LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE ESWATINI GENERAL CERTIFICATE OF SECONDARY EDUCATION (EGCSE) WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO ENGLISH LITERACY IN THE HLATHIKHULU CLUSTER SCHOOLS

By

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I declare that the above dissertation is my own work and that all the sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. I also declare that the dissertation is within the accepted requirements for originality, and that it has not been previously submitted for examination at UNISA or any other institution of higher education.

Signature: _(signature)_   **Date:** 26 September, 2022

ABSTRACT

English proficiency is a ticket to academic success and opens doors to better career prospects in many parts of the world. However, English Language is a challenge to learners in the Kingdom of Eswatini and their performance in external examinations is compromised due to low English literacy levels. To investigate the problem, the study explored learners' perceptions of the Eswatini General Certificate of Secondary Education (EGCSE) with particular reference to English literacy in the Hlathikhulu cluster schools. Using an embedded mixed method design, 120 Grade 11 learners (55 males and 65 females) were selected from six schools within the Hlathikhulu cluster. The schools were selected using simple random sampling, whereas the learners were selected purposively. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions, a structured questionnaire as well as a language literacy test. Qualitative data were analysed using thematic content analysis whereas quantitative date were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics, particularly Spearman's correlation. The findings revealed that a majority of learners had positive perceptions about English literacy; despite some challenges that hinder learners from attaining the highest level of literacy in English. The findings further indicated that nearly all the respondents used some form of learning strategies to mitigate the challenges. As revealed by the findings, the strategies were helpful to most leaners although the learners were still not happy that their overall performance in English literacy. The inferential statistics showed a strong correlation between language strategy use and performance as well as perception and performance. Based on the findings, the study concluded that despite having difficulties, learners had positive perceptions about English Literacy, and that that the use of learning strategies underscores the leaners' determined efforts to pass the subject. By focusing on the learners, the study advances scientific knowledge as it taps into a less researched territory. Overall, the findings have implications for improving language teaching and learning in Eswatini and other contexts where English is a second language.

Key words: English as Second Language, English literacy, Eswatini General Certificate of Secondary Education, medium of instruction, perceptions.

SENDLALELO

Emhlabeni wonkhe jikelele, kwati lulwimi lwesiNgisi ngekwelucophelelo lelisetulu kuyayivula iminyango yemadlelo laluhlata kutekusebenta. Noma kunjalo, kepha lolulwimi lwesiNgisi luta netingcinamba kubafundzi eveni laseSwatini, kufaka ekhatsi, kungasiphasi kahle lesifundvo ikakhulukati eluhlolweni lolukhulu lwangephandle. Imbangela yalokungaphasi kahle lesifundvo, lizinga lelincane bafundzi labasati ngaso lesifundvo sesiNgisi. Kucwaningwa imbangela yalokufeyilwa kangaka kwalesifundvo,kubukwe indlela labacondza ngayo lesifundvo sesiNgisi, bafundzi besitifiketi lesijwayelekile semfundvo lephakeme Eswatini (EGCSE), lakhona kubukwe kakhulu bafundzi labasetikolweni letibutsene kaHlathikhulu. Ngekusebentisa indlela yelucwaningo lebhicako, kwakhetfwa bafundzi labalikhulu nemashumi mabili (emashumi lasihlanu nesihlanu, lokubafana, kanye nemashumi lasitfupha nesihlanu lokumantfombatana). Tikolwa betingenele lolucwaningo takhetfwa ngalokungahlelwa, kani bafundzi bona bakhetfwa ngenhloso, kubukwa tingoni letitsite. Kukoleka i-datha, uMcwaningi wasebentisa; imibuto levuleke kancane wacococisana nabo bafundzi; liphepha lelineluhlu lwemibuto; kanye nesivivinyo selulwimi lwesiNgisi lesicwaninga lizinga umfundzi lati ngalo lolulwimi. Idatha leyatfolakala nakucociswana nebafundzi yahlatiywa, yabutsiswa ngetigcikitsi, kani lena yesivivinyo selulwimi lwesiNgisi neyeluhlwa lwemibuto lebhalwe phasi yona ihlatiywe ngendlela yaSpearman yekubuka budlelwano (ngekubuchaza nangekubucabanga). Lolucwaningo naselentiwe, luvete kutsi linyenti lebafundzi linembono lomuhle ngesiNgisi noma nje banato tingcinamba letivimba kutsi lolulwimi bagcine bangalwati ngalokusezingeni lelisetulu. Kuvelile futsi, kutsi linengi labo bafundzi basebentisa tinsita kufundza kulwa netingcinamba labahlangana nato nabafundza siNgisi. Bafundzi baveta kutsi noma beva ngatsi letinsita kufundza tiyabasita kufundza siNgisi, kepha abagculiseki ngelizinga lesolo baphasa ngaso lesifundvo sesiNgisi. Tibalo kulolucwaningo tikhombise kutsi kunebudlelwano lobukhulu emkhatsini wekusebentisa; tinsita kufundza; indlela bafundzi lababuka ngayo siNgisi; kanye nendlela labaphasa ngayo lesifundvo. Kuphetsa; lokungashiwo kutsi noma bafundzi banebulukhuni ngalesifundvo sesiNgisi, kepha bona basitsatsa kahle lesifundvo, kungako betama konkhe lokusemandleni kusebentisa tinsita kufundza lokukhomba kutikhandla ngalolulwimi. Ngekugcila kwalolucwaningo kubafundzi, lutfutfukisa lwati kutebucwephesha ngoba lubuke ingoni lengakavami kubukwa baCwaningi, kani ke, nemiphumela yalolucwaningo itawusita kakhulu indlela lokufundvwa ngayo nendlendlela lekufundziswa ngayo lesifundvo sesiNgisi,

eveni laseSwatini kanye nakulamanye emave lakhona lolulwimi lufundvwa njengelulwimi lwesibili.

Emagama lagcamile: SiNgisi njengelulwimi lwesibili, Lwati lwekukufundza siNgisi, Sitifiketi lesejwayelekile semfundvo lephakeme Eswatini, Indlela yekufundzisa, Indlela yekucondza

OPSOMMING

Engelsvaardigheid is 'n kaartjie na akademiese sukses en maak deure oop na beter loopbaanvooruitsigte in baie dele van die wêreld. Engelse Taal is egter 'n uitdaging vir leerders in die Koninkryk van Eswatini en hul prestasie in eksterne eksamens word benadeel as gevolg van lae Engelse geletterdheidsvlakke. Om die probleem te ondersoek, het die studie leerders se persepsies van die Eswatini Algemene Sertifikaat van Sekondêre Edukasie (EASSE) ondersoek met spesifieke verwysing na Engelse geletterdheid in die Hlathikhulu-klusterskole. Deur 'n ingebedde gemengde metode-ontwerp te gebruik, is 120 graad 11-leerders (55 mans en 65 vroue) uit ses skole binne die Hlathikhulu-kluster gekies. Die skole is deur eenvoudige ewekansige steekproefneming geselekteer, terwyl die leerders doelbewus geselekteer is. Data is ingesamel deur gebruik te maak van semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude deur oop vrae, 'n gestruktureerde vraelys sowel as 'n taalgeletterdheidstoets te gebruik. Kwalitatiewe data is ontleed deur tematiese inhoudsanalise te gebruik, terwyl kwantitatiewe datum ontleed is deur gebruik te maak van beide beskrywende en inferensiële statistieke, veral Spearman se korrelasie. Die bevindinge het aan die lig gebring dat 'n meerderheid leerders positiewe persepsies oor Engelse geletterdheid gehad het; ten spyte van sommige uitdagings wat leerders verhinder om die hoogste vlak van geletterdheid in Engels te bereik. Die bevindinge het verder aangedui dat byna al die respondente een of ander vorm van leerstrategieë gebruik het om die uitdagings te versag.Soos deur die bevindinge aan die lig gebring, was die strategieë nuttig vir die meeste leergangers, hoewel die leerders steeds nie tevrede was met hul algehele prestasie in Engelse geletterdheid nie. Die inferensiële statistieke het 'n sterk korrelasie getoon tussen taalstrategiegebruik en prestasie asook persepsie en prestasie. Op grond van die bevindinge het die studie tot die gevolgtrekking gekom dat leerders, ondanks probleme, positiewe persepsies oor Engelse Geletterdheid gehad het, en dat die gebruik van leerstrategieë die leerders se vasberade pogings om die vak te slaag onderstreep. Deur op die leerders te fokus, bevorder die studie wetenskaplike kennis namate dit 'n minder nagevorsde gebied inskakel.Oor die algemeen het die bevindinge implikasies vir die verbetering van taalonderrig en -leer in Eswatini en ander kontekste waar Engels 'n tweede taal is.

Sleutelwoorde: Engels as Tweede Taal, Engelse geletterdheid, Eswatini Algemene Sekondêre Onderwyssertifikaat, onderrigmedium, persepsies.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my dearest maternal grandmother, Mrs. Mabel Thandekile Mabuza, who has always loved me with no bounds, and encouraged me to pursue my dreams as she waited on them with prayer until they were realised. Though you are gone, your memory continues to regulate my life and I shall make sure that it continues to live on. I love and miss you beyond words, may your beautiful soul continue resting in peace!

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CHAPTER 1

1.1 Background to the Study

This study sought to explore learners' perceptions of the Eswatini General Certificate of Secondary Education (EGCSE) with particular reference to English literacy in the Hlathikhulu cluster schools. The concept of perceptions for this study was based on learners' attitudes / beliefs and their learning experiences concerning English literacy. The EGCSE Syllabus is a two-year course for examination from Grade 11 to Grade 12 (locally known as Form Four and Form Five) for learners in Eswatini. The main aims of the syllabus course as outlined in the EGCSE English Language Syllabus for examination in 2021-2023 issued by the Examinations Council of Eswatini (ECESWA) (2021:5) are to enable learners:

- Develop an awareness of the usefulness of the English Language as a medium of national and interpersonal communication;

- Promote the value of effective language command and use for personal development;

- Develop an awareness of the nature of language and language-learning skills along with skills of a more general application and;

- Form a sound base for the effective uses of English for the purposes of further study and employment.

The aforementioned EGCSE syllabus aims show that the syllabus encourages that learners be aware of the usefulness of the English Language, and it also makes them appreciate the importance of English for their personal, intellectual and social development. The primary focus for this study was Grade 11 learners who were in the first year of the course study. Focusing on Grade 11 allowed the researcher more time to complete study as these learners had two full years to do the EGCSE course.

As explained by Hlatshwayo and Mthethwa (2017), Eswatini has two official languages, namely: English (the second language) and siSwati (the native language). The government of the kingdom of Swaziland (now Eswatini) (2011), in its Education and Training Sector Policy states that, children will enter school and learn through the medium of mother tongue (siSwati) for the first four years of schooling, and they will switch to English as a medium of instruction when they reach the fourth grade. However, in reality, it is difficult to ascertain the degree to which both English and siSwati are used in the primary level of education as this varies among teachers. In Eswatini, English is a medium of instruction and assessment

after the fourth grade of school, as well as in tertiary institutions. Mordaunt (1990) reports that in 1973, the government of Eswatini sent a circular (No.E21/73) to schools all over the country to remind school principals that all local learners in Grade One should take English and siSwati as languages that would be learned in school from 1974. It was also stated that after completing the primary level of school, learners should sit for a Primary Certificate Examination (PCE) and may proceed to a junior secondary level where at the end of the junior level (Form Three) they would write a Junior Certificate examination (JC) and must pass English. Also, at the end of Form Five / Grade 12, in order to qualify for EGCSE, learners must pass the English Language.

The implication of the English Language policy was that, from the fifth grade, learners were not allowed to proceed to the next class if they had failed English Language, despite having passed all other subjects. This has been the culture of the education system of the country since 1974 until academic year 2019/2020, which brought a drastic change in the education system of the country. In January 2020, the Eswatini Education Minister, Lady Howard Mabuza, through all media houses, announced that English Language would no longer be a passing or failing subject with effect from academic year 2020. As a result, about 3000 pupils who sat for the 2019, Grade Seven and Form Three/Grade 10 examinations, passed even though they had failed English (Sukati, 2020). English Language has since been relegated from the status of being a passing or failing subject to that of a normal core subject, just like all other compulsory subjects. Consequently, English Language is no longer a barrier to learners' progression to the next class, at least for all other grades except for Grade 12 learners, who are in their final year of EGCSE in Eswatini.

English Language, however, is still an entry requirement for Grade 12 learners who wish to enrol in higher institutions of learning after completing their EGCSE. In particular, under-graduate prospectus from the University of Eswatini (UNESWA) (2020), stipulate that in order to be admitted for a degree programme at the university, one must have a minimum of 6 passes in EGCSE, and that must include passes at C grade (60%) or better in English Language and five other relevant subjects. This means that learners who have passed other subjects, but failed English are not allowed entry at UNESWA, as well as in other tertiary institutions that affiliate under the main university (UNESWA) in the country. As Kunene and Mthethwa (2020), correctly observe, English Language requirement for entry into tertiary

institutions is a challenge to every Liswati school child as performance in English Language as a school subject continues to be poor.

The National EGCSE annual statistics published by ECESWA (2017, 2018, 2019), reveal that learners consistently perform poorly in English Language. That is, the percentages of learners who obtain a C grade and better (60 %+) in English Language from 2017 to 2019 range from 24.19% to 26.81 %. These figures indicate that learners' performance in the English Language subject is poor, yet tertiary institutions demand a 60% pass or better in the subject for EGCSE learners to be admitted in institutions of higher learning. Poor performance in English language translates to low levels of English literacy among learners. Lipka, Siegel and Vukovic (2005) assert that the literacy skill in English is a crucial variable in predicting academic success. Therefore, English literacy is important for academic success.

As the language of instruction (LOI) in Eswatini, English language proficiency offers a cross-curricular advantage. Being an entry requirement into tertiary institutions, English opens doors to better career prospects. In essence, the poor performance in English literacy does not only hinder EGCSE learners' admission in universities and colleges in the country, but it also compromises their ability to perform well in other subjects since all the subjects are taught and assessed in English, except for siSwati, the home language. EGCSE learners, especially those in their final year of study, must pass English Language in order to proceed to the next level of education even though a fail in English no longer hinders learners in the lower grades from progressing to the next class. It is on this backdrop that the problem statement is based.

1.2 Problem Statement

The Eswatini General Certificate of Secondary Education (EGCSE) examination poses a challenge to most candidates, and this leads to poor performance (Kunene & Mthethwa 2020). As documented in the Examinations Council of Eswatini (ECESWA) external examination reports (2015, 2018, 2019, 2020), the learners' performance of in English Language is below average every year. These reports highlight grammatical errors as the main cause for failure. In particular, glaring spelling mistakes, poor use of tenses, incorrect use of subject-verb-agreement have been cited. The 2015 report states that candidates "lack command of the language" (p. 9). That is, "their writing is infested with a plethora of poor grammatical structures." The 2020 examination report highlights that candidates' performance was lower than the previous year (2019). The report continues that "spelling and

punctuation errors were evident in across all the written papers. In comprehension exercises such errors "cost candidates marks – even if they knew the answer" (ECESWA, 2018:11). Unfortunately, the 2021 report was not available at the time because examinations were delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Table 1.1 shows students' overall performance in English Language from 2015 to 2020.

Table 1.1:

Students' performance in SGCSE / EGCSE English Language (2015-2019)

Year	Total	A* to C	A* to C %	D to G	D to G %
2020	15 673	4 082	26.81	10 082	68.79
2019	15 068	4 275	28.37	9 836	65.27
2018	14 922	3 853	25.88	9 789	65.60
2017	13 626	3 371	24.73	8 794	64.53
2016	12 595	3 173	25.19	8 343	66.24
2015	12 003	2 898	24.14	8 179	68.14

Table 1.1 shows the students' overall performance in SGCSE / EGCSE English Language. Notably, in the performance is poor. In 2015, only 24.14% of the candidates obtained credits in English whereas 68.14% did not. In 2015, there was a slight increase in the credit pass to 25.19%. There was another decline to 24.73% credit percentage pass in 2017 – despite an increase in the number of candidates who sat for the examination. In 2018, credits stood at 25.88%, and in 2019 there was a notable increase to 28.37%. However, there was another decline to 26.8% credit pass in 2020. It can be said that for the past six years, the credit percentage pass has ranged from 24.14 (2015) to 28.37 (2019). This means that over 60% of the candidates have not scored credits for six consecutive years. The statistics indicate that a majority the learners perform poorly in the EGCSE English Examination. In other words, the percentage of those who do not score credit passes (C grade and above) is considerably high – closer to the 70% mark.

Within this context, it is not known how the Hlathikhulu cluster EGCSE learners perceive English literacy as one component of their overall performance in English, thus a knowledge gap that needs to be filled is created. This study extended beyond learners' performance in English as a Second Language (L2), in that it sought to assess learners' perceptions of

English literacy in terms of difficulties that they encountered; their learning strategies; and how both their strategy use and perception/attitude related to their performance in English.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore learners' perceptions of the Eswatini General Certificate of Secondary Education (EGCSE) with particular reference to English literacy in the Hlathikhulu cluster schools. To achieve the purpose, specific objectives and corresponding research questions were used, as outlined in the subsequent section.

1.3.1 Research Objectives

The objectives of the study were as follows:

1. To explore Grade 11, EGCSE learners' perceptions regarding English literacy.
2. To establish difficulties encountered by Grade 11, EGCSE learners in English literacy if any.
3. To unearth learning strategies used by Grade 11, EGCSE learners in English literacy.
4. To ascertain how Grade 11, EGCSE learners perform generally in English literacy as a subject.

1.4 Research Questions

The research questions were as follows:

1. What are Grade 11, EGCSE learners' perceptions regarding English literacy?
2. What difficulties are encountered by Grade 11, EGCSE learners in English literacy, if any?
3. What learning strategies do Grade 11, EGCSE learners use in English literacy?
4. How do Grade 11, EGCSE learners perform generally in English literacy as a subject?

1.5 Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by the cognitive learning theory, which according to Saville-Troike (2006), has two central frameworks for learning processes. These processes are Information Processing (IP) and Connectionism. It is revealed however, that IP has been more influential than any other psychological perspective as far as second language acquisition is concerned. Saville-Troike (2006) state that language learning approaches based on IP concern

themselves with mental processes that are involved in language learning and use. Perception and the input of new information have been identified as one of the approaches of IP. Saville-Troike (2006) assert that input for second language acquisition is any information/sample that L2 learners are exposed to. However, the sample is not available for processing unless learners pay attention to it. It is at this point of perception of input where priorities are largely determined and where attention resources are channelled (Saville-Troike 2006: 75-76). Therefore, in order for learners to learn a language, they need to have a high sense of awareness of the language so that they can process whatever they are learning.

Buttressing the concept of awareness, Sincero (2011) posits that the cognitive learning theory advocates effective cognitive processes associated with ease of learning and storing of new information in the memory for a long time. However, ineffective cognitive processes are attributed to learning difficulties of an individual that can be identified at any point during their lifetime. Additionally, Ellis (1993) highlights that the cognitive learning theory sees second language acquisition as a conscious and reasoned thinking process which involves the deliberate use of learning strategies. Learning strategies have a bearing on the way an individual learns a language, be it a first or a second language (Oxford, 2003).

Viewed this way, cognitive learning theory is optimal for exploring the variables of the study adequately. The theory provides a wide lens through which to study learners' beliefs and attitudes towards the learning of L2 English so that their awareness of English could be heightened in order for successful intake to occur, resulting in improved literacy levels in English Language. Based on the foregoing, the cognitive learning theory was suitable for this study as it would help in; 1) assessing learners' perceptions in terms of difficulties encountered regarding English literacy; 2) their learning strategy use; and 3) how both perceptions and strategy use related to their performance in English. In line with cognitive theorists (Tennyson and Rasch, 1988; Wachs, 1981; Sincero, 2011 and Ausubel, 1969), the study also tested for a correlation between perception and performance as highlighted in the research design.

1.6 Research Design

This study is located in the pragmatic paradigm, which is founded on two main principles, according to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017). These principles are: 1) individuals have unique ways of interpreting situations of reality; and 2) that the researcher is the one who best

determines what is appropriate for that particular study. This study, therefore, was guided by what best works for the researcher, as well as the approach that could be appropriate for addressing the research questions. To that end, the pragmatic paradigm was optimal for this study because it recognises the importance of all research methods. That way, pragmatism provides the most informative, complete, balanced, and useful results for a study as stated by Sitwala (2014).

