

**Written Language Expression
in Linguistically Diverse Classrooms
in the Western Cape:
A Case Study**

by

Indira Navsaria

Student Number: NVSIND001

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

**Master of Science
in Speech-Language Pathology**

By full dissertation.

**Division of Communication Sciences and Disorders
Faculty of Health Sciences
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN**

Date of Submission: JUNE 2010
Supervisors: Prof. Harsha Kathard & Dr. Michelle Pascoe
Division of Communication Sciences and Disorders

DECLARATION

I, Indira Navsaria, hereby declare that the work on which this dissertation/thesis is based is my original work (except where acknowledgements indicate otherwise) and that neither the whole work nor any part of it has been, is being, or is to be submitted for another degree in this or any other university. The referencing format used in this thesis: *Harvard – author date convention*.

I empower the university to reproduce for the purpose of research either the whole or any portion of the contents in any manner whatsoever.

Signature:

Date:

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the current performance, values, present and further opportunities and barriers to written language in ordinary, linguistically diverse intermediate phase classrooms in the Western Cape. A single, within-site case study was conducted in one grade 5 and one grade 6 classroom in an urban school. Two teachers, 65 learners and 19 parents participated in this study. Multiple data sources and methods included questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, written language sample analysis and observations. This case study aimed to provide in-depth information on written language. It was found that none of the learners in either grade were meeting all the writing outcomes for the preceding grade. Although written language was highly valued by all the participants, multiple level barriers at the school/education system level, social (home/community) level and individual (learner) level were impeding the written language development of learners. These barriers included limited training and lack of support for teachers, limited reading and writing opportunities at school and home, limited resources at the school and lack of parental support. Present opportunities for the development of written language were insufficient and participants identified further opportunities to promote the learners' written language development at a school system level, social level and individual level. These included increased reading and writing opportunities at school and home, increased resources at the school, increased parental support and safe nurturing home environments. The role of speech-language therapists in ordinary classrooms in South Africa is discussed and future research plans are outlined.

Key Words: *barriers, case study, classrooms, linguistically diverse, opportunities, speech-language therapists, written language*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people have guided and helped me through this entire process and I would like to express my sincere appreciation as follows:

- My supervisors Harsha Kathard and Michelle Pascoe for their guidance and support.
- Zahra who was a wonderful research assistant during the data collection and analysis process.
- Taybah for her great work with the transcripts.
- Martha and Mikki for their help with the editing.
- Sandra and Sharlene for their assistance with the written language sample analysis.
- Pradeep for taking time out of his busy schedule to help with the photocopying, video tapes, formatting, printing and advice and support during the research process.
- Heather and Raymondi for their encouragement and support during this process.
- My two girls for always understanding that mummy needs to have time to work on her 'masters'.
- My dad who is no longer with me but who has always placed tremendous value on education and instilled this principle in me. This had motivated me to go on and complete this process amongst the various other daily tasks that I face.
- All the participants in this study who were so willing of their time to contribute to this research process.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
<i>Declaration Page</i> -----	2
<i>Abstract</i> -----	3
<i>Acknowledgements</i> -----	4
<i>Table of Contents</i> -----	5
<i>List of Tables and Figures</i> -----	10
<i>List of Abbreviations</i> -----	12
<i>Glossary of Terms</i> -----	13
<i>CHAPTER 1: Rationale and Situational Context</i> -----	16
1.1. Introduction -----	16
1.2. Orientation to this study -----	16
1.3. Rationale for this study -----	17
1.4. Situational context -----	24
1.5. Summary-----	29
<i>CHAPTER 2: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review</i> -----	30
2.1. Introduction-----	30
2.2. Theoretical framework of literacy as a social practice -----	30
2.2.1. Skills-based approach to literacy-----	31
2.2.2. Social literacy-----	35
2.2.3. School system vs. social views of literacy -----	38
2.3. Value of literacy-----	42
2.4. Opportunities and barriers to written language development -----	44
2.4.1. Written language learning in classrooms-----	45
2.4.2. Language competence of teachers-----	45
2.4.3. Learning in a second or other language -----	46
2.4.4. Literacy level of parents -----	49
2.4.5. Parental support and involvement-----	50
2.4.6. Foundation skills-----	50
2.4.7. Socio-economic factors -----	51
2.5. Summary-----	52

CHAPTER 3: Methodology -----	53
3.1. Introduction-----	53
3.2. Aims of the study-----	53
3.3. Research design-----	54
3.4. Sampling-----	56
3.4.1. Sampling of the case-----	56
3.4.2. Sampling of participants -----	57
3.5. Participants-----	57
3.5.1. Criteria for selection of teachers-----	57
3.5.2. Criteria for selection of learners -----	58
3.5.3. Criteria for selection of parents/guardians-----	58
3.6. Preselection process-----	59
3.7. Ethical considerations-----	59
3.7.1. Beneficence-----	59
3.7.2. Non-maleficence-----	60
3.7.3. Autonomy-----	60
3.7.4. Justice-----	60
3.8. Site selection and recruitment-----	61
3.9. Study procedure-----	61
3.10. Research instruments and apparatuses -----	62
3.11. Pilot Study-----	65
3.12. Data collection methods and procedures -----	66
3.12.1. Questionnaires-----	67
3.12.2. Interviews-----	68
3.12.3. Focus Groups-----	70
3.12.4. Documents /written language samples-----	71
3.12.5. Observations-----	72
3.13. Data Analysis-----	73
3.13.1. Teacher, learner and parent questionnaires-----	73

3.13.2. Interviews (teachers and learners) and focus groups (learners and parents) -----	73
3.13.3. Written language samples-----	75
3.13.4. Observations-----	77
3.14. Rigour and trustworthiness-----	78
3.15. Summary-----	80
CHAPTER 4: Results -----	81
4.1. Introduction-----	81
4.2. Contextualizing the classrooms-----	82
4.2.1. Profiles of the participants -----	82
4.3. Current performance of the learners’ written language-----	86
4.3.1. Written language concerns-----	86
4.3.2. Written language sample analysis-----	89
4.3.3. Meeting written language outcomes -----	92
4.4. Written language highly valued-----	95
4.5. Barriers and opportunities to written language development -----	97
4.5.1. School system barriers vs. school system opportunities -----	99
4.5.2. Individual barriers vs. individual opportunities -----	110
4.5.3. Social barriers vs. social opportunities -----	114
4.6. Summary -----	119
CHAPTER 5: Discussion -----	120
5.1. Introduction -----	120
5.2. Current performance of the learners’ written language -----	120
5.3. Classroom value vs. world value-----	125
5.4. Multiple level barriers vs. multiple level opportunities -----	128
5.4.1. Education/school system barriers and opportunities -----	128
5.4.2. Social barriers and opportunities -----	146
5.4.3. Individual barriers and opportunities-----	155
5.5. The way forward-----	158
5.6. Summary -----	159

CHAPTER 6: Conclusions, Implications and Limitations -----	161
6.1. Introduction-----	161
6.2. Conclusions -----	161
6.3. Implications of the study-----	162
6.3.1. School system implications-----	163
6.3.2. Social/community implications-----	170
6.3.3. Individual learner implications-----	173
6.3.4. Implications for speech-language therapists -----	173
6.4. Limitations of the study-----	176
6.5. Researcher reflections-----	177
6.6. Future research-----	177
6.7. Reporting and implementation-----	179
6.8. Summary-----	179
Reference List -----	181

Appendices

Appendix A1: Ethics Approval from University of Cape Town Research Ethics Committee

Appendix A2: Permission to Conduct Research from WCED

Appendix A3: Written Permission from the School Principal

Appendix A4: Written Permission from Chairperson of School Governing Body

Appendix B1: Information Letter and Informed Consent: Teachers

*Appendix B2: Information Sheet about the Project: School Principal/ SGB Chairperson/
Teacher*

Appendix B3: Information Letter and Informed Consent: Parents/Guardians

Appendix B4: Information Letter and Informed Consent: Parents/Guardians for Learners

Appendix B5: Information Letter and Informed Assent: Learners

Appendix C1: Classroom Observation Schedule

Appendix C2: Teacher Questionnaire

Appendix C3: Interview Schedule-Individual: Teachers

Appendix C4: Learner Questionnaire

Appendix C5: Interview Schedule- Individual and Focus Group: Learners

Appendix C6: Parent/Guardian Questionnaire

Appendix C7: Focus Group Question Guide: Parents/Guardians

Appendix C8: Written Language Analysis Schedule 1: Grade 5

Appendix C9: Written Language Analysis Schedule 2: Grade 6

Appendix D: Suggested Pamphlet for policy Makers

Appendix E1: Grade 5 Written Language Sample - 1

Appendix E2: Grade 5 Written Language Sample - 2

Appendix E3: Grade 6 Written Language Sample -1

Appendix E4: Grade 6 Written Language Sample - 2

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

TABLES	PAGE
Table 3.1.: Summary of objectives, participants and instruments in this study	56
Table 3.2.: Strategies to enhance design, rigour and trustworthiness	79
Table 4.1.: Education and employment details of participant parents	84
Table 4.2.: Teachers, learners and parents’ written language concerns	86
Table 4.3.: Grade 5 samples in relation to the expected outcomes for grade 4	91
Table 4.4.: Grade 6 samples in relation to the expected outcomes for grade 5	92
Table 4.5.: Barriers and opportunities to written language development amongst the learners	98

FIGURES	PAGE
Figure 1.1.: The development of literacy	21
Figure 2.1.: The interrelated processes constituting literacy	31
Figure 2.2.: Frith’s Model of Literacy	31
Figure 2.3.: The Basic Structure of the Speech Processing and Literacy System (From Stackhouse & Wells, 1997)	34
Figure 2.4.: Top-Down Processing (adapted from Stackhouse & Wells, 1997)	35
Figure 2.5.: New literacy studies focus	38
Figure 3.1.: Data management and analysis process	78
Figure 4.1.: Structural framework of the results	81
Figure 4.2.: Learners’ current written language performance	86
Figure 4.3.: Participants’ values of written language	95

Figure 5.1.: The current performance, values, barriers and opportunities to written language development	128
Figure 5.2.: Summary of tripartite factors promoting written language development in ordinary linguistically diverse classrooms	159
Figure 6.1.: Proposed role of SLTs in ordinary linguistically diverse South African classrooms	175

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASHA	American Speech-Hearing Association (ASHA, 2001).
BICS	Basic interpersonal communication skills (Cummins, 2003:122).
CALP	Cognitive academic language proficiency (Cummins, 2003:122).
DoE	Department of Education (National) (DoE, 2008:12).
EFL	English first language
ESOL	English-second (or other) language
L	Learner
LiEP	Language in Education Policy (DoE, 1997:2)
LoLT	Language of learning and teaching (DoE, 1997:2)
NGO	Non-Government Organisation (DoE, 2001:50)
NLS	New literacy studies (Street, 2003:77)
NRS	National Reading Strategy (DoE, 2008)
OBE	Outcomes-based education (WCED, 2002:1)
P	Parent
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (Centre for Evaluation & Assessment, 2006:3)
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement (WCED, 2006:1)
SA	South Africa
SGB	School Governing Body (DoE, 2003b:2)
SLT(s)	Speech- language therapist(s)
T	Teacher
WCED	Western Cape Education Department (Provincial) (WCED, 2009:1)
WHO	World Health Organisation (WHO, 1992)

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Bilingual

People who are fluent in two languages and use two languages on a daily basis (Owens, 2005:467). This may extend to writing as well.

Code mixing

The combined use of two linguistic systems in a conversation (Foley & Thompson, 2003:129). In this study the learners combined English and Afrikaans or English and IsiXhosa in their conversations.

Communication

Any means by which an individual relates experiences, ideas, knowledge and feelings to another. It includes speech, sign language, gestures and writing (Nicolosi et al, 1989:61).

First /Home language

The first language acquired in a bilingual (two languages) or multilingual (more than two languages) speaker. It is transmitted by the family as members of the indigenous language community in a given geographical-linguistic environment. It is also known as the mother tongue or native language. The first language may also be spoken more frequently than the second or other languages used by the speaker (Obanya, 2004:5).

Form teacher

The teacher who is responsible for managing a specific class of school children (Longman, 2010), noting attendance and writing up reports on the learners in that class. This teacher may also be responsible for teaching one or more learning areas in that class.

Language

Socially shared code or conventional system for representing concepts through the use of symbols and rule governed combinations of those symbols (Owens, 2005:470).

Linguistically diverse

A specific place e.g. a classroom, a city or a country where individuals from a variety of language groups may be found. These individuals speak a range of different languages thereby contributing to a pool of different languages that may be used in that specific place (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2002:9).

Multifunctional team

The district-based support team comprising of staff from provincial district, regional and head offices and from special schools that evaluate programmes, diagnose effectiveness and suggest modifications, thereby supporting teaching and learning at schools (Education white paper 6: DoE, 2001:29)

Multilingual

The term that describes the use of more than two languages in an environment or by an individual. In a multilingual environment there may be different individuals speaking different languages, whereas a multilingual speaker is one individual who is able to speak more than two languages (DoE, 2002:4).

Ordinary Classrooms

The term used to refer to classrooms in ordinary mainstream Government schools and not to classrooms in 'special schools' (DoE, 2001:15).

Outcomes

The required expectations in different learning areas that learners need to achieve in a grade (DoE, 2002:2).

Outcomes-based education (OBE)

An integrated system of educational programs that aligns specific student outcomes, instructional methods, and assessment (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 2002: 1)

Reading

The processes by which one constructs meaning from printed symbols. Although a number of interrelated processes are involved, reading can be divided into two general components – decoding and comprehension (ASHA, 2001:168).

Speech

The dynamic neuromuscular process of producing speech sounds for communication and is a verbal means of transmissions (Owens, 2005:473)

Speech – Language Therapist (SLT)

An individual with an accredited degree in speech and language pathology who is able to diagnose and manage speech, language and voice disorders (Nicolosi, et al, 1989:246). In the USA, SLTs are referred to as speech-language pathologists (ASHA, 2001).

Writing outcomes

The required expectations for writing in a learning area, for example English, that a learner has to achieve in a grade. Writing outcomes in the areas of presentation, paragraph levels, sentence levels, word levels and narrative structures are assessed in the RNCS (DoE, 2002:78-92).

Writing processes

The cognitive-linguistic and motor acts that are involved when producing written texts (ASHA, 2001:169).

Written language

Set of phonological (sounds), syntactical (form) and semantic (content/meaning) rules represented by orthographic features (Nicolosi et al, 1989: 142). It also refers to reading and writing and related processes (ASHA, 2001:355)

Written language expression

The written language texts that are generated through the writing processes as a form of communicating meaning to the reader (ASHA, 2001:169).

1. CHAPTER ONE

RATIONALE AND SITUATIONAL CONTEXT

1.1. INTRODUCTION

This case study responded to the interrelated questions, “why are learners in disadvantaged, ordinary, intermediate phase classrooms in the urban Western Cape failing to acquire grade level outcomes in written language?” and “what are the opportunities for improving their written language outcomes?”

1.2. ORIENTATION TO THIS STUDY

To respond to the broad research question, the primary aims of this study were to explore and understand the current performance, values, present opportunities and barriers to written language in ordinary, linguistically diverse, intermediate phase classrooms in selected, urban Western Cape sites. A secondary aim was to identify further opportunities to promote written language development in the intermediate phase learners.

As used in this research report, current performance refers to the current status of the learners’ written language development, with regard to style, presentation and quality. Values refer to the importance of written language in the school system as well as in the home/community. Opportunities refer to the practices and support strategies that teachers, parents and learners use to develop written language amongst learners. Barriers refer to the challenges in the school system, home/community as well as within the learners, that impedes the development of written language in learners. Ordinary classrooms refer to classrooms in mainstream Government Schools and not to classrooms in ‘special schools’.

Teachers, learners and parents were interviewed to explore the current performance, values, opportunities and barriers to written language development for learners in both school and home/community contexts while further information was gathered through observation and document (written language sample) analysis. The

study aimed to provide data to inform policy and practice about strategies and support that would promote written language amongst intermediate phase learners in the Western Cape.

This study was part of a larger research project, “Enhancing Communication in Classrooms” which aimed to build knowledge about collaborative actions amongst speech language therapists (SLTs), teachers, learners and parents in improving communication and learning in linguistically diverse primary school classrooms in the Western Cape Metro (Kathard, 2005). The purpose of this study was to make a specific contribution regarding the aspect of written language and informing the role of SLTs in enhancing communication in classrooms.

As a part of the larger, long term study, this case study focused on a detailed investigation of written language in two intermediate phase classrooms in one urban school from which there had been a high number of referrals for SLT (speech-language therapy). It was in this phase that teachers were reporting significant concern about learners’ literacy skills which were critical in the assessment of all learning areas. Academic language learning problems had become visible as basic literacy skills were applied. The data was limited to two classrooms given the in-depth nature of the study, which included the class teachers, learners and parents/guardians. Although written language together with reading contributes to the process of literacy, the focus of this study was on written language expression as this was the identified area of concern.

1.3. RATIONALE FOR THIS STUDY

The impetus for this study arose from the high number of referrals that SLTs based at a newly-established University clinic in the community under study, had received. There were no SLT services in this community prior to the establishment of the University Clinic in 2004. When teachers were informed of the service assisting learners with communication difficulties, they referred learners in large numbers. The majority of referred learners, who were from intermediate phase classrooms, were reported to be experiencing problems with written language. Clearly, the situation warranted a more in-depth understanding and therefore the main study (Kathard, 2005) was initiated to understand the challenges and to explore possible intervention

strategies. While the problem was highlighted at this localized site, there was also grave concern that many children elsewhere in South Africa (SA) were experiencing reading and writing difficulties (Centre for Evaluation and Assessment, 2006).

In 2003, the South African Department of Education (DoE) investigated literacy levels among grade 3 learners and found that 61% of children did not have age-appropriate reading and writing skills (Centre for Evaluation and Assessment, 2006). It was also found that 18.5 % of learners in some provinces had to repeat grade 3 (Centre for Evaluation and Assessment, 2006). Furthermore, in 2006, the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) conducted reading literacy studies in 40 countries, including SA (Mullis et al, 2007). The South African results were the lowest in the study even though the South African grade 5 learners were being compared to grade 4 learners internationally (Scherman et al, 2008). This result indicated that South African learners were more than two years behind their international peers with reading.

As reading and written language are related, this would suggest that their written language skills are also delayed in comparison to their international peers. Reading and writing are important tools in other learning areas in later grades, so it is vital that effective interventions take place to help these children cope (Centre for Evaluation and Assessment, 2006). Current research in the Western Cape Education Department confirms that the serious concern about written language and reading remains and has variously been described as a national crisis (DoE, 2008).

The long term result of poor reading and writing skills among young learners is that they leave primary school with poor literacy levels, with problems continuing into secondary school, as evidenced by the poor matric results. These have steadily declined over the past six years. In 2003, the pass rate was 73.3 % but in 2009 it declined to 60.6 % (UNESCO, 2010). This has sparked concern throughout the country (Sapa, 2010). Poor reading and writing skills among learners have been cited as a primary cause of the poor matric results (UNESCO, 2010). Furthermore, poor long term outcomes have been linked to poor support received in schools (DoE, 2001).

Education White Paper 6, the policy document on inclusive education and training system in SA, states that 70% of learners in mainstream education, who experience barriers to learning, receive little or no education support services (DoE, 2001). With regard to the pass/fail criterion for school children, oral communication accounts for a third (33.3%) of the total mark for English language (Kapp, 2004). Written language accounts for two thirds (66.67%) of the total mark signalling the very high value placed on written language. Children need to have adequate written language skills in order to pass a grade, complete school and ultimately obtain employment. Education is central to the development of a country as an educated individual is more likely to obtain employment than a person with poor literacy skills (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2004). Poor literacy skills increase one's risk of unemployment which in turn leads to poverty. The risks of other negative outcomes are also increased and may include low self-esteem, violence, depression, and even suicide (Barwick & Siegel, 1996). In order to provide effective support and prevent the large percentage of children that drop out of school in SA, it is necessary to explore the written language expression and understand problematic areas and the inherent skills or talents of the learners; before they complete primary school (intermediate phase).

The current performance of the learners' written language expression was first investigated to determine if the learners in the two classrooms in this study were also presenting with poor written language development, as indicated in the literature. While earlier research data provides the numbers of learners failing, little is known about what happens behind the numbers (Soudien, 2008). It was therefore necessary to obtain a further depth of understanding of the written language expression of intermediate phase learners. Teachers had signalled their concerns through referring learners for help but the specific nature of their concerns were not known. Learners and parents views were also unknown and as they are key role players, their views had to be ascertained. In addition to gaining the views of teachers, learners and parents, the researcher also saw the importance of assessing the current performance in relation to the expectations of outcomes relevant to the grade level.

Learners are assessed using the guidelines set for outcomes-based education. Each grade has a number of learning areas (e.g. English), within which are a set of

outcomes (e.g. speaking, writing, listening, reading and reviewing), which learners need to fulfil in order to progress onto the next grade. In this study, the learners' written language samples were compared to the outcomes for writing that are set out in the Revised National Curriculum Statement (DoE, 2002). The focus on the current performance was not done to place the learner in deficit. This standpoint is clarified in chapter two.

The values placed on written language were investigated to determine if the key role players i.e. teachers, learners and parents valued written language in the two classrooms and found it to be relevant. If written language was highly valued then it was more likely that teachers, parents and learners would have been willing to identify and participate in strategies that would support and promote written language. A further focus of the study was to understand opportunities for and the barriers that hamper, written language development in the learners in this localized context.

This study also explored the present opportunities as well as the further opportunities that would assist in developing written language, with the aid of the teachers, parents and learners. The information generated would help to identify the strengths and problems of the learners' written language development and the possible priorities and responsibilities of the education system as well as the home/community in breaking down the barriers that prevent learners from achieving optimal success in education.

There has been limited research on written language expression in the intermediate phase classroom in the Western Cape and even less research has focused on the tripartite partnership of teachers, learners and parents in the development of written language in the classroom. Yet, it has been acknowledged that teachers, learners and parents need to work with and support each other to improve learning and teaching in the classroom (Ngidi & Qwabe, 2006) in order to enhance written language expression. Teachers need to ascertain what knowledge the students bring into the classroom from the home and community experience and to build upon that knowledge to help foster literacy (Kim, 2003; Street, 2003). The home-school divide needs to be bridged to succeed in developing literacy amongst culturally and linguistically diverse children (Kelder, 1996). Literacy cannot be viewed as an

abstract set of skills outside the child's social and cultural background and context. Hence, in this study, the research participants included the teachers (school), parents (home/social community) and learners (individual) because it has been acknowledged that the combined efforts of these three parties, in interaction with other supports, are required to develop and promote literacy and written language expression in the learners. The researcher has represented these interactions in Figure 1.1.

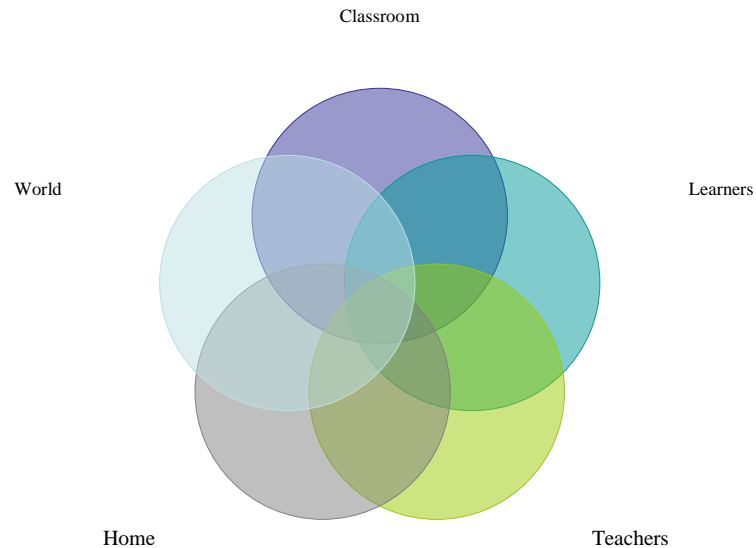


Figure 1.1: The development of literacy

SLTs in Ordinary, Linguistically Diverse Classrooms

In SA, SLTs have traditionally provided interventions for children with speech and language disorders on an individual basis in hospitals, special schools and in private clinics, and so these services have been available only to a limited population of children (Overett & Kathard, 2006). However, in the recent years there has been a large referral of school-aged children with slow development in language, reading and written language to SLTs. It is estimated that 7% of school-aged learners in developed countries have speech, language, voice, fluency and/or hearing impairments that impact negatively on their learning and communication (Kathard, 2005).

It has also become apparent that there is a need for SLTs in ordinary classrooms because these ‘ordinary classrooms’ have now become complex, in that learners as well as the teacher in a classroom frequently come from different linguistic backgrounds, bringing a variety of languages into the classroom (Walton, 2002). Often the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) may be a foreign language to the learners as they may be learning in their second or third language resulting in communication, learning and teaching difficulties. As SLTs have the expertise and knowledge to assist with communication difficulties, they should be involved in supporting both the teachers and learners in these linguistically diverse classrooms to enhance communication and promote literacy learning amongst the learners (Du Plessis & Louw, 2008; Wium, 2010). ASHA (2001:356) has identified the following roles of SLTs with regards to literacy development across the school curriculum in all grades at primary schools in the USA:

- preventing written language problems by fostering language acquisition and emergent literacy support
- identifying children ‘at risk’ for reading and writing problems and providing early intervention to these children
- assessing reading and writing in learners
- providing intervention and documenting outcomes for reading and writing
- assuming other roles such as providing assistance to teachers, parents and learners
- advocating for effective literacy practices and advancing the knowledge base
- providing support to teachers and learners in the classrooms and across the school system

Linguistically diverse classrooms are a global trend. The USA and UK have also seen a growth of cultures develop in diverse classrooms due to increased immigration into the countries. According to Walton (2002), there are children from more than 180 diverse cultures now attending public schools in the USA. Ehren and Whitmire (2009:92), also in the USA, emphasized that SLTs have multiple roles in a school setting. They suggested a three tier approach where SLTs:

- provide support to the whole class in developing oral and written language,

- provide support to small groups of ‘at risk’ learners in developing oral and written language skills
- provide individual support to learners who may also require specialised education

According to Justice (2006:285), SLTs can serve as important consultants and collaborators in elevating the quality of reading interventions. However SLTs may also extend this support to writing within the ordinary classroom. Furthermore, it has been found that there are improved outcomes in children’s language when SLTs and teachers collectively plan and co-teach language lessons in preschool and elementary school (Justice, 2006). However, in a linguistically diverse classroom, there is a need to differentiate between children who are struggling to learn due to second language difficulties and those who have learning problems due to delayed language development, phonological and phonemic awareness skills. SLTs are challenged to find ways to work in the ordinary classroom in SA as there is a need to assist learners who may not present with disorders but rather slow development (Kathard & Pillay 2006). There is a need to delineate the role of an SLT in an ordinary classroom in SA. Lewis (2004) emphasised the need for a shift in practice so that SLTs may expand their support to learners in ordinary schools who are not developing grade level literacy and numeracy skills. However, before intervening in an ordinary classroom context, with its many challenges within an inclusive system in SA, one has to understand why these learners are not developing grade level written language skills. This need was part of the motivation for this study.

It is important for children to be able to read and write. With writing comes the development of logic, rationality, linearity, abstract thinking and the ability to classify (Applebee, 1984). Reading also enables a person to access the meaning contained in a text (Kelder, 1996). Writing enables the writer to express his/her thoughts and reading enables the reader to access these thoughts (Kingston et al, 2005), and literacy enhances communication in social, cultural, religious and general everyday life (Kelder, 1996). Written language expression, together with reading, is central to the acquisition of literacy (ASHA, 2001). Furthermore, spoken and written languages complement and support each other, resulting in general language and literacy competence that begins early and continues throughout childhood into

adulthood (ASHA, 2001). Children with reading and writing problems experience difficulties in using language to think learn and communicate (Kelder, 1996), and so language intervention needs to focus on written as well as verbal language needs.

Although SLTs play a critical role in the development of reading and written language for children and adolescents with communication disorders, they can play a substantial and potentially more powerful role by collaborating with other school professionals to heighten the quality of general education (ASHA, 2002; Justice, 2006). Gottfred (2008) stated that SLTs are uniquely qualified to not only help individual learners with achieving literacy but also to be part of the team associated with enhancing literacy amongst all the learners in schools. In the USA, schools have teams consisting of SLTs, reading specialists, teachers and remedial teachers who assist learners with reading difficulties, from preschool level, by providing intensive reading programs (Ciampaglio, 2008). These programs have been found to enhance literacy (i.e. reading and writing skills) in learners (Tsang, 1996). There is a need for the promotion of written language development in ordinary mainstream schools in SA as well. Hence, it is imperative that SLTs be part of the team in ordinary mainstream South African schools to promote and enhance literacy, and that an SLT's role in this context be defined. This study intends to contribute to defining an SLT's role in an ordinary classroom in SA.

In summary, the study was conducted as there is very little research in this context. The importance of researching written language is that it deepens our understanding of various aspects of current performance, values and barriers and opportunities, in order to influence further actions including those of SLTs. The perspectives of teachers, learners and parents will increase the depth of understanding of key role-players in the development of written language in linguistically diverse ordinary classrooms in the Western Cape.

