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**Teaching literacy and language in a functioning Western Cape  
Quintile one school: A Grade one case study**

by

Eleanor Virginia De Cerff

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## **Declaration**

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

University of Cape Town

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## **ABSTRACT**

The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) provides compelling evidence that many learners fail to achieve at the required grade level in South African primary schools. Although there are various factors that might contribute to this, the teaching and classroom practices of the teacher must be regarded as a highly significant factor in learners' achievement.

This dissertation examines the literacy and language pedagogy of a South African Grade one teacher, in a Quintile one school with a history of relatively good performance on the Grade three provincial systemic assessments. The study asks the question: How does a Grade one teacher of learners who are not proficient in the language of learning and teaching (LoLT), English, teach literacy in the first term in a high performing Quintile 1 school?

I conducted a qualitative case study observing one Grade one teacher's teaching practices over a period of five weeks. I draw on a sociocultural approach to literacy as contextualised social practice, the emergent literacy paradigm, as well as whole language and phonics approaches to literacy pedagogy to make sense of the teacher's observed practices and discourse.

The findings show that the teacher conceptualises reading and writing as separate skills which are taught through separate and distinct practices. While reading is approached as a word by word process with a focus on word recognition and the neglect of comprehension, writing is focused on the accurate copying of words and punctuation with very little emphasis on the construction of meaning. In contrast to the whole language approach where learners read and write for meaning, a Phonics approach is most dominant in this classroom. The teacher's practices further contrast with an emergent literacy perspective that prioritises book handling, play reading, as well as scribbling, drawing and invented spelling to convey meaning. My research also confirms that even though South African language research and language policy reflects the importance of home languages, the teacher's practices value English monolingualism.

I conclude this study by arguing that the observed approach to literacy pedagogy is unlikely to lead to deep literacy proficiency in learners and show how this conclusion is supported by the gap between the Grade three and Grade six literacy results at the school, knowledge of which emerged during my fieldwork period.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 The South African Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) and Language in Education Policy (LiEP) context**

Reading problems tend to be masked by language proficiency issues in South African schools (Pretorius, 2002: 174) and, as Pretorius points out, because “ language is the medium through which one reads, language proficiency and reading are clearly related” (Pretorius, 2002: 175). According to Fleisch (2008), as well as the South African Department of Education’s National Strategy for Reading (2008a), there are very low levels of reading nationally, as well as a large number of children who cannot read. Less than one South African child in ten speaks English as their first language, yet by the end of Grade three most children are taught and assessed in English. Learners are much more likely to succeed in learning to read in English if their proficiency in the language is good. This would also enhance their comprehension levels since learners would be able to ‘make meaning’ from what they read. In other words, reading proficiency and language proficiency cannot be separated and as Pretorius (2002: 174) points out, one of the reasons for poor academic performance in South Africa is that learners do not study in their home language (HL).

Drawing on President Mbeki’s portrayal of the developmental challenge of South Africa, Fleisch (2008: 1) makes the distinction between First and Second economy schools. The former president described the First economy as modern and that which produces the bulk of South Africa’s wealth, while the Second Economy is described as being underdeveloped where a large percentage of the population is poor and is structurally not connected to the rest of the world (Fleisch, 2008: 1). The first economy which the president refers to has all the facilities and infrastructure which would make provision for a good education while the second economy results in underdeveloped infrastructure and inferior education (p. 1). Despite the end of the apartheid era, South Africa thus has two education ‘systems’ (Fleisch, 2008: 1). The first ‘system’ consists of well resourced schools that serve white middle-class and new black middle-class learners, many of whom will enter university, whilst the other system consists of under resourced schools that serve the poor and generally do not perform as well as their relatively privileged counterparts (p. 2). Fleisch asks the question: “does the simple fact that the vast

majority of children in the 'second-economy' schools learn in a second or additional language explain the crisis in primary education?" (Fleisch, 2008: 98). Despite the challenges of the education crisis, there is a general paucity of research in early childhood literacy in South Africa and especially classroom based research. The Department of Education takes cognisance of the fact that this is disastrous and therefore continues to investigate why the levels of reading are so poor, realising the need to deal with these problems (DoE, 2008a: 4). Emphasis is placed on schools that are faced with many challenges, but the ones who are faced with the greatest challenges are the teachers. They are the ones who have to ensure that effective and efficient teaching and learning takes place and they are ultimately responsible for their learners' results.

Academics and researchers debate whether the HL of learners "should be the core of bilingual programmes" (Alexander, 1995; Heugh, 1995; Lockett, 1995; Pluddemann, 1996 cited in Banda, 2000: 51). Banda argues that in view of the fact that:

The teaching and use of African languages, particularly as media of instruction, is less than adequate, their use in additive bilingual programmes, the official South African language in education on policy, is most likely to be unsuccessful (Banda, 2000: 51).

The fact that parents regard English as the preferred medium of instruction, the poor teaching of English and lack of simultaneous support for the mother tongue as advocated in additive bilingualism leads to poor mastery of both English and the mother tongues (p. 51). Banda (2000: 51, drawing on Pluddeman, 1996; Heugh, 1995; Lockett, 1995) points out, the use of English as second language as the LoLT is regarded by many as the reason for the lack of achievement and under performance of black learners at high school and tertiary level. The LoLT does have an enormous impact on both the learners and the teacher. The LoLT at my focus school is English, despite the fact that English speaking learners are in the minority. In the following section I will briefly discuss how the hegemony of English as the LoLT continues to have an influence on the language in education policy (LiEP) that my focus school is currently implementing.

The LiEP introduced in 1997 was necessary in order to move away from the old apartheid education system and to move towards the new democratic education system where education would be equalised for all learners. (DoE, 1997). It is meant to facilitate communication across the barriers of colour, language and region, and recognises cultural diversity as a "valuable

national asset” (DoE, 1997). It thus aims to promote multilingualism, the development of the official languages and respect for all languages in the country. The policy also states that “being multilingual should be a defining characteristic of being South African” and that the “learning of two or more languages should be general practice” (DoE, 1997). The provincial education department has decentralised implementation of the language policy by declaring that school governing bodies should determine the language policy of the school in consultation with parents and in line with national recommendations such as language maintenance and immersion programmes (DoE, 1997). However, as mentioned above, many schools opt for English LoLT with little HL maintenance, that is, a subtractive bilingual model.

Learners in poor urban schools are at a greater disadvantage than their privileged counterparts in well resourced schools because they are not exposed to as much English. This coupled with the lack of libraries or books in schools and the high levels of poverty and unemployment “mean that there is little home support for literacy development” (Probyn, 2009: 127). Probyn (2005, cited in Creese, Martin and Hornberger, 2008: 215) argues that “the pedagogically sound LiEP has not received popular support and that the LiEP has not been implemented as required at school level”. According to Probyn, the reason for this is that there was a lack of government action in implementing the plan, and that the LiEP was introduced at the same time as the new curriculum (p. 215). Furthermore, Ball (cited in Probyn, 2009: 128) points out that “national policy is reinterpreted at school level according to popular opinion and practical constraints; and reinterpreted again when it is enacted at classroom level; and at each level there is a gap between policy intentions and policy enactment”.

## **1.2 Problems with literacy levels as assessed by systemic assessments**

With the onset of a new democratic South Africa in 1994 came the introduction of a new education system. South Africa now has a language in education policy which promotes multilingualism as a nation-building instrument. As indicated in the Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R – 9 (2003), additive multilingualism is promoted (DoE, 2003:20). Additive multilingualism means that learners must learn additional languages at the same time as maintaining and developing their home languages (DoE, 2003: 20). The policy states that “Additive multilingualism makes it possible for learners to acquire complex skills

such as reading and writing in their strongest language” which in turn enables them to “transfer these skills to their additional language” (DoE, 2003: 20).

The Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) conducted the “Teaching Literacy Education Project (TLEP)” to support our understanding of the results from the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) in 2006. PIRLS was conducted for the first time in South Africa in 2006 (Zimmerman, Botha, Howie & Long, 2007: 2). The main focus of PIRLS was on reading literacy which involved “comprehension, purposes of reading and attitudes and behaviours towards reading” (Zimmerman, Botha, Howie & Long, 2007: 2). Over 30 000 Grade four and five learners in South Africa were tested and it was discovered that on average the Grade fours scored 13.2% and the Grade fives scored 18.2% (Fleisch, 2008: 22). These results showed that the majority of South African learners are not performing at grade level (Gilmour and Soudien, 2009: 287).

According to Gilmour and Soudien (2009: 282-283), these disastrous results provided one of the reasons for the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) to initiate Grade three and six numeracy and literacy testing from 2002 in the Western Province, when it was found that only 35% of Grade three learners were reading at a Grade three level. This was echoed by the WCED Literacy and Numeracy Strategy 2006 – 2016 document which drew attention to how far behind the learners were in terms of what the requirements were for them to learn and develop effectively (WCED, 2006: 1). The two grades three and six are tested in alternate years and the findings to date are that “the results that have followed in subsequent years have not shown substantial improvements” (WCED 2003, cited in Gilmour and Soudien, 2009: 282). In contrast with the 2001 national Grade three systemic assessments that showed an average score of 54% for literacy, (DoE, 2003b, 24 cited in Gilmour and Soudien, 2009: 282), my research site, Boswell Primary School, has achieved above 70% in the consecutive years of 2006, 2007 and 2008.

### **1.3 Problems with teacher training and literacy pedagogy**

The National Reading Strategy of the Department of Education has officially acknowledged the difficulties that South African teachers experience in teaching reading (DoE, 2008a: 7). This Reading Strategy also points out that many South African teachers do not know how to teach

reading and writing (DoE, 2008a: 8). Furthermore, the DoE articulates that teachers in the higher grades are not trained and are not knowledgeable with regard to teaching basic reading, which makes it almost impossible to help struggling readers in the higher grades (p. 8). Many teachers who are employed in the Foundation Phase do not have the necessary qualifications needed to teach in the Foundation Phase. This practice is especially common in rural schools (DoE, 2008: 7 – 8). It is for this reason that the WCED has come to the realisation that teachers need to be adequately trained in order for them to “address the alarmingly poor literacy and numeracy levels” as pointed out in their Literacy and Numeracy Strategy 2006 - 2016 (WCED, 2006: 4). This foregrounds the understanding that pedagogy forms an important aspect in literacy development and as stated in the WCED Literacy and Numeracy Strategy 2006 – 2016, “Education departments in the post apartheid era did not “train” teachers but “orientated” them to the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) policy goals and aims” (WCED, 2006: 4).

The enormity of problems in literacy learning specifically in South Africa has prompted me to explore the topic in more depth and to become more knowledgeable with regard to classroom based literacy pedagogy in a Grade one class in a low-income school. Moats (1999: 10) acknowledges that there are various factors, such as parents and the community that contribute to the success of reading. However, the teaching and classroom practices of the teacher must be regarded as the most important factor in ensuring that reading problems are prevented (Moats, 1999: 10). Furthermore, teachers’ acquisition of their teaching skills is critical to bringing about the development of literate language competency in learners. Bloch argues that “in South Africa, many assumptions have been largely unquestioned about how to teach reading and writing, which languages to use and what counts as high quality practice in classrooms” (Bloch, 1999a: 55 – 56). Considering the research highlighting the problems related to literacy and the lack of research on the development of early literacy, I feel that more classroom based research needs to take place in the foundation phase. I thus decided to research the teaching of literacy in one Grade one classroom in a relatively high performing low-income school. This study focuses predominantly on the literacy pedagogy of a Grade one teacher, in an English medium classroom, where many of the learners are not English home language speakers.

## **1.4 Background to research site**

My initial rationale for choosing the research site was because it was a well functioning Quintile one school, meaning that the poverty levels of the school are high. As a quintile one school, it receives the highest financial allocation per learner in relation to the four other categories of schools. Although the majority of the learners are English Additional Language (EAL) learners, the Grade three provincial systemic assessments showed that the school was performing relatively well in both literacy and numeracy which is very unusual in Quintile one schools where the majority of the learners are not taught in their HL. During an informal conversation with the principal he mentioned that the aim of the school was to attain exceptional results in both literacy and numeracy.

Boswell Primary School is situated in an urban area in which violence is prevalent. Since the majority of the parents at the school are unemployed, the school has afforded parents the opportunity to be trained by the Safety School's Project which is linked to the WCED and they in turn take turns to work in shifts to ensure that the school is a safe haven for their children. The medium of instruction at Boswell Primary is English as determined by the school's governing body. However, the majority of the learners' HL is Afrikaans, with a minority of Xhosa and English HL speakers. The Grade one teacher in the study emphasizes that the principal and teachers at Boswell Primary are well motivated and the school displays excellent team effort.

## **1.5 Research Questions**

The focal research question upon which this study is based is:

How does a Grade one teacher of learners who are not proficient in the LoLT, English, teach literacy in the first term in a high performing Quintile 1 school?

Stemming from this main question are two sub questions that support the investigation:

- What constitutes literacy teaching in the class?
- How does the teacher give access to English, Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT), for non English home language learners in the class?

In order to answer the above-mentioned questions, my study focussed on:

- Problems with language of learning and teaching (LoLT) and language in education policy (LiEP) issues
- Problems with literacy achievement as seen from PIRLS and WCED results of the systemic assessments of reading
- Problems with literacy pedagogy

## **1.6 Outline of the research report**

### **Chapter one: Introduction**

This chapter outlines the context of this research and what triggered my interest in conducting the study. It attempts to explain the rationale for the study and it outlines the goals of the study.

### **Chapter two: Conceptual Framework and Literature Review**

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework as well as reviews the literature that supports this dissertation. It will give an overview of the relevant literature which explains the key concepts and principles of early childhood literacy. The main themes to be dealt with are as follows: defining literacy, drawing on a socio-cultural approach to put forward an understanding of literacy as contextualised social practice; the development of early literacy; approaches to teaching early literacy and the South African curriculum for early literacy.

### **Chapter three: Methodology**

This chapter describes the research design and methodology used in this study. The methods of data collection and analysis are discussed and finally, the strengths and weaknesses of the research design are mentioned along with various ethical considerations.

### **Chapter four: Literacy Pedagogy**

This chapter presents and analyses the data of the case study focussing on the teaching of literacy. It documents the Grade one teacher's understanding of literacy and literacy pedagogy in the context of her classroom as observed over a period of five weeks. More specifically, the

intention is to focus on the kinds of literacy activities that constitute the teaching and learning of literacy in the classroom, the methods used by the teacher to teach reading and writing, and the meanings of literacy conveyed in the teacher's discourse.

#### **Chapter five: Language issues in Literacy Teaching**

In this chapter I draw on an analysis of the semi-structured interview with the Grade one teacher at Boswell Primary School, as well as classroom observations and document analysis to examine language issues in the teaching of literacy. I will consider how the LiEP influences the teacher's teaching of English as the LoLT to a majority of learners whose HL is not English. I investigate what problems the teacher encountered as well as what approaches or teaching strategies the teacher used. I conclude the analysis in this chapter with the presentation of a mini case study, which was conducted to highlight the difficulties of one Xhosa-speaking learner who is not proficient in English, the LoLT.

#### **Chapter six: Discussion and conclusions**

This chapter considers the findings in terms of the research goals and theoretical framework. It also draws conclusions from the analysis and outlines areas for further study.

## **Chapter 2**

### **2. Conceptual Framework and Literature Review**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The primary intention of this chapter is to outline the theoretical framework, as well as to review the literature, that supports this dissertation. Thus, this chapter will give an overview of relevant literature which explains the key concepts and principles of early childhood literacy. The main themes to be dealt with are as follows: defining literacy, drawing on a sociocultural approach to put forward an understanding of literacy as contextualised social practice; the development of early literacy; approaches to teaching early literacy as well as emergent literacy and emergent literacy for biliterates. I then give a brief outline of the South African curriculum for early literacy and I conclude the chapter by considering code-switching as a teaching strategy in additional language acquisition. The literature can enable us to interpret the poor performance of learners in literacy in South Africa and the approaches educators employ in their early literacy classrooms to facilitate effective and efficient teaching and learning.

#### **2.2 A socio-cultural approach: New Literacy Studies**

The New Literacy Studies (NLS), also known as a socio-cultural approach to literacy, refers to the work of researchers within the field of cultural anthropology, psychology and applied linguistics who examine how people use literacy in everyday and educational contexts (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Gee, 1996; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street, 1984; Prinsloo & Breier, 1996). The NLS thus provides an understanding of literacy and how it is variably acquired, used and valued across socio-cultural contexts. Gee (1990: 27) sees literacy as socially situated and inherently political. This suggests that reading and writing practices are culturally variable and are deeply implicated in ideological values and in dominant discourses (Gee, 1990: 137 – 138). Gee (1990: 143) further points out that ‘ways with printed words’ within socio-cultural practices are always integrally and inextricably incorporated with ways of talking, thinking, believing, knowing, acting, interacting, valuing and feeling; therefore engaging with literacy is always a social act.

As a central contribution to NLS, Street (1984) makes a distinction between ‘autonomous’ and ‘ideological’ models of literacy (Street, 1984, cited in Barton, 1994: 25). Street (1984) describes his approach as an ideological approach to literacy, meaning that: “one accepts that what is meant by literacy varies from situation to situation and is dependent on ideology” (cited in Barton, 1994: 25). The emphasis within this model is primarily on what people can do with literacy in particular social and cultural contexts rather than on what literacy does to them (Barton & Hamilton, 1994: 7). In contrast to this, Street (1984) argued that the autonomous model sees literacy as the acquisition of decontextualised technical skills which, once acquired, affect social and cognitive processes. Drawing on the autonomous model as defined by Street, Prinsloo and Stein (2004: 68) argue that when this model is applied to schooling, it draws heavily on behaviourist notions of the teaching of literacy that are based on the assumption that students should be taught to read and write by learning a sequence of component technical skills involving the coding and decoding of print. Furthermore, Gee (1990: 150) argues that the issue for early literacy is not ‘learning how to read’ but rather how the child does or does not acquire specific social practices, social languages and genres that involve ‘ways with printed words’ at home, in the community and at school.

In the 1970s, Shirley Brice Heath was considering how children growing up in different communities in the United States of America used language and interacted around literacy. Heath’s study, *Ways with Words*, describes the different language and literacy practices of three communities in the rural Carolinas, in the United States of America (Heath, 1983). Heath contrasted a black working class community, Trackton, with a white working-class community, Roadville and a mixed middle-class community, Maintown (Heath, 1983: 28 – 29). Heath’s aim was to observe and trace the home and school literacy practices and events of these three communities (Pahl & Rowsell, 2006: 15). In doing this, she looked at how the parents interacted with their children and noticed that for both Trackton and Roadville children, “there was a disjuncture between their home literacy practices and expected school literacy practices” (Pahl & Rowsell, 2006: 15). In contrast to Trackton and Roadville, Heath found that the community in Maintown ensured that their children were well prepared for school and believed that if their children succeeded in school then they would become successful adults (Heath, 1983: 236). In order to understand how different ways of interacting contributed to different outcomes in

literacy, Heath focused her study around the concept of literacy events. Heath (1982: 93) describes a literacy event as “any occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of participants’ interactions and their interpretative processes”. Literacy events are observable and often repeated routine events (Barton and Hamilton, 1998: 7). According to Barton and Hamilton (1994: 7), literacy practices are “what people do with literacy”. From specific literacy events, literacy practices can be inferred (Barton and Hamilton, 1998: 8). Street (1993: 12) uses literacy practices to refer to “both behaviour and conceptualisations related to the use of reading and / or writing”. Furthermore, Street maintains that it is “the patterned regularity with which events happens that turn them into literacy practices” (Street, 1993: 12). Literacy events then can be understood as specific observable instances of a broader literacy practice. These criteria were used as a way of identifying literacy practices and events that were representative of classroom activities in my study.

