade 1 level the learners are obligated to use language at cognitively demanding levels. They are required to use language not only for reading and writing but also to acquire information in content areas such as Mathematics and Life Skills. This is a mammoth task for any five year old learner; but for the isiZulu-speaking five year old it is an even more so undertaking.

A typical example is a Grade 1 class in School E which is an English medium school. During the researcher's observation of a reading lesson in a Grade 1 class in School E, the educator (Educator F) informed the researcher that the learners in her class could not speak in English.

Accordingly, these learners had not achieved BICS in English but they were required to read and write in English. Most of these learners were five years old when they entered Grade 1. They were not ready for formal schooling; especially in an English medium school. The age of the learners, combined with a multitude of factors could impede the learner's reading and writing achievements.

**Table 5.54**

**IsiZulu-speaking learners should be proficient in their home language before learning a second language.**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	12	25
<b>Unsure</b>	7	14,6
<b>Agree</b>	29	60,4
<b>Total</b>	48	100

Cummins (1981:2) claims that many educators perceive the promotion of heritage languages [home languages] in the school as undermining their efforts to teach children English. He argues that these educators tend to encourage parents to use English as much as possible in the home because they feel that the learning of English will be facilitated if children are gradually weaned away from their L1.

This was also exceedingly evident in the educator interviews. Educators 1, 5 and 8 emphasised that they encouraged their isiZulu-speaking learners and the parents of these learners to speak in English at home. However, there is a compilation of examples and evidence produced by UNESCO and other independent researchers that attest to the resurgence of international interest in promoting home language education (See 2.3).

Although the majority of the educators, 29 (60,4%), felt that isiZulu-speaking learners should be proficient in their home language before learning a second language, 12 (25%) educators disagreed. The other seven (14,6%) educators were diffident. The majority of the educators'



views concur with research findings that reveal the benefits of home language instruction (See 2.3.1).

**Table 5.55**

**The language of learning and teaching at school should be the learners' home language.**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	15	31,3
<b>Unsure</b>	9	18,8
<b>Agree</b>	24	50
<b>Total</b>	48	100

Children come to school proficient in at least one and even several languages used in their immediate community. They have learnt to use these languages for effective communication in mainly informal contexts. Heugh (2006:63) posits that what is expected in the school setting, in most parts of the world, is that learners' language skills and expertise in their home language will be further developed for use in formal academic contexts. This includes, especially, reading and writing [literacy] for creative and cognitively challenging purposes. Children whose home language is different from the school language of instruction learn less (Bhattacharjea et al. 2011:8). Alidou, Boly, Bock-Utne, Diallo, Heugh and Wolff (2006:15) elucidate that when educators teach effectively reading, writing and literacy in the home languages learners can develop adequate literacy skills that they can use in learning the official languages.

The data presented in table 5.55 confirm that half the number of the educators, 24 (50%), in this study avowed that the language of learning and teaching at school should be the learners' home language. Fifteen, (31,3%), respondents disagreed; while nine, (18,8%), were tentative.

According to Heugh (2006:65) if children have to jump from L1 literacy to L2 medium of instruction, even if they have had a year or two of early literacy exposure to rudimentary L2 narratives, the cognitive distance is simply too far for the majority of learners. She reiterates that most will "sink", and few will be able to "swim" under such circumstances. Unfortunately, this is exactly what is happening in several South African schools.

Heugh (2006:69) contends that a close analysis of data from the available African research and longitudinal and other studies from other parts of the world reveal a consistent pattern of achievement that has emerged from learners who have undergone a range of language education models. The most preeminent language education model is the additive bilingual model (See 2.3.2). A case in point, Heugh (2006:82) argues, is that Afrikaans-speaking learners in South Africa, who have enjoyed home language education to the end of schooling and even through university education, have consistently scored higher academic results than any other learners in the country.

The ASER study in rural India revealed that children whose home language differs from the language of instruction performed substantially worse in baseline and endline assessments than children whose home language matched the school's language of instruction (Bhattacharjea, Wadhwa & Banerji 2011:63).

Due to the proliferation of research studies that documented the significance of home language education (See 2.3.1); it can be assumed that isiZulu-speaking learners will benefit from education in their home language. Unfortunately isiZulu-speaking learners in English medium schools will have to gain more language proficiency (See 2.4.3) each year than their English-speaking peers in order to catch up and close the gap. Thus, isiZulu-speaking learners will have to learn English through socially mediated activities (See 2.4.5). This means that these learners will require access to or participation in the learning community, and an immense amount of mediation by experts and peers (See 2.4.5).

**Table 5.56**

**An isiZulu-speaking learner may have developed the informal language of conversation but may struggle to read and write in English.**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	3	6,3
<b>Unsure</b>	1	2,1
<b>Agree</b>	44	91,7
<b>Total</b>	48	100

An overwhelming majority of the respondents, 44 (91,7%), affirmed that an isiZulu-speaking learner may have developed the informal language of conversation but may struggle to read and write in English. Only three (6,3%) educators disagreed and one (2,1%) educator was hesitant.

The educators' views correspond with research studies by Cummins that constantly demonstrate that although BICS is the foundation from which CALP develops the attainment of BICS does not automatically guarantee the achievement of CALP skills (See 2.4.3).

**Table 5.57**

**Learners' individual attributes (such as motivation, attitudes, confidence and anxiety) play a role in second language acquisition.**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	0	0
<b>Unsure</b>	0	0
<b>Agree</b>	48	100
<b>Total</b>	48	100

The patterns of bilingualism which children develop are very closely linked to their attitudes towards their two languages and also towards the two cultural groups that speak these languages (Cummins 1981:4). The entire sample, 48 (100%), in this study acknowledged that learners' attributes play a role in second language acquisition. No (0%) educators disagreed or were in doubt.

Motivation, attitudes, confidence, and anxiety are some of the critical psychological factors that could determine the learners' reading and writing achievements. The findings of this study are consistent with Krashen's affective filter hypothesis which embodies his view that a number of "affective variables" play a facilitative role in SLA (See 2.4.2.5) and several other studies conducted with ESL learners in many parts of the world (See 3.3.2).

**Table 5.58**

**I tend to correct every mistake an isiZulu-speaking learner makes while reading in English.**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	13	27,1
<b>Unsure</b>	2	4,2
<b>Agree</b>	33	68,8
<b>Total</b>	48	100

Cummins (1981:35) asserts that if educators are constantly correcting learners' utterances, very little real communication will take place in the classroom, and consequently, very little development of language skills will occur. Thirty three (68,8%) respondents averred that they tend to correct every mistake an isiZulu-speaking learner makes when reading in English. There were 13 (27,1%) educators who disagreed; and only two were hesitant.

**Table 5.59**

**I tend to correct every mistake an isiZulu-speaking learner makes while writing in English.**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	13	27,1
<b>Unsure</b>	2	4,2
<b>Agree</b>	33	68,8
<b>Total</b>	48	100

The findings reflected in table 5.58 commensurate the data revealed in the above table. Thirty three (68,8%) subjects maintained that they tend to correct every mistake an isiZulu-speaking learner makes while writing in English. Of the remaining 15 educators, 13 (27,1%) disagreed; and two (4,2%) confirmed their indecision.

Although it is important for educators to correct learners' mistakes when writing; constant correction of every mistake can lead to learners' low self-confidence and increased levels of anxiety. Learners may perhaps feel that their writing is not good enough or that every attempt at writing is a futile endeavor. Thus educators should be extremely cautious when correcting learners' reading and writing mistakes.

The quantitative component consisted of an analysis of the parent and educator questionnaires. In an attempt to compensate for the shortcomings of the educator questionnaire; interviews were conducted with educators from the five schools. Moreover, classroom observations were conducted during reading and writing lessons.

### **5.3 QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

This section presents the findings of observations and interviews conducted with the foundation phase educators at the five schools. The findings from the interviews will be discussed prior to the discussion on the classroom observations.

### 5.3.1 Findings from the interviews

Firstly, the participants' characteristics or biographical data will be discussed. Subsequently, as reflected in Chapter 4 (See 4.3.2.4) and the interview schedule five dominant emerging themes that were identified, will be discussed. These prevailing themes are:

- ❖ Cultural factors
- ❖ Psychological and affective factors
- ❖ Social factors
- ❖ Cognitive factors
- ❖ Unique barriers

In order to protect the schools' and participants' identities, pseudonyms were used.

#### 5.3.1.1 Biographical data

The participants were 13 foundation phase educators (one male and twelve females) from the five English medium primary schools in the Port Shepstone region. Demographic information is provided for a description of the participants' in terms of school, gender, grade currently teaching, years of teaching experience, training to teach ESL learners, and ability to speak isiZulu.

Table 5.60 reflects a summary of the biographical details of the educator participants:

<b>Table 5.60: Biographical details of the educator participants</b>						
Educator participants	School	Gender	Grade	Years of teaching experience	Training to teach ESL learners	Ability to speak IsiZulu
Educator 1	School E	Male	3	20	No	Fair
Educator 2	School E	Female	2	20	Yes	Excellent
Educator 3	School E	Female	1	8	No	Fair
Educator 4	School C	Female	3	17	Yes	Excellent
Educator 5	School C	Female	3	18	Yes	Very poor
Educator 6	School D	Female	3	14	No	Fair
Educator 7	School D	Female	2	30	Yes	Fair
Educator 8	School D	Female	1	35	No	Fair
Educator 9	School B	Female	2	14	No	Very poor
Educator 10	School B	Female	3	15	No	Fair
Educator 11	School A	Female	3	19	Yes	Excellent
Educator 12	School A	Female	2	26	No	Good
Educator 13	School A	Female	1	33	No	Very poor

In the five schools that were researched, gender disparity was exceedingly conspicuous. There were only three male foundation phase educators in the five schools. A minimum of two educators per school were interviewed. Three educators from School A, two from School B, two

from School C, three from School D, and three from School E were interviewed. Of the thirteen educators interviewed, three teach Grade 1 learners, four teach Grade 2 learners, and six teach Grade 3 learners.

When the researcher approached educators, it seemed quite evident that the Grade 2 and 3 educators were more willing to be interviewed; whereas some of the Grade 1 educators were somewhat reluctant. For example, one Grade 1 educator from School B initially agreed to be interviewed but later she continuously tried to procrastinate. She consistently found excuses not to be interviewed. She said that she had no time and that she was on ground duty. The researcher had to omit that particular educator. The Grade 1 educators from School C were also not too keen to be interviewed. They mentioned that they were not so experienced to be interviewed. However, the Grade 1 educators from Schools A, D, and E were very cooperative and enthusiastic.

All the educators who were interviewed have several years of teaching experience, ranging from eight to 35 years. The average years of teaching experience among the 13 educators is 20,7. This is a remarkable finding. Only five educators indicated that they had training to teach ESL learners. Three educators stated that their ability to speak isiZulu is excellent. This is probably because their first language is isiZulu. Only one educator asserted that she speaks isiZulu well. The remaining educators felt that their ability was either fair or very poor.

In the foundation phase educators are required to teach any grade from Grade 1 to Grade 3 (See 1.9.7). This implies that generally foundation phase educators are not expected to teach the same grade each year. They alternate grades. Consequently, all the foundation phase educators have numerous years of experience teaching learners from Grade 1 to Grade 3.

#### 5.3.1.2 Cultural factors

##### a) Home language background

A common recurring factor in all the educator interviews with regard to isiZulu-speaking learners' reading and writing achievements in English is home language background. Educators felt that among isiZulu-speaking learners the use of the English language is confined to the classroom. At home these learners speak in isiZulu. The following responses were eminent:



- 
- Educator 1: *Coming from an isiZulu home background they do experience difficulties. A lot of difficulties, if I might say so. Children come to school speaking English at school. Once they go back home its back to Zulu home background and Zulu language.*
  - Educator 2: *It affects them because it is not the language they normally use at home. Sometimes it is very difficult for them to understand English. You cannot teach them like you teach the first language speaking children.*
  - Educator 5: *Majority of the time they don't understand the words.*
  - Educator 6: *It is difficult for them having to cope with a language other than their home language and in our school because English is our home language it's quite advanced. It's on a different level. So they battle ... That continuous switch from English to Zulu is very confusing to them ... and challenging for us.*
  - Educator 11: *It does affect them because at home they are speaking isiZulu. So, in our school English is home language. So, to them they are not used to reading it at home – reading English books.*
  - Educator 12: *Well, because they are only trying to speak English in class, when they go home they are gone back to their mother tongue. It definitely affects the way they are able to read English texts. Putting pen to paper is a bit of a challenge for isiZulu-speaking learners.*

It is clearly evident that the isiZulu-speaking learners are not optimally benefiting from English home language education. A major contributing factor to these learners' reading and writing difficulties is the fact that these learners' reading and writing skills in the home language are not sufficiently developed and in some instances not developed at all. An abundance of research studies has perpetually demonstrated that one of the most critical determinants of the learning achievements of children entering primary school is home language education (See 2.3.1). Thus, it is anticipated that a vast difference in learner achievement will be discernible if learners learn to read and write in their home language (in this instance, isiZulu) prior to learning to read and write in a second language (English). This is due to the fact that a preponderance of research studies indicates that literacy skills do transfer from one language to another (See 2.3). It is also possible that these isiZulu-speaking learners' reading and writing achievements could be potentially promising if they are exposed to an additive form of bilingual education. Bountiful studies have explicated the advantages of bilingual and multilingual education (See 3.2.3).

### b) Phonics and pronunciation of words

Two other significant aspects that were emphasised by several educators are phonics and the pronunciation of words in English. Although it could be presumed that these two aspects should be included in the section on cognitive factors, educators considered phonics and pronunciation of words to be inextricably linked with culture. Educators generally felt that isiZulu-speaking learners experience difficulties sounding and pronouncing English words while reading and this is due to the culture in which they were nurtured. The following responses were noted:

- Educator 3: *Since it's their second language, it's difficult. I mean they don't know the sounds.*
- Educator 5: *They have no idea of what they are reading and they do have a lot of difficulties pronouncing words. They basically don't know English.*
- Educator 9: *They battle with pronunciation. They battle with phonics and they really battle with making sentences.*
- Educator 10: *They have word recognition problems and also the pronunciations of a lot of words are incorrect. That's also because of the way they speak, for example the "bad" and "bed". So, with reading I find pronunciation is a problem.*

### c) Translation from isiZulu to English

As mentioned in Chapter 3 (See 3.3.1), language and culture are interrelated. The culture the child is born into generally determines the language the child will use to communicate. When isiZulu-speaking learners are asked to write in English some educators mentioned that they have a tendency to translate from isiZulu to English. It is important to reiterate that in all the five schools foundation phase learners are learning English as home language. However, at Schools C and E isiZulu is the First Additional Language (FAL) and at Schools A, B, and D Afrikaans is the FAL. Some of the educators' responses were:

- Educator 1: *Their writing is badly affected. If they cannot spell the word properly then they substitute it with an isiZulu word. They are basically thinking in isiZulu. They are translating it to English.*
- Educator 4: *You would see that the child was trying to write in English but wrote it in isiZulu.*

- Educator 6: *Because they speak and they are thinking in Zulu, most of the time they try to translate.*
- Educator 9: *Before they can write they need to translate it in their minds from Zulu to English. So, it takes them a bit of a while to realise what to say and how to write it.*

#### d) The use of pronouns

A rather confusing aspect that is related to grammar is the use of pronouns. This is also due to the isiZulu culture. Educators believed that isiZulu-speaking learners confuse the pronouns “he” and “she”. Some of their responses included the following:

- Educator 5: *They don't differentiate between male and female. So, that is why it's brought into the English language.*
- Educator 6: *They make lots of grammatical errors, especially when it comes to pronouns. They say the boy she ...*
- Educator 10: *They get the pronouns mixed up.*

English second language speakers experience difficulties in aspects of English that do not cause difficulties for English speakers (University of South Africa 1999:185). They also experience difficulties that are similar to those experienced by English speakers. Not only do they make the same mistakes when they read and write in English, they also make more mistakes. English second language learners find pronouns very difficult and they often confuse them (University of South Africa 1999:85). This study confirmed that isiZulu-speaking learners do indeed confuse the pronouns.

#### e) Acculturation

Eight educators maintained that isiZulu-speaking learners were acculturating. This implies that these learners were identifying with both their language and culture and the English language and culture. The following were the responses elicited from some of the educators:

- Educator 2: *They are identifying with both but it's not at the same level.*
- Educator 4: *They are still small and they learn easily. It's easy for them to identify with English as well.*

- Educator 12: *Most of them are also eager to learn English. Although they have a problem, they are eager to learn.*
- Educator 13: *We find that most of our children are speaking English only in the classroom or at school and at home they are still conversing in their home language. When we are on duty we notice that children are speaking in their mother tongue with their peers.*

From the eight educator interviews it can be inferred that isiZulu-speaking learners do achieve social and psychological proximity, thus yielding a high degree of acculturation. A high degree of acculturation will assist in achieving a high level of success in the target language (See 3.3.1) and consequently, success in reading and writing in English. When applying Berry's models (See 3.3.1) of acculturation to this study, it can be deduced that eight educators believed that isiZulu-speaking learners are following the integration model of acculturation. This model appears to be the most suitable acculturation strategy for young learners (See 3.3.1).

However, five educators had contrasting opinions. They believed that isiZulu-speaking learners in their classes were rejecting the target language and identifying with the native culture. Their responses were the following:

- Educator 1: *Yes, still struggling a lot to identify with the English language and culture.*
- Educator 3: *They focus on their own language. They won't ask you a question in English as much as you teach them. They will say it in isiZulu.*
- Educator 6: *I think with them it's like they are forced to learn English and I think it's very confusing. So, I think now they are associating school with English and home with Zulu.*
- Educator 8: *Well, recently I found that the Zulu-speaking children are speaking Zulu more which they didn't do.*
- Educator 11: *All I can say is that here at school during break time they use more isiZulu when they talk with their friends.*

If we apply Berry's acculturation models (See 3.3.1) to this study, we can deduce that five educators felt that isiZulu-speaking learners are practising the acculturation process of separation; that is they are identifying with their language and culture and rejecting the English

language and culture. This model is not appropriate for isiZulu-speaking learners since it will not assist in achieving a high degree of success in reading and writing in English.

In this study, the acculturation processes of assimilation and marginalisation were not found amongst isiZulu-speaking learners.

### 5.3.1.3 Psychological and affective factors

#### a) Reading anxiety

The majority of the educators (nine) interviewed indicated that generally isiZulu-speaking learners do experience reading anxiety. The following are some of the responses that emerged from the interviews conducted with the educators:

- Educator 1: *They automatically freeze, become tense and some of them will just look at it.*
- Educator 2: *They are always shy and anxious. They have the feeling that maybe they may say the wrong thing. It's not easy for them.*
- Educator 9: *At first they are ... They were very anxious because it took them a while to be able to identify phonics and try to break up the words and to read.*
- Educator 10: *But I would say half of them, yes they do experience anxiety.*

Educator 1 from School E expressed the view that isiZulu-speaking learners become anxious when they are confronted with a typed text. Educator 1's response was:

- *The anxiety is a bit too much, especially if it's a typed out text ... I have noticed that the printed text does actually intimidate the learners ... Typed text is too formal ... They feel that it is easier to read something that the teacher has written than to read something that's typed.*

Contrary to the above educator's view, Educator 6 felt that the isiZulu-speaking learners in her class do not experience reading anxiety due to the text being typed. She stated the following:

- *Right from Grade R they use everything that is typed out and they relate to it ... I would say ninety five percent of our worksheets are typed and even our resources are typed.*

However, Educator 6 maintained that the learner's level of anxiety depends on what the learner is reading and when the learner was admitted to the English medium school. Her responses were:

- *If it's something that is not too difficult for them, they want to read ... But I think that if it's an unfamiliar text and it's something new that they haven't seen there is that anxiety.*
- *We have Zulu-speaking learners who have been with us from Grade R so they have picked up quite a bit of language skills by the time they are in Grade 3. So, they don't really get anxious. But if you look at the new learners that come in Grade 3 from Zulu medium schools they get anxious because their grasping of the English language is not too good.*

Educator 3 who is a Grade 1 educator at School E reported that none of the learners in her class could read. This educator had only isiZulu-speaking learners in her class. Her response was:

- *If you read to them they will listen but they can't read on their own ... They like to look at the pictures but not to read.*

However, during the interviews some of the educators pointed out that not all the isiZulu-speaking learners are anxious when they are asked to read. Responses included the following:

- *Educator 5: Not at all. I think that the weaker ones – yes – they do. They get nervous ... They will be all scared in case they mess up.*
- *Educator 7: It's just the last group – some of them. They won't say anything because they are scared of the language.*
- *Educator 10: Not all of them. You do have a handful of learners who do read very well ... There are some isiZulu children who are really doing very well in my class. They make that extra effort to learn.*
- *Educator 13: Some of them do, especially the poor performers. They get a little stressed out when it comes to reading ... But we find the highflyers are quite fine, are quite confident when it comes to reading.*

On the other hand there were educators who believed that isiZulu-speaking learners do not experience reading anxiety. Their responses incorporated the following:

- Educator 4: *Actually, they enjoy reading. Even if the child is struggling they try and they enjoy reading.*
- Educator 7: *They are not anxious. If I tell them to read they are excited.*
- Educator 8: *They are very excited about reading. They are not anxious.*
- Educator 12: *I wouldn't say anxiety because all the learners in my class are eager to come out and read to me or to the class.*

Since the foundation phase learners are asked to read aloud individually, in pairs or in groups, educators are able to easily identify the anxious L2 readers. The views expressed by Educators 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, and 13 concur with the majority (67%) of the parents' views, the findings from the educator questionnaire (47,9%) and several studies that suggest that reading in an L2 is indeed anxiety provoking to some L2 learners (See 3.3.2.1).

#### b) Writing anxiety

Ten of the educators who were interviewed expressed the view that isiZulu-speaking learners in their classes experience writing anxiety. They conveyed the following responses:

- Educator 1: *They definitely do become anxious ... Once you ask them to write down those ideas on a page, they'll be stumped ... It's too much because the language comes in ... Putting their thoughts into words and writing it down is a problem.*
- Educator 5: *The weaker ones – yes – because they are very scared to do story writing. And you can see they are all nervous. They don't know what to do. A lot of times, when they have to put in answers they like looking around and they are unsure ... kind of confused.*
- Educator 6: *They do become anxious because they feel that they are not going to know most of the words ... Because I'm asking them to do it in English they have that anxiety.*
- Educator 12: *They feel a bit perturbed to put pen to paper.*
- Educator 13: *They are a bit worried because they cannot express themselves as well as the English-speaking children.*

The views of the above educators are analogous to majority (61%) of the parents' views, 47,9% of the educator respondents, and numerous studies that confirm the presence of a considerable amount of writing anxiety in L2 learners (See 3.3.2.1).

Two educators asserted that the learners in their classes cannot write sentences. These were their views:

- Educator 2: *Most of them cannot write sentences. They copy from the board ... If they are not going to copy from the board then it's a big problem.*
- Educator 3: *They don't know. They won't be able to write ... We did writing sentences the other day. I had to write it on the board and they just copied it.*

Only two educators stated that the isiZulu-speaking learners in their classes do not experience writing anxiety. Their responses included the following:

- Educator 8: *They don't experience anxiety ... There's no anxiety in children. They don't think that they are doing something wrong. Even if they are doing something wrong they will just go ahead and do it.*
- Educator 9: *Not at the moment. Maybe in Grade 1 they were anxious.*

#### c) Writing test anxiety

Nine educators affirmed that the isiZulu-speaking learners in their classes do not experience writing test anxiety. They articulated the following responses:

- Educator 3: *Although they don't know what's happening they are excited.*
- Educator 4: *They are very excited. Only when you mark it you can see that it's confusing. They were so excited and their results are something else. But they are always happy to write a test.*
- Educator 6: *Not at the age they are because they don't really see the importance of testing.*
- Educator 7: *They are excited ... They want to see if whatever I taught them are the same things in the test.*
- Educator 9: *I don't think that it really clicks with them that they are writing a test. They just think that they are doing a worksheet.*
- Educator 11: *Some are happy – those that are clever. But those that are weak, it's like they don't care.*



- Educator 13: *I suppose they are still so young and the word “test” doesn’t really have an impact and you find most of them regard it as just another lesson.*

According to Krashen’s Affective Filter hypothesis (See 2.4.2.5), the isiZulu-speaking learners in these educators’ classes will be better equipped for success in English literacy; since they appear to portray low levels of anxiety.

Only four of the educators felt that the isiZulu-speaking learners in their classes experience writing test anxiety. They expressed the following views:

- Educator 1: *They are definitely anxious. We’ve actually seen it in some classes where the attendance becomes a problem on that day if they know in advance that they are writing a test. The classic case is last year’s ANA, where we had about 15 children absent in one class ... it was a Grade 1 class.*
- Educator 5: *They do get very anxious ... but I know with story writing ... they get all scared.*

For the isiZulu-speaking learners in the above educators’ classes, a high degree of anxiety can contribute to raise the affective filter. When the filter is “up” it could obstruct or impede the development of English literacy skills; thus contributing to low test scores. However, a small amount of anxiety can be helpful when writing a test (See 3.3.2.1).