1.4. SITUATIONAL CONTEXT

The two classrooms in this study are in a school that is situated on the socio-economically disadvantaged Cape Flats area in urban Western Cape, SA where domestic and gang violence and crime are highly prevalent. Politically it was classified as a Coloured area in apartheid SA (1953-1994). Now, fifteen years post-

apartheid, it is a time for rebuilding the nation given the devastation of the system of basic education under apartheid which cannot be underestimated (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2004). The system of education under apartheid divided people into racial categories and suppressed human dignity. It also restricted the capacity for creative thinking and reduced the possibilities of learning for most young South Africans (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2004). During the apartheid era, education for the majority of the population i.e. Black, Coloured and Indian races was undermined, and needs to be rebuilt.

During the apartheid era, schools for White children were well resourced with good infrastructures and amenities and also had significantly lower learner: teacher ratios, while Indian, Coloured and Black schools were overcrowded and severely under-resourced, with Black schools being the most severely affected. “Bantu Education” which was one of the components of apartheid restricted education for the Black population (Heugh, 2000). It divided education, had a language policy built for separate development, unequal resources and a cognitively impoverished curriculum that resulted in the majority of the population being under-educated (Heugh, 2000). Post-apartheid these previously Black schools and Coloured schools continue to be overcrowded and under resourced (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2004). Basic amenities and infrastructures have still not been put in place, while the previous White only schools continue to be well resourced (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2004).

There are large differences in school fees amongst these schools as well. Schools are now open to all races but segregation continues as parents who can afford to pay high school fees send their children to previous White-only schools which have good infrastructures, are well resourced and have smaller teacher: learner ratios. Disadvantaged children attend the previous Black, Coloured and Indian schools which still lack in resources, have large teacher: learner ratios but have lower school fees. Education remains divided, but this time between the rich and the poor even though post- apartheid education sought to create a better system of education for all (Soudien, 2008). At a policy level a range of changes aimed at educating all South Africans was put forth in the South African Schools ACT of 1996 (Burger, 2009). Among the many intended changes were the changes in the post provisioning model,

introduced in 1998, which attempted to balance teacher ratios by implementing 40:1 teacher ratio in primary schools and 35:1 ratio in secondary schools (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2004).

Although this policy did address some of the past inequalities, it was not successful in providing more teachers to schools with historically disadvantaged learners. This is putting a considerable burden on all professionals in the education system, both in teaching and management (DoE, 2001). Teachers are faced with a large number of learners with many socio-economic problems that contribute to their learning difficulties. In both rural and poor urban schools there is a shortage of classrooms, teachers, and basic educational tools like stationery and textbooks combined with poor basic needs like water, electricity and sewerage. Although we are now well into the second decade of democracy, and our transformation of basic education is underway, the vestiges of apartheid still hamper children's ability to learn and are difficult to eradicate (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2004).

One of the most dramatic changes that occurred as a consequence of the Schools Act in SA, was the sudden inflow of African- language speaking learners into schools which had previously been open only to White or Coloured learners and the inflow of Coloured learners into schools that were open to only White learners in the apartheid era (Pluddemann, Xola & Mahlahela-Thusi, 2000). Even though there was a big influx of learners there was no redeployment of appropriately qualified African-language speaking teachers to the schools where African-language speaking learners became the majority or a sizeable minority of the school population (Pluddemann, Xola & Mahlahela-Thusi, 2000). Hence, over a short period classrooms became linguistically diverse while teachers were speaking English and Afrikaans with no, or only limited knowledge of African languages. This has resulted in significant communication difficulties between the teachers and learners (Pluddemann, Xola & Mahlahela-Thusi, 2000).

There are ongoing problems that negatively impact on the education of learners. It is estimated that there are about five million people directly affected by HIV and AIDS in SA (Szabo, Dhali & Veller, 2006:1073). Children are orphaned while still at school and many learners leave school to take care of younger siblings or to seek employment (UNESCO, 2001). It has also been found that most children

with disabilities are not in school where there was limited inclusion of those with physical, emotional or learning difficulties within the education system (UNESCO, 2001).

There is a need to look beyond the learner as the site of the problem; a systemic look is essential. The DoE in SA has acknowledged the “barriers” that are contributing to children not able to acquire adequate literacy. The development of the Inclusive Education and Training System, which is outlined in the Education White Paper 6 (2001), aims to provide various levels of support to both learners and teachers, making education accessible to all learners (DoE, 2001). A realistic time frame of 20 years is proposed for the implementation of the inclusive education and training system; that is, by 2021 all target aims would have been met (DoE, 2001).

According to our constitution, *all* South Africans have a right to basic education. A new unified education and training system must be based on equity, on addressing past imbalances and on a progressive improvement of the quality of education and training (DoE, 2001). Inclusive education principles acknowledge that all children and youth can learn and all learners need support. Education structures, systems and learning methods must meet the needs of all learners. Differences occur in learners, be it due to age, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, HIV or other infectious diseases, but these differences must be respected. However, it must also be acknowledged that learning occurs in the formal school environment and broader learning occurs in the home, community and within formal and informal settings and structures. Therefore, teaching methods, attitudes, behaviour, curricula and environment will have to change to meet the needs of all learners. Culture also has to be incorporated into the curriculum to reveal and minimise barriers to learning because the culture of a learner is where he/she comes from and this needs to be acknowledged (Mathonsi, 2001).

It has been acknowledged that a broad range of barriers prevent many learners from learning effectively. The different barriers may be due to physical, mental, sensory, neurological, developmental, psycho-social and intellectual ability. So, learners with disabilities and impairments or due to particular life experiences, socio-economic problems or problems in the education system may be further affected by an inflexible curriculum, language and communication differences, inadequately

trained teachers, poor parental involvement and poor infrastructure of schools (DoE, 2001). Inclusive education aims to place all disabled children and youth of school-going age into schools. As part of the plans, there will be qualitative improvement of the special schools that serve the more severely disabled children. The special schools will also be converted to serve as resource support centres for the ordinary schools in the neighbourhood. About 500 primary schools will be converted to full-service schools that will be able to provide for the full range of learning needs amongst learners (DoE, 2001).

In ordinary schools, the roles of the teachers, parents and educational support services will be explained in the national advocacy and information programme. Learners who require low intensive support were to receive this in ordinary schools, while those requiring moderate support will receive this in full service schools and learners with high intensive support will be at the special schools (DoE, 2001). Therefore, a wider spread of educational support services will be developed to provide for the learners with special needs (DoE, 2001), and the factors or barriers affecting school placement of children and acquisition of literacy will be addressed in the new inclusive education and training system.

There has been an attempt to link education and social development. Schools are to be made more relevant to the needs of the immediate community and instil a sense of belonging among communities (Mathonsi, 2001). Parents have to play a central role in the education of their children and become more involved in the school. This should be seen as a part of education in the new democracy in SA. The South African DoE has attempted to address this by the establishment of school governing bodies (SGBs) in 1997 (DoE, 2003b). An SGB is a body in which all components of the school and community are represented (Mathonsi, 2001). Parents are first and foremost to be involved in any decisions concerning their children and they must be involved in the education and schooling of their children. All parents, with or without reading or writing skills, should be given the opportunity to be actively involved in SGBs as the school is part of a community (Mathonsi, 2001) .

1.5. SUMMARY

This chapter provided the rationale for the study in view of the contextual realities of the education system as well as its policy intention in SA. There are large numbers of children experiencing written language difficulties in ordinary classrooms in SA. Hence it was necessary to obtain a further depth of understanding regarding the current performance, values, opportunities and barriers to written language in linguistically diverse intermediate phase classrooms so that further opportunities/strategies may be identified to promote written language development of learners. There are many barriers that are impeding the written language development of learners resulting in poor literacy levels. The policy of inclusive education has been developed to address all these barriers. However, SA is faced with a high school drop-out rate and poor matric results. Therefore it is very important that written language be investigated in the intermediate phase to develop effective support before high school. The next chapter will move forward with theoretical underpinnings and a literature review.

2. CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter will present the theoretical framework of written language and the different views of literacy. The global status of literacy and the value of literacy will then be described. The opportunities for, and the barriers to, written language development will be highlighted.

2.2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF LITERACY AS A SOCIAL PRACTICE

Written language is part of literacy together with reading and spoken language. Literacy is a loaded term that has been described in many ways. It has been associated with social and economic progress, political democracy, social and educational mobility and the development of cognitive skills (Aitchison, 2001; Kelder, 1996). Traditionally, it has also been viewed as an abstract set of reading and writing skills or abilities that exist independently of any context and that one has to acquire in order to be considered “literate” (Prinsloo & Stein, 2004). School systems have focused on the development of these skills to foster literacy in children. However, in accordance with the tenets of New Literacy Studies (NLS), Street (2003) suggests that literacy should not be viewed narrowly as the acquisition of skills, but rather on what it means as a social practice, taking into consideration, culture, as well as social dialects (Street, 2003). These different views of literacy will now be explored.

2.2.1. SKILLS-BASED APPROACH TO LITERACY

Within the field of speech-language therapy, literacy has been defined as “ an individual’s ability to read, write, speak, listen and compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job and in society, to achieve one’s goals, and to develop one’s knowledge and potential” (ASHA, 2002: 168). Literacy therefore encompasses speaking, reading; writing and listening (see Figure 2.1.).

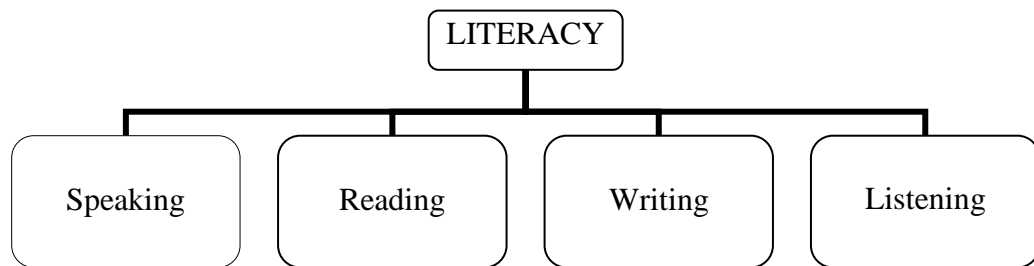


Figure 2.1.: The interrelated processes constituting literacy

Reading can be defined as “the processes by which one constructs meaning from printed symbols” (ASHA, 2002:168). Even though a number of perceptual, linguistic and cognitive processes are involved, reading can be divided into two broad components, viz. decoding and comprehension. Decoding is the word recognition process that changes printed symbols into words and comprehension is the process whereby language is understood and interpreted i.e. giving meaning to the word. Uta Frith (1985:308) presented a three phase model of literacy in which the child moves from an initial logographic or visual whole word recognition strategy of reading to an alphabetic phase utilizing letter sound correspondences and finally to an orthographic phase that is dependent on segmentation of larger units (morphemes) (see Figure 2.2.).

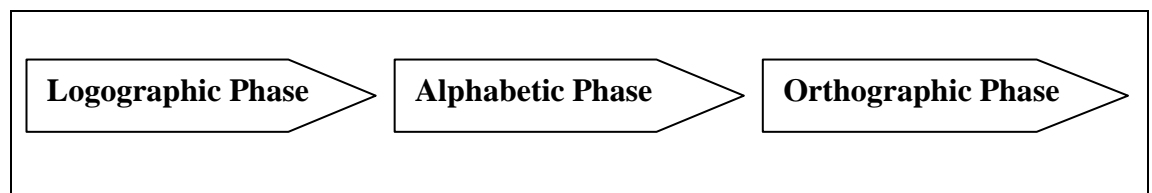


Figure 2.2: Frith’s Model of Literacy

In the logographic phase, the child's reading is limited by the extent of their orthographic lexicon i.e. their store of written words. They can only recognize words they know and they are not able to decode unfamiliar words. With regard to spelling, children may have learnt programs for familiar words (e.g. their names), but in general, spelling is non-phonetic in this phase and does not show sound-letter correspondences. The transition to the alphabetic phase occurs when children are able to apply letter- sound rules to decode new words. When reading the child may sound out the letters in the word and then blend them together to decode the target word. Finally, in the orthographic phase the child is able to recognize the large chunks of words such as prefixes and suffixes (e.g. station) and to read more proficiently by analogy with known words. According to Frith, failure to progress through these phases results in literacy problems (Frith, 1985; Stackhouse & Wells, 1997).

Written language production/expression can be divided into two stages viz. the process and the product (ASHA, 2001). Writing processes include the cognitive-linguistic and motor acts that are involved in producing written language texts. These include planning (prewriting), organizing, drafting, reflecting, revising and editing as well as forming letters and sequences of letters into words. The overall purpose of writing is to communicate ideas in the most effective manner. Written products are the result of the writing processes. A writing product can be examined at several levels, viz. the word level (e.g. word choice, spelling), sentence level (e.g. grammar, complexity, style) and the text level (e.g. discourse, structure, cohesive devices, and coherence) (ASHA, 2002: 169). Writing products may also be examined according to writing conventions (e.g. capitalization, punctuation and paragraphing), communication functions (e.g. to entertain or inform) and effectiveness (e.g. evidence that the writer has appropriately judged and met audience needs) (ASHA, 2002:169; Gillam & Johnston, 1992; Lillis & Scott, 2007).

Importance of Language in Literacy Development

Spoken language provides a critical foundation for the development of reading, spelling and written language and this relationship is reciprocal (Bishop & Clarkson, 2003; Locke, Ginsborg & Peers, 2002; Speech Pathology Australia, 2005). Spoken language, reading and writing have strong connections. It is debated in the literature

whether spoken language has to be proficient prior to the development of written language or if the process of developing written language parallels that of developing oral language (Bloch, 2006). However, the link and reciprocal relationship between oral and written language is supported in all literature. Writing is often regarded as the visual representation of spoken language as it is also a way of expressing one's thoughts and feelings (Kingston et al, 2005). When one engages in the act of reading, the content has to be understood to obtain meaning. Hence, reading and written language will develop appropriately only if language is adequate.

Children who have problems using oral language to communicate are at increased risk for having difficulties learning to read and write (ASHA, 2002; Justice, Invernizzi & Meier, 2002). However, many children with delayed language development are not identified early and problems are only noticed after a few years of schooling when the child is experiencing reading and written language difficulties. Phonological (or sound) awareness includes identifying and producing rhyming words, manipulating of sounds in spoken words, segmenting (or breaking down) words into syllables and sounds and the blending of syllables and sounds. Phonemic awareness involves the ability to identify and work with individual phonemes or sounds. Both, phonological and phonemic awareness is critical in supporting early literacy development (Speech Pathology Australia, 2005; Willenberg, 2007).

A long term study by Naucler and Magnusson (1999), investigated the development of reading and writing in children in Amsterdam from pre-school to adolescence. They aimed to identify which abilities were the most important linguistic prerequisites for learning to read and write. The results confirmed the relationship between linguistic ability and reading and spelling, and children who had normal language development scored much higher for reading and writing skills than children who had language disorders. A study by Bishop and Clarkson (2003) in the UK also investigated the relationship between speech and language development and writing abilities. Their results showed that most children with language impairments were poor at written language, with marked deficits in spelling and punctuation. These findings also supported the close link between spoken language and written language, further emphasising the need for competent language skills to foster the development of literacy. This has important implications for speech-language

therapists (SLTs) in the development of literacy in children who do not have adequate spoken language skills.

The Psycholinguistic Approach to Literacy

The psycholinguistic approach is based on the assumption that the child receives information of different kinds (e.g. auditory, visual) about an utterance, remembers it and stores it in a variety of lexical representations (a means of keeping information about words) within a lexicon (a store of words) then selects and produces spoken and written words (see Figure 2.3.)

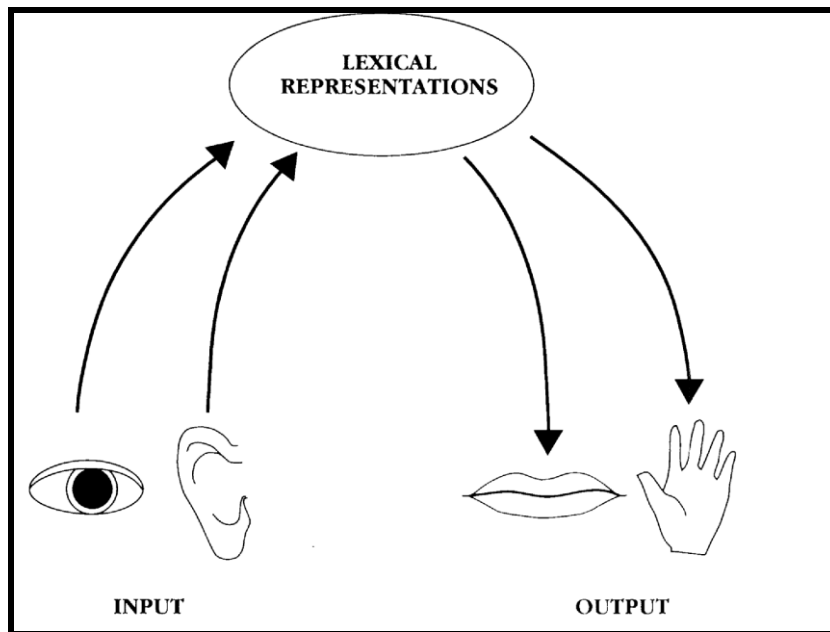


Figure: 2.3. The Basic Structure of the Speech Processing and Literacy System (Stackhouse & Wells, 1997)

On the left of the model are channels for the input of information via the eye and ear and on the right of the model are channels for the output of information via the mouth (spoken) or hand (written). At the top of the model there are lexical representations which store previously processed information while at the bottom there is no such store. In the psycholinguistic approach, top-down (T-D) processing refers to an activity whereby previously stored information in the lexical representations is found helpful and utilised. A bottom-up, (B-U) processing activity requires no such prior knowledge and can be completed without accessing stored

linguistic knowledge from the lexical representations (Stackhouse & Wells, 1997) (see Figure 2.4.).

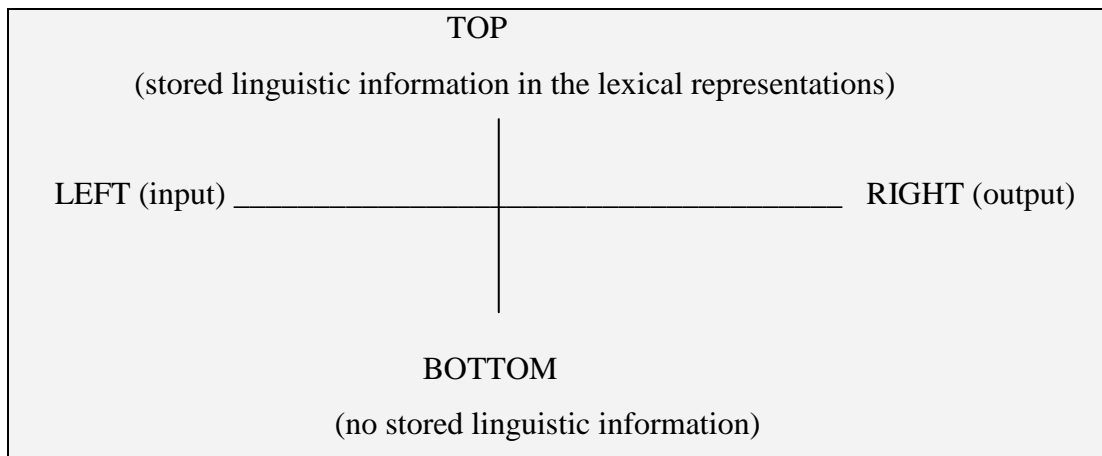


Figure 2.4: Top-Down Processing (adapted from Stackhouse & Wells, 1997)

Frith's model emphasizes the developmental processes involved in reading, while the psycholinguistic model emphasizes the skills required for spoken and written language. Both models focus on a set of skills within the child and do not consider external environmental influences. In a skills-based approach to literacy, skills such reading, writing, speaking and phonological awareness is supported, while the social and cultural influences are ignored. However, different communities have different communicative practices and values which are brought into the classroom with the child and influence how that child will develop literacy in the classroom (Prinsloo & Stein, 2004). So, while these traditional literacy skills are necessary, the social and cultural influences of a child need to be considered when literacy instruction is taking place in the classroom.

2.2.2. SOCIAL LITERACY

In NLS, there is a move away from viewing literacy as an isolated and abstract set of skills as it is embedded in conceptions of knowledge, identity and being (Cho, n.d.; Street, 2003). Spoken or written language that includes different styles, vocabularies, grammars and registers requires socially situated identities (Bartlett, 2005). Individuals acquire these identities through the adoption and use of powerful, cultural resources or artefacts (Bartlett, 2005). Cultural artefacts are objects, symbols,

narratives or images to which the individual and his/her culture/community have allocated a vast amount of meaning. Thus, literacy is more than “print” literacy – it is thought of as “reading one’s world”.

Society and culture play a vital role in the way a child speaks, writes and reads (Kelder, 1996). Children come into the class with vocabulary and grammatical styles that are prevalent in their community and different from other communities. When a child reads for meaning s/he will deduce the meaning not only from the text but also on the basis of the meanings s/he has acquired outside school or at home. Therefore, the teacher has to be aware of the knowledge gained at home and brought into the classroom. NLS argues that reading and writing only make sense when studied in the context of social and cultural practices of which they are a part of (Gee, 1998). Furthermore, language in use does not provide general de-contextualised meanings. In oral or written language, interacting participants use various lexical, structural and prosodic “cues” to refer to the relevant context and provide meaning (Gee, 1998).

Discourses are characteristic ways of speaking and writing about, as well as interacting with, people and objects. These discourses are circulated and maintained within various texts, images, artefacts, institutions, social practices and in everyday social interactions (Gee, 1998). Therefore, reading, writing and meaning are always situated within specific social practices within specific social discourses (Street, 2003). These appear as multiple forms that have socio-political, cultural and ideological importance and so a person’s beliefs and ideas about politics as well as the influence of his/her culture and society will be depicted in his/her reading and writing style (see Figure 2.5.).

The term ‘multiliteracies’ implies multiple communication channels, hybrid text forms, new social relations and linguistic and cultural diversity. In 1996, the New London Group defined multiliteracies as the modes of “linguistic meaning, visual meaning, audio meaning, gestural meaning, spatial meaning and the multimodal patterns of meaning that relate the first five modes of meaning to each other” (Kelder, 1996:8). Traditionally reading and writing in school had been restricted to books but, in the new millennium, there has been a shift from page to screen-based literacies (Unsworth, 2001). Access to technology in and outside school includes computers

and cell phones, and emails and sms-texts have replaced traditional letter writing in many societies (Godwin-Jones, 2005; Kiernan & Aizawa, 2004). Multiliteracies are present in school as well as in society and include a range of multimodal meanings. In order to understand how these meanings are created, one needs to bring in a critical dimension (Kelder, 1996), i.e. not just considering literacy in terms of the basic functional skills of decoding words and writing, but rather meaning from the texts should be extracted, analysed and reflected upon.

Literacy practices are now being conceptualized into three sequential levels of competencies of ascending proficiency and complexity, viz. functional literacy, communicative/interactive/cultural literacy and critical literacy (Betz, et al, 2008; Lankshear & Knobel, 1998). Functional literacy or print mastery refers to an individual's ability to read and write in a range of contexts in an appropriate manner, while cultural literacy refers to the ability to extract and appreciate the meaning from texts in relation to contexts (Lankshear & Knobel, 1998). Critical literacy refers to the ability to extract meaning from a text and to act on that meaning or to take an active part in transforming and producing it (Lankshear & Knobel, 1998). Schools have now acknowledged these three different proficiencies of literacy and have begun including them in their curricula (Lankshear & Knobel, 1998). For example, in the foundation phase in SA, the basic functional skills of reading and writing are emphasised while in the intermediate phase and senior phase, cultural and critical literacy are emphasised.

NLS also emphasises the bridge between community based text and school based text. The way in which teachers and their students interact is a social practice that affects the nature of the literacy being taught and the ideas of literacy held by the learners (Street, 2003). The culture and the community of the learners will influence their style of reading and writing. A real-world interdisciplinary approach to learning through the use of knowledge across disciplines is encouraged (Cho, n.d.) Multiple literacies that exist in the combined contexts of language, culture, society, politics and ideology need to be understood and included in the curriculum and instruction at schools (Kelder, 1996; Street, 2003). The researcher has represented the range of focus of NLS in Figure 2.5. Education cannot be viewed as separate from the home and community of the learner and relevant aspects of the social and cultural life of the

child need to be incorporated in the curriculum to generate motivation, pride and a sense of belonging in the learner.

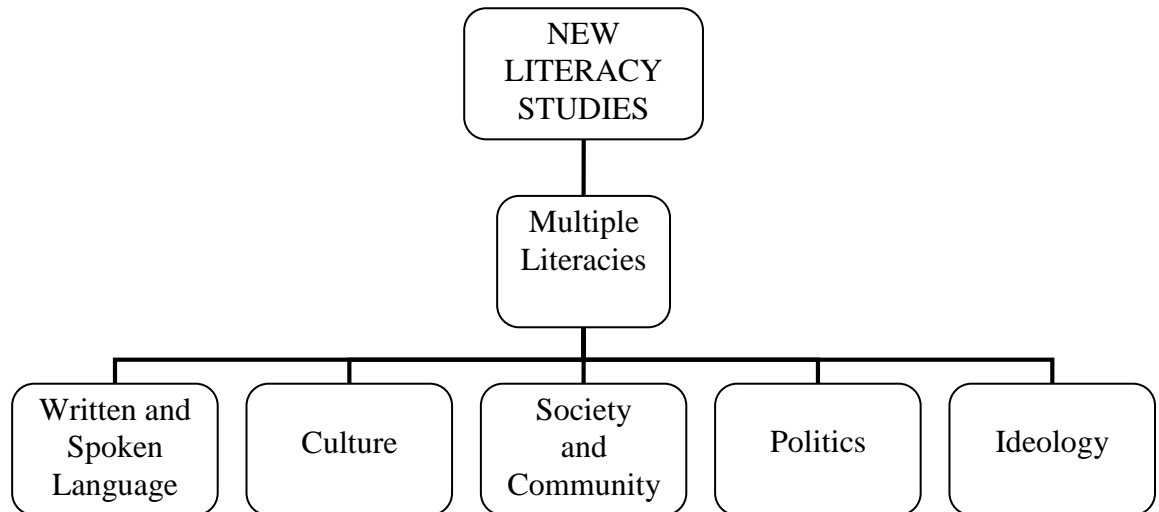


Figure 2.5: New literacy studies focus

2.2.3. SCHOOL SYSTEM vs. SOCIAL VIEWS OF LITERACY

It has been found that schools, teachers, parents and communities have different perceptions with regards to literacy and overall education. The school system (school/teachers) and the social (parents/community) perceptions of literacy will now be examined.

School System Views

In education and government, literacy has traditionally been viewed simply as a process of decoding or encoding texts and the student's performance is evaluated against a set of standard norms (Kelder, 1996). The South African Department of Education (DoE) has commenced implementing Outcomes Based Education (OBE) in the recent few years (DoE, 2002). The principles that OBE maintain is that all learners can learn and succeed and the institutions (schools) control the conditions of success through the supply of quality and authentic learning experiences and the student's success is the responsibility of the teacher (Gerber, 1996). OBE has a set of learning outcomes in specific learning areas that the learner has to complete in order

to exit the grade. These learning outcomes are the end products of a learning process. In the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) in South Africa (SA), written language is part of the writing outcomes of the learning area of English (DoE, 2002). Written language is taught formally, beginning in the foundation phase. Learners have to meet written language outcomes in order to satisfy the requirements for the particular grade and pass. This implies that if a learner's written language levels meet the norms, they pass and if they are below the norms, they fail. The historical, political, cultural, social and ideological complexities were not taken into account and this contributed to the deficit model in the education system i.e. the student was viewed as inadequate because he/she did not meet pre-set criteria or have "enough of the valued product" (Kelder, 1996:3).

Individuals who were already victimized due to race, class and caste were experiencing further injustice (Kelder, 1996). These children from diverse cultural, racial and language backgrounds were assessed and judged against standard norms of schooled literacy skills while their language use in other contexts was in direct contrast to the school discourse. Even though there is a greater awareness of these issues, literacy development is still often restricted because of a lack of knowledge and awareness of the association of social, cultural and oral contexts of language use and identity (Kelder, 1996). This has been of great concern in SA's linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms.

O'Connor and Geiger (2009) investigated the needs of primary school teachers in former Model C (White advantaged) as well as non-Model C (non-White disadvantaged) schools in the Cape Metropolitan Area in the Western Cape. It was found that in the former non-model C schools, teachers were very concerned about the reading and written language difficulties amongst English second (or other) language (ESOL) learners. The large teacher to learner ratios in these schools hampered the acquisition of English amongst ESOL learners and teachers felt that there was a great need for further outside support to facilitate literacy skills in these learners. They also emphasised that parents should be involved in their children's education and needed information on how to assist their children at home to promote reading and writing development. Teachers recommended that the community be involved in homework assistance, especially with ESOL speakers. This could take

place via the formation of parent groups who were competent in English, who could assist the children as well as provide support to other parents.

O' Connor and Geiger (2009) focused on the needs of teachers who identified learners' difficulties with written language and their need for support. Also, their focus was on ESOL, while the current study focused on all learners irrespective of their first language, as it has been acknowledged that classrooms are now linguistically diverse.