In accordance with the pragmatic paradigm, this study employed the descriptive embedded mixed methods research design. The study is descriptive as it sought to find views, opinions, and insights of learners regarding English literacy. According to Dörnyei (2007), descriptive studies as the name implies, describe some phenomenon. According to Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, and Hanson (2003), in embedded mixed methods designs, one set of data provides a supportive, secondary role in a study that is primarily based on the other types of data. The authors further explain that the rationale for this design is that a single set of data is not enough to address research question within a largely qualitative or quantitative study. In this research, the qualitative aspect was predominately used to guide the study, wherein the quantitative element played a supplementary role. Basically, both qualitative and quantitative techniques were used in conducting the research. Qualitative tools, specifically focus group discussions, were used with regard to learners' perceptions, learning strategies, and difficulties on English literacy. Quantitative tools, namely: structured questionnaires and learners' test scores were used to measure learners' English literacy levels.

The embedded mixed methods design was optimal for this study many ways. First, the quantitative aspect proved to have a high level of reliability of collected data, while the qualitative aspect allowed the researcher to get more in-depth information about how Grade 11 EGCSE learners perceived English literacy in relation to their performance, difficulties, and strategy use in learning the subject. Secondly, combining quantitative and qualitative methods allowed building on the strengths of each method, thus minimising their shortcomings as postulated by Leedy and Ormrod, (2019). The weaknesses of the quantitative method, such as the inability to provide detailed information about the context of the situation, prior-anticipated outcomes, and inability to control the research environment, were compensated by interacting with the research participants during focus group discussions. This way, the researcher was able to learn about the participants' contexts and new themes were also discovered on the subject of investigation (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2018).

The shortcomings of the qualitative method, such as high researcher experience and subjectivity in judging experiences were compensated by double-checking the statistical analysis results, understanding contextual aspects of the research, and framing a strong theoretical foundation of the study. Moreover, integrating qualitative and quantitative research methods ensures rigour through data triangulation (Maree, 2020). In turn, this yields reliable results through a more holistic analysis and interpretation.

To achieve that purpose, learners were asked for their interpretations of English literacy through both quantitative and qualitative methods. Then the relationship between learners' perceptions and strategy use was determined with regards to their performance in English literacy through means of quantitative methods in accordance with the ideas advanced by Yockey (2016).

1.7 Significance of the Study

Since the English Language subject performance statistics by ECESWA (2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019) reveal that EGCSE learners perform poorly, it was crucial to explore learners' perceptions of English literacy, the impact it has on their performance in the subject as a whole, as well as their learning strategies and how both their use of strategies and perceptions/attitudes relates to their performance in English. This would help in recommending productive teaching and learning strategies for the effective teaching and learning of English, both as a language and as a subject. Furthermore, curriculum developers would also benefit in this study in the sense that they would design curriculum content that would help improve the performance of learners whose English literacy levels are low.

1.8 Definition of Key Terms

This section describes key terms that were used in the study. A generic scholarly definition for each term is given, followed by an operational definition. That is, a contextualised definition of the term based on the application of the terms in the current study.

Perceptions: As defined by Wesely (2012), perceptions are mental dispositions that influence attitudes. In this study, learners' perceptions were treated as learners' attitudes/beliefs about themselves and the learning experience regarding English literacy.

English literacy: McCloskey (2018) defines English literacy as the ability to use the English language in writing, reading, speaking, and listening with comprehension. In this study,

English literacy denotes the learners' ability to effectively communicate / express ideas in the English language, while paying attention to the conventions of the language.

Eswatini General Certificate of Secondary Education (EGCSE): is a two-year senior secondary course that starts from Form Four and ends in Form Five (Eswatini Ministry of Education and Training, 2018). In the study, EGCSE refers to the content of the Form Four English Language content, drawn from the syllabus.

Hlathikhulu cluster schools: Generally, a cluster is a group of schools that share similar traits (Anagun, 2018). As used in the study, the term "cluster" refers to a mix of ten semi-urban and rural schools positioned together in Hlathikhulu (Eswatini).

1.9 Organisation of the Study

The study is organised in to five chapters. Chapter 1 comprises the background of the study, the problem statement, objectives, research questions, the methodological orientation, and the significance of the study. Chapter 2 is the literature review. It comprises the theoretical framework that informs the study, a critical review of the empirical studies, and a synthesis of gaps in literature. Chapter 3 is the methodology. The chapter presents the research design, sampling, data collection instruments, the rigour of the study, ethical considerations as well as data analysis methods. Chapter 4 is the data presentation and discussion of the findings. The results of the study are presented according to the research instruments and discussed in light of existing literature. Finally, Chapter 5 concludes the study. The chapter comprises of the summary, conclusions, and recommendations.

1.10 Conclusion

This chapter presented the purpose of the study which was to investigate Eswatini General Certificate of Secondary Education (EGCSE) learners' perceptions of English literacy in selected Hlathikhulu cluster schools in Eswatini. The study was prompted by the observation that English literacy performance statistics consistently show poor performance in the subject for EGCSE countrywide. As a result, more EGCSE learners are denied entry in higher institution of education due to their poor performance in the subject. This has not only created a barrier in learners' progression to their next level of education, but it has also proved to be a problem in the education system that needs to be tracked and attended to with immediate effect. That way, effective teaching and learning – not only of English literacy, but of all other subjects that are taught in English can be attained. Based on the given background,

study explored learners' perceptions of English literacy and the impact it had on their performance in the subject as a whole, as well as their learning strategies and how both their strategy use, and perceptions/attitudes relate to their performance in English. It is believed that through the findings of this study, productive teaching and learning strategies for the effective teaching and learning of English, both as a language and as a subject would be adopted by teachers to help learners perform well in the subject. Furthermore, curriculum developers would also benefit in this study in the sense that they would design curriculum content that would help improve the performance of learners who find acquiring English difficult.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Emphasis on improving the quality of education, particularly English literacy, has been a central issue in Eswatini for decades. According to the National Education and Sector Policy (2018), the Eswatini Ministry of Education and Training has taken the initiative to improve English language teaching and learning by embedding activities in English Language departments. These educational activities include debates, spelling bee competitions, drama, theatre arts, and essay writing competitions. Educators and other stakeholders within the education system of the country have been regularly engaged in English literacy. Specifically, inspectors of English conduct workshops and further encourage teachers to conduct research in the subject area with the aim of improving the quality of subject content delivery, teaching-learning strategies, as well as good performance amongst learners in the subject. This study, therefore, sought to investigate EGCSE learners' perceptions in English literacy, particularly in Hlathikhulu cluster schools.

In the area of language learning, several researchers have investigated the variable of perception in relation to language learning wherein most studies reported a positive correlation between perception in language learning and academic performance (Wesely, 2012; Al-Qahtani, 2013; Saeb and Zamani, 2013; and Meltezer *et al.,* 2004). Thus, it is crucial for all stakeholders in the education system, especially practitioners of language learning and teaching to investigate learners' perceptions with regards to language learning. The purpose is so come up with suitable learning material as well as learning-teaching strategies, especially in the English Language. However, to the researchers' knowledge, no studies have gone as far as investigating perceptions of learners in language learning at a cluster level in the Eswatini context. As such, there is a need to focus in the Hlathikhulu cluster in trying to investigate learners' perceptions in the field of language learning with particular reference to English literacy.

This section presents a comprehensive range of existing material regarding; learning and perceptions; how perceptions have an impact on learners' performance; as well as learners' use of learning strategies and how both strategy use, and perceptions relate to performance in English literacy.

2.2 The Concept of Learning and Perception

Research indicates that the learners' perceptions, beliefs, attitudes impact on the learning processes and the final achievement (Saeb and Zamani, 2013). The scholars explain that L2 learners have firm beliefs and opinions regarding the nature and the processes involved in language learning. Focal areas included learning difficulties, the efficacy of learning strategies, the assumptions that they have about success and teaching methods used in teaching the language. Prior situations of language learning exposure and cultural background, according Horwitz (1987), can influence learners' perceptions and attitudes about learning a language. Therefore, it is important that learners' perceptions on language learning be investigated in the field of Applied Linguistics. That way, scholars can provide valuable insights into the process of language learning, specifically L2 English.

Constructivist theorists such as Garrison (1997), Hein (1991) and Teslow *et al.* (1994) assert that in learning, the way an individual understands concepts comes from their personal interpretation of the world. This means that an individual acquires knowledge by cognitively making sense of the world through interacting with the environment. Garrison (1997) mentions that the interaction is a "dialogue" within the individual. As espoused by Glasersfeld (2000), knowledge is constructed by individual thinkers as an adaptation to their subjective experience.

Garrison (1997) posit that a learner's motivation is based on valence and expectancy. The author explains that valence indicates the attraction to specific learning goals, whereas expectancy indicates a learner's beliefs and perceptions in the achievement of learning outcomes. Perceptions, according to Hornby (2005), are ideas, attitudes and beliefs that a person holds in relation to how something is seen or understood. Perceptions are general assumptions that learners have about themselves, influential language learning factors, and the nature of language teaching and learning (Wesely, 2012). Saeb and Zamani (2013) add that learners' perceptions are commonly associated with how learners perceive themselves, and the learning situation as a whole.

From the given formation, it can be synthesised that that perceptions are two dimensional. The first dimension is about the individual learner regarding their ability/attitude in relation to a subject area. The second dimension concerns the learner's ability/attitude towards the learning situation. The learning situation comprises the learning environment, the learning material, the subject teacher, the subject, and other variables affecting the learning situation

(Brown, 2009). The cited scholars point out that learners' perception of the learning situation includes how well learners can understand the aspects of the classroom as well as their learning experience. In the same vein, Wesely (2012) puts forth that learners' perceptions about themselves entails how learners measure their language proficiency in academic tasks.

As revealed by literature (Brown, 2009; Wesely, 2012; Saeb and Zamani, 2013), it is difficult to address one dimension of perception without talking about the other. Therefore, in this study the analysis of learners' perceptions in English literacy is informed by the categorisation put forward by Wesely (2012). Learners' perceptions are treated on learners' attitudes/beliefs about themselves and the learning experience regarding English literacy. Saeb and Zamani (2013) emphasise that learners' perceptions are influenced by the context in which language is learnt.

In a study about perceptions and ability to learn languages, Saeb and Zamani (2013) found that learners with higher scores in L2 were more confident in their ability to learn foreign languages. The findings ale revealed that the learners were willing to engage with native speakers of the language. Moreover, there was a significant positive correlation between perceptions and language proficiency. That is, learners who possessed more constructive and positive perceptions showed higher levels of language proficiency.

Furthermore, Wayne *et al*. (2013) found that learning perception and student performance is muddied by the fact that learners who perform well tend to rate their learning positively than lower performing students. According to the findings, learners who have a positive perception of their learning experience perform better than learners who report less positive perceptions. In addition, the study identified a meaningful learning environment, a positive emotional climate, and closeness among students as factors associated with better academic performance.

Based on the foregoing, further research on the topic is worthwhile as perception impacts learning. In trying to improve the quality and good performance in English literacy, learners' perceptions regarding the subject should be identified. Once the perceptions are known, the learning-teaching process can be modified to be responsive – thus improving learners' academic achievement.

2.3 The Concept of Literacy in English

For decades, literacy in English has been about one's ability to read and write. Reading and writing are dynamic and complex processes that require the reader/writer to have certain skills and strategies for making meaning through creating and interpreting written text (Shin 2018). Similarly, McCloskey (2018) states that literacy is the process of making and conveying meaning from written texts – a process that occurs in different sociocultural contexts. Literacy encompasses the four language skills, namely: listening, speaking, writing and reading. Anagun (2018), on the other hand, opines that the global education reform movements' goal is to have learners solve complex problems that arise from living in a technology-intensive world. It is for that reason that 21st century learners are now surrounded by digital computing devices like cellphones, computers, tablets many more electronic devices. On the listed devices, learners just click a button to communicate and to access information.

Nowadays, English literacy is not only limited to basic reading and writing. Instead, literacy extends to listening, speaking, and the purposeful usage of all these four language skills in the 21st century's media and environment that is information rich (ACTFL language connects, 2020). Thus, language literacy is the ability to read, write, listen, and speak a language, paying attention to the conventions of the language, using vocabulary precisely and increasingly, and understanding how the language functions. Based on the given information, it can be said that language literacy goes beyond meaning (semantics) to usage (pragmatics).

Arguing for the 21st century language literacy, Cope and Kalantzis (2009) explain that we now live in a world of technology, where iPods, wikis, blogs, and SMS messages are the new modes of communication, which have given rise to new literacies / multi-literacies. In multi-literacies pedagogy, all forms of representations including language should be regarded as dynamic processes of transformation rather than processes of reproduction (Cope and Kalantzis 2009). This means that multi-literacies involve designing and interpreting diverse meaning through using different modes of communication other than only print. As stated by Cope and Kalantzis (2009), in multi-literacies learners need to be recognised in the meaning-making process. That way, learners can be more productive, innovative, and relevant to the learning pedagogy. According to Kohnke (2020), using different modes of communication, particularly digital media, provides opportunities for effective and authentic language teaching.

By mixing all the afore-mentioned perspectives, English literacy is grounded to the ability to effectively use of all four language skills. The skills are used to analyse, interpret, and express ideas in the English language while paying attention to the conventions of the grammar. To be considered literate in English, the learner should be able to decipher meaning using various methods of communication and all the four language skills within the confines of grammar. Using different methods of communication in English language teaching has been identified as a social movement which has led to the transformation of communication and language practices, changing the scope of the learning and teaching of English language (Hafner, 2014). Language learning has been dependent on various electronic modes of communication where the combination of different semiotic modes, such as speech, writing, images, gestures in text, present a crucial developmental in digital media (Hafner, 2014).

In a study on perceptions and the relationship between 21st century skills and managing constructivists learning environments by Anagun (2018) found that 21st century skills were positively related to perceptions on the constructivist learning environment. The implication is that when one possesses strong perception in relation to problem solving, critical thinking, cooperation, communication, and creativity, they automatically create a learning environment that is conducive – resulting in positive attitudes among learners.

2.4 The Relationship between Perception and Performance

Understanding language learners involves examining both observable and unobservable evidence about their learning of a language (Wesely, 2012). Observable evidence may come from the learners' performance with regards to grades and skills acquired, whereas unobservable evidence can be sourced from examining learners' perceptions/attitudes/ beliefs about language learning. One way of sourcing unobservable evidence is requesting learners to express their thoughts and assumptions about the teaching-learning experience. As indicated in the previous section, learners' perceptions are two-dimensional. The first dimension is learners' perception of themselves in relation to how they understand and make the way in which they learn. The second dimension is the learners' perception of the learning situation which involves the learners' understanding of the aspects of classroom; like the teacher's behaviours, learning material, and other classroom dynamics (Wesely, 2012). Based on the given information, it is important to ascertain learners' perceptions about language learning because learners at the centre of the learning experience.

On the contrary, performance in language on the contrary, involves the interaction of a number of cognitive systems and has much in common with other skills (O'Grady, 2012). To test learners' language performance, teachers use tests and exams. These tasks assess the learners' competence in producing specified linguistic structures through integrating all four language skills. Based on the performance in the assessments, the learners' language proficiency is classified as being below average, average, above average or excellent.

According to Westby *et al.* (2018), assessing learners' performance in a language is crucial because it serves different purposes. For instance, language assessments screen learners in order to identify learners who are at risk and serve a diagnostic purpose to determine the extent of a problem. Additionally, language tests provide information to help in decision making with regards to the best educational placements, planning intervention programmes, and determining a learner's progress. Thus, knowing the learners' performance is crucial in a language class; not only does it measure the learners' progress in a language, but it also shows the effectiveness of the whole language teaching and learning experience.

Learners' performance is linked to the cognitive learning theory, which concerned about how people process, store, and retrieve information. Proponents of the cognitive theory (Tennyson and Rasch, 1988; Wachs, 1981; Sincero, 2011; Ausubel, 1969) argue that there is a significant relationship between perception and performance. This positive correlation between perception and performance is based on the premise that performance is a result of learning, which requires a learner to be actively involved in the process.

Kim et *al.* (2012) further explain that in order to understand the mechanisms that underlie the success of training and other interventions to induce learning, non-cognitive individual differences come to play. Both an individual's general mental ability and conscientiousness are powerful determinants of learning performance. It is argued that mental ability alone is not enough to induce learning, but that other external factors that determine whether learning becomes successful or not. According to Kim *et al.* (2012), research suggests that positive perceptions predict positive learning motivation and performance. In essence, individuals who have positive perceptions are more likely to motivate and regulate themselves to aspire to achieve their learning goals, resulting in better performance and vice-versa.

There is a need for scholars to consider other factors that might influence language learning, rather than considering only the general mental ability and conscientiousness for learning to be successful. Although conscientiousness is an important predictor of learning outcomes, it

does not always have a positive relationship with learning outcomes. Kim *et al.* (2012) reckon that such claims provide the basis for examining other non-cognitive individual factors. Perception is an individual trait that can aid learning as advocated by Gonzatez-Gomez *et al.* (2016). In their study, the authors found that students had a general positive opinion about the flipped classroom learning model. As a result, they performed well at the end of the course compared to those who were enrolled in a traditional classroom learning model. This was after the researchers conducted a study to assess the suitability of the flipped classroom model in terms of students' performance and perceptions against the traditional classroom setting. The study was conducted in a Science course in Spain, with students who were enrolled for a primary education bachelor's degree in a teacher training college. To assess the students, the class was randomly divided into two groups of 51 and 52 students each, where the first group used the traditional classroom setting, and the latter group using the flipped learning model. Both groups were studied comparatively in terms of performance and perception, where assessment results and post-task questionnaires were used as quantitative instruments for this study. The results of this study concur with what Kim *et al.* (2012) that positive learning outcomes do not only hinge on general mental ability and conscientiousness, but perception as an individual factor also aids in successful learning.

A synthesis the findings by Kim *et al.* (2012) and Gomez *et al.* (2016) establish the correlation between positive learning outcomes. However, there is a need for studies centred on perception and performance with regard to language learning and teaching. As predicated by Moloi (2009), the way learners perceive L2 English influences what learners do both during the teaching-learning process and beyond the classroom. Therefore, teachers should be cognisant of what learners believe and perceive about English literacy. Such knowledge can inform teachers' decisions and judgments regarding what to teach and how to teach it. In buttressing the point, Jia (2004) asserts that thoughts and attitudes are manifested through behaviours. The scholar points out that it is crucial for teachers to gain a deeper understanding of their learners' behaviour in the classroom setting, so that they can enhance the process of teaching and learning for the benefit of their learners.

2.5 Difficulties Encountered by Learners in Learning English

One main persistent difficulty of English L2 learners, as revealed by de Guzman *et al.* (2006), is using English correctly. It is believed that L2 learners have limited experience in listening and speaking English throughout their lives, despite years of instruction in the English

language. Rosenman and Madelaine (2012) assert that L2 learners across the world struggle with the language of instruction (LOI) which impacts on language acquisition. Consequently, these learners are exposed to the risk of failure throughout their education and into their professional lives. Similarly, Andreou and Segklia (2017) also acknowledge that learners with learning difficulties face problems when learning a second / foreign language. The authors attribute that to the hypothesis of Linguistic Interdependence which advocates a strong relationship between L1 and L2 language skills. The hypothesis of Linguistic interdependence entails that deficits L1 translate to deficits learning of the L2.

As postulated by de Guzman et *al.* (2006), English language learning difficulties stem from three factors, namely, motivation, cross-cultural understanding, and sociolinguistic competence. Pande (2013) explains that difficulties experienced by learners in English literacy indicate problems or interference in the process of learning L2. The scholar puts forward learning difficulties prevent learners from attaining high levels of English Language proficiency. Therefore, is imperative that that the difficulties learners face in English literacy be identified. That way, learners can be helped to overcome those challenges through the use of effective teaching-learning strategies and materials.

Nizkodubov *et al.* (2015) contend most difficulties associated with the acquisition of English Language are associated with social and psychological factors. The authors argue that social and psychological factors are related to the learning of certain components or aspects of the English Language, such as listening. Learners who have under-developed listening skills have difficulties understanding English and struggle to express themselves. This is because listening skills are essential for the development of speaking skills. In stressing the point, Hartley (2007) points out that reading, writing, speaking, and listening are inter-related skills in the field of Applied Linguistics, and should not be treated as different cognitive domains. In various ways and different times, the skills intersect. The implication is that English literacy teachers should ensure that all four language skills are taught evenly that learners can achieve the highest possible level of English literacy.