Domain is a further key concept in the NLS. Barton and Hamilton (1998: 10) define domains as “structured, patterned contexts within which literacy is used and learned”. The notion of domain is important as a way of thinking about how “school literacies are configured in the school domain” (Barton and Hamilton, 1984: 10). This includes the kinds of literacy practices teachers inculcate in their classes and those that are required by the Department of Education. Barton and Hamilton (1984: 10) claim that schools are regarded as powerful institutions and therefore have a strong support system for literacy practices.

As previously discussed, a sociocultural approach shows how the child’s literacy practices are shaped by their environment. If the social context is rich in print, then the child will have a good foundation for reading. Children make sense of the language they continually see around them and are therefore involved in an active process of learning (Jackson, 1993). From this one can deduce that children who are in print rich environments begin to engage actively with print at an early age, although at this stage their understanding relies heavily on context. It is therefore important for teachers not to underestimate the importance of the prior knowledge of their learners.

Discussing optimal conditions for children's early literacy learning, Flanagan (1995: 16) contends that:

Children must be introduced to books and stories straight away, letting children play with books and discover what books and written language are all about. Readers learn about written language while playing and working with real books.

Thus, children do not have to wait until they reach a certain age before they are introduced to books. They should be encouraged to handle books and should be allowed to experiment and explore with books at an early age.

Wray and Medwell (1997: 68) list six technical concepts children need to acquire in relation to the working of print if they are to succeed in school-based literacy practices:

Book orientation (knowing which is the front of the book); directional rules (reading from left to right, top down); print carries a message; letter concepts (distinguishing upper and lower case letters); word concepts (distinguishing words from each other); punctuation.

Furthermore, as stated in the National Curriculum Statement Grade R – 9 (2003), a well-balanced reading programme will provide learners with opportunities to “read for the pleasure of self-discovery, for self-enrichment and for enjoyment” (DoE, 2003: 21). This is echoed in the National Reading Strategy where the aim is to “promote a nation of life-long readers and life-long learners” and their vision is that “every South African learner will be a fluent reader who reads to learn, and reads for enjoyment and enrichment” (DoE, 2008: 4). Bearing this in mind it is therefore of utmost importance that teachers understand principles that would enhance teaching reading to the learners in their classrooms.

Wren (2001: 3) points out how the phonics and whole language approaches reflect different philosophies of reading instruction. In the section to follow, I will discuss how these approaches view the teaching of early literacy.

### **2.3 Literacy Pedagogy: Phonics and Whole Language**

Phonics-based approaches are clearly defined by Armbruster et al. (2001: 11) who explain that:

The goal of phonics instruction is to help children learn to use the alphabetic principle, which is the understanding that there are systematic predictable relationships between

written letters and sounds. Knowing these relationships will help children recognize familiar words accurately and automatically and decode new words.

We can see from this description that phonics-based approaches focus on individual letters and sounds. Thus, according to a phonics approach, children will only be able to read words if they know the alphabet. Furthermore, Cooper (2000: 179) argues that a focus on phonics is essential for literacy success in that it helps children to “develop the awareness of sounds in words” as well as the ability to “combine sounds to form words”. However, an overemphasis on phonics instruction and teaching children to chorus out sounds is problematic in that “it drags the learner into the intricacies of language outside any meaningful context” (Edelsky, 1994). As Edelsky (1994: 115) further notes, “the activity of performing divisible sub-skills may have little or no relation to the indivisible activity we call reading”. Teaching conventional letters, discrete skills and phonics to South African children, especially those who come from relatively print-free environments, often does not work (Du Plessis & Naude 2003). In line with this, several researchers have argued that teaching conventional letters to South African children, especially those who are not exposed to print in their environments, does not work (Bloch, 1990; Du Plessis & Naude, 2003 and Prinsloo & Stein, 2004).

The philosophy underpinning whole language contrasts with the Phonics approach. Wren (2001: 3), states that in whole language, reading is viewed as:

a natural process, much like learning to speak, and that children exposed to a great deal of authentic, connected text will naturally become literate without much in the way of explicit instruction in the rules and conventions of printed text.

Wren (2001: 3) states that teachers who use the whole language approach in their classrooms create an atmosphere where children are engaged in meaningful reading of simple texts which makes it easy for them to understand and comprehend what is being read. Thus, the primary goal of the Whole Language teacher “is to foster a love for the act of reading” (Wren, 2001: 3). The importance of interactions between teachers and learners is emphasised by the Whole Language approach to language development (Schory, 1990: 206), which refers to a philosophy which involves learners learning language in a meaningful way. In other words, the emphasis is on understanding and comprehending text. In contrast to the whole language approach, the phonics approach emphasises that when learners are taught to read, the teacher should ensure

that learners are able to decode words. In doing this, learners would be encouraged to decode individual words before they can understand what they have read (Armbruster et al., 2001: 34).

Crawford (1995: 83) argues that the real debate underlying phonics vs. whole-language approaches to reading pedagogy is about “people’s beliefs about the nature of literacy, the processes of learning and perceptions about how children should be treated”. The Great Debate also known as the reading wars “has been one of the most destructive forces in reading education” thus constituting a negative impact on the teachers and even more so on the children (Wren, 2001: 5). From a phonics point of view, whole language is not rigorous enough in teaching skills for beginning reading while from the whole language point of view, phonics overemphasises skills over meaning (Dahl, Scharer, Lawson and Grogan, 1999: 312). In Wren’s view, educators should steer away from the focus on which approach should or should not be used and rather place their emphasis on what they as educators could do to assist beginner readers to learn to read (Wren, 2001: 4).

## **2.4 Emergent Literacy**

There are many studies on the emergent literacy of monolingual middle-class children in highly literate environments (Vernon and Ferreiro, 1999 cited in Reyes, 2006: 270). Emergent literacy is defined as “the reading and writing behaviours of young children that precede and develop into conventional literacy” (Sulzby, 1989 cited in Reyes, 2006: 270). These behaviours as described by Goodman would include “learning how to hold a book and turn pages, telling a story from a picture book while pretending to read it, and using drawings and scribbled letters to write messages” (Goodman, 1984 cited in Reyes, 2006: 270).

The focus on emergent literacy contrasts with that of ‘reading readiness’ (Prinsloo and Stein, 2004). Influenced by behaviourism, reading readiness conceives of reading as the acquisition of a series of discrete perceptual skills, particularly that of phonics recognition, preceded by a range of perceptual and response skills which could be taught or acquired and mastered by children in sequence (Prinsloo and Stein, 2004: 68). Prinsloo and Stein (2004) point out ‘reading readiness’ and skills-based models continue to be influential in teacher education in South Africa and in the working theories of many South African school teachers (see also Prinsloo & Bloch, 1999).

In contrast to the belief that literacy learning and learning to read only begins with formal schooling, Ramsberg (1998: 1-2) reports the following as principles of emergent literacy:

- Literacy development begins before children start formal instruction in primary school (Teale & Sulzby, 1986 as cited in Ramsberg, 1998). For example by age 2 or 3 many children can identify signs, labels and logos in their homes and in their communities.
- Reading and writing develop at the same time and in an interrelated way in young children rather than sequentially.
- The functions of literacy (such as knowing that letters make up words and knowing that words have meaning) have been found to be as important a part of learning about reading and writing during early childhood as the forms of literacy (such as naming specific letters in words).
- Children have been found to learn about written language as they actively engage with adults in reading and writing situations; as they explore print on their own; and as they observe others around them engaged in literacy activities (Teale & Sulzby, 1986 as cited in Ramsberg, 1998).
- Children have been found to pass through general stages in literacy development in a variety of ways and at different ages (Teale & Sulzby, 1986 as cited in Ramsberg, 1998).

In South Africa, Carole Bloch, a pre-eminent researcher in the field of emergent literacy in this country, claims that many teachers are still locked in the reading readiness approach (Bloch, 1999: 39). Murray (2006: 1) argues that young children only learn to write when:

- They realize they can use writing to achieve something they want to achieve.
- They are given opportunities to write for real reasons in the language or languages they feel at home with.
- Their attempts are recognised as worthwhile by the important people in their lives.

Much research shows that children from low-income families have fewer experiences with reading and writing at home than children from middle-class families (Dickinson & Snow, 1987; Washington, 2001; Whitehurst et al., 1994). Therefore, it is argued that when children from low-income families enter school, their knowledge in emergent literacy is limited, which can lead to future problems with conventional reading and writing. However, Crawford points out that children come to school from different cultural backgrounds and therefore bring different primary, home-based discourses to school with them (1995: 82). She goes on by saying that children's primary discourses embody not only the language, but also the behaviours, values, and beliefs of their cultures and serve to identify them with particular social groups (Crawford, 1995; Gee, 1987). Children, who are exposed to print in the home, perform much better than children who are not. Earlier research highlighted the fact that the average middle-class child is exposed to hundreds of books before entering formal schooling while the poor or working class child is not (Heath, 1993). However, while working class children may have less exposure to text, they come with different cultural resources which need to be acknowledged and drawn upon in class. In Heath's study, Trackton's children were very good at story telling. However, these children did not receive any acknowledgement from the teacher for their excellent story telling abilities (Heath, 1983). In contrast to Maintown's children who have been exposed to books at an early age, Trackton's children did not receive books and their parents did not read to them or create opportunities for them to read or write (Heath, 1983: 190). This resulted in Trackton's children often struggling in school as well as a high failure rate among these children (Heath, 1983: 353).

## **2.5 Implications of emergent literacy in South African education**

The South Africa DoE (2002: 9) has recognised the importance of emergent literacy in the early years of the Foundation Phase (Grades R to 3). It argues the following, "the classroom should be a place that celebrates, respects, and builds on what children already know" (DoE, 2002: 9). It also acknowledges that literacy knowledge does not begin when children enter school for the first time. They have been exposed to reading and writing before entering school and have therefore been prepared in reading and writing in their cultural contexts as well as in their HL (DoE, 2002: 9). The Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) views this form of early learning as an important determiner for early literacy success and for later academic success "because it begins with children's emergent literacy [and] it involves them in reading real books

and writing for genuine purposes, and gives attentions to phonics” (DoE, 2002:9). Yet evidence from South African classrooms suggests there is limited knowledge of emergent literacy on the part of teachers (Bloch, 1999a; Prinsloo & Stein, 2004; Prinsloo & Bloch, 1989).

## **2.6 Emergent literacy of biliterates**

Biliteracy involves “any and all instances in which communication occurs in two (or more) languages in or around writing” (Hornberger, 1990: 213). Reyes (2006: 268) uses the term ‘emergent bilinguals’ to describe learners between the ages of three to five years old whose mother tongue is not English but who are in the process of simultaneously developing their home language as well as English. According to Reyes (2006: 268), the teacher should use and view the home language of learners’ as a resource and the home language should thus be used to enhance learners’ second language competency. In comparison to research on emergent literacy, the research on literacy development among young emergent bilinguals is very limited (Kenner et al., 2004; Reese et al., 2000; Romero, 1983; Schwarzer, 2001; Tabors et al., 2002 cited in Reyes, 2006: 270). The research that has been conducted has emphasised that it is extremely difficult for children who are biliterate to function in school, and it is therefore important for teachers to acknowledge and interconnect the learners’ home language with that of the school (Reyes, 2006: 270). Reyes argues that for emergent bilinguals to be fluent in two languages in reading and writing, it is of utmost importance that they receive continuous support in both languages from teachers and parents (Reyes, 2006: 270).

## **2.7 South African Curriculum for Early Literacy**

Educational change in South Africa is a fundamental process which involves the national education system, curricula, teaching and learning in the classroom. After April 1994, South Africa found itself at the crossroads of change that was inevitable due to the political past of the country. This change was fuelled by the political strategy to drive the change. Curriculum 2005 (C2005) with all its principles was seen fit to change the traditional apartheid curriculum that was content-based instead of skills-based. In short, C2005 is understood to be a planned process and strategy of curriculum change underpinned by elements of redress (of the past imbalances), equity, and development (DoE 2000: 8). The NCS has learning outcomes for each learning

area. In the language learning area, the DoE has specified six learning outcomes, namely listening, speaking, reading and viewing, writing, thinking and reasoning, as well as language structure and use (DoE, 2002: 20). Although these six learning outcomes are presented as separate outcomes, they should be integrated in teaching and assessment (DoE, 2002: 21). The South African Department of Education's National Strategy for Reading points out that language plays an integral part in the academic performance of the learners (DoE, 2008a: 7). If learners' experience language barriers it would have a negative effect and hamper their performance and progress in reading as well as their comprehension and writing skills.

## **2.8 Code-Switching as a teaching strategy in additional language (L2) acquisition**

One of the major challenges that teachers face in South Africa is to use language creatively in the multilingual classroom, and code-switching may be one method of experimenting with language as well as teaching and developing language skills. Code switching refers to the switching from one language to another within phrases or sentences (Lawrence, 1999: 266; Heugh et al., 1995: vii). Ferguson, 2003 as cited in Makoni & Meinhof, 2003) notes that:

Code-switching is highly functional, though mostly subconscious. It is a communicative resource which enables teachers and pupils to accomplish a considerable number and range of social and educational objectives.

Code-switching is widely used in classrooms in multilingual settings (Ferguson, 2003: 38). Studies on classroom code-switching have revealed that one of its main functions is for curriculum access (Ferguson, 2003: 39). The other two functions of classroom code-switching are code-switching for classroom management discourse and code-switching for interpersonal relations (p. 39). Code-switching for curriculum access helps the learners to understand what is being taught, thus benefiting both the teacher and the learners (Ferguson, 2003). Code-switching in the classroom may lead to better understanding and communication with English as the LoLT and prevent communication breakdowns between teachers and learners. Heugh (2002: 185, cited in Lin and Martin, 2005: 162) says that in most cases in South Africa, teachers are able to communicate in the learners' HL. However, small scale studies have revealed that teachers in South Africa differed in their use of classroom code-switching and the findings were that some

teachers would teach the whole lesson in the HL of the learners, only diverting to English when reading sections from the textbook, whereas other teachers would teach the whole lesson in English and would only switch to the HL of learners as a resource to ensure that learners have a thorough understanding of what is being taught (Probyn, 2001; 2002 cited in Lin and Martin, 2005: 163). Probyn (cited in Lin and Martin, 2005: 167) suggests that classroom code-switching practices need to be recognized as an important strategy. Code-switching can be used as an advantage when learners are struggling to understand certain concepts as the teacher can explain the concept in a language that the child understands.

## **2.9 Conclusion**

In this chapter a review has been presented of the literature related to my research study. I began by defining literacy, drawing on a sociocultural approach to put forward an understanding of literacy as contextualised social practice and outlined the development of early literacy. I then reviewed different approaches to teaching early literacy focusing on the phonics and the whole language debate. My aim was to develop a clear understanding of certain theoretical concepts that underpin the concept of early childhood literacy: Emergent literacy and the implication of emergent literacy in South African education as well as Emergent literacy of biliterates were discussed. I then gave a brief outline of the South African curriculum for early literacy; the acquisition of English as the language of learning and teaching was discussed and I concluded the chapter by considering code-switching as a teaching strategy in additional language acquisition. In the next chapter, I provide a detailed outline of the methodology used for my research.

## **Chapter 3**

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter gives an overview of the research methodology, methods of data collection and tools of analysis used in this research project. I then describe the approach and methods which I used in my study as well as the process of data analysis and the ethical considerations of the study.

#### **3.2 Research Site**

As previously mentioned, Boswell Primary School is situated in an urban area in which violence is prevalent and where gangs are in control of the community. There are learners in the school who have fathers, older brothers, cousins or friends who are members of a gang. The school however recognises this as an important stepping stone to inform learners that belonging to a gang is dangerous and wrong. In previous years, Boswell Primary School focussed only on educating the learners. However, after 1994, with the onset of the new government, things began to change in the education system. The principal of Boswell Primary mentioned that their school was no longer just a place for teachers and learners. Partnerships were formed within the community, i.e. parents, churches, mosques, shop owners and leaders in the community. This formed a basis for everyone to work together and in doing so the school no longer became the sole responsibility of the principal and teachers. According to the principal, the school aims to prepare learners who will achieve exceptional results in literacy and numeracy.

I carried out observations within one Grade one classroom. The physical space of this classroom is very limited. There are forty learners in this class, with twenty tables and forty chairs. Two learners share a table and learners have to store their school bags underneath their tables. The teacher struggles with lack of space and has to use her only desk for the computer. Because the classroom is small there is hardly any space for the teacher to move around between the learners' tables. The amount of space taken up by the learners' tables and chairs also prevents the teacher from having them seated as a class in a contained space such as the mat

during story time. The mat<sup>1</sup> is not used for whole class teaching because of the lack of space in the class which prevents close interaction. In the foundation phase the mat is an ideal place for the teacher to use for whole class story reading and storytelling activities. The mat is also often used to teach a group of learners. This is quite common in the foundation phase if the teacher organises her learners into groups. Because all learners are unique and work at their own pace, teachers can group the learners into ability groups and therefore plan their lessons and use various methodologies in their teaching practices to adapt to the needs of the learners. Whilst teaching a group on the mat, the other learners are busy with activities at their tables. However, the space on the mat in this Grade one classroom is very limited, since the learners' tables take up more than half of the mat. Because of the lack of space on the mat, the teacher's groups are very small when doing group work, approximately five in a group.

The teachers' classroom is very attractive. Objects in the classroom are labelled, for example, 'door', 'window', 'chair', and 'table', is written on flashcards and attached to the objects. The walls are decorated with various pictures of shapes, counting charts, numbers and number names, letters of the alphabet, rhyming charts and samples of learners' work are displayed on the walls. Sections on the walls are clearly demarcated for Mathematics, Literacy and Life Skills.

### **3.3 Research Approach**

The methodology adopted in this research is based on a qualitative approach to data collection. According to McMillan & Schumacher (2001: 21) qualitative research "is inquiry in which researchers collect data in face-to-face situations by interacting with selected persons in their settings". Myers supports the use of qualitative research methods whenever social and cultural phenomena are being examined (2002: 2). One of the main strengths of the qualitative research approach is that it gives the researcher insight into how social, environmental and cultural contexts influence human behaviour. For this study, a qualitative case study was used because it was a suitable approach to conducting in-depth classroom-based research.

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<sup>1</sup>The mat in the foundation phase classrooms refers to a 'carpet' which is placed on the floor for learners to sit on. This is used to protect the learners from sitting on a cold floor. Some teachers have their mat either in the front or at the back of the classroom. The mat is often used by teachers when doing whole class story reading, storytelling activities and group teaching. Group teaching is when the teacher teaches a group on the mat, while the other learners are busy with activities at their tables. Not all Foundation Phase classrooms have mats.

### 3.4 Case Study

A case study is an investigation in considerable depth of single or multiple phenomena within their real life context (Gomm, Hammersley and Foster, 2000: 3). The in-depth investigation describes the interaction of significant factors that relate to the phenomena in order to holistically describe them (Yin, 1994: 13). My preference for using a case study is because it is best suited to situations where the phenomena investigated cannot be separated from the context. The phenomena examined in this study incorporate one Grade one teacher's approach to teaching literacy and language within her classroom context. A sociocultural approach would argue that literacy pedagogy cannot be separated from its context.

A case study, furthermore, offers researchers opportunities to gain a full perspective on what is happening in a real life context (Yin, 1994: 13). Case study involves situations in which real life events are not controlled, and where the uniqueness of the case is captured. In this study the case study approach is useful in helping to understand the real life context which involves detailed descriptions of the teacher's early literacy classroom practices especially with regard to the teaching approaches employed by the teacher. Her pedagogical knowledge about early literacy learning and instruction are explored. This helped me to develop an in-depth understanding of the available development activities and their impact from the teacher's point of view.