Studies carried out by Bloch (1998, 2006), in the Western Cape, SA, investigated teachers' strategies, practices and underlying assumptions about oral and written language in linguistically diverse contexts in the foundation phase. Many teachers did not recognize the significance of meaning and of purposeful social and cultural practice in literacy learning (e.g. story telling). Even those teachers, who did recognize that children learned more effectively in such meaningful contexts, found that they had little time in the school-day to read to the class. It was concluded that teachers seldom reflected upon or engaged with the lives of the pupils outside the school and did not place educational value on children's home or community experiences. Emphasis was placed only on knowledge acquired in the classroom through the language of learning and teaching (LOLT) e.g. English as a medium of instruction. Teachers did not recognise educational value in what children brought into the classrooms from their homes or communities and felt that children only learned through the knowledge passed onto them in class. Teachers also did not recognise children as being capable of initiating the reading and writing process. Bloch recommended that teachers consider the home languages of children in learning and teaching to enhance oral and written language in the classroom. She also suggested that parents be included so that children experience their own language being used in different ways by the important adults in their lives; and that their home language be sustained and nurtured in both oral and written forms.

A study by Pluddemann, Xola and Mahlahela-Thusi (2000), investigated the problems and possibilities in multilingual classrooms in the Western Cape. Teachers in the foundation phase (Grade 1-3) reported that literacy and phonics presented the biggest problems. As the children were learning in English, their second language, pronunciation of the words and sounds proved very difficult and affected their

reading and spelling. It was recommended that teachers should follow the new language policy developed by the DoE in SA, i.e. to maintain the mother tongue as the medium of instruction in the foundation phase while introducing English orally in grade 1 and in writing in grade 3 (DoE, 1997). Despite the policy, the practice remains that parents choose to send their children to English medium schools. This is associated with better educational opportunities and an escape from the Bantu Education system in which mother tongue education was adopted (Heugh, 2000). While the new language policy is progressive, its association with poor quality education is strong and supports parents' political decision to educate their children in English medium schools.

Du Plessis and Naude (2003) investigated the needs of teachers in preschool centres in Pretoria, SA with regard to multilingual learners. They found that more than half of the learners in any class found it difficult to comprehend or express themselves in their additional languages. The preschool teachers reported certain strategies to facilitate comprehension but expressed the need for training and collaboration in order to meet the needs of learners. It was proposed that the role of the SLT should be extended to support preschool teachers in multilingual settings and utilise their skills in the development of additional languages. A critical point to note is that teachers' struggles begin early in the preschool years. Also in Pretoria, Du Plessis and Louw (2008) investigated the challenges that preschool teachers faced in learners' acquisition of English as the LoLT. They found that the teachers perceived certain personal challenges and expressed the need for knowledge and support. The above studies looked at linguistically diverse preschool classrooms and the needs of preschool teachers while this study investigated linguistically diverse *intermediate phase* classrooms and teachers.

Social Views

The results of the matric examinations have created concern across communities in SA (Sapa, 2010). The matric examination is the final national examination in grade 12, which is the last year at school in SA. A pass in the matric examination allows a learner to pursue tertiary education i.e. admission into a university or a college. It is now acknowledged that poor literacy levels in primary school are a significant

contributing cause to poor matric results (UNESCO, 2010). Poor teaching and unmotivated learners have also been cited as causes (Sapa, 2010). However, while some parents and communities are disillusioned with the standards of education in SA, other parents and communities are satisfied (Schlemmer, 2004). A survey of 1450 multi-racial parents of school-going children was conducted to determine parents' perceptions of education in SA (Schlemmer, 2004). Data collection involved face to face interviews, and it was found that 65% of parents were satisfied with the present education system while 35% were not. The 65% of satisfied parents were mainly poorly educated Black parents while the 35% dissatisfied parents were mainly Indian and White parents. The reasons for satisfaction were: improved education since the end of apartheid, children are achieving better results, upgraded facilities; poor parents are not required to pay school fees and improving teacher quality. The reasons given for dissatisfaction were: OBE has lowered standards, unease with the changes in the curriculum, the DoE is not responding to parents' needs, lack of job opportunities after completion of school, learner discipline, affordability, teacher motivation and quality, new religious instruction policies, LoLT, facilities and equipment, inter-group relations, government interference and poor relations with school governing bodies (SGBs). It was concluded that even though the majority of parents were satisfied, the views of the minority dissatisfied parents should be considered as these parents have the education and experience to make informed assessments about the quality of education in SA as the promise of better education is important for all (Schlemmer, 2004).

Both, the education system as well as the community need to be involved in education as both parties are concerned about the status of literacy in the country (Mathonsi, 2001). Literacy is valued by both the education system as well as the social/community.

2.3. VALUE OF LITERACY

Literacy has always been highly valued in SA, ever since the first print-based literacy was introduced to mission schools in the nineteenth century (Stein, 2008). Even through the era of apartheid and Bantu education, literacy has been viewed by the government and social groups as the marker of power, control, inclusion and

exclusion (Stein, 2008). Illiteracy has been associated with unemployment, poverty and a poor life quality whereas literacy increases the likelihood of obtaining employment, financial security and an improved life quality (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2004). Literacy is therefore highly valued both by Government as well as by the citizens of a country.

The DoE in SA views literacy as a strong ‘weapon’ through which Africa could achieve its place amongst the continents in the globe (Magubane, 2008). The Department of Arts and Culture has also committed R180 million to the upgrading of library services and buying of books (Magubane, 2008). Furthermore, since the rise of a new democratic government various strategies have been put in place in an attempt to provide an inclusive education for all the children in the country (DoE, 2001). This has been explained in chapter 1.

The emphasis on literacy locally is derived from an international context. The value and importance of literacy has become apparent in the 50 years since the United Nations declared it a basic human right on a par with the right to adequate food, health care and housing (Centre for Evaluation and Assessment, 2006). Literacy is of central importance to the development of a country (Centre for Evaluation and Assessment, 2006). Therefore, many projects have been established around the world to promote literacy. At the World Health Forum in Dakar, in 2000, this international forum committed to working towards Universal Primary Education (UPE), by 2015 and elimination of gender disparities in primary and secondary schooling by 2005 (UNESCO, 2001). UPE is the Millennium Development Goal number 2 (UN Department of Public Information, 2008). Though school enrolment is important, it is only part of achieving UPE. Between four and six years of schooling are required if the key skills of literacy and numeracy are to provide the foundation for further learning. Many countries with a high initial enrolment rate at primary schools, have a much smaller percentage of children completing five years of schooling. These completion rates are lower for girls, children from poor and needy homes, those living in rural or conflict- stricken areas, or affected by HIV/AIDS, disability and/or special needs (UNESCO, 2001).

In SA, about 4.7 million people have never attended school and have no literacy, while about 4.9 million adults are functionally illiterate (left school before

grade 7) (Magubane, 2008). Illiteracy is highest in the provinces of Kwazulu-Natal, the Limpopo and the Eastern Cape (Magubane, 2008) and there is a national crisis in literacy development in schools in SA generally. Globally, about 861 million people (20% of the world's adults) cannot read or write (UNESCO, 2001). Furthermore, 70% of these adults without literacy live in Sub-Saharan Africa, Southern and Western Asia, Arab countries and North Africa (Centre for Evaluation and Assessment, 2006). According to UNESCO (2001), there were about 113 million children not enrolled in primary school in 1998 (i.e. one in five children in the 6 to 11 year range). Sixty percent of those not enrolled were girls, and almost 87% of the total lived in Sub-Saharan Africa, South and West Asia and the Arab States and North Africa (UNESCO, 2001). However, reading and writing difficulties are also highly prevalent amongst school children in well developed countries. About 10% of the school population in Hong Kong has reading and writing difficulties (University of Hong Kong, 2006), while in the UK, one in five children leaves primary school with inadequate reading skills (Douetil, 2005). The USA DoE has acknowledged that the educational careers of its children are adversely affected as they cannot read well enough (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998). Literacy is highly valued globally but poor literacy skills amongst children and ultimately adults constitute an international crisis and changes are needed to address this global phenomenon. Many countries, including the UK, USA and Hong and Kong, have implemented reading recovery programs as it has been acknowledged that there is a global need to improve the reading and writing abilities of many children in primary school (Douetil, 2005; Snow et al, 1998; University of Hong Kong, 2006).

2.4. OPPORTUNITIES AND BARRIERS TO WRITTEN LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

There are many opportunities both at school and in the home/community to develop written language in learners, but when these are absent or insufficient, barriers may arise which impede written language development. Opportunities and barriers influencing written language development include written language learning in classrooms, language competence of teachers, learning in a second language, literacy

levels of parents, parental support and involvement, foundation skills and socio-economic difficulties. These barriers and opportunities will now be discussed.

2.4.1. WRITTEN LANGUAGE LEARNING IN CLASSROOMS

There is a lack of time and focus spent on written work in the classroom. According to Kapp (2004), there was a lack of follow-up with writing tasks as teachers believed that writing ability would flow naturally from oral competence. A dominant conception in classes across the curriculum is that ‘writing’ is to record notes after a lesson has been presented orally by the teacher. These written notes are then used for examination preparations. Writing is not viewed as a tool for creative expression or as a tool for reflection and analysis (Kapp, 2004). This limited focus on written language is further supported by the Nelson Mandela Foundation (2004), who found that a “workbook” was used on average once every second day, while about one third of teachers indicated that they used a workbook less than twice a week. The President’s Education Initiative (PEI) researcher found that very little reading and writing took place in classrooms and most writing was limited to one word answers, with rare use of sentences (Taylor & Vinjevoold, 1999:143). Limited time and instruction spent on written language work in classrooms, were contributing to the poor writing skills of primary school children.

2.4.2. LANGUAGE COMPETENCE OF TEACHERS

Another factor that influences literacy development is the language competence of the teacher. Apart from the learners learning in a second or third language, LoLT may not be the first language of the teacher, and so teachers may be teaching in a language in which they are neither fully proficient nor comfortable. For example there may be first language Afrikaans or IsiXhosa teachers in the Western Cape teaching in English in the intermediate phase. Pluddemann, Xola and Mahlahela-Thusi (2000) found that pronunciation was a problem for some ESOL teachers. As children use the teacher as a model, they use the pronunciation that s/he provides, and if the teacher has given an incorrect model, the children tend to pronounce the word/sound incorrectly, read it incorrectly and write it incorrectly. Hence, teachers’ speech and language proficiency in the LoLT is very essential. Many teachers are also not competent in the African

languages in SA. Therefore in a classroom where learners come from African language backgrounds, the teacher may not be able to communicate with them in their mother tongue. This may also hamper learning and teaching.

2.4.3. LEARNING IN A SECOND OR OTHER LANGUAGE

Many learners in SA are not being taught in their first language. Although English is the home language of only 8.2% of South Africans, it is the LoLT in most schools of SA (StatsSA, 2003). It is often believed that children who are learning in their second or third language and are not orally proficient in the LoLT, are more likely to experience reading and writing problems, but many researchers have differing viewpoints. Some believe that proficient oral language is required prior to development of reading and written language if the LoLT is in the first language (Bishop & Clarkson, 2003; Locke, Ginsborg & Peers, 2002). Others believe that if the child is already literate to some extent in the first language both oral and written language can develop simultaneously in the second language (Bloch, 2006). Therefore, children need to be provided with opportunities to begin and continue reading and writing in their first language as well as in their second language. It is a widely held belief that if a child is orally proficient in his/her first language, he/she is more likely to successfully acquire a second oral language. Likewise, if a child is literate in his/her first language, then literacy is more likely to develop successfully in the second language (Bloch, 2006).

A key finding of the UNESCO-UNICEF Monitoring Learning Achievement project (MLA) across 11 countries was that learners who were taught in their home language performed much better than their counterparts who were taught in a second or third language (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2004). Low and Siegel (2005) found that ESOL speakers had poorer syntactic skills than English first language speakers. It is then logical to assume that ESOL learners are more likely to experience problems in reading and written language as their English oral language is poorer. Research indicates that learners need at least 12 years (i.e. 12 years from birth) of learning in their first/home language and if 'plunged' into learning in a second language too quickly, they will experience difficulties (Heugh, 2000). So, learners need to be orally

proficient and literate in their first language, before the second language becomes the language of instruction.

Several commissions of enquiry into education in Africa have identified the importance of early first language literacy and maintenance for successful education (Bloch, 2006). According to Heugh (2000), the less use made of a learner's first language in education, the less likely s/he will perform well across the curriculum and in the second language. The language that the learner brings into the classroom should be built upon to foster literacy. Sometimes, the first language used at home is quite informal and lacks the standard written (more formal) form used in the classrooms. In this case, the standard written form should be added to the learner's repertoire so that literacy can be achieved successfully. While research internationally supports the benefits of mother tongue instruction and literacy, the choice in SA schools is that parents have chosen to have their children learn in English medium schools. Hence ESOL learners in SA schools are expected to meet the outcomes of first language speakers most often without additional support. The Language in Education Policy (LIEP) allows learners to have the choice of learning in their mother tongue up to grade 3 and the subsequent switch to English as LoLT from grade 4 (DoE, 1997). However, many schools in SA do not adhere to this policy and English is the LoLT from grade 1; often because the teachers cannot speak any of the African languages. Should there be changes in the language policy and the switch over to English instruction occur earlier than grade 4, problems may still arise as neither the first/home language or English may be sufficiently developed for written development and learning to occur.

Cummins introduced an important distinction between basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP), in 1979 to show the different time periods required by second language learners to achieve conversational fluency in their second language as compared to grade-appropriate academic proficiency in that language (Cummins, 2003:121). Conversational fluency is often acquired to a functional level (BICS) within about two years of initial exposure to the second language, whereas at least five years is usually required to catch up to first language learners in academic aspects (CALP) of the second language (Cummins, 2003). It is important for learners to achieve CALP

in order to achieve academic written language skills. Learning in a second language may support BICS, but impede the achievement of CALP, which then hampers written language development.

The DoE in SA has stipulated that ordinary classrooms follow the RNCS, of which OBE forms the foundation (DoE, 2002). For each grade there are different learning outcomes in each learning area (Gerber, 1996). For example, in the learning area of English, the different learning outcomes will include listening, speaking, reading and reviewing, writing, thinking and reasoning and language structure and use. There is a curriculum for English home language learners, English first additional language learners and English second additional language learners. However, in schools where the LoLT is English, these schools often tend to follow the English-Home Language curriculum, and learners from linguistically diverse backgrounds have to fulfil the same English language outcomes as English first language learners.

In a linguistically diverse society where English is a highly prized language, the only viable option would be bilingual education (Heugh, 2000). A solid foundation of language development in the mother tongue would be grounded whilst the second/other language would be systematically added (Heugh, 2000). The mother tongue would not be replaced and linguistic proficiency in neither the first nor second/other languages would be impeded. However, in order for bilingual education to be effective, the DoE needs to ensure that textbooks and materials are available in other languages (Afrikaans/African languages) and that there is adequate development in terminology and translation. According to Heugh (2000), bilingual education would not pose a threat to English as it would still remain the aspired language of the majority of the citizens in SA but it would increase the standards of education, decrease the levels of school-drop outs and failure, increase the levels of competence in English, improve the self-esteem and social tolerance of the citizens and have a positive impact on the economy in SA.

Studies by Cunliffe et al (2006) and Kirk et al (2007) investigated intermediate phase learners' experiences of communication in linguistically complex classrooms in the Western Cape. Both these studies found that despite the noted struggles, learners indicated both positive and negative experiences. English was the

language promoted in the classroom, whilst Afrikaans was taught only as a subject and IsiXhosa was not incorporated in any academic format. Positive experiences of English were associated with benefits such as access to tertiary education. While the learners held English in high regard, ESOL learners used their first language to explain concepts to their peers who did not understand the teacher's instructions in English. Learners' opportunities to communicate in the classroom were affected by teacher-dominated patterns of interaction, which in turn, were influenced by the nature of the teacher-learner relationships as support from the teacher or peers facilitated learning and communication for the learners. Poor proficiency in English was linked to poor writing skills in that language; however, despite their struggles with written language, learners were proud that they were learning in English.

The above studies investigated only the learners' perceptions of some written communication experiences whilst the current study investigated the perceptions of the teachers, learners, parents as well as the analysis of the learners' written language samples. Furthermore, the current study looked at written language in depth and in detail in comparison to the expected outcomes for the grade.

A study by Jordaan and Yelland (2003) was part of an international survey by the Multilingual Affairs Committee of the International Association of Logopaedics and Phoniatrics. The study investigated how South African SLTs provide language intervention for multilingual, language impaired children. The results indicated that the majority of SLTs provided language therapy to multilingual, language impaired children in the child's second language only, which is generally English. This is due to parental insistence and a lack of another common language between the SLT and child. This finding indicates that there is a lack of African-language practicing SLTs in SA, and ESOL children are therefore not being treated for language disorders in their mother tongue.

2.4.4. LITERACY LEVEL OF PARENTS

Studies reflect a positive relationship between higher educational level of parents and the improved performance of learners on literacy tests (DoE, 2003a:24). However, there is a large percentage of parents in SA who have poor literacy skills (Mathonsi, 2001), and the children from these homes are not exposed to books, reading or

writing materials from an early age. For many children, their first experience with a book is at school. For many adults with poor literacy skills the only time they need to write or read is when they have to fill in a form, for example when opening an account, paying an account or voting at a polling station (Brice Heath, 1983).

These parents are generally sending their children to school because they want them to be able to read and write and to value literacy. They have not exposed their children to reading or writing materials because they often do not know the contribution of early reading to literacy. These parents also seldom know how they can assist their school-age children, and therefore need to be guided on how they may support their children in acquiring literacy.

2.4.5. PARENTAL SUPPORT AND INVOLVEMENT

Another vital social challenge affecting the development of literacy in learners is a lack of parental support and involvement. Studies have found that children who come from such homes, have more disciplinary and academic problems and are more likely to repeat a grade (Kendall-Tackett & Eckenrode, 1996). Hence, in homes where there is a lack of parental support with homework and parental involvement in the school and academic activities, the development of literacy and written language may be hampered.

On the other hand, increased parental support and involvement has a powerful influence on academic achievement (Keith, 1993). Furthermore, a positive learning environment at home in which parents support, guide and motivate their children has a significant impact on student achievement (Henderson, 1987).

2.4.6. FOUNDATION SKILLS

An important opportunity that promotes the development of literacy in learners is the acquisition of foundation skills, which are also known as emergent literacy and refer to the knowledge, phonological awareness skills and orientations that preschoolers show with regard to writing, reading and oral language (Willenberg, 2007). These skills develop in the preschool years and form the foundations for literacy development (Speech Pathology Australia, 2005). They include recognition of environment print, letter naming, phonological awareness skills such as identifying

sounds in words, rhyme production and segmenting and blending of sounds, emergent writing and spelling, receptive vocabulary and fictional narratives (Willenberg, 2007). However, these skills are acquired by active stimulation in the home and preschool environments.

In 2002, Pretorius and Naude investigated the effect of early childhood developmental factors on poor reading and writing ability among children in South African Townships. Children between the ages of five and a half and seven years from six day-care centres in the informal settlement of Temba (SA) were randomly chosen. The home language of the children was Setswana. A reading and writing readiness checklist was used with the sample group. They found that the children were ill-prepared for formal education with poorly developed sentence construction and sense of syntax and inadequate sound development and knowledge of the alphabet. The children also had poor knowledge of sounds especially pertaining to prefixes and suffixes, transposition of sounds within words and replacement of a sound within a word by another. The following factors were indicated: inadequate visual analysis and synthesis, poor fine motor development and inadequate exposure to reading and writing at home.

However, cultural strengths of these disadvantaged, Black children included: adequate gestalt formation, enjoyment of and ability in visual arts, responsiveness to the concrete, expressiveness of gestures and body language, enjoyment of and ability to learn pictorial and symbolic representations. These children also excelled in storytelling and singing and enjoyment of and ability in creative movement, dance, music and rhythm and it was therefore suggested that these be implanted as a medium of instruction in the foundation phase in primary school. The above study has identified the barriers and also some opportunities to enhance reading and writing in disadvantaged preschool learners while the present study aimed to identify barriers and opportunities in the school system, social/home and learners to enhance the written language amongst disadvantaged intermediate phase learners.

2.4.7. SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS

It has been found that socio-economic conditions relate significantly to school enrolment and school completion rates globally (UNESCO, 2001). Socio-economic

difficulties often result in children leaving school and seeking employment to contribute to the family's living expenses – thus the prevalence of child labour in impoverished communities (UNESCO, 2001).

A study by Locke, Ginsborg and Peers (2002) investigated language development in low socioeconomic status children in the UK. The results showed that there is a link between low socioeconomic status and language delay. Due to the strong link between spoken and written language, the researchers concluded that a significant proportion of children from areas of economic deprivation must also be at risk for delayed written language development and related slow educational progress. Locke, Ginsborg and Peers (2002) viewed the learner and community as the site of the problem, and the influence of the education system was not questioned. The present study aimed to explore the influence of the education system as well as the community, in the development of written language in the learners, anticipating a combination of barriers and opportunities related to the development of written language in learners.

2.5. SUMMARY

There are many different views of literacy. Traditionally, literacy had been viewed as a skills-based tool but in recent years, with the emergence of NLS, there has been a shift to consider the social implications of literacy. It is now acknowledged that society and culture cannot be separated from the development of literacy, and therefore, literacy should be viewed as a social practice. Even though the education system may try to incorporate this tenet into the curriculum, the facilities are not present to carry this out. A complexity of factors influences education in SA which is a new and young democracy. The DoE in SA is seeking ways to improve education and increase hope for the youth. Teachers have many concerns about literacy and education. The majority of parents are satisfied about access to a better post-apartheid education system while the lack of quality education is still a concern amongst some parents. Learners are struggling to achieve appropriate reading and writing skills. This study aimed to identify the barriers as well as the opportunities to facilitate written language development in learners.

3. CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the aims of the study are presented followed by a description of the research design. The sampling procedures, participants, ethical issues, research instruments, pilot study, data collection and analysis are described. The precautions of trustworthiness and rigour are then discussed.

3.2. AIMS OF THE STUDY

Aim 1

To ascertain the current performance of the learners' written language expression.

Objectives

- To explore and describe the teachers, learners and parents' perceptions of the learners' written language expression.
- To evaluate the learners' current written language expression in relation to expected grade level writing outcomes.

Aim 2

To identify the values placed on the written language expression of learners.

Objective

- To explore and describe the values that teachers, learners and parents place on the written language expression of learners.

Aim 3

To identify the barriers and challenges affecting the development of written language in the learners.

Objective

- To explore and describe the teachers, learners and parents' perceptions of the barriers and challenges affecting the development of written language in the learners.

Aim 4

To identify the opportunities present to develop the written language of the learners.

Objective

- To explore and describe the teachers, learners, parents' perceptions of the present opportunities available to develop the written language of the learners.

A Secondary Aim was:

To identify the further opportunities/strategies that will promote written language development in the learners.

Objective

- To explore and describe the teachers, learners, parents' perceptions of the further opportunities/strategies that will promote written language development in the learners.

3.3. RESEARCH DESIGN

The case study as a research design is effective in allowing researchers to respond to a complex question like “why” (Yin, 2003). Case studies are typically described as exploratory, explanatory and descriptive (Yin, 2003), and this complex research question required such a combination-type case study. The focus of this study was on written language - a social phenomenon which required a design grounded in social science. While there are many types of designs used in social science research (e.g. experiments, surveys, or analysis of archival information), a case study was most relevant for this study. This study was a single within-site case study because it focused on two classrooms in one school in a particular community.

This design allowed for understanding the complexities of naturalistic, holistic, cultural and phenomenological interests (Stake, 1998; Yin, 2003). A case study design, by nature, allowed the researcher to do an in-depth investigation of the

critical multi-faceted aspects of written language through exploring the current performance, values, opportunities and barriers of this phenomenon (Seale et al, 2007). Complexity of the data meant that a design that allowed for in-depth investigation of various aspects of written language was required (Seale et al, 2007). Therefore, rather than using samples and following a strict protocol to investigate a limited number of variables, it was necessary to carry out an in-depth, investigation of a single instance or event: a case. In this instance, this was the case of written language in intermediate phase learners.

The design was also useful because it allowed the multiple perspectives of many different participants (teachers, learners, parents), which enabled the researcher to consider multiple voices and perspectives (Tellis, 1997). Multiple perspectives added to the depth and diversity of data obtained in this the study and as a result, the researcher gained a broader understanding of the case, with implications for future research (Seale et al, 2007).

A case study allows the inclusion of both quantitative and qualitative data (Yin, 2003). This study was primarily qualitative, but quantitative data was also required to answer the research questions. The strengths of a case study design include the provision of a systematic strategy of observing events, collecting data, analyzing information, and reporting the results (Yin, 2003). This, and the use of multiple methods and data sources enhanced the trustworthiness and rigour in this case study (Yin, 2003) – as discussed later in this chapter.

Data collection methods and participants in this case study included: (a) Questionnaires (with teachers, learners, parents), (b) Interviews (with teachers, learners), (c) Focus groups (with learners, parents), (d) Observations (researcher observing learners and teachers in the classrooms) and (e) Document analysis (written language samples of the learners) (see Table 3.1). These multiple methods and data sources provide in-depth and detailed data that was rich in content (Harling, 2002).

Case study as a design satisfied all the requirements of this study. However like all other research designs, case studies have limitations, the most common being the difficulty with generalising findings (Yin, 2003). This limitation is acknowledged; the intention of this study was not to generalise findings as the researcher is aware that the schooling context in SA is uneven. A further limitation of a case study is that it

generates large volumes of data, which presents a challenge in the writing up process and contributes to a lengthy report (Yin, 2003).

Table 3.1 Summary of objectives, participants, methods and instruments in this study

OBJECTIVES	PARTICIPANTS	METHODS and INSTRUMENTS	
To explore and describe: 1. the current performance of the learners' written language expression. 2. the values placed on the written language expression of the learners. 3. the barriers and challenges affecting the development of written language in the learners. 4. present opportunities available to develop written language in the learners. 5. further opportunities that will promote written language development in the learners.	Teachers	Questionnaires	*Teacher Questionnaire *Learner Questionnaire *Parent Questionnaire
	Learners	Interviews	*Interview Schedule- Individual: Teachers *Interview Schedule – Individual and Focus Group: Learners
	Parents	Focus Groups	*Interview Schedule – Individual and Focus Group: Learners *Focus Group Question Guide: Parents/Guardians
		Document Analysis	*Written Language Analysis Schedule 1 : Grade 5 *Written Language Analysis Schedule 2 : Grade 6
		Observations	*Classroom Observation Schedule *Field Notes

3.4. SAMPLING

3.4.1. SAMPLING OF THE CASE

A criterion, purposive sampling strategy was used to identify the case of written language (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Purposive sampling refers to selecting information-rich cases for in-depth study in order to understand the phenomenon being studied in those cases (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Purposive sampling is commonly used in case studies as the researcher decides what population will be typical of, or of interest to, the phenomenon being investigated (Robson, 1993). Criterion sampling is usually carried out in case study research where the case meets some pre-set criterion, or criteria, of importance (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). In the Western Cape, SA, there has been a growing concern about written language development in linguistically diverse, disadvantaged, intermediate phase learners.

This case of written language is typical of classrooms found in disadvantaged linguistically diverse ordinary schools in the Western Cape. Typical case sampling, which is a form of purposive sampling, illustrates or highlights what is typical, normal and average in a specific context (Patton, 2002, p. 243).

3.4.2. SAMPLING OF PARTICIPANTS

All the teachers, learners and parents in these two classrooms were invited to participate in this study. This type of sampling is referred to as complete collection sampling (Flick, 2009). This was necessary as all learners, parents and teachers in the two classrooms were aware of the research study taking place and it had to be ensured that none of these individuals felt discriminated against.

A purposive sample of 10 learners per class (20 in total) was recruited to be interviewed individually. This sample was intended to represent a range of learners from diverse language backgrounds and academic performance levels. The remaining learners were placed in four focus group sessions. In purposive sampling, the researcher selects particular elements from the population that will be representative or informative about the topic of interest (Robson, 1993). On the basis of the researcher's knowledge of the population, a judgment is made about which participants should be selected, to provide the best information to address the purpose of the research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001 p. 175). Here, the sample of learners selected for the interviews were information rich cases.

Purposive sampling was used to obtain the written language samples. Forty written language samples (20 from each class) were chosen. Similar to the learner interviews, the samples had to be representative of language diversity and academic performance of the learners in the classrooms.

3.5. PARTICIPANTS

3.5.1. CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF TEACHERS

Inclusion criteria for teacher participants were:

- teaching in the intermediate phase because the focus of this study was on written language in the intermediate phase

- involvement in language teaching and one other learning area that included written language (e.g. history/geography/science) as these teachers would have experiences with the learners' written language expression
- willingness to volunteer to participate in the study because the study required their voluntary participation
- the presence of learners of diverse language backgrounds in their classrooms because they had to have experience with written language in linguistically diverse classrooms
- a minimum of three years teaching experience in linguistically diverse classrooms as they would be familiar with written language expectations in the curriculum

Exclusion criteria were:

- Teachers who did not teach in the intermediate phase were excluded from this study.
- Teachers who did not have linguistically diverse learners in their class were excluded from this study.
- Teachers who did not have a minimum of three years experience and in-depth experience of written language learning were excluded from this study.

3.5.2. CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF LEARNERS

Inclusion criteria for learner participants were:

- willingness to participate in the study
- parental consent
- learners had to be in grade 5 and grade 6

Exclusion criteria were:

- Learners who did not have parental consent.
- Learners who were not in grade 5 or grade 6.

3.5.3. CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Inclusion criteria for parent/guardian participants were:

- Parents/guardians had to be willing and volunteer to participate in the study.

- Parents/guardians had to be caregivers of the learners who were participants in this study because they had to provide their perceptions of the learners' written language expression.

Exclusion criteria were:

- Parents/guardians who were not caregivers of the learner participants.