#### d) IsiZulu-speaking learners’ attitudes towards reading in English

The majority of the educators (11) who were interviewed reinforced that generally isiZulu-speaking learners have positive attitudes towards reading in English. Their responses comprised of the following:

- Educator 4: *They enjoy reading and even if you want the child to read individually or in pairs or in groups they are always looking forward to reading and they love it. Even the child who is struggling, when given the chance to read he will take the chance with a smile.*
- Educator 5: *The brighter ones look forward to reading. They’ll be pestering me to read.*

- Educator 9: *It's positive at the moment. They are actually enjoying reading in English because now that they are confident, they know the words, and they are able to construct sentences, they are very positive in their reading.*
- Educator 10: *You have those children who love going to the library corner and reading for pleasure, and they really enjoy their reading. Some of them will even bring their books from home that they would like to read. I find that my weaker learners, they do go to the library corner. They pick up books but they look at the pictures only ... but I think that they need to develop that love for reading a little more.*
- Educator 12: *They all want to read. Whether it's their reader or their personal news, they are eager to read.*
- Educator 13: *Most of them enjoy reading in English. Even the slower learners actually look forward to reading because I think with the bright pictures ... they are also eager to learn the language. I find that although they struggle they look forward to reading.*

Only one educator averred that generally isiZulu-speaking learners in his class have negative attitudes towards reading in English. His response was:

- Educator 1: *It's not something that they like or something that they look forward to doing. You have to push them.*

A surprising response from Educator 3 was:

- *We don't ask them to read because they don't know.*

All the educators', with the exception of Educator 1 and Educator 3, opinions reaffirmed the parents' views. The data gleaned from the parent questionnaires and the educator questionnaires suggest that isiZulu-speaking learners are always or most of the time excited about reading in English. This was the view of 73% of the parents and 58,3% of the educators. Accordingly, it can be tentatively inferred that majority of the isiZulu-speaking learners have predominantly positive attitudes towards reading in English. This positive attitude will certainly be transferred to improved reading results.

e) IsiZulu-speaking learners' attitudes towards writing in English

Several educators acknowledged that the brighter isiZulu-speaking learners have more positive attitudes towards writing in English whereas the weaker learners have more negative attitudes towards writing in English. The following were some of their views:

- Educator 4: *Maybe in four groups the first two groups will write easily and then the third group will try and the last group will be struggling.*
- Educator 5: *The brighter ones will be all excited while the weaker ones will be nervous and unsure. Some of them don't even finish what they are doing ... They don't know what to do. Language is a barrier.*
- Educator 8: *Whatever you give them to write, they write. They are eager. But what I noticed is that there are some that don't do any work.*
- Educator 13: *Those who have a good command of the flash and phonic work, we find that they try to finish their work fast and they write good sentences. But the slower ones, they are very hesitant and most often they don't complete their work.*

Only one educator (Educator 9) mentioned that the attitudes of isiZulu-speaking learners in her class towards writing in English are positive.

Educator 10 felt that generally isiZulu-speaking learners in her class displayed negative attitudes towards writing in English. She avowed the following:

- *I find that children are very lazy when it comes to bringing the dictionary and asking to spell a difficult word ... Most of the time when I mark their books you'll find that so many words are incorrectly spelt ... They would rather sit there, spell the word incorrectly and rush through their story and bring their books for marking.*

These findings are somewhat varied. It appears that mostly the brighter learners have positive attitudes and the weaker learners have negative attitudes towards writing in English. On the other hand, the views of majority of and the educator respondents (52,1%) (educator questionnaire) and the parents (58%) point towards positive attitudes since these parents felt that their children are excited about writing in English.

Since attitudes and motivation are interconnected, learning to read and write in an L2 is dependent on the learner's willingness to identify with the culture of the target language and to

incorporate aspects of the target language and culture in his or her behaviour (See 3.3.2.2). This is consistent with the acculturation process of assimilation (See 3.3.1). Consequently, this study reveals that generally isiZulu-speaking learners are motivated to read English texts. The question of whether these learners are integratively or instrumentally motivated requires further investigation. However, the findings from the parent questionnaire demonstrated the dominance of instrumental motivation. A critical point to consider is that many studies have documented that integratively motivated learners tend to be higher achievers than instrumentally motivated ones (See 3.3.2.2).

When we consider writing, it was commonly found that the brighter isiZulu-speaking learners are motivated to write in English whereas the weaker isiZulu-speaking learners are not motivated to write in English.

#### 5.3.1.4 Social factors

##### a) Conversing with peers during lessons

Eight educators agreed that during lessons and group work the majority of the isiZulu-speaking learners converse with their peers in isiZulu. Some of the educators remarked the following:

- Educator 2: *In most cases they speak isiZulu. They can speak and understand English but they start their own language before you can say anything.*
- Educator 6: *When I put all the Zulu medium learners in one group I found that they did end up conversing in Zulu.*
- Educator 8: *Recently they have been communicating in isiZulu.*
- Educator 12: *Many of them speak isiZulu to their peers but I try to discourage and ask them to speak in English.*

The remaining five educators confirmed that the isiZulu-speaking learners in their classes converse in English during lessons and group work. The foremost reason for this is that these educators consistently insist on learners speaking English and discourage learners from speaking isiZulu in class. The following responses were noted:

- Educator 4: *We insist on them talking in English. Most of the time they interact using English.*

- Educator 5: *I don't allow isiZulu in class. Not at all. They have to use English. At no time they use isiZulu. The reason is I need to get them used to English because it's an English medium school.*
- Educator 9: *English, because I encourage them to speak English in the classroom; just to help them to speak better; to write better and to learn.*
- Educator 13: *My learners all speak English in the classroom. I suppose because we stress that English is the medium of teaching they all do speak English.*

According to the educators' views learners prefer conversing in isiZulu with their peers during lessons. The major reason for some learners conversing in English is due to the fact that educators are resolute when it comes to learners communicating with peers during lessons.

b) Conversing with peers during the breaks, on the playgrounds, and during social activities

The majority of the educators (11) reported that isiZulu-speaking learners converse with their peers in isiZulu during the breaks, on the playgrounds, and during social activities. A few of their responses included the following:

- Educator 1: *It's only isiZulu. I can bet my life on that because I go out on ground duty very often.*
- Educator 5: *I'm sure once they are out of that gate there's no way they are speaking in English.*
- Educator 8: *They communicate with one another in isiZulu. I noticed that.*
- Educator 10: *It's completely isiZulu. Unless they are speaking to an English-speaking child it's English.*
- Educator 11: *They speak isiZulu most of the time.*
- Educator 13: *While we are on duty we notice that children tend to speak Zulu to themselves and sometimes when they are conversing with an English-speaking learner they try to speak in Zulu to them as well.*

Only Educators 5 and 7 claimed that isiZulu-speaking learners use a mixture of both, English and isiZulu, when conversing with peers during the breaks, on the playgrounds, and during social activities. Educator 5 also stated that some of the isiZulu-speaking learners have a tendency to mix English and isiZulu in one sentence.

The majority of the educators' responses correspond with the researcher's observations. The researcher's observations about learners' language use were based on their interactions during lessons, during the breaks, and after school while learners were waiting for their transport. While waiting for their transport and while playing on the playgrounds with other isiZulu-speaking learners, learners preferred to converse in isiZulu. Their communication in isiZulu emerged spontaneously and they evidently thought more clearly and articulated themselves more confidently and easily in this language. A small minority of isiZulu-speaking learners spoke to each other in English when they were not in the company of English-speaking learners. However, this rarely occurred.

Since L2 learners often exhibit the problems associated with learning a new language, such as comprehension, and articulation difficulties, limited vocabulary and grammatical errors in writing and speaking (See 3.3.3), it would appear that isiZulu-speaking learners would be more comfortable communicating with their isiZulu-speaking friends in their primary language as opposed to communicating in English.

#### c) Social relationships of IsiZulu-speaking learners

Most of the educators (10) contended that isiZulu-speaking learners have good social relationships with English-speaking learners. Educators reported the following:

- Educator 4: *In my class I've got two Indian learners. The rest are isiZulu. At first I was like, maybe the two will feel isolated. But, if you get into my class you won't even notice because they all get along very easily.*
- Educator 8: *You know they join anybody and everybody. There's no discrimination.*
- Educator 10: *They have good relationships. A lot of them play together on the field. Some of them do have mixed play groups.*
- Educator 12: *Majority of the learners in my class get along very well with each other.*
- Educator 13: *In the classroom I find that there is no real difference between them. They get along very well.*

Educators 6 and 13 felt that when isiZulu-speaking learners are out of the confines of the classroom they will try to make friends with isiZulu-speaking children. These were their views:

- Educator 6: *They'll try to get along in the classroom but once they are out there they go and find people that speak Zulu.*
- Educator 13: *When you look at the rest of the school we find that isiZulu-speaking children tend to stick together.*

Educators 1 and 3 indicated that they have only isiZulu-speaking learners in their classes.

These findings suggest that isiZulu-speaking learners have good social relationships with their English-speaking peers as well as their isiZulu-speaking peers, and are consistent with the researcher's observations. This is significant not only for the isiZulu-speaking learner's social well being but also in terms of cognitive development. Krashen's acquisition-learning distinction is critical in this regard (See 2.4.2.1). From the above findings it can be presumed that isiZulu-speaking learners do develop the acquired system because they encounter numerous opportunities to informally, spontaneously and naturally interact with English-speaking learners.

#### d) Social isolation and alienation

From their experiences, all the educators indicated that they have not had any isiZulu-speaking learners in their classes who felt alienated or isolated. The fact that the majority of the children at the five schools are isiZulu-speaking learners, language should not be the foremost reason for social isolation and alienation. However, studies conducted by Washburn (2008) (See 3.3.3) highlighted the tendency for L2 learners to experience social isolation and alienation. The following are some of the views that were expressed:

- Educator 1: *In fact I feel isolated and alienated because when they start conversing in isiZulu outside, I don't understand.*
- Educator 8: *They are children ... They are very spontaneous and natural with one another. They don't think that they are any different.*

#### 5.3.1.5 Factors related to cognitive development

##### a) The teaching of reading to foundation phase second language learners

All the educators from Schools A, B, C, and D reported that they use the New Way graded readers to teach reading. Furthermore, Educators 5 and 10 mentioned that in addition to the New

Way readers they also use the Gay Way readers. Although the Gay Way readers are outdated these educators still utilise them as supplementary readers. On the other hand, all the educators from School E who were interviewed indicated that they use the New Heights and the Spot On Books.

Twelve out of the thirteen educators who were interviewed affirmed that they use the phonic approach to teach reading. This approach is also advocated in the CAPS document. Some of their responses consisted of the following:

- Educator 1: *We emphasise a lot on phonics. Phonics is absolutely important for these children.*
- Educator 4: *Phonic is the background of every reading and writing lesson.*
- Educator 5: *I stick more to the phonic. For me I find once they know their phonic they learn their words and then they start reading.*
- Educator 9: *We use phonic. Lots of the time we try to break up the words.*
- Educator 10: *Firstly, we tell that they need to identify phonic sounds and if they come across difficult words they need to try and use their phonic to break up the words.*
- Educator 12: *Yes, phonic method and I insist that they break up the words using the phonics to try and recognise the words.*

In addition to using the phonic approach twelve educators stated that they use flashcards to teach reading. All the difficult words are extracted from the graded readers and are written on flashcards. Furthermore, the Grade 1 educators also pointed out that they use the breakthrough words. The breakthrough words are the most basic and common words, for example mum, dad, brother, sister, house, and school. These words are written on flashcards. The participants' responses were the following:

- Educator 9: *I give them a set of words to learn before I do reading ... I use flashcards, lots of flashcards.*
- Educator 10: *We also give them the wordlists from the reader and we drill the words. They need to do the breakthrough and the flashcards*
- Educator 12: *Initially in Grade 1, I start with the ancient breakthrough method where they use flashcards to learn the common used words.*



- Educator 13: *We use the breakthrough which is very effective ... and then we have a set of reading words for each reader which we give the children to take home in their files and which we flash to them as well.*

Only Educator 3 uses a dissimilar approach to teach reading. She stated that the learners in her class cannot read individually. She shared the following:

- *I read the whole story. They will listen. Then they will follow as I read. As I read the word they will have to read. They point to each word as they read. They read together after me.*

It is clearly evident that all the educators with the exception of one use the phonic approach combined with the breakthrough (which is frequently used in Grade 1) and the flashcards which include all the difficult words from the graded readers.

According to seven educators, isiZulu-speaking learners are not coping with the several types of reading assessments that are required. Their responses were:

- Educator 1: *They are really, really not coping. They are struggling. I tried to make it easier for them. When I'm doing an assessment for reading I even go to the extent of sending the text home and tell them to practise.*
- Educator 2: *They are not coping because reading you know, they don't take it like, you know seriously – like something that they look forward to. We have to push them. You have to motivate them.*
- Educator 10: *Not so much with independent reading. Group reading is okay. The shared reading is okay but it's still quite a bit.*
- Educator 11: *They try but when it comes to independent reading those that are weak they seem to have some difficulty.*
- Educator 12: *Personally, I feel that those are too many methods to assess a learner. When it comes to assessment I think just independent and group are more than enough. Although we have to assess those four ways, learners tend to get very tired with those numbers of assessments.*
- Educator 13: *When its shared reading and group reading we find that it's mostly the English-speaking learners whose voices can be heard. The rest of them basically just*

*look at the page and they point with their fingers. I think the reading basically is too much. There are too many types of reading. From my experience I find we should just be able to cope with the independent reading. I think that is sufficient for any child. The paired and group reading is not really a true reflection of the child's reading and his worth.*

Six educators expressed their views by stating that isiZulu-speaking learners are coping with the several types of reading assessments that are required. These were some of their responses:

- Educator 5: *They actually do. They find reading very interesting as I told you but I think it's more because they want to know what's going to happen ... and also the fact that they are holding a book and reading.*
- Educator 6: *They do cope because we kind of make it like interesting. It's different and varied. So, because it's varied it keeps them interested rather than the same old methods.*

The data gleaned from the educator questionnaires and the interviews highlighted the dominance of the phonic approach in the teaching of reading to L2 learners. This was later confirmed during researcher's observations of several reading lessons at the five schools.

The various categories of reading assessments, as set out in the foundation phase CAPS document, include shared reading, group reading, paired reading, and independent reading. This implies that each learner has to complete four types of reading assessments. This will require a lot of time since each class comprises of approximately 40 learners. Hence, some educators announced their dissatisfaction with the number of reading assessments. This was authenticated by the findings from the educator questionnaires that showed that 72,9% of the educators stressed that CAPS consists of too many reading assessments. On the other hand, a number of educators believed that isiZulu-speaking learners were coping with the various types of reading assessments.

#### b) The teaching of writing to foundation phase second language learners

It was noticed that a common procedure is followed when educators taught writing to foundation phase second language learners. All the educators stated that first they give the learners a topic. They discuss the topic. The educators write all the difficult words on the chalkboard in order to

assist the learners when they write their sentences. Learners also have wordlists with the breakthrough words in their flip files and they have word books or dictionaries to assist them with their spelling. If there are any words that the learners do not know how to spell they will take their dictionaries to their educators who will write the words for them. Six educators indicated that they use pictures when teaching story writing. Their responses included the following:

- Educator 1: *I will start with something that is picture based. We'll have a discussion on the picture. Difficult words are written down in a list form. If the child is still struggling what we do is have the picture on the top and write the sentences for them and have a list of words on the side. So the child takes a word from there and just slots it in. Because of their limited writing skills and limited language skills you have to start with something very basic.*
- Educator 6: *We write the words on the board and we help them to make the sentences. Pictures help a lot.*
- Educator 10: *When we write we encourage them to have their dictionaries and their breakthrough words open ... Very often if we are doing like a picnic or a birthday party or a visit to the farm or something we put a little picture in their exercise books.*

The above approach to the teaching of writing to L2 learners was also observed by the researcher during the classroom observations.

Educator 4 mentioned the following three ways in which she teaches story writing to her learners:

- *At first what we normally do, we give them sentences where they have to fill in the words ... Secondly, you give them words to use in making sentences. Sometimes you give them pictures and then they write whatever they want about the picture. You discuss the picture, you talk about everything that is happening in the picture, and then you give them a chance to write their own sentences ... When you give them a paragraph to write or the sentences they also have their word books. So, when they are looking for the words they come with their word books. Then you write the word.*

Educator 13 very vociferously articulated how she teaches writing to second language learners.

- *If we are writing a story I discuss it with the learners. I give them a chance to talk about the story. They give the sentences. What we then do is we pick out all the difficult words that are not in their flip files. I put the words on the board and the children are now encouraged to look at the words and build a sentence around each word.*

Educators 8 and 11 pointed out that in addition to discussing the topic and assisting the learners with the difficult words they also begin the story for them with a few sentences. This is merely to guide them. These educators' responses were

- *Educator 8: We discuss the topic and then I start them off with some sentences. Then they extend. They write more on their own.*
- *Educator 11: I also start the story with them to show them how they must start it, taking note of punctuation marks.*

Educator 3 argued that since the learners in her class cannot read and write she has to write the sentences for them.

#### c) Educators' views on the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement English home language workbook

All the educators with the exception of two (Educators 6 and 9) expressed their absolute dissatisfaction with the CAPS English home language workbook. These educators felt that the book is too advanced and is not at the learners' levels of development. It was also found that all the thirteen educators who were interviewed were not content with the manner in which the phonics is structured in the CAPS workbook. Their views embraced the following:

- *Educator 1: Some of the comprehension passages are too farfetched for the learners from this area ... They find it very difficult to identify with this and ... it's like beyond them.*
- *Educator 5: I'm not very happy with it. I feel that it's not on the level of our children. It's too advanced for our kids ... The phonic is out of our range. There's no way our kids will learn from the way the phonic is structured.*
- *Educator 7: The language is not completely correct according to proper English language. Sometimes I find certain things that are incorrect ... I'm not happy with the*

*phonic ... It's very scrambled and you know they are doing five or six new sounds on one page. It's very confusing for the child. Maybe if they had it structured it would have made more sense.*

- Educator 8: *It's so condensed and I think it's confusing for them. I think it's too much for Grade 1. The workbook is too much and it's frustrating for the teacher and the children ... Because I'm teaching for so long I'm still following the old method and I do not follow the CAPS phonic.*
- Educator 10: *The English for Grade 3 is very difficult for second language learners. That language book is not very user friendly. Personally I don't like the phonic in CAPS at all because it's very helter-skelter. It doesn't follow that logical sequence. I'm not in favour of that phonic. In fact I considered going back to my old method ... It is just not structured for children who are second language speakers ... Even the home language learners struggle.*
- Educator 12: *There is no order which we are used to. I'm not sure what method they are using to teach phonic.*
- Educator 13: *Well, I remember phonic many years ago when we started with basic phonic. We started with single sounds, going to blends, and then going to more advanced stages of phonic but what we find here is that the phonic is not starting at the basic and going up. It's all mixed up. You are going from a basic sound and then you are going to a blend which our children cannot cope with. Phonic is not structured for it to be successful in the classroom.*

Educators 6 and 9 appeared to be quite content with many aspects in the CAPS English home language workbook; with the exception of the phonic. These educators' comments were:

- Educator 6: *I think it's quite good. The learners are coping with that. They enjoy the stories. I like this book because it gets them to think ... It's always recalling, repetition and it's based on a story. The passages that are there are not too difficult for them and its using children's names that they are familiar with. The fact that the books are in colour, the pictures, it's all appealing to them ... You cannot rely primarily on that blue book to be doing your phonic. It's a bit jumbled.*

- Educator 9: *I find it very helpful. The Grade 2 one is really helping me because there's a lot of variation in terms of questioning and in terms of how they answer ... Lots of lovely stories. The stories are very nice and the children enjoy it ... The phonic ... they are just helter-skelter.*

The general views of the educators regarding the CAPS English home language workbook were rather depressing considering the fact that the Department of Education has obviously spent millions of rands to produce these books. The fact that educators were discontent with the structuring of the phonics raises the question of whether these workbooks are being used optimally in the classroom.

#### d) Educators' views on the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement Document

Eleven educators felt that CAPS for home language is not working effectively in the classroom. This was to be expected considering the fact that the data spawned from the educator questionnaires revealed that 77,1% of the educators acknowledged that CAPS is too challenging for most isiZulu-speaking learners. These were the educators' views:

- Educator 6: *You cannot expect them to perform at that level.*
- Educator 4: *The way we have phonic in our school doesn't correlate with the way they have arranged their phonic. It's like they have no order of how they are putting their phonic. They are jumbled up.*
- Educator 5: *There's no way our kids at Grade 3 level are going to read those stories all on their own and understand because there are quite a few words that are very difficult.*
- Educator 6: *For me, if I have to be honest it's just merely a guide. It's just informing my teaching but I cannot see myself rigidly sticking to that and achieving all the outcomes that I would like to achieve with my learners.*
- Educator 9: *I feel that they just jump from one thing to another ... it's not moving progressively. Sometimes we have to adapt it to what the children know and can do.*
- Educator 10: *If a child misses a day of work there's no going back because it's such a pressurised document. There's no room for you to go back and do remedial work.*

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Only two educators were tentative. These were their responses:

- Educator 11: *I'm not sure because it has a lot of work. Lots of activities to be done.*
- Educator 12: *That's a bit of a tricky question because we are forced to use the document ... I'm not sure if it is user friendly to other people but ... we use the document and try to work from the document.*

Subsequent to the advent of a truly democratic South Africa, the Education system had undergone numerous transformations. A number of amendments and modifications were made to the then existing curriculum. These modifications were occurring perpetually and as a result educators had to make the necessary adjustments, undergo training and learners who are already in the system are compelled to continuously adjust to the new curriculum. Although change is good and sometimes necessary, obviously it has to be informed by, amongst other things, research studies and rational thought. As educators, we are obliged to ask ourselves: Is the educational revolution in South Africa actually benefiting our learners, more especially our second language learners?

When educators were asked which aspects of the CAPS document they find most difficult to implement their responses were relatively varied. Seven educators reiterated that the teaching of phonics is the most difficult to implement as stipulated in the CAPS document. Some of their responses included the following:

- Educator 5: *I ignored the phonic when I was in Grade 1 because I felt it didn't work at all. The phonic was way out of range. For Grade 1s it was terrible but even here in Grade 3 you can't work the way they want it ... It's like jumping all over the place. There's no system in it. So we are actually having a very difficult time in Grade 3 and they want us to implement that. It's really, really going badly. When they are reading they are forgetting the phonic because there's so many they have done ... There's too many phonic as well because if you looking at in one week you are doing five different phonics and whereas you could have taken one blend and did it over two or three days ... With this you are doing a whole range of phonics in one week. It's too much.*
- Educator 9: *Especially the phonic because of it not being progressive.*

Of the above seven educators, two educators (Educators 1 and 3) mentioned that the learners get confused with the English and isiZulu phonics.

Assessments were also perceived as difficult when implementing CAPS. The following were two educators' responses:

- Educator 6: *We are doing more assessing than actually trying to teach.*
- Educator 13: *Assessments, I can't even say has doubled. There are too many assessments. In the past we knew exactly what we were doing and suddenly when CAPS was introduced we find that there are more assessments than actual teaching. And what we are doing now is that we are basically teaching for assessments. I think that the demands on a Grade 1 or any foundation phase learner are very great when it comes to the assessments. It's stressful for the teacher and for the child. I think assessments should be cut down greatly.*

Writing was also observed as an aspect which is difficult to execute when implementing CAPS. Two educators' views were the following:

- Educator 5: *I find that there are too many things that they expect from the children; like you got letter and then you got diary, one after the other. You don't give the child time for it to sink in. Generally we'll take a letter and do it over two or three weeks. And then they can do a letter all by themselves. Here you don't have the time. You probably have letter today and then a day later you'll have diary. And then you've got another thing coming up.*
- Educator 10: *It's definitely the grammar and story writing because ... when you expect them to apply what they learnt in language to what they write in their stories, they can't. They learn in isolation. They only learn that section for that time period.*

Educator 12 emphasised the following challenge that she experiences:

- *I think that the pace in the CAPS document is not good enough for the first two terms of Grade 1. That's my challenge initially.*

It is not surprising that educators yet again emphasised that the phonics in the CAPS document is difficult to implement since it is not well-structured, it is confusing for the learners, and it is not



progressive. This was verified by 62,5% of the educators who completed and returned the questionnaires.

It is clearly evident that the number of assessments has increased with CAPS and educators appear to be despondent because they feel that they are doing more assessing than constructive teaching. This was also apparent in the data that was generated from the educator questionnaire where 89,6% of the educators maintained that too much of emphasis is placed on assessments, 91,7% of the educators reinforced that when implementing CAPS more time is utilised for assessing than for constructive teaching, and 83,3% of the educators emphasised that the excessive number of reading and writing assessments is frustrating.

#### e) Age of entry to Grade 1

All the educators who were interviewed reinforced that five year old children are not ready for formal schooling. From their experiences they found that vast discrepancies exist between five year olds and six or seven year olds. The following are some responses that emerged from the interviews conducted with the educators:

- Educator 1: *I found that some of them need more time to develop. They are not ready for formal schooling.*
- Educator 5: *I find that they are still not developed enough because I used to find them actually by eleven o'clock falling off to sleep, tired, exhausted. It's like they can't manage and some things were too difficult for them to grasp ... They are clingy. They cry for every little thing ... playful ... They cannot concentrate for long hours. They got to be six years old because you'll actually see the difference. Once the child turns six it's like a whole new child came and sat in your class.*
- Educator 6: *I think from my experience the ones that are already six – they do better especially in the first half of the year. The five year olds ... they really battle.*
- Educator 7: *The government is not addressing the readiness. It's just you are at that age you must go to school – whether you are ready or not.*
- Educator 8: *It's frustrating for teachers. I'll give you an example. Last year about eight to ten children per class were not ready to progress to Grade 2. We pushed them through but they didn't meet the requirements for promotion. They were far behind ...*

*Some of them were sleeping in class, were getting frustrated, and not completing tasks. Their concentration level is bad ... They don't understand what is expected of them. They are too young. They are definitely not ready for school ... They don't complete tasks because they are so immature. They take a long time to settle down. They cry a lot. They take very long to adjust to the classroom and then from the beginning of the year you start with work and by the time they settle down, well the work has passed and you have to go back. So they sort of lag behind the others.*

- Educator 9: *They are definitely too immature. Their concentration is not there at all. They will just not adjust because of their age. Lots of toilet training. Five year olds, they are not ready.*
- Educator 10: *They are still too immature and now with CAPS there are certain concepts that are so abstract that we are requiring to teach our children. They need to have a certain level of maturity in order to grasp it and five years is definitely too small.*
- Educator 11: *They are not ready because there are lots to be done in class ... their minds are not well-matured.*
- Educator 12: *I found it from my experience that learners that are lagging behind are ones that are younger and when you see them older and more mature they tend to perform much better.*
- Educator 13: *Every year we have examples of children battling in the classroom. Children are unable to manage the day. You find they are asleep during the course of the day. They are unable to listen. They cannot concentrate and we find that those children are not coping at all. If you compare the five year olds to the children who came when they were six and seven there's a vast difference in their progress.*

The above findings are further elucidated by the statistics retrieved from the questionnaires; which demonstrated that 89,6% of the educators felt that learners who enter Grade 1 at the age of five are not emotionally ready for formal schooling, and 91,7% of the educators remarked that isiZulu-speaking learners who enter Grade 1 at the age of five generally experience reading and writing difficulties in English. These conclusions concur with the findings from Banerji's study (See 3.3.7).