In this study I observed what was taking place in the Grade one teacher's everyday practice and aimed not to intervene in that practice at all. I do however acknowledge that my physical presence in the classroom may have impacted a little on the teacher as well as the learners. As a researcher, I was also faced with many challenges in this Grade one classroom. The teacher sometimes forgot that I was there as a researcher and would ask me to supervise the class in her absence. At such times I had to subtly remind her that as a researcher I could not interact with the learners in this way. Furthermore, it was difficult not to intervene when the teacher left her classroom for a few minutes at a time and learners became noisy. Although I was seated at the back of the classroom, learners would often come to me and ask me if they could leave the classroom and once again, I gently informed them that they could not ask me and that they had to ask their teacher.

### 3.5 Methods and Techniques of Data Collection

The main data collection technique involved non-participant observations in one Grade one class for a period of five weeks during which time I spent the full school day starting at eight o'clock in the morning and ending at twenty past one in the afternoon in the classroom. The main sources of data in this research were guided by the aims of the research and the research approach, a qualitative case study. Data collection techniques comprised of the following: classroom observations captured in field notes; video recordings of selected lessons; a semi-structured interview with the Grade one teacher; observation at a parent meeting for foundation phase only; collecting examples of worksheets completed and learners work. The table below gives an overview of all the data collected.

#### **OBSERVATION**

**Classroom observation:** this took place over a period of 5 weeks (22days) and was captured in fieldnotes

**Video recording:** the following three lessons were filmed:

Sentence Construction	19 February 2010	20 minutes
Phonics	25 February 2010	21 minutes
News	12 March 2010	20 minutes

**Foundation Phase parent meeting:** one parent meeting in the school hall from 18h00 to 20h00 where parents were informed as to how to assist their children with homework and a short workshop on how the parents could help their children with phonics was presented. This workshop was presented by the foundation phase teachers.

#### **ARTEFACTS**

**Collection of worksheets:** Selected worksheets related to the activities that learners were engaged in were collected.

**Collection of learners' work:** four examples of phonics and sentence construction activities were collected.

**Collection of teacher's lesson plan:** one example of the Grade one's two-week lesson plan in the first term. There are two Grade one teachers and they do their planning together.

### **INTERVIEW**

**Teacher interview:** one twenty minute semi-structured interview with the Grade one teacher was conducted and transcribed.

### **3.5.1 Classroom observations**

Merriam (2001: 101) argues that observations offer a firsthand account of the situation under study and when combined with interviews and document analysis, allow for a holistic interpretation of the phenomenon being investigated. McMillan and Schumacher (2001: 268) contend that observation is very different from interviews and questionnaires. They argue that the observation method relies on a researcher seeing, hearing and recording things which are happening in the classroom situation. In my study, I observed the Grade one teacher over a period of five weeks. Observation was included as a research tool, because I wanted to gather data about the teacher in her classroom. In doing this I was able to get firsthand experience or knowledge of the teacher's literacy pedagogy as well as the language issues in this Grade one classroom. Furthermore, by hearing and seeing the teacher in action, this has enabled me, as the researcher to develop a deeper understanding of what was happening with regard to the literacy practices and events in her classroom.

During these observations, comprehensive field notes were taken and these have formed the basis of my data analysis. I began my field notes by writing the date, the activity and detailed notes of the lesson. All my field notes were typed out each day and saved in a file. Transcriptions were made of all literacy lessons which were recorded on video.

### **3.5.2 Interviews**

Bell (1994: 83) observed that interviews allow the collection of data in “the subjects’ own words thereby affording the researcher an opportunity to discover perceptions, interpretations and the meaning which they give to their actions”.

Furthermore, Hitchcock and Hughes (1997: 156) contend that:

The semi-structured interview is a much more flexible version of the structured interview. It is the one which tends to be most favoured by educational researchers since it allows depth to be achieved by providing the opportunity on the part of the interviewer to probe and expand the respondent’s responses.

For this study, I interviewed the Grade one teacher using a semi-structured interview with open ended questions prepared in advance to create opportunities for further probing (see Appendix 4 for questions guiding the interview). The interview was audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed. (see Appendix 5 for a transcription of the interview). The primary intention of the interview was to focus on the kinds of literacy activities that constitute the teaching and learning of literacy in this Grade one classroom as well as to determine how the Grade one teacher conceptualises literacy. Furthermore, I wanted to investigate what problems the teacher encountered as well as what approaches or teaching strategies the teacher used to assist her in her teaching practices and the effectiveness thereof.

### **3.5.3 Artefact Collection**

LeCompte and Preissle (1993: 216) define documents “as artefacts, symbolic materials such as writing and signs”. They further say documents can tell the researchers about the inner meaning of everyday events and they may yield descriptions of rare and extraordinary events in human life. Merriam (2001: 11) argues that documents refer to more than just paper and those documents are pre-produced text that has not been generated by the researcher. The researcher’s role becomes that of reviewing and interrogating relevant documents.

As previously mentioned some of the documents I collected included an example of the teacher’s two weekly lesson plan, worksheets and samples of learners’ work. In addition, I took careful note of all the texts and pictures adorning the classroom and the way the classroom was

furnished. These artefacts helped to develop a broader understanding of the classroom culture than that obtained by observation only. The specific artefacts that were collected were often collected on the basis of the activities that the learners engaged in during my observation sessions. The reason for the collection of these documents was to examine the teachers' practices and to see what might be informing her practices. Although documents are a good source of data for numerous reasons, they have advantages as well as disadvantages. One of the advantages stipulated by Merriam (2001: 128) is that documents are free and easily accessible. In my study I found that obtaining documents from the teacher was easy and the teacher did not hesitate to provide me with any information I needed. A good example of this is that when the teacher gave a worksheet to her class then she would give me one as well.

### **3.6 Data analysis**

This section describes the process of data analysis, which involves organising, analysing and interpreting data. Merriam (2001: 145) contends that data analysis involves consolidating, reducing and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read in order to make sense of the data. She further argues that data analysis is a complex process that involves moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation. Following the advice of Merriam (2001), I made decisions regarding what to focus on in the data and how to analyse it on the basis of my theoretical framework. I will discuss the methods I have used to analyse my data in relation to the two data analysis chapters which follow, focusing on the key methods used.

To begin with, the data from the observations needed to be systemised into one data set. To do this I combined my typed up field notes as well as the transcripts of the video and audio recorded data into a single electronic data set which could be systematically read and searched. The process of writing field notes itself begins the process of subjective interpretation. I watched the videos and made my own notes where I described events and gave the gist of verbal interactions of the videos recordings. Classroom topics, themes, and exercises could be easily identified and I could return to the video recordings for a more in-depth analysis. Each observation session was

coded in terms of the grade, whether it was filmed or notes were taken and dated (e.g. GR1/23/02/10).

I observed all the teacher's lessons and categorised literacy activities that the teacher carried out in her official timetabled literacy time as well as literacy activities across the curriculum, i.e. outside of the teacher's designated official literacy time. I coded the activities observed using categories derived from the teacher's discourse and detailed the time spent on each activity. For example, Activity: Phonics; Event: 1; Notes: teaching of single sounds; Date: 08-02-2010; Duration: 35 minutes. I followed the same procedure with all the literacy activities and did this on a daily basis. I then listed what was taught each day, to gain a sense of the literacy practices of the teacher, the frequency of different kinds of activities and the duration thereof. The categories used are as follows: Literacy practices in designated literacy time are News, Phonics, Reading, Sentence Construction, Sequencing, Rhymes and Poems and Story time. Literacy practices outside of the official literacy time are Numeracy and Life Skills. I then had an idea of the frequency of literacy events generally as well as the type of literacy being taught. A detailed illustration will be presented in Chapter four whereby these literacy activities are presented in tabular form and are categorised according to the frequency and the duration of time that the teacher spent on these activities. By looking at the frequency and time spent on the activities it can easily be noted which activities are typical and valued and which activities are not typical and thus I would argue not as valued in this Grade one classroom. Chapter five will present the language issues identified, based on the semi-structured interview with the Grade one teacher as well as classroom observation. Here I identified moments where she gives access to English, the language of learning and teaching, for non English home language learners in the class. In chapter five I develop a mini case study, which was conducted to highlight the difficulties of one Xhosa-speaking learner who is not proficient in English.

### **3.7 Ethical considerations**

It is essential to conduct research in an ethical manner. Stake (1995 cited in Merriam, 2001: 101) maintains that "qualitative researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world". It is important for the researcher to be aware of the ethical considerations and dilemmas that they may encounter, because they are entering people's private lives when doing research. Typically,

this should involve following a process of informed consent as well as guaranteeing privacy and confidentiality for participants. In order to address the ethical issues, I completed the standard WCED ethics form needed to obtain permission to conduct my research and I wrote a letter to the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) asking permission to work in the school. Following on this, written informed consent was sought from the Principal of the school and the teacher participant (who in this case was the Grade one teacher) for their participation in the research. (See Appendix 1 and 2 for letters). Similarly I sought consent from the teacher to be interviewed and to audio record the interview. (See Appendix 3b and 3c for consent forms). Written informed consent was also sought from the teacher to video record some of her literacy teaching in her classroom (see Appendix 3d for consent forms). Finally, once permission was obtained from the principal and the teacher concerned, I contacted the school and made an appointment to see both the principal and the teacher where I was afforded the opportunity to introduce myself in person and to thank them in advance. I alerted the participants to the fact that all the information gathered would be treated with respect and confidentiality. In addition to participation being voluntary, the participant was assured that her name and the name of the school would remain confidential. In this regard pseudonyms have been used to refer to the respondent's name and the name of the school.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

This chapter has provided an overview of the research site and the research approach. Furthermore, data collection methods and data analysis was discussed. Ethical considerations relevant to the study and the researcher's role were also explained. Having outlined the design and methodology, I now turn to the actual data that was produced through these methods. The following two chapters provide a presentation of the data and a thorough analysis based on the conceptual and analytical framework upon which this study is built.

## **Chapter 4**

### **4. Literacy Pedagogy**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents and analyses the findings of the case study conducted to trace and document the Grade one teacher's understanding of literacy and literacy pedagogy in the context of her classroom over a period of five weeks. More specifically, the intention is to focus on the kinds of literacy practices that constitute the teaching and learning of literacy in the classroom, the methods used by the teacher to teach reading and writing, and the meanings of literacy conveyed in the teacher's discourse. The key question which this chapter seeks to answer is:

#### **What constitutes literacy teaching in the class?**

In this chapter I will give an overview of the typical literacy practices in the Grade one classroom and give brief explanations and examples of these practices. I will then categorise the kind of literacy practices the teacher carried out in her official timetabled literacy time as well as literacy practices across the curriculum, i.e. outside of the teacher's designated official literacy time. These literacy practices are presented in tabular form and are categorised according to the frequency and the duration of time that the teacher spent on these practices. I argue that emphasis is placed on particular kinds of practices over others and this is reflected in the amount of time the teacher spends on different kinds of practices, as well as the frequency of their occurrence. I analyse the teacher's conception of literacy through her discourse on reading and writing, both as observed in the Grade one class and in interview data.

#### **4.2 A brief overview of the Grade one timetable of a typical school day**

The learners' day in the classroom begins at 08h00 where learners say a prayer and greetings take place. The teacher then does the register to see if all the learners are present, and if there are any absentees she sends their names to the office. Teaching begins immediately thereafter. The teacher usually teaches Mathematics until first break, though on three occasions news time preceded Mathematics. After first break, Phonics and Reading takes place until second break.

The teacher gives learners a chance to complete their written activities and continues with Life Skills and Story time. As with news, story time is not typical and only occurred five times; four times during story time and once where a story was integrated during the timetabled life skills period. At 13h20 learners say a short prayer, greetings take place and they line up at the door before they are dismissed.

**08h00 - 08h10** - Learners pray the “Our Father” and greet the teacher

**08h10 - 08h30** - News (Only three times)

**08h30 - 09h30** - Mathematics (whole class teaching which includes days of the week, the weather and counting)

**09h30 - 10h10** - Mathematics (Group work: teacher teaches three to four groups on the mat; other learners complete activities related to lesson being taught at their desks)

**10h10 - 10h35** - First Break

**10h35 - 11h30** - Phonics

**11h30 – 12h05** - Reading – (whole class and group reading)

**12h05 – 12h20** – Second Break

**12h20 – 12h45** – Learners’ complete all written activities

**12h45 – 13h10** – Life Skills

**13h10 – 13h20** – Story time (Only five times; four times during story time and once during life skills)

### **4.3 Categorization and frequency of the various kinds of Literacy practices**

Although literacy practices take place throughout the school day, what the teacher views as the explicit teaching of literacy taking place in her timetabled literacy time includes Phonics, i.e. teaching of single sounds and word-building, and reading of words or simple phrases. This takes place after first break at 10h35 continuing until second break that ends at 12h20.

The following descriptive categories of literacy practices are taken from the teacher's own discourse: Phonics, Reading, Story time, Rhymes and Poems, Sequencing, News and Sentence Construction. I have used the teacher's explanations of the various literacy practices and have related these to the literature on literacy pedagogy. By looking at the frequency and time spent on the practices (illustrated in Table 4.6 and 4.7 below) it can easily be noted which practices are typical and valued and which practices are not typical and thus I would argue not as valued in this Grade one classroom.

### **4.3.1 Explanation and examples of Literacy Practices focused on reading**

#### **4.3.1.1 Phonics**

Murray (2006: 3) points out that phonics is an explicit method of teaching children that there is a systematic relationship between sounds and letters. Phonics refers to decoding a word by breaking it down into units (syllables and letters). The purpose of phonics instruction is to give the learner tools so that he or she can easily decode words (DoE, 2008: 13). During my five weeks of observation the teacher spent a total of 8 hours and 1 minute on Phonics instruction. The teacher teaches a new letter of the alphabet every day, for example, '*a for apple*', '*b for ball*', (10/02/2010). She then revises sounds/letters which have already been taught. The Foundation Phase at Boswell Primary School uses a programme called "Jolly Phonics" in their classrooms. The teacher defines Jolly Phonics as "*learning Phonics through fun*". Each letter of the alphabet is taught as a sound and has an action which the teacher and learners do while repeating the sound. We can see an example of this in the lesson extract from field notes below:

#### **Phonics lesson (extract from field notes 08/02/2010, Grade one classroom)**

##### **Single sounds**

T: I am pointing to '*a*' what action must I do?

Learners: Your fingers must crawl up your arm like an ant

T: That's right, let's all do the action and repeat the '*a*' sound while doing it.

Learners repeat the - '*a*' sound

T: (Points to the - '*b*' sound) Now show me the action and tell me what sound this is?

(Learners stretch their folded arms and pretend to hit a ball whilst all saying, '*b for bat*', '*b for bat*'

Teacher and learners do action activities with each sound up to the '*j*' sound)

**Word-building lesson (extract from field notes 08/02/2010, Grade one classroom)**

T: Now we are going to build words. In other words we are going to use our sounds to make words and then we are going to read the words. (The teacher shows the learners the 'a' and the 't' letter).

T: We must know our single sounds before we can build words.

T: Now when we put these two sounds together it says: 'at'. First we get the 'a' and then the 't' but when we write them together, we say 'at'.

T: What sound is first?

L: 'a'

T: What sound is last?

L: 't'

T: Now 'at' remains the same, but if we put another sound in front of the 'at' then we are making another word. So every time we put a new sound in front of 'at' then we are making a new word, for example, 'c-at' = 'cat'

T: What sound do you hear first?

L: 'c'

T: What sound do you hear in the middle?

L: 'a'

T:           What            sound            do            you            hear            last?

L: 't'

T: Now tell me what word do you hear? 'c-a-t'

L: 'cat'

T: (writes the following words on the board) 'cat; mat; rat; fat; sat; bat'

T: I want you to sound each word and then you must read the word

As can be seen in the extract above, learners are exposed to spelling words phonetically, relating letters to the sounds they hear in words. They are encouraged to transform sounds into letters to write words. I would argue that instead of being able to read words that would be meaningful to the learners, the teacher's priority and main focus in this Grade one class is getting the learners' to first know what she calls "sounds" in order to identify printed words. The extract above

shows us that learners' are required to first 'know' individual sounds before they can build words. The teacher says: "*We must know our single sounds before we can build words*".

Therefore letters are referred to as sounds and words are seen as made up of sounds. This practice however only works with phonetically regular words like 'cat' or 'bat' but not with a word like 'o-n-e'- 'one', thus the approach or strategy that the teacher uses will only work with a limited vocabulary since letters do not necessarily correlate with sounds in English.

When the teacher teaches phonics she uses flashcards or writes the sounds or words on the board. The phonic approach is based on two assumptions:

- Most languages have consistent phoneme (sound) to grapheme (letter) correlation
- Once learners have learned the relationships of the letters to sounds, they can pronounce printed words by blending sounds together. (Aukerman 1984)

This model works from a view of bottom-up <sup>2</sup>processing, i.e. it takes different elements of reading as its starting point and works towards the whole. Proponents of bottom-up processing such as Gough (1995) and McCormick (1988) claim that learners' first have to identify letter features and then link these features to recognize letters. Furthermore, learners then have to combine letters to recognize spelling patterns and link the spelling patterns to recognize words, and only then proceed to sentence, and text level processing. A more detailed description of how learners are exposed to printed words will be discussed in the section below.

#### **4.3.1.2 Reading using 'Talking Stories'**

The teacher uses the 'Talking Stories' programme for what she defines as reading. This is a programme where learners read aloud various texts from the smart board.<sup>3</sup> Learners are first exposed to pictures, followed by single words and then sentences made up of twenty three words. Although each text has a reader, or small 'book' matching the text, the teacher does not make use of these. The reader is the prescribed book that learners are supposed to use for

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The Bottom-up approach to reading is a strictly serial process: letter-by-letter visual analysis, leading to positive recognition of every word through phonemic encoding (McCormick, T. 1988).

<sup>3</sup>The SMART Board is an interactive, electronic whiteboard  
(<http://its.leesummit.k12.mo.us/smartboard.htm>)

reading purposes. In the 'Talking Stories' programme there are six readers prescribed for Grade one, beginning with level one and ending with level six. As learners progress from one level to the next, they are exposed to more vocabulary and a longer form of text that follows a narrative structure. 'Talking stories' therefore begins with pictures, words, short simple sentences and progresses to longer sentences in paragraph form. The time spent on the two texts in the 'Talking stories' programme that learners were exposed to during my five week observation period was a total of 5 hours and 42 minutes and had the following procedure. The text that appears on the screen has a picture or drawing that matches the text, for example if the text is "*I can read*" then the picture depicts a person reading a book. Learners are instructed to first listen to the voice of the person reading the text. The teacher says: "*I want you to listen to the reader; the voice that you hear is the reader reading the story*". Learners listen to the voice of the person reading the text and while they are listening the teacher says: "*Look at the words while listening to the lady reading the story*". Learners listen to the sound of a voice reading the text. As the voice is heard reading the text, each word appears on the screen and each word lights up. On completion of the text, learners listen to the voice that instructs them to read the text. The teacher says: "*Now you are not going to hear the voice, but each word will light up and when the word lights up then you must read that word*". The words light up and learners read the words that appear on the screen. After each sentence the teacher presses the arrow that allows her to go on to the next sentence. The same procedure is then followed until the end of the text as it appears on the screen.