3.6. PRESELECTION PROCESS

- The research proposal was submitted to the University of Cape Town Research Ethics Committee and approval to conduct this study was received (REC Ref: 460/2007: see Appendix A1).
- Permission to conduct research at the school was obtained from the WCED (Appendix A2).

3.7. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Ethical principles of Beneficence, Non-maleficence, Autonomy and Justice, (WHO, 1992) were addressed as follows:

3.7.1. BENEFICENCE

Research should do good and promote benefits (Durrheim & Wassenaar, 1999: 66), which should be balanced against risks and costs. Researchers have an ethical obligation to ensure that their findings are correctly interpreted and used to advance and promote intervention development (WHO, 2001). It is important to know the strengths and weaknesses of written language in the current linguistically diverse classrooms in SA in order to support learners through the learning process, and to complete school successfully. Therefore the results of this study will be made available to schools, education departments and other professionals to assist in promoting written language development amongst learners. Participants were informed of the benefits of this study.

3.7.2. NON-MALEFICENCE

This requires that the researcher do no harm to the participants either intentionally or unintentionally (Aiken & Catalano, 1994: 24). This study was not harmful to participants and no obvious risks were involved. Data was handled sensitively with no personal references to participants i.e. names were not used. If participants had required personal support during the research process, relevant arrangements were available.

3.7.3. AUTONOMY

This is the right of self-determination, independence and freedom (Aiken & Catalano, 1994:23). Informed consent was obtained from the teachers, learners and parents/guardians to participate in the research. Information sheets and consent forms (see Appendices B1, B2, B3, B4, and B5) were provided to all participants. There was confidentiality of all information and data. Participant names and the name of the relevant school were not included. During the interview processes no names of participants were mentioned. Respect was maintained and there were no individualized comments. During the writing up process, care was taken to ensure anonymity of the participants by using alphabet-numeric codes when quoting participants. For example, teachers were referred to as T1 and T2, learners as L1 to L10 and parents as P1 to P6. Participants were also informed and that they could withdraw from the study at any time (Owen & Davis, 1991).

3.7.4. JUSTICE

This is the obligation of the researcher to be fair to all participants (Aiken & Catalano 1994:25). In this study all learners, teachers and parents were treated equally and fairly. All the participants were allowed to voice their opinions and the researcher recorded and used data from all the participants. No known discrimination took place and all data was integrated and treated with equal respect. The researcher made an effort to ensure that learners' voices, which have generally been neglected in research, were fairly included.

3.8. SITE SELECTION AND RECRUITMENT

- The school had to be situated in the Western Cape Metro in an area of historic social disadvantage.
- The school had to be linguistically diverse (i.e. classes consisting of learners and teachers who came from different racial, cultural and language backgrounds) with some learners receiving instruction in their second or third language.
- Together with the WCED and researchers taking part in the larger research project, schools were identified to correspond to the criteria for selection of schools in the larger study so that cross-study comparisons may be made.
- The researcher visited several schools of which only one school was receptive of the research study.
- The School Principal was telephoned to enquire if the classrooms were linguistically diverse and if there were written language concerns in these classrooms.
- The researcher visited the school, met with the school principal and was then introduced to the teachers who the principal thought were suitable participants.
- The researcher carried out a screening interview with the teachers to establish if they met the criteria for selection.
- The focus of this study was on written language in the intermediate phase, hence one grade 5 and one grade 6 classroom were chosen as learners in these two grades would be mature and representative of the intermediate phase.

3.9. STUDY PROCEDURE

- The School Principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) of the selected school were contacted for permission to conduct the research with teachers and learners (see appendices A3 and A4).
- The participants in this study were teachers, learners and parents in one grade 5 and one grade 6 classrooms.
- The teachers, learners and parents were invited to participate in either interviews or focus groups. The form teachers were responsible for teaching

all learning areas except art. Therefore, the two form teachers were the only teachers who participated in this study. Sixty-five learners and 19 parents volunteered and participated in this study

- The teachers were initially asked to complete a questionnaire to obtain information about their linguistic, educational and employment backgrounds.
- The teachers were then interviewed individually.
- The learners were initially asked to complete a questionnaire detailing their linguistic abilities and competencies.
- Twenty learners (10 per class) were interviewed individually.
- The remaining learners in both classes were then invited to participate in focus group discussions. The learners were placed into groups of eight-10 members (i.e. four groups) to carry out focus group discussions based on their availability.
- The parents who consented to participate in the study were organised into groups of four to six members for the focus group discussions.
- Observations of the two classrooms in action, took place multiple times over a period of six months.

3.10. RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS AND APPARATUSES

Instruments

The following instruments were used to collect data in this study:

- Teacher Questionnaire
- Learner Questionnaire
- Parent/Guardian Questionnaire
- Interview Schedule – Individual: Teachers
- Interview Schedule – Individual and Focus Group: Learners
- Focus Group Question Guide: Parents/Guardians
- Written Language Analysis Schedule 1: grade 5
- Written Language Analysis Schedule 2: grade 6
- Classroom Observation Schedule

Teacher Questionnaire, Learner Questionnaire and Parent/Guardian Questionnaire

Teacher questionnaires and learner questionnaires developed for the larger study have been adapted for this study. The parent questionnaire was developed by the researcher specifically for this study. The questions in the teacher questionnaire sought information on the employment and educational and linguistic backgrounds of the teachers, the communication limitations in the classroom and barriers to written language (see appendix C2). The questions in the learner questionnaire obtained initial biographical information regarding the language background, communication, reading and writing preferences of the learners (see appendix C4). The questions in the parent/guardian questionnaire tapped biographical, educational and linguistic background information about the parents/guardians (see appendix C6). The questionnaires were tested in the pilot study and modified accordingly to enhance trustworthiness and rigour.

Interview Schedule- Individual: Teachers; Interview Schedule- Individual and Focus Group: Learners and Focus Group Question Guide: Parents/Guardians

The interview schedules were organized by combining main questions, follow-up questions and probes (Rubin & Rubin, 2005:129) (see appendices C3; C5 and C7). Main questions were prepared to cover all the major parts of the research questions while follow-up questions asked for explanation of themes, concepts or events that the interviewee has introduced and probes helped manage the conversation by keeping it on the topic, signalling the desired level of depth and asking for examples or clarification (Rubin & Rubin, 2005:129). The interview schedules and focus group question guides were tested in the pilot study, reviewed by senior researchers and modified accordingly to enhance trustworthiness and rigour.

Written Sample Analysis Schedules 1 & 2 for grades 5 & 6

The researcher developed two schedules for this study, one for grade 5 and one for grade 6 (see appendices C8 & C9). There is no formal analytical tool available to analyse written language according to grade level writing outcomes, so these schedules were developed for the purpose of this study. The Revised National

Curriculum Statement (RNCS) (DoE, 2002) states specific outcomes for first and second language learners and there are different policy documents for English home language, English first additional language and English second additional language learners. The school where this investigation took place follows the English home language outcomes for all the learners even if they are English second or other language (ESOL) speakers. Therefore, the written language analysis schedules used the English Home- language policy document as a reference.

This policy document divides writing outcomes into presentation, paragraph, sentence and word levels, and narrative structure, with specific writing outcomes under each of these levels. For example, under paragraph level, the specific writing outcomes that learners should acquire include linking of paragraphs, appropriate punctuation, spelling and grammar whilst at the sentence level learners should acquire writing outcomes such as phrase and clause usage, use of adjective and adverbs and narrative structure looked at the reader's understanding of the piece. Presentation looked at neatness/legibility and format of the written piece. All these elements were incorporated into the written sample analysis schedules (see appendices C8 & C9). The schedules, which were instruments for relating the written sample analysis to the outcomes, were tested in the pilot study and modified accordingly, to enhance trustworthiness and rigour. In the pilot study, five writing samples were analyzed according to these schedules and these results were cross checked by a senior researcher.

Classroom Observation Schedule

An observation schedule (see Appendix C1) provided guidelines of what was most vital to observe (Flick, 2009). The observation schedule had been developed by researchers involved in the larger research project but was adapted to include the written language aspects for this study. The following were some areas that were observed in detail: physical layout of the classroom; communication between teacher and learners; facilitation and approach to written language work by the teacher; teaching aids and support in the classroom and quality and quantity of homework. The observation schedule was tested in the pilot study after observing three lessons in a grade 5 class and modified accordingly to enhance trustworthiness and rigour.

During the observations, additional field notes were made after using the observational schedule in the initial observations.

Apparatuses

The following apparatuses were used in the data collection and management process:

- Sony Handy cam digital video recorder- DCR HC 26E: To video the focus group sessions.
- Olympus digital voice recorder – DS-2200: To audio record the interviews and focus group sessions.
- Olympus digital voice recorder – DS-50: To audio record the interviews and focus group sessions.
- A personal computer was used to type out the transcriptions and capture the data. The programme Windows Microsoft Office Word- 2003 document was used.

3.11. PILOT PHASE

A pilot phase was necessary to sharpen the instruments and methods. Typically pilot studies employ only a few participants selected from the population of interest in order to check the feasibility of a research project and to make refinements as needed (Maxwell & Satake, 2006 p. 62). The form teacher and two learners were interviewed individually. There was one learner focus group and one parent focus group. Questionnaires were also administered to one teacher, 40 learners and six parents. The researcher also carried out observations in the classroom. The pilot study was conducted six months prior to data collection for this study. The pilot phase was necessary to become familiar with the research environment, to determine the effectiveness of the data collection methods and instruments and hence help assess the entire research process and determine any flaws that needed to be corrected before the actual study took place (Maxwell & Satake, 2006). All methods, procedures and instruments were tested and revised during the pilot study phase to enhance trustworthiness and rigour. The procedure for the revision and refinement of the methodology was analysed by two researchers and verified by senior researchers. Hence, the pilot study helped to:

- Sharpen the instruments: The teacher questionnaire was revised. The written language analysis schedules were also revised to compare accurately against the writing outcomes of the preceding grades.
- Shape the focus groups and interviews: The pilot study revealed that it was important to explain to the learners and parents that the study was not about the motor aspect of handwriting but rather about the written language. The elements involved in written language had to be explained prior to the interview and focus group sessions.
- Organise the analysis of data so that it was more logical.
- Shape the ongoing discussions. During the pilot phase it was found that during the observations it was important to speak to the teacher about any relevant issues while they came up and not wait for the interviews. It was found that the teachers also wanted to talk about problems and issues in their class while the researcher spent the extended amount of time observing in the classroom. Therefore ongoing discussions between the researcher and teachers took place during the classroom observations. Field notes were made during these discussions. These ongoing discussions with field notes were part of the observation process and the results were integrated with the results from the interviews and focus groups.
- Show that detailed observation was important: It was found that it was very important to take careful notes during the observation as vital data was obtained during the observation process.

The pilot phase alerted the researcher to many factors which needed to be revised in preparation for a rigorous study.

3.12. DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND PROCEDURES

A multi-method data collection strategy was used, including, in-depth interviews, self-administered structured questionnaires, focus groups, written language samples and observations. This extensive combination of methods was necessary to provide the in-depth information generated in this case study to answer all the research questions. The data was recorded manually (written) and electronically (audio and video recordings) using digital voice recorders and video cameras. Participants were

informed of this in the informed consent process. Trained research assistants assisted in data collection and analysis. Data Sources included:

- two self administered teacher questionnaires
- 65 self administered learner questionnaires
- 19 self administered parent/guardian questionnaires
- two transcribed individual teacher interviews
- 20 transcribed individual learner interviews
- four transcribed learner focus groups
- four transcribed parent focus groups
- 40 written language samples
- four observation schedules and
- 20 pages of field notes from observations and ongoing discussions with teachers

3.12.1. QUESTIONNAIRES

Self-administered questionnaires provided mainly biographical information, not obtained from the interviews. Questionnaires were important data sources that together with the interviews, written language samples and observations contributed to the in-depth data obtained in this study (Kitzinger, 2000). The researcher discussed the purpose of the questionnaires with the teachers individually who then self-administered the questionnaires. The teachers were invited to contact the researcher telephonically should any queries have arisen. The learners were provided with information in the classroom, regarding the research procedure and directions on completing the questionnaires by the researcher. The learners were also given the option of asking the researcher for help if they were experiencing any difficulties in completing the questionnaires. The researcher and research assistants were present in the classrooms while the learners completed the questionnaires. Before the commencement of the focus group sessions, the researcher discussed the purpose of the questionnaire with each parent individually and then asked him/her if he/she would prefer to fill in the questionnaire by himself/herself or would like the

researcher to assist him/her to complete it. The questionnaires were completed by the parents prior to the commencement of the focus group sessions.

3.12.2. INTERVIEWS

The interviews in this study were an important source of information (Yin, 2003). As this case study was about written language, which is a real-life experience, the participants provided important insights, history and background information about the situation of written language in the two classrooms (Taylor, 2005). The detailed in-depth information obtained through the interviews in this study may not have been obtained by using structured questionnaires as participants tend to only answer the question and not elaborate further as they would during a verbal conversation (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Therefore in this study, the researcher was able to discuss and explore with the participants and to probe more deeply into their accounts of their experiences with written language (Kvale, 1996). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers and learners. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using a loose structure consisting of open-ended questions that define the area to be explored, but from which the interviewer diverged to pursue a response in more detail (Britten, 2000: 12). The main questions helped to answer the research questions while the follow-up questions and probes ensured the depth, detail, vividness, richness and nuance of this study (Rubin & Rubin, 2005:129). Elaboration, continuation, clarification, attention and completion probes were used to ensure that the researcher received an accurate, comprehensible answer while encouraging the participant to continue speaking (Rubin & Rubin, 1995:150). The researcher listened carefully and audio recorded the interviews in order to hear the meanings, interpretations and understandings that provide shape to the worlds of the participants (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

Teachers

The interviews with teachers took place at the school, during their free period i.e. a time slot in which they were not teaching or during a break time. The interviews took place in the school staff room and also in the classrooms. The rooms were quiet and private and the researcher and teachers were not interrupted or disturbed during the

interviews. The teachers were interviewed formally in a semi-structured interview format and on-going discussions with the researcher during the classroom observations and data collection period also took place multiple times over a period of six months. The formal interviews each ranged from 90 minutes to 120 minutes while the ongoing discussions ranged from 30 minutes to 60 minutes. The formal interviews were audio-recorded while field notes were made during the ongoing discussions. The main question was on the expectations of written language for the relevant grade, while the follow-up questions focused on the difficulties and challenges encountered, the facilitation of written language, the importance of oral vs. written language in the class, the pass and fail criteria for the grade, the importance of written language in assessments, the oral and written communication of the learners, the nature of the learners' written language, the support provided to the learners to enhance their written language skills and further opportunities that will enhance the written language of the learners (see appendix C3).

Learners

Twenty learners were interviewed individually. A trained research assistant and the researcher each interviewed 10 learners separately. The learner interviews took place in a quiet vacant room at the school and ranged from 15 minutes to 30 minutes in duration. The learners were assured of confidentiality. As the learners had become familiar with the researcher during the observation procedure, they were relaxed and at ease during the interview process. The researcher explained to the learners that the interview was about their written language and not just about the motor act of writing and that when using the term writing it encompassed the use of sentences, grammar and punctuation and not just the physical handwriting. The main questions focused on their written language, the writing and reading they did outside of school and the help they would like to receive from school and the home to improve their writing. Follow up and probe questions focused on the importance of writing, the support given to the learners by the teachers to assist them with written language difficulties, the help they received with their homework at home and what they had learnt at home or from their community that helped them at school (see appendix C5).

All 20 learners interviewed were able to communicate in English and there was no need for an interpreter. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed after the researcher had listened to the tapes. If some of the interviews had taken place in IsiXhosa, the interpreter would have first transcribed the interviews into IsiXhosa and then into English. However as all the interviews were conducted in English, transcriptions were also in English.

3.12.3. FOCUS GROUPS

Learner focus groups and parent focus groups, a form of group interviews, took place in this study (Kitzinger, 2005). In this study the focus groups together with the interviews and questionnaires contributed to the in-depth information about written language that was generated (Patton, 2002). The learners were interviewed individually as well as in focus groups to ensure that they were given opportunities to discuss their perceptions about written language either privately with the researcher or amongst their peers in a group. This is because some learners may feel safe in a group and reveal their perceptions while others may feel uncomfortable to discuss their perceptions in the group and may prefer to do it alone in confidence with the researcher (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:455; Patton, 2002:389).

The focus groups focused on written language and reflections on common experiences. By creating a social environment wherein group members were encouraged and stimulated by each others' perceptions and ideas, the researcher was able to increase the quality and richness of data as communication between the researcher and participants was enhanced (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:455; Kitzinger, 2000:20). Focus groups with the learners (see appendix C5) as well as with the parents/guardians (see appendix C7) provided vital information in addressing the research question.

Learner and Parent/Guardian Focus Groups

Most reported studies involve a few focus groups of between six and fifteen, with the group size ranging from four to eight participants to facilitate a lively group interaction (Kitzinger, 2005). This study had four focus groups with learners and

another set of four focus groups with parents/guardians. Refreshments, and sitting around a circle, helped to establish a relaxed informal atmosphere. Each session lasted about 60-90 minutes. The sessions took place at the school, outside of school time for the learners and at a suitable time for the parents. The venue was accessible to all participants. These focus group sessions were video recorded with the permission of the participants and the data was transcribed after the researcher had watched and listened to the tapes. The exchange of ideas/experiences, shifts in agreement or disagreement among the participants during the focus group sessions was an integral part of the data. As with the learner interviews, an interpreter would have been available if the parents had preferred to speak in IsiXhosa. The interpreter would also have assisted with translation during the interviews and the transcription and analysis of the interviews. As all the parents were also able to communicate in English, the use of an interpreter was not required.

3.12.4. DOCUMENTS/ WRITTEN LANGUAGE SAMPLES

Forty written language samples (documents), 20 from the grade 5 classroom and 20 from the grade 6 classroom were obtained from the two teachers. Documents in research refer to written materials e.g. books, letters, notices, magazines or to non – written materials e.g. films, television programmes, pictures, drawings, photographs (Robson, 1993). The document method of data collection is an indirect technique or an unobtrusive measure as it involves analysis of a document that was produced for another purpose and not for the purpose of the research study. Hence the document is not affected by the fact that it is being used for the research study (Robson, 1993). In this study, the writing samples/documents were obtained through routine activities in the class e.g. compositions and creative writing work that was set by the teachers and is a grade 5 and 6 learning outcome expectation by the WCED.

The following were the topics and formats that emerged:

- Grade 5 : A creative explanation of why the learner was late for school
- Grade 6 : A friendly letter on the topic of HIV and AIDS

The researcher photocopied the samples and returned the originals to the teachers. The only exclusion criterion for the writing samples was complete illegibility or

incomplete written language samples. These samples had to be over half a page in length and were then analysed according to the two written language analysis schedules (see Appendix C8 and C9). These schedules took the writing outcomes into account as well as providing freedom for the researcher to pick up on any other trends that may arise during analysis. One of the aims of this study was to explore the current performance of the written language of the learners. The researcher aimed to explore the presentation, content and style of the written language of the learners.

3.12.5. OBSERVATIONS

After obtaining the necessary permission, direct observations and descriptive observations of classes in action were carried out to facilitate understanding of the classroom context. Observations were used as data as well as to generate discussion and a deeper understanding of relevant issues. During the observations the researcher observed directly but also queried certain observations with the participants. This is referred to as descriptive observation (Kelly, 2006). Field notes were made during these observation procedures (Neuman, 2006). The researcher's reflections were noted thereafter. The researcher spent extended amount of time within the chosen classrooms and observed at least 15 different lessons in each classroom to gain information that may not be achieved through other data collection methods (McMillan & Schumacher 2001). This added to the depth of this case study (Flick, 2009).

Observation complements other data collection methods and adds to the quality of data collection and the overall study (Robson, 1993). Sometimes participants tend to change their behaviour when they are aware that they are being observed. This is known as the Hawthorne Effect (Robson, 1993). To counteract this effect the researcher spent extended amounts of time in the classrooms over a period of six months (prolonged engagement) with minimal interaction. This led to 'habituation', where the researcher's repeated and unrewarding presence with minimal interaction resulted in the learners no longer noticing her presence and they continued with their work in their usual procedure (Robson, 1993).

3.13. DATA ANALYSIS

The following sources of data were analysed to understand and describe the current performance, values, opportunities to and barriers of written language in the selected linguistically diverse classrooms in the Western Cape.

3.13.1. TEACHER, LEARNER and PARENT QUESTIONNAIRES

The data was coded, analysed numerically and converted into percentages to determine frequency data and to provide basic information of the linguistic backgrounds and biographical details of the participants (Durrheim, 1999; Holloway, 1997). Data in the following areas were analysed:

- Education and qualification of teachers
- Educational level and employment status of parents
- Home languages of the teachers, learners and parents
- Languages spoken by the teachers, learners and parents
- Proficiency of English in teachers and learners
- Languages that learners were able to read and write in
- Languages which learners preferred reading in

3.13.2. INTERVIEWS (TEACHERS AND LEARNERS) and FOCUS GROUPS (LEARNERS AND PARENTS)

Data Management

- Individual interviews were audio recorded and focus group sessions were video and audio recorded.
- The content of the first interviews were examined to see what data was obtained and what information still needed to be found out (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Based on this ongoing analysis the researcher was able to modify main questions and prepare follow up questions to pursue emerging ideas (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).
- The researcher simultaneously listened to the audio tapes and watched the video tapes of the interviews and focus groups to cross check audio clarity.

- The researcher together with two research assistants then transcribed the interviews and focus groups. The transcriptions were typed verbatim according to the audio and video tapes using a computer and Microsoft Office Word -2003 document programme.
- The researcher then cross checked all the transcriptions with the audio and video recordings to verify accuracy of the transcriptions.

Data Analysis

- The researcher began the process of immersion. The researcher read and reread the transcripts several times to become totally familiar with the data and immersed herself in the data collection and ongoing analysis for a period of five months before beginning the final analysis (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).
- The next stage of analysis was recognition, in which the researcher found concepts, themes, events and topical markers in the interviews and focus groups (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). A concept is a word or term that represents an idea important to the research problem; themes are summary statements and explanations of what is going on; events are occurrences that have taken place and topical markers are names of people, places, organizations, numbers, such as dates, addresses, public laws (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).
- The researcher read the transcriptions to note core ideas and concepts, recognize emotive stories and find themes (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).
- The interviews and focus group transcripts were then systematically examined to clarify what is meant by specific concepts and themes and synthesise different version of events to facilitate the researcher's understanding of the overall narrative (Rubin & Rubin, 2005: 207). It was a rigorous, iterative process. As the researcher clarified and synthesised ideas that were present, new concepts and themes were generated by elaboration (Rubin & Rubin, 2005: 207). This occurred as the researcher found that specific extracts of texts generated multiple themes.
- All the transcripts from the interviews and focus groups were examined together to extract coherent and consistent descriptions, themes and theories that related to the research questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2005: 202), and also to

seek emerging patterns (Yin, 2003). Comparisons and similarities in the data from the different data sources were also emerging in this stage.

- The data was then coded to group similar ideas together and determine how the themes related to each other. Coding involves systematically labelling concepts, themes, events and topical markers so that the researcher may readily retrieve and examine all the data units that refer to the same subject across all the interviews and focus groups (Rubin & Rubin, 2005: 207). As coding progressed it showed similar themes emerging from the different data sources and participants i.e. teachers, learners and parents.
- Themes offer descriptions and explanations of the behaviours of people or how people should behave (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Themes explain how and why things happen.
- The themes obtained from the data were then sorted to determine which ones were related in order to answer the research questions and build a broader description of the case of written language.
- Peer review with two senior researchers took place throughout the analysis process to discuss and verify results.
- Saturation was then reached. Saturation refers to a researcher becoming fully immersed in the phenomenon being studied in order to know and comprehend it as fully as possible (Maxwell & Satake, 2006: 270). It implies that a researcher has performed a deep, dense or thick description in an exhaustive effort to extract as much meaning from the data as possible and further information becomes redundant and repetitive (Maxwell & Satake, 2006: 270; Kelly, 1999a:381).

3.13.3.WRITTEN LANGUAGE SAMPLES

Data Management

Forty written language samples (i.e. 20 per class) of existing pieces of the learners' written work were collected by the researcher and analysed by an expert writing tutor. The samples were part of the grade curriculum and were a fair representation of the learners' written language abilities as verified by the class teachers. The writing

expert was therefore able to analyse the samples against the preceding grade outcomes.

Data Analysis

- The samples were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively.
- The samples were first coded using categories according to the various outcomes and analysed uniformly using the written language analysis schedules (see Appendices C8 & C9) as outlined above. This type of analysis is based on the framework approach in which the objectives of the investigation are set in advance and the data is rearranged according to the appropriate part of the framework (Pope, Ziebland & Mays, 2000). More specifically, this was a criterion referenced analysis as the grade 5 samples were compared against the grade 4 outcomes in the grade 5 written language analysis schedule, and the grade 6 samples were compared against the grade 5 outcomes in the grade 6 written language analysis schedule (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 2002). The samples were compared to the preceding grade outcomes as they were obtained in May-June 2008 (midyear) and the learners would not have been expected to achieve the outcomes for their current grade by then.
- Each writing sample was first analysed individually and then compared to the preceding grade writing outcomes under presentation level, paragraph level, sentence level, word level and narrative structure, i.e. each grade 5 sample was compared to the grade 4 writing outcomes in schedule 1 (Appendix C8) and each grade 6 sample was compared to the grade 5 outcomes in schedule 2 (Appendix C9). Each individual writing sample was rated/graded by the writing expert analyst and given a 'yes' if it was judged as meeting a specific writing outcome and a 'no' if it did not meet a specific writing outcome, across all the different writing outcomes. The 'yes' and 'no' judgments of the writing outcomes for each individual writing sample were recorded in a corresponding written language analysis schedule by the writing expert analyst.
- The 40 written language analysis schedules of all the samples were then pooled together. The 'yes' and 'no' judgments for each writing outcome in all

40 schedules were coded into numeric values to determine the frequency of outcomes that were ‘met’ or ‘not met’ across all the samples (Holloway, 1997).

- Forty percent of the writing samples from both grades were then analysed, cross checked and verified by the researcher, together with an experienced grade 5 teacher. The grade 5 teacher qualitatively agreed with the written sample analysis results obtained by the writing expert tutor/analyst.
- The frequency count was then converted into percentages by the researcher to determine the percentage of samples that met each writing outcome and the percentage of samples that did not meet each writing outcome in both grades.
- The data was then analysed qualitatively by the researcher to determine underlying phenomena, interpretations and general patterns or trends for each grade. Strengths and weaknesses as well as other possible underlying challenges and barriers in the different writing outcomes (e.g. spelling, punctuation, use of adverbs, etc.) were identified.
- These results are presented in tables and in a descriptive format in chapter 4.

3.13.4. OBSERVATIONS

Data Management

An observational schedule (Appendix C1) was used to obtain data during the classroom observations (Flick, 2009). Field notes were made during these observations.

Data Analysis

- The data from the observation schedule and the field notes were coded and analysed to determine themes and concepts and build up a thick description of the classroom in action.
- These results were integrated with the results from the focus groups and interviews where common themes emerged in order to obtain an in-depth understanding of written language in these linguistically diverse classrooms.

An overview of the steps in the data management and analysis process in this study is presented in Figure 3.1. below.

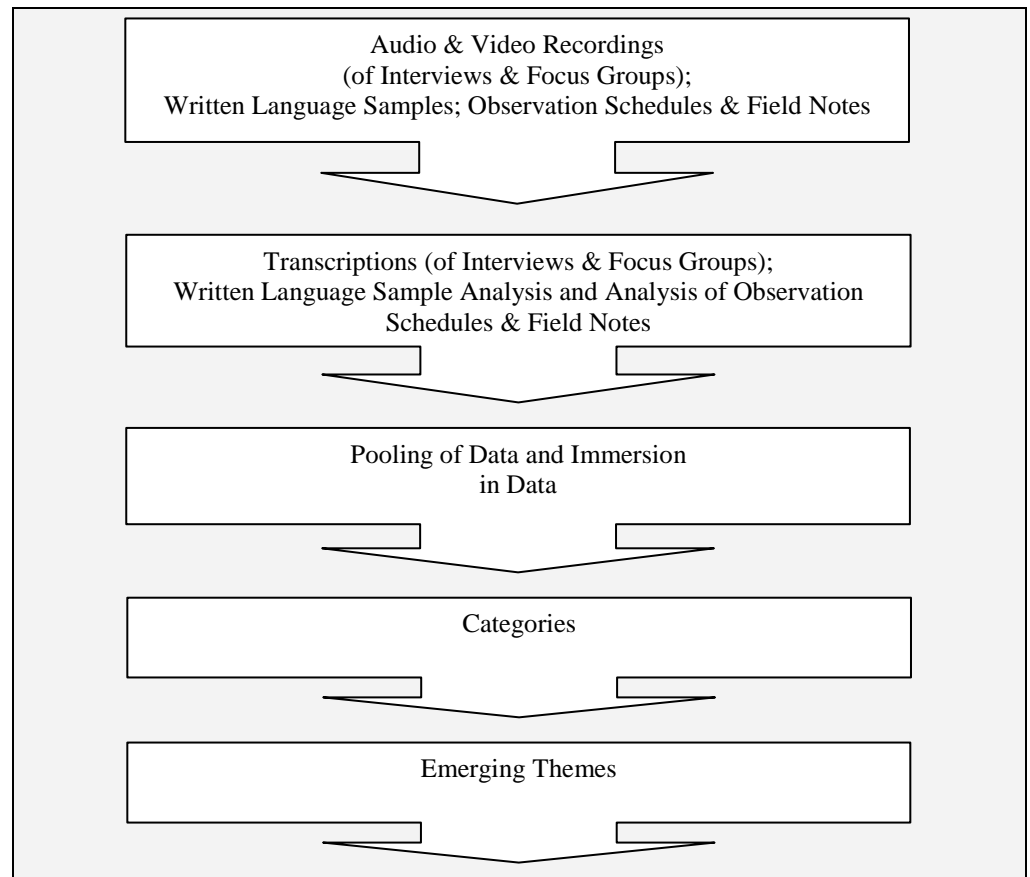


Figure 3.1. Data management and analysis process

3.14. RIGOUR AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

To ensure trustworthiness and rigour of the data and to reduce the likelihood of misinterpretation, various precautionary measures were applied, including the redundancy of data gathering and procedural challenges to explanations (Yin, 2003). During qualitative case work, these procedures are referred to as “triangulation” (Yin, 2003). Table 3.2. shows the different strategies used in this study to increase trustworthiness and rigour.