Extending the debate, McNeill (2017) postulates that some language learning difficulties also occur when native speakers to teach the target L2. The basis of the argument is that native L2 teachers of English are not sensitive to their learners' difficulties. That is, the teachers do not appreciate the challenges faced by L2 because owing to the gaps linguistic and cultural background. The argument of L2 teachers as barriers to learning is supported by research.

McNeill (2017) reports that a group of non-native and native English speakers who taught L2 learners were asked to preview a text and identify the most difficult words. The learners were given the same text and instruction as their teachers. The results revealed that the words selected by non-native English teachers were largely the same with the words identified by their learners. However, those selected by native speakers of English were largely different from what their learners selected.

The findings by McNeill (2017) provide evidence that native speakers of English who teach English as a Second Language (ESL) are less sensitive to the language needs of learners compared to their non-native ESL counterparts. According to McNeill (2017), such disparities are attributed to native teachers' lack of access to the learners' native language (L1). By extension, such gaps imply that native teachers have limited understanding of the different ways in which L2 is processed by the learners. There are, however, ongoing institutional debates about ascertaining the difficult language items. It is believed that non-native speakers of English use intuition to identify items that are difficult for ESL learners. For this reason, there is preference for non-native teachers for L2 English in some countries. However, research on the native / non-native L2 English teacher dichotomy remains inconclusive.

 On another note, a study conducted by Li *et al.* (2018) among Mandarin speaking children learning English revealed that literacy difficulties in a L2 are associated with the structural abnormality in the left supramarginal gyrus. The supramarginal gyrus is a part of the brain that is involved in phonological processing. The study suggests that L1 phonological skills predict good reading skills in L2. It can also be inferred that language literacy deficits can be transferred from L1 to L2. A conclusion that may be drawn from such findings is that a universal cognitive mechanism may underpin difficulties in literacy for both L1 and L2.

Based on the foreign, it can be said that under-developed L1 skills contribute to language learning difficulties encountered by learners. The implication is that difficulties in learning an L2 are not limited to social and psychological factors. Rather, language learning challenges are deeply rooted psycholinguistics. It is for this reason that studies on language learning difficulties are popular in Applied Linguistics (Andreou and Segklia, 2017). Psycholinguistic studies provide feedback to language teachers and curriculum designers, prompting the development of programmes that are needs-based. Needs-based programmes are beneficial to

learners as they address different learning styles, resulting in improved linguistic competence and overall academic achievement in language learning.

2.6 Learners' Performance and Strategy Use in Language Learning

Language learning strategies are specific acts of behaviours and techniques that learners employ to improve their progress in the development of L2 skills (Saeb and Zamani, 2013). They are personal special behaviours and thoughts that learners use to interpret, retain or learn new information, Msuya (2016) explains. Put differently, learning strategies are conscious acts of learners that are goal-orientated, especially in trying to tackle tasks that learners find challenging. These learning strategies help the learner to cope with difficulties as they learn a new language.

Ghanbarzehi (2014) distinguishes between successful language learners and unsuccessful language learners. To that end, the scholar explains that successful language learners are those learners who use a range of appropriate language learning strategies. Ghanbarzehi (2014) builds on Oxford (1989) who asserts that language learning strategies make language learning more successful, self-directed and enjoyable. Oxford (1989) classifies language learning strategies into six categories. These are cognitive or mental strategies, memory strategies, compensation strategies, indirect learning strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies.

First, there are cognitive or mental strategies. Cognitive strategies are used by learners to make sense of their learning. Examples include practicing, receiving and sending messages for both input and output processes. The second category consists of memory strategies. These are used for storing information like creating mind linkages. The third category comprises compensation strategies. Compensation strategies help learners to fill in and overcome knowledge gaps to continue with communication in speaking or writing by making intelligent guesses, for example. The fourth category consists of indirect learning strategies. Indirect learning strategies include metacognitive strategies which assist learners in evaluating, regulating and prioritising their learning. Affective strategies constitute the fifth category. Affective strategies involve lowering one's anxiety, encouraging oneself as well as taking note of one's emotional state. Lastly, social strategies involve heightened interaction with the target language; like asking questions, collaborating with others, and empathising with them (Oxford, 1989). The main point made by Oxford (1989) is that using learning strategies results in improved language proficiency and overall academic achievement.

In the same vein, Sen and Sen (2012) acknowledge that the usage of language learning strategies is effective in language learning. The scholars mention that learning strategies motivate learners, making them active, aware, efficient, and responsible. Strategies make learners more alert to the target language structures. In turn, learners become self-regulated as they are encouraged to explore content on their own. Independent study is efficient because learning takes place in accordance with the learners' style and pace.

Msuya (2016) addresses the importance of using appropriate strategies. The scholar points out that unsuccessful learners tend to use language learning strategies that are ineffective, such as memorisation strategies. Based on research, Msuya (2016) concluded that differences between successful and unsuccessful language learners were due to the number and range of strategies used. Other factors were the ways in which the strategies were applied to the task, and in the appropriateness of the strategies for the tasks (Msuya, 2016). Based on the findings, it can be synthesised that being a successful or failure in language learning depends on the choice and application of strategies. Therefore, language learners ought to use a number of relevant strategies for different tasks in order to improve academic performance.

Research on the relationship between strategy use and performance shows a strong correlation between the two variables (Saeb and Zamani, 2013). In his study, Msuya (2016) established that the usage of language learning strategies (or lack thereof) is a significant factor in determining success. Strategies were found to predict success or failure in language proficiency more than other factors such as the learners' age, motivation, and personality.

In another study Li (2014), found that participants used language learning strategies in different ways. The study was involved two groups of students from two universities in Mainland China. One group was from a university where English was used as a medium of instruction (EMI), and the other group was learning English as a foreign language (EFL). The participants in the EMI group displayed a higher level in their usage of language learning strategies, compared to the EFL group. In particular, the findings revealed that the EMI group employed meta-cognitive and cognitive strategies, affective, and social strategies. Additionally, the findings suggested that assessment methods and learning environment influenced the differences in learning strategy use between these two groups of learners.

The aforementioned results have educational implications for the learning and teaching of L2 English. In particular, a social context where English is used frequently is important as it can promote or hinder language learning. It is also crucial that teachers expose learners to

different learning strategies, explain their importance to the learners, and recommend certain strategies for different kinds of language tasks.

2.7 Conclusion

When it comes to the teaching and learning of L2 English, it is essential to find out learners' perceptions. As revealed by literature, perception is a predicator of successful or unsuccessful language learning. It has been established that learners' perceptions influence academic achievement in English literacy. However, geographical and population gaps have been identified. That is, studies focused on perceptions of EGCSE, Grade 11, Hlathikhulu cluster learners in respect of English literacy could not be found in the broad literature search. Given the findings in the literature reviewed, it was important to explore learners' perceptions (attitudes and beliefs) in relation to English literacy. The goal was to identify difficulties that they learners encounter in learning English, assess the use of learning strategies, and analyse how both their perceptions and strategy use affected their performance in English literacy. The rationale for the study was the consistently poor performance in English in the EGCSE level as national EGCSE yearly statistics published by the Examination Council of Eswatini (2015; 2016; 2017; 2018; 2019). As previously stated, the percentage rate for learners who obtained a C grade and better (60 %+) in English Language from 2017 to 2019 was 29.19%, 28.9% and 30.31%. This shows that learners' performance in English literacy is poor, yet entry into tertiary institutions requires a 60% pass or better in the subject. This is a cause for concern, especially for Hlathikhulu cluster schools, as most leaners do not qualify for tertiary enrolment after completing school due to the poor grades in English Language.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter covers the empirical processes that were involved in conducting this study. These include the research paradigm, research design, context, participants, research instruments, data collection procedures as well as validity and reliability. Further, data analysis procedures, ethical issues, limitations, and delimitations of the study are discussed.

3.2 Research Paradigm

This study is located in the pragmatic paradigm. According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), the pragmatic paradigm advocates that all individuals have their different unique ways of interpreting situations of reality. The pragmatic paradigm holds that that the researcher determines what is appropriate for particular study. As such, the study was guided by what best worked for the researcher in terms of addressing the research questions adequately. The pragmatic paradigm was optimal for the study in many ways as illustrated in the recap of the purpose of the study.

The study sought to assess learners' perceptions in terms of difficulties encountered regarding English literacy, their strategy usage as well as how both their perceptions and their strategy usage relate to their performance in English Language. To that end, learners were required to give their different perceptions of English literacy which were obtained through embedded mixed method approach, where the quantitative method was nested upon the qualitative method which was the prominent method for this study. The relationship between learners' perceptions and strategy use was used to determine their performance in English literacy through means of quantitative methods.

The methodological implication of pragmatic paradigm is that of mixed methods approach in which both qualitative and quantitative methods are used in collecting and analysing data for the study. The pragmatic paradigm was suited to this study because it allows for the integration of different research methods. That way, it entails a balanced, rigorous study (Sitwala, 2014). The next section presents the research method.

3.3 Research Method

This study used an embedded descriptive mixed methods research design in keeping with the pragmatic paradigm. In order to discover the ideas, opinions, and insights of students regarding English literacy, the study was descriptive. Dörnyei (2007) asserts that descriptive studies describe a phenomenon, as the name implies. The scholar explains that data collection is done by studying facts, views, and attitudes of people in order to test a hypothesis or address research questions. Testing a hypothesis implies that the researcher can only describe or report on what already exists and cannot change or control the phenomenon.

It follows that the embedded mixed method design chosen for the study was influenced by the nature of the research topic. The embedded mixed methods design, according to Creswell *et al.* (2003), is when one set of data plays a supporting, secondary function in a study that is predominantly reliant on the other type of data. The authors further explain that the reasoning behind this design is that a single set of data is insufficient to fully address a research issue in a study that is purely qualitative or quantitative. In this study, the qualitative component served as the primary driving force whereas the quantitative component was supportive. Basically, the research was conducted using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Regarding learners' attitudes, learning practices, and English literacy challenges, qualitative tools, focus group discussions, were used. The English literacy levels of the students were assessed using quantitative approaches, specifically structured questionnaires and a language literacy test.

For this investigation, the embedded mixed approach was ideal in several aspects. First, the quantitative component demonstrated a high level of data reliability, whereas the qualitative component allowed the researcher to gather more detailed data on how Grade 11 EGCSE learners regarded English literacy in connection to their performance, challenges, and learning strategies. Second, integrating quantitative and qualitative methodologies maximises the strengths of each approach while minimising its weaknesses. As suggested by Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018), the rich data collected through interviews offsets the shortcomings of the quantitative method, in which closed-ended questions are used. Conversely, the limitations of the qualitative method, such as the high level of researcher experience and subjectivity in evaluating experiences, were also counteracted by the "objective" statistical analyses. Additionally, by triangulating data from qualitative and quantitative research approaches, rigour is ensured. In turn, this leads to trustworthy

outcomes via a more comprehensive analysis and interpretation. The aforementioned measures were observed in the study.

One of the reasons for utilising quantitative tools in this study was to correlate the relationship of the variables (perception and strategy usage) to learners' performance in English Language. As propounded by Dörnyei (2007), by combining the qualitative and quantitative research methods, the strength of each method is maximised while the weaknesses are neutralised. The strengths are maximised because two research methods are complimentary. Altogether, the combination is more rigorous compared to a study that uses only one research method in isolation. In essence, the study adopted the embedded mixed method to ensure rigour.

3.4 Research Context

The study was conducted in Eswatini, among the Hlathikhulu cluster schools, where the focus was Grade 11, EGCSE learners who were learning English as a second language (EGCSE English Language Syllabus 2021 – 2023:5). The cluster is comprised of 10 secondary schools which are located in rural and semi-urban areas. The schools had an estimated population of around 700 EGCSE learners who were siSwati native speakers and learn English as a second language.

3.5 Respondents

Respondents in this study were Grade 11, EGCSE learners from six schools in the Hlathikhulu cluster, learning English as a Second Language (ESL). At total of 120 respondents were selected for the study. Their ages ranged from 16 to 24 years. Table 3.1 shows the number of respondents from each of the six schools (using the Pseudonyms School 1 to School 6).

Table 3.1

Number of Respondents per School

School	Number of Respondents
School 1	20
School 2	19
School 3	22
School 4	18
School 5	20
School 6	21
Total: 6	**Total: 120**

As shown in Table 3.1, there were 20 respondents from School 1; 19 from School 2; 22 from School 3; 18 from School 4; 20 from School 5 and 21 from school 6. From the 120 participants, 18 also participated in the focus group discussions.

3.5.1 Sampling Criteria

The population of schools that participated in the study was selected using simple random sampling. Random sampling, according to Dörnyei (2007), is affording all respondents an equal chance of being selected. Each of the 10 schools was assigned an alphabet code from A-J, the codes were then put in a box and the six schools were drawn using the lottery method in accordance with the ideas advanced by Leedy and Ormrod (2019). The reason for choosing random sampling was to make sure that all the schools in the cluster stand a chance of being selected to represent the whole population. Using the random sampling method was also a way to decrease subjectivity on the part of the researcher and to avoid the temptation to select schools based on the convenience of geographical location, thus compromising the credibility of the study.

3.5.2 Sample Size

As previously mentioned, there were 120 respondents in the study. The study was supposed to have 100 participants for the quantitative aspect, 18 from each of the six schools. However, since the learners were already allocated classrooms, it was not feasible to exclude one or two learners from the study within the same classroom that had participating learners. Therefore, all the learners who were found in each of the six schools were included in the study because

they did not significantly exceed the required sample size. In addition, all the learners were keen to participate after the researcher had explained the purpose of the study. Initially, there were 117 participants in total. However, it transpired that three learners from the selected classes were absent on the first day when the researcher made an introduction. When the leaners re-joined the classes, they expressed interest to participate and were included in the sample, making a total of 120 respondents. This sample size was based on the principles advanced by Dörnyei (2007). The scholar recommends a sample size between 1% and 10% of the target population. After calculating the number of Form Four learners in 10 schools within the Hlathikhulu cluster, 10% translated to 117 respondents.

Dörnyei (2007) also warns that respondents' dropout is always a serious concern in research as it threatens the validity of the study. To cater for respondents who might have withdrawn from the study, researcher first presented a synopsis of the study to the learners and requested 20 learners who were willing to participate in the study to sign consent forms (see Annexure C) for learners aged 18 years and older. Learners who were younger than the age of 18 were requested to take parental consent forms (see Annexure D) to be signed by their parents or guardians if the consented to the learners' participation in the study.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic regulations at the time, the number of learners in each class for the different schools, ranged from 18 to 22 learners so as to maintain a one metre social distance to curb the spread of the virus. Fortunately, all learners were willing to partake in the study and there were no subject dropouts. From School 1 to School 6, 20, 19, 22, 18, 20 and 21 learners participated in the study respectively. This brought the number of participants to a total of 120. Table 3.2 sums up the respondents' demographic data.

Table 3.2:

Respondents' Demographic Data (n = 120)

Total	Gender	Number of respondents	Age range (in years)
	M	55	16 – 19+
120	F	65	16 – 19

As observed in Table 3.2, there were 120 respondents in total, comprising male and female learners. There were 55 male respondents, and their ages ranged from 16 to 19+ years. There 65 female respondents and they were aged between 16 and 19 years.

For focus group discussions (FGD), three learners were selected per school. Since there were six schools in the study (3 learners x 6 schools) a total of 18 participants were selected for the focus groups. For logic and practicality issues, the willing participants were held discussions with the researcher in groups of three participants according to their respective schools. Each focus group comprised one below-average learner, one average learner, and one above-average learner from each school. This was done to accommodate different abilities in English literacy, thus ensuring that perceptions were representative of the all types of learners. The language literacy test scores were used to select learners with different learning capabilities.

3.6 Research Instruments

Two research instruments were used in the current study, namely: questionnaires and a focus group discussion guide. These are discussed in detail in the subsequent sections.

3.6.1 Questionnaires

Dörnyei (2007) defines questionnaires as any written instruments that presents respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their responses or selecting from among existing answers. Questionnaires bring out three types of data, namely: factual, behavioural, and attitudinal data (Leedy and Ormrod, 2019). Factual data denotes demographic characteristics of respondents whereas behavioural data reflects respondents' actions, habits and lifestyles and personal history. Finally, attitudinal data highlights what respondents think, including attitudes, opinions, beliefs, interests, and values.

For the quantitative component of the study, questionnaires were used for data collection. The questions were aimed at gathering information about learners' perceptions, difficulties, and learning strategy usage in English literacy. In addition, the data from the questionnaires made it possible to test for relationships between the variables with regards to performance in English literacy. The four-point Likert scale questionnaire comprised of 22 questions with close-ended items scaled from "always," "often," "sometimes," and "never" (see Annexure F). Likert scale questions, according to Dörnyei (2007), are mostly used to measure respondents' attitudes and opinions with a greater degree of accuracy.

There are several advantages of using questionnaires. Marshall (2005) asserts that questionnaires are cost-effective and ideal for collecting data from a large sample. Leedy and

Ormrod (2019) add that questionnaires are effective tools for collecting data from participants that do not want to be identified; hence participants can fill in questionnaires honestly. Based on the given information, it can be synthesised that questionnaires have many advantages to both the respondent and the researcher. First, respondents can easily understand and fill in questionnaires they simply choose responses from the given options. Additionally, since questionnaires can be completed without the researcher's presence, respondents can be more candid in their responses, this enhancing data accuracy. Researchers, on the other hand, can analyse questionnaires relatively quickly, present the findings graphically, and draw logical conclusions (Dörnyei, 2007).

3.6.2 Focus Group Discussion Guide

The focus group discussion guide, similar to the interview guide, is a widely used research instrument in qualitative research (Leedy and Ormrod, 2019). A Focus group discussion guides is a set of questions used by the researcher during an interview with participants. A focus group discussion takes the form of question-and-answer session between the researcher and a group of participants. The goal is to have the participants' description of the life worldview of the phenomenon being studied (Maree, 2020).

Focus group discussions (FGDs) are traditional of collecting information on a topic of interest (Dörnyei, 2007). The author further explains that FGDs allow the researcher to collect data in a more naturalistic environment. In addition to documenting the respondent's insights on a phenomenon, the researcher also gets to observe the participants' nonverbal communication. Observing nonverbal cues such as hand gestures and eye movement aids understanding.

Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick (2008) identify different types of focus groups such single focus groups and mini focus groups, respondent moderator focus groups and remote focus groups. Gill *et al.,* (2008) defines a single focus group as a focus group with a few participants, in which a single moderator asks questions and naturally engages in conversation about a subject. Unlike other focus group kinds, a mini focus group only contains four or five participants (Gaber, 2020). Smaller groups foster a more intimate atmosphere for conversation and are especially suitable for delicate subjects (Gill *et al.,* 2008).

As described by Maree (2020), in a respondent moderator focus group, one or more focus group participants briefly take on the role of moderator by posing questions to the other participants in the group in order to reduce unintended bias. Sharing the moderator role makes it easier to encourage various responses from each respondent, hence enhancing the data that is finally gathered. A remote focus group can bring together members from places that might otherwise be restricted via a teleconference or internet format (Gaber, 2020). This form of focus group can offer an option for greater anonymity, even though it is less illuminating than a face-to-face meeting because participants are unable to respond to body language and communication tone Maree (2020). This makes it an ideal choice for gathering data on private issues or when resources are limited.

Out of the mentioned types of focus groups, the study used the single focus group as there were three participants at a time. Dörnyei (2007) explains that in FGDs question and answer sessions, the researcher poses only a few predetermined questions while the rest of the interview questions are not planned in advance. Gill *et al.* (2008) add that focus group discussions used to elicit collective information on respondents'' views on a phenomenon, and the reasoning behind the opinions.

Generally, focus group discussions are conducted with a manageable group of participants (Gill *et al.,* 2008). The researcher assumes the role of a facilitator to encourage a discussion on a research phenomenon. In this study, focus group discussions employed to confirm and provide more information on aspects derived from questionnaires (see Annexure E). These focus group discussions were recorded through a voice recorder, after seeking permission from the respondents.