These findings also coincide with the DST perspective of “limited resources” (See 2.4.4). The notion that resources such as, attention span, cognitive capacity, and maturity of learners are limited when they enter Grade 1 at age five, is critical in explaining their reading and writing deficits.

Since these five year old learners possess limited resources it is obvious that these young learners will experience great difficulty in attempting to achieve CALP; which is the decontextualised or context-reduced, cognitively demanding language used in school. This will surely have repercussions since these five year old learners will constantly be lagging behind their six year old or seven year old counterparts. They will be continuously striving to catch up with their older peers but the gap in knowledge would have increased making it even more difficult. Thus, their growth will not be sufficient to compensate for the substantial early gaps.

It was not surprising to note that all the educators who were interviewed concurred that the Department of Education should reconsider the policy for age of entry to Grade 1. Most of the educators (nine) believed that the policy should be amended so that the age of entry to Grade 1 is six and not five. The following were articulated by the educators:

- Educator 2: *Six years will be better because what happens is that if they are five years – normally they used to say that the child needs to master the home language before she could be introduced to another language. Imagine if she is coming from a home where there is no English. Now at the age of five the child must come to school and be introduced to this new language - not even mastered the home language. It's difficult. I think six years is alright.*
- Educator 3: *Maybe six years. That will be the right age. But, I know that they cannot make it in this school different and in that school different. It has to be standard.*
- Educator 5: *Six should be fine, turning seven in June.*
- Educator 10: *I just feel send them when they are six years and turning seven in the year.*

On the other hand, four educators were in favour of learners entering Grade 1 at the age of seven. The following responses were elicited:

- Educator 8: *The children should complete six before they come to Grade 1.*

- Educator 9: *I would rather prefer the child being seven in Grade 1 because I find that children who are seven years in my class adjust far better. They are toilet trained. They can hold the pencil properly. They are able to grasp concepts much better. The whole child itself is much more adjusted at seven years old.*
- Educator 12: *They should come to school Grade R entering six years and Grade 1, seven.*
- Educator 13: *I think children should turn seven before entering Grade 1 because they are more mature and you find that they perform better and they are confident in the classroom which makes the teacher and the child less stressed.*

f) Gender differences among foundation phase learners

The majority of the educators explicitly stated that from their experiences and observations there are major differences between the performance of boys and girls in reading. They expressively pointed out that girls perform better than boys. Their views included the following:

- Educator 1: *I found that girls are able to cope with reading much better than boys ... I found that the girls are more eager as well to learn English. They are first to come up to read and if you give them a written text and tell them to go home and practise they will do it but the boys are most likely not to ... Somehow girls, I feel they are motivated. They are much more motivated to want to learn, to practise, to improve their literacy levels but boys they have to be pushed.*
- Educator 5: *I think the girls are more expressive than the boys. Like if you heard me earlier when we did reading you would have found that the girls would change their voices whereas the boys are shy to do so.*
- Educator 6: *I think that in the foundation phase the girls read better. I think it is because they enjoy reading. The boys want to do more practical stuff and they rather be making things.*
- Educator 7: *The girls are more advanced, I noticed.*
- Educator 13: *From my experience I've always found the girls to be quicker and better readers.*

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Two educators expressed the view that from their experiences and observations the difference between the performance of boys and girls in reading is negligible and one educator stated that she was uncertain. The following were their responses:

- Educator 12: *I find if they are able to use the phonic method to be able to recognise and read words, it's both, girls and boys can read just as well.*
- Educator 10: *Well, I don't know. I haven't really made a distinct note but if I talk about my current class, I just have a handful of boys who give me trouble.*

The views of the majority of the educators are congruent to the EGRA studies across Sub-Saharan Africa which demonstrates that girls significantly outperform boys on early reading tasks; although in only a few instances the differences were not statistically significant (See 3.2.2).

All except two of the interviewees highlighted that from their experiences and observations there is a major difference between the performance of boys and girls in writing. They stated the following:

- Educator 1: *The girls, definitely the girls ... do better than the boys.*
- Educator 6: *There again I think it's because the girls read more and they have more ideas.*
- Educator 9: *Even with writing, girls tend to do better, much better.*
- Educator 10: *My girls write better than my boys.*
- Educator 12: *Girls definitely tend to put more thought into their writing while boys just want to write and complete the activity.*
- Educator 13: *Even with writing I find that the girls are always writing better sentences and stories than the boys.*

Only one educator felt that the boys write better than the girls and one educator acknowledged that the difference between the performance of boys and girls in writing is inconsequential. They mentioned the following:

- Educator 2: *From my observations the boys are able to write better and the girls are best readers.*

- Educator 4: *You will find a balance of both.*

Due to the verity that girls generally outperform boys in reading; it is very much anticipated that girls will also surpass the performance of boys in writing; since reading is an antecedent to writing. This conclusion was supported by the majority of the interviewees.

g) Educators' views on the fact that isiZulu-speaking foundation phase learners are learning through the medium of English.

The educators' views in this regard are quite varied. The following were the participants' responses:

- Educator 1: *At one point I'd say it's good because if you have to look at job sectors they need to learn English. It is important.*
- Educator 2: *It's a common language. Everybody must know English. So, I think that they must get used to the fact that they have to learn English.*
- Educator 4: *It's good because they are coming from a background where they are speaking isiZulu ... So for them to use English in school is at their advantage of learning more than one language at an early age.*
- Educator 6: *It's good for them that they start learning English you know at an early age. So, they obviously have chosen to come here to learn English ... But because isiZulu is their home language you know I feel that we are doing a more disadvantage to them by trying to force them to learn English and make English as important as Zulu for them ... They are travelling great distances to come here whereas there are schools you know right at their home front that they can go to but they are choosing to come here. It's because of language. When you ask them they say I want my child to learn English.*
- Educator 8: *They are coming to our school, a lot of them, because they want their children to learn English. English is a language of power ... They are eager and their parents are eager. As I told you one parent changed the child's place and he wants the child to join English-speaking learners outside.*
- Educator 9: *I think their parents did choose this school because of English medium. So, I think they enjoy it and it's what they want.*

- Educator 10: *The parents that have sent their children here want their children to learn in English.*
- Educator 11: *I think it will help them as they grow. English is seen as an important language when choosing their careers.*
- Educator 12: *It is a challenge, both for the educator and the learner. But it's what most of the parents want – their children to learn English because it's a universal language, I suppose.*
- Educator 13: *They come here because they want to have a good command of the language ... I think it's important for our isiZulu learners to come to our schools because if you look at the bigger picture they definitely need to know how to speak English. It's essential.*

The educators' views illustrated the global dominance of the English language, and thus the need to learn the language. These were also expressed by the parents who preferred to enroll their children in English medium schools.

#### h) Approaches used to teach reading to second language learners

All the educators interviewed indicated that they use the phonic approach and flashcards to teach reading to second language learners. Additionally, two educators mentioned supplementary methods that they use. Their responses consisted of the following:

- Educator 6: *I use repetition like where you would read and then they will follow and read ... Sometimes I start off with a picture. Then I will use the flashcard words and get them used to the story before they start reading.*
- Educator 8: *I teach the words. I teach them the sounds and I teach them the pattern in reading. There is a pattern in the New Way readers where the words are repeated. I teach them to discover the rhythm that is there and when they discover that they read very fluently.*

## i) Learning theories for second language teaching

None of the interviewees, except Educator 7 was familiar with any of the theories for second language teaching. The implication here is that educators require in-service training on the various theories that can be used to teach second language learners.

## j) Grade R attendance

Educators reiterated the significance of Grade R attendance and the Grade R curriculum. Furthermore, the significance of isiZulu-speaking learners being enrolled in English medium schools from Grade R was emphasised. Some of the educators articulated the following views:

- Educator 1: *... making sure that Grade R is absolutely compulsory ... I'll say that Grade R structure and the way it's taught, the teaching itself has to be disciplined, because we have children that say that they have been to Grade R but when they come into a school system they want to play. They are not interested but you got the report to say the child has completed Grade R. And then you ask yourself what Grade R did this child go to because the basics that should have been covered in Grade R were not covered. And what happens in Grade 1 the teacher has to go back and cover the Grade R work.*
- Educator 8: *Some of them that went to preschool were not so bad but the children who did not go to Grade R were sleeping in the class, were getting frustrated, and not completing the tasks.*
- Educator 9: *They really need Grade R grounding. They need that time to learn about themselves, to be able to explore and colouring, lots of colouring.*

Additionally, Educator 13 reinforced the following:

- *If they come in say Grade 2, Grade 3 levels it's a little more difficult for them. But if they come in at Grade R, Grade 1 level you find that they learn from their peers and they have a better command of the language as they grow up, you know to the next phase.*

## k) Readiness test prior to entry to Grade 1

Educators 5 and 7 highlighted the necessity of a readiness or screening test for learners prior to entry to Grade 1. Their views encompassed the following:



- Educator 5: *I'm always telling the school that sometimes we need to screen our children from Grade 1.*
- Educator 7: *I feel that some children we got in Grade 2 shouldn't even be in preschool. That's how weak they are. So, I feel that there should be a test to check if a child is ready for school.*

#### 5.3.1.6 Unique barriers

a) The unique barriers that are experienced by isiZulu-speaking learners when reading and writing in English and not by English-speaking learners

##### ❖ Limited vocabulary

The interviews with all the educators revealed that isiZulu-speaking learners have very little exposure to the English language at home. Also, the quality of limited English exposure at home is not conducive to English language acquisition. For many isiZulu-speaking learners the English language is confined to the school. As soon as they leave school they revert to isiZulu. Educator 6 felt that *isiZulu-speaking learners are forced to learn English and once they get out of school they get back to isiZulu. This hinders their vocabulary acquisition.* Educator 8 believed that *because isiZulu-speaking learners speak their home language at home they are not able to express themselves very well in English.* She stated that the learners whose parents speak isiZulu at home are actually disadvantaged.

This implies that isiZulu-speaking learners do not have sufficient interaction and involvement with more competent English-speaking persons such as parents. As a result they do not have access to models of language structure in their home environment. A lack of reading has also contributed to their limited vocabulary (See figure 5.9).

The interviews revealed that isiZulu-speaking learners experience difficulties with the choice of vocabulary in the construction of sentences. The use of pronouns is perceived as a major problem. This is attributed to the fact that indigenous languages do not have the pronouns he, him, she, and her to indicate gender. In isiZulu, the word “yena” is used. The gender of the person is inferred from the sentence. The following type of

mistake is therefore commonly made in sentences: “The boy she plays with me” (See 3.3.4.2). Educator 13 expressed the following:

- *They mix up the words like his is her when they are writing ... They jumble up words. The sentence is not very clear and you’ll find that they prefer to write shorter sentences. They feel safe when they are writing a shorter sentence.*

According to Educator 2 *pronunciation of words, and language use and structure are difficult for isiZulu-speaking learners*. This was reiterated by Educator 1. He maintained the following:

- *Pronunciation, in terms of reading. The way they pronounce the words at times, I have to listen very hard to hear what the word was ... In terms of the written part of it, I’d say the biggest problem that they would have is the grammatical part of it ... You’ll find words missing and you’ll find that there’s no flow in their writing.*

Educator 9 found that the common errors made by isiZulu-speaking learners when writing in English include tense and the pronouns he and she which are constant problems. She provided the following example which illustrates how an isiZulu-speaking learner may write an English sentence:

- *When you say “They are playing on the ground”, they will write “They are play on the ground”.*

❖ Processing of information and limited ability to understand

Educator 6 argued that when isiZulu-speaking learners look at a picture they think of an isiZulu word. The learner thinks in isiZulu and then tries to transfer the information to English. Educator 1 also affirmed that *they are thinking in isiZulu and they are translating it to English*. Consequently, it takes the isiZulu-speaking learner longer to write sentences or a story based on a picture. On the other hand the English-speaking learner thinks in English and writes in English.

It was also noticed that educators believed that isiZulu-speaking learners experience difficulties understanding certain words and concepts in English. Educator 4’s opinion was the following:

➤ *I would say it's the comprehension of information where they have to understand the instructions and then follow the instructions.*

Learners do not understand the messages they hear or the texts they read because they are unfamiliar with the vocabulary used. Thus, their receptive English language abilities are limited to a certain degree. Here again, comprehensible input, which Krashen proposes that children require to activate the Language Acquisition Device (LAD) and begin acquisition of an L2, is vital. Without comprehensible input, the L2 learner is left with a group of words that are perceived as incomprehensible noise and cannot be processed in the LAD (See 2.4.2.4). Also, it is important to take cognisance of the fact that reading material and writing topics are more meaningful when they relate to the learners' personal lives and cultural backgrounds (See 3.3.1).

b) The unique challenges experienced by educators who teach reading and writing to isiZulu-speaking learners

❖ Communication

Occasionally there are problems with communication. Educators who are not proficient in isiZulu experience difficulty teaching isiZulu-speaking learners who are not able to communicate in English. Educator 12 highlighted a challenge that she believes educators experience when teaching isiZulu-speaking learners: *I think the major challenge for an educator is getting across to a Zulu-speaking learner when she or he himself don't speak isiZulu and cannot understand isiZulu. That's the initial barrier, I think.*

Furthermore, Educator 5 who had a similar opinion argued that *the ones that don't speak English it's very difficult because you don't even know how to communicate with them. There's no way of communicating. I am somebody who doesn't speak isiZulu. So, it's very hard. I actually get translators ... It's not a language we use all the time with the click of the tongue and all that. So, we are also going to have an issue to learn it.*

Another difficulty regarding communication was highlighted by Educator 1. He fervently articulated the following:

➤ *Another problem that we face is learners coming from isiZulu home background, and where you have teachers that are proficient in isiZulu (here the educator was referring to isiZulu-speaking educators) – these teachers – although it's an English home language school they resort to teaching the lessons in isiZulu. As a result when I start teaching in English the children feel why do I need to learn a new language, being English when the other teacher comes in and teaches me in isiZulu. So, that again creates a problem for us. Children feel that there's no need to work so hard to learn English when other teachers in the school are teaching lessons in isiZulu.*

❖ Parental involvement

It is axiomatic that parental involvement and support is crucial to the learners' reading and writing achievements. If parents show an interest in their children's reading and writing the children's levels of performance will increase and teaching these learners will be less challenging for educators. Some of the educators affirmed the following:

- *Educator 6: I have Zulu-speaking learners whose parents are well educated. So, they speak in English and I see that they are catching on quite well but it's more the ones that come from the rural areas. Their parents don't understand English. They are not assisting. So, those are the ones that really struggle because it's the switching between languages that's causing the problem.*
- *Educator 10: I think one of the major challenges for teaching reading and writing is that there's no support from a lot of homes – from the parents. You find that those isiZulu children who are coping they come from homes where their parents speak English.*
- *Educator 13: Encourage our parents to converse with their children in English ... Maybe we must make it a policy where we insist that parents who are sending their children and are having problems converse with them in English at home so it helps us at school. If parents can take the initiative of getting their children to the library or just listening to them read I think it will help us at school as well.*

For basic L1 acquisition, all children should achieve a final native acquisition state. However, for SLA there is great variability which is found in the ultimate level of attainment by L2 learners. One of the three possibilities within the UG framework mentioned in Chapter 2 is that some learners may receive qualitatively different L2 input from others (See 2.4.1). Consequently, the quality of parental input, involvement and support is crucial to the L2 learners' reading and writing achievements.

The quality of parental input is also critical to learner achievement. Educator 1 vehemently reinforced that the *Grade 3 learners' literacy levels may be higher than their parents*. This has consequences for effective mediation and scaffolding (2.4.5). The development of the individual is mediated by, amongst other individuals, parents guiding their children. Parents who have low literacy levels will not be able to facilitate their children's reading and writing skills. Apart from their educators, these L2 learners will probably not have any access to models of language structure in their homes. As a result these learners could experience enormous challenges in achieving the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and self-regulation (See 2.4.5).

Educator 7 emphasised the words "exposure to literature" and "parental interest" as the key to success in learners' reading and writing achievements. She aptly explained the above as follows:

- *If a parent can sit with a child, talk to the child, read with the child then that child is always going to be ahead of the child that is not stimulated. There are lots of children. They are completely not stimulated. Their parents, I think just leave them in front of the TV.*

Educator 8 stressed that there must be a link between home and school for the learner to perform better. She emphasised the following:

- *The more the parents get involved in the education of the child the better the child adjusts and the child starts reading. Like we saw with the readers. Those children who went home and read those books you can see the difference in their performance, in the way they write and express themselves.*

Another factor that plays a crucial role in learners' reading and writing achievements is the fact that several isiZulu-speaking learners do not live with their parents. This was highlighted by Educators 1 and 8. Educator 8 pointed out that *the children have a problem where they are not living with their parents. They are living with aunts, uncles, and grandparents. You can make out that they are not living with their parents. The parents see their children over the weekends only and they are not revising work.* Educator 1 reiterated that *we have found that the parents generally leave their children with the grandparents and in this area it's rife. What makes it worse is the AIDS pandemic. The parents are passing on and you've got most of the children living with grandparents ... The older person takes this child speaking to him or to her in English as a sign of disrespect. By working with people in this area, I've picked this up.* This could imply that many of the grandparents are illiterate. Thus, they will definitely not be able to assist in developing the learners' reading and writing skills.

❖ Educator/learner ratio

Due to large numbers of children in classes educators are confronted with further challenges. Educators 6 and 11 stated the following:

- Educator 6: *I think our numbers make a big difference. If you want me to teach children who don't know English and you give me 40 of them I don't have the time to go around individually and help them.*
- Educator 11: *Too large classes. So, it's not easy. It's not easy for us for individual attention. There's no time.*

❖ Inadequately trained educators

Clearly educators who are well trained on how to teach second language learners will perform better in the English medium classroom. Educator 2 suggested the following:

- *I think the teachers as well need some training or they need some methods to understand where our children are coming from because really it's not easy for them to hear the language at school only and then expect them to perform at that level. Somehow we need to come to an understanding.*

### ❖ The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement

Educators expressed the challenges they experience when implementing CAPS. Some of their views entail the restructuring of the CAPS. Educator 10 fervently reinforced the following:

- *I just think that our documents need to be simplified, really, as a foundation phase teacher and somebody in the class, and we are experiencing these problems first hand. They need to go back and really look at what we are expecting of our second language learners. It's really too much and I just hope that somebody hears us and actually changes it. We are doing a disservice to our children.*

This was echoed by Educator 12 when she stated the following:

- *I think our old methods of repetition and breakthrough, the old breakthrough method, you know the common recognisable words, and that I think is the mother of learning. I still use that and I find I can get through to my learners. They are able to read better. They are able to write better.*

Educator 13 ardently stated the following:

- *I think somebody who has experience in the classroom should be sitting and compiling that book.*

As explained earlier (See 5.3.1.5) it is obvious that educators do experience great challenges when implementing CAPS.

### **5.3.2 Findings from the reading and writing observations**

Observation was used as a corroborative data collection strategy. The researcher approached numerous educators in order to conduct observations in their classrooms. Some educators were busy with assessments while others were preparing learners for the Annual National Assessments (ANA). Nevertheless, the researcher was able to acquire the acquiescence and assistance of ten educators who very willingly cooperated. Seven reading lessons and five writing lessons were observed at the five schools.

Table 5.61 reflects a summary of the reading and writing lessons observed

<b>Table 5.61: Summary of reading and writing lessons observed</b>						
Educator Participants	School	Educator's gender	Grade	Lesson observed	Library corner	Basic resources
Educator A	School C	Female	3	Reading	Yes	Yes
Educator B	School C	Female	3	Reading	No	Yes
Educator C	School D	Female	1	Reading	No	Yes
Educator D	School B	Female	1	Reading	Yes	Yes
Educator E	School E	Female	2	Reading and writing	No	Yes
Educator F	School E	Female	1	Reading	No	Yes
Educator G	School B	Female	2	Writing	Yes	Yes
Educator H	School B	Female	2	Writing	Yes	Yes
Educator I	School B	Female	3	Writing	Yes	Yes
Educator J	School A	Female	1	Reading and writing	Yes	Yes

### 5.3.2.1 Reading observations

Reading observations were conducted in seven different classes at the five schools. Six of the seven classes had 40 learners or more. The most learners (47) were found in a Grade 2 class in School E. Only one class had 36 learners. Five of the classes had eighty eight percent or more isiZulu-speaking learners. In the other two classes there were all isiZulu-speaking learners. All the classes observed had the fundamental resources and charts that are viewed as critical in assisting learners in their literacy development.

During the reading observations it was noticed that the educators from Schools A, B, C, and D teach reading in a similar manner. The phonic and the language experience approaches were used to teach reading. However, it was noticed that the phonic approach appeared to be the more



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dominant approach. The findings from the educator questionnaire as well as the educator interviews evidently complement the researcher's observations with regard to the approaches used to teach reading to L2 learners.

The learners were taught reading in ability groups. None of the reading lessons observed included shared reading and paired reading. One group of learners sat on the carpet while reading whilst the others were at their desks occupied with work. The teachers used flashcards. The flashcards consisted of all the difficult words that were extracted from the graded readers. The educators taught each word, explained the words, orally constructed sentences using the words, and tested each child in the group.

Thereafter, the educators continued with reading from the page they stopped at when they previously did reading. The educators read page by page and all the learners in the group pointed to the words and they read after the educator. Subsequently, each child in the group had a turn to read. The educators encouraged the learners to read with expression and asked the learners questions. Thus, educators paid attention to the important notion of understanding when reading.

It was noticed that in these five classes (classes in Schools A, B, C, and D) the learners were very well behaved. They listened to the educators. They were interested in reading and they concentrated during the reading lessons. Their enthusiasm was seen in the manner in which they read and answered the questions posed by the educators. This was due to the fact that the educators motivated the learners who were not confident and complimented them when they read well or when they answered the questions correctly.

In the five classes reading was done every day. However, all the groups did not read every day. Between 30 to 45 minutes are spent on ability group reading each day.

An entirely different scenario was noticed in School E. It was observed in both the Grade 1 and Grade 2 classes that there are no ability groups for reading. The educators did not follow any particular reading series books. They used a variety of readers from different series such as the Spot On Books, Oxford Reading Tree, Cub Reading Series, and Sunshine Books. These books are CAPS compliant and approved by the South African Department of Education. The

educators read a phrase or a sentence and the learners pointed to the words in their readers and repeated what the educators read.

Educator F indicated that in her Grade 1 class none of the learners could read individually. They were all working at the same pace and on the same level. The classroom was very small and compact. The learners were not comfortably seated. They were restricted because of limited space. All the desks and chairs are plastic and very small which is more appropriate for learners in a Pre-Grade R or a Grade R class. Four learners were required to share one small desk. There was insufficient space for four learners to place their stationery on the small desk and to read and write. The learners were seated at their desks while reading.

### A GRADE 1 CLASSROOM IN SCHOOL E



**Visual presentation 5.1** Figure illustrating Educator F's Grade 1 classroom in School E

It was evident that these Grade 1 learners were not motivated to read. They showed no interest. They talked and played during the lessons. They did not follow in their readers. They were not fluent in English. They could barely speak the language. They mostly spoke isiZulu. Thus, the books were not appealing to them. They were most definitely working far below Grade 1 level.

It was poignant to observe these Grade 1 learners who could not understand their teacher because of their exceedingly limited English proficiency. All the learners in this class had not achieved BICS in English and they were required to read and write in English as well as learn through the medium of English.

In Educator E's Grade 2 class most of the boys showed no interest in reading. The girls were more interested. Out of 47 learners, only five learners could read at Grade 2 level. The others were not interested in following in their books and reading. They were not concentrating. They preferred to play in class. These were mostly boys. During the reading lesson one male learner who was not listening to the educator, was rocking on his chair and fell. Approximately five girls were able to come to the front of the class and read independently. The other learners were not able to read at all.