In this 'reading' procedure, the learners are denied the opportunity to predict what is going to happen in the text. They are merely reading or sounding out words which are reinforced by the voice of the reader. I would argue that the teacher's main concern is to get learners to listen and to look at the text and to do what the voice of the reader requires them to do. There is little that is meaningful in this process. The only two reading texts that learners were engaged in during my five weeks observation are as follows:

**Talking stories: Text 1 (Each block represents one screen)**

**Screen 1 (has an image of a boy jumping)**

I can jump.  
Can you jump?  
Yes I can.  
Look at me.

**Screen 2 (has an image of a girl hopping)**

I can hop.  
Can you hop?  
Yes I can.  
Look at me.

**Screen 3 (has an image of a girl skipping)**

I can skip.  
Can you skip?  
Yes I can.  
Look at me.

**Screen 4 (has an image of a boy reading a book)**

I can read.  
Can you read?  
Yes I can.  
Look at me.

**Talking stories: Text 2**

One red ball. (picture of one red ball)  
Two blue cars. (picture of two blue cars)  
Three yellow hats. (picture of three yellow hats)  
Four green frogs. (picture of four green frogs)

I will now present, describe and analyse the data from two reading lessons which have been taken from extracts from my field notes during my observation.

In the reading extract below, the teacher finds the text on the computer: *'I can jump'* and the text appears on the smart board. The children first have to listen to the voice recording of the person reading the text and while listening they are instructed to look at the pictures and the words which are highlighted. When the text ends, the learners are told to read the text.

**Reading lesson (Talking Stories 1 extract from field notes 10/02/2010, Grade one classroom)**

T: *Now we are going to do 'Talking stories'.* (Text on smart board)  
T: *I want you all to listen to the voice of the lady, who is reading the 'story' so you must look at the pictures, listen, and look at the words that are highlighted.*  
Text:  
*I can jump.*  
*Can you jump?*  
*Yes I can.*  
*Look at me.*  
When the text ends the teacher says: *I want all of you to look at the words and everyone must read the story. You are not going to listen to the lady reading the story now, you are going to read.*  
All the sentences are on the board, and learners read the text by looking at the words that are highlighted.  
Learners repeat the text three times. The teacher then drills the words and learners have to repeat the words several times, for example, *'jump, jump, jump, jump'*.

In the first text the words *'I'* and *'can'* are repeated and only the last word in the sentence changes. The teacher ensures that the words are repeated several times, for example: *'IIIIII can can can can can jump jump jump jump'*. The teacher thus sees individual word recognition as an important stepping stone before reading the sentence. The teacher gains satisfaction only if and when learners recognise or 'can say' their words irrespective of whether learners read and understand what is being read. As mentioned previously, every sentence has a matching picture,

for example if the sentence reads: *'I can skip'*, then a picture of a girl skipping is below the sentence. I have mentioned before that the 'Talking stories' programme has a variety of texts and the programme has hard copy books or readers that match the texts. However, learners are not exposed to the actual handling of books that accompany the text that they read from the smart board. The books remain on the shelf at the back of the class. According to the teacher, *"the learners will only start reading from their readers in the second term"*. Thus the learners do not have access to the readers in the first term.

Durrell and Gardiner (cited in Brozo and Hargis, 2003) note that the less time young people spend with books and print, the less growth they show on measures of vocabulary and reading achievement. In this Grade one classroom, learners are exposed to a total of eleven vocabulary items in the first text and in the second text learners are exposed to twelve vocabulary items. Although the teacher and the programme itself refers to these texts as 'stories', in no word are they recognizable as 'stories', because they do not follow a narrative structure. I observed eight reading lessons during which time the two texts mentioned above were repeated in every lesson. The vocabulary that is taught to the learners is thus limited, because the same words are repeated on a daily basis. Learners read from the smart board and the same text that has been read from the smart board is photocopied and pasted into their books. The teacher refers to these books as their '*readers*' or little '*blue books*'. These books are sent home with the learners and the teacher reminds them to learn their words and read their sentences at home.

In contrast to the first Talking Story text above, where learners had to listen to the whole text before reading it, in the text below learners have to listen to the voice recording of each phrase for example *"One red ball"* and after listening to the phrase, they are instructed to read it.

**Reading lesson (Talking Stories 2 extract from field notes 08/02/2010, Grade one classroom)**

(Teacher displays text by Jenny Garner on the smart board)

T: We first listen, and then we repeat

("Text" 'a picture is displayed with each phrase')

The learners first listen to the voice recording and immediately after each text they have to repeat

the text.

Voice recording: One red ball (a picture of a red ball)

Learners: One red ball

Voice recording: Two blue cars (a picture of two blue cars)

Learners: Two blue cars

Voice recording: Three yellow hats (a picture of three yellow hats)

Learners: Three yellow hats

Voice recording: Four green frogs (a picture of four green frogs)

Learners: Four green frogs

This activity is repeated three times.

Once again the 'Talking Stories' Programme and the teacher refer to the above mentioned text as a 'story'. However the text that the children are listening to and reading or repeating is rather a list of labels. Learners hear the text and emphasis is placed on the accuracy of the learners' verbal repetition which is equated with their "reading of the words". Although learners are exposed to images of the pictures displayed with each text formation or phrase, there is no evidence that any of these phrases are meaningful to the learners. As mentioned previously, the teacher uses the smart board exclusively for this kind of reading practice. While Information Communication Technology (ICT) has much potential, the teacher does not seem to exploit this potential with regard to reading. The smart board replaces physical books and the teacher uses the smart board to reinforce reading as a word by word process thus emphasising word recognition which is described in more detail below. The fact that each word lights up as it is to be read further emphasises reading as a process in which each word must be read with no role for prediction.

#### **4.3.1.3 Reading as word recognition**

As we can see in the description of the use of 'Talking Stories', the teacher places an enormous emphasis on reading as word recognition and as repetition of what learners have heard. In the eight lessons using 'Talking Stories' I observed, I have found that this is the most common

manner in which the teacher teaches reading. The practice of reading as word recognition and as repetition of what learners have heard is therefore typical in this class. The teacher drills the words by repeating each word at least four times after which learners have to do the same. An example of how the teacher reinforces ‘drilling’ is illustrated in the reading extract below.

**Reading lesson (extract from transcript of the second text 09/02/2010, Grade one classroom)**

T: Look at the word and read, one one one one

L: one one one one

T: Read it again

L: one one one one

T: red red red red

L: red red red red

T: ball ball ball ball

L: ball ball ball ball

T: Good now I know that you know the words

The extract above illustrates how the teacher presents ‘reading’ as word recognition and as repetition of what learners have heard and seen. She repeats this procedure on a daily basis; therefore learners are able to recognize the words in the two Talking Stories correctly and virtually effortlessly. One of the teacher’s favourite statements repeated during my observation is as follows: “*I must know my sounds to read my words and I must know my words to read my sentences*” (08/02/2010). Earlier in the chapter (see 4.3.1.1 lesson extract) I have shown the teacher using a similar statement in her lesson: “*We must know our single sounds before we can build words*”. This statement is a good example of how the teacher views reading from the perspective of bottom-up processing. According to proponents of the bottom-up approach, such as Wray & Medwell (1997), learners have to recognize and decode letters, and then progress to

larger units of print through the sentence up to the complete text. In other words the teacher ensures that learners' must first master the individual components of reading in order to be able to independently make meaning of print. However, proponents of the interactive<sup>4</sup> reading model, such as Ruddel & Speaker (1985) and Rumelhart (1985) suggest that "the reader constructs meaning by the selective use of information from all sources of meaning (graphemic, phonemic, morphemic, syntax, semantics) without adherence to any one set order" (p. 136). Thus learners simultaneously use all levels of processing even though one source of meaning can be primary at a given time. McCormick (1988) states that the interactive reading model "attempts to combine the valid insights of bottom-up and top-down<sup>5</sup> models" (p. 72). The teacher should therefore focus on comprehension as the basis for decoding skills, and should emphasize that meaning is constructed as the reader interacts with the print. Most people argue for an interactionist approach because it involves both bottom-up and top-down processing. By looking at the Phonics and Reading practices of the teacher above, it is clearly evident that she uses a bottom-up approach.

However the ability to read or sound out individual words is not sufficient. Learners must have the ability to make meaning of the words in a text, since reading comprehension is the ultimate goal for reading. Learners must also be able to read sentences and longer text which is crucial for comprehension. The teacher should provide the learners with explicit instruction in reading comprehension strategies. This however is impossible with the 'Talking Stories' texts because the texts that learners are exposed to do not follow a narrative structure, making prediction impossible. Learners are furthermore not exposed to the handling of books even though the books, based on the same stories that learners read from the smart board, are readily accessible.

A well-balanced reading programme should provide learners with opportunities to read for the pleasure of self-discovery, for self-enrichment and for enjoyment as well as indicated in the Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R – 9 2003, Learning Outcome 3: Reading and Viewing states that "The learner will be able to read and view for information and enjoyment, and respond critically to the aesthetic, cultural and emotional values in texts". The limited range

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<sup>4</sup> Interactive reading model suggests that reading involves a process of interaction between the information on the page (text) and the information or background knowledge that the reader brings to the text (McCormick, T. 1988).

<sup>5</sup> Top-down reading model is a reading model that emphasizes what the reader brings to the text; says reading is driven by meaning, and proceeds from whole to part. (Goodman, K. 1985; Smith, F. 1994)

of texts that learners were exposed to in their reading lessons over five weeks gives them little opportunity to associate reading with pleasure or with meaning making. I argue that in order to teach learners to read, there is a need for the teacher to focus on understanding. This means that when learners are being taught to read, the focus must not only be on the techniques of decoding, but also on helping them to understand what they are reading.

In the next section I discuss the limited range of other texts that learners are exposed to.

#### **4.3.1.4 Reading for enjoyment using dramatization and performance**

#### **4.3.1.5 Story time**

In contrast to the dominant practices of phonics and ‘Talking Stories’ which took a total of 13 hours and 43 minutes, on five occasions the teacher read to learners from storybooks which amounted to a total of 2 hours. Four of these stories took place during story time and one story was integrated in the timetabled Life Skills time. In these activities we can see a different modelling of reading and a different social practice of literacy. The learners were exposed to a different form of text. In contrast to the ‘Talking Stories’ texts that the teacher referred to as ‘stories’ for the learners, these texts followed a narrative structure and thus the genre of stories. This was clearly evident when the teacher read the story of the ‘Three little pigs’ and ‘Goldilocks and the three bears’. During the reading of these stories, learners were given the freedom to engage in a purely pleasurable way. There were no expectations from the learners to know certain words and they had the opportunity to express themselves when the teacher allowed them to participate in the ‘huffing and puffing’ part of blowing the houses down in the story of ‘The three little pigs’. In the story of ‘Goldilocks and the three bears’, the learners were exposed to dramatization. Learners were chosen to act out the parts of the characters whilst the teacher read the story. Listening to the story was made meaningful to learners since they had to act out the parts of the different characters in the story. The teacher exposed the learners to the text by showing them the pictures of the story. After every page that she read, she would turn the book towards them so that they could have a good look at the pictures of the various characters in the story.

The importance of reading books to children was established in Chapter two (see Flanagan (1995). In the example given below, the teacher allows the learners to interact with the text and encourages learners to be active and to be involved with the text.

**Story lesson (extract from field notes 01/03/2010, Grade one classroom)**

T: We are going to do some acting now. I am going to read the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears. I am going to choose some learners to come to the mat and they have to listen very carefully, because I am going to read the story slowly and they are going to do the actions that go with the story.

T: Right, now I need a Pappa bear, a Momma bear and a baby bear. I also need a girl to be Goldilocks. (Teacher chooses four learners. She places a small table and three chairs in the front of the class).

T: Pappa bear, you sit over there, (she shows the others where to sit) and Goldilocks you stand over there by the door. Now while I am reading and I come to the part where I say “Goldilocks tasted pappa bear’s porridge and said ‘this porridge is too hot’”. Then Goldilocks must pull her face so that we can see that the porridge is too hot. I want the bears to show that they are upset or cross when I come to the part of “Somebody has been eating my porridge” or “Somebody has been sitting on my chair and look they broke it”. Then you must show a sad face, baby bear because your chair is broken. We are not really going to break the chair; we are just going to imagine that the chair is broken. So what you are going to do is listen and do the actions only when it comes to your part.

(T. reads the story, the learners struggle a bit and are not quite sure what to do, but she guides them as she goes along)

Reading stories aloud or listening and interacting with a storyteller are essentially a social experience (Britsch, 1992). Reading in this form, i.e. as the teacher reading a storybook for enjoyment and inviting the learners to interact by encouraging them to dramatize was thoroughly enjoyed by all the learners. During this time all the learners in the class participated in the story even though there were only a few who were chosen to act out the part of the different characters. I sat at the back of the class and noticed that when Goldilocks broke the chair, the

teacher told her: *“I want you to fall softly onto the floor”*. The learners who were seated at their tables all followed the instruction and fell off their chairs. They were having fun rolling off their own chairs laughing and chatting. The teacher had to settle them several times and at one stage she threatened that she would not continue the story. The teacher used voice intonation and changed her voice for the different characters in the story, for example Pappa bear had a deep voice, mamma bear had a calm soft voice and baby bear had a small squeaky voice. Learners eventually joined in when the teacher said: *“Pappa bear said who has been sitting on my chair?”* Most of the learners would make their voices deep and would join the teacher. They did this with all the characters in the story. When the story came to an end, the learners begged the teacher to read the story again. Because it was time for them to go home she could not but promised them that they would do it one day in the week. There were no expectations from the learners to know certain words and they had the freedom to express themselves when the teacher allowed them to participate. This kind of literacy practice shows the learners active engagement and pleasure in meaningful reading activities. This was evident when they echoed parts of the sentences in the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears, for example: *“Somebody has been sleeping in my bed”*. Below, I give another example of a story which is integrated during the Life Skills timetabled time. Dramatization and active participation during story time forms part of the Arts and Culture Learning Outcomes in the curriculum.

**Story lesson (extract from field notes 11/02/2010, Grade one classroom)**

T: Jessie because it is your birthday we are going to allow you to choose a story book from the reading corner. Any book it's your choice. (Jessie chooses 'The three little pigs).

The teacher reads the story and shows learners the pictures. When she comes to the part of the wolf blowing the house down, she encourages the children to help her 'huff and puff'.

T: And I will huff and I will puff and I will blow your house down. And he huffed and he puffed and he blew the house down.

Learners are actively involved in huffing and puffing. When the house is blown over, learners fall to the ground demonstrating that the house has been blown down.

In this example, the teacher gives a learner an opportunity to choose a book from the reading corner. Although the learner has freedom of choice in selecting a book, he takes a book that has been read before. While reading the story, the teacher encouraged and invited learners to join in choruses at the appropriate time, for example: When the wolf tries to blow down the houses of the three little pigs; they all join in by saying “*and I will huff and I will puff and I will blow your house down*”. The teacher allows the learners to interact with the text. Once again this literacy event involves an active process where learners find pleasure in interacting with the text.

In the interview discussion, the teacher emphasised the importance of book reading: “*Learners have a chance to enjoy stories because most of their parents do not read to them, but I do encourage them to go to the library and to read their library books at home. I always tell them that if the book is too difficult for them to read then they can ask somebody at home to read it to them*” (17/03/2010). Despite the teacher’s observed skill in story reading and her view expressed on the importance of reading books, this literacy practice is not dominant in her class. Only five such events totalling 2 hours in five weeks signals the teacher’s view that this practice is far less important than the practices of teaching phonics and word recognition.

#### **4.3.1.6 Rhymes and Poems**

The teacher uses rhymes throughout the day and this usually takes place in-between lessons. There is thus no set time for rhymes and poems. When the learners become noisy, the teacher would recite a rhyme and learners would join in. Learners enjoyed reciting poems and rhymes, especially since most of them are action based. Learners are exposed to a variety of rhymes and poems. The teacher uses rhymes and poems to get the learners to settle down quickly, especially after break.

#### **Example of a rhyme (extract from field notes 02/03/2010, Grade one classroom)**

Teacher and learners do actions with the rhyme

Ten little fingers (both hands in the air, showing their ten fingers)

ten little toes; (point to their toes)

One little nose (use index finger and place it on nose)

two little ears; (touch their ears, using both hands)

Two little eyes (touch their eyes, using both hands)

shining so bright; (open their eyes wide)

Two little lips to kiss mommy good night (touch their lips softly using their index finger)

As can be seen in the regular use of rhymes immediately after break times, rhymes are used as a disciplinary tactic to keep the noise levels down in the class or to get learners to settle down in-between lessons. The learners do however enjoy reciting poems and rhymes, especially action rhymes such as the one described above. The learning potential of these rhymes is rich because learners learn vocabulary words both explicitly and implicitly and learners' phonemic awareness is raised through rhyming words. However, the teacher does not give learners the opportunity to really enjoy these rhymes or poems, because she uses them as an incentive for learners to keep quiet. A further example of how the teacher uses rhymes as a disciplinary tactic is provided below.

**Rhyme (extract from transcript 10/02/2010, Grade one classroom)**

T: We are going to do Phonics now. You are not listening. Litha sit down, Jody go to your place. Ronelle how many times must I tell you not to pull your chair like that?

T: Grade one's you are not listening, sit down and keep quiet. You are still not listening.

T: Open them shut them; open them shut them. Come now I want everyone to join me.

T: and L: Open them shut them; open them shut them (they open and close their hands)

Give a little clap (they clap their hands once)

Open them shut them, open them shut them (they open and close their hands)

Lay them in your lap (they put their hands in their laps)

T: We wasted enough time now you are quiet so we can start with our Phonics

As can be seen in the extract from the transcript above, the teacher initially struggles to get the learners to keep quiet and to settle down. She asks learners to keep quiet but gets no response from them. The teacher then begins the rhyme “*Open them shut them*” and asks the learners to say the rhyme with her. She encourages everyone to join in. Once all the learners participate in the action rhyme they settle down which gives the teacher the opportunity to continue her lesson.

To summarise the presentation and analysis of the teaching of reading, reading in this Grade one classroom can be viewed as a process where learners are focused on word recognition and letter-sound relationships. Reading is not taught as a conceptual skill where learners read for meaning and the teacher does not encourage learners to read for pleasure.

In the following section I will now turn to analyzing writing activities in this Grade one class.

#### **4.4 Description of exposure to writing texts in Grade one**

According to Ramsberg (1998: 1-2), research suggests that reading and writing are interdependent and should be integrated. In this classroom the teacher approaches reading and writing as separate skills which are taught in separate and distinct activities

##### **4.4.1 Explanation and examples of writing as Literacy Practices**

###### **4.4.1.1 News**

During news time, individual learners are invited to talk about anything and would share this with the rest of the class. News took place on three occasions which took a total of 1 hour and 10 minutes during my five week observation period. Learners’ news is usually based on personal experiences, for example things that happened at home or in their community. The teacher would choose one learner’s news, write a sentence on the board about this and ask the learners to copy down the sentence. However, on a special occasion such as when the school celebrated their Jubilee, the teacher would ask and prompt learners to discuss that specific topic. The teacher would construct a sentence related to the topic and write it on the board. The learners are then told to copy the sentence and asked to draw their own picture related to the topic.

### News: Teacher's topic

The school celebrated their Jubilee in the fourth week of my fieldwork. They had a thanksgiving service in the hall and all the learners received a gift. The teacher then chose to discuss the jubilee during news time on the following day. Her emphasis was on the thanksgiving service. She allowed learners to talk about what happened and then constructed her own sentence and wrote it on the board. The extract below illustrates the literacy practice of news time following a special event in this classroom.

#### 'Jubilee' News lesson (extract from transcript 12/03/2010, Grade one classroom)

T: What happened yesterday? Who can tell me?

Emma: It was our jubilee

T: What else happened?

Ryan: We got presents

T: Yes, and what about the service?