As espoused by Marshall (2005), FGDs are optimal for augmenting other forms of data. Data were collected in the participants' schools during English Language lessons. The researcher followed a guide of five questions that needed to be covered with every focus group discussion. The guide questions were aimed at unearthing the participants' perceptions, difficulties, and learning strategies in English literacy. Also, a relationship between these variables was sought with regards to learners' performance in English literacy.

The single focus group discussions were suitable for the study because they allow for in-depth exploration of a phenomenon (Dörnyei (2007. However, participants may feel intimidated by the presence of the researcher, and this could compromise the quality of the

responses (Dörnyei, 2007). Another risk is that the researcher might influence the direction of the interview, leading to biased responses (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). In this study the researcher remained objective to avoid the compromising the integrity of the investigation.

3.6.3 Language Literacy Test

A test, according to Phakiti (2014), measures how well a person has learned something, knows something, or can do something. In language learning research, tests are needed to assess the learners' language ability and success in achieving objectives of a course of study. Tests also provide feedback to learners so that they track their progress. Additionally, tests evaluate the efficacy of an academic programme. To that end, a language literacy test was also used to ascertain learners' performance in English literacy. Phakiti (2014) argues that performance assessments measure what learners can do (such as speaking and writing), rather than what they know (for example, grammar, vocabulary and pragmatic knowledge). In this type of assessment, learners are directly assessed through carrying out an activity that requires them to use a particular target language skill. This type of assessment is also known as authentic assessment because it requires learners to use the target language communicatively (Phakiti, 2014).

The language test used in this study (see Annexure G) was adapted from Ontario Secondary School from the Education Quality and Accountability Office's (EQAO) (EQAO, 2021). The EQAO is a wing of the Ontario government that administers large scale assessments to measure Ontario's students' achievement in reading, writing, and Mathematics at key stages of their education. A 60% grade is considered a success in a test for both English literacy and Mathematics' test. The language literacy test (see Annexure G) was suited to this study because it concentrates on the reading and writing skills which are skills that carry 70% weight of the EGCSE examinations' final mark. By focusing on reading and writing, the test aligns with the study which centres on literacy. Further, the test is professionally developed and corresponds with the EGCSE syllabus as it tests the reading and writing skills. The researcher opted for a readily available language test because it has already been validated (Phakiti, 2014). Administering the language literacy test to all participants was preferred over using learners' English literacy tests marks to avoid inconsistencies in the tests. Furthermore, using a standard language test across the board yielded credible results as all respondents were exposed to the same data collection instrument.

The language literacy test consisted of two reading comprehension passages with 15 multiple choice comprehension questions. One reading comprehension passage had three short paragraphs and open response questions. It also had four English grammar testing questions and a continuous writing question. In the continuous writing question, the learners were expected to write three paragraphs expressing their opinions on a given subject. This test basically combined objective and subjective test techniques, where objective techniques had answer keys. Answer keys ensure consistent scoring (Phakiti, 2014).

Subjective techniques on the other hand, require a learner to complete a task by speaking or writing. A rating scale is used based on scorer's characteristics, opinion or attitude towards a particular language use (Phakiti, 2014). As a result, different scorers can assign different scores to judge the same performance, which is not ideal. However, Mackey, and Gass (2005) argue that a good test combines different test techniques because there are strengths and weaknesses in any particular test technique. Thus, a test that combines both subject and objective test techniques was preferred collecting data in this study.

3.7 Data Collection Procedures

Mackey and Gass (2016) assert that findings in second language research are highly dependent on the data collection measurers used. The authors emphasise that the goal should be to unearth information about learner knowledge and behaviour, independent of the data collection context. This means that the researcher should approach the data collection process cautiously and observe research procedures in order yield authentic results.

In keeping with the aforementioned principles, the researcher visited all the six participating schools for introductions and to deliver permission letters to the principals. In each school, the principals referred the researcher to the English Head of Department (HOD) where the researcher presented a brief overview of her study. The presentation specified the kind of assistance required for the data collection process. Although some HODs initially concerned that research might disrupt their classes, they cooperated after realising the value of the study.

Schedules were discussed with each school and slots for data collection were allocated. The goal was to minimise disturbance and to use times that suited the participants. With each school, it was agreed the researcher could collect data during English Language time slots. For smooth operations, the researcher set made phone call to set up appointments with each school a week in advance to arrange for an upcoming session. Across all the six schools, the

first session was used to discuss research ethics with the learners and present the synopsis of the study. The session was also used to attend to learners' questions and to distribute consent and assent forms to the prospective respondents. Leaners above 18 years of age completed the consent forms, but younger leaners took the assent forms for their parents/guardians to fill in. Learners were given a week to fill forms and submit them to their subject teachers.

On the same day of the introduction to the learners, dates for administering language literacy tests were scheduled. In some schools with shorter periods, arrangements were made to other subject teachers to allow extra time so that learners could complete the 60-minute test. Overall, it took three weeks to grade the English literacy tests using a marking guide provided by the EQAO. The scores were stored securely in both hard copy and soft copy. Appointments were scheduled again to have learners answer survey questionnaires and to have them engage in focus group interviews. Questionnaires, which were printed in both siSwati and English, were then administered. Learners were informed of the liberty to choose a questionnaire in the language with which they were more comfortable. Interestingly, all learners chose questionnaires in the English language (see Annexure F). When asked about their language choice, the leaners stated that written siSwati is longer compared to English. Others mentioned that they understood the questions in the English language questionnaire as they were simple and straight forward.

This exercise of completing the questionnaires took 10-15 minutes in each school. The completed questionnaires were collected, tucked in an envelope to keep them away from unauthorised persons in line with research ethics. Learners who were interested in taking part in the focus group interview were requested to register with the researcher. After looking at the respondents' language literacy test scores, three interested interview respondents were randomly selected on the basis of their performance. One below-average, one average, and one above-average learner was selected to participate in the focus group discussion which took 15-20 minutes. Before the interview was conducted learners were reminded of the research ethics governing focus group discussions. The FGDs were conducted in both English and siSwati as learners preferred using both languages. Besides, both languages are official in the country as previously stated, so there were no violations. After each FDG, the data collected were backed up in a password-protected external hard drive. Then the hard drive device was stored in a lockable drawer together with the recording device.

Overall, the data collection process took nine weeks. The researcher ensured that COVID-19 regulations were adhered to at all times during the data collection process. Participants were supplied with disposable face masks and personal hand sanitisers for every session of the data collection process, and social distance was also observed as well.

3.8 Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis is the use of tools and applications to summarise and interpret information (Cotterell, 2008). The scholar explains that during data analysis, the researcher can make decisions and draw conclusions based on the trends emerging from the data. For this study, data for focus group discussions were analysed by using thematic content analysis (TCA). Thematic analysis is a method for analysing qualitative data that entails searching across a data set to identify, analyse, and report repeated patterns (Leedy and Ormrod, 2019). The recurring patterns or ideas are grouped together, forming themes – hence the name thematic content analysis.

Data for questionnaires, on the other hand were analysed statistically through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 28, in accordance with the guidelines propounded by Yockey (2016). In particular, Pearson correlation was conducted in order to determine the relationships between perception and strategy use in relation to English literacy level by using the. The two methods which were used to analyse data were then merged in the discussion chapter. Data from focus group discussions were first transcribed from audio into textual form by the researcher where data analysis was primarily done with words. This, according to Dörnyei (2007), familiarises the researcher with the data. Furthermore, transcribed data were translated into English since all the FGDs were conducted in both English and siSwati. The next step was data coding, where similar ideas were highlighted and grouped into different themes.

To ensure trustworthiness, the researcher repeated the process as part of theme conformation (Dörnyei, 2007). The confirmation of themes meant scrutinising the data for subtle details. This final step meant listening to the interviews once more, crosschecking against the transcription, and making reference to field notes. When the review was completed, the codes were revised and combined into themes as suggested by Leedy and Ormrod (2019). The themes were then presented and discussed in a well-integrated and cohesive manner.

Data from the four-point Likert scale questionnaires showed the number of occurrence or intensity of an attitude or activity. The scales of measurement ranged from "always, "often," "sometimes," and "never". The numerical data were entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) application (version 28). According to Dörnyei (2007), SPSS performs statistical analyses in quantitative studies. Since the software is versatile and user-friendly, it is commonly used in applied linguistics and educational research in general (Yockey, 2016). SPSS was chosen because it is efficient, produces reliable and straight forward results (Yockey, 2016).

The services of a statistician were sought for the analysis and interpretation of data from questionnaires as the researcher is not so well versed in the use of the SPSS programme. Questionnaires were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics, particular correlating. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse leaners' performance in the literacy language test. Inferential statistics were used to correlate leaners' perceptions with their performance in the test.

3.9 Ethical Issues

Ethics are guiding principles that inform research designs and practices in research (Fujii, 2012). Ethics matter because social sciences can physically and psychologically harm respondents directly or indirectly (Mackey and Gass, 2016). The authors state it is every researcher's responsibility to adhere to research ethics to ensure integrity of their studies. Fujii (2012) discusses three guiding principles for ethical research. The first principle is *respect for persons*, which involves obtaining voluntary and informed consent from participants of study. Next is *beneficence*, which has to do with the researchers' duty to minimise harm but maximise benefits for participants as well as participants' rights to privacy and confidentiality. The third principle is *justice*, which has to do with the researchers' fair selection of participants, not slanted to any group of participants convenient to the researcher.

To observe ethical considerations for this study, the researcher first applied for ethical clearance from the Research Ethics Committee of the College of Human Sciences at UNISA. The ethical clearance was granted (see Annexure A) after the committee had assessed research proposal. Since the research involved Eswatini schools, written permission was sought from the Ministry of Education and Training. This meant writing to the Shiselweni

Regional Education Officer (REO), requesting to conduct research in the schools under the Hlathikhulu cluster. This was because Hlatikulu is under the jurisdiction of the Shiselweni REO. In addition, permission was sought from school other stakeholders. Letters were written to school principals (see Annexure B). Respondents above 18 years completed consent forms (see Annexure C), whereas those below 18 years took home assent forms to their parents or guardians (see Annexure D). A confidentiality clause stated that records and information pertaining to interviews and questionnaires would be kept in high confidentiality. It was also mentioned in the consent form that participation in this study was voluntary. Moreover, respondents were at liberty to opt out of the research at any time.

Paper records were kept in a lockable drawer and were only accessed by the researcher and the statistician signed a confidentiality agreement. Again, digital records such as the recording from the focus group discussions were stored in a password protected hard drive as previously stated. The material related to the study will be kept for five years in line with the ideas of Leedy and Ormrod (2019). After the lapse of the five years, papers will be shredded, and recordings of interviews will be permanently deleted in recording devices and the back-up external hard drive. Names of schools and participants were referred replaced with pseudonyms. Schools were referred to as "School 1" to "School 6." Leaners were referred to as "Leaner A from School 1," for example. Care was taken to ensure that no learners shared the same alphabetical codes. As previously mentioned, respondents were provided with disposable masks and personal hand sanitisers since the COVID-19 pandemic was still rife at the time. Respondents were assured of the provision of a soft copy of the study after data analysis.

3.10 Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity relate to the consistency and accuracy of research instruments. Mackey and Gass (2016) define reliability as the extent to which the findings of the study can be replicated. That is, if a research instrument is reliable then it has to yield the same results over time. Validity of an instrument, on the other hand, refers to how accurately it measures what it is designed to measure (Yockey, 2016).

To test reliability and validity of the research instruments before collecting data, the researcher conducted a pilot testing. According to Mackey and Gass (2016), pilot testing is done to unearth any problems, and to address them before the main study is conducted. A

pilot study further assesses the feasibility and efficacy of the methods of collecting data. To test data collection methods for this study, interview questions, questionnaires, and the language literacy test were piloted in one randomly selected school. The pilot school was one of the four schools that were not selected for the main this study. Initially, 15 willing respondents randomly selected, but eventually 22 learners participated in the pilot study. Piloting testing was done to test the research tools ascertain that respondents understand the questions. Following the pilot testing exercise, a few questions were rephrased. In addition, the siSwati language versions of the questionnaire and interview guide questions were designed for respondents who preferred their native language over English.

To measure the validity of research instruments, the researcher distributed the interview guide questions, language test and questionnaires to research experts, and English language experts (for content validity in language test). The instruments were analysed and checked for alignment with the objectives of the study. The researcher's supervisor provided guidance in the phrasing of the questions to make sure that they were in line with the objectives of the study. Based on the feedback from the supervisor and other research experts, some of the questions were revised.

Regarding the language literacy test adapted from the EQAO, there were no issues with validation. The EQAO's policies and procedures are rigorous enough to warrant confidence in the reliability and validity of the test. For instance, the EQAO tests are designed by experts in the field of English literacy. In addition, the tests are tested and re-tested using sophisticated techniques. Therefore, language literacy test was adopted for this study as it proved to be valid and reliable.

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter discussed procedures that were observed in conducting the study. The study focused on Grade 11 EGCSE learners' perceptions on English literacy in Hlathikhulu cluster schools. These learners were 120 Swati natives aged between 16-24 years. They were all learning English as a second language. The study adopted the embedded mixed method design in which the qualitative aspect was supplemented with the quantitative aspect which served a secondary, supportive role. Interviews, questionnaires, and a language literacy test were the chosen data collection instruments. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were chosen for data analysis since the study adopted a mixed method. Ethical considerations were

observed as permission was sought from all the relevant stakeholders in the education system of Eswatini. A detailed analysis and discussion of the findings is presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter covers the presentation of data and discussion of the findings. The chapter is organised into five sections. These are: 1) data presentation for focus group discussions (FDGs); 2) data for questionnaires; 3) data for language test; 4) discussion of the findings; and 5) conclusion. Two research instruments were used for data collection; focus group discussions and a questionnaire. The data were collected from a total of 120 learners, 55 of whom were males and 65 were females. Their ages ranged from 16 to over 19 years. All 120 respondents provided data for the questionnaire, and from this total, 18 participants also participated in the focus group discussions. Table 4.1 presents the summary of the respondents' demographic data.

Table 4.1:

Respondents' demographic data (n = 120)

Total	Gender	Number of participants	Age range (in years)
	M	55	16 – 19+
120	F	65	16 – 19

As shown in Table 4.1, a total of 120 respondents, 55 male learners and 65 female learners whose age ranged from 16 to over 19 years. The figures indicate that there were more female respondents than male respondents, although by a small margin.

4.2 Data for Focus-Group Discussions

Data for focus-group discussions obtained from 18 participants (three learners per school from each of the six participating schools). These learners formed part of the 120 respondents as they also filled in the questionnaire. Table 4.1 shows the demographic data of the participants for the focus-group discussions according to gender per school.

Table 4.2:

Respondents' Demographic Data for Focus Group Discussions (n=18)

	Schools	Participants	Gender		Age range
			M	F	
	School 1	3	2	1	16 – 19+
	School 2	3	2	1	16 – 19+
	School 3	3	1	2	16 – 19+
	School 4	3	2	1	16 – 19+
	School 5	3	1	2	16 – 19+
	School 6	3	2	1	16 – 19+
Totals	**6**	**18**	**10**	**8**	**–**

As presented in Table 4.2, 18 participants participated in the focus group interviews. There were three participants from each of the six schools (School 1 to School 6). Overall, there were 10 female participants, and 8 females.

The participants for the focus group discussions were selected based on their scores in the language literacy test to represent below-average, average, and above-average learners. The data presentation and analysis are presented in accordance with the interview guide. There were four interview questions, namely:

1. What are your perceptions regarding English literacy?
2. What difficulties do you encounter in learning English literacy, if any?
3. How do the difficulties hinder you from attaining the highest level of literacy in English?
4. What learning strategies do you use in learning English?

However, some were split into two parts, resulting in a lead question and a follow up question. Such questions (for example, questions 2 and 4) consists of Part 1 and Part 2. In each case, the questions are presented as they were phrased when posed to the respondents. The learners' responses are presented in vignettes in line with qualitative conventions. As previously stated, 18 participants participated in the focus group interviews. However, in keeping with thematic content analysis, the presented data are representative of the common trends that eventually formed the themes. Effort was made to have all the six schools represented. The responses that best presented the views of the participants from each school were chosen to keep the data presentation manageable. To protect the identity of the participants, there was no reference to their real names. Instead, letters of the alphabet and the

school pseudonym were used for identification purposes. With regard to schools, numbers 1 to 6 were used for identification. Learners from School 1 were coded Learner A, B, and C. Learners from School 2 were coded Learner D, E, and F. The same pattern was used for the other schools and learners, meaning that learner number 18 was, was coded Learner R from School 6.

4.2.1 Findings for Research Question 1

The first interview question was: What are your perceptions regarding English literacy? The first interview question addresses research question 1 which sought to find what Grade 11, EGCSE learners' perceptions regarding English literacy were. Almost all the learners in all the focus group discussions responded positively to the question. Only one learner gave a negative response. The following are learners' responses to the question.

Learner A (from School 1) stated that:

> *"English literacy is a subject where we learn English language skills, which is an international language."*

Learner E (from School 2) pointed out that:

> *"We are nothing without English as it applies to our everyday life since it is a medium of communication and a language of trade."*

Learner H (from School 3) lamented that:

> *"English literacy is difficult for me, and I struggle in class. It's a pity that the subject is an entry requirement for tertiary institutions. We are forced to like it in order to pass."*

Learner K (from School 4) remarked that:

> *"It is a unique language as compared to siSwati. One is able to make utterances without feeling awkward as opposed to when the utterances were to be made in siSwati."*

Learner N (from School 5) declared that:

> *"My teacher makes me to love the subject. She is so kind and teaches us well all the time."*

Learner R (from School 6) reckoned that:

> *"English literacy helps us to understand all the other subjects that we do in school as they are all taught in English except for siSwati."*

4.2.2 Findings for Research Question 2

The second interview question was divided into two parts: Part 1 and Part 2.

4.2.2.1 Part 1 of Question 2

Part 1 of question 2 was: What difficulties do you encounter in learning English literacy? The second interview question sought to establish difficulties encountered by Grade 11 learners in learning English literacy. Findings for this question revealed that all learners had difficulties in learning English literacy. The following were the leaners' responses to the question.

Learner B (from School 1) submitted that:

> *"Vocabulary is difficult for me. I cannot find meanings of new words in context when we read comprehensions and we are not allowed to use dictionaries (which most of us do not have anyway.)"*

Learner D (from School 2) expressed that:

> *"It is difficult for me to converse in English yet, I do understand what the next person is saying to me in English."*

Learner G (from School 3) confided that:

> *"My peers laugh at me all the time when I try to communicate in English with them, so I could practise the language. I have since given up on speaking English."*

Learner J (from School 4) declared that:

> *"It is difficult for me to concentrate in class because sometimes I am not in a good state of mind due to personal problems that I sometimes deal with."*

Learner M (from School 5) mentioned that:

> *"I have a difficulty with writing compositions."*

Learner Q (from School 6) remarked that:

> "It is difficult to listen to the people in our listening comprehension CDs. The speakers are too fast for me, and they twang a lot."

4.2.2.2 Part 2 of Question 2

Part 2 of question 2 was: How do the difficulties hinder you from attaining the highest level of literacy in English? This follow-up question was aimed at finding out how the difficulties impacted on the respondents' academic performance in English literacy. Findings for this question revealed that the difficulties hindered all learners from attaining the highest level of literacy in English. The following were the leaners' responses to the question.

Learner C (from School 1) submitted that:

> "...As a result, we end up not understanding the passage, thus respond wrongly to comprehension questions."

Learner F (from School 2) disclosed that:

> "When I am supposed to speak in English I just run out of words, and this always make me obtain low marks in my English oral exam."

Learner I (from School 3) confided that:

> "That affects my marks for the oral exam as it becomes difficult to converse in English with the examiner if you have not been practising the language."

Learner L (from School 4) declared that:

> "I get confused and miss concepts in class and never get a chance to catch on them again when my personal problems have subsided. I guess that's why I fail"

Learner O (from School 5) mentioned that:

> "I do not know what to write, it is very difficult to express myself in English."

Learner P (from School 6) remarked that:

> "...and I end up not hearing a thing from the audio disk, causing me to fail."

4.2.3 Findings for Research Question 3

The third interview question was: What learning strategies do you use in learning English? The findings for this question indicate that nearly all the participants used some form of learning strategies, except for two who responded to the contrary. The following are learners' responses to the question.