A widespread occurrence in the reading observations was the detection of attractor states. It was found that during the reading lessons several learners were made aware of their errors. These learners were capable of correcting them once, but then spontaneously fell back on the error state. This could eventually lead to fossilisation. Additionally, during the interview, Educator 6 mentioned that after correcting the learners they did fall back on the error state while reading: *Then and there if you ask them to read it again they'll remember but sometimes when they come the next day they often ask what's this word?*

#### 5.3.2.2 Writing observations

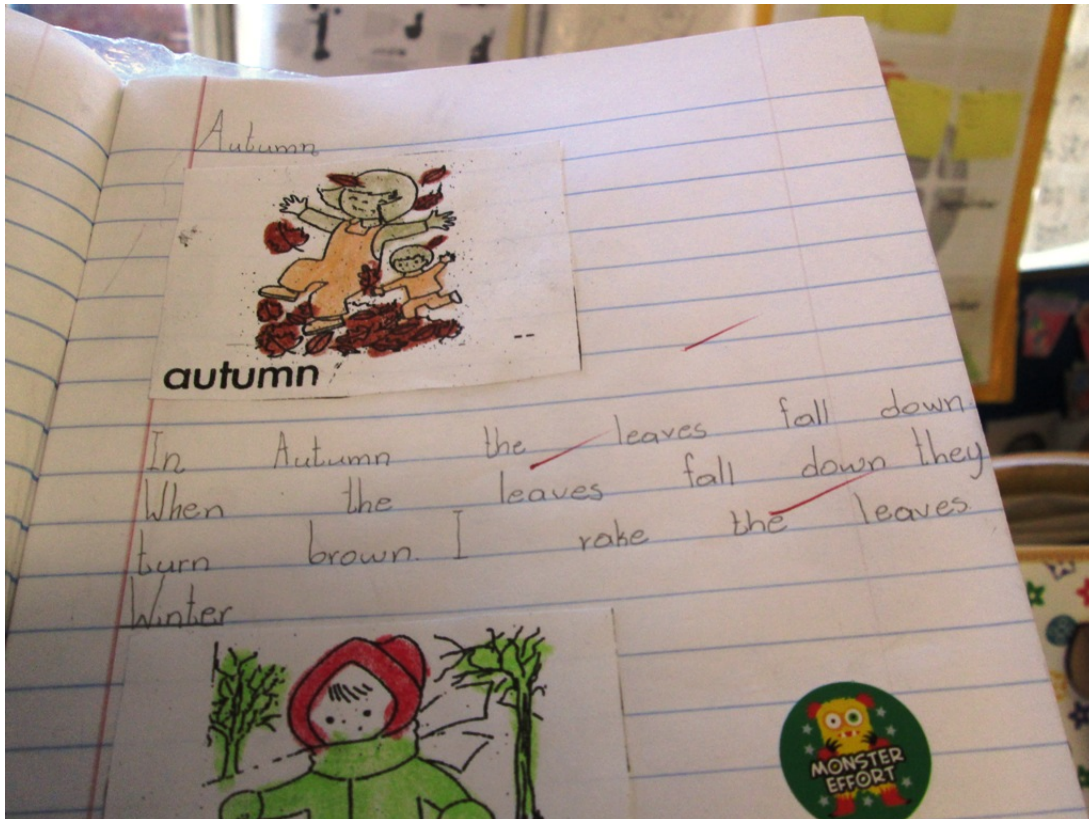
Writing observations were conducted in five different classes at three schools (Schools A, B, and E). In each of the classes, with the exception of Educator E's Grade 2 class in School E, there were approximately 40 learners. Educator E had 47 learners in her class. Four of the classes had over ninety percent isiZulu-speaking learners. In Educator E's class all the learners were isiZulu-speaking.

In School E, story writing was observed in Educator E's Grade 2 class. It was observed that the learners in this class were not able to construct sentences individually. The educator displayed a picture on the chalkboard, attempted to discuss the picture with the learners, and wrote the sentences on the chalkboard. The learners merely copied the sentences without any understanding. The manner in which writing was taught at School E differs considerably from the way writing was taught at the other four schools.

In Schools A, B, C, and D story writing was taught in a similar manner. Although writing lessons were not observed in Schools C and D, during the interviews educators from these schools described how they taught writing. Thus, similarities in the teaching of writing were

seen among these four schools. Educators at these schools generally taught story writing by using pictures. The educators introduced the topic with pictures. Pictures were distributed to each learner. The educators discussed the pictures. The learners also contributed to the discussions. Learners cut and pasted the pictures in their books. With the assistance of the educators learners were asked to write stories based on the pictures. The educators wrote all the difficult words on the chalkboard. Learners also made use of their dictionaries (wordbooks). With this approach the learners could identify with the topic because of the pictures that were distributed to them.

### A SAMPLE OF A GRADE 2 LEARNER'S WRITING



**Visual presentation 5.2** Figure illustrating the writing of a Grade 2 learner in Educator H's class

Educator H utilised pictures to teach writing to her Grade 2 learners. The topic was seasons. Each learner received pictures of the four seasons. The pictures that were selected by Educator

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H appeared to be very western orientated. This means that the pictures were not culturally familiar to isiZulu-speaking learners.

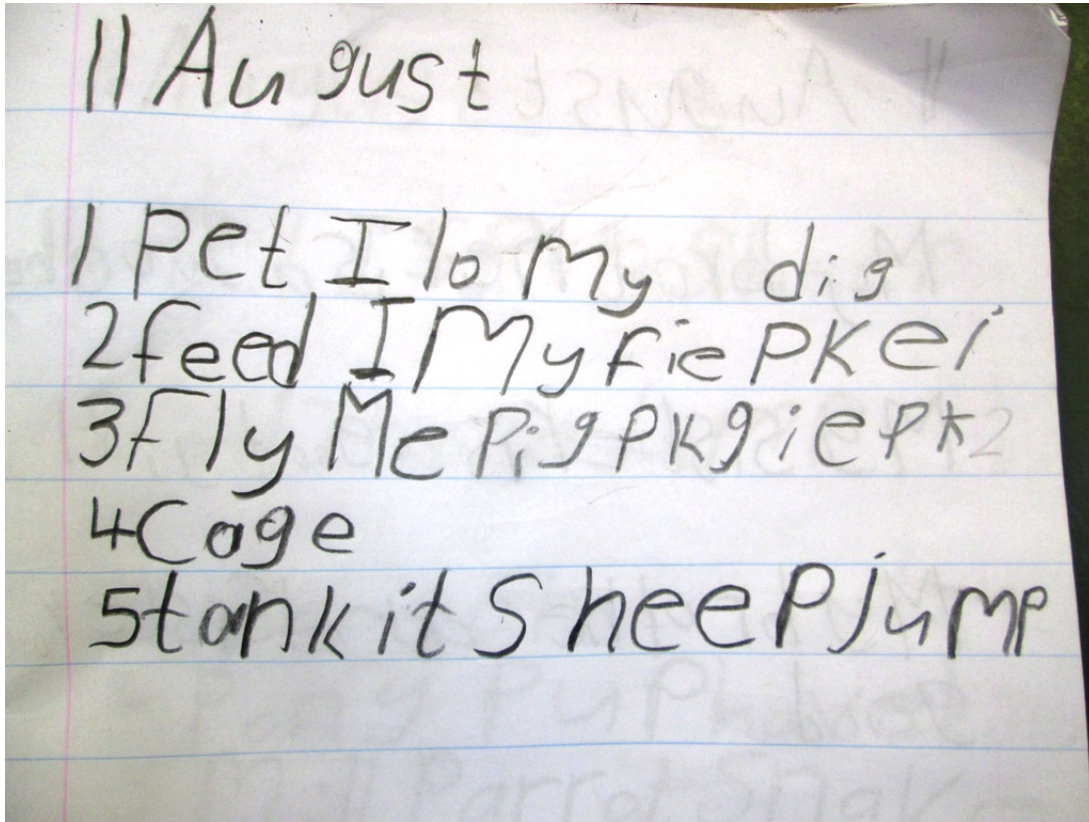
Educator H discussed each season, wrote all the difficult words on the chalkboard, and explained to the learners how to write their sentences. Figure 5.28 provides an illustration of Lebo's (pseudonym) writing. Lebo began with autumn. She pasted her picture and wrote a few sentences. Thereafter she pasted her picture on winter and constructed a few sentences on winter.

Another approach that was used to teach story writing was where the educators gave the learners a topic, discussed the topic, wrote all the difficult words on the board, and assisted the learners by starting the story with a few sentences. After the learners had completed their stories they were asked to draw pictures based on their stories. This method provided learners with opportunities to creatively express themselves through drawings.

Both these approaches appear to be mutually beneficial to L2 learners. However, without the basic skills and knowledge of phonics and word building learners are bound to experience difficulty writing stories.

Attractor states were found to be quite common during the writing lessons. Additionally, while interviewing Educator 1, he attested that learners continuously fall back on the error state. He stated that *you will correct it ... and write it on the chalkboard ... one hour later it's forgotten ... If you ask them to write something over and over again you are still going to find errors in it.* Educator 10 provided an example of a learner who perpetually made the same mistake while writing. She affirmed that *one child repeatedly spelt the words "spoke" and "must" incorrectly after being corrected. They will make the same mistake.*

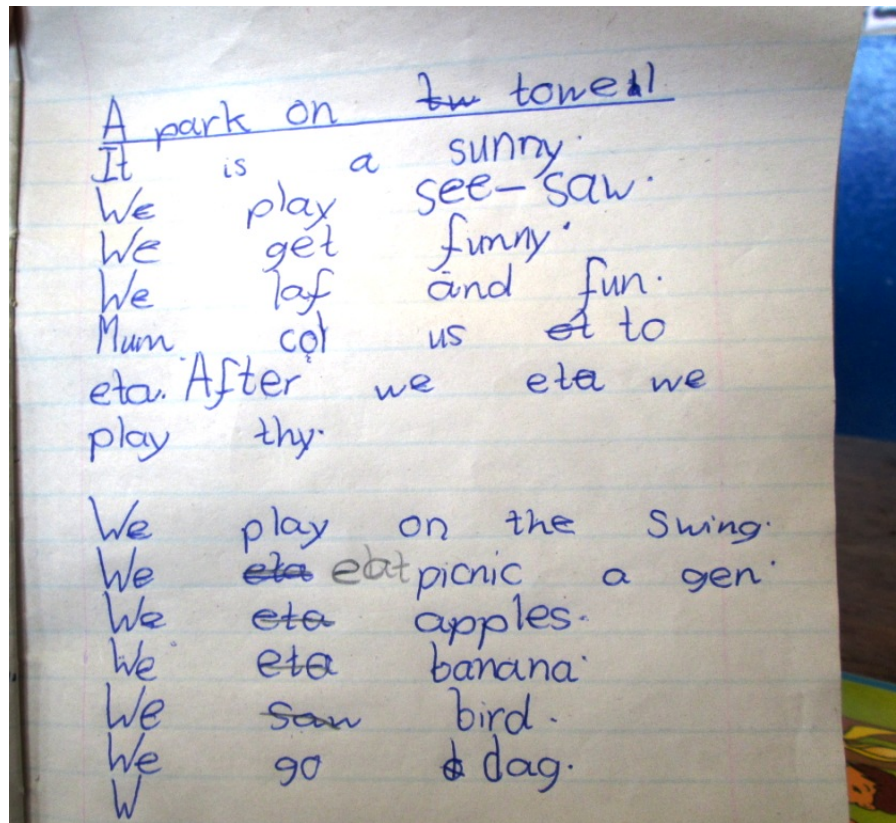
### A SAMPLE OF A GRADE 1 LEARNER'S WRITING



**Visual presentation 5.3** Figure illustrating the writing of a Grade 1 learner in Educator C's class

During the observation of a reading lesson in Educator C's class the researcher paged through Vuyo's (pseudonym) English book. Although the observation was conducted on the 4 September 2014 it was found that on the 11 August Vuyo, a Grade 1 learner in School D merely copied the words from the chalkboard and attempted to construct a sentence using each word. It is clear that Vuyo encountered great difficulty when constructing the sentences. None of the sentences are correctly constructed. There are several language and spelling errors.

### A SAMPLE OF A GRADE 3 LEARNER'S WRITING



**Visual presentation 5.4** Figure illustrating writing of a Grade 3 learner in Educator I's class

Sipho (pseudonym), a Grade 3 learner in Educator I's class was asked to construct sentences on "A day at the park". Educator I provided the learners with a picture of the park, discussed the picture with the learners, wrote all the difficult words on the chalkboard, and assisted the learners with sentence construction. However, if we consider Sipho's writing it is clearly evident that he experiences immense difficulty constructing sentences. All his sentences are erroneous. There is an assortment of errors. Language errors, spelling errors and repetition of the word "we" are identified as the most common mistakes in Sipho's writing. It is worrying that in the third term Sipho could still not construct even a simple sentence correctly.

Overall, if we compare how reading and writing are taught at the five schools, it can be construed that the educators at Schools A, B, C, and D teach reading and writing in a similar manner. Although the educators from School E teach reading using the approaches that are used



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by the educators at the other four schools, the manner in which they teach reading and writing is extremely different. However, the circumstances and learning conditions at School E ought to be taken into consideration when making these comparisons.

#### **5.4 SUMMARY OF THE DATA GLEANED FROM THE QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE COMPONENTS OF THE STUDY**

A summary of the data obtained from the parent questionnaires, the educator questionnaires, the educator interviews, and the observations of reading and writing lessons is presented below.

##### **5.4.1 Findings and interpretations gleaned from the parent questionnaires**

A preponderance of the parent respondents in the sample are females and the majority of them are unemployed. In this study the majority of the parents have either completed Grade 11, 12 or tertiary education. The majority of the respondents reside in rural areas. Most of the parents indicated that they do not take their children to the library to borrow books, they sometimes read to their children, and that most of the time they listen when their children read. The implication here is that these learners may not have sufficient exposure to age appropriate literature. Although a substantial number of parents indicated that they have radios, televisions, books, newspapers, and magazines at home the effective use of these resources warrants further investigation. However, very few parents stated that they have computers or laptops at home.

A considerable number of parents highlighted that although their children feel anxious about reading and writing in English they nonetheless are excited about reading and writing in English.

The majority of the parents views for wanting their children to be able to read and write in English were strongly influenced by both integrative and instrumental motivation. However, when comparing instrumental and integrative motivation in this survey study, it can be deduced that these findings illuminate the dominance of instrumental motivation. On the other hand, several studies that were discussed in Chapter 3 have demonstrated that integratively motivated learners appear to perform better than instrumentally motivated learners.

An analysis of the data gleaned from the parent questionnaires regarding isiZulu-speaking learners' proficiency in isiZulu reveal that the majority of the isiZulu-speaking learners are very competent when it comes to speaking in isiZulu and understanding oral isiZulu. On the other the

majority of the IsiZulu-speaking learners in this study have not yet learnt to read and write in their primary language. Accordingly, these learners would have achieved BICS in isiZulu but would not have achieved CALP in isiZulu.

The majority of the parents in the sample view their children's ability to speak in English, to understand oral English, to read English books, to understand written English, and to write in English, as good. These results would imply that most of the parents in this study are generally satisfied with their children's ability to read and write in English; since they have rated their children's reading and writing abilities as mostly good.

#### **5.4.2 Findings and interpretations gleaned from the educator questionnaire**

The profile of the educator that emerged out of the analysis of the educator questionnaire indicated that, on the whole, female educators were in absolute majority. The majority of the educators were between the ages of 36 and 45 and most of them had between 11 to 20 years of teaching experience. In terms of their academic qualifications, most of the educators met or exceeded the minimum requirements. Generally, most of the educators rated their training in the teaching of English as a second language and their CAPS training with regard to bilingual/multilingual teaching as ranging from adequate to excellent. The majority of the educators asserted that they are either slightly proficient in isiZulu or are not at all proficient in isiZulu.

An overwhelming majority of the educators affirmed that they use the phonic approach to teach reading to L2 learners. This appeared to be the dominant approach when teaching reading.

With regard to the library as a resource centre the majority of the educators affirmed that their school libraries are under-stocked. However, most of them have library corners in their classrooms.

An alarming number of educators are of the opinion that the appropriate age for learners to be enrolled in Grade 1 is six years – turning seven by June. This was later affirmed by the educator interviewees.

A greater percentage of parents than educators viewed reading and writing as anxiety provoking among isiZulu-speaking learners. With regard to the learners' attitudes towards reading, the

educators' views buttress the parents' perceptions; since the majority of the parents and educators viewed reading as an exciting task for isiZulu-speaking learners. However, most of the parents felt that their children are not excited about writing in English; while most of the educators affirmed that the majority of the isiZulu-speaking learners in their classes are excited about writing in English.

There appears to be a disparity when we compare the parents' views with the educators' views with regard to the learners' ability to speak in English, to understand oral English, to read English texts fluently, to read and comprehend English texts, and to write simple stories in English. A greater percentage of parents in this study than educators felt that the learners' ability to speak English, to understand oral English, to read English texts fluently, to read and comprehend English texts, and to write simple stories in English is good.

As explained earlier, the educators focus more on language structure and grammatical rules when writing. It is possible that parents only focus on conveying a message in writing; irrespective of spelling errors, grammatical errors and errors in language structure. This could possibly have contributed to the inconsistencies in the parents' and educators' views.

When educators were asked about their views on the CAPS English home language workbook and the CAPS document a significant number of educators acknowledged that CAPS is too challenging for most isiZulu-speaking learners, CAPS consists of too many reading assessments, too much of emphasis is placed on assessments, the teaching of phonics is not well-structured in the CAPS document, CAPS does not cater for the individual learners' reading and writing needs, when implementing CAPS more time is spent on assessing than on constructive teaching, and an excessive number of reading and writing assessments is frustrating. These issues of contention imply that generally the educators at the five schools are not satisfied with several aspects in the CAPS English home language workbook and the CAPS document. Delving deeper into these findings, we see the dire need for modifications to the CAPS document.

It appears that the foremost contributing factor to the teaching of reading and writing in the foundation phase is the learner/educator ratio at schools. Many of the educators reported that their large classes negatively affect the provision of extra individual lessons to isiZulu-speaking learners who experience reading and writing difficulties. All the educators indicated that they

have between 30 to 49 learners in their classes. Therefore, as expected, it would be a demanding task for educators to provide extra individual lessons to isiZulu-speaking learners who experience reading and writing difficulties. The problem is exacerbated especially when these learners retrogress. This can be foreseen since these learners are learning through the medium of English.

Furthermore, a great number of educators believed that learners who enter Grade 1 at the age of five are not emotionally ready for school, and that they generally experience reading and writing difficulties. The educators also felt that motivation, attitudes, confidence, and anxiety are some of the critical psychological factors that could determine the learners' reading and writing achievements.

### **5.4.3 Findings and interpretations gleaned from the educator interviews**

This study reveals that several cultural, psychological, social, cognitive, and developmental factors do impact on the learners' reading and writing achievements.

A common recurring factor in all the educator interviews with regard to isiZulu-speaking learners' reading and writing achievements in English is home language background. Educators felt that among isiZulu-speaking learners the use of the English language is confined to the classroom. At home these learners are speaking in isiZulu. However, in order for these learners to make adequate progress in the English language it is crucial for these learners to have sufficient exposure to both languages.

Two other significant aspects that were emphasised by several educators are phonics and the pronunciation of words in English. Educators considered phonics and pronunciation of words to be inextricably linked with culture. They generally felt that isiZulu-speaking learners experience difficulties sounding and pronouncing English words while reading and this is due to the culture in which they were nurtured.

A rather confusing aspect that is related to grammar is the use of pronouns. This is also due to the isiZulu culture. Educators believed that isiZulu-speaking learners confuse the pronouns "he" and "she". Additionally, when isiZulu-speaking learners are asked to write in English some educators mentioned that they have a tendency to translate from isiZulu to English.

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From the majority of the educator interviews it can be inferred that isiZulu-speaking learners do achieve social and psychological proximity, thus yielding a high degree of acculturation. A high degree of acculturation will assist in achieving a high level of success in the target language and consequently, success in reading and writing in English. These educators believed that isiZulu-speaking learners are following the integration model of acculturation. This model appears to be the most suitable acculturation strategy for young learners.

On the other hand a few educators felt that isiZulu-speaking learners are practising the acculturation process of separation; that is they are identifying with their language and culture and rejecting the English language and culture. This model is not appropriate for isiZulu-speaking learners since it will not assist in achieving a high degree of success in reading and writing in English.

In this study, the acculturation processes of assimilation and marginalisation were not found amongst isiZulu-speaking learners.

The majority of the educators interviewed indicated that generally isiZulu-speaking learners do experience reading anxiety. Since the foundation phase learners are asked to read aloud individually, in pairs or in groups, educators are able to easily identify the anxious L2 readers. The views expressed by the majority of the educators concur with the majority of the parents' views, the findings from the educator questionnaires, and several studies that were discussed in Chapter 3 that suggest that reading in an L2 is indeed anxiety provoking to some L2 learners.

The majority of the educators who were interviewed expressed the view that isiZulu-speaking learners in their classes experience writing anxiety. The views of the above educators are analogous to the majority of the parents' views and most of the educator respondents. Conversely, a large number of the educator interviewees affirmed that the isiZulu-speaking learners in their classes do not experience writing test anxiety.

The majority of the educators who were interviewed reinforced that generally isiZulu-speaking learners have positive attitudes towards reading in English. These educators' opinions reaffirmed the parents' views. The data gleaned from the parent questionnaires and the educator questionnaires suggest that isiZulu-speaking learners are always or most of the time excited about reading in English. Accordingly, it can be tentatively inferred that majority of the isiZulu-

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speaking learners have predominantly positive attitudes towards reading in English. This positive attitude will certainly be transferred to improved reading results. Additionally, several educators acknowledged that the brighter isiZulu-speaking learners have more positive attitudes towards writing in English whereas the weaker learners have more negative attitudes towards writing in English.

According to the educators' views learners prefer conversing in isiZulu with their peers during lessons. The major reason for some learners conversing in English is due to the fact that educators are resolute when it comes to learners communicating with peers during lessons. On the other hand, the majority of the educators proclaimed that isiZulu-speaking learners converse with their peers in isiZulu during the breaks, on the playgrounds, and during social activities. The educators' responses in this regard correspond with the researcher's observations.

Moreover, the findings of this study suggest that isiZulu-speaking learners have good social relationships with their English-speaking peers as well as their isiZulu-speaking peers, and are consistent with the researcher's observations. This is significant not only for the isiZulu-speaking learner's social well being but also in terms of cognitive development.

From their experiences, all the educators indicated that they have not had any isiZulu-speaking learners in their classes who felt alienated or isolated. The fact that the majority of the children at the five schools are isiZulu-speaking learners; language should not be the foremost reason for social isolation and alienation.

The New Way graded readers were predominantly used in four of the five schools to teach reading. The data gleaned from the educator questionnaires and the interviews highlighted the dominance of the phonic approach in the teaching of reading to L2 learners. This was later confirmed during researcher's observations of several reading lessons at the five schools. In addition to using the phonic approach several educators stated that they use flashcards to teach reading. All the difficult words are extracted from the graded readers and are written on flashcards. Furthermore, the Grade 1 educators also pointed out that they use the Breakthrough to Literacy.

It was noticed that a common procedure is followed when educators taught writing to foundation phase second language learners. All the educators stated that first they give the learners a topic.

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They discuss the topic. The educators write all the difficult words on the chalkboard in order to assist the learners when they write their sentences. Learners also have wordlists with the breakthrough words in their flip files and they have word books or dictionaries to assist them with their spelling. This approach to the teaching of writing to L2 learners was also observed by the researcher during the classroom observations.

Almost all the educators expressed their absolute dissatisfaction with the CAPS English home language workbook. These educators felt that the book is too advanced and is not at the learners' levels of development. It was also found that all the educators who were interviewed were not content with the manner in which the phonics is structured in the CAPS workbook.

A great number of educators felt that CAPS is not working effectively in the classroom. This was to be expected considering the fact that the data spawned from the educator questionnaires revealed that most of the educators acknowledged that CAPS is too challenging for most isiZulu-speaking learners. When educators were asked which aspects of the CAPS document they find most difficult to implement their responses were relatively varied. Some educators reiterated that the teaching of phonics is the most difficult to implement as stipulated in the CAPS document. Writing and assessments were also perceived as difficult tasks to execute when implementing CAPS.

It is not surprising that educators yet again emphasised that the phonics in the CAPS document is difficult to implement since it is not well-structured, it is confusing for the learners, and it is not progressive. This was verified by most of the educators who completed and returned the questionnaires.

It is clearly evident that the number of assessments has increased with CAPS and educators appear to be despondent because they feel that they are doing more assessing than constructive teaching. This was also apparent in the data that was generated from the educator questionnaires where a large number of the educators maintained that too much of emphasis is placed on assessments, when implementing CAPS more time is utilised for assessing than for constructive teaching, and that the excessive number of reading and writing assessments is frustrating.

All the educators who were interviewed reinforced that five year old children are not ready for formal schooling. From their experiences they found that vast discrepancies exist between five

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year olds and six or seven year olds. The above findings are further elucidated by the statistics retrieved from the questionnaires; which demonstrated that a considerable number of the educators felt that learners who enter Grade 1 at the age of five are not emotionally ready for formal schooling, and a substantial number of the educators remarked that isiZulu-speaking learners who enter Grade 1 at the age of five generally experience reading and writing difficulties in English. These findings have telling implications for five year old isiZulu-speaking learners who are enrolled in Grade 1.

It was not surprising to note that all the educators who were interviewed concurred that the Department of Education should reconsider the policy for age of entry to Grade 1. Most of the educators believed that the policy should be amended so that the age of entry to Grade 1 is six years and not five years.

The majority of educator interviewees explicitly stated that from their experiences and observations there are major differences between the performance of boys and girls in reading and writing. They expressively pointed out that girls perform better than boys.

The educators' views illustrated the global dominance of the English language, and thus the need to learn the language. These were also expressed by the parents who preferred to enroll their children in English medium schools.

One of the interviewees was familiar with any of the theories for second language teaching. The implication here is that educators require in-service training on the various theories that can be used to teach second language learners.

Educators reiterated the significance of Grade R attendance and the Grade R curriculum. Furthermore, the significance of isiZulu-speaking learners being enrolled in English medium schools from Grade R was emphasised. Some educators highlighted the necessity of a readiness or screening test for learners prior to entry to Grade 1.

The unique barriers that are experienced by isiZulu-speaking learners when reading and writing in English and not by English-speaking learners are: limited vocabulary, processing of information and limited ability to understand.



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The unique challenges experienced by educators who teach reading and writing to isiZulu-speaking learners are: communication, parental involvement, educator/learner ratio, inadequately trained educators, and the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement.

#### **5.4.4 Findings and interpretations gleaned from the reading and writing observations**

During the reading observations it was noticed that the educators from Schools A, B, C, and D teach reading in a similar manner. The phonic and the language experience approaches were used to teach reading. However, it was noticed that the phonic approach appeared to be the more dominant approach. The findings from the educator questionnaire as well as the educator interviews evidently complement the researcher's observations with regard to the approaches used to teach reading to L2 learners.

In Schools A, B, C, and D story writing was taught in a similar manner. Educators at these schools generally taught story writing by using pictures. The educators introduced the topic with pictures. Pictures were distributed to the learners. The educators discussed the pictures. The learners also contributed to the discussions. Learners cut and pasted the pictures in their books. With the assistance of the educators learners were asked to write stories based on the pictures. The educators wrote all the difficult words on the chalkboard. Learners also made use of their dictionaries.