Lisa: A thanksgiving service

T: Yes, that is what we are going to write about.

T: We want to write news about our thanksgiving service. But the most important thing I want you to write about is to write about the fact that you had what yesterday?

T: So this is what I want you to do. I'm gonna write the sentence on the board, then you must copy the sentence and write it in your books. If you can't write this whole sentence you just gonna write the word 'thanksgiving' and make your drawing.

T: (points to where the drawing must be) I want the drawing here, if you can't write the whole sentence, I want you to write these words, here that I'm gonna underline, just write the word 'thanksgiving'.

(T. underlines the words thanksgiving service again) Here, I want you to write these words that I'm underlining if you can't follow to write the whole sentence. Just write the word 'thanksgiving'.

T: (points to where the drawing must be) I want the drawing here, if you can't write the whole sentence, I want you to write these words, here that I'm gonna underline, just write the word 'thanksgiving'.

(T. underlines the words thanksgiving service again) Here, I want you to write these words here that I'm underlining if you can't write the whole sentence. Just write the word 'thanksgiving'.

In the first extract from the News lesson above, the teacher chooses a topic and encourages learners to participate in the discussion of the topic. She probes by asking the learners the following questions:

T: *What happened yesterday?*

Emma: *It was our jubilee*

T: *What else happened?*

Ryan: *We got presents.*

T: *Yes, and what about the service?*

Lisa: *A thanksgiving service.*

While the teacher could have chosen one of the learners' sentences to write on the board, she chose her own sentence instead. She wrote the sentence on the board and told the learners that she wanted them to copy the sentence. The teacher initially instructed the learners to write the whole sentence 'once' and then changed the instruction by repeating the following sentence five times.

**News lesson (extract from transcript 12/03/2010, Grade one classroom)**

T: *"If you can't write the whole sentence then just write the word thanksgiving".*

*"If you can't write the whole sentence then write the word thanksgiving".*

*"If you can't write the whole sentence then write the word thanksgiving".*

*"If you can't write the whole sentence then write the word thanksgiving".*

*"If you can't write the whole sentence then write the word thanksgiving".*

The teacher thus placed much more emphasis on learners' writing the word 'thanksgiving' than on writing the whole sentence: *"On Thursday the 11<sup>th</sup> of March we had our thanksgiving service"*. She emphasised the instruction to write the single word by drawing a line underneath the word *"thanksgiving"*. By repeating her instruction to write only the word if unable to write

the full sentence, the teacher gave the learners' the impression that she did not expect them to know how to, or manage to write the whole sentence and emphasised that they were capable of writing one word only. The repetition of the teacher's phrase, "*If you can't write the whole sentence then just write the word thanksgiving*" five times further demonstrates the importance placed on accurate copying.

According to Koralek and Collins (1997: 5-6) children learn and demonstrate that they know print carries meaning by "writing (scribbling or using invented spelling) to communicate a message". The extract illustrated above demonstrates that learners are not encouraged to produce extended writing using emergent literacy practices such as invented spelling. When learners write, the emphasis is not placed on meaning or composing. The teacher's view with regard to the learners' writing is linked to writing as a product of reproducing exactly what is on the board; i.e. accurate copying rather than composing and constructing meaning.

**News lesson (extract from transcript 01/03/2010, Grade one classroom)**

On two other occasions during the fieldwork, the teacher invited learners to talk about anything, and encouraged them to talk about events happening in their communities.

**News time: Learner's topic**

T: Now on that blank page I want you to copy the date from the board. I am coming around and I am putting a sticker to show you where you must start to write. Some of us still don't know that when we write, we write from left to right.

(T. puts a sticker on each child's page on top left hand side).

T: Once you have a sticker, write your date. It must be exactly the way I have it on the board.

T: Today we will choose Jessie's news. We are going to write it on the board and then we will write it into our books. (Teacher writes the following sentence on the board: : "*Jessie went to the toy market*")

T: I want you all to write the sentence now.

Comment [MSOffice1]:

In this second example from news time, the teacher chooses a learner's news. She writes the sentence on the board and tells the learners to copy the sentence. The sentence reads: "*Jessie went to the toy market*". The teacher dictates what should be done and how it should be done. In this example, the teacher's understanding of writing is that learners can write only if they are able to copy what she has written. The teacher's emphasis is again on the technical aspects of writing for example where writing is positioned on the page and the accuracy thereof. She stresses: "*it must be exactly the way I have it on the board*".

The schooled literacy practice of news time often gives opportunities to teach learners about writing to convey meaning and to express one's ideas, that is writing as functional and meaningful. Morrow (1990: 134) maintains that "children are more likely to become involved in literacy activities if they view reading and writing as functional, purposeful and useful". Studies of early reading and writing behaviours further illustrate that young children acquire their first information about reading and writing through their functional uses (Goodman, 1990; Heath, 1980; Mason & McCormick, 1981, cited in Morrow, 1990: 134). In contrast to this, in both "news" activities, the practice is focused on writing as accurate copying and on how writing should look rather than on writing as meaning making.

#### **4.4.1.2 Sentence Construction**

##### **Teacher interview (extract from transcript 17/03/2010)**

E: Can you define 'Sentence Construction' and what activities do you do during this time?

T: Well you see, Sentence Construction actually teaches the children to put sentences together in a logical order. The children must know that when they write they write from left to right. This also helps them to understand that a sentence begins with a capital letter and it ends in a full stop. It also helps the children to copy the words properly from the board. It also helps them to be creative and to explore their writing skills.

As seen in the extract above, the teacher emphasises the technical aspects of writing such as directionality, punctuation use and logical ordering. Although she adds that Sentence Construction can be an opportunity for learners to be creative and to explore their writing skills, this was however absent during my observation period. Although the learners used books

labelled “Creative Writing” when doing Sentence Construction, they were not allowed to construct their own sentences and were always asked to copy sentences or words from the board. Thus there is no evidence of creating an awareness that writing occurs in a variety of contexts for many purposes. Examples of ‘Sentence Construction’ transcripts below demonstrate how the literacy practices of the teacher restrict learners from experimenting with meaningful writing.

**Sentence Construction (extract from transcript 19/02/2010, Grade one classroom)**

T: (Gives learners their books labelled creative writing) I have a sentence pasted in your books.

T: Now, we are going to write the sentence. There is a green dot on your page to help you to write from left to right. Remember, we write from left to right.

T: (Takes one of the learners’ books and shows it to the rest of the class) Here is the green dot, the green dot is on the left, now write the date. The date is on the board. Copy the date. Here is the date. Now write the date. Write the date from left to right. The green dot will show you where to begin. Write the date neatly. I want everyone to copy the date from the board.

T: (draws a pattern underneath the date) I want you to draw the pattern underneath the date. Draw the pattern from left to right. The green dot will help you to see where the left side is. (Learners draw the pattern).

T: Now underneath the pattern I want you to write the sentence. First we are going to write the word “three” (Teacher writes the word on the board underneath her pattern) (Learners write the word).

T: Now next to the word “three” I want you to use two finger spaces next to the word before we write the next word “yellow” (teacher shows learners how to do it).

T: Next to the word “yellow” I want you to use two finger spaces and *write* the word hats next to the word “yellow”. When we *write* a sentence we need space next to each word otherwise we will not be able to read the sentence.

In this extract, the teacher is reinforcing directionality by encouraging the learners to write from left to right. The word “writing” is again used here to mean copying rather than composing. In

this extract the teacher uses the word 'write' five times. In each case the teacher instructs the learners to copy from the board. The teacher first tells the learners what they are going to do, she then does it, modelling the practice for learners, and finally the learners have to do it. The teacher's main focus is on the technical aspect of how the learners' are going to write each word, for example reminding them about 'finger spaces' next to each word. She does not seem to have confidence that the learners' will be able to write a whole sentence and therefore instructs them to write one word at a time. In other words she writes a word and learners copy the word, she then waits until all the learners have written the word and then goes onto the next word.

#### **4.5 Explanation and example of a literacy practice outside of the teacher's official literacy time**

The activity below describes the kind of literacy activity that the teacher uses across the curriculum, i.e. outside of her official literacy time.

##### **4.5.1 Numeracy**

When the teacher teaches number names she encourages learners to say the sound of each letter in the number name before writing it on the board. Learners are encouraged to do the action with each sound, just as they do when they do Phonics. An example of this is provided below.

##### **Numeracy lesson (extract from field notes 09/02/2010, Grade one classroom)**

T: (writes the no. 1 and the number name one on the board) Tell me how to write the number name. Can you remember?

Learners: (sound) first a -'o' then a - 'n' then a -'e'

T: which number follows no. 1?

Learners: no. 2

T: Right now tell me how to write the number name

Learners: (sound) first a -'t' then a - 'w' then a - 'o'

The Phonics approach is again reinforced to sound out the number names and the writing of isolated words is encouraged. In this example the teacher implies that learners should be able to work out how to spell the number names 'one' and 'two' by sounding out the component letters.

This is not helpful as these words are not spelt phonetically. Once again as in reading, the teacher demonstrates that writing is merely copying words and not composing.

#### 4.6 Overview of literacy practices

Table 4.6 gives a summary of the lessons that took place within the literacy time during the five weeks in which I conducted my research. I categorise the activities observed using the categories derived from the teacher's discourse and detail the time spent on each activity as outlined in the discussion thus far.

**Table 4.6.1 Literacy practices in designated Literacy time**

Activity	Event	Notes	Date	Duration
News  Total duration: 70 minutes (1 hour, 10 minutes)	1	Learners talk about anything	22-02-2010	20 minutes
	2	Learners talk about anything. One child's news is chosen and the teacher writes it on the board in the form of a single sentence. Learners copy the sentence and have to draw their own pictures.	01-03-2010	30 minutes
	3	Teacher chooses a specific topic to be discussed	12-03-2010	20 minutes
Phonics  Total duration: 481 minutes (8 hours, 1 minute)	1	Teaching single sounds and word building	08-02-2010	35 minutes
	2		09-02-2010	40 minutes
	3		10-02-2010	40 minutes
	4		11-02-2010	30 minutes
	5		19-02-2010	45 minutes
	6		22-02-2010	30 minutes
	7		23-02-2010	45 minutes
	8		25-02-2010	45 minutes
	9		26-02-2010	40 minutes
	10	Assessment	02-03-2010	90 minutes
	11		03-03-2010	20 minutes
	12		15-03-2010	21 minutes

Reading with 'Talking Stories'  Total duration: 342 minutes (5 hours, 42 minutes)	1	Reading words exclusively from the smart board	08-02-2010	45 minutes
	2		09-02-2010	55 minutes
	3		10-02-2010	50 minutes
	4		11-02-2010	45 minutes
	5		19-02-2010	20 minutes
	6		22-02-2010	50 minutes
	7		25-02-2010	37 minutes
	8		01-03-2010	40 minutes
Sentence Construction  Total duration: 110 minutes (1 hour, 50 minutes)		Learners copy teacher's sentences	18-02-2010	70 minutes
		Learners copy a sentence from the board	19-02-2010	20 minutes
			12-03-2010	20 minutes
Sequencing		Learners are told a four sentence story and asked to arrange pictures to match the order they have heard.	01-03-2010	35 minutes
Rhymes, Poem  Total duration: 250 minutes (4 hours, 10 minutes)		Repeat x 5 in between lessons	Daily	2 minutes
			23-02-2010	10 minutes
Story time  Total duration: 80 minutes (1 hour, 20 minutes)		Reading for relaxation and enjoyment	09-02-2010	10 minutes
		Reading for relaxation and enjoyment	11-02-2010	25 minutes
		Learners dramatize the story of 'Goldilocks and the three bears'	22-02-2010	10 minutes
		Learners are actively involved in the story of 'The three little pigs'	01-03-2010	35 minutes

**Table 4.6.2 Literacy practices outside of the official literacy time**

Activity	Event	Notes	Date	Duration
Numeracy		Learners sound number names	08-02-2010	20 minutes

Total duration: 60 minutes		Position – learners sound ‘first, second’	09-02-2010	15 minutes
		Learners sound number names	22-02-2010	10 minutes
		Learners sound the names of the days of the week	01-03-2010	15 minutes
Life Skills, Arts and Culture: Story		Dramatisation in story telling	11-02-2010	25 minutes
		Participation in reading for enjoyment	01-03-2010	35 minutes
Total duration: 100 minutes (1 hour, 40 minutes)			09-03-2010	40 minutes

As illustrated in the tables above, the literacy practices of phonics and reading of words using ‘Talking Stories’ are the most dominant in the classroom. The teacher uses a bottom-up or decoding approach to teaching both reading and writing where decontextualised technical skills such as letter and sound recognition, accurate handwriting and letter formation are central. It is evident that letter and word recognition is her main focus in her literacy pedagogy.

#### **4.7 Resources in a print rich environment**

The teacher’s role in establishing a print rich environment is vital because it provides learners with opportunities to engage with and interact with print. It also communicates a message that literacy is part of our daily lives and written texts are all around us for different purposes. Gunn, Simmons, & Kameenui suggest that “children learn how to attend to language and apply this knowledge to literacy situations by interacting with others who model language functions” (1995: 11). Furthermore, findings from a study conducted by Snow, Burns, & Griffin, (1998: 36) demonstrate that a print rich classroom plays an important role since it will “facilitate language and literacy opportunities” as well as “improving speaking, reading, and writing in the learning of all students”. Although the Grade one classroom in which I conducted my research could be described as a print rich environment, Information Communication Technology (ICT) resources which include a computer and an interactive white board are used most extensively in the classroom. The classroom is very attractive and neat. A small corner in the classroom is set aside as a library with a wide variety of story books. The teacher refers to this as the reading

corner. Learners however are not allowed to use these books however. While the teacher makes use of these books on the occasional time when she reads a story to the learners, learners are never encouraged to use these books on their own. Because the classroom is small, the teacher sits on a chair in the front of the class and learners remain seated at their tables during story time. The walls are displayed with words of rhymes, a chart with the alphabet, a weather chart, a birthday chart, a counting chart, flashcards with number names, classroom rules, samples of learners' work, a beautiful display of a variety of story books as well as objects in the classroom that are labelled. However, I never observed the teacher referring to and using these resources and thus the potential of the print-rich environment was not fulfilled.

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

The literacy practices of the teacher in this Grade one classroom signal to learners that reading and writing skills do not develop together and are not interconnected. Reading and writing are taught in isolation of each other and are furthermore not developed through meaningful experiences for the learners. The extensive repertoire of books in the classroom was not made accessible to learners thus preventing them from the handling and reading of these books. While the teacher spoke about the importance of reading or telling real stories in her interview, this view was not reinforced in her actual practice.

The above account has shown the full range of literacy activities or practices that the teacher used to teach literacy in the classroom. We can see that learners are exposed to a fairly limited range of texts in the classroom. The teaching of word recognition was a common practice observed in this Grade one classroom.

During my five weeks of observation, the learners were exposed to only six reading texts in total. Five of these texts were introduced during story reading and the other two were introduced using 'Talking Stories' during the reading period in literacy timetabled time. As mentioned previously, the amount of time the teacher spent on Phonics was 8 hours and 1 minute, Reading 'Talking Stories' - 5 hours and 42 minutes, Stories - 2 hours, Rhymes and Poems - 4 hours and 10 minutes and Sequencing - 35 minutes. It is therefore clearly evident that Phonics and Reading using the 'Talking Stories' programme is dominant since so much time is spent on these literacy practices and events. In relation to writing the amount of time spent on News is 1 hour

and 10 minutes and Sentence Construction amounts to 1 hour and 50 minutes. The limited amount of time spent on writing in this classroom shows that it is not as valued a practice as reading. The teacher is not exploiting the potential to develop the learners' ability to write as composing and meaningful writing practices. The teacher uses writing as copying exclusively in the Grade one class.

In the next Chapter I focus on language issues in literacy teaching and how the teacher gives access to English, LoLT, for non English home language learners in the class.

University of Cape Town

## Chapter 5

### Language issues in Literacy Teaching

#### 5.1 Introduction

The key question addressed in this chapter is:

**How does the teacher give access to English, the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT), for non English home language learners in the class?**

In answering this question I draw on an analysis of the semi-structured interview with the Grade one teacher, as well as classroom observations and document analysis. I will give an overview of how the Language in Education Policy (LiEP) influences the teacher's teaching of English as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) to a majority of learners whose home language (HL) is not English. In doing this, the intention was to investigate what problems the teacher encountered as well as what approaches or teaching strategies the teacher used to assist her in her teaching practices and the effectiveness thereof.

I conclude the analysis in this chapter with the presentation of a mini case study, which was conducted to highlight the difficulties of one Xhosa-speaking learner who is not proficient in English, the LoLT.

#### 5.2 The influence of the Language in Education Policy (LiEP)

In an effort to cut ties with the legacy of apartheid, the democratically elected government designed a multilingual LiEP to meet the language and educational needs of South African children, (DoE 1997: 5). The LiEP is aligned with the South African Constitution (1996) which grants official recognition to eleven languages, nine African languages as well as English and Afrikaans. The curriculum requires that learners take a home language and at least one other official language (one of which must be the LoLT) as subjects from Grade one through to Grade twelve (DoE 2000). Furthermore, the curriculum suggests "that the learner's home language should be used for learning and teaching wherever possible" (DoE 2002: 5). This would mean that learners would become competent in an additional language, while their home language was

being maintained and developed. The majority of the learners at the school are Afrikaans speaking with the minority being English and Xhosa. The medium of instruction at Boswell Primary school is English and the language policy of the school has been determined by the school's governing body. The additional language offered at this school is Afrikaans which is compulsory for all learners from Grade three up to Grade seven.

In this Grade one classroom the home languages of learners are as follows:

**Table 1: Home language and sex of learners**

Number of Learners:	Boys: 16	Girls: 24	Total: 40
English (L1)	5	7	12
Afrikaans (L1)	9	16	25
Xhosa(L1)	2	1	3

As can be seen from Table 1 above, the teacher has a culturally diverse class, the majority of whom are Afrikaans L1 speakers. Although there are three Xhosa-speaking learners in the Grade one classroom, Salizwa, a Xhosa-speaking girl is proficient in English. It is clearly evident that one of the biggest challenges for the teacher in this Grade one classroom is the fact that the majority of the learners in her class are not taught in their mother tongue. Although the National policy states the importance of the learners' HL that should be used for learning and teaching, the evidence of these practices in the Grade one classroom is very limited. The teacher does however use some Afrikaans in her classroom discourse. The teacher says:

*I cannot teach in Xhosa because I cannot speak Xhosa, I only know a few words, but it is however possible to teach in Afrikaans because I can speak and understand the language. I did English and Afrikaans on the higher grade when I was in matric and at college so I am fairly good in these two languages (17/03/2010).*

Home language instruction is not the school's policy and the teacher in this Grade one class is not proficient in all the home languages of the learners in her class, which in this case are

English, Afrikaans and Xhosa. Furthermore, Pluddemann, (1996: 186) points out that “increasingly black and coloured parents (the disadvantaged group during apartheid), are demanding English medium of instruction for their children”. This point is supported by the teacher’s comment about the parents at Boswell Primary who want their children to be taught in English as a medium of instruction.

*It’s the parents’ choice because they want their children to speak English so more and more parents want their children to be taught in English which in most cases is not their mother tongue (17/03/2010).*

The teacher makes it quite clear that learners are not forced to attend a school where the medium of instruction is English. The parents have a choice and it is therefore their choice that their children are taught in English which is the preferred language rather than the HL of the child. She goes on by saying,

*Out of the forty children that I have in my class there are only twelve children who are really taught in their mother tongue, because only twelve children’s home language is English and that is why so many children struggle, especially the Xhosa-speaking children (17/03/2010).*

The teacher acknowledges that the minority of the learners in her Grade one classroom are taught in a home language and believes that the reason why so many learners are not coping, is because of the language barrier.