Table 3.2. Strategies to enhance design, rigour and trustworthiness

Strategy	Description	Phase of Research in which Strategy Occurs
Prolonged and Persistent Field Work	Allowed data analysis to establish a relationship between findings and participant (teachers, learners and parents) reality.	Data collection
Multi-method Strategies	Allowed triangulation in data collection and analysis.	Data collection and analysis
Verbatim Participant Accounts	Obtained literal statements and interpretations from teachers, parents and learners and quotations from transcripts.	Data collection/analysis
Mechanically Recorded Data	Interviews and focus group sessions were audio and video recorded.	Data collection
Member Checking	Checked informally with teachers, parents and learners for accuracy during data collection.	Data collection
Pilot Phase	Established trustworthiness and rigour of methodology.	Prior to actual data collection
Peer Critique	Two senior researchers reviewed data and analysis with the researcher.	Data collection and analysis
Audit Trail	Detailed records of design, methods, data, analysis and decisions were made electronically and in hard copy by researcher.	Prior to and during entire research process

Triangulation is the cross validation among data sources, data collection strategies, time periods and theoretical schemes (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006: 374). In order to implement triangulation in this study, various strategies were employed. There was prolonged and persistent field work over a period of six months. This study used a variety of schedules, multiple methods and data sources to obtain data and add to the quality and richness of data collection. Questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, writing sample documents and observations were used during the data collection phase to add to the rigour of the study (Yin, 2003). The findings in this study were compared across these data sources and methods to triangulate the results and increase the trustworthiness of the study (Maxwell & Satake, 2006; Yin, 2003). In order to find patterns in the data, different sources, situations and methods were

compared to see whether the same pattern kept recurring (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:374). Multiple perceptions from the different participants were obtained to clarify meaning and to verify the repeatability of an observation or interpretation (Stake, 1998). Verbatim participant accounts were audio- as well as video recorded to ensure clarity and accuracy of data. However, divergent views were also obtained from the participants.

The researcher verified interview data with the participants to ensure rigour (Kelly, 1999b:430). Hence, ongoing member checking during data collection and analysis added to the trustworthiness and rigour. The pilot phase enhanced the quality of the schedules and instruments in obtaining the relevant data (Maxwell & Satake, 2006). Peer debriefing with two senior researchers took place throughout the research process (Kelly, 1999b:430). The results of the written language sample analysis were cross checked and verified by the researcher together with an experienced grade 5 teacher. This grade 5 teacher has thirty years of teaching experience and is the Head of Department of the intermediate phase (grades 4-6) in her school. Finally, as the researcher is fundamental in the research process, an audit trail including continued self-reflection about personal biases and assumptions was recorded throughout the study (Kelly, 1999b:430).

3.15. SUMMARY

This study investigated the case of written language in two linguistically diverse, intermediate phase classrooms. A qualitative single case study design, using multiple data collection methods was used. The participants in this study were teachers, learners and parents and ethical considerations were ensured. Data collection methods included questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, written language sample document analysis and observation. All the research instruments were tested in the pilot phase and modified accordingly. Data from the multiple data sources was analysed to determine emerging themes and trends. Various procedures were employed to enhance the rigour and trustworthiness of this study. The next chapter will present the integrated results.

4. CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

4.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the results from the different data sources and participants. These are presented in relation to the different themes that relate to the context, current performance, value, opportunities and barriers to written language in the classrooms. Direct quotes of the participants, tables and figures are used as representation devices of the results. The results from the grade 5 and grade 6 classrooms will be integrated, given the similarities between them. However, where differences between the two classrooms arose, those will be highlighted. First, the contexts of the classrooms and the biographical and linguistic profiles of the participants will be presented. Thereafter, the results pertaining to the current performance, values, opportunities and barriers to written language development in the two linguistically diverse classrooms investigated, will be presented (see Figure 4.1.).

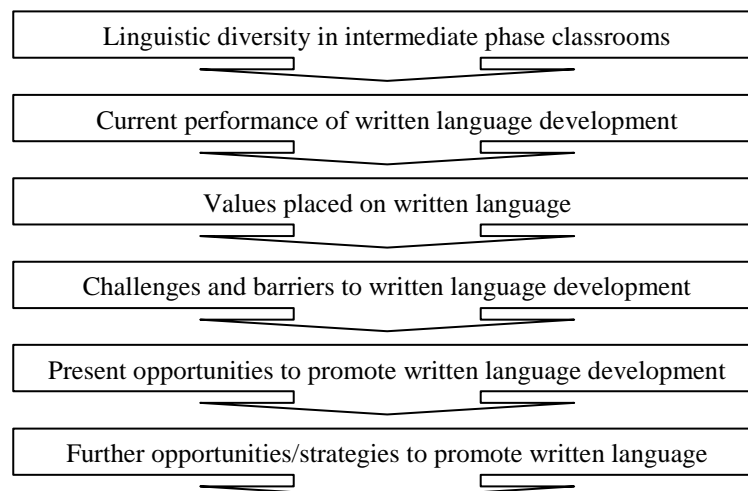


Figure 4.1. Structural framework of the results

4.2. CONTEXTUALIZING THE CLASSROOMS

The grade 5 and grade 6 classrooms are in a school situated in the historically socially disadvantaged Cape Flats area in urban Western Cape, sixteen years post-apartheid. The data in this study was collected in May-June, 2008, which was at the end of the second school term. The grade 5 classroom was situated on the second floor of the building. There were 48 learners in this classroom and they sat in pairs at desks: in four rows of six desks each. The classroom was crowded and the aisles were very narrow. The teacher's desk was at the back of the classroom

The grade 6 classroom was also situated on the second floor of the building. There were 38 learners in this classroom. The learners sat in pairs at desks in four rows. In this classroom, there were three rows with 5 desks and one row with four desks. The teacher's desk was at the front of the classroom close to the blackboard.

In both classrooms the learners were allowed to choose their own seating places. However, if the seating arrangements became problematic, the teacher would choose a seating place for the learner. During lessons and when instructions were being given, the teachers would stand in front of the class or stand up at their tables. While the learners were busy with tasks, the teacher would walk around the classroom, assisting individual learners at their desks. In the grade 5 classroom, this was impossible due to the crowded desks and narrow aisles, and so the teacher was not able to monitor and assist learners in this way. On the walls of both classrooms, there were many educational posters, covering themes such as classroom rules, etiquette and behaviour patterns specific for that class and posters on life skills and HIV /AIDS. All the posters were in English.

4.2.1 PROFILES OF THE PARTICIPANTS

The participants were of diverse linguistic, cultural and educational backgrounds. In terms of ethnic or race groupings, all the participants were Coloured or Black – there were no White learners, parents or teachers in the classroom contexts investigated here. The following information was obtained from the questionnaires completed by the two form teachers, 19 (out of 86) parents and 65 (out of 86) learners of the grade 5 and grade 6 classrooms in this study.

Teachers

The form teachers were involved in the teaching of all the academic learning areas except art, as per the arrangement in this school.

Teacher 1

Teacher 1 was a Coloured female. She had a three year college diploma and a university honours degree in education. She had been teaching for 21 years. She had taught grade 5 learners for 7 years. Apart from teaching seven academic learning areas to her class, she was also involved with counselling and coordinating the peace committee at the school. Her home language was Afrikaans but she was bilingual and spoke English proficiently.

Teacher 2

Teacher 2 was a Coloured male, with a four year honours degree from a College of Education. He had taught grade 6 learners for 10 years. Apart from teaching seven academic learning areas to his grade 6 class, he also had administrative and extra murals responsibilities at the school.

In the questionnaire, both teachers self-rated their oral and written language in English as good and their oral and written language in Afrikaans as average.

Parents/Caregivers

This information was obtained from the questionnaires, administered to the parents who attended the focus groups. Although all were invited, only 19 out of the 86 parents (i.e. 22%) from the grade 5 and 6 classes attended the parent focus group sessions and completed the questionnaires. The response rate of parents was poor but in accordance with the overall poor parent attendance rate at the school as indicated by the teachers. The parents' ages ranged from 29 to 54 years in the grade 5 class, and from 33 to 42 years in the grade 6 class. One sister/caregiver aged 19 years also completed the questionnaire. The education and employment details are summarised in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Education and employment details of participant parents/guardians

	Primary School completed		High School completed		Tertiary qualification		Employment			Total
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Full time	Part time	None/home makers	
Grade 5 Parents	-	1	6	3	-	-	5	-	4 + 1	10
Grade 6 Parents	-	-	3	5	1	-	7	-	2	9

The first languages of the 19 parents were English 26.3% (n = 5), Afrikaans 31.6% (n = 6), IsiXhosa 36.8% (n = 7) and Southern Sotho 5.3% (n = 1), reflecting the linguistically and culturally diverse home environments of the participant learners, which affect the classroom diversity. In the grade 5 class 5 /10 (50%) of the parents reported speaking English as well as their first language at home while 7/9 (77.77%) of the parents in the grade 6 class reported speaking English as well as their first language at home. This is indicative of the importance and value that parents place on the exposure to English in the home environments as well as indicating that home environments are often bilingual.

Learners

The first languages spoken in the homes of the grade 5 and 6 learners were diverse. The grade 5 learners spoke predominantly English (57%) or IsiXhosa (31%), with Afrikaans (6%), Sesotho (3%) and isiZulu (3%) following. In the grade 6 classroom, only English (66%) or IsiXhosa (34%) were reported as the first language. However, the learners were exposed to a variety of second languages namely: Afrikaans, IsiZulu, Setswana and Sesotho, aspects of which were brought into the classroom with the learners, adding to its linguistic richness and cultural diversity. Both teachers reported that, in their view, all the learners in their class were proficient in their respective home languages.

In the grade 5 class, 51% of the learners reported that they spoke English well while 9% reported that they spoke both English and Afrikaans well. A total of 60% of the learners in the grade 5 class reported speaking English well. In the teacher profile it was reported that 31 of the 48 learners (65%) in the grade 5 class were proficient in

English while 17 of the 48 learners (35%) were not proficient in English. This indicated an agreement between the learners' and the teachers' perceptions of the learners' proficiency in spoken English. In the grade 6 class 29% of the learners reported that they spoke English well, 37% reported speaking English and Afrikaans well, 11% reported speaking English and IsiXhosa well and 4% reported speaking English, isiZulu and IsiXhosa well. Hence, 81 % of the learners reported speaking English well. In the teacher profile, it was reported that 33 of the 38 learners (87%) were proficient in spoken English while 5 of the 38 learners (13%) were not proficient in spoken English. This again shows a close agreement between the teachers' and the learners' perception of the learners' proficiency in spoken English.

In the grade 5 class, learners reported being able to read in English only (72%), English and Afrikaans (13%), English, Afrikaans and IsiXhosa (6%), Afrikaans (3%), IsiXhosa, IsiZulu and Setswana (3%) and IsiXhosa (3%). However, English was the language that the learners preferred to read in (97%). These grade 5 learners also reported being able to write in English (69%), English and Afrikaans (14%), Afrikaans (11%), IsiXhosa and English (3%), English, Afrikaans and Sesotho (3%). In the grade 6 class, the learners reported being able to read in English and Afrikaans (52%), English (41%) and English and IsiXhosa (7%). The language the grade 6 learners preferred reading in was English (79%). These grade 6 learners also reported being able to write in English (45%), English and Afrikaans (45%), IsiXhosa and English (8%), English, Afrikaans and IsiXhosa (4%) and English and Setswana (4%). The emerging trend is a very low percentage of learners who are able to read in IsiXhosa and a strong preference for reading in English.

The results relating to the current performance of the learners' written language will now be presented.

4.3. CURRENT PERFORMANCE OF THE LEARNERS' WRITTEN LANGUAGE

The teachers, learners and parents have many concerns regarding the learners' written language performance. The learners' written language samples were analysed to evaluate the learners' current written language performance (see figure 4.2.).

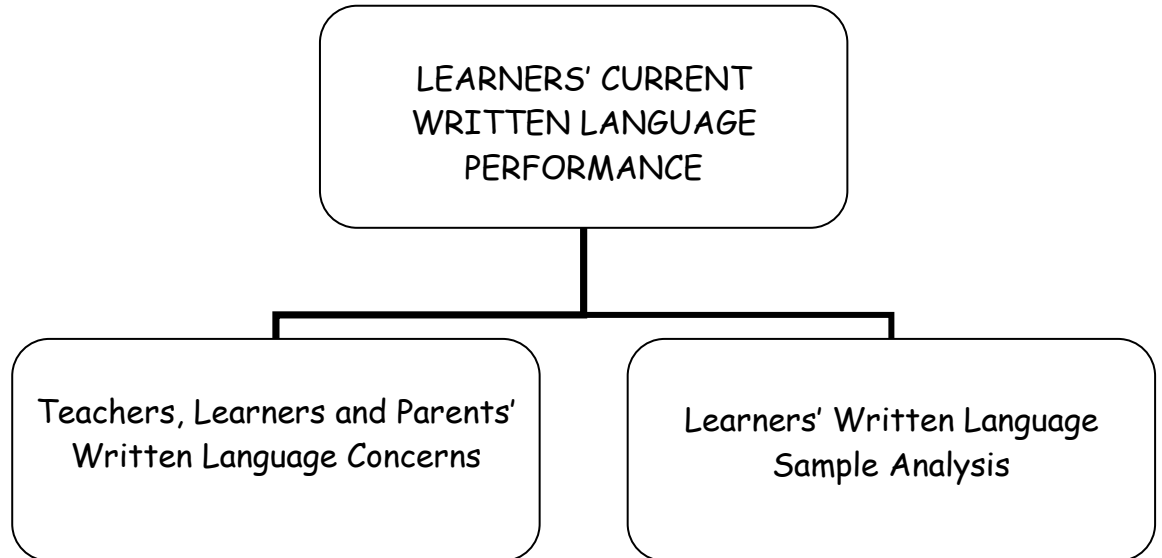


Figure 4.2. Learners' current written language performance

4.3.1. WRITTEN LANGUAGE CONCERNS

The teachers, learners and parents were concerned about the learners' written language development and reported on the many written language difficulties experienced, with reading, spelling and punctuation being common concerns for teachers, learners as well as parents -see Table 4.2.

Table 4.2. Teachers, learners and parents' written language concerns

TEACHERS	LEARNERS	PARENTS
Reading	Reading	Reading
Spelling	Spelling	Spelling
Punctuation	Punctuation	Punctuation
*Poor sentence Construction *Written language not coherent *Written comprehension difficulties *Poor cohesion *Cannot carry out formal written assessments *Not meeting written language outcomes	*Poor sentence Construction *Poor English Vocabulary *Untidy handwriting *Generating ideas to write about *Ending paragraphs and letters	*Poor sentence construction and grammar *English second language difficulties *Poor handwriting *Code mixing

Teacher concerns

T1 estimated that 70% of the learners in her grade 5 class were not meeting the written language outcomes for the grade, while only 30% of the learners were able to write coherently. She stated that the learners also struggled with spelling, punctuation, reading and written comprehension.

T 1: Because of systemic problems 70%....., only 30% of my children can write coherently. I can prove it. The written work. And I can say the same percentage fail spelling. Very, very bad, I'm very concerned. I'm doing what I can do but I'm very concerned.

According to T2, 50% of the learners in this grade 6 class were not meeting the written language outcomes for the grade and were not able to write coherently. He also reported that sentence construction was poor. As discussed above, written language is very important in the assessments of all academic learning areas as assessments are all written. Written work is clearly the largest contribution to the learners' overall mark.

T 2: I would say it's not as good as their spoken language. Fifty percent (50%) of the class are not up to standard with their written language, creative writing or any kind of writing for that matter. It seems to me that it's difficult for them to put pen to paper when it comes to their own thoughts and ideas. They can verbalise it very easily but when it comes to writing it on paper they don't follow the same kind o They just can't write cohesively.

The consequences of the poor written language of the learners in these classes are that they are not able to carry out the relevant tasks in the curriculum and struggle with

the formal written assessments. The teacher has to provide assistance in answering the questions in the formal exams. This is in direct contradiction to examination standards which require responses to be entirely a learner's work.

T 1: I need to help them...To that extent in a formal exam e.g. in a grammar test to divide the following sentence into subject and predicate, I have to give them an example first.

Learner Concerns

Many learners reported having difficulties with written language and identified problems with spelling, sentence construction, reading, understanding Afrikaans and written language in Afrikaans, punctuation, English vocabulary, untidy handwriting, generating ideas to write about, and ending paragraphs and letters (see Table 4.2.).

L3: I can only write in English and sometimes Afrikaans, but I can't spell properly. And I can't read properly also.

L5: My English is lekker but I can't write the words, so I ask somebody to spell the words for me and something I can't I ask my Miss.

L6: I also can't read the long words

L9: My sentences is bad when I forgot putting question marks, full stops.

L2: Miss, every time we write a sentence Miss, we find it difficult to write because I don't know how to.

Parent Concerns

All 19 parents from both the grade 5 and 6 classes reported being very concerned about their children's written language. Spelling, grammar, sentence construction and poor handwriting were among their concerns; and they felt that their children's reading skills were below the grade levels and that this resulted in poor written language. Parents were also anxious that their children, who were English second or other language (ESOL) speakers, struggled with English vocabulary and grammar in written language tasks.

P5: I can say his spelling is poor. He can't spell the words, he can say the words but he can't write them and when he's writing like the sentence, instead of the capital letters he will write the small letter and then he won't finish the words sometimes...

P6: he doesn't read in front of me but for me it's very bad.

P3: My child struggles to read sentences because when I check what the cause it's because she. She would like to read but she struggles to read. But she wants to, she tries but she can't.

P1: And his handwriting isn't up to standard as well.

P2: Yes her language is very bad in English.

P4: My daughter struggles with English and Afrikaans because the language is unique to her. I don't know the other people. Because she is better with maths. But these two languages. It is a problem with our kids from the townships.

The grade 5 parents also reported being anxious about their children's English language skills as it was not a standard form of English. Learners from Afrikaans backgrounds tend to mix English and Afrikaans when speaking and often substitute Afrikaans words when speaking English. This is referred to as code mixing and is very common in the Western Cape (Anthonissen, 2009). Parents were concerned as the learners tended to code-mix between English and Afrikaans and often carried this over to their written work as well.

P6: yes she speak English with them, in a mix

4.3.2. WRITTEN LANGUAGE SAMPLE ANALYSIS

The samples of grade 5 learners' written language were short stories explaining why the learner was late for school (see Example A; Appendices E1 & E2). The grade 6 samples were letters written to a friend about HIV/AIDS (see Example B; Appendices E3 & E4). The samples were obtained in May-June that is; towards the middle of the academic year. The samples were analysed according to the major dimensions of written language such as Paragraph Structure, Sentence Structure, Word Structure and Overall Narrative Structure. The samples were divided according to content and structure criteria, and were judged in the context of other samples and curriculum outcomes for the preceding grade (i.e. the grade 5 samples were judged against the end of year grade 4 outcomes, while grade 6 samples were judged against the end of year grade 5 outcomes). The content of each sample was considered in terms of overall flow and communicative intent to determine if the message was communicated effectively. Adequacy and appropriateness of grammatical structures were also assessed.

Example A: Grade 5 Sample: ‘A creative story about why you were late for school’.

about a boy that is late

Miss I was late because my mom came home and I was't at school and she was angry and I came to school

THE END

Researcher Comments:

- Piece far too short
- Very poor sentence structure
- Poor punctuation
- Lack of adverbs and adjectives
- Inappropriate use of tenses
- Limited vocabulary
- No flow
- No character development

Example B: Grade 6 Sample: Letter to a friend re: HIV/AIDS.

Dear Leon

How or you I miss you I met a friend. He is a pear boy it my skool. He told me he hax HIV I falt sorie for him his name is Yaseen

He sesy hesy mom hesy it to I feel soree. I sed I ack hem duesy hesy dhed hesy HI NO he sed. I shed you dhed is lhuke. I shed.

Sho how is or mom dooween. I hop she is fin And I hop you or fin. Whint Soon.

Your friend Kevin

Researcher Comments:

- Appropriate format for letter
- Does not use topic and supporting sentences to develop a coherent paragraph
- Paragraphs do not link
- Poor grammar, spelling and punctuation
- Limited vocabulary
- Poor overall flow

Tables 4.3. and 4.4. show the results of the grade 5 and grade 6 written language sample analysis against the writing outcomes for the preceding grades 4 and 5, respectively.

Table 4.3. Grade 5 samples in relation to the expected outcomes for grade 4

EXPECTED OUTCOMES	% of GRADE 5 samples that <i>met</i> grade 4 outcomes n (20)	% of GRADE 5 samples that <i>did not meet</i> grade 4 outcomes n (20)
Presentation		
<i>Neatness and Appropriate format</i>	5% (n = 1)	95% (n = 19)
Paragraph Level		
<i>Uses topic and supporting sentences to develop a coherent paragraph</i>	35% (n = 7)	65% (n = 13)
<i>Cohesion – do the paragraphs link?</i>	0% (n = 0)	100% (n = 20)
<i>Uses appropriate grammar</i>	40% (n = 8)	60% (n = 12)
<i>Uses appropriate spelling</i>	50% (n = 10)	50% (n = 10)
<i>Uses appropriate punctuation</i>	20% (n = 4)	80% (n = 16)
Sentence Level		
<i>Extends sentences by adding adjectives</i>	0% (n = 0)	100% (n = 20)
<i>Extends sentences by adding adverbs</i>	0% (n = 0)	100% (n = 20)
<i>Extends sentences by adding qualifying phrases and clauses</i>	5% (n = 1)	95% (n = 19)
<i>Shifts from one tense to another consistently and appropriately</i>	30% (n = 6)	70% (n = 14)
Word Level		
<i>Selects and uses a wide variety of words drawn from various sources e.g. language experience, activities, literature and oral language of classmates and others</i>	5% (n = 1)	95% (n = 19)
Overall Narrative Structure		
<i>Overall flow</i>	10% (n = 2)	90% (n = 18)
<i>Character development</i>	0% (n = 0)	100% (n = 20)
<i>Interest evoked</i>	0% (n = 0)	100% (n = 20)
<i>Awareness of the specific, purpose and reader</i>	45% (n = 9)	55% (n = 11)

Table 4.4. Grade 6 samples in relation to the expected outcomes for grade 5

EXPECTED OUTCOMES	% of GRADE 6 samples that <i>met</i> grade 5 outcomes n (20)	% of GRADE 6 samples that <i>did not meet</i> grade 5 outcomes n (20)
Presentation		
<i>Neatness and Appropriate format</i>	70% (n = 14)	30% (n = 6)
Paragraph Level		
<i>Uses topic and supporting sentences to develop a coherent paragraph</i>	50% (n = 10)	50% (n = 10)
<i>Cohesion – do the paragraphs link?</i>	30% (n = 6)	70% (n = 14)
<i>Uses appropriate grammar</i>	55% (n = 11)	45% (n = 9)
<i>Uses appropriate spelling</i>	45% (n = 9)	55% (n = 11)
<i>Uses appropriate punctuation</i>	45% (n = 9)	55% (n = 11)
Sentence Level		
<i>Extends sentences by adding adjectival phrases and clauses</i>	35% (n = 7)	65% (n = 13)
<i>Extends sentences by adding adverbial phrases and clauses</i>	45% (n = 9)	55% (n = 11)
<i>Extends sentences by adding qualifying phrases and clauses</i>	45% (n = 9)	55% (n = 11)
<i>Extends sentences by adding noun phrases and clauses</i>	45% (n = 9)	55% (n = 11)
<i>Shifts from one tense to another consistently and appropriately</i>	40% (n = 8)	60% (n = 12)
<i>Uses direct and indirect speech appropriately and effectively</i>	0% (n = 0)	100% (n = 20)
Word Level		
<i>Selects and uses a wide variety of words drawn from various sources e.g. language experience, activities, literature and oral language of classmates and others</i>	30% (n = 6)	70% (n = 14)
<i>Consults a dictionary to check words</i>	10% (n = 2)	90% (n = 18)
Overall Narrative Structure		
<i>Overall flow</i>	35% (n = 7)	65% (n = 13)
<i>Character development</i>	25% (n = 5)	75% (n = 15)
<i>Interest evoked</i>	40% (n = 8)	60% (n = 12)
<i>Awareness of the specific, purpose and reader</i>	65% (n = 13)	35% (n = 7)

4.3.3. MEETING WRITTEN LANGUAGE OUTCOMES

From the above tables, it can be seen that **none** of the grade 5 samples were meeting **all** the grade 4 writing outcomes and **none** of the grade 6 samples were meeting **all** the grade 5 writing outcomes. No single written language sample met all the expected writing outcomes for the preceding grade.

Presentation Level

In the grade 5 class, only 5% of the samples presented with neat and legible handwriting as well as headings and appropriate spacing for paragraphs, thus meeting

the outcomes for neatness and appropriate format while 95% did not. In the grade 6 class, 70% of the samples presented with neat and legible handwriting, appropriate format for a letter as well as correct spacing for paragraphs while 30% of the samples in this class did not.

Paragraph Level

In the grade 5 samples, 35% of learners were able to use the topic and supporting sentences to develop a coherent paragraph whilst in the grade 6 samples 50% of the learners were able to do this. Skills such as linking of paragraphs which were not present in any of the grade 5 samples were evident in 30% of the grade 6 samples. In terms of linking clauses and phrases, this was a general weakness across both grades. Conjunctions were often used inappropriately. Clauses were often just listed and linked with 'and'. However, the grade 6 samples did display more appropriate usage of conjunctions and better sentence construction. Sentences were shorter and more concise amongst the grade 6 samples. This improved overall flow in some of the grade 6 samples.

Appropriate grammar was found in only 40% of the grade 5 samples whilst 55% of the grade 6 samples showed appropriate grammar. Inappropriate grammar was found in 60% of the grade 5 samples and 45% of the grade 6 samples. Spelling was a weakness across both grades; however, the grade 5 samples displayed slightly stronger spelling skills (in terms of previous year's outcomes) than the grade 6 samples. In the grade 5 samples, 50% met the grade 4 outcomes for spelling whilst in the grade 6 samples; only 45% met the spelling outcomes. Certain spelling weaknesses were found in both the grade 5 and grade 6 samples. The spelling of homophones was a problem in both grade 5 and grade 6. Morphology and certain spelling rules (such as the silent 'e' rule and the dropping of the final 'e' before adding 'ing') was also a problem in both the grade 5 and grade 6 samples.

Punctuation was a problem across both grades; with some improvement in the grade 6 samples. In the grade 5 samples only 20% of the learners used appropriate punctuations skills, whilst 45% of the grade 6 learners used appropriate punctuation. A wider variety of appropriately used punctuation marks was evident in the grade 6 samples, but quotation marks to indicate direct speech were found in none of the

samples even though these punctuation marks should have been learnt by grade 4 (DoE, 2002). See examples A and B.

Sentence Level

There was no use (0%) of adjectives in the grade 5 samples, whilst 35% of the grade 6 samples showed the use of adjectival phrases and clauses. Similarly, there were no adverbs in the grade 5 samples whilst 45% of the grade 6 samples displayed use of adverbial phrases and clauses. Sentence extension by adding qualifying phrases and clauses occurred in only 5% of the grade 5 samples, whilst 45% of the grade 6 samples displayed use of noun phrases in the extension of sentences. In the grade 5 samples, 30% showed the ability to shift from one tense to another consistently and appropriately whilst in the grade 6 samples, 40% of the samples displayed this skill. None of the grade 6 samples (0%) showed the ability to use indirect and direct speech consistently and appropriately, although this is an expected outcome at the end of grade 5. See example B.

Word Level

In the grade 5 samples, only one sample (5%) displayed a wide variety of words drawn from various sources. In the grade 6 samples, 30% were able to do this. In the grade 6 samples, only 10% of the samples indicated the use of a dictionary to check words. Hence, it appears that word usage or the use of an extended vocabulary is a major weakness across the grades. See examples A and B.

Overall Narrative Structure

Overall narrative flow was present in only 10% of the grade 5 samples and in 35% of the grade 6 samples. None of the grade 5 samples (0%) displayed character development whilst 25% of the grade 6 samples did. Interest in the reader was not evoked in any of the grade 5 samples (0%), whilst 40% of the grade 6 samples did. Finally, 45% of the grade 5 samples displayed awareness of the specific purpose of the written piece, while this skill occurred in 65% of the grade 6 samples. These findings indicate that the current performance in all (100%) of the learners' written language samples in grade 5 and grade 6 were below the outcomes expectations for

the preceding grades and not restricted to ESOL learners. Not one single written language sample in either grade 5 or 6, met all the outcomes for the preceding grades.