Learner B (from School 1) stated that:

> *"I watch cartoons and emulate them to acquire English."*

Learner D (from School 2) shared that:

> *"I listen to Western music and BBC news to improve their listening skills. I write new words in a notebook and use the dictionary to find out meanings of new words."*

Learner H (from School 3) revealed that:

> *"I believe that the only strategy that could be used in learning English literacy was having one-on-one sessions with the teacher. This is the only learning strategy I know; I cannot use it because I am afraid of my English literacy teacher because she is not friendly."*

Learner K (from School 4) declared that:

> *"I use vocabulary and spelling applications in their phones to improve my vocabulary and spelling. I read novels, magazines, and newspapers."*

Learner N (from School 5) mentioned that:

> *"I use English to communicate with my friends are parents at home so that I can be fluent in the speaking the language."*

Learner R (from School 6) remarked that:

> *"I do not use learning strategies because English literacy is difficult, it bores me. I do not like it and has given up on the subject."*

4.2.4 Findings for Research Question 4

The fourth interview question was also divided into parts; Part 1 and Part 2.

4.2.4.1 Part 1 of Question 4

Part 1 of question 4 was: How do learning strategies affect your performance in English literacy? Almost all participants, except one, revealed that the strategies that they were using were helping them improve their grades in English literacy. The learners' responses to the question were as follows:

Learner A (from School 1) exclaimed:

> *"Yes! The strategies are helping me bit by bit as practice makes perfect."*

Learner E (from School 2) confirmed that:

> *"Well, cartoons do help with listening skills because their accent is clear. They are meant for kids, but I benefit too."*

Learner G (from School 3) emphasised that:

> *The truth is that I try to listen attentively in class, but it does not work. Other than that, I can't say I have a strategy. What I really need is to have one-on-one sessions with the teacher"*

Learner J (from School 4) stated that:

> *"Without doubt, reading novels and newspapers help me acquire new words and beautiful English expressions that I copy and use when speaking and writing my compositions."*

Learner M (from School 5) mentioned that:

> *"Listening to western music and BBC news has familiarised me with the British ascent, I now have little difficulty in doing listening comprehensions."*

Learner P (from School 6) lamented that:

> *"Speaking English with friends helps because I get used to correct expressions and identify the wrong ones quite easily, and I avoid them in writing."*

4.2.4.2 Part 2 of Question 4

Part 2 of question 4 was: Generally, how do you perform in English literacy? Most learners mentioned that their performance was average, ranging from 50 to 59%. The following are the learners' responses to the question.

Learner B (from School 1) lamented:

"I perform averagely, and I am not happy because a D grade bares me from being admitted in tertiary as they want a 60+ grade."

Learner E (from School 2) bemoaned:

"I am not happy with my average performance and wish to improve and I believe that I can do better than I am doing right now."

Learner H (from School 3) stated:

"It's pretty bad, honestly. I hardly score above 60%."

Learner K (from School 4) shared that:

"You see, I am struggling here. English is definitely not my friend. I rarely pass the subject."

Learner N (from School 5) remarked:

"English is something else. I cannot relax the last time I got good grade. It is a disaster, but I will not give up."

Learner R (from School 6) mentioned that:

"I am not happy at all. No matter what I do, it makes no difference. My grades still disappoint."

4.3 Data for Questionnaires

This section begins with is a presentation of the respondents' demographic information according to gender and according to age, respectively. Next is the presentation of data for the questionnaires which is divided into four sections, namely: 1) Section A: learners' experiences during English literacy lessons in class; 2) Section B: learners' perceptions /

attitudes on English literacy; 3) Section C: learners' difficulties encountered in learning English literacy and; 4) Section D: leaners' performance in English literacy. A four-point Likert scale questionnaire comprising 22 questions with close-ended items was used to collect quantitative data. The four scales on each item were: "always," "often," "sometimes," or "never."

4.3.1 Respondents' Demographic Data According to Gender

Since the study was conducted in a mixed gender school, Section A of the questionnaire required the respondents to indicate their gender status. Data for the questionnaire were collected from all the 120 respondents from the 6 schools. As indicated in Table 4.1, out of the 120 respondents, 55 (42%) respondents were male whereas 65 (58%) were female learners. The data summary is presented in *Figure 4.1*.
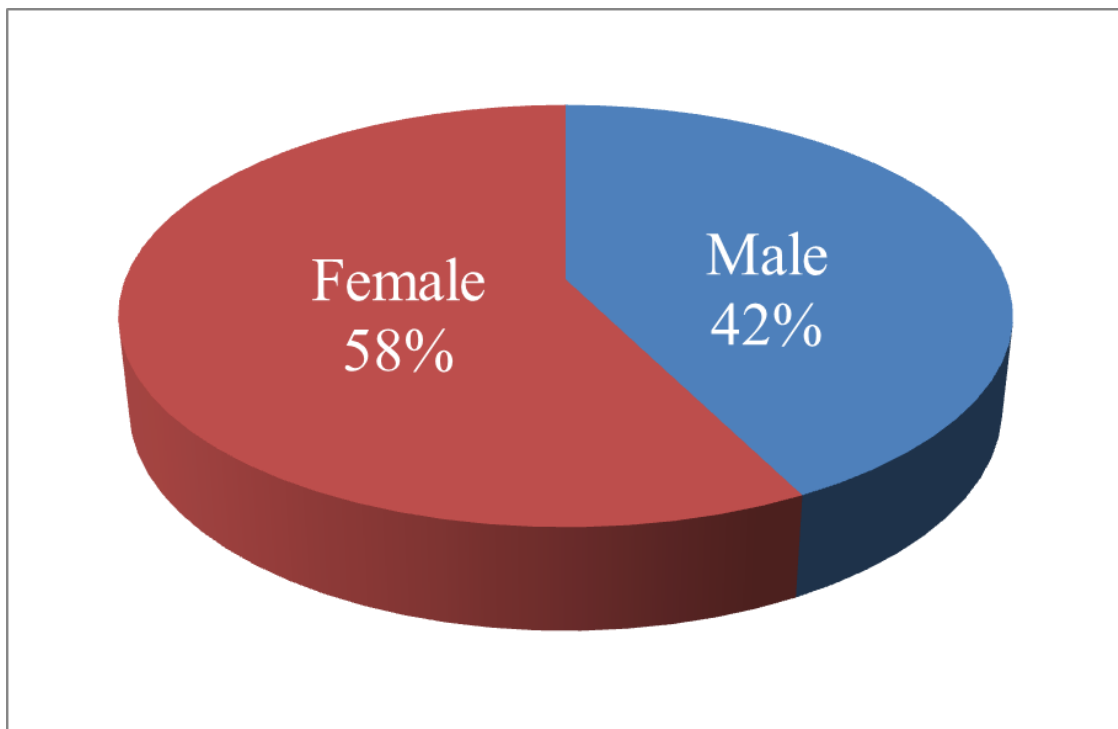
Figure 4.1: Respondents' gender

As shown in *Figure 4.1*, 58% of the respondents were female whereas 42% were male. The figures indicate that there were marginally more female respondents than male respondents.

4.3.2 Respondents' Demographic Data According to Age

To keep things simple and to avoid causing discomfort to much older leaners, the section on age was treated with caution. Instead of asking respondents to indicate their specific ages,

sub-section A of the questionnaire only requested that respondents indicate whether they were between 16 and 18 years old or whether they were 19 years old and above. *Figure 4.2* presents the distribution of the respondents according to age. The findings indicate that 65 leaners (54.2%) were between 16 and 18 years whereas 50 (45.8%) were 19 years old and above.
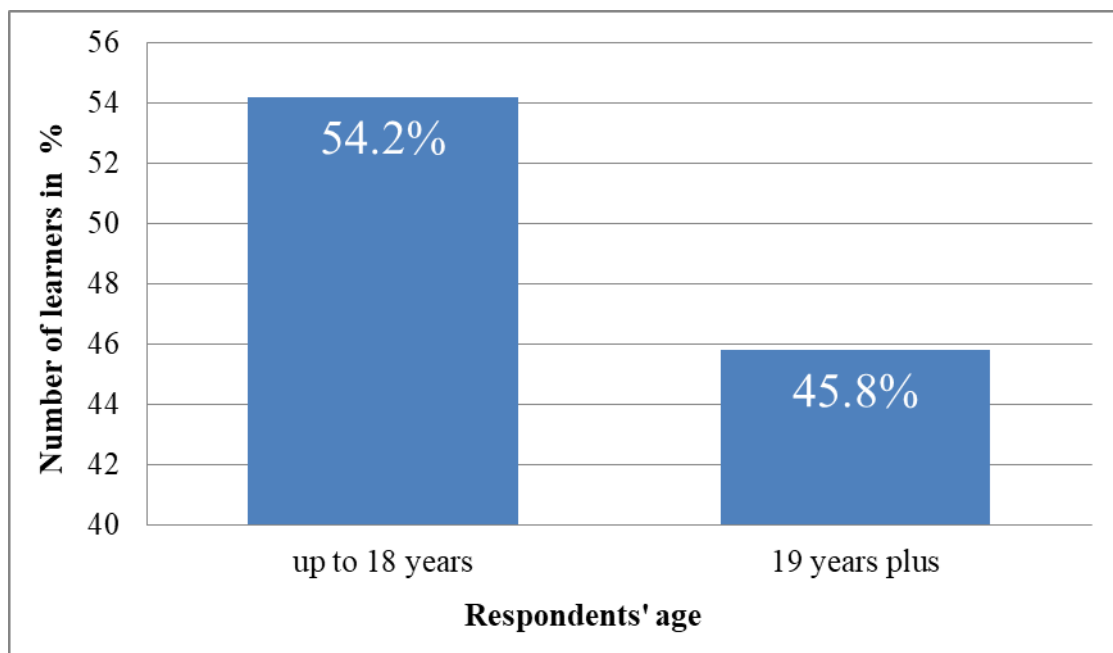
Figure 4.2: Respondents' age

As observed in *Figure 4.2*, 54.2% of the respondents were between 16and 18 years old whereas 45.8% were 19 years or above.

4.3.3 Respondents' Experiences during English Literacy Lessons in Class

The respondents' experiences during English literacy lessons in class were collected using the first six items (1-6) in the questionnaire (Section B). The purpose was to find out what exactly learners do in class during English Literacy lessons. The respondents had to circle one of four options in the Likert scale questionnaire. As indicated earlier, the options were: "Always" – if the respondent described activity all the time in class. "Often" – was an option if the respondent performed the describe activity most of the time in while class. "Sometimes" – was relevant if the respondent did described activity occasionally when in class. "Never" – was an option for those respondents to whom the describe activity was not applicable at all times during class. The results are presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3:

Respondents' Experiences during English Literacy Lessons in Class (n=120)

Response	Frequency	Percentage
I take notes when the teacher is teaching		
Always	14	11.7
Often	19	15.8
Sometimes	84	70.0
Never	3	2.5
Total	**120**	**100.0**
I highlight difficult words in reading comprehension passages and find out their meanings.		
Always	25	20.8
Often	15	12.5
Sometimes	74	61.7
Never	6	5.0
Total	**120**	**100.0**
I read novels/newspaper/magazines to improve my English literacy levels		
Always	12	10.0
Often	89	74.2
Sometimes	17	14.1
Never	2	1.7
Total	**120**	**100.0**
I communicate in English with my peers and teachers at school		
Always	7	5.8
Often	15	12.5
Often	84	70.0
Never	14	11.7
Total	**120**	**100.0**
I make an effort to ask for clarity from my teacher/peers regarding concepts I did not understand in class.		
Always	61	50.8
Often	31	25.9
Sometimes	24	20.0
Never	4	3.3
Total	**120**	**100.0**
I do not do my English literacy assignments		
Always	3	2.5
Often	8	6.7
Sometimes	20	16.7
Never	89	74.2
Total	**120**	**100.0**

According to the results in Table 4.3, 70% of the respondents sometimes take notes when the teacher is teaching, 15.8% of them said often, 11.7% of them said always while 2.5% of them said never. Also, 61.7% of the respondents said that sometimes they highlighted difficult

words in reading comprehension passages and find out their meanings. This was always the case with 20.8% of the participants, 12.5% said sometimes while 5% of them said never.

In addition, 74.2% of the respondents indicated that they often read novels/ newspaper/magazines to improve their English literacy levels, 14.1% said "sometimes," 10% said "always" while 1.7% said they "never." Further, 70% of the respondents indicated that sometimes they communicate in English with their peers and teachers at school, 12.5% of them said often, 11.7% of them said never while 5.8% of them indicated "always." In further responses it is shown that 50.8% of the respondents indicated that they always made an effort to ask for clarity from their teacher/peers regarding concepts they did not understand in class, 25.9% of them said often, 20% of them said sometimes while 3.3% of them said "never." In addition, 74.2% of the respondents indicated that they always did their English literacy assignments, 16.7% said "sometimes," 6.7% said "often" while 2.5% said "always."

4.3.4 Respondents' Perceptions / Attitudes on English Literacy

The respondents' perceptions / attitudes on English literacy during English literacy lessons in class were collected using the six items (6-12) in the questionnaire (Section C). The purpose was to find out the respondents' perceptions / attitudes (mental dispositions) on English literacy lessons. The respondents had to circle one of four options in the Likert scale questionnaire. As indicated earlier, the options were: "Always" – if the respondent's beliefs aligned with the described state of mind all the time during class. "Often" – was an option if the respondent's beliefs aligned with the described state of mind most of the time during class. "Sometimes" – was relevant if the respondent's beliefs aligned with the described state of mind occasionally when in class. "Never" – was an option for those respondents to whom the described state of mind was not applicable at all times during class. The results are presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4:

Respondents' Perceptions / Attitudes on English Literacy (n=120)

Response	Frequency	Percentage
My English literacy teacher is a good teacher		
Always	91	75.8
Often	20	16.7
Sometimes	8	6.7
Never	1	.8
Total	**120**	**100.0**
I do not like my English literacy lessons because they are not interesting		
Always	14	11.7
Often	15	12.5
Sometimes	30	25.0
Never	61	50.8
Total	**120**	**100.0**
I have confidence in my ability to learn English in class		
Always	37	30.8
Often	6	5.0
Sometimes	74	61.7
Never	3	2.5
Total	**120**	**100.0**
I believe that I will master English because my teacher says I am good student and she/ he see good potential in me		
Always	12	10.0
Often	32	26.7
Sometimes	69	57.5
Never	7	5.8
Total	**120**	**100.0**
I do not see the use of learning English literacy		
Always	5	4.1
Often	8	6.7
Sometimes	33	27.5
Never	74	61.7
Total	**120**	**100.0**
I believe that the learning material we use in class help us a great deal in achieving the highest level of proficiency in English		
Always	94	78.3
Often	5	4.2
Sometimes	15	12.5
Never	6	5.0
Total	**120**	**100.0**

As presented in Table 4.4, 75.8% of the respondents indicated that their English literacy teacher was "always" a good teacher, 16.7% indicated "often," 6.7% indicated "sometimes" while 0.8% of them indicated "never." Also 50.8% of the respondents indicated that they

"never" disliked English literacy lessons because they are not interesting, 25% indicated "sometimes," 12.5% indicated "often" while 11.7% "indicated always."

Additionally, 61.7% of the respondents indicated that they "sometimes" had confidence in their ability to learn English in class, 30.8% said "always," 5% indicated "often' while 2.5% indicated "never.' Furthermore, 57.5% of the respondents indicated that "sometimes' they believed that they would master English because their teacher said they were good students and she/ he saw good potential in them, 26.7% indicated "often," 10% indicated "always," while 2.5% indicated "never." Moreover, 61.7% of the respondents indicated that they "always" saw the use of learning English literacy; 27.5% said "sometimes" while 6.7% of them indicated "often" while 4.1% indicated "never". Finally, 78.3% of the respondents indicated that they "always" believed that the learning material they used in class helped them a great deal in achieving the highest level of proficiency in English, 12.5% indicated "sometimes," 5% indicated "never" whereas 4.2 % indicated that this was "often" the case.

4.3.5 Difficulties Encountered in Learning English Literacy

The respondents' difficulties encountered in learning English literacy in class were collected using the five items (13-17) in the questionnaire (Section D). The purpose was to find out the respondents' challenges on English Literacy lessons. The respondents had to circle one of four options in the Likert scale questionnaire. Once again, the options were: "Always" – if the respondent's difficulties aligned with each description or scenario all the time during class. "Often" – was an option if the respondent's difficulties aligned with each description most of the time during class. "Sometimes" – was relevant if the respondent's difficulties aligned with each description occasionally when in class. "Never" – was an option for those respondents to whom the described scenario was not applicable at all times during class. The results are presented in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5:

Difficulties Encountered in Learning English Literacy (n=120)

Response	Frequency	Percentage
I find learning English literacy easy		
Always	18	15.0
Often	85	70.8
Sometimes	15	12.5
Never	2	1.7
Total	**120**	**100.0**
I understand all the reading material I read in class		
Always	5	4.2
Often	19	15.8
Sometimes	30	25.0
Never	66	55.0
Total	**120**	**100.0**
I do not understand my teacher when he/she is teaching in class		
Always	10	8.3
Often	16	13.4
Sometimes	72	60.0
Never	22	18.3
Total	**120**	**100.0**
I have access to all the English literacy learning material		
Always	9	7.5
Often	7	5.8
Sometimes	11	9.2
Never	93	77.5
Total	**120**	**100.0**
I find it easy to complete written tasks using the English language in my English literacy class		
Always	10	8.3
Often	23	19.2
Sometimes	22	18.3
Never	65	54.2
Total	**120**	**100.0**

From Table 4.5, it can be noted that 70.8% of the respondents indicated that they "often" find learning English literacy easy, 15% indicated "always," 12.5% indicated "sometimes" while 1.7% indicated "never." Also 55% of the respondents indicated that they "never" understood

all the reading material they read in class, 25% indicated "sometimes," 15.8% of them indicated often while 4.2% indicated "always."

In addition, 60% of the respondents indicated that "sometimes" they did not understand their teacher when he/she was teaching in class, 18.3% said "never," 13/4% indicated "often" while 8.3% indicated "always." Further 77.5% of the respondents indicated that they "never" had access to all the English literacy learning material, 9.2% said "sometimes," 7.5% said "always" while 5.8% indicated "often." Finally, 54.2% of the respondents indicated that they "never" found it easy to complete written tasks using the English language in their English literacy class.

4.3.6 Performance in English Literacy

The respondents' data on their performance in English literacy were collected using the five items (18-22) in the questionnaire (Section E). The purpose was to find out the respondents' own assessment of their performance in English literacy. The respondents had to circle one of four options in the Likert scale questionnaire. Once more, the options were: "Always" – if the respondent's performance aligned with each evaluation statement all the time. "Often" – was an option if the respondent's performance aligned with each evaluation statement most of the time. "Sometimes" – was relevant if the respondent's performance aligned with each statement occasionally. "Never" – was an option for those respondents to whom the given statement not applicable at all times. The results are presented in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6:

Respondents' Performance in English Literacy (n=120)

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
I feel happy with my performance in English literacy		
Always	22	18.3
Often	22	18.3
Sometimes	14	11.7
Never	62	51.7
Total	**120**	**100.0**
I perform poorly in my English literacy tests because I have difficulty in accomplishing tasks in the English		
Always	11	9.2
Often	12	10.0
Sometimes	84	70.0

Never	13	10.8
Total	**120**	**100.0**
communicating in English with my peers and teachers help me to perform better in the English literacy subject		
Always	97	80.8
Often	11	9.2
Sometimes	10	8.3
Never	2	1.7
Total	**120**	**100.0**
It is crucial that I perform well in my English literacy subject		
Always	65	54.2
Often	30	25.0
Sometimes	20	16.7
Never	5	4.2
Total	**120**	**100.0**
If I give up on learning English, I cannot do well in the subject		
Always	80	66.7
Often	29	24.2
Sometimes	10	8.3
Never	1	.8
Total	**120**	**100.0**

The results in Table 4.6 indicate that 51.7% of the respondents indicated that the respondents "never" felt happy with their performance in English literacy; 18.3% said "always," another 18.3% indicated "often" while 11.7% indicated "sometimes." Also, 70% of the respondents indicated that sometimes they performed poorly in their English literacy tests because they had difficulty in accomplishing tasks in the English; 10.8% said "never," 10% indicated often while 9.2% indicated always.