Overall, if we compare how reading and writing are taught at the five schools, it can be construed that the educators at Schools A, B, C, and D teach reading and writing in a similar manner. Although the educators from School E teach reading using the approaches that are used by the educators at the other four schools, the manner in which they teach reading and writing is extremely different. However, the circumstances and learning conditions at School E ought to be taken into consideration when making these comparisons.

### **5.5 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter the factors that affect foundation phase English second language learners' reading and writing skills were investigated. In order to provide an in-depth perspective, both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used. Data retrieved from the parent questionnaires revealed that the isiZulu-speaking learners' linguistic environment is not conducive to the

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development of English literacy skills. Generally, learners do not have access to libraries, only a few parents always read to their children, and less than half of the sample indicated that they always listen when their children read. Parents highlighted that their children always or most of the time feel anxious about reading and writing in English. They also emphasised that their children always or most of the time are excited about reading and writing in English. They felt that their children's ability to read and write in isiZulu is poor but to read and write in English is good.

Additionally, the parents' opinions reinforced the significance of being able to read and write in English. English, being an international language, a language of development, and an important language in South Africa, was viewed as a language that is essential in order to acquire better employment and to study at colleges or universities and/or abroad. IsiZulu-speaking parents want their children to be able to read and write in English because they view English literacy as a crucial advantage for their children, and their conscious effort to promote it, a future investment.

The profile of the educator that emerged out of this analysis indicated that, on the whole, female educators were in absolute majority. The majority of the educators were between the ages of 36 and 45 and most of them had between 11 to 20 years of teaching experience. In terms of their academic qualifications, most of the educators met or exceeded the minimum requirements.

The data generated from the educator questionnaires emphasised the need for in-service training in the teaching of reading and writing skills. Educators reported that isiZulu-speaking learners are anxious when asked to read and write in English and they are excited to read and write in English. Their views on the learners' ability to read English texts fluently ranged from fair to poor; and to write stories in English as poor.

Educators highlighted their dissatisfaction with CAPS. They argued that CAPS is too challenging for most isiZulu-speaking learners, consists of too many reading assessments, and does not cater for the individual learner's reading and writing needs. Too much emphasis is placed on assessments since more time is spent on assessing than on constructive teaching. A vital aspect that promotes the development of reading skills is phonics which educators believed is not well-structured in the CAPS document.

Educators also reiterated that the large learner/educator ratio negatively affects the provision of individual lessons to isiZulu-speaking learners who experience reading and writing difficulties. Hence, educators experience frustration when teaching reading and writing, and conducting an excessive number of reading and writing assessments. According to the educators, learners who enter Grade 1 at the age of five are not emotionally ready for formal schooling and they generally experience difficulties reading and writing in English.

The reading observations demonstrated that educators preferred using the phonic approach, flashcards, and Breakthrough to Literacy to teach reading to foundation phase learners. The writing observations demonstrated that educators chose to use pictures which were accompanied by difficult words, to teach writing.

The subsequent chapter comprises the conclusions that were drawn from the results of this study. Recommendations for future research are provided and the limitations of the study highlighted.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapter the results of the study were discussed. In this chapter the researcher explores the conclusions of the literature study and the empirical research with regard to factors that affect foundation phase English second language learners' reading and writing skills; against the background of Inclusive Education. The limitations of the study are highlighted and recommendations that have educational implications are made for improving the reading and writing achievements of foundation phase second language learners. Additionally, policy implications are explored. The conclusions, recommendations, and limitations are derived from the findings in this investigation and are applicable to the schools that are similar in context to the five schools researched.

#### 6.2 BACKGROUND

A proliferation of research studies has provided strong evidence that many learners in South Africa experience reading and writing difficulties. Widespread studies conducted by the South African Department of Education, the Provincial Departments of Education as well as international bodies reflect that learners in South African schools performed poorly when tested for their ability to read at age-appropriate levels (See 1.5.2). It was also found that large numbers of South African children simply do not read.

A systemic evaluation of language competence of intermediate phase learners in South Africa in 2005 reflected that 63% of the learners were below the required competence for their age level (See 1.5.2). South Africa's Grade 6 learner performance in SACMEQ 2 and SACMEQ 3 also revealed unacceptably low levels of reading competence. In 2000 and 2007 the reading achievement scores were below the predetermined SACMEQ average of 500 (See 1.5.2). It was also disconcerting to note that the vast majority of learners in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) did not reach acceptable levels of reading performance.

Cross-national comparisons between South Africa and its neighbouring countries Botswana, Namibia, and Mozambique indicate that learners from Botswana and Namibia performed considerably better in SACMEQ 3 than learners from South Africa and that South African learners performed reasonably better than learners from Mozambique (See 1.5.2). This cross-national comparability also indicates that South Africa has the second best performing province (Western Cape) and the worst performing province (Limpopo) of the 40 provinces in all four countries. This provides some evidence that South Africa has the greatest variation in learner performance of all four countries.

Additionally, in PIRLS 2006, Grade 4 and Grade 5 learners from South Africa achieved the lowest scores of the 40 participating countries, with approximately 80% failing to reach the Low International Benchmark, meaning that they had not mastered the basic reading skills (See 1.5.2). In PrePIRLS 2011 Grade 4 learners who wrote in Afrikaans or English achieved average scores of 525 and 530 respectively, higher than the international centre point of 500; while the average scores obtained by learners from all the African languages were well below the international centre point of 500 (See 1.5.2).

Furthermore, the results obtained from the SACMEQ 2, SACMEQ 3 and the PIRLS study demonstrated a persistent gap in reading achievement between girls and boys, with girls outperforming boys (See 1.5.2). There were significant gender differences in reading achievement with more girls at the upper end of the reading scale and more boys at the lower end.

Spaull (2011:36) illuminates the veracity that there is an alarmingly high percentage of functionally illiterate [unable to read and write] learners in KwaZulu-Natal [28%]. He stresses that in KwaZulu-Natal, the number of functionally illiterate learners ranges from approximately one in three learners to one in two learners. This problem could be exacerbated by the fact that there are many isiZulu-speaking foundation phase learners in KZN who are not taught in their home language but in English as their second language. Furthermore, there are significantly more functionally illiterate learners in rural areas than in urban areas, as one might expect.

Since extensive studies have shown that many South African learners demonstrate unacceptably low levels and quality of competencies in the foundational skills of literacy (reading and writing) (See 1.5.2), this study aimed to investigate the factors that affect foundation phase English second language learners' reading and writing skills.

### **6.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of the study was to examine the factors that affect isiZulu-speaking foundation phase learners' reading and writing skills in English medium schools. Hence, the following questions were examined:

- ❖ Which learning theories had been formulated in the field of second language acquisition and what were their implications for this study?
- ❖ What did other researchers worldwide and in South Africa find with regard to factors that affect young second language learners' reading and writing skills?
- ❖ Currently, in the five English medium primary schools included in this research study which factors are significantly related to isiZulu-speaking foundation phase learners' reading and writing achievements?
- ❖ What can be recommended to improve the reading and writing achievements of isiZulu-speaking foundation phase learners in South Africa, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal; and more specifically in the five English medium primary schools?

From the discussions and recommendations included in the rest of this chapter, it will be noticed that these four research questions for the study were answered.

### **6.4 RESEARCH DESIGN**

A mixed-method research design was used. In this study mixed methods research was seen as adopting a pragmatic philosophy, based on the premise that the researcher in order to answer complex research questions made use of all the tools and methods at her disposal, thus interplay of methods as opposed to a compromise (See 1.8). Although there are numerous characteristics of pragmatism, the one advanced in this study was based on the principle of context, and that

questions of research dictated the use of mixed methods. In this view, combining methods was deemed the preferential manner in which the researcher could expect to arrive at knowledge of greater completeness (See 1.8). Since this study incorporated a mixed methods research design the study utilised pragmatism as its philosophical departure.

Qualitative and quantitative data were collected simultaneously or concurrently. The qualitative component was used to supplement and validate the quantitative study. Thus, data were triangulated.

The framework for the research conducted for this study was based on the gathering of multiple sources of data which included questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations. The use of multiple sources of data provided the researcher with a variety of data that allowed for insight into the sustained consistency of cultural, psychological and affective, social, cognitive, and school factors throughout the course of the study.

The multiple sources of data included a self-designed parent questionnaire, a self-designed educator questionnaire, interviews with foundation phase educators, and observations of reading and writing lessons in the foundation phase classrooms. The parent questionnaires were administered to 158 parents of isiZulu-speaking learners in all the five schools and 143 questionnaires were completed and returned. The educator questionnaires were distributed to all (48) the foundation phase educators in the five schools and all the subjects completed and returned the questionnaires. Interviews were conducted with 13 foundation phase educators: three in Grade 1, four in Grade 2, and six in Grade 3.

Ten reading and writing lessons in the foundation phase were observed. Classroom observations of reading and writing lessons allowed the researcher to validate the use of approaches to teach reading and writing to isiZulu-speaking learners, as presented by the educators in their questionnaires and interviews. Observation of reading and writing lessons also allowed the researcher to observe isiZulu-speaking learners' interactions with the educator as well as their English-speaking classmates, the existence of the process of acculturation, the attitudes of isiZulu-speaking learners towards reading and writing in English, and the ability of isiZulu-speaking learners to read and write in English. These observations occurred consistently for a

period of two months. The researcher routinely visited the five participating schools and therefore, established a sense of instructional approaches to reading and writing and consistency across the classes, grades, and schools.

The multiplicity of sources of data obtained from the questionnaires, interviews, and observations allowed for triangulation in order to confirm the findings. Consequently, the convergence of the different sources of findings served to confirm an accurate portrait of the phenomenon being examined.

The researcher used two measures of validity in this study: face validity and content validity. Face validity was established by giving a draft questionnaire to approximately three parents and three educators, prior to pilot testing. They were asked to comment on whether the instruments [questionnaires] provided valid data for the purpose of the study. This also ensured reliability of the research instrument. The possible factors that affect isiZulu-speaking foundation phase learners' reading and writing skills were validated by the literature study to sample the concepts adequately. Hence, content validity was established.

In the qualitative component credibility or internal validity was achieved by carefully recording the interviews, transcribing the interviews verbatim, analysing all the data gathered, and presenting the data in a fair and unbiased manner. In order for the readers to determine the transferability of this study, the researcher provided a complete description of the participants and the context of the research so that readers can determine to what extent the findings might be applicable to other contexts. This implies that transferability, or applicability of the results to other contexts, was accomplished by reporting "thick descriptions". Interpretative validity was attained when the researcher used direct quotations when writing the research report.

Dependability, or consistency of the findings, was achieved since the interviews were recorded. Electronically recorded data assisted the researcher to make use of all interpretive cues in order to draw inferences and evaluate the dependability of the inferences that had been drawn. Additionally, in reporting the qualitative study, the researcher provided a rich description of the participants involved in the study, the context for the study, and, most importantly, all the steps taken to carry out the study. Confirmability, or neutrality of the findings, was achieved since full



details of the data on which claims or interpretations were based were made available. This will allow other researchers to be able to examine the data and confirm, modify, or reject the researcher's interpretations.

## **6.5 CONCLUSIONS**

The following conclusions were derived from the literature study and from the quantitative and qualitative data collected and analysed in the empirical investigation.

### **6.5.1 Conclusions from the literature study**

The rationale for the exploration of the literature was to raise awareness of the current trends in research findings regarding second language acquisition and factors that impact on the ESL learners' reading and writing achievements. Furthermore, the expansion of the English language, the significance of the primary language in second language acquisition, insights and issues focusing on bilingualism and multilingualism, second language acquisition, reading and writing in the home language, and factors related to English second language learners' reading and writing achievements were examined.

#### **6.5.1.1 The expansion of the English language**

The initial component of the literature study highlighted the global dominance of the English language in various sectors of communication in the media, trade and the economy, science, technology, education, politics, government administration, the judiciary, and legislation. As an indispensable international language, English is associated with better job opportunities and inevitably vocational success. Its worldwide status has contributed to making it the most commonly used second language in South Africa. Hence, English has become a lingua franca within the country.

#### **6.5.1.2 The significance of the primary language in second language acquisition**

For several decades UNESCO and UNICEF have persistently emphasised the expediency of home language education. This was supported by a growing body of contemporary research studies conducted in a number of countries by various prominent researchers such as Hakuta, Dixon, and Walter (See 2.3.1). Moreover, numerous studies in South Africa by researchers such

as Heugh, Benson, Bogale, Yohannes, Taylor, and Coetzee revealed a replication of the results reported by UNESCO (See 2.3.1.1). Further attestation was provided by one of the preeminent Canadian researchers, Jim Cummins and was corroborated by renowned researchers, Thomas and Collier, in the United States (See 2.3.1.2). The verity that a compendium of studies has documented that cognitive processes work less efficiently through the second language implies that the South African Department of Basic Education needs to focus in the first instance on providing home language education to its learners.

#### 6.5.1.3 Insights and issues focusing on bilingualism and multilingualism

UNESCO has a strong commitment to support home language instruction and bilingual and multilingual education to improve the quality of education. Heugh, Young, De Klerk, Benson, Skutnabb-Kangas, and Thomas and Collier mention a number of bilingual programmes (See 2.3.2). However, strong models take an additive approach. The cognitive benefits of additive bilingual and multilingual programmes are supported by an impressive number of research studies which have documented a moderately strong correlation between bilingual learners' L1 and L2 literacy skills in situations where learners have the opportunity to develop literacy skills in both languages (See 2.3.2).

#### 6.5.1.4 Second language acquisition

The section on second language acquisition in the literature study is critical in understanding how learners acquire an L2. The theories of second language acquisition were the foremost focus of this part of the literature study. The acquisition of an L2 is inextricably linked to the acquisition of an L1. Chomsky, who is a leading proponent of Universal Grammar (UG), proposed a theory that all people have an innate, biological ability to acquire language and UG is part of that innate biologically endowed language faculty (See 2.4.1). Chomsky's theory of UG emphasises that children could not learn their first language without the assistance of an innate language faculty to guide them. Furthermore, he suggested that the LAD predisposes all people to the acquisition of a second language. However, this innate faculty may or may not be available for L2 acquisition.

The dominant theories of second language acquisition which were highlighted in the literature study will be encapsulated in this section. Of significance in Krashen's theory of second language acquisition are the acquisition-learning distinction, the input hypothesis and the affective filter hypothesis. According to Krashen there are two ways of developing a second language: the "acquired system" and the "learned system" (See 2.4.2.1). Comprehensible input, which is an essential aspect of Krashen's input hypothesis, is a necessary condition for the acquisition of a second language (See 2.4.2.4). Affective variables such as motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety play a facilitative role in second language acquisition (See 2.4.2.5).

Cummins's developmental interdependence hypothesis argued that L1 acquisition plays a crucial role in L2 development because of the transfer of cognitive skills used in the acquisition of the L1 to the acquisition of the L2 (See 2.4.3). Thus, the processing of information in the L1 enhances the transfer of concepts to the L2. Cummins's BICS/CALP framework encapsulates the developmental nature of BICS and CALP (See 2.4.3.1 and 2.4.3.2), in that CALP is developed after BICS.

Dynamic systems are systems that change over time and are characterised by what is called complete interconnectedness. The Dynamic Systems Theory (DST) places great emphasis on the interconnectedness of the language system when related to second language acquisition (See 2.4.4). The butterfly effect in SLA is seen when difficulties experienced in the L2 are due to problems experienced in the L1 acquisition (See 2.4.4). Dynamic Systems Theory also emphasises attractor states that tend to occur during SLA (See 2.4.4).

Sociocultural Theory (SCT) illuminates the role of social processes in cognitive and linguistic development (See 2.4.5). Great emphasis is placed on the culture in which the child develops and the role of peer interactions in relationships. Language is viewed as a socially constructed intellectual tool, and participation in social activities is mediated by the use of language. Hence, SCT argues that the development of the individual is mediated by others. Accordingly, SLA is facilitated by interaction between the learner and a more proficient English speaker.

Scaffolding is expressed as an instructional process by which the educator adjusts or modifies the amount and type of support offered to the learner that is best suited to his or her level of

development (See 2.4.5). Meaningful scaffolding in reading and writing will also assist learners to achieve the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The ZPD is an area of potential development, where the learner can achieve that potential only with assistance (See 2.4.5).

#### 6.5.1.5 Reading and writing in the home language: Prerequisites for academic achievement

Of all the core competencies recognised to contribute to lifelong learning and sustainable development, none is quite as central as the aptitude to read and write. Reading and writing are the foundational, complex cognitive skills on which all formal education depends. However, reading and writing deficits are endemic in numerous Asian and African countries (See 3.2.1, 3.2.2, and 3.2.3). Consequently, several reading assessments such as ASER, EGRA, PIRLS, Pre-PIRLS, and SCAMEQ have been implemented in numerous countries (See 3.2). Additionally, other non-government organisations that focus on literacy learning include Save the Children, RTI, PRAESA, and SIL (See 3.2). The extensive studies on reading and writing that were conducted by some of these organisations amplify the crisis in education and the plight of early grade learners. An attributing factor to this catastrophe is the fact that many children in countries in Africa, Asia, and South America are learning through the medium of an L2.

Literacy assessments conducted in, for instance, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka provided deplorable results. These assessments revealed that majority of the learners were not learning to read even simple sentences by Grade 2; in no country did children reach grade level expectations; writing ability was very low in all countries; and there was high disparity in reading levels from Grade 2 onwards (See 3.2.1).

Overall, EGRA results from African countries such as Egypt, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Malawi, Mali, Senegal, South Africa, Uganda, and Zambia demonstrated that most learners had not acquired a basic level of reading proficiency by the end of Grade 2 [or beginning of Grade 3] to allow them to transition from learning to read to reading to learn in the later grades (See 3.2.2). Sadly, the results being found by EGRA in most developing countries are nothing less than disastrous.

#### 6.5.1.6 Factors related to English second language learners' reading and writing achievements

English second language learners are generally confronted with a multiplicity of challenges when they enter English medium schools. These challenges could arise as a result of numerous factors which can be contemporaneous and may perhaps affect the learners' reading and writing achievements. Thus, the literature study examined the cultural, psychological and affective, cognitive, social, school, gender, and age factors that are related to the ESL learners' reading and writing achievements.

Since one's knowledge of one's primary language is culturally transmitted culture plays a pivotal role when acquiring a second language. The cultural factors included the models of acculturation which consists of separation, assimilation, deculturation, and integration (See 3.3.1). The acculturation hypothesis implies that the learner will acquire the L2 only to the degree that he or she integrates socially and psychologically with the L1 group (See 3.3.1). The studies on acculturation discussed in the literature study revealed contrasting findings. In some studies it was found that learners preferred integration and assimilation as acculturation experiences. Other studies revealed that not all learners felt that they were acculturating or wanted to do so (See 3.3.1).

Also, culturally familiar texts help to facilitate reading and writing. A wealth of studies has indicated that language curricula are more meaningful when they relate to the learners' personal lives and cultural backgrounds and that culturally familiar items do facilitate L2 reading and writing (See 3.3.1).

Two significant psychological factors discussed in the literature study are anxiety and motivation. In recent years, it is widely recognised and accepted by language researchers that anxiety has a close relationship with L2 learning. Second language anxiety has been almost entirely associated with the oral aspects of language use. Consequently, research on language anxiety has mainly studied the oral aspects of language anxiety [speaking and listening], and relatively underestimating the other two components of language anxiety [reading and writing] (See 3.3.2.1). However, there were several researchers who did conduct research based on reading and writing anxiety. A preponderance of studies indicated that reading is indeed anxiety

provoking to L2 learners (See 3.3.2.1). As mentioned in the literature study, two very crucial aspects of L2 reading that would seem to have great potential for eliciting reading anxiety are unfamiliar scripts and writing systems, and unfamiliar cultural material.

Additionally, studies have repeatedly demonstrated that L2 learners utilising the productive skill of writing were found to experience a considerable amount of anxiety in the process of learning (See 3.3.1). Furthermore, learners with low reading proficiency were found to be more anxious, and learners' writing anxiety was caused by their lack of writing skills.

Motivation is one of the main determinants of L2 learning achievement (See 3.3.2.2). It plays a critical role in determining the effort that learners make towards learning an L2. The most widely recognised types of motivation discussed in the literature study are integrative and instrumental motivation. The literature study also revealed controversial views regarding the type of motivation that appears to be a major force in determining success in L2 learning. However, scores of studies have indicated that integratively motivated learners tend to be higher achievers than instrumentally motivated ones (See 3.3.2.2).

Second language learners also experience great cognitive and social demands as they are required to read and write as well as to develop social relationships in order to participate fully in the school curriculum (See 3.3.3). Some of the cognitive factors discussed in Chapter 3 include comprehension and articulation difficulties, limited vocabulary and grammatical errors in their writing and speaking, difficulties in understanding class discussions, and difficulties in communicating concerns and viewpoints.

Additionally, learners' background knowledge could influence SLA (See 3.3.3). When lack of background knowledge that is required to learn new information is added to language difficulties, learners experience a heavy "cognitive load", which is usually lightened if the learners are at least able to draw on their own experiences and knowledge.

A crucial factor that was examined in the literature study is the transfer of skills from the L1 to the L2. Home language literacy provides a good foundation for English literacy since various aspects of reading and writing transfer across languages (See 3.3.3). Consequently, learners who have a strong primary language literacy base tend to have an easier time learning English,

while those who lack strong primary language skills, tend to struggle as they learn English. Thus, education in the primary language facilitates academic adjustment while providing a solid experiential base for literacy development in the L2.

Furthermore, the question of orthography plays a significant linguistic role (See 3.3.3). The literature study reflected that in languages with shallow orthographies [such as Spanish and French], the learning progression in reading and writing is more rapid than in languages with a deep orthography [such as English] where the correspondences between graphemes and phonemes are more complex. When the writing systems of the L1 and L2 are similar, then positive transfer can occur in decoding. However, when writing systems differ, to learn to read in English, learners need to learn the specific conventions of how English is represented in print while at the same time developing English language proficiency to facilitate reading comprehension.

Moreover, it is well known that all the indigenous African languages spoken in South Africa are agglutinative in nature. The isiZulu language and other indigenous languages often use fewer words in a sentence because one or two words denote a number of words, a phrase or even a sentence in English. This has consequences for ease of acquisition or word recognition and automaticity. Additionally, the indigenous languages do not have the pronouns he, him, she, and her to indicate gender.

Factors related to the institutional context were also examined in the literature study. These factors include, amongst other things, the curriculum, and the educators' competences, expectations and attitudes (See 3.3.4). The literature review reinforced that schools have failed to provide quality education to children in a language that the children understand and in which their parents can relate to school authorities (See 3.3.4.1). Dismissing the learners' prior knowledge, and trying to teach children to read and write in a language they are not accustomed to hearing or speaking, makes the teaching of reading and writing difficult, especially in under-resourced schools in developing countries. As a result, many learners repeat or drop out of school, while those who stay in school lack basic literacy skills and have not mastered content knowledge.

School authorities and parents do not always understand the importance of the primary language, first as the basis for learning the skills of reading and writing, and then as a basis for acquiring a second academic language. In the United States and elsewhere, accumulating studies demonstrate that the longer a child can learn reading and other content subjects in his or her L1 while learning the L2 in a cognitively demanding manner, the better the chances of success after elementary school (See 3.3.4.1).

Use of the learner's primary language as the medium of instruction and the language of reading accelerates learning, and allows the learner to develop the skills and knowledge that will enhance his or her potential for lifelong learning (See 3.3.4.1). However, an important fact to consider is that isiZulu-speaking learners are currently learning English as a home language in several schools.

Apart from the difficulties in accessing the curriculum, L2 learners find themselves in classes where educators are incompetent, have low expectations, and negative attitudes (See 3.3.4.2). Research has shown that most foundation phase educators in South Africa are uncertain about the methods and approaches that they need to use in order to teach reading and writing to beginning readers at school and educators are not trained to teach reading (See 3.3.4.2). This implies that educators do not have the capacity to teach reading and writing. Because of the limited qualifications of educators, they are not familiar with the different methods of instruction of English as an L2.

Gender differences also play a role in learners' reading and writing achievements. Voluminous research studies have indicated that girls significantly outperform boys on early reading tasks (See 3.3.5).

Vast differences exist in ESL learners' opportunities they have had to develop high-level language and literacy in the L1 and L2. Hence, children vary in the availability of learning support outside of school. Consequently, the learner's home environment plays a crucial role in developing reading and writing skills. The literature study revealed that a large number of learners are not exposed to print materials at home and most of the parents are unable to provide



effective support for learning at home (See 3.3.6). This is due to the generally low educational levels of parents.

Of significance in the literature study is the age factor. The age factor is one of the most frequently discussed variables for explaining individual differences in L2 acquisition. While L1 acquisition usually starts at the same time for all L1 learners, there is tremendous variation as to when individuals commence learning an L2 (See 3.3.7). The critical period hypothesis assumes that language is biologically based and claims that it is not possible to acquire a native-like level of proficiency when learning of an L2 starts after a critical period, normally associated with puberty (See 3.3.7). This position is most strongly associated with acquiring the phonological system of an L2. The literature study highlighted studies that warranted the conclusion that “ability to attain native-like phonological abilities in an L2 begins to decline by age six in many individuals and to be beyond anyone beginning later than age twelve, no matter how motivated they might be or how much opportunity they might have” (See 3.3.7).

Another fundamental aspect related to age is the age at which the child is enrolled in Grade 1. The literature study examined studies that revealed that older children seemed to have a definite advantage in learning and, it was found that the learning disadvantages of the youngest children in the cohort that was visible in Grade 1 persisted over time (See 3.3.7). Thus, the younger children never caught up with their older counterparts.

### **6.5.2 Conclusions from the empirical study**

The empirical research was guided by the general research problem as well as the research questions.

The central question of this study was as follows:

- ❖ What are the distinguishing factors that affect isiZulu-speaking foundation phase learners’ reading and writing skills in English medium schools?

The research questions for this study were as follows:

- ❖ Which learning theories have been formulated in the field of second language acquisition and what are their implications for this study?