The results pertaining to the value of written language will now be presented.

4.4. WRITTEN LANGUAGE HIGHLY VALUED

The teachers, learners and parents placed great value on written language expression (see Figure 4.3.). However the range of values that teachers placed on written language were more classroom focussed while parents and learners were more world focussed.

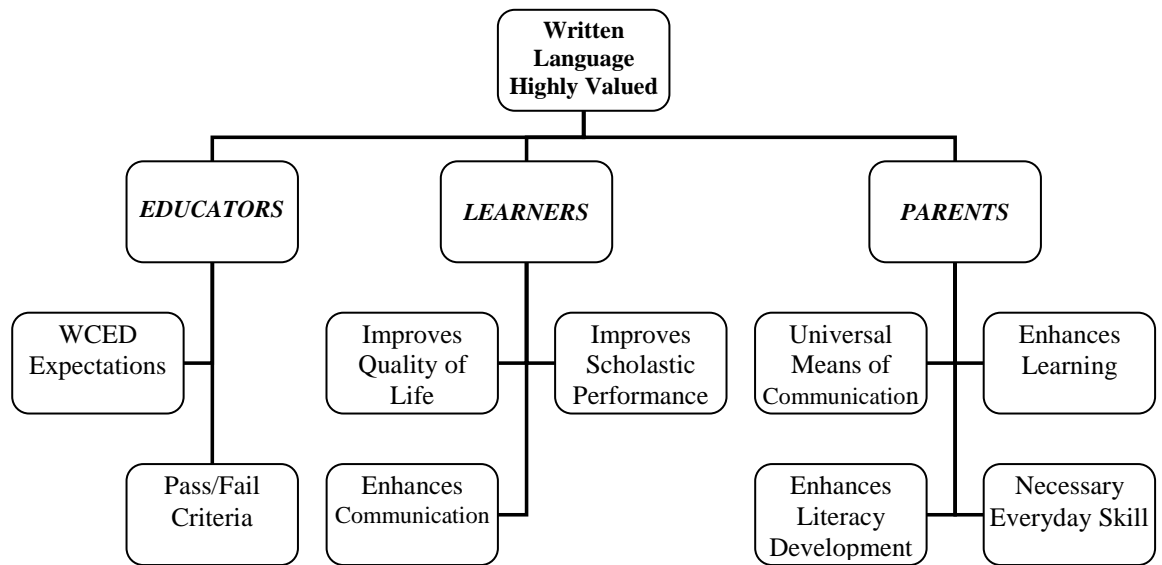


Figure 4.3. Participants' values of written language

Classroom value versus world value

It has emerged that although great value is placed upon written language by the teachers, learners and parents, the teachers have emphasised the value in relation to the classroom and academic learning while the learners and parents have focused more on value in relation to the uses in every day life in both the local and global world.

Teachers – Classroom Value

The teachers have reported that the WCED has stipulated that learners are expected to achieve certain writing outcomes for the relevant grade, inherently valued in education. Learners need to be able to write a cohesive story with good punctuation

and paragraphs in both grades 5 and 6. However, the teachers need to focus on the content of the story and not on the spelling of words.

T1: Good punctuation, good cohesion and paragraphs and good all. I'm supposed to be introduced to average punctuation and good cohesion. Because in grade 4 they are taught how to link sentences and how sentences are supposed to run into each other, you know like a story that kind of thing, but they have a story lacking.

In grade 5, written language expression can account for up to 80% of the total mark at the end of the year. This indicates the great value placed upon written language by the WCED. T1 also reported that literacy and numeracy are the two areas especially focused on when deciding if a learner may pass the grade. In grade 6, learners need to pass English in order to progress to the next grade. The formal exams that count 40% of the total mark in all learning areas are written only, whilst the year mark which consists of both oral and written language constitutes 60 % of the total mark. However, the oral counts for less than the written; written language thus accounting for the greatest percentage of the total mark and in the passing or failing of a grade.

T1: We have a scale of 1 to 4. If a child is scoring 2s, 3s and 4s and more 3s and 4s than 2s that child is allowed to proceed. If a child presents with maybe 1s or 2s, we will look especially at literacy and numeracy. Those are the two focus areas we especially look at.

Written language contributes proportionately more to the overall mark than oral language. Therefore, it is not sufficient for a learner to satisfy the oral language outcomes for the grade but moreover, has to satisfy the written language outcomes. The teachers have acknowledged this and therefore give the learners increased opportunities to write.

T1: I try to create lots of opportunity where we engage orally because I feel that is important but written is obviously more. So I give them lots of opportunities to write that may not be in the curriculum.

It can be seen that written language is very important in the learner assessments given by the teachers and also in deciding if a child passes to the next grade. The teachers focused their attention on the academic value of written language.

Learners and Parents – World Value

The learners and parents have focused on the value of written language in relation to its use in everyday life and the benefits of written language as a life tool. All the learners stated that written language was important because one would need it

throughout life to improve one's quality of life. The learners felt that written language also improved scholastic performance, enabled one to go to university and enhanced everyday communication.

L3: Yes. When I grow up then what if I can't write or read properly. It's through your life you can't get nowhere if you can't read or write. To get a good job and go on with your education and get a good working better life.

L6: To study and if you go to like university and stuff you must write most of the time, so you need to know how to write.

L4: Miss if you can't write then you can't read so writing and reading is important miss: miss, if a person in your street knows someone far away and wants to write a letter, then you can help her and show her how to write a letter.

All the parents strongly agreed that written language was very important. They felt that it was the universal means of communication, helped one to speak and read well, enhanced learning and literacy development and that it was a necessary everyday life skill.

P2: Very important...extremely important it's the ...it's a universal thing for communication and if you don't know how to write then you won't be able to speak and it's just so, it's, like respect, very important.

P1: It is very important yes; otherwise they won't know what to do and how to go about it cos they can't read it.

P3: Cos it helps you in everyday life, you need that language.

P5: Especially like in job situation, you communicate with...say you have like an interview you must give your letter to the bosses and so or some of that, that's why it's important.

4.5. BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES TO WRITTEN LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

According to the teachers and the written language sample analysis, the learners are not meeting the writing outcomes for their relevant grade. The parents were also concerned about the learners' written language and the learners themselves reported written language difficulties. The teachers, parents and learners reported many barriers contributing to the written language difficulties. However, they also shared their perspectives on the present and further opportunities that would promote written language development. The barriers and present and further opportunities to written

language development will be presented together to contain the information and avoid repetition (see table 4.5.).

Table 4.5: Barriers and opportunities to written language development amongst the learners

	BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES	PRESENT OPPORTUNITIES/SUPPORT	FURTHER OPPORTUNITIES/STRATEGIES
SCHOOL SYSTEM LEVEL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of Inclusive Education policy/implementation - Inconsistent assessment procedures - Limited training and support for the teachers - Limited reading and writing opportunities - Disruptive/ incompetent teaching - No library at school - Large teacher: learner ratio - No IsiXhosa lessons - Lack of support from the school - Limited homework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feeding scheme - Reading books and writing opportunities - Teaching strategies - Individual assistance to learners - Peer intervention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training for teachers - Interesting culturally related reading books - More written demonstrations and guidance - Instruction and support on written language and reading - Library at school - Extra teachers and smaller classes - IsiXhosa teacher - Remedial assistance - Extra weekend classes for learners - More homework - Homework diary
INDIVIDUAL LEARNER LEVEL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poor foundation skills - Language barriers - Code mixing - Aversion to writing and reading - Technological influences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Importance of English - Technology as a teaching aid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Language support - Increased exposure and use of English - Increased reading and writing at home and at school
HOME/SOCIAL COMMUNITY LEVEL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of parental support - Parents' limited reading and writing at home - Limited communication between school and home - Socio-economic difficulties - Family structure and unsafe home environments - High schooling costs - Ill-discipline - Difficulty understanding the syllabus - Complementary/ vernacular schooling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support with homework, reading and written language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased parental support and involvement - A safe nurturing home environment - Increased discipline at home - Motivating the learners - Parental guidance for assisting learners

4.5.1. SCHOOL SYSTEM BARRIERS vs. SCHOOL SYSTEM OPPORTUNITIES

The following barriers and opportunities at the school system were identified by the participants.

Lack of Inclusive Education Policy/Implementation

According to the policy of inclusive education all learners need to be included in the classroom irrespective of the barriers they present with. One great barrier in the present classrooms is the language /communication barrier. This is where learners are faced with the difficulty of learning in a language that is either their second or third language or sometimes a totally foreign language that they have not yet been exposed to. According to the revised national curriculum statement (RNCS) (DoE, 2002), it is recommended that the learner's home language be used for learning and teaching wherever possible, and that this is especially important in the foundation phase. From the two participant teachers' perspectives, this is not adhered to in their school, because often the teacher does not speak the home language of the learners, who are then at a disadvantage. Furthermore, even learners who have physical barriers need to be accommodated in the classroom so that they can learn effectively (e.g. a child with a visual problem will need the teacher to read the questions to him). However, according to T1 this is also not taking place effectively.

T1: We have a very big problem. I fight because I believe it is a policy from the WCED that inclusion take place. Within our public schools that is what supposed to happen. For example, Thandi, English is not her first language so ultimately that child is supposed to be taught and assessed in her mother tongue and that is not happening in our school, that child is disadvantaged.

Present Opportunity - Feeding scheme

T1 sees to it that 75% of the learners in her class receive a full meal from the school feeding scheme. These learners come from socio-economically deprived homes. They need adequate nutrition to be able to learn and the school has to put in place basic support in addition to academic support.

T1: 75% of my class is depending on the school feeding scheme.

Inconsistent Assessment Procedures

T1 reported that there were no consistent assessment procedures through the grades

and strategies that helped a child with written language in primary school were not followed up in high school.

T1: So as far as assessment is concerned, my problem is there is no continuation, it doesn't continue to the next grade. Whatever we do in primary school doesn't get even carried on to high school and that is a problem with our entire education system. The system doesn't carry the child consistently. There is no consistency with regard to assessment. That is why most children are disadvantaged systematically.

T1 reported that the present marking system is not effective in assessing a learner's ability because the codes used in the assessment are very close. The codes used are on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 meaning 'needing support', 2 referring to 'partially satisfied outcomes', 3 referring to 'satisfied outcomes' and 4 referring to 'exceeded outcomes'. The parents also reported that the pass and fail criteria between grades in the WCED were not adequate as children were just being passed on from one grade to the next, even if their reading and written language was not up to standard. The multifunctional team, which consists of management staff from the WCED, has to make the final decision and often learners are passed to the next grade even if they have not fulfilled the outcomes of the previous grade. Furthermore, according to the WCED a learner is not supposed to fail more than once in a phase. A phase consists of 3 grades. The foundation phase is grade 1 to grade 3 and the intermediate phase is grade 4 to grade 6. Even if a learner has not fulfilled the outcomes for a certain grade, s/he has to be passed on to the next grade if s/he has already repeated a grade in that phase. This results in the learners not being able to cope and problems being passed over from one grade to the next. Parents and teachers expressed concerns in this regard.

P2: Children get passed on even if their reading and writing is not up to standard.

P4: They are not doing the child a favour. The child's books are empty because they haven't done the work.

P3: Yes it's terrible.

T1: The system. Even this coding system I disagree with because between the one and two is so close so I don't feel that effectively assesses the learner's ability. Also the integrity of our teachers are being undermined by the multifunctional team that comes at the end of the year to sort of audit our opinion of whether a child should stay or pass to next grade and I have questioned them and challenged them and say I have been with this child all year long, you come in one day and you are actually nibbling at my integrity and I have a problem with that.. So it happens a lot and once again the system is failing. I have presently in fact referred a child from grade 5 this morning to a school psychologist who according to my professional, testing and sitting with a child observing level of writing, spelling and reading is in at a grade 2 level.

Limited Training and Lack of Support for Teachers

T1 reported that teachers have to draw up an intervention plan to help learners who are having problems at school. This plan shows what support the learners would need to improve at school (e.g. remedial lessons), and the teachers were expected to provide that support as there were no remedial teachers for the intermediate phase - just one remedial teacher who provides support in the foundation phase. However, these teachers have no remedial training and are not able to help the learners who need it.

T1: Individual Educational Development Plan. We have an IEDP for one child and GDP for a group- Group Educational Development Program, so if you identify or at least you know some of the problems, you draw up a plan, an intervention plan for that group of children. The teachers have not been trained yet it is expected of them, and nobody from the department is coming and saying, look guys we're running this course, we will give you bursaries, do the course and we will pay for you to do the course so that you are equipped.

T2: No remedial support. The onus falls on the teacher. There's lots more that need to be done, I only have let's say ten months, counting all the holidays. So I have ten months in which to work on the efficacy of their writing. They obviously come from Grade 5 with these problems, so basically I'm doing a little bit and sending them off to the next teacher with these problems.

The WCED currently uses the OBE (Outcomes Based Education) system in all its schools. Both participant teachers reported problems with OBE and the RNCS and felt that this is contributing to the written language difficulties of the learners. Parents also reported that they felt that the OBE system was not working here in SA and that the teachers are spending too little time teaching as they just present work from a “profile”. This results in the learners not understanding the work they have done. Furthermore, T1 reported that the teachers have not been properly trained in the OBE procedure. This has resulted in poor quality education.

P4: The OBE, they copied it from overseas. It doesn't work here in South Africa. It's not working. The system is not how it is done. Every teacher should understand. They say this OBE, there's a profile for each child. They don't work they just take it from the profile. With the OBE the teachers are spending less time teaching. You must learn with understanding. We are concerned about our education. It is going from bad to worse especially literacy and numeracy. Especially literacy. You can go and see overseas as well. If you don't have a foundation with literacy it is hard.

P3: And most of the stuff they must do on their own, on the new OBE system the teachers don't really help them the way the teachers helped us on the old system.

T1: Training. In a week no: No, we teachers don't know how to engage with the policy document.

Further Opportunity - Training for teachers

T1 reported that the teachers are expected to provide intervention for the learners who are struggling at school. Therefore training and workshops for the teachers would be valuable, to enable them to provide necessary intervention in the learning areas.

Limited Reading and Writing Opportunities

The teachers stated that there is presently limited focus on reading and writing in the RNCS - notably from grade 5 onwards. T2 reported that, as the syllabus was extensive teachers have been using worksheets for grades 1, 2, 3 and 4 to save marking time as learners do limited writing. These worksheets require mainly single word answers so learners do not learn the process of writing longer pieces.

L1: Afrikaans miss we only get questions papers to paste in we don't do much writing or paragraphs and we don't get a good understanding of what is happening in Afrikaans. We only fill in words no paragraph.

P5: We buy their stationery list, we have to buy all these books and not one of these books are a quarter full at the end of the year. They don't write in the books because they have these worksheets.

T2: Let's say, and also OBE has thrown a big spanner in the works. Up to 10 years ago I would say children at this school in the grades that I have taught, Grade 6 and 7 would write beautiful long pieces. These days I think the children can just about write half a page of cohesive: I came though the system, the old system and I'm in the new system. I think we've thrown out the good of the old system. Writing, reading, doing your basic 1, 2, 3; s. your reading your writing.

Present Opportunity - Reading books and writing opportunities

Although the school does not have a library, T1 tried to give the learners some reading books to take home to read to assist with reading. She also reported that she provided extra writing opportunities, with writing and spelling games for the learners in her class.

L4: sometimes my miss give us reading books to take home and read

T1: So I try to play all these games to engage them with the language. This is writing games. So I give them lots of opportunities that may not be in the curriculum to write.

Further Opportunities

- ***Interesting culturally related reading books***

T2 reported a need for books that interest the learners and are related to their life and culture as they do not like to read and need to be encouraged.

T2: But also the books should be entertaining enough and new enough with new ideas. Not your older books. It must be within their life, world, rather than to be something that is far removed.

- ***More written demonstrations and guidance***

The parents as well as the learners felt that if the teacher did more written examples and demonstrations on the board it would improve written language as learners would see where they went wrong. The parents also felt that the teacher needs to provide more guidance when the learners are doing projects, because the learners often just photocopied and handed in pages of information without reading, sifting the material and writing down the relevant information.

P2: But it must be visible, because if they sit down like this, sometimes the child next door doesn't know the word is because...

P2: More demonstrations. They need to be instructed yes and guided.

P1: I think they read nothing from that information, they just hand it in like that.

- ***Instruction and support on written language and reading***

The learners want more time to be spent on teaching them spelling, sentence construction and reading as they feel that this would improve their written language skills. The parents also felt that there should be more focus on improving the learners' spelling and punctuation in the classroom.

L10: Some letters because there is some difficult letters that I need to learn. I can't write it then I want to learn how to write it then my sir must say we must spell it then we will learn how to write it.

L7: More help with spelling and making the sentences

L4: More help with English and making the sentences

L1: More help with English and spelling

P2: I also think that uhm... where the problem comes in the children are not spelling properly. So more, maybe more, uhm, more blackboard work where they physically see the sound and they understand and they know where to use it, the problem is they don't know where to use a particular, say if it's a question mark.

Disrupted and Incompetent Teaching

Another barrier is when teaching is disrupted due to lack of teachers or poor teaching skills. T1 reported that her class was disadvantaged having had a disruptive year in grade 4 due to poor teaching from two different teachers. The learners also reported

that sometimes the teachers did not explain things well enough for them to understand the work, for example how to “write” paragraphs and the ending of letters. It is clear that the learners do not know the process of writing letters or creative stories and they feel it is because the teachers are not ‘teaching’ them well. Some parents also felt that poor teaching strategies, especially in the foundation phase, were contributing to reading and written language difficulties.

L1: Yes, because sometimes the teacher does not explain a lot of things which we need to understand.

L3: Yes miss, and my teacher is always talking in Afrikaans and we never know what to do because he does not explain well.

T1: This is a very difficult class. They had two teachers last year, a very old lady and a gentleman who did very little teaching. So this class is disadvantaged, seriously disadvantaged.

Present Opportunity - Teaching strategies

During the classroom observations and also during the individual teacher interviews, it was observed and also reported by both teachers that they use the following teaching strategies to facilitate written language tasks in the classroom.

- Dramatizing events
- Oral discussions and debating
- Spelling and writing games
- Increased writing opportunities
- Integration of art, culture and writing
- Explanations of concepts
- Relating discussions to learners’ everyday lives and culture
- Mind mapping
- Providing examples on the black board
- Providing challenges and tests to stimulate interest
- Visual aids e.g. computers

Teacher 1

Teacher 1 reported that she felt that the lessons must be “provocative”. She used drama, oral discussions and debates when approaching written language tasks. She

also reported that she gave the children frequent opportunities to practice their writing skills - more than required by the curriculum.

T1: To me a lesson needs to be provocative. It must want a child to be. If the child can choose to be in my class right now because of what I am presenting. I believe that because from one lesson we have spelling words, debating, and dramatization. By enticing them, by using oral work. I play a game called pass the paper. So I try to play all these games to engage them with the language, this is writing games. People are thinking that writing is compositions and paragraphs but you can start small. I'm there but I do my own thing. In my class where there are lots of barriers and problems even if I get the child to write two words or eight words it's writing. I go down to the level they are at.

Researcher's observations of lessons by T1

It was observed by the researcher that the lessons were very interactive with learners participating enthusiastically in the oral discussions. During the English creative writing lesson, T1 wrote the topic on the board and then engaged the class in an oral discussion about the topic. The learners had to provide reasons why they were absent from school. She provided examples verbally but did not write the examples on the board. The learners gave her their ideas. There was a high level of interest amongst the learners and the noise level sometimes increased significantly as the learners would also speak amongst themselves. T1 would then ask the learners to please reduce the noise levels and listen to the speaker. There was regular code mixing between English and Afrikaans during the lessons as the learners would often use an Afrikaans word while they were speaking in English. However this would usually be a word that they did not know in English and the teacher and other learners would then supply the English word. Learners who came from IsiXhosa-speaking backgrounds and had poor English language skills would not participate in the discussions or even engage in code mixing. T1 would also sometimes use an Afrikaans phrase while speaking (e.g. 'Luister boeta'). After the oral discussion that took about 15 to 20 minutes, she instructed them to do a rough draft of the writing piece, stating that it should not be less than six sentences.

Teacher 2

T2 reported that when approaching a written language task e.g. creative writing, he spends up to four days engaging the class in oral discussions, providing examples, relating the topic to the learners' lives and even using the computer to locate and show areas discussed. He provides examples on the board and uses mind mapping

before asking the learners to write about the topic. He also asks them to prepare a draft copy of the written work first and he discusses this with them to give them feedback on their content and grammar. The preparation for one piece of creative writing takes the whole school week. It also shows that the learners need a lot of guidance especially in the form of oral discussions and visual aids, to be able to write a creative story.

T2: What I always do is, we will discuss, we'll have our mind mapping. I'll always give them a page where they will have to have their first draft. So they'll come to me and I'll say look do you think, and I'll always throw it back at them. I will never give my ideas unless I feel it's important to. But I always say do you think this goes with that. I spend a lot of time talking to them. Oral discussions. I would probably spend 2, 3, 4 days going through process because they need a process so that they can see the link and understand it. So a lot of discussion and mind mapping so that they can internalize what we are talking about and also linking it with whatever, so I'll start with a global picture and then I'll work from there and draw it right down to their lives .. then you can capture their interest. Ja. So what I've done with them twice is take them into the computer room after we've discussed it.

Researcher's observations of lessons by Teacher 2

In the English creative writing lesson observed by the researcher, the learners were expected to write a dialogue. T2 first explained to the class what a dialogue was and wrote down examples of dialogues on the board. He then role-played a dialogue between himself and a learner. He also read to them an example of a telephone dialogue from a textbook and the learners followed this in their own textbooks. This discussion took about 20 minutes. All the learners participated in the oral discussions. None of the grade 6 learners appeared to have any difficulty in understanding or expressing themselves in English. They were then instructed to write a dialogue. T2 provided the scenario for them, which was a dialogue between a learner and a friend when they were late for school and the friend was trying to get the learner to play truant. The learners found this topic very interesting and there was a lot of oral discussion between the teacher and learners.

T2 then gave the learners a lined page and advised the learners on the length of the dialogue before asking them to try to write the dialogue. T2 then went around the class assisting the learners individually while they wrote. The learners usually raised a hand and the teacher went to them to assist them with any difficulties e.g. starting off, spelling, and sentence construction. T2 also gave them immediate feedback while he went around the class, and provided regular praise and

reinforcement. The learners were also offered rewards of chocolates from T2 for good work done.

These learners were in grade 6 with just one more year of primary school before entering high school. However they were not able to complete written language tasks independently with minimal support from the teacher.

No Library at School

The school does not have a library. Hence learners cannot borrow books to read, and as they do not go to public libraries, many learners do not do additional reading at home.

P1: I feel that its important that the school should have a look at that because each school should have a library. And I mean without a library that already tells you that the children is not reading enough.

P2: JA...ok that would work cos to be honest we can't always take them because we work different hours.

Further Opportunity - Library at school

The teachers, parents as well as the learners felt that a library at the school would encourage the learners to borrow books and participate in more reading which would also enhance their written language skills. At present, learners are not able to go to the public library as they live too far away, and parents do not have time to take them. The parents felt that if the school could not get a library, the WCED should at least arrange for a taxi or transport to take the learners to the public library during school time. They also suggested that mobile libraries should visit the school so that learners could borrow books.

P3: Yes I think it's a good thing to have a library at school cos you see then he will have a chance to read and improve his work. Like when he have projects he can have his project done here at school before he goes home. Because it's too far. And it's a lot of money to go to the library .

L5: Miss I have to go miss, but the library is too far miss.

T2: A library period. That could help yes.

Large Teacher-Learner Ratio

There are 48 learners in the grade 5 class. There are no teacher assistants so the ratio is one teacher per 48 learners. Hence the teacher is neither able to provide the learners

with individual attention nor give extra attention to learners who struggle let alone remedial support in the absence of a remedial teacher.

P2: But the major problem is there's too many learners in one class...

P3: Ja...and last year, my son had 53 learners, so there was...he never had, you know, the kids need sometimes individual time...

T2: We need smaller classes to be able to give children individual attention.

Further Opportunity - Extra teachers/ smaller classes

The teachers and parents felt that extra teachers and smaller classes would be beneficial in providing more individual assistance to the learners.

T2: Extra teachers, smaller classes

P3: At least to minimise the class, so that she can be of access to all the children. Because its 48...

No IsiXhosa Lessons

The learners from both the grade 5 and grade 6 class were unhappy that there was not an IsiXhosa teacher at the school and that they did not receive IsiXhosa lessons. Learners, including those who were not first language IsiXhosa speakers expressed a desire to learn to read and write in IsiXhosa.

L1: We don't have a IsiXhosa teacher. My spelling and I'll like to write in IsiXhosa coz I want to learn that language.

Further Opportunity - IsiXhosa teacher

The school does not have an IsiXhosa teacher this year but all the learners wanted to learn IsiXhosa. They wanted an IsiXhosa teacher to teach them oral and written IsiXhosa.

L2: We want a IsiXhosa teacher.

Lack of Support from School

Learners had varied views. While some felt that they were not getting sufficient help from the school to assist with their reading and writing skills others reported receiving assistance with writing difficulties.

L6: No we don't get help.

L7: More help with spelling and making the sentences

L4; More help with English and making the sentences

L1: More help with English and spelling

L2: No miss, sometimes miss, but we didn't learn how to write about the ending of HIV.

Present Opportunities

- ***Individual assistance***

T2 goes around the class assisting individual learners with written language difficulties (e.g. vocabulary, spelling and grammar problems). This was observed by the researcher during the classroom observations and learners also reported that they are able to go to the teacher if they need help.

L5: They give us help to spell the words miss.

L5: My sir miss.

L7: My sir helps us with spelling. If we need help we can go to him.

- ***Peer intervention***

A support structure in the grade 5 class was the “buddy system” or peer intervention, where a learner with good reading and writing skills is seated next to a learner who is weaker in order for the strong learner to support and assist the weak learner.

L4: yes miss, we have reading pairs if the one struggling then the other one can help. Like with any difficult word, then we just tell them what the word is.

Further Opportunities

- ***Remedial assistance***

There is currently a remedial teacher who only provides assistance to the foundation phase learners. A remedial teacher for the intermediate phase would also be a strategy to assist with written language difficulties.

T2: I think remedial. I think we should take those children aside and work with those who are in the meanwhile have somebody in there to support them

- ***Extra weekend classes for learners***

The parents felt that there should be extra classes at the school to help the learners – and possibly the parents - with their reading and writing.

P3: I think also weekends, like on Saturdays uh they don't do anything the children at home, so I think they must have more classes for them and parent's as well to teach then spelling and reading.

Limited Homework

The parents reported that the amount of homework given was minimal and that learners were given too few projects and assignments. Six months into the school year, the grade 6 class had been given only one assignment. The parents also reported that, even if the learners did their homework, they did not know if it was right or wrong, as the teachers often did not mark or check the learners' homework

P5: Not a lot of homework. The grade four got six projects and the grade six, nothing yet

P1: The teachers don't check homework, now they don't know if it's right or wrong.

Further Opportunities

- ***More homework***

Parents and learners felt that learners should be given more homework. This was especially so in the grade 6 class. The learners felt that they should be given more reading and writing to do at home and that this would help them improve their reading and writing skills.

P 3: I think they should get more homework.

L7: Yes miss, I would like the school to help the struggling children miss, and help them with their reading and their spelling and give them more to study at home miss, and then come back to school and then they know the work.

- ***Homework diary***

Parents often did not know what homework their children had and felt that it would be beneficial if there was a homework diary in which they could see what homework their child had, to assist them and see that it gets done.

All parents: Yes, homework diary.

P1: Last year they had a book in grade 4 then when the teacher write a letter to the parents then the parents must sign and then message back. Last year he had that, I don't know about this year.

4.5.2. INDIVIDUAL BARRIERS vs. INDIVIDUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Barriers within the learners that are hampering their written language development as well as present and further opportunities at the individual level, which would promote written language development, have been identified.

Poor Foundation Skills

Initial reading and writing skills are acquired in the foundation phase. The teachers in the foundation phase are trained to teach phonics and early writing conventions. T1 reported that if the foundation phase skills are not acquired then difficulties arise later on. The parents reported that the learners had not acquired the skills of reading in the foundation phase and this problem was then passed on through the grades.

P5: Children in high school struggle with reading because the problem does not get sorted out in primary school.

P2: basically our kids need individual attention because the problem, the foundation wasn't set properly

T1: In grade 1 there is supposed to be having a certain set of phonics the child supposed to know, able to read, able to write and able to recognize. So what happens, children are being shoved over without having satisfied with regard to that level of proficiency of phonics, reading, writing, etc.

Language Barriers

T2 reported that if learners were exposed to English from a young age e.g. from preschool or grade 1 then they are able to cope in the present grade 6 classroom as their English language skills have had time to develop. However, if learners are only brought into the school from grade 3 or 4 and have not been exposed to English prior to that, there is a huge language barrier. This makes teaching for the teacher and learning for the learner extremely difficult. Some learners reported that they found Afrikaans and English very difficult to understand and did not know what was required of them. Even though they were able to read they did not understand what they read because they had a poor understanding of the languages. ESOL parents reported that their children were not English first language (EFL) speakers, so they struggled with the reading and writing in English as well as Afrikaans.

P4: My daughter struggles with English and Afrikaans because the language is unique to her. I don't know the other people. Because she is better with maths. But these two languages. It is a problem with our kids from the townships.