The teacher says,

*What we get from the Department is the fact that you can’t let the child repeat if it’s a language barrier, then the child has to move on but because the child does not understand, when they get to Grade two and the child struggles, then only do they give us permission to let the child repeat, so the child’s actually wasting that first year already because he does not have the language foundation which begins in Grade one (17/03/2010).*

At the time of the Threshold research (Macdonald, 1991) which examined the demands for African learners who were switching from their mother tongue to English in Grade four, the primary finding was that learners entering Standard three were not ready to learn through the medium of English. Macdonald (1991) attributed the ineffectiveness of their schooling experience primarily to the fact that the majority of learners had not been prepared in Grades one

to three to learn through a language other than their own. The report also found that learners' listening, speaking, reading and writing skills were poorly developed in both first and second languages. These findings (Macdonald, 1991) were strongly supported by the findings of Taylor (cited in Macdonald, 1991: 131), who stated that at the time: "almost one in four African children who enter Grade one does not reach Grade two the following year, half of all African children do not graduate from primary school within the minimum 7-year period". This suggests that the language policy guiding South African education, at the time, was not meeting the education needs of a vast majority of the South African population. With the onset of the new democratic South Africa in 1994, the South African language context still however presents challenges as most learners study at secondary and tertiary level through the medium of a language that is not their primary language (Pretorius, 2005). According to the teacher the Department of Education (DoE) does not allow a learner to repeat a Grade, especially in Grade one, and even more so if the reason for wanting the learner to repeat the grade is because of a language barrier. The teacher however feels that the learner who has a language barrier should be kept back in Grade one, because the language foundation begins in Grade one. The teacher referred to 'language foundation' because during an informal conversation with the teacher, she mentioned that many learners' whose mother tongue is not English is exposed to English for the first time in Grade one.

### **5.3 Problems encountered in the classroom**

During my five weeks of observation, the Grade one teacher encountered various problems in her classroom with regard to language issues in literacy teaching. In this section I will identify the problems which she encountered as well as the strategies she used to support her in her teaching practices.

When asked in the interview about encountering any problems regarding communication in the classroom, the teacher explained:

*I get frustrated because it is easier to communicate with the English and Afrikaans-speaking learners than with the Xhosa-speaking learners. At least the Afrikaans-speaking children can understand me or I can translate and tell them in Afrikaans but because I cannot speak Xhosa I cannot communicate effectively with the Xhosa-*

*speaking learners and this creates problems especially with regard to discipline. So the biggest problem that I encounter is a breakdown in communication (17/03/2010).*

The teacher makes it quite clear that she experiences great difficulty in expressing herself or communicating with learners whose home language is Xhosa. The teacher also has to take cognisance of the fact that in contrast to the rest of the class, the Xhosa speaking learners are not exposed to as great a variety of print in their environments.

Probyn (2005: 161) states that “teachers are very often not proficient in the home languages of all learners and so do not have recourse to those languages when there is a communication breakdown”. This statement is aligned with a report made by the teacher that one of the biggest problems encountered in this Grade one class is communication with EAL speakers. The cultural background and related assumptions present a further problem because the teacher is aware that she sometimes takes certain background knowledge for granted and assumes that all learners have had experience of certain concepts, while often some of the learners have not:

*Also it's concepts we take for granted that they understand... like if you speak ask them about news and news can be about anything, for example, what they did when they got home after school. You expect everyone to be able to say something, but it's not like that so you have to beg them to talk and this takes up a lot of your time and this mostly happens with the children whose home language is not English (17/03/2010).*

The above responses reveal that the teacher recognizes and acknowledges the various challenges she faces in ensuring that learners whose HL is not English are given every opportunity to succeed. Furthermore, the teacher has to ensure that effective and efficient teaching and learning takes place and has to therefore be creative in her teaching practices. She therefore has to create an environment that would be conducive for learning for all of the learners in her class. The teacher engages a number of strategies in working with non English HL learners. In this section I will use extracts taken from field notes during my observation to illustrate the various strategies as well as the frequency of these strategies that the teacher uses in her teaching practices to support learning with EAL learners.

#### 5.4 Reformulating the learners' language and modelling the correct language

The teacher often reformulates and models the correct language for learners when they do not speak standard South African English. She reinforces the language by repeating a word or sentence and asks the learner to repeat the correct sentence after her. This is not a typical practice and only occurred four times during my five week observation. An example of how the teacher does this is illustrated in the extract below.

(Extract from transcript 10/02/2010, Grade one classroom)

T: Grade 1's if I look out of the window, it's not cold, but what is happening? Brad you tell me.  
Brad: *It are raining*  
T: Yes it is raining. What is happening Brad? Can you repeat that for us?  
Brad: It is raining  
Zoe: *An der was tunder dis morning*  
T: That's right Zoe there was thunder this morning.  
    There was thunder this morning  
T: Now tell me what was there this morning?  
Zoe: There was thunder this morning  
T: Who was scared of the thunder?  
L: (shout) me me me me  
T: Aiden what day was it yesterday  
Aiden: Yesterday are Tuesday  
T: You mean yesterday was Tuesday '*was Tuesday*' '*was Tuesday*' '*was Tuesday*'  
T: Repeat that for me  
Aiden: Yesterday was Tuesday  
T: And today is Wednesday '*today is Wednesday*'  
T: Shakirah what day will it be tomorrow  
Shakirah: Tuesday  
T: Let's all say the name together '*Thursday*' '*Thursday*' '*Thursday*'  
T: Now say it in a sentence Shakirah  
Shakirah: Tomorrow will be Thursday

The extract above illustrates how the teacher reformulates and models the correct use of standard South African English in her teaching practices. This mostly occurs with Afrikaans-speaking learners where learners do not pronounce the words correctly or their verb /tenses as well as their subject/ verb agreement (verb concord) are incorrect. The teacher has an excellent manner in which she attempts to do this without drawing attention to the learners' incorrect use of standard English such as "*An der was tunder dis morning*" or "*Yesterday are Thursday*". The teacher

reformulates and models the correct use of standard South African English by repeating the sentence for the learner. She does not tell the learners' that what they said was wrong and uses positive reinforcement instead so that learners' do not feel afraid to answer her questions. This enhances learners' motivation to be actively involved in lessons.

As can be seen in the extract above, the teacher demonstrates the correct use of the language by modelling and encourages the learners' to repeat the sentence. The teacher also uses code-switching as a practice to reinforce her teaching of language.

#### **5.4.1 Code- switching**

Code switching refers to the switching from one language to another within phrases or sentences (Lawrence, 1999: 266; Heugh et al., 1995: vii). Ferguson (2003: 51, as cited in Makoni & Meinhof, 2003) notes that

Code-switching is ...highly functional, though mostly subconscious. It is a communicative resource which enables teachers and pupils to accomplish a considerable number and range of social and educational objectives.

In contrast to Adendorff's observation of code-switching as subconscious, the Grade one teacher's use of code-switching shows that she is usually conscious and fully aware of this strategy in her classroom practices. When the teacher was asked what her view was on code-switching during the interview, her response was,

*If it's the beginning of the year, like now we just started out January till maybe June, you can use the code-switching because that child will actually understand you much better in his or her home language. It is just my own thing, the whole school does not do it. It is much more difficult to do code-switching with the Xhosa-speaking child than the Afrikaans-speaking child, because I can speak and understand Afrikaans but I do not speak Xhosa. Although with the Xhosa-speaking children I always get the bigger children to come and help when I need assistance. Code-switching also makes my job a bit easier because the learners get a better understanding of what you are telling or teaching them so they can take part in the lesson (17/03/2010).*

The teacher thus sees code-switching as a useful strategy and acknowledges that it helps in a sense that learners are able to understand the content of lessons and it enhances learners' ability

to participate and be actively involved in lessons. The teacher does however acknowledge that this strategy is not a practice that involves the whole school and that she only uses this strategy in the first half of the year, which means that she uses it as a transition or emergency strategy for teaching and learning in general. The teacher's acknowledgement of code-switching as a resource contrasts with much research on teachers' views on code-switching as negative and to be avoided (Probyn, 2009).

The teacher makes it clear that she uses code-switching with the Afrikaans speaking learners but is unable to do so with the Xhosa-speaking learners because she is not proficient in Xhosa. While the teacher reported for Xhosa that: *"I usually get in the bigger children to come and help when I need assistance"*, I only observed this practice once during my five weeks in her classroom. On one occasion the teacher requested a Grade three learner to read a Xhosa text and this took place during the timetabled computer class which took place in the computer laboratory. A more detailed discussion of this incident that took place in the computer laboratory is discussed in 5.4.2 below.

As mentioned above, the teacher uses code-switching for the first half of the year and thereafter reports using only English as the LoLT. The teacher's reason for this is that when the learners enter Grade one, code-switching assists the learners, that is, the Afrikaans speaking learners to become more proficient in English. She also acknowledges that although it is time consuming, there is progress because after the first half of the year she does not really have to use code-switching because by then the learners are more proficient in English.

*I only use code-switching up to June because after June you can't still use that. It takes up a lot of your time so the learners must know I'm in an English class now and this is my language for the rest of my schooling years. But I usually find that if you use code-switching in the first half of the year then it helps and you don't really need to use it after that because the learners are much more proficient in English and that is the Afrikaans learners (17/03/2010).*

The teacher recognizes that another function of code-switching is that it helps her to maintain discipline in her classroom.

*Code-switching really does work for me because it improves the way the learners talk and in helping them to understand instructions and it also helps with the discipline*

*problems. When the learners are noisy then I first tell them to keep quiet and then I say it in Afrikaans 'Bly stil asseblief' and this seems to help. It's just a pity that the Xhosa speaking learners cannot benefit from it (17/03/2010).*

When the learners are noisy the teacher uses English and Afrikaans to get them to keep quiet, "keep quiet, bly stil asseblief". She acknowledges that this is useful and it works in more areas such as "improving the way learners talk" as well as "helping them to understand instructions". This is an example of the functions (Ferguson, 2003, cited in Makoni & Meinhoff, 2003:). outlines, classroom management.

The extract below is an example of how the teacher uses code-switching as a strategy in giving instructions to the learners and how she uses exact translations when repeating instructions in English.

T: *Maak julle tafels skoon en haal uit jou toebroodjie.* [Tidy your tables and take out your lunch]. *Gaan asseblief toilet toe gedurende pouse.* Remember to [go to the toilet please during break] and don't forget to wash your hands. Please go to the toilet (01/03/2010).

In the extract above, the teacher uses direct translations when code-switching to learners. She first gives the instructions in Afrikaans and translates the same instructions in English. A further example of how the teacher uses code-switching between English and Afrikaans is illustrated in the extract below. As discussed in chapter four individual learners are invited to talk about anything during news time and would share this with the rest of the class.

#### **News lesson (extract from transcript 22/02/2010, Grade one classroom)**

T: Now it is news time. I want you to tell us what you did over the weekend and remember you can talk about anything. Jordan would you like to tell us first what you did over the weekend. [*Dit is nuus tyd en ek wil hoor wat julle oor die naweek gedoen het*]. *Nou moet julle stil sit en luister, [Jordan wat het jy gedoen?]*

T: What did you do Jordan?

Jordan: I 'kapped' [played] with my 'toll' [top]

T: That is the Afrikaans word; now let's try to say that by saying the proper words in English.  
Who can help Jordan?

T: In English we would say 'I played with my top'

T: Tell us again what did you do Jordan?

Jordan: I played with my top

T: Ok Stacey you must wait I can see that you had your hand up

Stacey: *'Ek het by my antie se swembad geswem'* [I swam in my aunt's swimming pool]

T: Oh! You went to swim in your aunt's swimming pool. Can you repeat that and tell us again what you did in your aunt's swimming pool?

Stacey: I did swim by my aunt's swimming pool

T: Say after me, I swam in my aunt's swimming pool.

Stacey: I swam in my aunt's swimming pool.

In the extract from the News lesson above, the teacher's teaching approach and strategy involved code-switching as a method to encourage or motivate learners to participate in the news lesson. She first instructed the learners as to what they were going to do in English, and when there was no response she repeated the instruction in Afrikaans. This is an example of the use of code-switching for curriculum access as learners are able to use Afrikaans to understand the teacher's instructions. As in the case with Jordan's news: 'I *kapped* [played] with my *toll* [top]', the teacher used code-switching where only two individual words such as '*kapped*' and '*toll*' were translated into standard South African English words, [played] and [top]. Furthermore, in Stacey's news code-switching was used where the whole sentence had to be translated. '*Ek het in my antie se swembad geswem*' to [I swam in my aunt's swimming pool]. This teaching practice of the teacher may be attributed to the fact that the majority of the learners in the classroom's home language are Afrikaans. In this lesson a combination of strategies are used by the teacher. As can be seen in the extract above, the teacher used translations as well as modeling to reinforce the use of standard South African English.

“Now it is news time. I want you to tell us what you did over the weekend and remember you can talk about anything. Jordan would you like to tell us first what you did over the weekend. *[Dit is nuus tyd en ek wil hoor wat julle oor die naweek gedoen het]. Nou moet julle stil sit en luister. [Jordan wat het jy gedoen?]*” (22/02/2010).

In this instance, the teacher used code-switching to support learning, that is for curriculum access, (Ferguson, 2003 as cited in Makoni & Meinhof, 2003) by first giving the instruction to the learners in English and then translating it into Afrikaans. The teacher also used it as a strategy to discipline the learners by informing them that they had to sit quietly and listen, that is for classroom management (Ferguson, 2003 as cited in Makoni & Meinhof, 2003). The teacher did not overtly reprimand Jordan for not speaking standard South African English when he said “I *kapped* with my *toll*”. She first asked if there was anybody in the class who could assist by giving the “proper” words in English. When none of the learners responded, the teacher translated and modelled the correct standard English forms by repeating the words and stressed that “*In English we would say I played with my top*”. Furthermore, she made a clear distinction between the Afrikaans and English words “*kapped* [played] and *toll* [top]”. The teacher then encouraged repetition by asking learners to repeat the sentence. Although the Xhosa-speaking learners were exposed to another language with Afrikaans here, it did not benefit them in the same way as it did for the Afrikaans and English speaking learners. The English and Afrikaans learners were at an advantage because they were exposed to their HL, unlike the Xhosa-speaking learners who were at a greater disadvantage because they were exposed to two languages different from their HL.

I argue that it is the teacher’s responsibility to ensure that effective and efficient learning takes place and in the lesson extracts above the use of code-switching as a language practice in her classroom helped to deal with the challenges that the teacher was faced with regarding the learners’ use of language. Furthermore code-switching in this Grade one classroom may be seen as an example of how the teacher experiments with language in this classroom. Code-switching to Afrikaans benefits the majority of twenty five Afrikaans-speaking learners as well as twelve English-speaking learners but not the three Xhosa-speaking learners who may be further excluded. English-speaking learners are at an advantage because they can understand Afrikaans but not the Xhosa-speaking learners.

#### 5.4.2 Reading text in English and Xhosa

On one occasion during my observation, an English reading text was provided to learners in Xhosa translation as well. This took place during the Grade one's timetabled computer class. Each class is allocated one period a week for computer classes that takes place in the computer laboratory. Each teacher is responsible for his or her own class. Since the whole school is trained in using the 'Talking Stories' programme, the stories are on their computer system, so the teacher immediately logs on and guides the learners as to which text they will be reading. The Grade one class in which I did my observation had a 35 minute period every Thursday from 08h45 to 09h20. During the five weeks in which I carried out my observation, the teacher used all five of these periods for literacy where learners were involved in using the 'Talking Stories' programme. There are twenty computers in the computer laboratory and learners are asked to work in pairs. It was interesting to see that Litha and Nizole, two Xhosa-speaking learners, chose each other as partners even though they are not seated next to each other in the classroom. This could be because they share similar linguistic backgrounds and were given the freedom to explore their own options in choosing a partner, unlike in the classroom where they are told where to sit. According to the teacher,

*The main purpose of the computer class is to enhance the children's' computer skills and it also provides learners the opportunity to do paired reading because two learners share a computer. The reading that they do during the computer period reinforces what I do in the classroom and even more because the Xhosa-speaking children are exposed to the same story in Xhosa (11/02/2010).*

I will now present, describe and analyze the data of the bilingual English and Xhosa reading text taken from my field notes. During the timetabled computer class, learners were exposed to the following text of the 'Talking Stories' (again not a narrative).

##### **'Talking stories': Text 2 – English and Xhosa 11/02/2010**

One red ball (accompanied by a picture of one red ball)

*Enye ebomvu Ibhola* (Xhosa translation)

Two blue cars (accompanied by a picture of two blue cars)

*Zimbini ezimzuba iimoto* (Xhosa translation)

Three yellow hats (accompanied by a picture of three yellow hats)

*Mithathu emthubi iminqwazi* (Xhosa translation)

Four green frogs (accompanied by a picture of four green frogs)

*Mane aluhlaza amasele* (Xhosa translation)

The teacher asked the learners to work in pairs and to share a computer. Without wasting any time, learners were seated immediately and listened for the next instruction. The teacher asked the learners to click on 'Talking Stories', Activity two and walked around and assisted until the 'Talking Stories' programme appeared on all the computer screens. The teacher then gave the following instructions:

**A description of a Reading lesson in the Computer laboratory (extract from field notes 11/02/2010)**

T: I want you to find the same 'story' that we read in the class yesterday. We only read the English 'story' yesterday but today we are going to read the same story in English and in Xhosa. I want you all to click on the activity 'story': "One red ball"

(The teacher discovers that the sound system is not working)

T: There is something wrong with the sound so we are not going to listen to the voice of the person reading the 'story' we are going to have to read the 'story' by ourselves. Come now did you all find the 'story'?

L: Yes teacher

(The learners are seated in pairs and are able to access the text by themselves. The teacher walks around and checks to see if the learners are following her instructions and assists learners where needed)

T: Can you see that the story is in English and in Xhosa.

L: Yes teacher

T: Click on the first sentence. Learners listen and click on “One red ball”. Now read the sentence.

L: (read) One red ball

T: Now we are going to read the same sentence in Xhosa

(The teacher realizes that she and the learners are unable to read the Xhosa text and asks two Xhosa-speaking boys Litha and Nizole who are sharing a computer to read the text)

T: Litha and Nizole can you read the sentence?

(Litha and Nizole are unable to read the text so the teacher sends for a Grade three learner)

T: Reagan, go to Miss M’s class and ask her if Thabisa can come here quickly.

(Thabisa, a Xhosa-speaking girl who is in Grade three comes to the computer lab.)

T: Thabisa can you help us quickly. I want you to help us to read these sentences.

Thabisa: *Enye ebomvu lbhola*

T: Read it again Thabisa and read it slowly please.

Thabisa: *Enye ebomvu lbhola*

T: Now Litha and Nizole can you read it with Thabisa

Litha, Nizole and Thabisa: *Enye ebomvu lbhola*

T: Now I want the whole class to read the sentence

Class: (struggles and reads the text slowly) *Enye ebomvu lbhola*

T: Remember we did this story in English yesterday, now it is the same story. Show me the ball. (Learner points to the ball) Now I want the whole class to read it in English and then in Xhosa.

(Learners read the text first in English and then in Xhosa)

One red ball

*Enye ebomvu lbhola*

T: Litha and Nizole you are able to catch on quickly so I want you to listen to Thabisa. She is going to read all the Xhosa sentences of the whole 'story' and then when she is gone you must teach it to us.

T: Thabisa can you read the other sentences, but read it slowly so that I can also learn how to pronounce the words. I want the whole class to listen and pay attention while Thabisa is reading the sentences.