- ❖ What did other researchers worldwide and in South Africa find with regard to factors that affect young second language learners' reading and writing skills?
- ❖ Currently, in English medium primary schools, which factors are significantly related to isiZulu-speaking foundation phase learners' reading and writing achievements?
- ❖ What can be recommended to improve the reading and writing achievements of isiZulu-speaking foundation phase learners?

The findings of this study are discussed under the following themes that arose from the data: cultural factors, psychological and affective factors, social factors, cognitive factors, school factors with reference to the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement, general factors, unique barriers to learning and development, unique challenges, and the parents reasons for wanting their children to be able to read and write in English.

#### 6.5.2.1 Cultural factors

This study incontestably revealed the following with regard to cultural factors:

- ❖ Home language background played a critical role in the development of a group of isiZulu-speaking learners' reading and writing achievements. It was established that among isiZulu-speaking learners who were incorporated into the study the use of the English language was confined to the classroom. When learners were beyond the precincts of the classroom they conversed with their peers and family members in isiZulu. As a result the continuous switch from English to isiZulu and isiZulu to English was confusing for the learners, challenging for the educators, and contributed to the learners' poor reading and writing achievements.
- ❖ Phonics and pronunciation of words were considered to be inextricably linked with culture. The group of isiZulu-speaking learners under discussion generally experienced difficulties sounding and pronouncing English words while reading and this could be due to the culture in which they were nurtured.
- ❖ When the group of isiZulu-speaking learners was asked to write in English they had a tendency to translate from isiZulu to English even though they were not competent in

writing in isiZulu. IsiZulu-speaking learners frequently tried to translate from isiZulu to English because they spoke and they thought in isiZulu.

- ❖ Due to the isiZulu culture learners experienced difficulties with pronouns. They had a tendency to use the pronoun “she” when referring to males and females. Thus, pronouns appeared to be very confusing to these learners and it negatively affected their writing.
- ❖ No specific model of acculturation was found to be apparent in this study. There were relatively contrasting views with regard to acculturation. The majority of the educators maintained that isiZulu-speaking learners were identifying with both their culture and language and the English culture and language (integration). Some educators reported that isiZulu-speaking learners were rejecting the target language and culture and identifying with the native language and culture (separation). In this study, the acculturation processes of assimilation and marginalisation were not found amongst isiZulu-speaking learners.

#### 6.5.2.2 Psychological and affective factors

- ❖ All the educator respondents stated that learner’s individual attributes such as motivation, attitudes, confidence, and anxiety played a crucial role in SLA.
- ❖ The views expressed by the majority of the educators and parents suggested that reading in English was indeed anxiety provoking for several isiZulu-speaking learners.
- ❖ The educators and parents confirmed that there existed a considerable amount of writing anxiety in isiZulu-speaking learners.
- ❖ This study revealed that generally the group of isiZulu-speaking learners did not experience writing test anxiety. This could be due to the fact that they were still so young that the word “test” did not really have an impact on them and they didn’t really see the importance of testing.
- ❖ The group of isiZulu-speaking learners enjoyed reading English texts and they demonstrated relatively positive attitudes towards reading.

- ❖ The findings with regard to isiZulu-speaking learners' attitudes towards writing in English were somewhat varied. It appeared that mostly the brighter learners had positive attitudes and the weaker learners had negative attitudes towards writing in English.
- ❖ Although the parents' views were strongly influenced by both instrumental and integrative motivation, this study illuminated the dominance of instrumental motivation.

#### 6.5.2.3 Social factors

- ❖ According to the educators' views learners preferred conversing in isiZulu with their peers during lessons. The major reason for some learners conversing in English was due to the fact that educators were resolute when it came to learners communicating with peers during lessons.
- ❖ During the breaks, on the playgrounds, and during social activities such as sports, excursions and fun days isiZulu-speaking learners preferred to converse in isiZulu with their peers. However, they also had a tendency to use a mixture of languages, isiZulu and English.
- ❖ It was found that isiZulu-speaking learners interacted relatively well with both their English-speaking peers and their IsiZulu-speaking peers. Hence, they had good social relationships with their English-speaking peers as well as their isiZulu-speaking peers.
- ❖ The experiences of social isolation and alienation by isiZulu-speaking learners were not found in this study.

#### 6.5.2.4 Cognitive factors

- ❖ The isiZulu-speaking learners' ability to speak isiZulu and to understand isiZulu was relatively good.
- ❖ However, the ability to read and write in isiZulu of the IsiZulu-speaking learners' who were included in the research was generally poor. This was confirmed by the parents.
- ❖ The isiZulu-speaking learners' ability to speak English and to understand oral English ranged from fair to good. The educators' and parents' views were analogous in this

regard. However, pronunciation of words in English could be challenging as a result of accent. Additionally, the use of pronouns may have been problematic.

- ❖ In this study IsiZulu-speaking learners' ability to read English texts fluently and with understanding ranged from fair to poor. These were the views of the educators. Contrarily, the parents' views regarding their children's ability to read English texts ranged from fair to good. Some of the reasons for their poor reading performance that were advanced by the educators were: Parents were not motivating their children to read books and learners who did not learn the prescribed words encountered difficulties when reading.
- ❖ According to the educators' perceptions isiZulu-speaking learners' ability to write simple stories in English ranged from fair to poor. Since writing is an exacting task which requires more skill, learners experienced difficulties when constructing sentences. The parents' views differed in this regard.
- ❖ It was found that the New Way graded readers were used to teach reading in four of the five schools. The data gleaned from the educator questionnaires and the interviews highlighted the dominance of the phonic approach in the teaching of reading to L2 learners. This was later confirmed during the researcher's observations of several reading lessons at the five schools. Furthermore, the majority of the educators felt that isiZulu-speaking learners were not coping with the excessive number of reading assessments.
- ❖ It was noticed that a common procedure was followed when educators taught writing to foundation phase second language learners. Pictures, wordlists, and dictionaries were used to teach story writing.

### 6.5.2.5 School factors with reference to the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)

The following were the majority of the educators' perceptions regarding CAPS home language:

- ❖ All the educator interviewees, with the exception of two expressed their absolute dissatisfaction with the CAPS English home language workbook. These educators felt that the book is too advanced and is not at the learners' levels of development.
- ❖ Eleven of the thirteen educators interviewed concurred that CAPS for home language was not working effectively in the classroom.
- ❖ All the educators who were interviewed were not content with the manner in which the phonics is structured in the CAPS workbook.
- ❖ Educators reiterated that the teaching of phonics was the most difficult to implement as stipulated in the CAPS document. Assessments were also perceived as difficult when implementing CAPS. Furthermore, writing was observed as an aspect which was difficult to execute when implementing CAPS.
- ❖ CAPS is too challenging for most isiZulu-speaking learners (77,1%).
- ❖ CAPS consists of too many reading assessments (72,9%).
- ❖ Too much emphasis is placed on assessments (89,6%).
- ❖ The teaching of phonics is not well-structured in the CAPS document (62,5%).
- ❖ CAPS does not cater for the individual learner's reading needs (50%).
- ❖ CAPS does not cater for the individual learner's writing needs (45,8%).
- ❖ When implementing CAPS more time is spent on assessing than on constructive teaching (91,7%).

#### 6.5.2.6 General factors: Educators' views on additional factors that could affect isiZulu-speaking learners' reading and writing skills

The following reflects a broad spectrum of factors that could affect isiZulu-speaking learners' reading and writing skills as stated by the group of educators who participated in the research project:

- ❖ Educators' limited knowledge of approaches to teaching second language learners contributed to the difficulties they were experiencing in teaching reading and writing to isiZulu-speaking learners (43,8%).
- ❖ In general, educators were unfamiliar with the theories for second language teaching.
- ❖ Educators' large class size negatively affected the provision of extra individual lessons to isiZulu-speaking learners who experienced reading and writing difficulties (97,9%).
- ❖ Due to the large learner/educator ratio educators experienced frustration when teaching reading and writing (95,8%).
- ❖ The excessive number of reading and writing assessments was frustrating (83,3%).
- ❖ Learners who entered Grade 1 at the age of five were not emotionally ready for formal schooling (89,6%). Additionally, all the educators who were interviewed profusely reinforced that five year old children were not ready for formal schooling.
- ❖ IsiZulu-speaking learners who entered Grade 1 at the age of five generally experienced difficulties reading in English (91,7%).
- ❖ IsiZulu-speaking learners who entered Grade 1 at the age of five generally experienced difficulties writing in English (91,7%).
- ❖ All the educators who were interviewed concurred that the Department of Education should reconsider the policy for age of entry to Grade 1. Educators believed that the policy should be amended so that the age of entry to Grade 1 is six or seven and certainly not, five.

- ❖ IsiZulu-speaking learners should be proficient in their home language before learning a second language (60,4%).
- ❖ The language of learning and teaching at school should be the learners' home language (50%).
- ❖ An isiZulu-speaking learner might have developed the informal language of conversation but might struggle to read and write in English (91,7).
- ❖ Educators tended to correct every mistake an isiZulu-speaking learner made while reading and writing in English (68,8%).
- ❖ Educators explicitly stated that from their experiences and observations major differences existed between the performances of boys and girls in reading. They expressively pointed out that usually girls performed better than boys.
- ❖ Educators highlighted that from their experiences and observations a major difference existed between the performance of boys and girls in writing. Generally, girls significantly outperformed boys on writing tasks.
- ❖ Educators reiterated the significance of Grade R attendance and the Grade R curriculum. Furthermore, the importance of isiZulu-speaking learners being enrolled in English medium schools from Grade R was emphasised.
- ❖ Educators highlighted the necessity of a readiness or screening test for learners prior to entry to Grade 1.

#### 6.5.2.7 Unique barriers to learning and development

The unique barriers that were experienced by isiZulu-speaking learners and not by English-speaking learners in this study were:

- ❖ The group of isiZulu-speaking learners was not being taught in their primary language.



- ❖ The learners had very little exposure to the English language at home. Also, the quality of limited English exposure at home was not conducive to English language acquisition. For many isiZulu-speaking learners the English language was confined to the school.
- ❖ The learners did not have sufficient interaction and involvement with more competent English-speaking persons such as parents or other grown-ups. As a result they did not have access to models of language structure in their homes. This contributed to their limited vocabulary and grammar. The use of pronouns and tense in sentences were conceived as major problems.
- ❖ A lack of reading has also contributed to the selected group of isiZulu-speaking learners' limited English vocabulary.
- ❖ The learners experienced difficulties with the choice of vocabulary in the construction of sentences.
- ❖ The learners experienced difficulties processing information in English.
- ❖ A lack of exposure to the English language has contributed to the difficulties in understanding certain words and concepts in English. As a result this group of isiZulu-speaking learners did not understand the messages they heard or the texts they read because they were unfamiliar with the vocabulary used. Thus, their receptive English language abilities were limited to a certain degree.

#### 6.5.2.8 Unique challenges

The unique challenges experienced by educators who teach reading and writing to the selected group of isiZulu-speaking learners were:

- ❖ Occasionally there were problems with communication. Educators who were not proficient in isiZulu experienced difficulties teaching isiZulu-speaking learners who were not able to communicate in English.
- ❖ Lack of parental involvement and support contributed to the challenges that educators experienced when teaching reading and writing to isiZulu-speaking learners.

Additionally, the quality of parental involvement and support were viewed as contributing factors to poor reading and writing achievements.

- ❖ The learners' lack of exposure to literature presented a major challenge to educators who taught reading and writing.
- ❖ Several of the group of isiZulu-speaking learners did not live with their parents. They lived with their relatives or grandparents.
- ❖ Due to large numbers of children in classes educators were confronted with further challenges.
- ❖ Educators were not adequately trained to teach second language learners.
- ❖ Educators expressed that they experienced challenges when implementing CAPS.

#### 6.5.2.9 Parents' reasons for wanting their children to be able to read and write in English

The following were the reasons expressed by the majority of the parents:

- ❖ English is an international language (91,6%). The global dominance of the English language was also expressed by the educator interviewees.
- ❖ English is perceived as a language of development (92,3%).
- ❖ English is an important language in South Africa (88,1%).
- ❖ Parents want their children to learn more than one language (94,4%).
- ❖ Parents felt that learning English at school will help their children to get better jobs (90,9%).
- ❖ Learning English at school will help their children to continue their studies at colleges or universities (94,4%).
- ❖ Learning English at school will help their children to continue their studies abroad (89,5%).

- ❖ Learning to read and write in English will help their children to understand the English culture (77,6%).
- ❖ Parents want their children to be able to read and write in English so that their children will be able to be friends with English-speaking children (84,6%).
- ❖ Parents want their children to be able to read and write in English so that their children can think like and be like people who speak English (58%).

### **6.5.3 Summary of the research findings with reference to the literature review**

This section provides a summary of the interconnections between the research findings and the literature study. First the research findings that are directly linked to the theories of second language acquisition (SLA) will be presented. These include Universal Grammar which is related to SLA, Krashen's theory of second language acquisition, Cummins's theory of second language acquisition as well as his notion about BICS and CALP, DST, and SCT. This discussion relates to the first research question that was put forward based on the purpose of the study.

Additionally, the association of the literature study with the cultural psychological, social, and cognitive factors, educators training and competence, gender, parents' levels of education, and the age factor will be presented. This discussion correlates with the second and third research questions that were posed based on the purpose of the study.

Support for UG and the critical period hypothesis was distinctly evident when educators indicated that when isiZulu-speaking learners commence schooling in English medium schools from Grade R or Grade 1, they cope better with reading and writing as the year progresses. Additionally, educators also acknowledged that when L2 learners who have passed the critical period for L2 acquisition are enrolled in English medium schools, they would not be able to achieve native-like levels of proficiency in the L2. The findings of this study are unequivocally consistent with studies that support the critical period hypothesis (See 3.3.7).

Of the five hypotheses highlighted in Krashen's theory three hypotheses were relevant to this study. The acquisition-learning hypothesis, the input hypothesis and the affective filter

hypothesis had implications for this study. From the findings of this study it could be presumed that isiZulu-speaking learners did develop the acquired system because they encountered numerous opportunities to informally, spontaneously and naturally interact with English-speaking learners. The fact that educators had rated the ability to understand oral English of majority of the isiZulu-speaking learners in their classes as relatively good (See table 5.33) implies that learners did receive sufficient comprehensible input from their teachers. The parents' views (See table 5.24) were analogous to the educators' opinions.

The educators' and parents' views and the researchers' observations provided a variation of responses with regard to reading anxiety (See 5.3.1.3, and tables 5.4 and 5.28) and writing anxiety (See 5.3.1.3, and tables 5.29 and 5.5). Applying Krashen's affective filter hypothesis to this study, it can be inferred that for the majority of the isiZulu-speaking learners a high degree of anxiety could contribute to raise the affective filter; thus impeding or obstructing English reading and writing (See 2.4.2.5, 5.3.1.3, and tables 5.4, 5.5, 5.28, and 5.29). Contrariwise, only a minority of the isiZulu-speaking learners would be better equipped for success in their English reading and writing; since they appeared to portray low levels of anxiety (See 2.4.2.5, 5.3.1.3, and tables 5.4, 5.5, 5.28, 5.29).

Cummins's BICS/CALP framework encapsulates the developmental nature of BICS and CALP which is clearly evident in this study. The inference that can be drawn from the parents' views is that the majority of the isiZulu-speaking learners in this study could speak and understand isiZulu very well but they had not yet learnt to read and write in their primary language (See tables 5.18, 5.19, 5.20, 5.21, and 5.22). Accordingly, these learners would have attained BICS in isiZulu but would not have achieved CALP in isiZulu.

According to the educators' views, an IsiZulu-speaking learner may have developed the informal language of conversation but may struggle to read and write in English (See table 5.56). The educators' views correspond with research studies by Cummins that constantly demonstrate that although BICS is the foundation from which CALP develops the attainment of BICS does not automatically guarantee the achievement of CALP skills (See 2.4.3).

In Educator F's Grade 1 class (School E) the isiZulu-speaking learners had not achieved BICS in English but were required to read and write in English. According to the educators' views, if an isiZulu-speaking learner has achieved BICS and CALP in English then it is very unlikely that he or she will experience reading and writing anxiety (See 5.3.1.3 a, and 5.3.1.3 b).

Dynamic systems are characterised by complete interconnectedness. In this study the concept of complete interconnectedness was evident when learners who experienced difficulties with phonics and pronouncing words in English were required to read and write in English (See 5.3.1.2 b).

The findings from the educator interviews also coincided with the DST perspective of "limited resources" (See 2.4.4 and 5.3.1.5 e). The notion that resources such as, attention span, cognitive capacity, and maturity of learners were limited when learners entered Grade 1 at five, was critical in explaining their reading and writing deficits.

The Dynamic Systems Theory also illuminated the butterfly effect and attractor states in SLA. The findings of this study with regard to reading and understanding of written English; pointed to the butterfly effect (See Table 5.36). Reading difficulties were seen to be butterflying their way throughout the process of understanding written English. Additionally, in this study difficulties experienced in reading English texts could be seen to be butterflying throughout the process of writing in English. This was due to the fact that reading and writing are viewed as connected growers which support each other's growth (See 2.4.4). During the educator interviews, and reading and writing observations it was found that attractors emerged spontaneously (See 5.3.2.1 and 5.3.2.2). Learners were capable of correcting them once, but then spontaneously fell back on the error state.

The Sociocultural Theory emphasises the role of mediation and scaffolding in SLA. In this study it was found that the majority of the educators rated the ability of isiZulu-speaking learners to read and comprehend written texts as ranging from fair to poor (See table 5.36) and their ability to write simple stories in English as poor (See table 5.39). This implied that most of the isiZulu-speaking learners would require intensive mediation, with regard to reading and writing, by educators, parents, and peers who are proficient in the English language. Through exhaustive

mediation these learners would be able to reach the stage of other-regulation and eventually self-regulation (See 2.4.5).

Since the majority of the educators indicated that CAPS was too challenging for most isiZulu-speaking learners (See table 5.40) and isiZulu-speaking learners generally experienced difficulties with phonics, pronunciation of words, and pronouns (See 5.3.1.2 b, d ), it can be inferred that educators were compelled to provide supportive scaffolding to these learners. Additionally, an overwhelming majority of the educators asserted that isiZulu-speaking learners who entered Grade 1 at the age of 5 generally experienced reading and writing difficulties in English (See tables 5.52 and 5.53). As a result educators were pressurised when it came to mediation and providing appropriate scaffolding.

Educator 1 reiterated that *the Grade 3 learners' literacy levels may be higher than their parents'* (See 5.3.1.6 b). This had implications for effective mediation and meaningful scaffolding by parents. Parents who had low literacy levels would not have been able to facilitate their children's reading and writing skills. The children of these parents depended solely on the educators and as a result these learners experienced enormous challenges in achieving the ZPD and self-regulation.

Additionally, the literature study highlighted the cultural, psychological, social, and cognitive factors that impact on the L2 learners' reading and writing skills. This discussion is associated with the second and third research questions that were put forward based on the purpose of the study.

With regard the cultural factors, two models of acculturation were established in this study (5.3.1.2 e). These included integration and separation. Although integration was the most prominent acculturation process; the process of separation also played a vital role in the learners' experiences. In this study, the acculturation processes of assimilation and maginalisation were not found amongst isiZulu-speaking learners.

The literature study on culturally familiar learning material is consistent with the views of the educators who participated in this study. Educator 6 affirmed that reading passages were not too difficult for isiZulu-speaking learners when there were names in the passages that children were

familiar with. Educator 1 asserted that learners could not identify with comprehension passages that were not related to their culture and experiences.

The two prominent psychological factors that were discussed in the literature study are anxiety and motivation. This study corroborated the results of studies on reading and writing anxiety that were examined in the literature study. This study has revealed that isiZulu-speaking learners did experience reading and writing anxiety since they were required to read and write in a language that was foreign to them. The parents' views (See tables 5.4 and 5.5) and the educators' opinions (See 5.28 and 5.29, and 5.3.1.3 a, b) were consistent in this regard. Contrariwise, the majority of the educators felt that isiZulu-speaking learners did not experience writing test anxiety because they were excessively young to understand the significance of writing a test (See 5.3.1.3 c).

This study revealed that generally isiZulu-speaking learners were motivated to read English texts (See 5.3.1.3 e). The question of whether these learners were integratively or instrumentally motivated requires further investigation. However, the findings from the parent questionnaire demonstrated the dominance of instrumental motivation (See tables 5.8, 5.9, 5.10, 5.11, 5.12, 5.13, 5.14, 5.15, 5.16, and 5.17).

Various cognitive factors were emphasised in the literature study and these had an impact on the ESL learners' reading and writing achievements. The educators highlighted the difficulties in reading and written language that were frequently experienced by ESL learners. These difficulties incorporated the use of pronouns, phonics and pronunciation of words (See 5.3.1.2 b, d).

Due to the isiZulu culture educator interviewees perceived pronouns as confusing to isiZulu-speaking learners (See 5.3.1.2 d). When sentences were constructed learners frequently wrote the word "she" instead of "he". Also, educators generally felt that isiZulu-speaking learners experienced difficulties sounding and pronouncing English words while reading and this was due to the culture in which they were nurtured (See 5.3.1.2 b).

According to the parents' and the educators' views the majority of the isiZulu-speaking learners were able to speak English and understand oral English (See tables 5.23, 5.24, 5.32, and 5.33). In this regard; the researcher's observations were clarified by the parents' and educators' views.

However, data spawned from the parent and educator questionnaires revealed contrasting views with regard to reading and writing. Whereas a large number of parents believed that their children's ability to read and understand written English, and to write in English as relatively good (See tables 5.25, 5.26, and 5.27) the majority of the educators affirmed that the isiZulu-speaking learners' abilities in these aspects ranged from fair to poor (See tables 5.35, 5.36, and 5.39).

Although as asserted in the literature study, that language difficulty inhibits social interaction (See 3.3.3); the findings of this study consistently supported the good social relationships that existed among isiZulu-speaking learners and English-speaking learners. In terms of social interaction, the researcher's observations were corroborated by the educators when they avowed that isiZulu-speaking learners interacted exceptionally well with English-speaking learners (See 5.3.1.4 c). Despite studies indicating the tendency for L2 learners to feel isolated and alienated (See 3.3.3) from their experiences, all the educators indicated that they had not had any isiZulu-speaking learners in their classes who felt alienated or isolated (See 5.3.1.4 d).

The views of the educators in this study were anomalous to several studies that revealed that educators were poorly trained in early childhood approaches and methods involving the teaching of reading and writing (See 3.3.4.2). In this study it was found that almost all the educators had teaching qualifications (See figure 5.15). However, not all the educators were trained to teach in the foundation phase (See figure 5.16). The majority of the educators described their training in the teaching of English as a second language as excellent and their CAPS training with regard to bilingual/multilingual training as adequate. On the other hand, educators were not familiar with all the theories for second language teaching (See figure 5.18, and 5.3.1.5 i), and they did not use a variety of approaches to teach reading (See figure 5.20, and 5.3.1.5 a, h). Most of the educators indicated that they used only the phonic approach to teach reading to L2 learners. This was later confirmed during the researcher's observations of several reading lessons at the five schools. The majority of the educators were slightly proficient in isiZulu and several educators were not at all proficient (See figure 5.21). Sixty nine percent of the educators had between 11 to 30 years of teaching experience (See figure 5.22).



Also, in this study it was found that girls were better readers and writers than boys. This was also evident during the observations of reading and writing lessons. The views of the majority of the educators are congruent to the EGRA studies across Sub-Saharan Africa which demonstrates that girls significantly outperform boys on early reading tasks; although in only a few instances the differences were not statistically significant (See 5.3.1.5 f).

This study has demonstrated that 51 (36%) parents had completed tertiary education (See figure 5.7). Hence, sixty four percent of the parents had completed Grade 12, dropped out of school, or had no schooling at all. Also, during the interview, Educator 1 reiterated that the learners' levels of literacy may be higher than the parents'. Although it can be presumed that more literate parents would provide more and better quality support to their children in their school work, the question of whether parents' level of education impacts on the learners' reading and writing skills demands further research.

This study is incompatible with the ASER and EGRA studies with regard to literacy resources that learners have at home. The literature study elucidated the scarcity of reading materials in the learners' homes (See 3.3.6). Contrarily, this study has illuminated that learners are exposed to substantial resources such as books, magazines, newspapers, television, and radio (See figure 5.10).

The inference drawn from the critical period hypothesis indicated that the ability of isiZulu-speaking learners to attain native-like phonological abilities in English would begin to decline by age six in many learners and to be beyond any learners beginning later than age twelve.

This study has unequivocally presented strong support for learners to be enrolled in Grade R at 6 years – turning 7 years by June (See figure 5.26). An overwhelming majority of the educators reinforced that learners who entered Grade 1 at the age of five were not emotionally ready for formal schooling (See table 5.51), and generally experienced difficulties reading and writing in English (See tables 5.52 and 5.53). Furthermore, all the educators who were interviewed reinforced that five year old children were not ready for formal schooling. From their experiences they found that vast discrepancies existed between five year olds and six or seven year olds (See 5.3.1.5 e).

## 6.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

During the course of this study several limitations were identified. The following were the most significant limitations:

- ❖ The findings of this study may be interpreted with circumspect; since this research is focusing on the factors that affect foundation phase English second language learners at only five primary schools. These schools were also previously House of Delegates (HOD) schools. Therefore a general relation of experiences cannot be made. Nevertheless, this study has provided valuable information that could assist parents and educators of second language learners as well as educational authorities.
- ❖ The qualitative component of this study was based on interviews and classroom observations of reading and writing lessons. Although no signs of intimidation were apparent in the educator interviewees there is a possibility of reactive responses. This possibility is evident in some of the contradictory views expressed by the educators.
- ❖ The structured nature of the questionnaires distributed to the parents limited the possibilities of exploring a more extensive field of areas to investigate, such as unstructured and open-ended questionnaires could do. On the other hand, the educator interviews and observations compensated for the shortfall of the structured nature of the educator questionnaires.
- ❖ Grade 1 is the grade in which the foundation of the learners' reading and writing skills are beginning to develop. Thus, this study would have been more productive if additional Grade 1 educators were involved in the interviews and observations. It was discerned that some of the Grade 1 educators were not very willing to be interviewed.
- ❖ This study was conducted in four schools situated in a town and one school in a semi-rural area. Rural and urban schools may generate varying results. This study concentrated specifically on the five schools because the rural schools in the Port Shepstone region are not completely English medium schools.