T2: Yes. The township children, if they come here from Grade 1, or if they come to our school even from pre-school. We have a pre-school here, then they are in the system from the beginning. So now they come here the language barriers were something terrible so we try to push the parents to rather bring them here in Grade 1 so they come right through the system.

Present Opportunity - Importance of English

During the parent focus group sessions parents indicated that English is important as they feel it is the universal language that people all over the world use to communicate. Parents are therefore encouraging their children to learn English.

P1: Say when they are going to meet the other people like those who are coming out of other countries they must speak to them in English and they must write English if they want to write something. They can't write our language IsiXhosa.

P4: It's important to learn English because if the children go to other places they can communicate easily. The reason why we send our children to these schools is because we want them to communicate. These schools are more advantageous than our schools.

Further Opportunities

- ***Language support***

Parents and learners felt that they would benefit from language support to enhance their English language skills. All the learners expressed enthusiasm about learning different languages, and wanted to improve their English, Afrikaans and IsiXhosa competencies.

P4: They should encourage reading to the students and make some extra classes for the languages because especially our people from the townships the language is new to them and the environment as well affects them when they are here.

P1: Some parent English classes. It will help.

- ***Exposure and use of English***

Parents from first language IsiXhosa backgrounds especially felt that as the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) was English, learners should only speak English at school so as to improve their English language proficiency.

P3: in school time they must be told they must only speak English because during break they speak IsiXhosa, Sotho. They must only talk English. So that they must use the language.

Code Mixing

Both teacher participants reported that many learners come from homes where a combination of English and Afrikaans is spoken, and where words from one language are substituted to the other. This 'code mixing' carries over to their written work as

well. The learners also reported sometimes not understanding the English, Afrikaans or IsiXhosa words and then substituting a word from another language.

T1: Most of my kids come with the mixture of languages, they do code switching. English and Afrikaans or English and IsiXhosa. Those are the two basic ones.

Aversion to Writing and Reading

T2 reported that learners do not like to write or to read outside of school because they have many other interests outside of school (e.g. sport). Several learners reported going to the library and also getting books from family, but others reported that they could not go to the library because it was too far away from their home. Some learners reported that they did some writing outside of school but others indicated that they did not do any writing outside of school.

T2: I would say it's not as good as their spoken language. Because children by nature of very lazy to write. Aversion to writing, they don't want to write. Our children don't really make use of libraries because they're not interested in reading really.

R: How much writing do you do outside of school?

L6: not a lot. I play with my friends.

Two learners: And me miss

Learners: no miss

L3: I never go to the library.

L7: Not near but it's far.

Further Opportunity - Increased reading and writing at home and at school

The parents felt that if the learners read more at school and at home, it would enhance their written language skills. Parents and learners felt that if they were given more writing opportunities at home and at school, their written language skills would improve. Projects also need to involve more writing, and learners wanted to do more writing of sentences and paragraphs as they often just filled in single words in worksheets. This was especially so in Afrikaans.

P1: I think more reading also.

P3: Just bring the book and say read and write, spell those names.

P1: Yes...and then most of the children will get to take a book and read it, and what they must do, they must write down what is the book about, you see, then they must write it down.

P5: I think the projects need to be more writing where they need to do research and actually write down everything.

L7: When we need to write stuff in your note book, then in your spare time you can write sentences and that helps.

Technological Influences

Parents complained that certain technologies (e.g. MXit on cell phones) actually impaired their children's spelling and writing skills. The learners used their own spelling for many words which was often in a shortened form, and then carried over this spelling style when they were writing in school.

P3: MXit is messing up children's spelling. They develop their own grammar and vocabulary. Funny spelling. Then they write it like that in their school work.

L4: I usually write at home miss because sometimes when I'm feeling lonely then I write to my parents, write, or smsing or write on the computers.

Present Opportunity - Technology as a teaching aid

The school has recently been provided with computers. T2 reported using computers as a visual aid during teaching and that this has stimulated the interest of the learners, who are now keener to undertake written language tasks.

T2: They need concrete.. ja. They need to see. And we're fortunate at the moment we have computers now, up and running for a few months. So if I am going to do something with them and we discuss even if it's a comprehension, I will always make it so that its geographically located somewhere and it has a issue somewhere so that I will then take them afterwards into the computer room and then, this is only now just for the last couple of weeks because we only got the computers recently.

L1: we sometimes usually go to the computer room, we type in a word which we don't understand then it tells us the meaning of the word so that we can become better understanding of the word.

4.5.3. SOCIAL BARRIERS vs. SOCIAL OPPORTUNITIES

The following barriers and opportunities at the social level have been identified by the participants.

Lack of Parental Support

Limited support from home and from school, was another barrier to written language development in some learners. Although many learners received help with their homework from family members, others indicated that they did not receive help.

Some parents reported that they work long hours and are tired when they get home and, as they also have domestic chores to do, they often cannot help their children with their schoolwork. The teachers reported that some parents do not provide support to their children at home and do not attend parent teacher meetings, either because they do not have money for transport, cannot get time off work or are just not interested.

L3: No help with homework. Only sometimes when I don't know what to do.

T2: Also a lot of parents work long hours where they don't have the time to spend with their kids.

T1: You know we had a our PTA meeting, Parent- Teacher conference last year. I sent out 26 letters and I only got 4 responses. It's a combination of them not being interested, or bosses not allowing them to leave early, not having transport to come or not having money for taxi fare and attitude and the issues.

P4: Ja but the schools are playing a big role to our kids. I think they do do something, its just us as the parents must make time for them.

Both teachers believed that the learners need the support from the home environment, and particularly from their parents. If this was lacking then it was to the detriment of the learners.

T1: So if you don't have parent's participation, there is nothing you can do...so unfortunately the parents participation is not very good within the school in general.

Present Opportunity - Support with homework, reading and written language

The parents reported that they, an older sibling, cousin or relative assisted the learners with their homework, assignments, projects and reading and written language. The learners also reported receiving help with their homework, Afrikaans and IsiXhosa from: their neighbours, employees of the parents and people working in their aftercare in the community. Learners also received help with their written language during extramural activities like ballroom dancing in their community.

P6: Me and her elder sister and her brother...help her.

P3: Yes but I need to check the spelling sometimes she ask me "mummy how is this" then I have to show her.

P5: Ja...when they've got projects I must run around with him looking for the pictures in the magazines for the pictures...

L1: My next door neighbour she taught me Afrikaans, she speaks Afrikaans.

L7: The lady who works for my mommy speaks IsiXhosa and she helped me with IsiXhosa.

L2: We go to aftercare miss, every afternoon and they help me with my work, my Afrikaans. It's there in Gugulethu. They help me to read.

L7: We go do ballroom and then they ask to write a sentence about how you enjoy ballroom.

Further Opportunity -Increased parental support and involvement

The teachers, parents and learners felt that the parents needed to become more involved in their child's school and schoolwork and to provide more support to the learners.

P5: We must get more involved.

Parents' Limited Reading and Writing at Home

Some parents reported reading and writing regularly at home but other parents admitted that in their homes the learners were not exposed to regular reading and writing.

R: ok... does your family as a whole engage in reading or writing regularly at home?

P3: No I don't, I write too much at work (laughs).

Limited Communication between School and Home

Parents reported little contact with the class teacher, but that they were aware that they could make an appointment with the teacher if needed to discuss their child's progress or difficulties. This was not happening.

P1. We had a parents meeting at the beginning of the year and then we didn't have one again after that.

R: Ok, but if you wanted to find out about your child's work at school, you could make an appointment?

All parents: yes

Socio-Economic Difficulties

In the grade 5 class 75% of the learners were dependant on the school feeding scheme (i.e. the school supplies one meal to the learners each school day). This is because many of the learners come from extreme poverty, where families do not even have houses and live in a Wendy (wooden hut) house in the backyards of relatives. Such

severe socioeconomic difficulties leads to the parents being frustrated and this affects the learners psychologically, which in turn affects their school performance.

T1: Socio Economics, lots of socio economic barriers, ok 75% of my class is depending on the school feeding scheme. There are many children that I referred to the school psychologist this morning. 7 people are living in a Wendy house it's overcrowding. Some children have single parents and they are frustrated so it carries over to the child and the child brings it to school. It just affects them psychologically.

Family Structure and Home Environments

Many of the learners came from homes with single mothers, no father figure and where there is alcohol and drug abuse, violence and crime in and around the homes. Hence these learners are exposed to crime, violence, alcohol and drug abuse, sexual abuse and many other social atrocities at a very young age. T2 also reported that many learners tend to be left in the care of their grandparents while their parents move out to live in areas closer to their employment sources and these children only see their parents during weekends.

T1: They report crime to me. Most of my kid's parents abuse alcohol, many single parents so fathers are absent. I have another problem two little girls in my class were gang raped.

Further Opportunity – A safe nurturing home environment

The teachers felt that learners need to have a safe nurturing home environment in order to support them and enable them to do well at school.

T2: First of all a loving environment. A warm nurturing environment. Parents who are interested actually interested in what their children are doing. Any child who has the interest and support of the parent does better than the child who doesn't have any interest

High Schooling Costs

Parents also complained about the high costs involved in schooling. This included travelling costs, as many learners lived a distance from the school and had to travel by taxis.

P4: We are struggling. My child has to travel by bus, we pay school fees. Where is the money? Government said we will not have to pay school fees. R 500 for the year and R 300 per month for transport. So I pay about R 4000 a year for education.

Ill-discipline

Parents reported that they were having problems with disciplining their children. The learners sometimes did not tell them that they had homework and did not get their

homework done. Learners did not listen to their parents when asked to do their homework, and preferred watching television or playing.

P1: They don't want to listen to us at home, they like the TV, they don't want to do nothing at home.

P1: uhm... how can I say, he don't listen to me when I speak to him but I must shout at him to write, "you must write this, write that" then I must shout every time then he stubborn then he throw his books at me and goes into his room and...

P6: sometimes the children is plain lazy, they say they haven't got homework then they...then you find out by the teacher they didn't do their homework.

Further Opportunities

- ***Increased discipline at home***

Parents reported that the learners often lied to them about not having homework to do. Learners also did not listen to the parents when asked to go and do their homework. Parents felt that they needed to have stricter control and check the learners' books regularly.

P6: Sometimes they say no I haven't got homework.

P3: We must check their books

- ***Motivating the learners***

Parents also felt that they needed to encourage, motivate and support the learners more.

P2: Just to encourage them.

Difficulty Understanding the Syllabus

The parents reported that even if they wanted to help their children with their homework, they were sometimes unable to as they did not understand the syllabus. Parents also had to do a lot of "teaching" at home as their children did not understand the schoolwork properly.

P6: Because sometimes I don't understand the homework they bring home.

P2: Now it frustrates me at home because I have to now put in more, I have to try and be that teacher. I have to explain to him listen this is how it works and this is what should've happened.

Further Opportunity - Parental guidance for assisting learners

Parents felt they needed some guidance from the teachers on how to assist their children at home.

P1: Especially when we were learning it wasn't like this

P3: For us to get extra help

Complementary/ Vernacular Schooling

Learners who came from a Muslim background attended Arabic School every day after school and got home very late. Parents reported that these learners then are very tired and often do not feel like doing their homework.

P6: She leaves school at 2.30pm, then she must go to Madrassa (Moslem school), so she only gets home at 5pm. Then she must still bath, eat all of that so she doesn't feel like doing her homework.

4.5 SUMMARY

Both teachers and parents were very concerned about the learners' written language skills. The learners have also reported many written language difficulties. T1 reported that 70% of the learners in her class were not meeting the required writing outcomes whilst T2 reported that 50% of the learners in his class were not. This concern was confirmed by the written language sample analysis which showed that none of the grade 5 or grade 6 samples was meeting all the writing outcomes for the preceding grade. However, the grade 6 samples demonstrated more of the outcomes required.

The teachers, parents and learners valued written language highly. While, teachers tended to emphasise the value of a classroom focus, learners and parents shifted the value to a world focus. Teachers tended to focus the value of written language to WCED expectations and to the contribution of written language to the passing or failing of a grade. Parents and learners emphasised written language as a necessary life tool that improved life quality and career opportunities.

There are many barriers hampering the learners' written language development. These range from problems in the education system to challenges within the learners to social barriers in the home and community environment. Presently there are few opportunities in place to promote the development of the learners' written language. However, these are not sufficient as the learners are still not meeting the writing outcomes. The teachers, learners and parents have identified further opportunities to enhance the development of the learner's written language – and these need to happen at multiple levels, i.e. school system, individual and social.

5. CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

5.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the most relevant issues that have emerged from this study will be presented in relation to the aims. The current performance of written language will be discussed first, followed by the values placed upon written language and finally the multiple barriers to written language development and the present and further opportunities to promote written language development will be discussed. Themes will be discussed with reference to the realities of the South African context, relevant theory and literature.

5.2. CURRENT PERFORMANCE OF THE LEARNERS’ WRITTEN LANGUAGE

There was a collective concern among teachers, parents and learners regarding the written language expression of learners. This was confirmed by the written language sample analysis. Teachers and parents are in agreement that the learners’ written language skills are below the expectations for their grade. Learners are also concerned as they are experiencing difficulties in many areas of written language.

The learners in both grades were not able to meet the outcomes for the preceding grade. A concern is that if learners continue to fail to meet the writing outcomes, they may not be able to “catch” up and the gap between the learners and the outcomes will persist and these learners will enter high school not having met the writing outcomes for junior school. This may persist through to grade 12 and learners may not be able to cope with the national matriculation examination. The 2009 matric results have confirmed that there is a crisis in South African education (UNESCO, 2010). Over the past decade there has been a steady decline in the matric pass rate in SA. In 2003, the matric pass rate was 73.3%, while 2009 saw a pass rate of 60.6%, a

decline of almost 13% in six years (UNESCO, 2010). Matriculation failure rates mean poor employment prospects as learners are not able to pursue further tertiary education. Moreover, many learners with poor literacy skills drop out of school before grade 12 (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2004). This reduces employment opportunities further. Lack of employment usually leads to socio-economic difficulties and poverty (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2004) and a decrease in life quality. Although this is a global phenomenon, it has been found that SA has higher unemployment levels than most developing countries and this has been related to poor literacy levels (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2004).

In 2006, the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) conducted reading literacy studies in 40 countries, including SA (Mullis et al, 2007). The results for SA were the lowest in the study even though the South African grade 5 learners were being compared with grade 4 learners internationally (Scherman et al, 2008), which suggests that South African learners are two years behind their international peers with reading. As reading and written language are related, this suggests that their written language skills are also developing at a much slower pace than their peers internationally. This study which found that the learners are not able to achieve the writing outcomes of the preceding grade supports the findings of the PIRLS project in SA.

While the written language samples here illustrated that learners were not meeting grade level outcomes, teachers, learners and parents were also very concerned about the writing and reading skills of the learners. In this study all the learners were affected as English second (or other) language (ESOL) learners as well as English first language (EFL) learners had difficulty meeting the writing outcomes for the preceding grade. Written language development is a general concern and not specific to ESOL learners, indicating a need to promote written language development amongst all intermediate phase learners.

A general weakness across both grades was word usage (vocabulary). There was a limited variety of words drawn from various sources e.g. language experience, activities, literature and oral language of peers. This could be related to reading difficulties and limited reading, as vocabulary plays a major part in reading proficiency (Constantinescu, 2007). If the learners are not reading regularly, their

vocabulary is not expanding and this could be reflected in their written language. In this study, English was the second or third language of many of the learners. According to Constantinescu (2007), reading skills are a very important aspect of first language as well as second language literacy. However, in acquiring second language reading skills, many variables play a part, such as first language literacy, the use of top-down and bottom-up strategies, activating background knowledge and vocabulary knowledge (Constantinescu, 2007).

Here, the inability to meet the outcomes for word usage could indicate reading difficulties, and poor reading proficiency may be a general weakness across the grades in both ESOL learners as well as English first language learners, as indicated by the PIRLS project (Scherman et al, 2008). In this study the school follows the English home language curriculum. Therefore, EFL and ESOL learners all have to meet the writing outcomes for English home language. However ESOL learners may not have the same level of competency of English as EFL learners and may be disadvantaged during taught lessons as well as during assessment procedures.

Another general weakness across the grades was spelling outcomes. Frith (1985) developed a reading and spelling model (see chapter 1) which shows the relationship between the different stages of reading and spelling (Pascoe, Stackhouse & Wells, 2004). According to Frith's model of literacy, each stage of development is dependant on the preceding stages of development and if one stage is disrupted, disorders in literacy arise (Stackhouse & Wells, 1997). For example, in the orthographic phase the child is able to recognize the large units of words such as prefixes and suffixes (e.g. station) and to read more proficiently by analogy with known words. This implies that when children reach this stage they would develop morphology skills for reading and spelling. If learners in linguistically diverse classrooms have problems with morphology, it does not necessarily mean that this stage has been disrupted and disorder has resulted, rather development to this stage has been delayed due to additional demands and development to this stage will continue, albeit slowly.

In this study, the teachers reported that the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) does not place major emphasis on spelling, but rather on the content of the written language piece i.e. learners are not marked down for spelling

errors but the content of the written piece will count towards the overall mark. The problems with spelling that the learners experience could also be due to the lack of emphasis placed upon spelling in the school curriculum thus far. Another possible reason could be that learners are experiencing marked spelling difficulties due to significant reading difficulties as indicated by teachers and parents. If they were penalized for spelling errors, their overall mark would be severely reduced, but the WCED may be aware of this and has therefore decided that when marking a learner's written language piece, teachers should focus more on the content so that the learners are credited for content knowledge.

Furthermore, it appears that there is a limited focus on teaching spelling and spelling rules in the classroom in the foundation phase and spelling difficulties are passed on through the grades. This may indicate that it is important that spelling rules be taught adequately in the foundation phase as well as through the intermediate phase, so spelling skills develop and the written language pieces of the learners are improved (Good, Simmons & Kameenui, 2001; Willenberg, 2007). Writing is a means of communication. The writer has to be able to communicate the written information adequately so the reader understands and interprets the written piece accurately. However, should a written piece be marked by spelling errors, this may affect the clarity and meaning of sentences. The reader may not obtain the correct meaning from the written piece and the communicative purpose of the writing piece may be impeded. In order for a writing piece to fulfil its communicative purpose accurately, the written language has to be grammatically correct with appropriate spelling conventions.

Narrative flow, character development and interest evoked were more evident in the grade 6 samples than in the grade 5 samples. Appropriate format and narrative conventions were adhered to in many of the grade 6 samples. From a top-down perspective, some of the learner samples showed an awareness of certain writing conventions such as a friendly letter and writing for an audience. These top-down writing processes were more established in grade 6 samples. Bottom –up processing skills where the learner does not use any stored linguistic skills when constructing a piece of writing were evident in many of the learner samples with regard to spelling, punctuation and grammar. Many of the samples showed phonetic spelling with a

disregard for spelling conventions and rules. This is typical of beginner spellers (Stackhouse & Wells, 1997). However, by grades 5 and 6, spelling rules should have been acquired (DoE, 2001) and learners should have been using top-down processes, where spelling is checked for rules and conventions and analogies are made with the spellings of known similar words stored in their orthographic representations (Stackhouse & Wells, 1997). This would also apply to grammar and punctuation.

The samples in both grades did not meet the punctuation, spelling and grammar outcomes of the previous grade. These skills are less related to spoken language and rely more on school based instruction and exposure to written texts. However, top-down processes were not being used with regard to these skills. This may indicate that the learners are not being adequately taught fundamental grammar, punctuation and spelling in the foundation phase and intermediate phase. This also indicates that learners may not be reading sufficiently so they have a limited store of correct spelling, punctuation and grammatical information to refer to when constructing a writing piece. Teaching in the classroom should include fundamental grammar, spelling and punctuation and this needs to start in the foundation phase and continue into the intermediate phase (Grief, Meyer & Burgess, 2007). There should also be increased focus on reading and exposure to written texts (Willenberg, 2007), which will enhance vocabulary, spelling, grammar and punctuation skills.

Many outcomes not achieved in the grade 5 samples were still not achieved in all the grade 6 samples, although more grade 6 samples did achieve these. The strength that emerged was that many of the grade 5 and grade 6 samples displayed awareness of writing as a means of communicating a message to the reader. The samples lacked the writing skills required to produce an interesting, well written creative writing piece because according to grade level outcomes in the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) (2002), the written language samples did not meet the writing outcomes. These learners are not achieving the basic functional literacy (reading and writing) skills necessary for daily functioning (Betz et al, 2008). The achievement of critical literacy, which allows one to critically analyse information and use this information to obtain greater control over life events and situations, may not be possible for these learners if basic functional literacy is not achieved first.

Both basic functional literacy as well as critical literacy is important in the process of acquiring literacy (Lankshear & Knobel, 1998). Critical literacy allows one to analyse, interpret and reflect upon the written content, and then to act upon it in order to participate effectively and productively in any social practice (Lankshear & Knobel, 1998). For example, in the school curriculum, when learners have read and understood a text, they may be asked to comment on and criticise the piece and to compare it to their lives or an everyday situation. This task incorporates both functional literacy as well as critical literacy and in order to interpret a written text and carry out a written response, the operational skills of decoding (reading) and writing need to be in place. If these learners are struggling to achieve the basic operational/functional skills of literacy, they may not be able to acquire critical literacy skills and so they may never become fully literate. It is imperative that these learners acquire basic functional reading and writing skills in order to progress to the next dimension of literacy, which is critical literacy.

However learners need to achieve grade level outcomes first. Soudien (2008:10) argues that learners may not be able to achieve the outcomes as the RNCS is modelled for a middle class population of learners and does not take into account the challenges and barriers that disadvantaged learners face. As the school system often does not have the necessary support in place, these learners fail to achieve and are viewed as deficit (Soudien, 2008). Hence it is imperative that the school system have the necessary support and that education become ‘learner centred’. The policy of inclusive education supports this on paper but is not a reality in many schools. Written language and literacy is highly valued in the school system (Magubane, 2008), but learners are not meeting outcomes as the school system is failing to support their development (Soudien, 2008).

5.3. CLASSROOM VALUE vs. WORLD VALUE

Written language is valued highly by teachers, parents and learners, but the value placed on written language is more classroom-focused by the teachers while the parents and learners tend to value written language with regard to its place in the greater world. The teachers felt that written language is very valuable as it plays an important role in the assessments of the school curriculum and in deciding if a child

passes to the next grade. The teachers also placed great value upon written language as it contributes more to the total mark in all academic learning areas: it can account for up to 80% of a learner's total mark. Teachers tend to focus on the achievement of academic literacy for learning (Lillis & Scott, 2007).

Academic literacy usually refers to academic communication, or more precisely writing, and is a broad description of the writing activities or conventions associated with academic study e.g. in school and university (Lillis & Scott, 2007). Teachers focus more on academic literacy which is more formal and conventional and differs from the informal written language used in everyday social practices e.g. sms texts and emails.

In contrast, parents felt that written language was a universal means of communication because it improved speech skills, vocabulary, reading, and spelling and enhanced learning and knowledge acquisition. Parents also shared the view that written language was useful in everyday life enabling one to write letters, carry out interviews and do one's job. All the learners shared a similar perspective that written language was important as it improved the quality of life, scholastic performance and enhanced communication. This finding is supported by Dyson (1991), who found that third grade learners in the USA, valued writing because it was a way of sharing experiences, expressing oneself and developing one's imagination.

Written language is not just an extension of the child's spoken language; it is also another communication tool with a distinct symbolic option that has links to the child's entire life (Dyson, 1991). In this study all the participants placed great value upon written language but the teachers tended to value written language in terms of the present time in the classroom while the parents and learners viewed written language as a lifelong tool that would ultimately enable one to have a better life. This perspective is aligned by the principles of New Literacy Studies (NLS), which emphasises that literacy (i.e. speaking, reading and writing/written language) is a social practice and not just a skill that is useful in the classroom (Street, 2003). Written language – a component of literacy - is a part of everyday social interaction, and a person who has acquired this skill will use it every day, at home (e.g. writing up shopping lists, letters, messages) and at work/school (e.g. writing notes). There is also an increasing trend to use written language in different forms e.g. sms messages via

cell phones and emails on computers (Cellular-news, 2008). This new trend of using written language via technology will be discussed later in this chapter.

Written language is valued and used more frequently now, than in the past. It is a lifelong tool that is extremely valuable and one that cannot be viewed solely as a tool in the classroom. The participants in this study all valued written language but they are part of a society that influences their values. The value of written language and literacy extends beyond the classroom, home and community. The Government of SA has acknowledged that reading and writing are vital tools that every child has to acquire and many projects have been implemented to improve literacy in the country (Magubane, 2008). R180 million has been allocated to improving libraries and buying books whilst the WCED will invest R20 million on teacher training and support to improve literacy and numeracy performance of primary school learners (WCED, 2009a). Furthermore, many adult literacy, family literacy and early literacy projects have developed throughout the country in a bid to improve literacy levels amongst both children and adults (BALID, n.d.).

The value of literacy extends even further into the world. The United Nations declared 2003 to 2012 as the Literacy decade (Centre for Evaluation and Assessment, 2006). Therefore many projects have been set up around the world to promote literacy (Centre for Evaluation and Assessment, 2006). The second Millennium Development Goal of the United Nations is to achieve universal primary education (UPE) by 2015 (UNESCO, 2001). Although, written language is valued highly globally, learners are not meeting the writing outcomes as barriers are impeding the written language development of the learners. These barriers are at multiple levels i.e. school system, home/social and individual. Present opportunities to develop the written language of the learners are not sufficient to enable the learners to meet the writing outcomes for their grades. It is therefore vital that further opportunities become available at all levels. These multiple level barriers and opportunities will be discussed in the next section. Figure 5.1. shows the current performance, value, opportunities and barriers to written language development occurring at the school system level , social/community level and individual learner level .

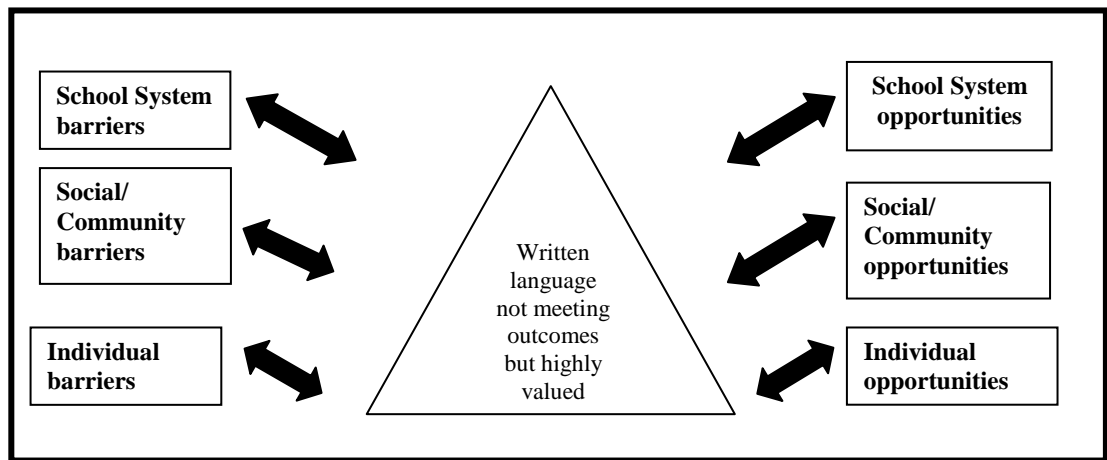


Figure 5.1: The current performance, values, barriers and opportunities to written language development

5.4. MULTIPLE LEVEL BARRIERS vs. MULTIPLE LEVEL OPPORTUNITIES

Multiple level barriers are impeding the written language development and achievement of outcomes in the learners. Barriers in the education system, home/social environment and individual learners themselves are contributing to the difficulties experienced. The present and further opportunities required to enhance the written language development of the learners are also at multiple levels.

5.4.1. EDUCATION /SCHOOL SYSTEM BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The first vital barrier to the development of written language in the learners was a lack of writing and reading opportunities in the school system. Other studies have also found that there are many barriers in the education and school system contributing to poor written language development. Ngidi and Qwabe (2006) and Pluddemann, Xola and Mahlahela-Thusi (2000) have explored the factors that contribute to the problems of learning and teaching in South African schools. They found that problems in learning and teaching are due to a variety of factors including problems in the school system e.g. poor management and administration in schools, poor school organization, poor time tabling, inadequate numbers of teachers and promotion of teachers in the middle of the year (Mona, 1997; Van Schalkwyk, 1994

cited in Ngidi and Qwabe, 2006:529), and teachers who are not committed, who do not prepare lessons, lack subject knowledge, abuse alcohol, set poor role models, conduct themselves unprofessionally, absent themselves from classes, lack discipline and professional working ethics (Ashley, 1993; De Villiers, 1997; Naidoo, 1997; Steyn, 1994; Wolpe, 1995; cited in Ngidi and Qwabe, 2006:529).

Writing and Reading Opportunities

Although written language is very important in learner assessments and in determining promotion to the next grade, observations and all the participant responses indicated that with the present OBE curriculum, the learners were not being given sufficient writing opportunities in the classroom. In the RNCS, there are many different outcomes that learners need to satisfy in order to fulfil the requirements for the particular grade. For example, in the learning area of English home language, the different broad outcomes would be listening, reading and reviewing, writing, thinking and reasoning and language structure and use, each of which are comprised of many different outcomes (DoE, 2002). The broad writing outcome with its many different outcomes has been detailed in chapter 4.

The different learning areas with the numerous outcomes increase as the grades progress. In grade 5, there are more learning areas and outcomes than in grade 4, yet learners are often given worksheets where they are just required to fill in one word answers in order to reduce the teachers' marking time. The writing of paragraphs, creative writing stories and compositions are limited. Learners are therefore not provided with enough opportunities to develop academic literacy. Learners need to be provided with more writing opportunities that will enhance their academic written language skills (Christenson et al, 1989).