Thabisa: Two blue cars

*Zimbini ezimzuba iimoto*

T: Quickly Litha and Nizole, you read the sentences

Litha and Nizole: *Zimbini ezimzuba iimoto*

Thabisa reads the whole text and Litha and Nizole repeat the text after her.

T: Litha and Nizole will you be able to teach us to read the sentences now because Thabisa has to go back to her class

Litha and Nizole: Yes

T: Thank you Thabisa you can go back to your class now. Litha and Nizole will read the first sentence we are going to listen and then we are going to read it together.

Litha and Nizole: One red ball

*Enye ebomvu lbhola*

T: Well done boys, now let's all read that together

Learners: One red ball

*Enye ebomvu lbhola*

T: Good now Litha and Nizole read the second sentence and I want the rest of the class to listen

Litha and Nizole: Two blue cars

*Zimbini ezinzuba iimoto*

T: Read it again

(Litha and Nizole read the text again)

T: Now let's all read it together

In this extract, an example of how the teacher and the learners read two “sentences” is illustrated. The teacher and learners completed the rest of the ‘Talking Stories’ text 2 which is illustrated above, following the same procedure. When Thabisa went back to her class, Litha and Nizole were able to read or recite the text and the rest of the class would follow.

In the ‘Talking Stories’ text above, all learners are exposed to the text in English and Xhosa. The teacher asked a Grade three learner to help read the Xhosa text since there was something wrong with the sound system where learners would normally hear a voice recording of somebody reading the story as described in Chapter four. After hearing Thabisa, the Grade three learner, read the text, the two Xhosa-speaking boys, Litha and Nizole who were unable to read the text on their own were then able to read or at least repeat the text without any difficulty. Litha and Nizole were advantaged by the older learner, Thabisa’s, reading in Xhosa. However it is questionable whether removing an older learner from her class is justified. For the first time, during my observation period, Litha and Nizole had an opportunity where they actually played a leading role in the class. They had to demonstrate by reading the text and the rest of the class had to listen to them and had to read or rather repeat the text after them. Although the text that the learners were reading was merely a list of labels, the two Xhosa-speaking learners who seldom participated in repeating these texts when they did it in English in the classroom, gained

some sense of satisfaction because they were able to identify the words representing the pictures in their own language as well as in English. As mentioned in the previous chapter, these learners were therefore exposed to 'Reading' as word recognition and as repetition of what they had seen and heard. However, this was meaningful to the two Xhosa-speaking learners because they were exposed to reading in their mother tongue and as Webb (1999: 3) contends "it is the learners' first language that provides a rich cognitive preparation for second language learning". He further argues that it is the skills acquired in the first language that provide for an easy transition to the second language medium. These learners were exposed to print in Xhosa which may not have been as meaningful to the other learners as it was for them.

In the Phonics lesson extract below, the teacher's intention was to assess the learners on their knowledge of a particular sound, the 'c' sound. Learners had to colour in all the pictures beginning with the 'c' sound on the activity sheet which the teacher gave to them. Litha was struggling and looked very confused so the teacher assisted him by showing him the objects beginning with the 'c' sound. The objects were not foreign to the learner and with the help of the teacher; he was therefore able to identify the word matching the object.

**Phonics lesson (extract from field notes 26/02/2010, Grade one classroom)**

T: Now we are going to do another activity. This time we are going to do the "c" sound. We have been doing these sounds all week and I want to see whether you understand it that is why I want you to work on your own. Don't look at your friend's work, do your own work. All the pictures beginning with the "c" sound you must colour in. (Teacher points to the picture of a cup on the page).

T: Litha, what is this?

(Litha is unable to answer)

T: Mommy drinks tea out of it and (shows Litha her cup) I drink my tea out of this

Litha: cup

T: Good, class clap for Litha

T: (shows Litha a candle) What is this Litha?

T: c for candle; c for candle; c for candle

Litha: (points to the candle) c for candle

(Class claps for Litha, Litha smiles feeling very proud of himself)

T: Right now I want you to begin, do your work now.

(Learners work quietly)

In the lesson extract above, the teacher does not only use the sound and matching pictures, but uses the actual physical object and even though Litha still struggles to give her the English word, at least he is able to identify what it is and the teacher continues to assist him by giving him the sound and the word of the particular object, 'c for cup'. The teaching practice in this extract is reinforcing what the teacher wants the learner to know by repeating the sound and the word for example, 'c for candle, c for candle, c for candle'. It could be argued that Litha is merely repeating what he has heard the teacher say and does not necessarily see the relationship between sounds and letters. Furthermore, there is no evidence that Litha can read or recognize the words 'cup' and 'candle' independently. He is therefore unlikely to succeed in completing the activity independently.

### 5.5 The positioning of Litha

The following mini case study of Litha, a Xhosa-speaking boy in this Grade one class at Boswell Primary School provides valuable insights into the consequences of him being taught in English as the LoLT, as well as the obstacles that he encounters in this class. As mentioned previously, there are three Xhosa-speaking learners in this class. During the interview the teacher reported the following:

*You see Litha never went to preschool. So I am not sure whether he even knows his own language which is Xhosa so imagine how difficult it will be for him to learn and to be taught in a foreign language (17/03/2010).*

In the extract above, Litha could be described as an 'emergent biliterate'. In my literature review, I presented Reyes (2006: 268) definition of 'emergent bilinguals' to describe learners between the ages of three to five years old, whose mother tongue is not English but who are in the process of simultaneously developing their home language as well as English. According to

Reyes (2006: 268) the teacher should use and view the home language of learners' as a resource and the language should thus be used to enhance learners' second language competency.

In the extract below, the teacher gave out the learners' 'Creative Writing' books in which they were going to copy the following phrase from the board "*Three yellow hats*". This was only the second time that learners were actually writing in their books since most of the activities that they did were on worksheets.

*"We are going to write in our books and I want you to write neat. If you write untidy then I am going to tear out your page. Copy the sentence from the board and take your time and do it neatly. Look after your books it belongs to you so treat it with respect. Please Litha do not do your favourite and make holes in your page again".*

*T: Class what does Litha like to do?*

*L: He likes to be lazy and not do his work so he won't get a job one day (Fieldnotes 10/02/2010)*

The learners response above is disturbing. It is likely that the teacher made this comment several times before for the learners to be able to recite this like a recitation "*He likes to be lazy and not do his work so he won't get a job one day*". It was clear that the learners had heard and repeated this comment before. When the learners said, "*He likes to be lazy and not do his work so he won't get a job one day*", the teacher ignored the comment. Being labelled as lazy, clearly positions Litha negatively in this classroom. The teacher should take cognizance of the fact that because of the language barrier, Litha does not necessarily understand what the teacher expects him to do and therefore does things which are not accepted according to the standards of the teacher. It is evident that Litha is being discriminated against. This may have a negative effect on Litha and because he is being labeled as lazy, he would seek attention that would result in inappropriate behaviour. If Litha hears this comment often, he might believe that he is lazy and therefore not do his work and this would have a negative impact on his learning and behaviour in the class. Litha sees that when he is disruptive he gets the attention of the teacher. At one point, when all the learners were seated at their tables I observed Litha crawling around on the floor and the teacher said:

*Litha why are you crawling on the floor when you are supposed to be working. Bring your book and come and sit here right in front of me and do your work (Fieldnotes 10/02/2010)*

When the teacher said this, Litha immediately stopped crawling around on the floor and sat close to the teacher. It was however clear that Litha had no idea what the teacher expected him to do. The teacher wrote the sentence in his book and told him to draw three yellow hats. Litha seems to be attentive only when he receives individual attention from the teacher. It seems that the effects of him having to learn in a language which is not his home language frequently result in his not knowing what to do and cause him to act in such a manner where he knows that he would get the attention of the teacher.

The teacher wrote the sentence *'Three yellow hats'* in Litha's book and showed him where she wrote it. She did not encourage Litha to write the sentence which gives the impression that she just took it for granted that he was unable to write the sentence. She wanted him to use a yellow crayon and had no confidence that he was able to choose a yellow crayon by himself and therefore handed the yellow crayon to him. She then instructed him to *"draw the hat"*. Litha did not give the teacher any reason to believe that he was going to be disruptive but once again the teacher assumed that he would disturb the learner who was seated next to him. She then took Litha to an empty table and let him sit by himself.

*Here Litha, I wrote the sentence 'Three yellow hats' now I want you to draw the hats. Here take this yellow crayon and draw the hat and I don't want you to sit next to Jessie because you are going to disturb him. Come and sit alone so you can do your own thing (Fieldnotes 10/02/2010)*

In the extract above, the teacher's tone was soft when she spoke to Litha and she made eye contact with him. This definitely had a positive influence on Litha since he immediately took the crayon and attempted drawing the hats. The teacher should have praised him when he sat down quietly and worked. Instead, she continued to position him negatively when she removed him from his seat and said that he would disturb the boy sitting next to him. Although Litha sat quietly, the teacher just assumed that he would become disruptive and disturb Jessie. Her negative assumption of Litha could result in reinforcing his disruptive behaviour. In other words, Litha fulfils the teacher's expectation that he would behave inappropriately.

Furthermore, by removing Litha from his table where he normally sits she was separating him from the rest of the class. Because of the language barrier and his negative positioning Litha frequently experiences exclusion in his class.

## 5.6 Conclusion

During the time of my fieldwork in this Grade one classroom, I observed very useful language learning strategies such as how the teacher reformulates the learners' language and models standard South African English as well as uses code-switching as a means of supporting language learning in her classroom practices. As can be seen in 5.4, 5.4.1 and 5.4.2, these strategies are however not used extensively. One might have expected many more examples of explicit language teaching in a classroom where the mother tongues of the minority of the learners are English.

The teacher's goal in her teaching practices does not appear to be prioritized in terms of developing the language proficiency of learners or helping the Xhosa speaking learners acquire English as comprehensively and as quickly as possible. The teacher does acknowledge in the interview discussion that it is more difficult for the Xhosa speaking learners to cope with English as the LoLT, because of her own lack of knowledge of Xhosa. The EAL learners are taught throughout the day in English. They are encouraged to speak in English and are discouraged from using their home languages. In her interview the teacher reported the following:

*I do not encourage them, especially the Xhosa-speaking children like Litha to speak in their home language. They must speak English all the time because this will help them and the more they speak in English the better they will get (Interview 17/03/2010)*

Although there are three Xhosa-speaking learners in the class, the teacher always singles out Litha. Unlike Salizwa, the only Xhosa-speaking girl who is proficient in English, the two Xhosa-speaking boys Nizole and Litha are the ones who struggle the most. On the whole, my research in this Grade one classroom confirms that even though language research and the language policies reflect the importance of mother tongue languages and multilingualism, the teacher's practices privilege monolingualism in English.

## Chapter six: Conclusion

This research study was designed to answer the question:

How does a Grade one teacher of learners who are not proficient in the language of learning and teaching (LOLT), English, teach literacy in the first term in a high performing Quintile 1 school?

Stemming from this main question were two sub questions:

- What constitutes literacy teaching in the class?
- How does the teacher give access to English, Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT), for non English home language learners in the class?

In order to answer the above-mentioned questions, I based my study of one Grade one teacher's understanding of literacy and literacy pedagogy in the context of her classroom over a period of five weeks. In Chapter four I focused on the kinds of literacy practices that constituted the teaching and learning of literacy in the classroom, the methods used by the teacher to teach reading and writing, and the meanings of literacy conveyed in the teacher's discourse. In Chapter five I further examined language issues in the teaching of literacy through a LoLT that was not the HL of the majority of learners.

The study found that the dominant practice in what the teacher views as the explicit teaching of literacy during her timetabled literacy time focused on Phonics, i.e. the teaching of single sounds, sound-symbol relationships, word-building, and reading of words or simple phrases. The following descriptive categories of literacy practices were taken from the teacher's own discourse: Phonics, Reading, Story time, Rhymes and Poems, Sequencing, News and Sentence Construction. By looking at the frequency and time spent on the practices (illustrated in Table 4.6 and 4.7) it was noted which practices are typical and valued and which practices are not typical and thus I would argue not as valued in this Grade one classroom. Although rhymes and poems took place throughout the day, i.e. the teacher would let learners recite rhymes in-between lessons, I found that the teacher used these as a disciplinary tactic to keep the noise levels down, rather than for enjoyment. 'News' only occurred three times and 'Stories' only occurred on five occasions during my five week observation, thus these were not typical literacy practices.

In contrast to this, Phonics was taught daily and the teacher spent a total of 8 hours and 1 minute on Phonics instruction. Learners were exposed to spelling words phonetically and relating letters to the sounds they hear in words. They were encouraged to transform sounds into letters to write words. I would argue that instead of being able to read words that would be meaningful to the learners, the teacher's priority and main focus in this Grade one class was getting the learners' to first identify sounds in order to identify printed words. On several occasions the teacher said, *"We must know our single sounds before we can build words"*. Therefore letters are referred to as sounds and words are seen as made up of sounds. This practice however only works with phonetically regular words like 'cat' or 'bat' but not with a word like 'o-n-e' 'one'. Thus the approach or strategy that the teacher used will only work with a limited vocabulary since graphemes and phonemes do not necessarily correlate in English.

For the actual teaching of 'Reading', I found that the teacher was heavily dependent on using an Information Communication Technology (ICT) programme for reading purposes. As described in Chapter four, the teacher uses the 'Talking Stories' programme for what she defines as reading. Although each text has a reader, or small 'book' matching the text, the teacher uses the smart board exclusively for reading purposes. The reader is the prescribed book that learners are supposed to use for reading purposes. There are six readers prescribed for Grade one, beginning with level one and ending with level six. As learners progress from one level to the next, they are exposed to more vocabulary and a longer form of text that follows a narrative structure. 'Talking stories' therefore begins with pictures, words, short simple sentences and progresses to longer sentences in paragraph form. The time spent on the two texts in the 'Talking stories' programme that learners were exposed to during my five week observation period was a total of 5 hours and 42 minutes. During the interview, the teacher explained that the learners would only read from their 'readers' in the second term. She firmly believes that in order for learners to become proficient readers, they have to know all their words first. As explained in Chapter four, learners are denied the opportunity to predict what is going to happen in the text and are merely reading single 'words' which are reinforced by the voice of the reader as it appears on the smart board. Thus, the teacher sees word recognition as an important stepping stone and gains satisfaction only if and when learners can say the words irrespective of whether they can read and understand what is being read.

Furthermore, because learners read from the smart board only, they are not exposed to the actual handling of books and thus miss out on learning about covers and title pages as well as other features of how books function. The extensive amount of time spent on two short texts meant that learners were exposed to very limited vocabulary through their reading texts. Learners were exposed to a total of eleven vocabulary items in the first text and in the second text learners were exposed to twelve vocabulary items. Although the teacher and the programme itself refers to these texts as 'stories', in no way are they recognizable as 'stories', because they do not follow a narrative structure. I observed eight reading lessons during which time the two texts mentioned above were repeated in every lesson. The vocabulary that is taught to the learners is limited, because the same words are repeated on a daily basis. While Information Communication Technology (ICT) has much potential, the teacher does not seem to exploit this potential with regard to reading. The smart board replaces physical books and the teacher uses the smart board to emphasise reading as a word by word process thus reinforcing word recognition and neglecting comprehension. Exposure to books and stories was very limited.

Although the literature suggests that reading and writing are interdependent and should be integrated (Ramsberg, 1998: 1-2), I found that the teacher approaches reading and writing as separate skills which are taught through distinct practices and activities. When the learners write, the emphasis is not placed on meaning making or composing. The teacher would always first tell the learners what they should write and then would model the practice for learners by doing it herself before learners had to do it. The teacher's view with regard to the learners' writing was linked to writing as a product of reproducing exactly what was on the board. Thus, 'writing' in this Grade one classroom refers to accurate copying of words and punctuation with very little emphasis on the construction of meaning.

The literacy practices which the teacher is engaged in and which learners are engaged in contrast with a sociocultural perspective of literacy as a context embedded, meaningful set of activities. Reading and writing are reduced to decontextualised technical skills of letter and word recognition for reading and accurate copying of letters and single words for writing. Such practices also contrast with an emergent literacy perspective that prioritises book handling, play reading, as well as scribbling, drawing and invented spelling to convey meaning.

During my five weeks of observation, the Grade one teacher encountered various problems with regard to language in literacy teaching. As previously mentioned, the teacher has a culturally diverse class, the majority of whom are EAL speakers. The majority of the learners in this Grade one class are Afrikaans speaking with the minority being English and Xhosa speaking. The medium of instruction is English and the biggest challenge for the Grade one teacher is the fact that the majority of the learners in her class are not taught in their mother tongue. In order to create an environment that would be conducive for learning for all of the learners in the class, the teacher engaged in a number of strategies in working with non English HL learners. The teacher would reformulate and model the correct use of standard South African English by repeating the sentence for the learner. In doing this, she used positive reinforcement so that learners' did not feel afraid to answer questions and this enhanced the learners' motivation to actively engage in lessons.

The teacher also used code-switching as a practice in her communication with learners. I found that even though code-switching was time consuming, both the learners and the teacher would benefit from it. The teacher used code-switching to support learning by first giving an instruction to the learners in English and then translating it into Afrikaans, thus for curriculum access (Ferguson, 2003 as cited in Makoni & Meinhof, 2003). The teacher also used it as a strategy to discipline the learners by informing them that they had to sit quietly and listen, thus for classroom management (Ferguson, 2003 as cited in Makoni & Meinhof, 2003). Once again the Xhosa-speaking learners were exposed to another language, Afrikaans, here. It thus did not benefit them in the same way as it did for the Afrikaans and English speaking learners. The English and Afrikaans learners were at an advantage because they were exposed to their HL, unlike the Xhosa-speaking learners who were at a greater disadvantage because they were exposed to two languages other than their HL. Therefore, code-switching to Afrikaans in this Grade one class benefited the majority of twenty five Afrikaans-speaking learners as well as twelve English-speaking learners but not the three Xhosa-speaking learners who may be further excluded.

I found that the Xhosa-speaking learners were the ones who struggled the most and the reason for this was that the teacher was unable to draw on her own bilingualism in English and

Afrikaans to assist Xhosa speakers not being proficient in Xhosa. Thus, language in this Grade one classroom is seen and experienced as a barrier to both the teacher and the learners.

One Xhosa-speaking boy displayed symptoms of anxiety, disobedience, lack of concentration and inattentiveness. In addition, the quality of his work regressed considerably over my period of observation. In my view, the teacher should design strategies and interventions to help the Xhosa-speaking learners more. If this is not done the gap between literacy achievements for the Xhosa-speaking learners and others will widen and widen as time goes by. The teacher's goal in her teaching practices did not appear to be prioritized in terms of developing the English language proficiency of Xhosa speaking learners as comprehensively and as quickly as possible. The teacher acknowledged in the interview discussion that it was more difficult for the Xhosa speaking learners to cope with English as the language of learning and teaching, because of her own lack of knowledge of Xhosa. Overall my research in this Grade one classroom confirms that even though South African language research and the language policy reflect the importance of home languages, the teacher's practices value English monolingualism.

My initial rationale for choosing the research site was because it was a well functioning Quintile one school with the provincial Grade three systemic results showing that the school was performing well in both literacy and numeracy. At the time I only knew about the Grade three results and did not know about the Grade six results but I assumed that the Grade six results would be just as good. However, this turned out not to be the case since the Grade six learners were not performing well in the systemic assessment. This was revealed during my fieldwork at a staff meeting which I attended where the principal expressed his disappointment about the Grade six results of the systemic testing. It appeared that the principal and the staff did not know why the Grade three learners were performing well in contrast to the Grade six learners who were underperforming.