- ❖ Although random sampling was utilised in the quantitative component of the study, the potential for a biased response sample inherent in survey research warrants cautious interpretation of findings.

While these limitations are important, they do not discount the significance of the study.

## **6.7 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The findings of this study elicited the recommendations that are presented in this section. Recommendations for schools, for parents of second language learners, for Institutions of Higher Education, for the Department of Basic Education and for future research were made and thus the last research question which deals with recommendations to improve the reading and writing achievements of isiZulu speaking foundation phase learners was responded to.

### **6.7.1 Recommendations for schools**

- ❖ It is imperative that educators understand the significance of learners being proficient in their L1 before being introduced to an L2. Hence, educators should refrain from encouraging the parents of isiZulu-speaking learners to focus exclusively on teaching their children English at home.
- ❖ Educators need to remember that in order for learners to follow the integration model of acculturation both the English and isiZulu languages and cultures must be respected and learners must receive maximum exposure to both the languages.
- ❖ Educators require in-service training focusing on second language theories and the approaches that can be used to teach reading to L2 learners. They should try to incorporate a variety of approaches and methods such as the whole language approach, the language experience approach, the phonic approach, and THRASS when teaching reading.
- ❖ School libraries should be prioritised and Library Resource Education (LRE) should be included in the curriculum. This will ensure maximum use of the school library. Schools need to expend more on purchasing appropriate books for the school library.

- ❖ A library corner in the classroom is a necessity. Thus, all foundation phase educators should have library corners in their classrooms.
- ❖ Educators should encourage free voluntary reading.
- ❖ In this study it was particularly worrying to note the low levels of interactions among educators and parents and a suggestion has been made on possible ways of overcoming possible barriers. Participation of parents in school activities does not only ensure that parents provide the necessary support to children in their school work, but it can also motivate learners to take more interest in their studies. Principals and School Governing Bodies (SGB) should examine the reasons for the apparent low participation by the parents of foundation phase learners in school activities and explore the ways of encouraging them to become more involved in their children's reading and writing and to meet the educators more frequently.
- ❖ Culturally familiar texts and topics could assist to reduce reading and writing anxiety.
- ❖ Enriching literacy classrooms should be provided in order to motivate learners to read and write.
- ❖ Educators are encouraged to identify, assess, and provide support to L2 learners who experience reading and writing difficulties. Early identification of reading and writing deficits may lead to early intervention programmes.
- ❖ Schools need to establish Institutional Level Support Teams (ILST) to provide support and assistance to L2 learners who experience reading and writing difficulties. A collaborative approach is thus advocated.
- ❖ Correct pronunciation of words is imperative. Basic English phonics must be taught and revised daily and educators must pronounce the words slowly, clearly, and correctly.
- ❖ Cooperative learning which includes group work and peer work should be encouraged. Involving English-speaking and isiZulu-speaking learners in mixed group reading and writing activities will assist in building L2 learners' self esteem and in developing their social conversational skills through shared experiences.

- ❖ Educators should be encouraged to familiarise themselves with the theories of SLA.
- ❖ Since a proliferation of studies, including this study illuminated that girls generally outperform boys on reading and writing tasks, educators should provide texts that will be appealing for boys to read and also topics that will fascinate boys so that they can write better stories.
- ❖ It is clear that schools and school management teams should make every effort to accelerate children's learning (reading, writing, speaking, and comprehending) to the expected levels. Schools should approach the various Departments of Education to reduce the galloping pace of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement which needs to be brought down to reasonable and appropriate levels which keep children's actual learning trajectories in mind.

### **6.7.2 Recommendations for parents of second language learners**

- ❖ Although this study has demonstrated that the majority of the parents do enroll their children in Grade R, it is essential for all parents to enroll their children in Grade R. This will assist in developing early literacy skills. Parents need to take cognisance of the fact that the formative years of childhood are crucial for cognitive development, and deficits arising from a lack of mental stimulation early on cannot be made up for in later schooling.
- ❖ Parents are encouraged to develop positive attitudes towards reading, to accompany their children to the library to borrow books, to regularly read to their children, and to listen when their children read. Parents should be motivated to encourage their children to read every day and to allocate time when both the parents and their children can read together. It is the parents' responsibility to provide enriching language environments for their children since the learners' linguistic landscapes play a pivotal role in SLA. Parents need to be accountable for providing appealing age appropriate books that also correspond to the developmental levels of the learners. Hence, parents are required to develop strong impact beliefs.

- ❖ Parents need to remember that Grade R attendance is not sufficient to prepare their children for academic success, but children will require ongoing support to acquire sufficient proficiency in the L2 and support to continue to develop the L1.
- ❖ Parents should be informed about the significance of the development of the learners' primary language. Parents need to constantly remember that first language development is central to second language development. The more proficient learners are in reading and writing in their primary language, the more proficient they will be in reading and writing in their second language.
- ❖ Parents should be informed that their children must obtain maximum exposure to both languages – isiZulu and English.
- ❖ Parents should communicate with the learner's teacher in order to discuss the learner's reading and writing progress. The areas of concern should also be discussed.
- ❖ The learners' reading and writing anxiety should be reduced at home by providing a non-threatening print-rich literacy environment and by providing consistent support and encouragement at home.
- ❖ Parents should be informed to develop integrative motivation.
- ❖ Parents should know that it is erroneous to assume that if a learner is competent when it comes to speaking and understanding English that the learner will automatically be proficient in reading and writing in English. Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills do not guarantee the achievement of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency.
- ❖ Parents should assist in providing intensive support for learners who experience reading and writing difficulties. Parents should consult the school's Institutional Level Support Team (ILST) for assistance.
- ❖ Parents should receive assistance to mediate homework.

### 6.7.3 Recommendations for Institutions of Higher Education

- ❖ It is recommended that the Institutions of Higher Education include a comprehensive pre-service training programme to ensure that educators are well equipped to teach in multilingual, multicultural and multiracial inclusive schools.
- ❖ This study advocates the inclusion of linguistics, theories of SLA, and approaches and methods to teach reading and writing to L2 learners in teacher training courses. This will assist to enhance the quality of teacher preparation.
- ❖ The theoretical foundation in teacher training should include Cummins's developmental interdependence hypothesis, along with the differences between social language (that is, BICS) and academic language (that is, CALP); Universal Grammar and SLA; Krashen's five hypothesis in SLA; Dynamic Systems Theory; and Sociocultural Theory.
- ❖ A solid understanding of the interconnectedness of language and culture is fundamental for teacher training programmes and should also form part of foundation phase teacher training programmes. Student teachers should know that cross-cultural understanding can facilitate communication across cultures.

### 6.7.4 Recommendations for the Department of Basic Education

- ❖ The Department of Basic Education's institutionalisation of inclusive bilingual/multilingual education systems should include a successful functioning bilingual/multilingual programme based on a profound understanding of the importance of the learners' primary language for instruction and additionally, a deep understanding of how to develop academic skills in the primary language, while simultaneously developing English proficiency. An understanding and appreciation of the use of the primary language and the ability to transfer learners' skills from the primary language to the English language should play a vital role in the implementation and consistency in practices for success in bilingual/multilingual programmes.
- ❖ Various Departments of Education should be approached to introduce Literacy Boost programmes in the foundation phase in underachieving primary schools in South Africa.

- ❖ Comprehensive in-service training should be provided to educators to ensure that they are well equipped to teach in multilingual, multicultural and multiracial inclusive schools.
- ❖ The number of learners in the foundation phase classes should be reduced.
- ❖ The Department of Basic Education should establish suitable policies regarding the admission of second language learners. For example, if a learner has surpassed the critical period for L2 acquisition then it is improbable for a school to admit that learner.
- ❖ It is imperative that higher authorities should establish language policies that provide comprehensible guidelines regarding primary language education.
- ❖ Attention should be given to modify the English home language CAPS document. The teaching of phonics in the CAPS document as well as the CAPS workbook for all the grades in the foundation phase should be restructured. It could for instance start with single sounds and when all 26 sounds have been taught, blends could be introduced.
- ❖ The organisation of and the spacing of various sections in the CAPS document should be amended in order to accommodate the developmental levels of the foundation phase learners. For example, when teaching writing, it will require several lessons for learners to get acquainted with the format and structure of a letter.
- ❖ When compiling or amending any document or workbook that is directly related to teaching and learning in the foundation phase, foundation phase educators should always be included in the panel. These educators have vast experience and knowledge and they have the capacity to compare the various curricula that have been implemented hitherto.
- ❖ The number of reading and writing assessments should be reduced.
- ❖ The reintroduction of the teaching of Breakthrough to Literacy in Grade 1 should be encouraged. This approach can be used in Grade 1 with the use of Graded Reading scheme books supplementing the reading programme.



- ❖ A school readiness checklist should be introduced in schools. The Grade R educators should be asked to complete a checklist for each learner prior to entry to Grade 1. This will ensure that learners begin their formal schooling with a strong foundation.
- ❖ This study has revealed that a determining factor that contributes to the learners' poor reading and writing achievements is age of entry to Grade 1. The plight of the Grade 1 ESL learner in the English medium school is amplified by the fact that the learner is not ready and equipped for formal schooling. Learners who are not ready are considered to be high-risk learners in respect of school success. Consequently, the question that arises is: Are five year older learners in South Africa ready for Grade 1? There is a preponderance of evidence in this study that reveals the immeasurable discrepancies in reading and writing that exists between five year olds and six or seven year olds.

In view of the above it is recommended that the Department of Basic Education should include the following in the school admission policy:

- A school readiness programme to determine whether a learner is ready for Grade 1.
- The policy with regard to age of entry to Grade 1 should be reconsidered and amended. The policy could for instance be modified as follows: A learner may be admitted to Grade 1 if he or she is six years old and turning seven by the end of June. No six year old learner may be admitted if he or she turns seven after 30 June.

### **6.7.5 Recommendations for further research**

- ❖ This study demonstrated that parents are not optimally involved in enhancing their children's literacy levels. Further research could examine parental involvement in enhancing the literacy skills among isiZulu-speaking foundation phase learners' reading and writing achievements. Additionally, parental attitudes towards reading and access to resources such as television, radio, computers, books, newspapers, and magazines on ESL learners' reading and writing achievements should be explored.

- ❖ It is recommended that research should be conducted to establish if there is a correlation between Grade R attendance or quality of Grade R instruction and reading and writing achievements.
- ❖ Further research should investigate parents' levels of education, socio-economic status and residential environments and reading and writing achievements of their children.
- ❖ The relationship between instrumental motivation and learners' reading and writing achievements should be researched.
- ❖ The relationship between educators' proficiency in isiZulu and isiZulu-speaking learners' reading and writing achievements should be investigated.
- ❖ The relationship between class size and isiZulu-speaking learners' reading and writing achievements should be examined.
- ❖ The status of the school library and learners' reading and writing achievements should be explored.
- ❖ This study has illustrated that the learner's age of entry to school plays a significant role in the learner's reading and writing achievements. Auxiliary studies are required to investigate the impact of age on L2 learners' reading and writing achievements in all the nine provinces in South Africa.
- ❖ Longitudinal studies could perhaps be conducted with two groups of learners - five year and six year old learners who are enrolled in Grade 1. These learners' reading and writing progress could be tracked and compared with each successive year throughout their primary schooling.

## 6.8 CONCLUSION

South Africa's unique educational circumstance was created as a result of colonisation. This manifested in the underestimation and the nearly surreptitious depletion of the indigenous languages and the overvaluing of the English language in various sectors such as education, the economy, media, trade and industry, and so forth. However, through democracy came the

perpetuity of bilingual and multilingual education. The reverberation of bilingual and multilingual education has sparked great concerns since learners, parents, and educators were left unprepared. Nevertheless, the parents of indigenous African language learners chose to enroll their children in English medium schools for various reasons (See 5.2.1.3). It is quite evident that these parents place great emphasis on English literacy. On the other hand this has led to the marginalisation of the primary languages.

Consequently, the researcher was interested in the factors that affect foundation phase English second language learners reading and writing skills and in so doing attempted to make a contribution to extant knowledge. The research departed from a pragmatic philosophy because the researcher believed that the research questions would be best investigated using mixed methods research. Thus, this study utilised quantitative and qualitative approaches. This can be considered as the use of a dualistic method based on pragmatism.

An in-depth literature study was initiated which provided a platform consisting of comprehensive information that assisted in developing the instruments used in this study. Two self-designed questionnaires, an interview schedule, and an observational guide were prepared.

The factors that affect foundation phase English second language learners reading and writing skills were investigated via survey questionnaires that were distributed to the parents of isiZulu-speaking learners and all the foundation phase educators from five English medium primary schools in the Port Shepstone region. Additionally, classroom observations and interviews with educators were used to compensate for the shortfalls that were inherent in the survey questionnaire. Several dominant themes emerged throughout the quantitative and qualitative analysis. They include cultural factors, psychological and affective factors, social factors, cognitive factors, school factors, and unique barriers. All these factors contribute to a certain extent to the English second language learners' reading and writing achievements. A crucial factor that appeared to affect the learners' reading and writing achievements was the age at which the learner was enrolled in Grade 1. There is insurmountable evidence in this study that reveals the immeasurable discrepancies in reading and writing that exists between five year olds and six or seven year olds.

Furthermore, the parents' reasons for wanting their children to learn to read and write in English were also investigated via the survey questionnaires. Although the majority of the parents agreed with most of the options in this section of the questionnaire; of prominence was the fact that most of the parents (94,4%) want their children to be able to read and write in English because they want their children to learn more than one language and learning English at school will help their children to continue their studies at colleges or universities.

Some of the findings in this investigation concur with previous findings. However, all research irrespective if the findings correspond or differ from previous studies, contribute to our knowledge so that we can deepen our understanding of all aspects of second language literacy and thus be in the best position to provide effective assistance and guidance to second language learners.

It is anticipated that the perspicuity of this study will enhance the understandings of parents, educators, and educational authorities with regard to the factors that affect foundation phase English second language learners' reading and writing skills. The findings of this study are expected to provide educational authorities with valuable information to contemplate when preparing educational programmes for ESL learners. It is also anticipated that researchers in the field of language teaching will take cognisance of the recommendations provided for further research.

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## APPENDIX 1



## Research Ethics Clearance Certificate

This is to certify that the application for ethical clearance submitted by

**R Govender [31648606]**

for a D Ed study entitled

**Factors that affect foundation phase English second language learners' reading  
and writing skills**

has met the ethical requirements as specified by the University of South Africa  
College of Education Research Ethics Committee. This certificate is valid for two  
years from the date of issue.

Prof KP Dzvimbho  
Executive Dean : CEDU

Dr M Claassens  
CEDU REC (Chairperson)  
[mcdtc@netactive.co.za](mailto:mcdtc@netactive.co.za)

Reference number: 2014 AUGUST /31648606/MC

19 AUGUST 2014

## APPENDIX 2

P.O. Box 11552

Port Shepstone

4240

5 November 2013

Mr M.W Sibiya

The District Manager

UGU District Office

KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education

Private Bag X860

Port Shepstone

4240

Dear Sir

### **RE: APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT ACADEMIC RESEARCH**

I hereby wish to apply for permission to conduct academic research in 2014 and 2015 in five primary schools in the Port Shepstone area. The schools are School A, School B, School C, School D and School E.

I am a doctoral (Inclusive Education) student at the University of South Africa (UNISA). I am undertaking a study titled: "Factors that affect foundation phase English second language learners' reading and writing skills". My supervisor is Professor AJ Hugo and she can be contacted by e-mail at the following address: hugoaj@unisa.ac.za

The aim of the study is to investigate the factors that affect isiZulu-speaking foundation phase learners' reading and writing skills in English medium schools and to make recommendations to improve their reading and writing achievements. The aim will eventually assist educators increase their understandings of learners' unique reading and writing needs in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms, which in turn will make the foundation phase learners' academic experiences and lives more meaningful and enjoyable.

The research problems will be investigated by using a combined quantitative-qualitative approach. The quantitative component will consist of a survey research design. All the foundation phase educators and ten percent of the foundation phase learners' parents in the five schools will be asked to complete questionnaires. The qualitative component will consist of a phenomenological study. This will include participant observation and interviewing. Foundation phase educators will be interviewed.

I would appreciate it if you could please respond to this letter by posting your response to the above mentioned address. I would be grateful if you could also e-mail your response to govenderranjini@gmail.com.

I trust that this will be given your kind consideration and time.

Kind regards.

---

Miss R. Govender

### APPENDIX 3

P.O. Box 11552

Port Shepstone

4240

19 June 2014

The Principal

School A

P.O. Box 1234

Port Shepstone

4240

Dear Sir

**RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT ACADEMIC RESEARCH**

I am a doctoral (Inclusive Education) student at the University of South Africa (UNISA). I am undertaking a study titled: “Factors that affect foundation phase English second language learners’ reading and writing skills”. My supervisor is Professor AJ Hugo and she can be contacted by e-mail at the following address: hugoaj@unisa.ac.za

The aim of the study is to investigate the factors that affect isiZulu-speaking foundation phase learners’ reading and writing skills in English medium schools and to make recommendations to improve their reading and writing achievements. The aim will eventually assist educators increase their understandings of learners’ unique reading and writing needs in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms, which in turn will make the foundation phase learners’ academic experiences and lives more meaningful and enjoyable.

The research problems will be investigated by using a combined quantitative-qualitative approach. The quantitative component will consist of a survey research design. All the foundation phase educators and ten percent of the foundation phase learners’ parents in the five schools will be asked to complete questionnaires. The qualitative component will consist of a phenomenological study. This will include participant observation and interviewing. Foundation phase educators will be interviewed.

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education has granted permission to conduct the research and the letter to this effect is attached. Your school has been purposefully selected as part of the sample schools to be polled. It would be greatly appreciated if the selected foundation phase educators and isiZulu-speaking foundation phase learners participate in the research.

I undertake to ensure strict confidentiality with the information collected and all respondents will remain anonymous. A copy of the report would be made available to the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education or made available to individual schools on request.

I trust that this will be given your kind consideration and time.

Kind regards.

---

Miss R. Govender

**APPENDIX 4**

P.O. Box 11552

Port Shepstone

4240

August 2014

Dear Parent

I am a doctoral (Inclusive Education) student at the University of South Africa (UNISA). I am undertaking a study titled: “Factors that affect foundation phase English second language learners’ reading and writing skills”. My supervisor is Professor AJ Hugo and she can be contacted by e-mail at the following address: [hugoaj@unisa.ac.za](mailto:hugoaj@unisa.ac.za)

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and the school principal have granted me permission to conduct the research. The research protocol has also received ethical clearance.

I hope to gain insight from the parents. You have therefore been identified as a possible participant in the research. Participation will entail the completion of a questionnaire. Please do not write your name or your child’s name on the questionnaire. This is a confidential questionnaire and your child will remain anonymous. You can be assured that no individual’s or school’s name will be published. If you have any queries regarding the research or the questionnaire, you are most welcome to contact me.

Your assistance in completing the questionnaire and returning it as soon as possible will be greatly appreciated, as this is vitally important to the study.

Kind Regards

---

Miss R. Govender

E-mail address: [govenderranjini@gmail.com](mailto:govenderranjini@gmail.com)

**APPENDIX 5****PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE IN ENGLISH**

*Please complete and return the questionnaire.*

**SECTION A****BIOGRAPHICAL DATA/BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Please tick (✓) the **appropriate box**.

**1. GENDER**

**1.1** What is your child's gender?

Male

Female

**1.2** What is your gender?

Male

Female

**2. AGE**

**2.1** What is your child's age?

5 years

6 years

7 years

8 years

9 years

10 years

**2.2 What is the appropriate range for your age?**

18 – 25 years

26 – 35 years

36 – 45 years

46 – 55 years

Older than 55 years

**3. GRADE**

**3.1 What grade is your child in?**

1

2

3

**3.2 Did your child attend Grade R ?**

Yes

No

**4. EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND**

What is your highest level of education?

None



Grade 1 – 7

Grade 8 – 10

Grade 11 – 12

Tertiary

## 5. OCCUPATION

What is your occupation or similar occupation?

Unemployed

Housekeeper/gardener/labourer/cleaner

Vendor/informal trader/self-employed

Secretary/clerk/receptionist/typist/sales

Security officer/police/traffic officer

Teacher/nurse/social worker

Doctor/engineer/accountant/computer programmer

Businessman/businesswoman

Other

If other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

## 6. RESIDENTIAL ENVIRONMENT

Indicate your residential environment.

Informal settlement

Shelter

Place of safety/children's home

Suburb

Township

Rural area

Other

If other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

## 7. LINGUISTIC ENVIRONMENT

7.1 Do you have a library close to your home?

Yes

No

7.2 How often do you take your child to the library to borrow books?

Never

Rarely

Sometimes

Most of the time

Always

**7.3** How often do you read to your child?Never Rarely Sometimes Most of the time Always **7.4** How often do you listen when your child reads?Never Rarely Sometimes Most of the time Always **7.5** Tick (✓) all the items that you have at home.Books, magazines, newspapers Television Radio Computer/laptop

**SECTION B****MEASUREMENTS OF PARENTS' VIEWS REGARDING THEIR CHILDREN'S EMOTIONAL BEHAVIOUR WHEN READING AND WRITING IN ENGLISH**

*Indicate your views about the following statements using the scale below.*

Please **tick (√)** the **appropriate column** where:

**1** = Always

**2** = Most of the time

**3** = Sometimes

**4** = Rarely

**5** = Never

<b>HOW OFTEN DOES YOUR CHILD FEEL</b>	<b>ALWAYS 1</b>	<b>MOST OF THE TIME 2</b>	<b>SOMETIMES 3</b>	<b>RARELY 4</b>	<b>NEVER 5</b>
1. Anxious about reading in English.					
2. Anxious about writing in English					
3. Excited about reading English books.					
4. Excited about writing stories in English.					

**SECTION C****MEASUREMENTS OF PARENTS' REASONS FOR WANTING THEIR CHILDREN TO LEARN TO READ AND WRITE IN ENGLISH**

*Indicate your views about the following statements using the scale below.*

Please **tick (√)** the **appropriate column** where:

**1** = Strongly disagree

**2** = Disagree

**3** = Unsure

**4** = Agree

5 = Strongly agree

<b>I WANT MY CHILD TO LEARN TO READ AND WRITE IN ENGLISH BECAUSE</b>	<b>STRONGLY DISAGREE</b> <b>1</b>	<b>DISAGREE</b> <b>2</b>	<b>UNSURE</b> <b>3</b>	<b>AGREE</b> <b>4</b>	<b>STRONGLY AGREE</b> <b>5</b>
1. English is an international language.					
2. English is perceived as a language of development.					
3. English is an important language in South Africa.					
4. I want my child to learn more than one language.					
5. Learning to read and write in English at school will help my child to get a better job.					
6. Learning to read and write in English will help my child to continue his or her studies at a college or university.					
7. Learning to read and write in English will help my child to continue his or her studies abroad.					
8. My child will be able to understand the English culture.					
9. My child will be able to be friends with English-speaking					

children.					
10. I want my child to think like and become like people who speak English.					

**SECTION D****MEASUREMENTS OF PARENT'S VIEWS REGARDING THEIR CHILDREN'S PERFORMANCE IN ENGLISH AND ISIZULU**

*Indicate your views about the following statements using the scale below.*

Please **tick (√)** the **appropriate column** where:

**1** = Very poor

**2** = Poor

**3** = Fair

**4** = Good

**5** = Excellent

<b>MY CHILD'S ABILITY TO</b>	<b>VERY POOR</b>	<b>POOR</b>	<b>FAIR</b>	<b>GOOD</b>	<b>EXCELLENT</b>
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
1. Speak isiZulu is					
2. Understand oral isiZulu is					
3. Read isiZulu books is					
4. Understand written isiZulu is					
5. Write in isiZulu is					
6. Speak English is					
7. Understand oral English is					
8. Read English books is					
9. Understand written English is					
10. Write in English is					

**Thank you for your time and effort.**

**APPENDIX 6**

P.O. Box 11552

Port Shepstone

4240

Ncwaba 2014

Mzali Othandekayo

Nginumfundi owenza iziqu zobudokotela (Imfundo Ehlananisile Onke Engabandlululi) kwisikhungo esiphezulu semfundo iNyunivesithi yase-Msanzi ne Afrika. Ngenza ucwaningo ngesihloko: “Izingqinamba ezikhinyabeza amakhono okufunda nokubhala kuzingane zesiNgisi ulimi lwesibili”. Umphathi womsebenzi wami u Profesa AJ Hugo naye angathintwa naye nge e-mail esekhelini eliilandelayo: [hugoaj@unisa.ac.za](mailto:hugoaj@unisa.ac.za).

Umnyango wezemfundo we KwaZulu Natali kunye nothishanhloko wesikole (nomphathi sikole) banginike imvume yokuqhuba ucwaningo.

Ukuze ngikwazi ukuqeda lolu cwaningo lwami ngidinga wena ukuba uningcwalisele loluhla lwemibuzo olunanyathiselwe.

Ngicela ungalibhali igama lakho noma lomntwana wakho kuloluhla lemibuzo. Loluhla lwemibuzo luyimfihlo futhi igane yakho izoba ongaziwayo. Uyaqinisekiswa ukuthi akukho muntu nom agama lesikole eliyovezwa. Uma unayo noma imiphi imibuzo ephathelene nalolucwaningo noma uhla lwembuzo, wamukelekile ukungithinta/ukuzhumana name.

Usizo lwakho ekugcwaliseni loluhla lwemibuzo bese ulibuyisa ngokushesha luyoncomeka kakhulu njengoba lolu cwaningo lubaluleke kakhulu.