Further, 80.8% of the respondents indicated that "always" communicating in English with their peers and teachers helped them perform better in the English literacy subject, 9.2% indicated" often," 8.3% indicated "sometimes" while 1.7% indicated "never." In addition, 54.2% of the respondents indicated that it was "always" crucial that they perform well in their English literacy subject, 25% indicated "often," 16.7% indicated "sometimes" while 4.2% of them indicated "never." Further still, 66.7% of the respondents indicated that "always" if they give up on learning English, they could do well in the subject, 24.2% indicated "often," 8.3% of the indicated "sometimes" while 0.8% indicated "never."

4.4 Data from the Language Literacy Test

The learners were given a language literacy test to assess their literacy in a real-life situation. The test was also mean to augment the data collected using focus-group interviews and the questionnaires. The results, in percentage, from the respondents' scores in the language test are presented in *Figure 4.3*.
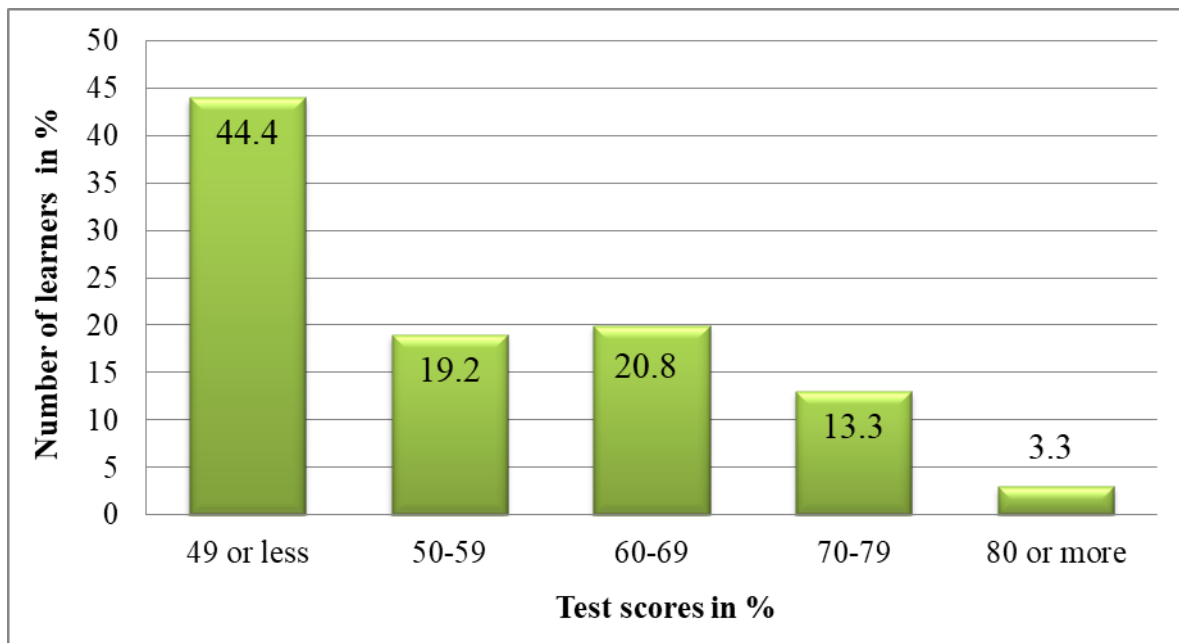

Figure 4.3: Learners' performance in language tests

As illustrated in *Figure 3*, 44.4% of the respondents scored 49% of or less; another 20.8% obtained grades ranging from 60%-69%. A further 19.2% scored between 50% and 59%, whereas 13.3% of the respondents scored 70%-79%. Finally, 3.3% of the respondents scored 80% marks or more. This shows that more than half of the respondents passed the language test and a good number of them failed. Also 43.4% failure rate is huge hence, the need for more efforts to improve the student performance in English literacy.

4.4.1 Descriptive Statistics of Learners' Performance in English Test

In order to gain deeper insight into the meaning of the respondents scores in the language test, further statistical analysis was conducted. In particular, descriptive statistics were used to calculate the mean and the standard deviation. The results are presented in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7:

Descriptive Statistics of Learners' Performance in English Test (n=120)

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Students score in language test	120	1	5	2.14	1.211
Valid N (listwise)	120				

From Table 4.7, it can be observed that there was (Mean=2.14: σ=1.2.11) indicating that the performance of the class was on average (50-59 marks) with a large standard deviation meaning there was even distribution of learners' scores on other marks ranges. This implies that there was an average general performance in English literacy in the respondents' class.

4.4.2 Correlation between the Learners' Scores and Their Attitude towards English Literacy

In this section, the correlation between the learners' scores and their attitude towards English literacy was tested. Spearman's rho (r_s) and two tailed *t*-test (*p*-value) were used to check the level of correlation and statistical significance. The results are presented in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8:

Correlation between the Learners' Scores and Their Attitude towards English Literacy (n=120)

Correlations				Students score in language test
Spearman's rho	Students score in language test		Correlation Coefficient	1.000
			Sig. (2-tailed)	.
			N	120
	My English literacy teacher is a good teacher		Correlation Coefficient	.745[**]
			Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
			N	120
	I do not like my English literacy lessons because they are not interesting		Correlation Coefficient	.861[**]
			Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
			N	120
	I have confidence in my ability to learn English in class		Correlation Coefficient	.787[**]
			Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

		N	120
	I believe that I will master English because my teacher says I am good student and she/ he sees good potential in me	Correlation Coefficient	.814**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
		N	120
	I do not see the use of learning English literacy	Correlation Coefficient	.796**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
		N	120
	I believe that the learning material we use in class help us a great deal in achieving the highest level of proficiency in English	Correlation Coefficient	.727**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
		N	120
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

As shown in Table 4.8, with regard to "My English literacy teacher is a good teacher", there was (r_s= .745** p=000), indicating that there was a strong correlation with no statistical significance between leaners' performance and their attitude that their teacher was good.

Also on the statement, "I do not like my English literacy lessons because they are not interesting, there was (r_s= .861** p=000), indicating that there was a very strong correlation with no statistical significance between the leaners' performance and they are not liking English literacy lessons which are not interesting. Further on the statement "I have confidence in my ability to learn English in class", there was (r_s= .787** p=000), indicating that there was a strong correlation with no statistical significance between leaners' performance with their confidence in their ability to learn English in class. On the statement "I believe that I will master English because my teacher says I am good student and she / he sees good potential in me; there was (r_s= .814** p=000), indicating that there was a very strong relation with no statistical significance between the students' performance and their belief that they will master English because their teacher says they are good student and she/ he sees good potential in them.

Further, on the statement, "I do not see the use of learning English literacy", there was (r_s= .796** p=000), indicating that there was a strong correlation between leaners' performance and they are not seeing learning English literacy as useless. Finally, on the statement "I believe that the learning material we use in class help us a great deal in achieving the highest level of proficiency in English", there was (r_s= .727** p=000), indicating that there was a strong relationship between leaners' performance and their belief that the learning material

they use in class help them a great deal in achieving the highest level of proficiency in English.

4.5 Discussion of the Findings

This section is organised according to the research objectives, which are modified into headings in order to break the section into manageable chunks. The discussions are anchored in the literature from Chapter 2.

4.5.1 Learners' Perceptions about English Literacy

The findings indicate that a majority of learners had positive perceptions about English literacy, as they liked the subject. The reasons given could be attributed to the prestige of the English language both locally and globally. From a local perspective, the learners acknowledge the importance of English as a medium of instruction, where high proficiency is associated with cross-curricular advantage as it helps learners to understand all the other subjects (except for siSwati which is the native language). Moreover, in Eswatini, a credit pass (C grade or higher) is a prerequisite for entry into tertiary institutions. As such, the leaners perceive English literacy as a ticket to higher education and better career prospects. On the global sphere, learners are aware that English is the language of the internet and information Communication Technology (ICT) as espoused by Cope and Kalantzis (2009). Therefore, it is not surprising that most leaners hold English literacy in high regard.

The learners' positive outlook is also driven by other factors pertaining to the teaching and learning process. The learners also report that they have confidence in their ability to learn English in class, and they believe that they will master English because their teacher motivates them. As revealed by the findings, the learners believe that the learning material they used in class, coupled with their "good" teacher, helps them in achieving the highest level of proficiency in English literacy. Such findings corroborate those of Wesely (2012) who assert that learners' perceptions are mainly associated with two things: perception of themselves in relation to how they understand and make sense of themselves and the way in which they learn. In addition, learner perception of the learning situation involves the learners' understanding of the aspects of classroom, like the teacher's behaviours, learning material, and all other relevant aspects of the classroom (Wesely, 2012).

However, some learners reported negative perceptions about English literacy. This was unexpected in light of the value of English as highlighted in the preceding paragraph. It transpired that the negative mindset was due to learning difficulties. Literature (de Guzman *et al.,* 2006; Rosenman and Madelaine, 2012; Pande, 2013; Andreou and Segklia, 2017) attributes negative attitudes to language barrier, which is the misunderstanding and interpretation of meaning which restrict effective communication. Such findings highlight the need for teachers to provide additional support to struggling learners. As proposed by Nizkodubov *et al*. (2015), difficulties learners face in English literacy should be exposed, so that learners can be helped to overcome those problems through the use of effective teaching-learning strategies, as well as the usage of effective teaching-learning material.

In line with previous studies (Pande, 2013; Saeb and Zamani, 2013) the current study highlights that the learners' perceptions, beliefs, attitudes are crucial factors that contribute to the process of learning as well as in the final achievement. A striking observation about these findings is that the perceptions of learners regarding the subject are extrinsically inclined, as most learners feel they need the English in order to survive. No response showed a result of perception due to personal reward or academic achievement. Instead, most responses showed that the learners' perceptions were as a result of external factors (for example, English literacy an entry requirement for tertiary institution; a language of survival). English literacy teachers, therefore, still have a role to play in their learners in as far as instilling positive perceptions to learners for intrinsic purposes over extrinsic ones.

4.5.2 Difficulties Encountered by Learners in English Literacy

The findings show that learners had difficulties in learning English Literacy. These difficulties hindered learners from attaining the highest level of literacy in English, and due to lack of linguistic competence, learners do not perform well in assessments. These difficulties emanate from various factors such as limited vocabulary, lack of learning material, inability to understand lessons, inability to communicate in the English Language, psychological issues as well as social issues. As reported by the learners, limited vocabulary made it difficult to deduce the contextual meaning of words during reading tasks. Consequently, limited vocabulary made it difficult for a person to express themselves or to understand what others are saying. Additionally, shallow lexicon made it a challenge to understand reading material and to complete related tasks. The learners also fail to communicate effectively as they "run out of words."

The findings suggest that without adequate language skills, communication becomes a challenge. Such findings echo the sentiments raised by Andreou and Segklia (2017) that linguistic incompetence exposes to the risk of failure throughout their education and their professional lives. In the same vein, Pande (2013) reports that learners who have under-developed language are not only unable to perceive English properly but are also in a difficult position when required to communicate in English. The scholar continues that difficulties experienced by learners in English literacy indicate that there are problems or interferences in the process of the learners learning a second language (L2). Pande (2013) posits that L2 creates a barrier towards learners achieving their highest possible level in English language performance. It is, therefore, crucial that the difficulties learners face in English literacy be known. That way, learners can be helped to overcome those problems through the use of effective teaching-learning strategies, as well as the usage of effective teaching-learning material.

Regarding social and psychological difficulties, the findings indicate the effect of the learners' social environment and state of mind during lessons. The findings align with observations made by Guzman *et al.* (2006) and Nizkodubov *et al.* (2015) who note that English Language learning difficulties stem from motivation issues, cross-cultural understanding, and sociolinguistic competence. Commenting on the social environment as a barrier to language acquisition, Guzman *et al.* (2006) report that L2 learners have limited engagement in the target language outside class despite years of schooling. This is also emphasised by Hartley (2007) who points out that a social environment that that does not nurture the development of L2 is detrimental to learners as it impedes linguistic growth.

The implication is that the difficulties learners face in English literacy should be identified, so that learners can be helped to overcome those problems through the use of effective teaching-learning strategies, as well as the usage of effective teaching-learning material. Since language learning should continue even beyond the confines of school, the concept of the flipped classroom is worth considering for learners of L2 to afford them sufficient practice through continuous engagement in the target language.

4.5.3 Learning Strategies Used by Learners in English Literacy

The results indicate that most learners use learning strategies. These include watching cartoons and emulating them, listening to music, keeping vocabulary notebooks, using

spelling applications, reading, novels, magazines, and newspapers as well as speaking English with friends and family. However, some learners reported not using any learning strategies which as surprising observation. The use of learning strategies is commonly cited in literature (Oxford, 1989; Saeb and Zamani, 2013; Msuya, 2016). In fact, learning strategies are recommended as they help learners to cope with difficulties that prevent them from attaining high proficiency in new language. In stressing the importance of learning strategies, Ghanbarzehi (2014) posits that successful language learners are those who use a range of appropriate language learning strategies. In this light, it is odd that some language learners report using no learning strategies. Interestingly, such learners believed that only one-on-one sessions with the teacher could be an effective strategy. Admittedly, this would be impractical. Basically, it can be said that even learners who use "no learning strategy", have a good idea of their "ideal strategy". In essence, the learners appreciated the value of employing some form of learning strategy.

A close scrutiny of the results reveals that the strategies can be categorised into two: in-class and out-of-class strategies. In-class strategies are used during English Literacy lessons whereas out-of-class strategies are used beyond the classroom. During English literacy lessons in class, the learners make an effort to ask for clarity from their teacher or peers regarding concepts they did not understand. Learners also take notes when the teacher is teaching. Beyond the classroom, leaners reported reading novels, newspaper, and magazines – highlighting "difficult" words in order to search for meaning later. Another interesting observation was practising speaking English with friends and family, which most learners often recent as infringing on their rights. The findings concur with Moloi (2009), who asserts that how learners perceive English as a second language (L2) greatly influences what learners do both during the teaching-learning process, as well as outside the classroom.

As observed in the current study, learning strategies vary from one learner to another. The substantial list of learning strategies reported by learners is evidence to the fact. As correctly noted by Saeb and Zamani (2013), language learning strategies are unique for each learner. They are personal special behaviours and thoughts that learners use to help enhance understanding, retaining, or learning new information as espoused by Msuya (2016). Indeed, Msuya (2016:95) puts forth that language learning strategies help the learner to cope with difficulties that prevent learners from attaining desired proficiency in new language. The above findings reveal that participants of this study, first of all, know and acknowledge that

they have difficulties in learning English literacy. In addition, they go an extra mile to try and help themselves to improve their progress in the acquisition of L2 skills through employing personal learning strategies.

The findings make a strong case for curriculum differentiation. That is, the process of modifying or adapting the curriculum according to the different ability levels of the learners in the classroom. Curriculum differentiation is a strategy that teachers can use with a view to provide meaningful learning experiences for all learners. Based on the findings, a blanket approach to the teaching of English literacy may not reflect the best practice.

4.5.4 The Performance of Learners in English Literacy

Generally, the learners reported that they were not happy with their performance in English literacy. That is a cause for concern, as it indicates that most learners are struggling in the learning of English literacy. The findings indicate that the leaners' performance is average to poor. The poor performance is attributed mainly to the aforementioned learning difficulties (see section 4.5.3) challenges. As revealed by the findings, learning strategies are helpful to the learners. Learners who incorporate audio-visual material become familiar with various accents, whereas those who read improve their vocabulary. However, the overall gain in performance remains minimal. The sub-standard performance is worrying to the leaners as they may not quality for entry into tertiary institutions, where a C grade or better is essential. It is transpired that, although learners use learning strategies, they count on the teacher to help them improve. The findings corroborate those reported by Jia (2004), Kim *et al.* (2012), and Gonzatez-Gomez *et al.* (2016) who also found that learners struggle with second language acquisition.

According to Westby *et al.* (2018), using learning strategies results in improved language proficiency and overall achievement not only in language skills but also in the whole academic performance of a learner. Sen and Sen (2012), concur that the usage of language learning strategies is effective in language learning. The benefits of using learning strategies include increase motivation, language awareness, and self-regulated learning. This helps in making the students aware of the target language that is to be acquired. It also makes them independent learners, which is a good thing. When learners explore content on their own, they learn best. The findings on the relationship between strategy use and performance therefore, revealed that there was high correlation between strategy use and performance.

This corresponds with the ideas propounded by Msuya (2016) that; language learning strategies help the learner to cope with difficulties that prevent them from attaining desired proficiency in new language.

As trusted figures in the classroom, teachers need to be well equipped in the English language and be able to analyse learner characteristics in order to apply relevant interventions. As observed by Westby *et al.* (2018), assessing learners' performance in a language is crucial in the sense that it serves different purposes. These include screening learners to identify learners who are at risk; diagnosing in order to determine the extent of a problem; collecting information to help in decision making with regards to the best educational placements; planning intervention programmes; as well as determining a learner's progress. Knowing the performance of learners is crucial in a language class. Assessments measure the effectiveness of the whole language teaching and learning experience.

As alluded to in the problem statement in chapter 1 that EGCSE learners (on average) perform poorly in English literacy as a subject as national EGCSE annual statistics published by the Examinations Council of Eswatini (ECESWA) (2015; 2017; 2018; 2019) reveal that the pass percentage rate for learners who obtain a C or higher (60 %+) in English from is constantly hovering around 30%. This shows that learners' performance in the English literacy subject is poor, yet tertiary institutions demand a 60% pass or better in the subject for EGCSE learners to be admitted in institutions of higher learning. The findings from the current study confirm the struggles always reflected by ECESWA statistics each year.

Thus, intervention measures are required to mitigate the situation. Since most learners put their faith in the teacher, it is important that English literacy teachers strategic in their teaching and think outside the box. One of the setbacks mentioned earlier was that L2 learners have limited opportunities to lack practice the target language. As part of self-regulated learning, teachers of English need to consider using more modern methods such as the flipped classroom, where the learners will be engaged even outside class. The flipped classroom has been found to be more effective than the traditional classroom set up for language learners (Gonzatez-Gomez *et al.,* 2016).

4.5.5 The Relationship between Learners' Attitudes and Performance in English Literacy

As revealed by the findings, there was a strong correlation between learners' attitudes and their performance in English literacy. This means that the more positive a learner's attitude is towards English, the better their performance is likely to be. Noteworthy is that the factors that contribute to leaners' positive attitude are teacher rapport, lesson presentation, and learners' confidence in ability to learn English. The findings partly agreed with Kim *et al.* (2012) who assert, that positive learning outcomes do not only hinge on general mental ability and conscientiousness, but perception as an individual factor also aids in successful learning. The findings corroborate those of Garrison (1997), Hein (1991), Teslow *et al.* (1994) as well as Saeb and Zamani (2013) who found that learners' perceptions, beliefs, attitudes are very crucial factors that contribute to the process of learning as well as in the final achievement.

Conversely, learners' perception of the learning situation comprises of how well learners can understand the aspects of the classroom as well as their learning experience in the classroom (Brown, 2009). Also, learners' perceptions about themselves include how learners judge themselves their proficiency in skills or lack thereof when completing different academic tasks as reported by Wesely (2012).

In the present study learners were examined with regard to the English literacy as a subject. However, as previously mentioned, a number of factors shape attitudes and perceptions (rapport, presentation, and self-confidence). It follows that English literacy teachers need to be cognisant of these factors in order to foster positive attitudes among learners. A positive attitude, as illustrated in this study, is likely to translate to better performance. The implication is that teachers need to nurture positive leaners attitudes by creating a conducive learning environment.

4.6 Conclusion

The chapter presented findings of the study for both qualitative and quantitative research tools. The data were presented in chronological order in accordance with the order of the questions (qualitative aspect) or the statements (on the quantitative aspect). In essence, this study revealed that; learners have a positive attitude towards English literacy as a subject, despite facing learning challenges that lead to average academic achievement. Nonetheless,

learners use learning strategies which help them in learning English literacy. A strong correlation between language strategy use and performance as well as perception and performance was observed. The latter section was a discussion of the findings, in which a comparison and contrast was made against previous research. Next is chapter 5, which comprises the summary, conclusions, and recommendations.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations for further research. To sum up the research neatly, there is a need to study by restate the research problem, the purpose of the study, and the methodology. The aspects covered are summary of the findings, contribution of the study, limitation of the study, conclusions, implications for practice, and recommendations.