Based on the Grade three results, I chose a school where I expected to find good literacy teaching practices. However the findings drawn from my observation period did not confirm this. I would like to consider possible explanations for the good results of the Grade three learners despite the relatively superficial, skills based approach to literacy teaching. On the one hand, one must acknowledge that this is a well functioning school. During staff meetings, it came

across that the principal and teachers are very committed to the school and particularly, the learners. The Grade one teacher is always physically present in her class and was seldom absent. Teaching occurs throughout the school day even though the tasks are very limited. On the other hand, it could be argued that the teacher drills learners in technical skills of literacy. This might be sufficient in the Foundation Phase in order to pass the Grade three systemic assessments where literacy tasks are very limited. However this is not sufficient to enable learners to become proficient readers and thus to give them access to the curriculum in higher grades. This could explain how the literacy results decline as learners move up through the grades and the overemphasis on decoding and accurate copying might be seen as a negative backwash effect of the systemic assessments of literacy.

Such a conclusion is only tentative though as this research is limited by the fact that it is a small scale study. One can thus not make large claims based on its findings, nor can one generalise from the study. Further limitations which need to be highlighted follow. Firstly, I would have preferred to observe the teaching practices of both Grade one teachers at the school. This however was not possible, because of time constraints. Secondly, I would have liked to conduct this research throughout the school year. Since I was only able to focus on the teacher's teaching practices in the first few weeks of the first term, I am not able to consider how such practices might have changed as the year went on. In the first term, the teacher did not allow learners to read books until they were ready and said that they were only going to read from their books in the second term. She also claimed that she would code-switch much less in the second half of the year. Such claims would need to be checked against practice.

I believe that there is a great need for follow up research in the field of literacy teaching in the Foundation Phase in South African schools. Recommendations from such research could be used to enhance academic achievements particularly in the field of teaching reading and writing. Further research could be undertaken in the following areas.

- Exploration of teachers' beliefs and perceptions regarding the teaching of reading.
- A critical investigation of how children are taught to read in two or more languages in the South African context.

- An investigation into how teacher training institutions could enhance the teaching of reading and writing in schools.
- A study on the methodologies of teaching reading and writing in South African schools.

After reflecting on my findings, I offer the following tentative recommendations:

The teacher should select relevant reading materials according to the level of the learners. The learners should be exposed to a far wider range of written texts which should include 'real' books, stories, non-fiction texts and graded readers.

There needs to be a careful consideration of materials utilized in the classroom. In this study an over-reliance on the computer programme 'Talking Stories' and worksheets produced limited opportunities for the development of proficient readers and writers.

Strategies such as code-switching for curriculum access, reformulation of learners' non-standard language and bilingual reading texts can be used more extensively to support literacy and language learning in the multilingual classroom.

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## **APPENDIX 1: Principal Information Sheet**

The Principal  
Boswell Primary School

23 November 2009

Dear Mr. Simpson

### **Request for permission to conduct research on Literacy teaching in Grade 1 in Boswell Primary School**

My name is Eleanor De Cerff, and I am conducting research for the purposes of obtaining a Masters Degree at the University of Cape Town. My research aims to study how a Grade 1 teacher of learners who are not proficient in English (the Language of learning and teaching), teaches literacy in the first term. The enormity of problems in literacy learning specifically in South Africa has prompted me to explore the topic in more depth and to become more knowledgeable with regard to classroom based literacy in a Grade 1 class in a low-income school. There are various problems that are related to literacy teaching as well as debates around the best methods of teaching literacy. Very little classroom based research on literacy teaching in South Africa has been done. It is however commonly recognised that the approaches used in teaching contribute enormously to the quality of education in schools. The study will therefore seek to explore what view the Grade one teacher has on literacy and how it is acquired, as well as discover how her beliefs and values are manifested in her actual teaching of literacy.

My study aims to explore the following:

- How does the teacher implement the literacy curriculum to address the diverse range of learners in her classroom?
- What are her views on literacy teaching?
- How is the teacher supported to teach literacy?

With your permission, this research will take place in February 2010 and will be conducted over a period of four weeks. I have also written a letter to Dr Smith at the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) to grant me permission to conduct this study at your school.

The data gathered to conduct this investigation will be in the form of classroom observations over the period of one month and observations in phase and grade meetings. In the classroom observation I will sit in the Grade 1 classroom for the full day, each day of the week. Observation will be captured in fieldnotes as well as selected video-recordings. At least four hours of recording will be captured in the second – fourth weeks. A semi-structured interview

will be conducted at the beginning of the fieldwork, which will be audio-recorded. In addition to this, document collection will include the teacher's year plan, work schedule and lesson plans as well as examples of learner's attempts at written text and of reading texts used.

Participation is voluntary, and the school will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way for choosing to participate or not participate in the study. At no stage in the research will the identity or location of the school, the identity of the grade 1 teacher, the identities of any of its staff or the identities of the learners be revealed. The school and all research subjects will be referred to using pseudonyms. The school may withdraw permission for conducting the research at any time.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this research, I can be contacted telephonically at 079 494 4904 or by e-mail at [leanordecerff@gmail.com](mailto:leanordecerff@gmail.com)

If you are willing to grant permission for the research to be conducted in your school, please sign in the space below.

Yours sincerely,

Eleanor De Cerff

The signature below grants permission for the abovementioned research to be carried out at this school.

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Principal                      Date

STAMP

## **Appendix 2: Teacher Information Sheet**

The Teacher  
Boswell Primary School

23 November 2009

Dear Mrs Braam

### **Request for permission to conduct research on Literacy teaching in your class at Boswell Primary School**

My name is Eleanor De Cerff, and I am conducting research for the purposes of obtaining a Masters Degree at the University of Cape Town. My research aims to study how a Grade 1 teacher of learners who are not proficient in English (the Language of learning and teaching), teaches literacy in the first term.

The enormity of problems in literacy learning specifically in South Africa has prompted me to explore the topic in more depth and to become more knowledgeable with regard to classroom based literacy in a Grade 1 class in a low-income school. There are various problems that are related to literacy teaching as well as debates around the best methods of teaching literacy. Very little classroom based research on literacy teaching in South Africa has been done. It is however commonly recognised that the approaches used in teaching contribute enormously to the quality of education in schools. My study aims to explore the following:

- How do you as the teacher implement the literacy curriculum to address the diverse range of learners in your classroom?
- What are your views on literacy teaching?
- What type of support do you as the teacher receive to teach literacy?

It would be highly appreciated if you could grant me permission to conduct my research in your classroom in February 2010, over a period of four weeks in which I will sit in on all your classes for the full day, each day of the week. Participation in this research would entail classroom observations and observations in phase and grade meetings if permitted. With your permission a semi-structured interview which will be audio-recorded will be conducted at the beginning of the fieldwork. Observation will be captured in fieldnotes as well as selected video-recordings. Once again, only with your permission, at least four hours of recording will be captured in the second to fourth weeks. In addition to this, document collection will include your year plan, work schedule and lesson plans as well as examples of learner's attempts at written text and of reading texts.

Participation is voluntary, and you will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way for choosing to participate or not participate in the study. At no stage in the research will the identity or location of the school, the identity of you as the participating teacher, the identities of any of its staff and the identities of the learners be revealed. All the data (video recordings, interview material and fieldnotes) will not be seen or heard by any person except myself and possibly my supervisor and will only be processed by me. The school and any research subjects referred to will be given pseudonyms. You may withdraw permission for conducting the research at any time.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this research, I can be contacted telephonically at 079 494 4904 or by e-mail [eleanordecerff@gmail.com](mailto:eleanordecerff@gmail.com)

If you are willing to grant permission for the research to be conducted in your classroom, please sign in the space below.

Yours sincerely,

Eleanor De Cerff

University of Cape Town

### **Appendix 3: Informed Consent Forms**

#### **3. a: Consent Form – Classroom Observation**

I \_\_\_\_\_ consent to being observed by Eleanor De Cerff for her study on how learners who are not proficient in English (the Language of learning and teaching) are being taught literacy in the first term. I understand that she will be conducting her research in my classroom over a period of four weeks in which she will be sitting in on all my classes for the full day, each day of the week. In addition to this, document collection will include my year plan, work schedule and lesson plans as well as examples of learner's attempts at written text and of reading texts.

I understand that:

- Participation in this study is voluntary and that I will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way for choosing to participate or not participate in the study
- At no stage in the research will the identity or location of the school, the identity of myself as the participating teacher and the identities of the learners be revealed
- All information gathered from the study will remain confidential
- Only the researcher and possibly her supervisor will have access to the research materials.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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#### **3. b: Consent Form – Interview**

I \_\_\_\_\_ consent to being interviewed by Eleanor De Cerff for her study on how learners who are not proficient in English (the language of learning and teaching) are being taught literacy in the first term.

I understand that:

- Participation in this interview is voluntary
- I may refuse to answer any questions I would prefer not to
- I may withdraw from the study at any time
- No information that may identify me will be included in the research report, and my responses will remain confidential.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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**3. c: Consent Form – Audio-Recording of Interview**

I \_\_\_\_\_ consent to my interview being recorded with Eleanor De Cerff for her study on how learners who are not proficient in English (the language of learning and teaching) are being taught literacy in the first term.

I understand that:

- The recording will not be heard by any person other than the researcher and possibly her supervisor
- I will be given a false name (pseudonym) to be used in the transcription of the interaction and my name will not be revealed in discussion of the research.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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**3. d: Consent Form – Video recording of lessons**

I \_\_\_\_\_ consent to some of my lessons being video recorded by Eleanor De Cerff for her study on how learners who are not proficient in English (the language of learning and teaching) are being taught in literacy in the first term.

I understand that:

- The video recordings will not be seen by any person other than the researcher and possibly her supervisor
- I will be given a false name (pseudonym) to be used in the transcription of the interaction and my name will not be revealed in discussion of the research.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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**3. e: Consent Form – sitting in on grade and phase meetings**

I \_\_\_\_\_ consent to Eleanor De Cerff to sit in on grade and phase meetings in the Foundation Phase for her study on how learners who are not

proficient in English (the language of learning and teaching) are being taught in literacy in the first term.

I understand that:

- Participation in this study is voluntary
- No data will be collected during these meetings

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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University of Cape Town

#### **Appendix 4: Questions for interview with Grade one teacher**

##### **Background questions:**

1. When did you start teaching at this school? (and where did you teach before that?)
2. Have you always taught Grade 1 and Foundation Phase?
3. Where and when did you receive your teacher training?
4. How would you describe your approach to literacy teaching with Grade 1 learners?
5. In your experience as a Grade 1 teacher, what challenges or difficulties are you faced with?
6. What is your view on the use of codeswitching (switching from one language to another in teaching)
7. I have seen you do group work. How do you group your learners?
8. Do you think there are specific challenges for teaching literacy to learners who are not taught in their mother tongue?
9. In order for you to teach literacy to a diverse range of learners, what kind of support do you receive?
10. I have seen Mrs Hildebrandt taking certain learners from your class. Is she the special needs teacher and what does she do with the learners?
11. What other forms of intervention takes place?
12. I know that you have a lot of resources in your class and you use the 'smart board' often. Specifically, what do you think are the advantages and/or disadvantages of using "Talking Stories" in helping children to read and recognize words?
13. I have seen the readers, more or less when will the learners begin reading from their readers?
14. What do you think makes this school successful in the grade 3 literacy tests?
15. Are there any questions you'd like to ask me?

## APPENDIX 5: TRANSCRIPTION OF AUDIO-RECORDING OF TEACHER

### INTERVIEW

E: Good morning Baker, thank you for having the interview with me. Can you tell me when did you start teaching at this school and where did you teach before that?

T: Good morning teacher Eleanor, I'm Tammy Baker and I've been teaching at Boswell Primary for the last five years now and before that I was at Logo Primary also in Brownville and I've moved around a little bit. I went to London and I've been teaching in Kimberly but I've been in the teaching profession plus minus twenty plus years now.

E: That is a long time and how long have you taught in London?

T: I was in London only for six months, I had a two year contract but because of personal reasons I had to come back and uhm, I also had a nursery class in London so I didn't have a Grade one class.

E: I have noticed that you have three Xhosa speaking learners in your class and you said the majority are Afrikaans speaking, what is your view on the use of codeswitching (switching from one language to another in teaching?)

T: If it's the beginning of the year, like now we just started out January till maybe June, you can use the codeswitching because that child will actually understand you much better in his home language, which is Afrikaans and if it's a Xhosa speaking child, I usually get in some children to come and help or I get in the Xhosa speaking teachers at the school to come and assist us with the child, but uhm, it's much more difficult with the Xhosa speaking than the Afrikaans speaking child, but the codeswitching helps to a certain extent. I only use code-switching up to June because after June you can't still use that, it takes up a lot of your time so they must know I'm in an English class now and this is my language for the rest of my schooling years. But I usually find that if you use code-switching in the first half of the year then it helps and you don't really need it after that. Code-switching really does work for me because it improves the way the learners talk and it helps them to understand instructions and it also helps when with discipline problems. It's just a pity that the Xhosa-speaking learners cannot benefit from it.

E: Ok, on that topic do you think there are specific challenges for teaching literacy to learners who are not taught in their mother tongue?

T: There's lots of challenges, because firstly, it's very frustrating to the child and secondly the child, I don't think I would like to come to a place if people don't understand me. So the child is frustrated everyday and you as a teacher have to get alternative things to do or methods to assist that child in what you doing every day. Another thing is I cannot teach in Xhosa because I cannot speak Xhosa, but it is however possible to teach in Afrikaans because I can speak and understand the language.

E: I've seen you use the little blue books that you use for reading and activities. I've also seen that you have a lot of readers in your class, more or less when will the learners begin reading from their readers?

T: What we've done up till now, I've been concentrating on my Phonics sounds and if they have their phonic sounds and if they know their phonic sounds then I will give them their readers as such, but they still, that reader that they have, that they will be receiving is the same as the talking stories on the board. So they have their reader of their talking stories and what they have in their little reading book, I copy the stories and I put it in their books, so they have it as such in that book already. They don't have the original reader that we use in our groups on the carpet, we use it there, but when we start when I will sit down with them and say listen, group number one you taking home your books today, whatever that will happen next term. So they have been introduced to the stories already, on the white board, in their little reading book, on the carpet, but next term I will officially start handing out this books and tick off, no you've done this, no you've done that, but now reading is just getting to know the book, this is the cover, how to page, go to the library, just getting to know words, things like that.

E: What do you think makes this school successful in the Grade 3 literacy tests?

T: I think the school is successful because we always like we brainstorm. We as the foundation phase and also the intermediate phase we come together and we say listen, what are we gonna do this year, at the beginning of the year. What are we gonna do to support our children and what game do you have to share, whatever we have we share and we share our ideas so we sit and we brainstorm and we say listen we didn't do so well, what can we do, or we did well, but what can we do to improve. So working as a unit also helps and and and putting the child first helps. And deciding at the beginning of the year, listen this is what we gonna do for this term and not you just working on your own. This is what we as a group gonna do this term and making a difference is also having the talking stories here, it plays a major role, doing it and having uhm, our management also helps us a lot because I mean we all have our ups and downs but you can go, they approachable, you can go to them and say listen I have a problem here how do you think how can you assist me and they'll get outside help and get people to assist you. The parents helping at the school, plays a big role because it gives you that extra hours to a day because sometimes you don't have that extra hours to a day and you have to go to a meeting this afternoon then you can slot in that parent and know that child had support. We also have a system at the school, that if a child struggles in the intermediate phase he can come down when we have our phonics and we have our literacy time. They can come down, they can come down to us in our reading time or they can slot in with a class whether his 15, 16 they can come and sit there and do the basics with us to understand and that's also for the Xhosa speaking children, maybe they come from another re another like uh, KwaZulu Natal or whatever and they don't understand what we doing here, so we get the basics back to them, give the basics back to them by letting them join in our literacy in the foundation phase, it depends what age the child is. So the Grade 1's, 2's and 3's, they help.

**APPENDIX 6: Lesson Plan**

**Boswell Primary School**

**Foundation Phase**

**Lesson Plan**

<b>Learning Area: Literacy</b>		<b>Grade: 1F + 1M Date; 15.02.10</b>	
<b>Lesson: Myself</b>		<b>19.02.10</b>	
<b>Time: 1 hr 50 minutes</b>		<b>Week: 6</b>	
<b>Duration: 1 week</b>			
<b>hours per week</b>			
<b>Learning Outcomes</b>		<b>Assessment Standards</b>	
<b>Integration with other learning Areas</b>			
<b>FAL</b>	<b>Children get to integrate with all the learning areas e.g. Life Skills and Numeracy /Social Sciences and Arts and Culture, Discovering communication. Rhymes and new songs – music activity, drama. Life Skills</b>		
<b>Linking with previous lesson(s)</b>	<b>Linking with next lesson(s)</b>		
Doing phonic sounds-individual and group /the alphabet	Coping words from labels and logos as above, Source labels such as Mac Donald’s, Coke Cola ,Revising Auditory perception, auditory memory	Source newspaper articles for events in the community, country, world e.g. 2010 World Cup	
<b>Core knowledge, skills and values</b>			
<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>Skills</b>	<b>Values</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to do individual, and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is very important to</li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The alphabet</li> <li>• new sounds, e.g. Dripping water</li> <li>• Getting to use language correctly</li> <li>• Riddles</li> <li>• Interprets and identify objects and pictures</li> <li>• Make own story</li> <li>• Predict from the cover of the book what the story is all about</li> <li>• Recognise similar and different sounds</li> <li>• Adverts from magazines and newspapers</li> <li>• Rhymes'/and songs on CD</li> <li>• Phonics awareness</li> <li>• Copy one line from the storey in creative writing book</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<p><b>group</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The correct pronunciation of new words, they learn to comprehend and to express them within their groups work.</b></li> <li>• <b>Listen without interruption</b></li> <li>• <b>Write from left to right</b></li> <li>• <b>Holds pencil and crayon correctly</b></li> <li>• <b>Holds the book the right way up and turns the pages correctly</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>listen, to follow instructions and to complete any given task. READING must be done daily and they must practise their handwriting.</b></p>
<p><b>Learning Activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>We will introduce the different ways of communication to the to the children, e.g. newspaper, books, CDS computer, radio, pictures</b></li> <li>• <b>Worksheets</b></li> <li>• <b>Smart board activities</b></li> <li>• <b>Rhymes</b></li> </ul>		<p><b>Planned Assessments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Teachers assessment</b></li> <li>• <b>Peer assessment</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Learning Activities</b></p> <p><b><u>Group Work</u></b></p> <p><b>Group 1; activity using flashcards /introducing new words/adding a new word everyday. Shared reading, Reading book for them to illustrate. Write their first sentence, practise it.</b></p> <p><b>Alphabet- Jolly Phonics</b></p> <p><b>Words with an a sound</b></p>		



Smart board	
Readers	
Worksheets	
Flashcards	Group Assessment
Pencil	
Colours	Whole class activity
Words	
Vowel sounds	
Constants	
<b>Songs</b>	
<b>Rhymes</b>	
<b>Action Songs</b>	
<u>Portfolio activity</u>	
<b>Worksheets on the above activities -</b>	

<p><b>Teacher reflection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did the learner's listening skills improve</li> <li>• Did I reach all my goals</li> <li>• Was the given lessons interesting</li> <li>• Did learners reading / hand writing improve.</li> <li>• Did I reach the results that I expected with my assessment</li> <li>• Did the learners finish on time</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Expand opportunities</u></b></p> <p>Start identifying the struggling readers /get a parent to support them in reading - twice a week</p> <p>Help to read - supporting the individual struggling learner.</p> <p>Rhymes and songs</p>

University of Cape Town

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