Ozithobayo

---

Nkosazana R. Govender

Cell No. 0833776653

**APPENDIX 7****UHLA LWEMIBUZO NGOMZALI NGESIZULU**

*Ngicela ugcwalise bese ubuyise loluhla lwemibuzo.*

**ISIGABA A****ULWAZI NGOMSUKA WOKUZALWA/ULWAZI OLUPHATHELENE NEMUVA**

Ngicela **uthikhe** (√) kwibhokisi elifanele.

**1. UBULILI****1.1** Yini ubulili bengane yakho?

Isilisa

Isifazane

**1.2** Yini ubulili Bakho?

Isilisa

Isifazane

**2. IMINYAKA****2.1** Mingakhi iminyaka yomntwana yakho?

5 iminyaka

6 iminyaka

7 iminyaka



8 iminyaka

9 iminyaka

10 iminyaka

**2.2 Iminyaka yakho iphakathi kwamiphi iminyaka?**

18 – 25 iminyaka

26 – 35 iminyaka

36 – 45 iminyaka

46 – 55 iminyaka

Iminyaka engaphezu kuka 55

**3. IBANGA**

**3.1 Wenza liphi ibanga umntwana yakho?**

1

2

3

**3.2 Kungabe umntwana yakho yabenza ibanga u R?**

Yebo

Qha

#### 4. OKUPHATHELENE NEMFUNDO

Yini izanga lakho lemfundo ephakeme?

Alikho

Ibanga 1 – 7

Ibanga 8 – 10

Ibanga 11 – 12

Imfundo ephakeme

#### 5. UMSEBENZI

Yini Umsebenzi owenzayo noma ofana nawo?

Angisebenzi

Ngisebenza endlini/engadini/umsebenzi/izindlu

Ngingumthengisi/ngiyazisebenza

Ngingumabhalane/umamukeli/umuntu oloba ngomshini/umdayisi

Unogada/iphoyisa/iphoyisa lomgwaqo

Uthisha/unesi/unonhlalanhle

Udokotela/unjiniyela/umcwaningi mabhuku/umhleli khompyutha

Usomabhizinisi

Okunye

Uma kunokunye, ngicela ukuveze \_\_\_\_\_

## 6. UHLOBO LWENDAWO LOKUHLALA

Veza uhlobo lwendawo yakho yokuhlala.

Emjondolo

Endaweni eyisiphephelo sesikhashana

Indawo lapho kuvikelwa khona abantu abadinga usizo/ikhaya labantwana

Edolobheni

Elokishini

Emaphandleni

Okunye

Uma kunokunye, ngicela ukuveze \_\_\_\_\_

## 7. UKUTHUTHUKISA ULIMI

7.1 Ukhona umtapo wolwazi oseduze nekhaya lakho?

Yebo

Qha

**7.2** Uyihambisa kangakanani ingane yakho kumtapo wolwazi ukuze iboleke amabhuku?

Angikaze

Akujwayelekile

Kwenye inkathi

Isikhathi esiningi

Njalo

**7.3** Uyifundela kangakanani ingane wakho?

Angikaze

Akujwayelekile

Kwenye inkathi

Isikhathi esiningi

Njalo

**7.4** Uyilalela njalo kangakanani ingane yakho uma ifunda?

Angikaze

Akujwayelekile

Kwenye inkathi

Isikhathi esiningi

Njalo

**7.4 Thikha (√) zonke izinto ezikhona ekhaya.**

Amabhubu, amaphepha, ezindaba

Umabonakude

Umsakazo

Khompyutha/i-lephopu

**ISIGABA C**

**ISIKALO GEMIBONO YABAZALI EMAYELANA NOKUPHATHEKA NGOKOMOYA  
KWEZINGANE UMA ZIFUNDA FUTHI ZIBHALA NGESINGISI**

*Khombisa imibono yakho ngezitatimende ezilandelayo ngokusebenzis isikalo esilanelayo.*

Faka **uphawu**(√) endaweni efanele:

**1** = Njalo

**2** = Esikhathini esiningi

**3** = Kwesinye isikhathi

**4** = Akujwayelekile

5 = Angikaze

<b>IPHATHEKA ISIKHATHI ESINGAKANANI INGANE YAKHO</b>	<b>NJALO  1</b>	<b>ESIKHATHINI ESININGI  2</b>	<b>KWESINYE ISIKHATHI  3</b>	<b>AKUJWAYELEKILE  4</b>	<b>ANGIKAZE  5</b>
1.Ukulangazelela ukufunda ngesiNgisi.					
2.Ukulangazelela ukubhala ngesiNgisi.					
3.Ukujabulela ukufunda izincwadi esiNgisi.					
4.Ukujabulela ukubhala izindaba ngesiNgisi.					

## **ISIGABA D**

### **ISIKALO GEZIZATHU ZABAZALI GOKUFUNA IZINGANE ZABO ZIFUNDE FUTHI ZIBHALE**

*Khombisa imibono yakho ngezitatimende ezilandelayo ngokusebenzis isikalo esilanelayo.*

Faka **uphawu**(√) endaweni efanele:

**1** = Angivumi ngokuqinisekileyo

**2** = Angivumi

**3** = Angazi

**4** = Ngiyavuma

**5** = Ngiyavuma ngokuqinisekileyo

<b>NGIFUNDA INGANE YAMI IFUNDE UKUFUNDA NOKUBHALA NGESINGISI NGOBA</b>	<b>ANGIVUMI NGOKUQIN- ISEKILEYO  1</b>	<b>ANGIVUMI  2</b>	<b>ANGAZI  3</b>	<b>NGIYAVUMA  4</b>	<b>NGIYAVUMA NGOKUQIN- ISEKILEYO  5</b>
1. ISingisi wulimi olusetshenziswa emhlabeni wonke.					
2. ISingisi sibukeka njengolimi nenqubekela phambili.					
3. ISingisi siwulimi olubalulekile eSouth Africa.					
4. Ngifuna umntwana wami afunde nezinye izilimi.					
5. Ukufunda iSingisi esikoleni kuzosiza umntwana wami ukuba athole umsebanzi ongcono.					
6. Ukufunda iSingisi kuzosiza umntwana wami ukuqhubeka nezifundo zakhe eNyuvesi.					
7. Ukufunda iSingisi kuzosiza ukuba umntwana wami aqhubeka nezifundo zakhe phesheya kwezilwandle.					
8. Umntwana wami uzokwazi ukuzwa abantu abakhuluma					

iSingisi.					
9. Umntwana wami uzokwazi ukuba nabangani abakhuluma iSingisi.					
10. Ngifuna umntwana acabange, futhi abe njengabantu abakhuluma iSingisi.					

**ISISGABA E****ISIKALO GEMIBONO YABAZALI MAYELANA NEZINGA LEMIPHUMELA YEZINGANE ZABO**

*Khombisa imibono yakho ngezitatimende ezilandelayo ngokusebenzis isikalo esilanelayo.*

Faka **uphawu**(√) endaweni efanele:

**1** = Kubi kakhulu

**2** = Kubi

**3** = Kuyenelisa

**4** = Kuhle

**3** = Kuhle kakhulu

**4**

<b>IKHONO LENGANE YAMI U</b>	<b>KUBI KAKHULU 1</b>	<b>KUBI 2</b>	<b>KUYENELISA 3</b>	<b>KUHLE 4</b>	<b>KUHLE KAKHULU 5</b>
1.Kukhuluma isiZulu u					
2. Ukuqonda isiZulu ngokukhuluma u					
3. Ukufunda izincwadi esiZulu u					
4. Ukuqonda isiZulu esibhaliwe u					



5. Ukubhala IsiZulu					
6. Ukukhuluma isiNgisi u					
7. Ukuqonda isiNgisi ngokukhuluma u					
8. Ukufunda izincwadi esiNgisi					
9. Ukuqonda isiNgisi esibhaliwe u					
10. Ukubhala isiNgisi u					

**Ngiyabonga isikhathi sakho nosizo lwakho.**

**APPENDIX 8**

P.O. Box 11552

Port Shepstone

4240

August 2014

Dear Educator

I am a Doctoral (Inclusive Education) student at the University of South Africa (UNISA). I am undertaking a study titled: “Factors that affect foundation phase English second language learners’ reading and writing skills”. My supervisor is Professor AJ Hugo and she can be contacted by e-mail at the following address: [hugoaj@unisa.ac.za](mailto:hugoaj@unisa.ac.za)

The Department of Education and the school principal have granted me permission to conduct the research.

I hope to gain insight from practitioners in the field. You have therefore been identified as a possible participant in the research. Participation will entail the completion of a questionnaire.

Please do not write your name on the questionnaire. This is a confidential questionnaire and you will remain anonymous. You can be assured that no individual’s or school’s name will be published. If you have any queries regarding the research or the questionnaire, you are most welcome to contact me.

Your assistance in completing the questionnaire and returning it as soon as possible will be greatly appreciated, as this is vitally important to the study.

Kind Regards

---

Miss R. Govender

E-mail address: [govenderranjini@gmail.com](mailto:govenderranjini@gmail.com)

## APPENDIX 9

### EDUCATOR QUESTIONNAIRE

*Please complete and return the questionnaire.*

#### SECTION A

#### BIOGRAPHICAL DATA/BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Please **tick (√)** the **appropriate box**.

##### 1. GENDER

What is your gender?

Male

Female

##### 2. AGE

Please **tick (√)** the appropriate range for your age.

18 – 25 years

26 – 35 years

36 – 45 years

46 – 55 years

Older than 55 years

##### 3. GRADE

What grade are you currently teaching?

Grade 1

Grade 2

Grade 3

#### **4. HOME LANGUAGE**

What is your home language?

Afrikaans

English

IsiXhosa

IsiZulu

Other

#### **5. EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AND TRAINING**

**5.1** Indicate your qualification.

Honours Degree or Masters Degree

Bachelor Degree and 4 years

Higher Education Diploma

Bachelor Degree

Four years Education Diploma

Three years Education Diploma

Lesser qualification

**5.2** Describe your qualification regarding Foundation Phase Education.

Unqualified (No educational qualification)

Under-qualified (Educational qualification but

not in the Foundation Phase

Qualified

**5.3** Describe your training in the teaching of English as a second language.

Excellent

Adequate

Inadequate

No training

**5.4** Tick (✓) all the learning theories for second language teaching that you use to teach English second language learners?

Universal Grammar

Krashen's theory of second language acquisition

Cummins's theory of second language acquisition

Dynamic Systems Theory

Sociocultural Theory

None of the above

Please indicate if you use any other theories that are not mentioned above

---

**5.5** Describe your CAPS training with regard to bilingual/multilingual teaching.

Excellent

Adequate

Inadequate

No training

**5.6** How would you rate the need for in-service training in the teaching of reading skills to second language learners?

Absolutely necessary

Necessary

A little necessary

Unnecessary

**5.7** Which of the following methods or approaches do you use to teach reading to second language learners?

The phonic method (“Bottom-up” approach)

The whole language or look-and-say approach (“Top-down approach”)

The language experience method

Teaching Handwriting, Reading and Spelling Skills (THRASS)

Other

If other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

**5.8** How would you rate the need for in-service training in the teaching of writing skills to second language learners?

Absolutely necessary

Necessary

A little necessary

Unnecessary

**5.9** To what extent are you proficient in pure isiZulu?

Totally

Largely

Slightly

Not at all

## **6. TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

How many years of teaching experience do you have?

1 – 5

6 – 10

11 – 20

21 – 30

More than 30

## **7. SCHOOL FACTORS**

**7.1** How many learners are in your class?

Less than 30



30 – 39

40 – 49

50 – 59

60 or more

**7.2** How many isiZulu-speaking learners are in your class?

1 – 9

10 – 19

20 – 29

30 – 39

40 – 49

50 or more

**7.3** To what extent are isiZulu-speaking learners in your class proficient in isiZulu?

Totally

Largely

Slightly

Not at all

**7.4** Which of these options best describes your school library?

Well-stocked

Under-stocked

Does not exist

**7.5** Do you have a library corner in your class?

Yes

No

If yes, please indicate the types of books you have in the library corner \_\_\_\_\_

**7.6** From your experience as an educator, what do you think is the appropriate age for a learner to be enrolled in grade 1?

5 years – turning 6 by June

6 years – turning 7 by June

## **SECTION B**

### **MEASUREMENTS OF EDUCATORS' VIEWS REGARDING ISIZULU-SPEAKING LEARNERS' EMOTIONAL BEHAVIOUR WHEN READING AND WRITING**

*Indicate your views about the following statements using the scale below.*

Please tick (✓) the **appropriate column** where:

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Unsure

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly agree

<b>MOST OF THE ISIZULU-SPEAKING LEARNERS IN MY CLASS ARE</b>	<b>STRONGLY DISAGREE  1</b>	<b>DISAGREE  2</b>	<b>UNSURE  3</b>	<b>AGREE  4</b>	<b>STRONGLY AGREE  5</b>
1. Anxious when asked to read in English.					
2. Anxious when asked to write in English.					
3. Excited when asked to read in English.					
4. Excited when asked to write in English.					

### SECTION C

#### MEASUREMENTS OF EDUCATORS' VIEWS REGARDING ISIZULU-SPEAKING LEARNERS' PERFORMANCE IN ENGLISH

*Indicate your views about the following statements using the scale below.*

Please **tick (√)** the **appropriate column** where:

1 = Very poor

2 = Poor

3 = Fair

4 = Good

5 = Excellent

<b>THE ABILITY OF MOST OF THE ISIZULU-SPEAKING LEARNERS IN MY CLASS</b>	<b>VERY POOR 1</b>	<b>POOR 2</b>	<b>FAIR 3</b>	<b>GOOD 4</b>	<b>EXCELLENT 5</b>
1. To speak English fluently is					
2. To understand oral English is					
3. To read simple English words is					
4. To read English texts fluently is					
5. To read and comprehend English texts is					
6. To write simple English words is					
6. To write simple sentences in English.					
7. To write simple stories in English is					

**SECTION D****MEASUREMENTS OF EDUCATORS' VIEWS REGARDING CAPS HOME LANGUAGE**

*Indicate your views about the following statements using the scale below.*

Please tick (✓) the **appropriate column**.

<b>STATEMENTS</b>	<b>STRONGLY DISAGREE 1</b>	<b>DISAGREE 2</b>	<b>UNSURE 3</b>	<b>AGREE 4</b>	<b>STRONGLY AGREE 5</b>

1. CAPS is too challenging for most isiZulu-speaking learners.					
2. CAPS consists of too many reading assessments.					
3. Too much of focus is placed on assessments.					
4. The teaching of phonics is well-structured in the CAPS document.					
5. CAPS caters for the learner's individual reading needs.					
6. CAPS caters for the learner's individual writing needs.					
7. When implementing CAPS, more time is spent on assessing than on constructive teaching.					

**SECTION E**

*Indicate your views about the following statements using the scale below.*

Please tick (✓) the **appropriate column**.

STATEMENTS	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	UNSURE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
------------	----------------------	----------	--------	-------	-------------------

1. My limited knowledge of approaches to teaching second language learners contributes to the difficulties I am experiencing in teaching reading and writing to isiZulu-speaking learners.					
2. My large class negatively affects the provision of extra individual lessons to isiZulu-speaking learners who experience reading and writing difficulties.					
3. Due to the large learner/educator ratio I experience frustration when teaching reading and writing.					
4. The excessive amount of reading and writing assessments is frustrating.					
5. Learners who enter Grade 1 at the age of 5 are not emotionally ready for formal schooling.					
6. IsiZulu-speaking learners who enter Grade 1 at the age of 5 generally experience difficulties reading in English.					
7. IsiZulu-speaking learners who enter Grade 1 at the age of 5 generally experience difficulties writing in English.					
8. IsiZulu-speaking learners should be proficient in their home language before learning a second language.					
9. The language of learning and teaching at school should be the learner's home language.					
10. An isiZulu-speaking learner may have developed the informal language of conversation but may struggle to read and write in English.					
11. Learners' individual attributes (such as motivation, attitude, confidence, and anxiety) play a major role in second language acquisition.					
12. I tend to correct every mistake an isiZulu-speaking learner makes while reading in English.					
13. I tend to correct every mistake an isiZulu-speaking learner makes while writing in English.					

**Thank you for your time and effort.**

## APPENDIX 10

<b>CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEWING EDUCATORS</b>		
<b>SECTION 1: CONTACT AND PROJECT DETAILS</b>		
Researcher's Full Name:	Radhamoney Govender	
Contact Details:	083 3776 653	
Supervisor's Full Name:	Professor AJ Hugo	
Contact Details:	012 4294117	
Protocol Number:	N/A	
Project Title:	FACTORS THAT AFFECT FOUNDATION PHASE ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS' READING AND WRITING SKILLS	
<b>SECTION 2: CERTIFICATION</b>		
<b>Participant Certification</b>		
<p>In signing this form, I confirm that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <span style="float: right; text-align: right;">The nature and purpose of the research project have been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part. This will include approximately 30 to 45 minutes for the interview.</span></li> <li>• <span style="float: right; text-align: right;">I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.</span></li> <li>• <span style="float: right; text-align: right;">I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.</span></li> <li>• <span style="float: right; text-align: right;">I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential, unless required by law.</span></li> <li>• <span style="float: right; text-align: right;">I understand that I will be audio taped during the interview.</span></li> <li>• <span style="float: right; text-align: right;">I understand that the tape will remain with the researcher and no other individual besides UNISA will have access to it.</span></li> </ul>		
<i>Participants under the age of 18 normally require parental consent to be involved in research. The consent form should allow for those under the age of 18 to agree to their involvement and for a parent to give consent.</i>		
<i>Participant Signature</i>	<i>Printed Name</i>	<i>Date</i>
<b>Researcher Certification</b>		
I have explained the study to subject and consider that he/she understands what is involved.		
	Radhamoney Govender	
<i>Researcher Signature</i>	<i>Printed Name</i>	<i>Date</i>

## APPENDIX 11

### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (EDUCATOR)

The following questions pertain to foundation phase isiZulu-speaking learners who are being taught through the medium of English. This implies that the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) is English.

#### SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

1. What grade do you teach?
2. Approximately how many years have you been teaching for?
3. Did you have any training to teach second language learners?
4. How would you rate your ability to speak isiZulu?

Excellent; good; fair; poor; very poor

#### SECTION B: CULTURAL ASPECTS

1. In your view, how does the culture of isiZulu-speaking learners in your class affect their ability to read English texts?
2. How does the culture of isiZulu-speaking learners in your class affect their writing skills?
3. Do you feel that isiZulu-speaking learners in your class are identifying with both their culture and language and the English language?
4. Would you say that English-speaking learners and isiZulu-speaking learners in your class view each other as socially equal?

#### SECTION C: PSYCHOLOGICAL AND AFFECTIVE ASPECTS

1. Do you feel that isiZulu-speaking learners in your class experience reading anxiety? Do they become anxious when asked to read in English? (Worried and uneasy when reading in class)
2. Do you feel that isiZulu-speaking learners in your class experience writing anxiety? Do they become anxious when asked to write in English?
3. In your view, are learners anxious when they are told that they are writing a test?



4. How would you describe the attitudes of isiZulu-speaking learners towards reading in English?
5. How would you describe the attitudes of isiZulu-speaking learners towards writing in English?

#### **SECTION D: SOCIAL ASPECTS**

1. Do IsiZulu-speaking learners in your class converse with peers in English or isiZulu during lessons?  
(During group work)
2. From your observations of isiZulu-speaking learners, would you say that they converse in English or isiZulu during the breaks, on the playgrounds, and during social activities such as sports, excursions, and fun days?
3. How would you describe the social relationships of isiZulu-speaking learners with English-speaking learners?
4. Are there any isiZulu-speaking learners in your class who you think feels alienated or isolated? Why do you say so?

#### **SECTION E: COGNITIVE ASPECTS**

1. Which set of graded readers are you using to teach reading?
2. How do you teach reading to second language learners? What methods or approaches do you use?
3. How do you teach writing to second language learners?
4. There are several assessments for reading, for example, independent, group, shared, and paired reading. From your observations do you think that isiZulu-speaking learners are coping?
5. What are your views on the English Blue Book that the Department of Education has given to learners?
6. Do you feel that CAPS for Home Language and First Additional Language is working effectively in the classroom? Why do you say so?
7. Which aspects of CAPS for Home Language and First Additional Language do you find most difficult to implement?
8. From your experience do you think that 5 year old children are ready for formal schooling? Why do you say so?

9. Do you think that the Department of Education should reconsider the policy for age of entry to Grade 1? What do you think is the appropriate age for entry to Grade 1?
10. From your experience and observations do you find a major difference between the performance of boys and girls in reading? Which group performs better?
11. From your experience and observations do you find a major difference between the performance of boys and girls in writing? Which group performs better?
12. What are your views on the fact that isiZulu-speaking foundation phase learners at your school are learning through the medium of English?
13. What approaches do you use to teach reading to second language learners?
14. Are you familiar with any of the learning theories for second language teaching? If yes, explain how you use the theory or theories to teach English to IsiZulu-speaking learners?

#### **SECTION F: UNIQUE DIFFICULTIES**

1. In your opinion, what are some of the unique difficulties that are experienced by isiZulu-speaking learners when reading and writing in English and not by English-speaking learners?
2. What are the unique challenges experienced by teachers who teach reading and writing to isiZulu-speaking learners?

**APPENDIX 12**

P.O. Box 11552

Port Shepstone

4240

August 2014

Dear Parent

I am a doctoral (Inclusive Education) student at the University of South Africa (UNISA). I am undertaking a study titled: "Factors that affect foundation phase English second language learners' reading and writing skills". My supervisor is Professor AJ Hugo and she can be contacted by e-mail at the following address: [hugoaj@unisa.ac.za](mailto:hugoaj@unisa.ac.za)

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and the school principal have granted me permission to conduct the research. The research protocol has also received ethical clearance.

It will be greatly appreciated if you could please grant me the opportunity to observe your child during reading and writing activities in his or her classroom. Observation will include the reading and writing behaviours of learners, the contents of the reading materials and writing scripts, the learners' perceptions and feelings during reading and writing activities, the availability of reading materials in the classroom, and the approaches used to teach reading.

If you require any further information about this research you are most welcome to contact me.

Kind Regards

\_\_\_\_\_

Miss R. Govender

Cell No. 0833776653

E-mail address: govenderranjini@gmail.com

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If permission is granted please sign the form and return.

I, Mr/Mrs/Ms \_\_\_\_\_ grant permission for Miss R. Govender to observe my child \_\_\_\_\_ in grade \_\_\_\_\_ during reading and writing activities in his or her classroom.

\_\_\_\_\_

Parent's signature

## APPENDIX 13

CONSENT FORM FOR OBSERVATION OF READING AND WRITING LESSONS		
<b>SECTION 1: CONTACT AND PROJECT DETAILS</b>		
Researcher's Full Name:	Radhamoney Govender	
Contact Details:	083 3776 653	
Supervisor's Full Name:	Professor AJ Hugo	
Contact Details:	012 4294117	
Protocol Number:	N/A	
Project Title:	FACTORS THAT AFFECT FOUNDATION PHASE ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS' READING AND WRITING SKILLS	
<b>SECTION 2: CERTIFICATION</b>		
<b>Participant Certification</b>		
<p>In signing this form, I confirm that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <p>The nature and purpose of the research project have been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part. This will include approximately one hour for observation. I understand that if the researcher requires more time for observation, prior arrangements will be made.</p> </li> <li> <p>I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.</p> </li> <li> <p>I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.</p> </li> <li> <p>I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential, unless required by law.</p> </li> </ul>		
<p><i>Participants under the age of 18 normally require parental consent to be involved in research. The consent form should allow for those under the age of 18 to agree to their involvement and for a parent to give consent.</i></p>		
<i>Participant Signature</i>	<i>Printed Name</i>	<i>Date</i>
<b>Researcher Certification</b>		
I have explained the study to subject and consider that he/she understands what is involved.		
	Radhamoney Govender	
<i>Researcher Signature</i>	<i>Printed Name</i>	<i>Date</i>

## APPENDIX 14

### RESEARCHER OBSERVATION GRID

OBSERVATION	DESCRIPTION
1. Who is in the group?	How many children are in the class? How many IsiZulu-speaking learners are in the class? What grade are these learners in? What is the age range of these learners?
2. What is happening here? a. What reading and writing behaviours are repetitive and irregular?  b. How do learners in the class behave towards one another when reading and writing?  c. What are the contents of the reading materials and writing scripts?	<p>How are reading and writing activities organised and explained? Are there any patterns that emerge when learners are reading and writing? What are the most common errors made when reading and writing? Do learners fall back on attractor states after errors are corrected?</p> <p>How do the teacher and learners organise themselves during reading and writing activities? What statuses and roles are evident?</p> <p>What topics are common and rare? What languages do the teacher and learners use for verbal communication? What beliefs do the content of the reading materials illustrate? Are the reading materials culturally familiar to the learners? Can the learners relate to the text and the topics for reading and writing; that are selected by the educator?</p>
3. Where are the learners located?	What physical settings form their contexts? What natural resources and technologies are created or used during reading and writing? How does the teacher allocate and use space and physical objects when teaching reading and writing?

4. How often do learners engage in reading and writing activities?	How does the teacher conceptualise, use, and allocate or distribute time for reading and writing?
5. What are the perceptions and constructions of the participants' actions, feelings, thoughts, and beliefs?	What non-verbal cues (facial expressions, gestures, tone of voice, body movements, and other unverballed social interactions that suggest the subtle meanings of language) are evident during reading and writing activities? Do learners appear anxious when reading and writing in English? Are learners motivated to read and write?
6. What reading materials are available in the classroom for learners to read?	Is there a reading or library corner in the classroom? Are there relevant charts pinned on the walls? Are the reading materials appropriate for the learners in that particular grade (level of language, context). Can learners identify with the cultures portrayed in the texts? Are the texts culturally familiar to the learners?
7. What approaches are used to teach reading?	Are any of the following approaches used to teach reading: phonic method, whole language approach, THRASS, interactive method, the language experience method? What other innovative approaches does the teacher use?