5.2 Summary of the Findings

The purpose of the study was to explore learners' perceptions of the Eswatini General Certificate of Secondary Education (EGCSE) with particular reference to English literacy in the Hlathikhulu cluster schools. To that end, learners' perceptions of English literacy and the impact it had on their performance in the subject as a whole, as well as their learning strategies and how both their strategies use, and perceptions/attitudes relate to their performance in English were explored. Using the embedded mixed method, questionnaires focus group discussions were used to collect data. A summary of the findings, per research question, are presented in what follows.

For coherence and logic, a recap of the research questions is presentation as follows:

1. What are Grade 11, EGCSE learners' perceptions regarding English literacy?
2. What difficulties are encountered by Grade 11, EGCSE learners in English literacy, if any?
3. What learning strategies do Grade 11, EGCSE learners use in English literacy?
4. How do Grade 11, EGCSE learners perform generally in English literacy as a subject?

- In the relation to the first research question, a majority of learners had positive perceptions about English literacy. The findings from the focus-group discussions indicate that a most of the respondents had positive perceptions about English literacy.

- With regard to the second research question, some challenges hindered learners from attaining the highest level of literacy in English, revealed by the findings in the focus

group discussions. The challenges include lack of access to all the English literacy learning material, lack of understanding of their teacher when he/she is teaching in class, lack of understanding of all the reading material they read in class, and they could not complete written tasks using the English language in their English literacy class. Despite facing difficulties in English literacy, learners were not deterred because they understood that English literacy is a ticket to tertiary education and batter career prospects.

- In connection to the third research question, most learners used learning strategies to mitigate the challenges encountered in English literacy. The findings further revealed that nearly all the respondents used some form of learning strategies to mitigate the challenges. The strategies included watching cartoons, listening attentively in class to reading novels and newspapers, listening to western music and BBC news, and speaking English with friends helps. The use of learning strategies underscores the leaners' determined efforts to pass the subject as reap the benefits promised by proficiency in English.

- With reference to the fourth research question, the learners were generally not happy with their performance in English literacy. Almost all respondents, except one, revealed that the strategies that they were using were helping them improve their grades in English literacy, although they were still not happy that their performance was average, ranging from 50 to 59%.

- Overall, there was a strong correlation between learners' attitudes and their performance in English Literacy. As revealed by the inferential statistics, there is a strong correlation between language strategy use and performance as well as perception and performance.

5.3 Contribution of the Study

Previous research in this field focuses on factors outside the students (such as instructional materials, teacher challenges, teaching methods) in trying to explain learner performance in English as a second language. The current study advances scientific knowledge by tapping into a territory less researched as it focuses directly on the learners. That is, exploring learners' perceptions of English literacy in terms of difficulties that they encounter; their learning strategies; and how both their strategy use and perception/attitude relate to their

performance in English Language. Globally, and the Eswatini context, not many studies tackle the topic from the learners' perspective.

5.4 Recommendations and Implications for Practice

Based on the findings and the study, some implications can be drawn.

(i) Owing to the fact that despite using learning strategies, the learners were not happy with their overall performance in English literacy, it is crucial that learners be purposefully taught about, and exposed to various strategies so that they can utilise the ones that work best for them.

(ii) Considering that learners' performance in English literacy had a strong correlation with the students' attitude, it is important that teachers make a conscious effort to instil positive attitudes on the learners abut English literacy.

(iii) Also, schools and teachers of English literacy need to ensure accessibility of learning material as the lack of access to such resources was cited as a barrier.

(iv) The average general performance of learners in English literacy implies the need to employ different teaching approaches such as the flipped classroom, in which learning will be more self-regulated and occur in the leaners' social settings where they have more time to practice language skills.

(v) Finally, curriculum differentiation strategies are recommended for the English literacy classroom, in light of the various learning strategies / styles as revealed by the findings,

5.4 Limitations of the Study

This study used a sample of 10 schools in a district with 69 high schools. Admittedly, covering the entire Shiselweni region was beyond the scope of the study. This could compromise the generalisability of the findings, but the smaller sample made it possible to provide more depth than breadth in the analysis. Another limitation is that the study examined learners and schools in a more general sense. That is, demographics were not taken into account as such variables were beyond the scope of the study.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Research

In order to overcome the limitations of the current study, further research should:

(i) Extend to other parts of the Shiselweni region.

(ii) Also, since the current study did not examine the variables according to demographics, further research needs to take account of school location (such as rural versus urban) and learner demographics such as age and gender to establish whether these factors impact learners' performance in English literacy.

(iii) Since the current study was a general overview of learner perceptions on English literacy, future research should focus on learner perceptions on each of the four language skills (listening, reading, writing, and speaking).

5.6 Conclusion

In essence, the findings indicate learners' perceptions of Eswatini General Certificate of Secondary Education (EGCSE) English literacy are positive, and mainly driven by the need to survive as English is an international language. Overall, the implication is that learners learn English Language because it is a ticket to tertiary education and promises better career prospects. Otherwise, they have no intrinsic motivation to learn English purely for knowledge. As a result, they struggle to attain a high level of English proficiency – despite using learning strategies.

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ANNEXURES

Annexure A

Ethical Clearance

UNISA | university of south africa

COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

21 May 2021

Dear Mlangeni Phephile Hlengiwe

Decision:	NHREC Registration # :
Ethics Approval from 21 May 2021 to 21 May 2024	Rec-240816-052
	CREC Reference # :
	65596986_CREC_CHS_2021

Researcher(s):	**Name: Mlangeni Phephile Hlengiwe**
	Contact details: 65596986@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Supervisor:	**Name: Dr M.M. Mabiletja**
	Contact: mabiletja1@webmail.co.za

Title: *Learners' perceptions of Eswatini General Certificate of Secondary Education (EGCSE) with particular reference to English literacy in the Hlathikhulu cluster schools.*

Purpose: Masters Degree

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Unisa College of Human Science Ethics Committee. Ethics approval is granted for three year.

The *Low risk application was reviewed by* College of Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee, in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the College Ethics Review Committee.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the

confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.

5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.

6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data require additional ethics clearance.

7. No fieldwork activities may continue after the expiry date **(21 May 2024).** Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

*The reference number **65596986_CREC_CHS_2021** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Yours sincerely,

Signature :

Prof. KB Khan
CHS Research Ethics Committee Chairperson
Email: khankb@unisa.ac.za
Tel: (012) 429 8210

Signature : PP

Prof K. Masemola
Exécutive Dean : CHS
E-mail: masemk@unisa.ac.za
Tel: (012) 429 2298

Annexure B

Request for Permission to Conduct Research in Schools (sample letter to Principals)

P.O. Box 3140

Hlathikhulu

The Principal

Dear sir/madam

A REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL

I hereby request permission to conduct research in your school. Currently I am conducting a research project titled: "*Learners' perceptions of the Eswatini General Certificate of Secondary Education (EGCSE) with Particular Reference to English Literacy in the Hlathikhulu Cluster Schools.*" In your school, 20 learners will be selected to participate in this study. All these participants will be given questionnaires and a language test to answer. The interviews will commence the beginning of February 2022.

This research project is the partial fulfilment of the Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages carried out at the University of South Africa (UNISA) under the supervision of Dr. M. Mabiletja. The questionnaires will be answered during break times and after school hours so as to avoid disruption of effective teaching and learning and they will last for about thirty minutes. Likewise, the interviews will be conducted during lunch breaks.

Your cooperation and positive response in this regard will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

Ms Phephile H. Mlangeni (Researcher)
Mobile: 7612 2477 or 7912 2477

Annexure C

Consent Form

LETTER REQUESTING ASSENT FROM LEARNERS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Title of Research: **Learners' perceptions of Eswatini General Certificate of Secondary Education (EGCSE) with particular reference to English literacy in the Hlathikhulu cluster schools.**

Dear Prospective Participant   Date _____

I am doing a study on learners' perceptions of EGCSE with particular reference to English as part of my studies at the University of South Africa. Your principal has given me permission to do this study in your school. I would like to invite you to be a very special part of my study. I am doing this study so that I can find ways on how that you and your teachers can help improve your learning and their teaching strategies in the English literacy subject. This may help you and many other learners of your age in different schools.

This letter is to explain to you what I would like you to do. There may be some words you do not know in this letter. You may ask me or any other adult to explain any of these words that you do not know or understand. You may take a copy of this letter home to think about my invitation and talk to your parents about this before you decide if you want to be in this study.

 I would like to ask you to; complete a questionnaire form, write a language test and involve yourself in a focus group interview (a group of three participants. Answering the questionnaire will require 15-20 minutes of your time; focus group interview, 30-45 minutes; and the language test will require 45-60 minutes. Please note that the language test will be administered in one day whilst the questionnaire and focus group interview will both be done on a different day. Focus group interview you will be recorded through an audio recording device, please make sure that you do not share personal sensitive information during the interview.

I will write a report on the study, but I will not use your name in the report or say anything that will let other people know who you are. Participation is voluntary and you do not have to be part of this study if you don't want to take part. If you choose to be in the study, you may stop taking part at any time without penalty. You may tell me if you do not wish to answer any of my questions. No one will blame or criticise you. When I am finished with my study, I shall return to your school to give a short talk about some of the helpful and interesting things I found out in my study. I shall invite you to come and listen to my talk.

The benefits of this study are that you will play a crucial role in making the learning and teaching of English easier for you and other learners by giving your opinions about English literacy, which will help in coming up with improved learning and teaching strategies for the subject. Potential risks are contracting COVID-19 if you do not follow prevention guidelines for the virus as you will have face-to-face interaction with the researcher and other participants (focus group interview). You are however, advised to always stick to the COVID-19 prevention guidelines during the data collection process, so that you can have maximum protection from the virus.

You will not be reimbursed or receive any incentives for your participation in the research except for being provided with a hand's sanitizer and a face mask so that you can protect yourself from contracting COVID-19.

If you decide to be part of my study, you will be asked to sign the form at the bottom of the page. If you have any other questions about this study, you can talk to me or you can have your parent or another adult call me at **+268 76122477.** Do not sign the form until you have all your questions answered and understand what I would like you to do.

Researcher: Mlangeni Phephile   Phone number: + 268 76122477

Do not sign the written assent form if you have any questions. Ask your questions first and ensure that someone answers those questions.

WRITTEN ASSENT

I have read this letter which asks me to be part of a study at my school. I have understood the information about my study, and I know what I will be asked to do. I am willing to be in the study.

_____   _____   _____

Learner's name (print):   Learner's signature: Date:

_____   _____   _____

Witness's name (print)   Witness's signature   Date:

(The witness is over 18 years old and present when signed.)

_____   _____   _____

Parent/guardian's name (print)   Parent/guardian's signature: Date:

_____   _____   _____

Researcher's name (print)   Researcher's signature: Date:

Parental Consent Form

UNISA | university of south africa

Ethical clearance no: ……………………

REQUESTING PARENTAL CONSENT FOR MINORS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Dear Parent

Your child, ………………………… is invited to participate in a study entitled; **Learners' perceptions of the Eswatini General Certificate of Secondary Education (EGCSE) with particular reference to English literacy in the Hlathikhulu cluster schools.**
I am undertaking this study as part of my Master's research at the University of South Africa. The purpose of the study is to find out perceptions of mainly Grade 11 (Form 4), EGCSE, Hlathikhulu cluster learners regarding English literacy. I want to find out the impact their perceptions have on their performance in the subject, as well as their learning strategies and how both their strategies use and perception/ attitude relate to their performance in English.

The possible benefits of the study are the improvement of learning and teaching strategies for effective teaching and learning of English. Curriculum developers will also benefit in that they will design curriculum content that will help improve the performance of learners who find the learning of English difficult.

I am asking permission to include your child in this study because he/she is an EGCSE learner in one of the Hlathikhulu cluster schools. I expect to have 99 other children participating in the study where 19 will come from your child's school and the other 80 coming from five different schools in the Hlathikhulu cluster.

If you allow your child to participate, I shall request him/her to:

- Take part in a survey where he/she will answer a questionnaire which will require 15- 20 minutes of his/her time. The questionnaire will be filled at school during school hours.
- Take part in a group interview which will comprise of three learners from your child's school. The focus group interview will take about 30- 45 minutes and will be conducted during school hours at your child's school. A recording device will be used to record the proceedings of the interview, hence a request to have your child recorded during the interview. While every effort will be made by the researcher to ensure that your child will not be connected to the information that they share during the focus group, I cannot guarantee that other participants in the focus group will treat information confidentially. I shall, however, encourage all participants to do so. For this reason, I advise you to warn your child not to disclose personally sensitive information in the focus group.
- Complete a language test that has been set to measure your child's language skills, especially in reading and writing. The test will also be administered at school during school hours at your child's school.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and can be identified with your child will remain confidential and will only be disclosed with your permission. His/her responses will not be linked to his/her name or your name or the school's name in any written or verbal report based on this study. Such a report will be used for research purposes only.

There are no foreseeable risks to your child by participating in the study, except that the researcher will be interacting with your child face-to-face. However, all COVID-19 regulations will be observed during the interaction and your child will be provided with a face mask and a hands sanitizer for maximum protection from the virus. Your child will receive no direct benefit from participating in the study; however, the possible benefits to education are the improvement of learning and teaching strategies of English to help learners with difficulties in learning the subject, learn it with ease. Neither your child nor you will receive any type of payment for participating in this study.

Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. Your child may decline to participate or to withdraw from participation at any time. Withdrawal or refusal to participate will not affect him/her in any way. Similarly, you can agree to allow your child to be in the study now and change your mind later without any penalty.

The study will take place during regular classroom activities with the prior approval of the school and your child's teacher. However, if you do not want your child to participate, an alternative activity like going to the school library to read will be available.

In addition to your permission, your child must agree to participate in the study and you and your child will also be asked to sign the assent form which accompanies this letter. If your child does not wish to participate in the study, he or she will not be included and there will be no penalty. The information gathered from the study and your child's participation in the study will be stored securely on a password locked computer in my locked office for five years after the study. Thereafter, records will be erased.

The benefits of this study are that through this study, effective teaching and learning strategies for EGSCE learners will be recommended, hence improve the pass rate of the subject.

Potential risks are the contraction of COVID-19 if guidelines on preventing the spread of the virus are ignored.

There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research except for a face mask and a sanitizer for your child.

If you have questions about this study please ask me or my study supervisor, Dr. Matome Mabiletja, Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages, College of Human Sciences, University of South Africa. My contact number is **+268 76122477** and my e-mail is phephile.mlangeni@gmail.com . The e-mail of my supervisor is Matome.Mabiletja@nwu.ac.za. Permission for the study has already been given by the Regional Education Officer of the Ministry of Education and the Ethics Committee of the College of Education, UNISA.

You are making a decision about allowing your child to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to allow him or her to participate in the study. You may keep a copy of this letter.

Name of child: …………………………………………………………….

Sincerely

_____   _____   _____
Parent/guardian's name (print)   Parent/guardian's signature: Date:

_____   _____   _____
Researcher's name (print)   Researcher's signature   Date:

Focus Group Discussion Guide

1. What are your perceptions regarding English literacy? Give reasons for your answer.
2. a) What difficulties do you encounter in learning English literacy if there are any?

    b) How do the difficulties hinder you from attaining the highest level of literacy in English?
3. What learning strategies do you use in learning English?
4. a) How do learning strategies affect your performance in English Literacy?

    b) Generally, how do you perform in English literacy?

SiSwati language guiding questions

1. Uyasitsandza yini sifundvo sesiNgisi? Niketa tizatfu takho.
2. Bulukhuni buni lohlangana nabo nawufundza sifundvo sakho sesingisi, uma bukhona? Nawucabanga lobo bulikhuni buyakuvimba yini kutsi ufundze kahle sifundvo sakho sesiNgisi?
3. Tikhona yini tindlela lotisita ngato kuze usifundze kahle lesifundvo? (Kungaba; kubhala emanotsi, kufundza tincwadzi tesingisi, kudvwebela emagama locala kuwabona nekufuna kutsi ashoni nawufundza sivisiso, noma ke kubuta thishela wakho noma bangani bakho ngetintfo longakativisisi eklasini?
4. Letindlela lotisebentisako kufundza singisi ucabanga kutsi tiyakusita yini kutsi usiphase lesiNgisi?
5. Usiphasa kanganani sifundvo sesiNgisi? Uyajabula yini ngendlela losiphas ngayo lesifundvo?

Survey Questionnaire

<table>
<tr><td>

Survey on EGCSE learners' perceptions on English literacy

Dear Respondent

This questionnaire serves to collect data on the topic **'Learners' perceptions of the Eswatini General Certificate of Secondary Education (EGCE) with particular reference to English literacy in the Hlathikhulu Cluster schools.'** Your response in this regard shall help to complete the research in an efficient way. Data collected from this research will be kept in high confidentiality. Please answer all questions in this questionnaire.

</td></tr>
</table>

Section A: Please circle the applicable answer

1. **Gender**: Male   Female
2**. Age:**   16-18 years   19 years and above

Section B

Think about your experiences in an English literacy class and circle how often each statement applies to you:

Learning strategies

During my English literacy lessons in class…

1. I take notes when the teacher is teaching.
   Always   Often   Sometimes   Never
2. I highlight difficult words in reading comprehension passages and find out their meanings.
   Always   Often   Sometimes   Never
3. I read novels/newspaper/magazines to improve my English literacy levels.
   Always   Often   Sometimes   Never
4. I communicate in English with my peers and teachers at school.
   Always   Often   Sometimes   Never
5. I make an effort to ask for clarity from my teacher/peers regarding concepts I did not understand in class.
   Always   Often   Sometimes   Never
6. I do not do my English literacy assignments.
   Always   Often   Sometimes   Never

Perceptions/ attitudes on English literacy

1. My English literacy teacher is a good teacher.

   Always   Often   Sometimes   Never
2. I do not like my English literacy lessons because they are not interesting.
   Always   Often   Sometimes   Never
3. I have confidence in my ability to learn English in class.
   Always   Often   Sometimes   Never
4. I believe that I will master English because my teacher says I am good student and she/ he sees good potential in me.
   Always   Often   Sometimes   Never
5. I do not see the use of learning English literacy.
   Always   Often   Sometimes   Never
6. I believe that the learning material we use in class help us a great deal in achieving the highest level of proficiency in English.
   Always   Often   Sometimes   Never

Difficulties encountered in learning English

1. I find learning English literacy easy.

   Always   Often   Sometimes   Never
2. I understand all the reading material I read in class.
   Always   Often   Sometimes   Never
3. I do not understand my teacher when he/she is teaching in class.
   Always   Often   Sometimes   Never
4. I have access to all the English literacy learning material.
   Always   Often   Sometimes   Never
5. I find it easy to complete written tasks using the English language in my English literacy class.
   Always   Often   Sometimes   Never

Performance in English literacy

1. I feel happy with my performance in English literacy.

   Always   Often   Sometimes   Never

2. I perform poorly in my English literacy tests because I have difficulty in accomplishing tasks in the English.
   Always   Often   Sometimes   Never
3. Communicating in English with my peers and teachers help me to perform better in the English literacy subject.
   Always   Often   Sometimes   Never
4. It is crucial that I perform well in my English literacy subject.
   Always   Often   Sometimes   Never
5. If I give up on learning English, I cannot do well in the subject.

Always   Often   Sometimes   Never

The end. Thank you for participating in this survey.

SiSwati Questionnaire

Lucwaningo ngendlela bafundzi baka EGCSE labatsatasa ngayo sifundvo sesiNgisi.

Mfundzi lotsandzekako,

Lemibuto lelandzelako yentelwe kukoleka imivo yakho ngalesihlokp, " **Indlela bafundzi baka EGCSE labatsatsa ngayo sifundvo sesiNgisi esigungwini setikolo taka Hlathikhulu**". Kuphendvula kwakho lemibuto lelandzelako kutabalusito kuphumelelisa lolucwaningo. Timphendvulo takho titawugcinwa tiyimfihlo, uyacelwa kutsi ubambisane nemcwaningi ngekuphendvula lemibuto lelandzelako.

SICEPHU A: Sicela ukipilitele imphendvulo

Bulili: Umdvuna umsikati

Iminyaka: 16-18   19 – kuya etulu

SICEPHU B

Ticabange useklasini lakho lesiNgisi bese ukipilitela tikhatsi lokwenteka ngato kuwe loku

lokulandzelako.

Tinsita kufundza

Ngesikhatsi sekufundza siNgisi eklasini lami…

1. Ngiyawabhala emanotsi thishela nakafundzisa.
Sonkhe sikhatsi   Esikhatsini lesinengi   Ngalesinye sikhatsi   Akwenteki neze

2. Ngiyawadvwebela emagama lamasha nalalukhuni kimi ngiphindze ngibuke kutsi ashoni nangifundza sivisiso.
Sonkhe sikhatsi   Esikhatsini lesinengi   Ngalesinye sikhatsi   Akwenteki neze

3. Ngiyawufundza emaphephandzaba, netincwadzi kute ngitfutfukise esiNgisini sami.
Sonkhe sikhatsi   Esikhatsini lesinengi   Ngalesinye sikhatsi   Akwenteki neze

4.Ngikhuluma siNgisi ngaso sonkhe sikhatsi nabothishela nebangani bami.

Sonkhe sikhatsi   Esikhatsini lesinengi   Ngalesinye sikhatsi   Akwenteki neze

5.Ngiyezama kubuta thishela noma bangani bami ngalengingakakakuva nakufundvwa.

Sonkhe sikhatsi   Esikhatsini lesinengi   Ngalesinye sikhatsi   Akwenteki neze

6. Angiwubhali umsebenti wami wesiNgisi.

Sonkhe sikhatsi   Esikhatsini lesinengi   Ngalesinye sikhatsi   Akwenteki neze

Indlela yekutsatsa/ yekubuka siNgisi

1. Thishela wami wesiNgisi ukahle.

Sonkhe sikhatsi   Esikhatsini lesinengi   Ngalesinye sikhatsi   Akwenteki neze

2. Angisitsandzi sifundvo sesiNgisi ngoba site mdvonseni.
Sonkhe sikhatsi   Esikhatsini lesinengi   Ngalesinye sikhatsi   Akwenteki neze

3. Ngiyatitsemba ngendlela lengifundza ngayo siNgisi.
Sonkhe sikhatsi   Esikhatsini lesinengi   Ngalesinye sikhatsi   Akwenteki neze

4. Ngiyetsemba kutsi siNgisi ngitogcina ngisati ngoba thishela wami utsi ngingumfundzi lokahle, longaphasa futsi.
Sonkhe sikhatsi   Esikhatsini lesinengi   Ngalesinye sikhatsi   Akwenteki neze

5. Angisiboni sidzingo sekufundza siNgisi.
Sonkhe sikhatsi   Esikhatsini lesinengi   Ngalesinye sikhatsi   Akwenteki neze

6. Ngiyakholelwa kutsi letincwadzi lesifundza ngato eklasini tiyasita kakhulu ekutsi sisifundze siNgisi.
Sonkhe sikhatsi   Esikhatsini lesinengi   Ngalesinye sikhatsi   Akwenteki neze

Bulukhunu lengihlangabetana nabo nangifundza siNgisi.

1. Ngikukhandza kulula kufundza siNgisi.

Sonkhe sikhatsi   Esikhatsini lesinengi   Ngalesinye sikhatsi   Akwenteki neze

2. Ngiyativa tonkhe tincwadzi lengifundza ngato eklasini.
Sonkhe sikhatsi   Esikhatsini lesinengi   Ngalesinye sikhatsi   Akwenteki neze

3. Angimuvisisi thishela wami nakafundzisa eklasini
Sonkhe sikhatsi   Esikhatsini lesinengi   Ngalesinye sikhatsi   Akwenteki neze

4. Ngiyakhona kutitfola tonkhe tintfo letingisitako kutsi ngifundze siNgisi.
Sonkhe sikhatsi   Esikhatsini lesinengi   Ngalesinye sikhatsi   Akwenteki neze

5. Ngaso sonkhe sikhatsi, ngikukhandza kulula kubhala, ngicedze umsebenti wami wesiNgisi.
Sonkhe sikhatsi   Esikhatsini lesinengi   Ngalesinye sikhatsi   Akwenteki neze

Lizinga lekuphasa sifundvo sesiNgisi.

1. Ngiyajabula ngendlela lengiphasa ngakhona sifundvo sesiNgisi.

Sonkhe sikhatsi   Esikhatsini lesinengi   Ngalesinye sikhatsi   Akwenteki neze

2. Angisiphatsi siNgisi ngoba ngiye ngibenelukhuni bekubhala umsebenti ngalo lulwimi lwesiNgisi.
Sonkhe sikhatsi   Esikhatsini lesinengi   Ngalesinye sikhatsi   Akwenteki neze

3. Ngiyakholelwa kutsi kusebentisa tinsita kufundza, njenge ku; bhala emanotsi; kufundza tincwadzi tesiNgisi; nekukhuluma ngesiNgisi nabengani bami nabothishela kungangisita kutsi ngente ncono kulesifundvo sesiNgisi.

Sonkhe sikhatsi   Esikhatsini lesinengi   Ngalesinye sikhatsi   Akwenteki neze

4. Kumcoka kutsi ngisiphase sifundvo sesiNgisi.

Sonkhe sikhatsi   Esikhatsini lesinengi   Ngalesinye sikhatsi   Akwenteki neze

5. Nangilahla litsemba ekusiphaseni lesifundvo sesiNgisi, vele ngete ngasiphasa.

Sonkhe sikhatsi   Esikhatsini lesinengi   Ngalesinye sikhatsi   Akwenteki neze

Iphela lapha imibuto. Siyabonga kutsi ubeyincenye yalolucwaningo.

Language Literacy Test (Adapted from Ontario Secondary School)

Released Selections and Test Questions

QUESTIONS

Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT)   2019

Follow along as your teacher reads the instructions.

Note:

You are not permitted to use cellphones, audio- or video-recording devices, or e-mail or text-messaging devices during the assessment. Exceptions may apply in accordance with EQAO guidelines.

No work in this booklet will be scored.

Education Quality and Accountability Office

EQAO

Continue to follow along as your teacher reads the directions on the cover of the *Answer Booklet.*

1 **Task:**

Write a **minimum** of **three paragraphs** expressing an **opinion** on the topic below. Develop your main idea with supporting details (proof, facts, examples, etc.).

Audience:

an adult who is interested in your opinion

Length:

The lined space provided in the *Answer Booklet* for your written work indicates the approximate length of the writing expected.

Topic:

Do people depend too much on technology?

Do not write in this area.

Multiple-Choice Questions

1 Which sentence does not belong in the following paragraph?

(1) Include mosquito prevention when planning outdoor summer fun. **(2)** Remove standing water where mosquitoes can breed. **(3)** Plant citronella and rosemary, which mosquitoes dislike. **(4)** Wear pants and long sleeves, especially in the evening. **(5)** Blackflies can be an even bigger nuisance. **(6)** Taking these steps will keep these pesky bugs from ruining your fun.

a sentence 2

b sentence 3

c sentence 4

d sentence 5

2 Choose the correct pronouns to complete the following sentence.

When the little boy grabbed the toy train, _____ wheel broke off in _____ hand.

a its / his

b it's / his

c its / he's

d it / one's

3 Choose the sentence that is written correctly.

a Their must be billions of stars in the universe.

b All the children have they're permission forms for the field trip.

c They're never going to make it back to the train station in time.

d Micheline and Jacob were unsure when their going to get the exam results.

4 Choose the option that best combines all the information in the following sentences.

Nina is in Grade 10.

Nina is on the student council.

Nina is taking extra courses this term.

a Nina, a Grade 10 student, is on the student council and is taking extra courses this term.

b Nina who is in Grade 10 is a student taking extra courses and also on the student council.

c Nina is a Grade 10 student and she is on student council, and she is taking extra courses this term.

d Nina is a Grade 10 student who is taking extra courses this term and who is on the student council.

Read the selection below and answer the questions in the *Answer Booklet*.

Mustard Oil Versus Malaria

Jessie MacAlpine knew she wanted to be a scientist as early as Grade 2, when she signed one of her homework assignments "Dr. Jessie MacAlpine." She was only a Grade 9 student when she published her first research paper, "The Effects of CO2 and Chronic Cold Exposure on Fecundity of Female *Drosophila Melanogaster*." By the time she graduated from high school, MacAlpine had already won a top prize at an international science fair and had begun collaborative research with University of Toronto (U of T) scientists. She had also made two interesting discoveries in her basement lab—both of which she is now in the process of patenting.

One of her patents is for a bioherbicide (a biologically based substance for weed control), which MacAlpine developed using molecular compounds found in garlic mustard plants and coffee grounds. The other is a mustard-oil compound—*allyl isothiocyanate*—the ingredient that gives mustard and wasabi (similar to horseradish) its pungent kick. She hopes to develop this into a treatment for malaria. This parasitic disease infects about 219 million people every year and is growing resistant to available drugs.

MacAlpine's anti-malaria compound idea came to her in Grade 11, after she read a newspaper article about a potential treatment using herbicides. In the 1990s, scientists discovered that the parasite causing malaria, a species called *Plasmodium*, actually has plant genes because it evolved hundreds of millions of years ago from an ancient algae. These genes are essential to the parasite's survival. So the thinking was this: if herbicides killed plant genes, maybe they could kill malaria parasites too. "Since I'd spent the past two years developing a herbicide, I thought, 'Ooh, maybe I can change my compound into a malaria drug,'" recalls MacAlpine. Other scientists worldwide were already working on new treatments that could target these plant genes; some treatments have reached clinical trials. But as far as MacAlpine knows, no one has experimented with mustard oil.

Now, in 2013, and in her first year at the University of Toronto, MacAlpine hopes her drug will be cheap, effective and accessible to people in the developing world. "Globally, we're always in desperate need of another anti-malarial product," said Ian Crandall, a U of T professor who has been working with MacAlpine at the Sandra A. Rotman Laboratories, where he is a principal investigator. "The interesting thing about what Jessie has been doing is [that] growing mustard oil is not something that requires a huge facility to do. If it's kind of a natural product that can be used to treat malaria, then it's something that's worth looking into." 4

While MacAlpine's early experiments have shown promise, her research is still in the very early stages. David Roos, a University of Pennsylvania biology professor whose lab helped confirm *Plasmodium's* plant ancestry, applauds her efforts, but cautions that "the world is full of thousands and thousands of natural products that have been shown to be effective against malaria parasites (but) have not wound up as drugs." 5

For MacAlpine, success—if it ever comes—is at least 10 years and millions of dollars away. "It's also important to remain realistic," she notes. "There's still a lot of tests that need to be done and a lot of work that needs to be completed for that dream to be realized." 6

But luckily for MacAlpine, at 18, there is plenty of time. 7

Provide your answers in the *Answer Booklet*.

Multiple-Choice Questions

1 When did MacAlpine publish her first research paper?

a in Grade 9

b in Grade 10

c in her first year of university

d in her last year of high school

2 How is the information in paragraph 1 organized?

a general to specific

b chronological order

c compare and contrast

d problem and solution

3 Why is there a need for a new anti-malarial product?

a Malaria treatments are expensive.

b Organic treatments are more effective.

c Scientists have not been interested in updating treatments.

d Malaria is growing resistant to treatments that are currently available.

4 Which statement is one of MacAlpine's hypotheses?

a Mustard oil can alter plant genes.

b Herbicides can kill malarial parasites.

c *Plasmodium* can be used to treat malaria.

d *Allyl isothiocyanate* can be made less pungent.

5 Which paragraph best describes how mustard oil might help treat malaria?

a paragraph 2

b paragraph 3

c paragraph 4

d paragraph 5

6 What does it mean that MacAlpine's experiments "have shown promise" (paragraph 5)?

a Scientists question MacAlpine's intentions.

b MacAlpine has almost completed her research.

c MacAlpine's investigations have the potential to be successful.

d MacAlpine's compound is ready to become a commercial drug.

Provide your answers in the *Answer Booklet*.

7 Which statement is accurate?

a *Plasmodium* is a plant gene.

b *Plasmodium* is a natural herbicide.

c *Plasmodium* is the drug used to treat malaria.

d *Plasmodium* is the species of parasite that causes malaria.

8 What is the function of the dashes in paragraph 6?

a to set off a prediction

b to highlight an example

c to emphasize the possibility of doubt

d to separate MacAlpine's opinion from that of the narrator

9 Which statement best summarizes the selection?

a Ian Crandall, a principal investigator in parasitic disease, is closing in on a potential cure for malaria.

b As a young researcher, Jessie MacAlpine has made exciting advances in the development of an anti-malarial drug.

c After many years of research on malaria, David Roos has successfully confirmed *Plasmodium*'s plant ancestry.

d The development of new anti-malarial drugs is a process that requires the co-operation of many different scientists.

Read the selection below and answer the questions in the *Answer Booklet*.

"Guess what!" exclaimed Basira. "I just joined the AV Club!"   1

"'AV' stands for audio visual, right? Will you be making movies?" inquired Ali.   2

"Not movies," Basira laughed. "At the information meeting, Ms. Phan told us that we would   3
be responsible for providing lighting and sound for school assemblies and community
events."

"Sounds like you're going to learn a lot in   4
that club," Jacob said. "How did you find
out about it?"

"At the Club Fair that was held in the   5
cafeteria. They were making announcements
all last week. Didn't you hear?"

"That's right," added Ali. "All the clubs   6
had booths and posters promoting their
activities. I decided to join the drama club. I
love performing!"

"I've never bothered attending the Club Fair. Maybe I should have taken advantage of it,"   7
said Jacob.

"It's not too late to get involved," Ali reassured him. "Participating in a hobby you enjoy will   8
enrich your high school experience."

"Not only that," Basira contributed, "but it also improves your resumé. One day I'd like to   9
become a sound technician at a radio station. My involvement in the AV Club shows that I'm
serious about the industry. In a few months, I'll be able to mix and record sound, as well as
edit recordings—that's advantageous to a future employer."

"I've never looked at it that way before." Jacob pondered their words for a moment. "You   10
know, I've always been interested in how diverse the students at our school are. Do you think
there's a club that promotes equity and inclusion?"

"I don't know," said Basira, "but why don't we look at the school Web site and find out?"   11

Provide your answers in the *Answer Booklet.*

Multiple-Choice Questions

1 How does Jacob most likely feel in paragraph 7?

a   bored

b   content

c   regretful

d   impatient

2 How is the information in paragraph 6 organized?

a   present to past

b   general to specific

c   problem to solution

d   least to most important

3 What does Ali provide in paragraph 8?

a   criticism

b   evidence

c   negotiation

d   encouragement

4 What is the function of the dash used in paragraph 9?

a   to introduce a definition

b   to separate contrasting ideas

c   to signal a change of attitude

d   to emphasize an important idea

5 What is the best meaning of the word "pondered" as used in paragraph 10?

a   consulted

b   considered

c   complained

d   contradicted

Open-Response Questions

6 How does Basira demonstrate that she is focused on life after high school? Use specific details from the selection to support your answer.

7 Which character (Ali or Basira) encourages Jacob the most? Use specific details from the selection to support your answer.

100

Provide your answer in the *Answer Booklet*.

Short Writing Task

1 Identify one guest speaker you would invite to your school. Use specific details to explain why your school would benefit from this visit.

Do not write in this area.

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Read the selection below and answer the questions in the *Answer Booklet*.

Filbert Facts

Hazelnut trees can live **75–100 years**.

Amount of hazelnuts produced per year from one tree: **8–10 kg**

PRODUCTION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Hazelnuts (also called filberts) are the only nut crop produced commercially in British Columbia.

Production: About 333 000 kilograms annually.

Area: 330 hectares (eastern Fraser Valley, mainly around Chilliwack and Agassiz).

Wild hazelnut trees grow throughout most of British Columbia. Production is threatened by eastern filbert blight, a fungal disease that has spread from Oregon and Washington states.

British Columbia
CANADA
Washington
Oregon
UNITED STATES
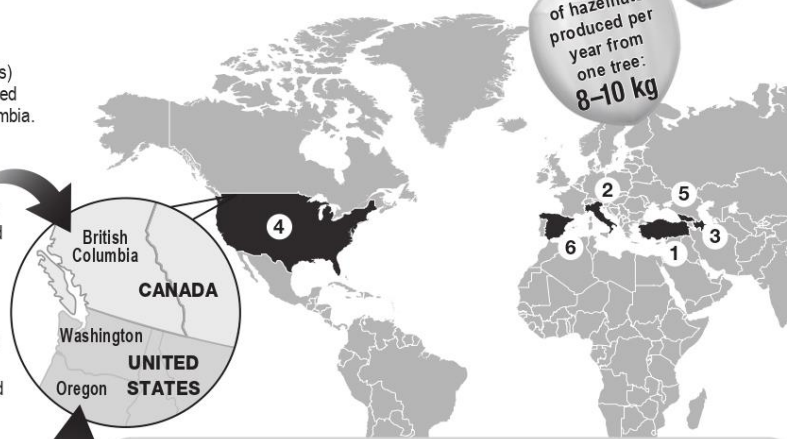
PRODUCTION IN OREGON

Oregon grows 99% of the United States' hazelnut crop.

Production: About 34 700 tonnes annually.

WORLD PRODUCTION, METRIC TONNES

Year	Tonnes
2008	584 400
2009	321 890
2010	417 950
2011	374 600
2012	469 908
2013	418 432

Down 11% from 2012
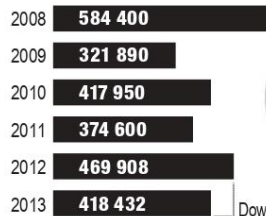
ESTIMATED 2013 HAZELNUT PRODUCTION KERNEL BASIS/METRIC TONNES

❶ Turkey 300 000 (72%)
❷ Italy 56 400 (13%)
❸ Azerbaijan 15 021 (4%)
❹ U.S.A. 14 000 (3%)
❺ Georgia 12 000 (3%)
❻ Spain 9750 (2%)
Others 11 261 (3%)
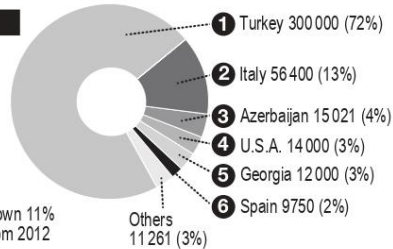
GROWING HAZELNUTS

When a hazelnut is ripe, the husk releases it, and the nut drops to the ground.

Harvesting involves two steps: The hazelnuts are swept or blown into long continuous piles in the centre of the aisles. Next, machines scoop up the rows of hazelnuts, which are taken to the processing plant.

Hazelnuts are harvested from late August through October.

PRODUCTION IN TURKEY

World's largest hazelnut producer. Exports to 110 countries.

Exports

2012 $1.8 billion	265 000 tonnes
2013 $1.7 billion	276 000 tonnes
2014 $2.3 billion	252 500 tonnes

Turkey still met more than 70% of the world's demand for hazelnuts despite losing one-third of its crop due to storms and freezing weather in late March 2014.

Provide your answers in the *Answer Booklet.*

Multiple-Choice Questions

1 According to the selection, what is eastern filbert blight?

a It is a crop disease.

b It is an isolated incident.

c It is a production decrease.

d It is a severe weather condition.

2 What information links the two hazelnuts at the top right corner of the page?

a the size of the hazelnut orchard

b the production rate of hazelnut trees

c the worldwide locations of hazelnut production

d the geographic relationship between Canada and the United States

3 In which section can you find information about wild hazelnuts?

a Production in Oregon

b Production in British Columbia

c World Production, Metric Tonnes

d Estimated 2013 Hazelnut Production

4 What is the purpose of the arrows?

a to direct the reader to the inset map

b to emphasize the location of Oregon

c to indicate the importance of the selection

d to connect the heading to additional details

5 Which section offers a detailed breakdown of hazelnut producers?

a inset map

b Growing Hazelnuts

c World Production, Metric Tonnes

d Estimated 2013 Hazelnut Production

6 What topic do the "Production in British Columbia" and "Production in Turkey" sections discuss?

a human population

b worldwide production

c threats to filbert crops

d worldwide distribution

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UNRELEASED ITEMS

The following March 2019 OSSLT questions are not being released this year:

Components	Questions
News Report (Reading)	1–6
Multiple-Choice Writing Items	7–10
Short Writing	11
Long Writing (News Report)	12
Information Paragraph (Reading)	13–19

Annexure H

Turnitin Report