These writing tasks should focus on the development of creative writing stories and compositions where learners are given opportunities to write paragraphs, and move beyond single words. According to the RNCS, the expected writing outcomes for the learners in grade 5 and 6 are that they are able to write different kinds of factual and imaginative texts for a wide range of purposes (DoE, 2002). The learners in this study were not achieving their writing outcomes and need to be given these types of written language tasks in the classroom. Only then, will they be able to

fulfil the expected writing outcomes for their grade. As the curriculum is so extensive, with so many different learning areas and outcomes to cover, there is limited time to do writing tasks in a school day. Furthermore, as learners struggle with writing, they spend a long time on the writing procedure. Teachers also have to spend extensive time “teaching and preparing” learners for undertaking writing tasks. Therefore, a creative story activity could only be implemented once or twice in a month, resulting in very little writing practice for learners in the school.

Semke (2008) conducted a study on 141 first year, third term German students at the University of Minnesota in the USA for ten weeks. The study compared the effects of four methods of teacher treatment of free-writing assignments. It was found that marking of the assignments, supplying corrections and writing of comments and questions by the teacher alone did not increase writing accuracy and fluency in the students. However, when the students found corrections and rewrote the assignments, there was an increase in writing accuracy and fluency. It was concluded that student progress in written language was enhanced when students had writing practice (Semke, 2008). If learners are given more writing opportunities, the practice will enhance the development of their writing skills (Christenson et al, 1989).

In this study, the teachers were aware that increased writing opportunities would enhance written language skills. Both teachers acknowledged that filling in single words in worksheets does not help learners promote their written language development but due to the extensive syllabus and increased marking loads, teachers still use worksheets frequently in the classroom. Parents and learners therefore felt that a further opportunity would be extra classes outside of school time focusing on reading and written language which would benefit the learners in this regard (Hafiz & Tudor, 1989).

Earlier studies by Gisler and Eberts (n.d.), Hafiz and Tudor (1989) and Tsang (1996), support the importance of good reading skills for academic achievement and the closely intertwined causal relationship between reading and writing as emphasised by ASHA (2002), Speech Pathology Australia (2005) and Naucner and Magnusson (1999). However, with the RNCS and OBE, parents here were concerned about the limited focus on reading and writing, especially from grade 5 onwards. The learners were not given reading books to read at school or take home and are not

receiving sufficient opportunities to practice reading both at school and home. As reading and written language complement and support each other in the process of literacy (ASHA, 2002), limited reading at school will result in poor written language development. Hence, it can be seen that even though written language is highly valued in school, a key strategy to enhance written language, i.e. reading, is not being implemented sufficiently.

There may be many reasons why learners are not receiving sufficient opportunities to read at school. Firstly, due to the extensive syllabus and the many different learning areas and outcomes, reading and writing outcomes are no longer prominent; there may not be sufficient time allocated to reading and few learners have the opportunity to read to the teacher or receive individual, direct instruction with reading. Secondly, due to a shortage of resources and school libraries learners have less to read at school and at home and the learners are also given limited homework. Yet; the more homework students complete especially from grades six to twelve, the better they do in school (American Psychological Association, 1998). Parents felt that the learners should be given more homework, particularly focusing on reading and writing, but the teachers do not give the learners much homework as there are many domestic and social problems that the learners have to cope with at home.

Learners do not get parental support with homework; parents work long hours and learners need to complete household chores and take care of younger siblings after school. They sometimes do not have stationery at home and cannot complete their homework. These realities mean that there are insufficient opportunities for reading and writing both at school as well as at home.

The facilitation of written language expression in the classroom will now be discussed.

Didactic Vs New- Age Methods

In this study, current methods used in the classrooms were mainly traditional didactic. Both teachers made use of oral discussions, mind mapping, demonstrations and role playing to facilitate written language during the lessons. These teaching methods stem from Vygotsky's "scaffolds", which are interactional mechanisms for learning

and development (Wilkinson & Silliman, 2001:4) Through dialogue and associative nonverbal interaction, teachers provide graduated assistance to learners as they attain higher levels of conceptual and communicative competence (Wilkinson & Silliman, 2001). Children learn best when learning is functional, relevant and encourages understanding and pleasure in the written word (Stone, 1993). The basic form of teaching would therefore be instructional conversation that integrates listening; speaking, reading and writing tools of inquiry that serve multiple communicative purposes (Wilkinson & Silliman, 2001). Teachers need to encourage social interaction and provide meaningful experiences for learners (Stone, 1993).

The teachers in this study made use of all these scaffolds to teach the learners; T2 used the blackboard more to provide written language examples, while T1 relied more on oral discussions and did less writing on the board. Some of the learners felt that they did not know how to write different creative written pieces (e.g. letters) because they had not been shown. The challenge is that the learners are diverse and have specific needs. These learners may not have understood the format of the letter when it was taught, but would have benefited from individual instruction, where they could have been shown individually how to write the letter and get a better understanding of what was required.

Some parents also felt that poor teaching strategies were a problem. The learners and parents felt that a further opportunity would be for teachers to provide more demonstrations and written examples on the board. This indicates that the learners were not satisfied with receiving only oral instruction, but prefer to be shown visually how to carry out written language tasks.

Studies show that oral competence does not transfer to writing ability - if learners are able to speak competently about a topic, they may not necessarily be able to write about it (Kapp, 2004). This occurs because although the processes for spoken language and written language are related, they are different (Dyson, 1991; Gillam & Johnston, 1992). Vygotsky in 1962 reinforced that written language has a different relationship to consciousness when compared to spoken language (Dyson, 1991:102). Vygotsky further noted that written language was a more deliberate second order system in comparison to spoken language (Dyson, 1991:102). Good spoken language supports written language development (Bishop & Clarkson, 2003) but specific

instruction of written language is necessary to facilitate the development of written language skills.

In this study there was variation between the two classrooms investigated. T1 relied mainly on oral/social interaction as a teaching strategy while T2 made use of both oral/social interactions and written examples on the board, in line with Vygotsky's guidelines for using scaffolds or interactive mechanisms in teaching - but there is a need for more visual aids (e.g. more written examples on the board). The learners need to see how written language tasks should be done as they are not able to follow through with only oral instructions and discussions.

Learners and parents felt that more time should be spent on the teaching of reading and written language. Presently the teachers are making use of mind maps which are a form of story web. In a study by Zipprich (1995) in Florence, 13 elementary intermediate-level learners with learning disabilities and poor writing ability were taught during a 4 month period how to use a pre-structured story web as a technique to improve their narrative story writing ability. The learners showed an improvement in writing quality (Zipprich, 1995). Although the teachers in the present study reported that they encourage the learners to use mind maps, the learners felt that they do not know how to approach written stories, and may need more written demonstrations on how to structure and use the mind maps. The barrier is that school system has passed on learners who have not satisfied the outcomes for the preceding grade and teachers in later years are trying to fill gaps that they are not trained to fill, and also have to meet further outcomes for the current grade. Combinations of factors in the school system contribute to the poor writing outcomes in learners and therefore "blame" cannot be placed on the teacher.

Only recently (about two months prior to study), computers were introduced to the grade 6 class to assist in teaching. As the school does not have a library or other audiovisual equipment (e.g. televisions, video recorders or DVD players), the use of visual aids to assist with teaching had been limited. T2 reported that the added use of computers has stimulated and motivated learners to write about a topic, after they have seen visual representation of it, as they are very interested in technology. T2 emphasised that the learners have an aversion to reading and writing and that the computers helped to raise enthusiasm about writing tasks.

Although the traditional teaching strategies that have been used by teachers are still beneficial and necessary, there is the benefit of using technology which the present youth find stimulating (Prensky, 2006). A further opportunity would be to integrate traditional teaching strategies with technology to facilitate written language development in the learners (Dada & Alant, 2002).

Studies by Chun and Plass (1996) and Lyman-Hager and Davis (1996) found that second language/foreign language vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension are enhanced more significantly when using computer based texts than with traditional materials (Constantinescu, 2007:2). These studies found that visual imagery helped in the learning and retention of new foreign words (Constantinescu, 2007). As good vocabulary and reading comprehension both support written language development, the use of computers could also improve written language development. Bristor and Drake (1994) observed that as we live in a high-tech society this requires that literacy not only encompass print literacy, but also include visual, computer and media literacy. Teaching has traditionally focused on improving listening, speaking, reading and writing using oral and print language symbols, but now there is a need to link visual and print literacy (Bristor & Drake, 1994; Zanin-Yost & Donaldson, 2005). It is through technology that visual and written communication may be linked (Bristor & Drake, 1994).

In this study learners used reading and writing differently in different situations. Learners used cell phones to send sms-texts, computers to send emails, wrote letters to friends and family, wrote poetry and read signs on shops in shopping malls. These different forms of reading and writing are referred to as multiliteracies (Unsworth, 2001). Both sms-texts and emails represent a form of visual literacy using visual language. Visual literacy may be defined as a person's ability to understand, interpret and evaluate visual messages and in turn to use visual language to communicate with others (Bristor & Drake, 1994). As there is an emphasis on integration in the school curriculum, visual language may be the means to link languages with the content learning areas (Bristor & Drake, 1994; Zanin-Yost & Donaldson, 2005).

Sms-texts and emails are a frequent mode of communication globally (Cellular –news, 2008; Godwin-Jones, 2005; Kiernan & Aizawa, 2004). Written

language is used in everyday life; but instead of the traditional pen/paper/postage stamps/post office route, cell phones and computers (technology) have taken over. However, the communication tool has not changed i.e. written language is still a very important tool of communication in everyday life. In this new age of technology, people prefer to send emails (written language) and sms-texts via cell phones rather than telephone calls (oral language) to communicate (Chinnery, 2006). A possible reason for this is that it is more cost efficient to send emails and sms-texts rather than telephone calls (Chinnery, 2006).

If the learners, who are doing very little reading and writing outside school with conventional reading and writing material, are using the cell phones to write and read messages, then the use of cell phones should be encouraged to enhance reading and writing skills (Prensky, 2006). Various studies have researched the use of cell phones as tools for classroom learning (Thornton & Houser, 2005; Levy & Kennedy, 2005; Brown, 2001 cited in Chinnery, 2006:10; Kiernan & Aizawa, 2004). These studies found that the use of sms-texts on cell phones was a valuable teaching method (Chinnery, 2006). Kiernan and Aizawa (2004) even evaluated the use of cell phones as tools for classroom learning at a university level in Japan, and found a number of advantages as well as some limitations of the use of cell phones but overall, it was concluded that cell phones are an important language learning resource that warrants further investigation (Kiernan & Aizawa, 2004).

Therefore, in the new age classrooms, during an English language lesson, instead of writing a letter to one's friend, learners may use the cell phone to send a text message. The parents had a different view in that they felt that certain technology e.g. MXit on cell phones, negatively influenced their children's spelling and writing skills. MXit is an instant cell phone text messaging service (Templeton, 2007). Parents felt that MXit actually impairs their children's spelling and writing skills as they have created their own shortened spelling for many words (Templeton, 2007). Therefore, when cell phones are used during lessons, the teacher should emphasise that the language used should be a standard form of English with correct grammar, punctuation and spelling. In this way, academic language as well as learning may be enhanced as the learners will have had a meaningful experience that they can relate to and are interested in.

Once again this supports Vygotsky's principle that learning needs to be functional and relevant (Stone, 1993). This also aligns with the principles of NLS, which views literacy as a social practice and not just a technical and neutral skill, and acknowledges that literacy varies in different contexts and cultures (Street, 2003). Traditional strategies have worked in the past but these now need to be integrated with advancements to create a new age classroom for these new age learners where the use of multiliteracies is taking place (Kelder, 1996). Ordinary classrooms in SA need to move forward in line with the current trends as the learners are living in the time of modern technology but attending school in didactic, traditional classrooms. The use of technology i.e. computers and cell phones, to read and write, should be used to motivate and stimulate the learners in these linguistically diverse classrooms.

Another strategy to stimulate interest and facilitate learning would be to ensure that reading books are diverse and related to the culture and environment of the learners (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). The learners in these classes not only speak different languages, but come from different communities and cultural backgrounds. T2 stated that learners need to see and relate to topics before they learn, as they find abstract ideas difficult to understand. T2 also reinforced that books and written tasks need to be related to the culture, age and interests of the learners so that they will enjoy reading. According to Bryan, Burstein and Bryan (2001), learning requires student co-operation that in turn demands that students value schoolwork, find it meaningful and are motivated to learn. Learners need to identify with the work they are doing and be able to relate to the characters in books. For example, English reading books should be set in SA, with characters having familiar local names so that learners may be able to identify with them and find enjoyment in reading. In this study the learners were keen to learn about the history of SA and the apartheid system. All the learners in this study were born after 1994, in the era of the new democratic nation and have heard about apartheid from their parents but have not experienced it; so they all expressed a desire to learn more about it.

Vygotsky emphasized the role of culture in language and literacy learning (Gee, 1996). NLS has continued to delineate the importance of culture and society in education (Street, 2003). It is therefore the task of the education system to provide resources such as reading and text books that are culturally relevant and appropriate

to the learners. The school curriculum should incorporate tasks and lesson themes that are culturally applicable and that recount actual events in the learners' communities so that they may be able to relate to and understand better. There is a need to use the principles of NLS to develop proposals for interventions in teaching, curriculum, assessment measures as well as teacher training (Street, 2003).

In this study it emerged that there are problems in all of these areas and new strategies need to be implemented. Some of these strategies will be discussed later in this chapter while implications that have arisen from this study, will be presented in the next chapter. However, another great concern in the system relates to mother tongue and ESOL instruction with the resultant language barriers to written language development being a great concern amongst the teachers, parents and learners in this study.

Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT)

According to the Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001), all learners have different learning needs and the education system is obligated to meet them. The school and teacher have to be equipped to deal with any barriers experienced by the learners and teachers. One significant barrier has been the language barrier where learners who come from non-English backgrounds are expected to learn in English, which is often their second or third language. The Language in Education Policy (LiEP) has therefore been put in place where learners have the choice of the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) (DoE, 1997). Learners in ordinary schools in SA have the right to choose any of the eleven official languages as a LoLT and as a learning area from grade 3 onwards (DoE, 1997). Hence, learners may be taught in their mother tongue up to grade 3 and then have the option to extending the use of their home language into the intermediate phase (DoE, 1997). However, to make it practical, the LiEP makes provision for the consideration of learner numbers when making the choice of the LoLT.

In practice, the school governing body (SGB) decides on the LoLT. Although there have been changes in learner profiles and schools are now linguistically diverse, many schools still choose to have English as the LoLT, as is the case in the school in this study. The teachers in both classrooms speak English and Afrikaans, but cannot

speak IsiXhosa or any of the other African languages and are therefore not able to communicate to ESOL learners in their mother tongue, which hampers both learning and teaching in the classrooms. “Inclusive education” is not taking place as the school is not able to support the learners and teachers who are faced with language barriers, which hampers the academic progress of these learners.

In this study the parents preferred their children to learn in English. The parents felt that English medium schools were more advantageous than schools where learners were taught in Afrikaans or IsiXhosa/other African languages. Neither the ESOL parents nor the ESOL learners expressed the need for the teacher to speak to them in their first language. Rather, parents as well as learners felt that they should receive language learning support so that their English language skills may improve and they may be able to communicate more effectively with the teacher. Earlier, Vesely (1998), had also found that IsiXhosa-speaking learners in Cape Town, prefer to learn in English as it is viewed as a high status language associated with city-life, middle-class lifestyle and access to the world outside SA (Vesely, 1998).

Post-1994, with the lifting of restrictions on which schools one could attend on the basis of the apartheid laws, there has been a trend for learners to move away from schools in their community to schools in more advantaged areas. This has been especially obvious in the Western Cape where the language of preference has been English (Vesely, 1998). The migration trend has been that many Black learners tended to move into previously ‘Coloured’ schools and many Coloured learners moved into previously ‘White only’ schools, which were better resourced. During the apartheid era, the White schools were well resourced while the Coloured and Black schools were poorly resourced, with the Black schools suffering the most.

In Cape Town, the schools closer to Table Mountain and the city centre tend to have English as the LoLT while it tends to be Afrikaans as one moves away from the mountain. The suburbs closer to Table Mountain are socio-economically more privileged than the suburbs away from the mountain. This movement has resulted in learners attending schools that are far from their homes and communities and in which English language is used for speaking, teaching and learning. While learners are positive about English, it is not the dominant language in their communities and these learners can be left with feelings of alienation that impact negatively on

communicating and learning (Kathard & Pillay, 2006). Parents pay higher fees in these schools and also have high costs for transportation and are therefore concerned that their children are still not satisfying the outcomes for reading and writing in their grades. They feel that the solution to the barrier is additional English language learning support. Learners also want language support for English language but would also like the support of the IsiXhosa teacher, to serve as interpreter and to assist them in learning to read and write in their mother tongue

In this study, the teachers showed that they were aware of the language barriers that both the learners and teachers have to deal with; however, they had contrasting views on how to overcome these barriers. T1's approach was to review the language policy and revert to mother tongue education. T1 recommended that teachers should be trained to speak the first language of the learners so that teaching and communication with all learners may occur in their first language. T2 felt that early immersion in English would help to overcome the language barriers. T2 believed that if the learners received early exposure to English from preschool, it would benefit them later. T2's view thus contradicted that of T1. The DoE has put forth the LiEP where learners should receive instruction in their mother tongue up to grade 3 and English instruction from grade 4 onwards, but this is not implemented in many schools and moreover, many parents prefer their children to learn in English and therefore send them to English medium schools.

The parents as well as the learners felt that a further opportunity would be language support to improve their English language skills. A study by Jooste (2003) in the Western Cape, found that ESOL learners would benefit from additional language support to facilitate their development of the LoLT which would in turn improve their academic performance (Jooste, 2003). Presently there is no language support for ESOL learners at the school. However, spoken language provides the critical foundation for the development of reading, spelling and written expression and this relationship is reciprocal (Bishop & Clarkson, 2003; Locke, Ginsborg & Peers, 2002; Speech Pathology Australia, 2005). Teachers, parents and learners all agreed that the LoLT poses a barrier in the classroom and they all have different suggestions to overcome the language barriers. While the debates continue it is evident that there is a critical need for immediate support for learners to improve their

oral English language skills, as this would also assist in promoting their written language development. However, the school is lacking in these vital resources. Further language support opportunities will be discussed in the next chapter.

Resources

The school does not have a library or an IsiXhosa teacher. IsiXhosa was therefore not being taught as an additional language at this school and the learners were very disappointed that they were not receiving IsiXhosa lessons. IsiXhosa speaking learners expressed the desire to learn to read and write it as it is their mother tongue while the rest of the learners wanted to learn to read and write IsiXhosa as it was the language that their peers/friends spoke. This indicates that the learners favour reading and writing in multi-languages. As first language literacy supports the acquisition of second language literacy (Smith, 1996), the English reading and written language skills of IsiXhosa learners should be enhanced with the development of their first language literacy.

According to Smith (1996), learners should be encouraged to assume that the written and spoken forms of both their first and second languages will play useful roles in their lives. In this study the learners acknowledged that it is important for them to be able to write in their mother tongue as well as in English. Therefore, a further opportunity would be to appoint an IsiXhosa teacher at the school to provide the necessary reading and written instruction in IsiXhosa.

The teachers, learners and parents reported that a further opportunity would be setting up a library at the school to promote reading amongst the learners. Learners did not read regularly because they could not access books. The school did not provide the learners with books to take home to read, there was no library at the school and parents could not take the learners to the public libraries due to time constraints and transport difficulties. Furthermore learners lived far from public libraries and could not walk there by themselves due to unsafe environments. According to Harrison (2001), an effective primary school library can have a significant impact on standards of literacy and levels of achievement across the whole curriculum.

The value of a library is appreciated universally (Harrison, 2001). A library is a vital resource for pupils as it is a place that brings learning to life and encourages the development of vital research and study skills that pupils take with them to future and higher education and into the workplace (TES Scotland, 2005:2). The possible ways of establishing a library at the school in the study and in other schools lacking libraries will be discussed in the implications chapter. In addition to a lack of resources, another important barrier in the school system is the inconsistent assessment procedures and a lack of support strategies to improve written language development.

Assessment Procedures and Support Strategies

In this study the teachers were concerned that, assessment procedures involving both written and oral presentations were inconsistent and that there was no continuation between the grades. T1 tried to apply the principles of inclusive education in her classroom as she understood that many learners came into her classroom with language barriers. She tried to accommodate these barriers when carrying out her assessments. For example, as she was aware that learners struggled with written language and reading, but were good oral language communicators, she allowed learners to do oral presentations and posters when assessing them in the different learning areas. Instead of giving them a written test to get an assessment mark, she would get the learners to prepare an oral presentation or a poster and mark them on that. The inconsistency factor comes in, in that not all teachers in the school do this.

However, there are positive as well as negative effects when carrying out more oral than written assessments. Positives include that the principles of inclusive education are being followed as the teacher is taking into consideration the barriers present in the learners and assessing them according to their capabilities. The negative effect is that, by carrying out too many oral assessments, the learners are again not being exposed to sufficient written language tasks, to the detriment of their written language development. Hence, the proportion of oral and written assessments throughout the year should be balanced and there should be some consistency of assessments across all classes in a grade. Furthermore, despite the fact that learners do not achieve outcomes, they are passed on to the next teacher, without additional

support. The end result is an accumulation of difficulties over time, as is evident in the large failure rate of learners in the matric examinations. This is an indication of the scale of the problem.

Another systemic barrier is that strategies to help the learners that are put in place in one grade are not followed up in the next grade or from primary school to high school. So, although a teacher may provide support strategies to assist a learner with written language in one grade, these support strategies are not continued with in the next grade when a new teacher takes over the class, hampering the written language development of the learner. This implies that there are difficulties with organisation in this school, which relates to the study by Ngidi and Qwabe (2006), where poor school organisation caused the greatest difficulties in teaching and learning. A further opportunity would be for clearer and consistent guidelines for assessments and pass/fail criteria to be set up by the education system and for all teachers to receive adequate training in the implementation of these. Evidence of the largest failure of the education system occurs at each transition, that is, from foundation to intermediate phase, from the intermediate to the senior phase (Soudien, 2008) and from high school to university (Sapa, 2010). Learners find it difficult to cope with a new phase as they have not fulfilled the outcomes of the preceding phase.

Ongoing in-service training would be useful for teachers as the limited training of teachers is a contributing factor to ineffective teaching practices in the classroom. In-service training would enable them to update and improve teaching strategies because, in this study, the teachers felt that they had not received sufficient training in providing interventions for learners struggling with reading and written language.

The teachers reported that there were two levels of challenge. Firstly, they did not have access to a remedial teacher and secondly they did not have the skills to support/reinforce foundation skills in intermediate phase learners. As there was no remedial teacher at the school, the education department expects the teachers to provide remedial and additional intervention. The teachers have however, not been trained to do this and so the learners who require this additional support, are not receiving it. Many of the learners who are struggling with reading, lack the skills that are taught in the foundation phase. The teachers in this study are intermediate phase

teachers who are not equipped to teach the early basic phonics etc. that are taught in the foundation phase. However, a remedial teacher would be able to do this.

Remedial education has been found to be successful in many countries and responsible for increasing levels of school performance and achievement (Sharif al-Shureify, 2004). Children who struggle to learn in the class environment are sent to remedial lessons either individually or in small groups with other learners who have similar difficulties. The remedial teacher often adapts the teaching materials and tasks to the learners' needs so that the learners may overcome their difficulties and progress at school (Sharif al-Shureify, 2004). For example, a grade 3 learner who is struggling with grade 3 reading words because he/she has not consolidated the grade 2 phonic skills may receive instruction on the grade 2 phonics by the remedial teacher. This will then enhance learning of the grade 3 reading words. However remedial education is not present in many schools and a large segment of the school population requiring additional remedial intervention is not receiving it (Sharif al-Shureify, 2004). This results in an escalation of reading and written language difficulties, underlining the urgent need for remedial support at all schools. Support may need to be classroom-based due to the large numbers of learners experiencing difficulties, as was evidenced in this study (Ehren & Whitmire, 2009).

In this study the teachers were not confident about the OBE curriculum as they had not received sufficient training with regard to administering it. This would affect their teaching skills and may hamper learning. The research nationally supports the need for teacher development to address a range of issues and this study highlights the need for support in various aspects, including OBE administration – to enhance written language.

Another barrier that prevents teachers from providing individual instruction to learners is large teacher: learner ratios or overcrowded classrooms. A study by Jooste (2003) in the Western Cape, found that grade 5 learners who came from classes with a lower teacher: learner ratio performed better in reading comprehension tasks than the learners who came from classes with higher teacher: learner ratios. In this study, there were 48 learners in the grade 5 and 38 learners in the grade 6 classrooms. T1 reported that she found it very difficult to give the learners individual attention, as there were too many learners in her classroom. For example, when a teacher teaches a

written language lesson to a whole class, some learners may not understand certain concepts. They may have questions requiring the teacher to explain certain concepts to them individually to facilitate their learning.

Studies have shown that individual assistance or tutoring by teachers to learners, who were struggling with reading, was found to substantially improve the reading skills of learners in classrooms (Wasik & Slavin, 1993). As reading and written language are closely linked, this would indicate that individual assistance and tutoring for written language difficulties would also improve written language skills. The teacher in the grade 5 classroom is unable to provide individual assistance to the learners as the number of learners in the class is too high and many of these learners are struggling with written language, needing individual assistance.

These problems have also been noted elsewhere. In SA, 6331 (23%) of the 27000 schools in the country have an average of 45 learners per classroom, which is 10 learners more than the required learner-teacher ratio (Chuenyane, 2008). It has been found that overcrowding in classrooms is due largely to a lack of classrooms rather than a shortage of teachers (Chuenyane, 2008). Large classes of learners affect teacher performance (Dachs, 1998). In order to promote effective teaching and learning, a further opportunity would be to build more classrooms and schools as well as the employment of more teachers to prevent overcrowding of classrooms.

The South African DoE has acknowledged that overcrowding in classrooms leads to a decline in learning and teaching and is a severe barrier that needs to be eliminated and hence the need for 12000 new classrooms across the country has been identified (Chuenyane, 2008). This solution would prevent overcrowding in classrooms, which could then improve teaching and learning and result in enhanced written language skills of the learners. However, there are a range of supports that would be significant in this context.

Opportunities have been put in place by the school already. The buddy system or peer intervention was used frequently in the grade 5 classroom where a stronger learner is seated next to a weaker learner to assist the latter with reading and written language. The teacher felt that this was a beneficial opportunity for learners with difficulties. Various studies have found that peer tutoring is highly beneficial, both academically as well as socially (GM South Africa Foundation, 2006; Palincsar,

Brown & Martin, 1987; Simmons et al, 1995). A study by Simmons et al (1995), found that reading comprehension and fluency was significantly higher in learning disabled and low performing learners in regular classrooms who received both explicit teaching as well as peer tutoring than in explicit teaching alone. This suggests that learners who are struggling with reading may benefit from additional peer intervention.

As reading and written language are closely linked, peer intervention strategies would therefore also improve written language development. Peer intervention is an opportunity that should continue in classrooms as it is highly beneficial when used in conjunction with explicit teaching by the teacher. There may be negative consequences to peer intervention as well. If it is used excessively, the learner may develop self-esteem issues as he/she may feel inferior to the peer-tutor. Moreover, the peer-tutor is also a learner in the same grade, still needing to learn, and sometimes provide incorrect information. Teachers should monitor the process of peer tutoring carefully to prevent these problems arising so that it may provide the optimum benefit.

The school also provides learners who do not bring lunch from home with a full meal during lunch time. The school ensures that these learners are nourished as children cannot learn on an empty stomach. Several studies have found a link between poor nutrition and low academic achievement (ASFSA, 1989; Newman, 1991; Parker 1989, Pollitt et al, 1991; Rush, 1986, cited in Troccoli, 1994:2). Pollitt et al (1991) found that if school-aged children did not eat breakfast, there was an adverse effect on their performance in tests (Troccoli, 1994:2). By providing the learners with a full meal at school it is ensured that the learners are well nourished during school-time and their cognitive abilities are not being affected by hunger. Traditionally parents had sent food with their children to school to be eaten during the course of the school day. However due to socio- economic barriers this is presently not happening in many schools. Schools have to take on the responsibility of feeding as well as educating learners while they are at school. Socio-economic difficulties are just one of the many social barriers experienced by the learners in this study.

5.4.2. SOCIAL BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Although it was found that there is some support being presently provided to the learners in the home environment (see chapter 4) to assist with reading and written language, further support/opportunities are required to ensure that the learners' written language skills develop. Several studies have found that challenges from the social and home environment contribute to difficulties in learning and teaching e.g. lack of support from the family such as inadequate housing facilities for studying, lack of proper nutrition and health requirements and illiterate parents (Borger, 1986; Botha, 1997; McConkey, 2000; Pacheo, 1996; Pillay, 1995; Smith & Van Wyk, 1996; Van der Aardweg, 1990; van Zyl & Vorster, 1995, cited in Ngidi & Qwabe, 2006:530).

Parents/caregivers need to provide the foundations at home in order for the child to succeed at school. These foundations are in the form of stability, security and nurturing in the home environment as well as support with the child's academic tasks. The parents and the school need to work together to enhance the written language of the learners which will ultimately promote academic achievement of the learners. It is now universally accepted in schools that parents are vital to promoting academic achievement amongst learners (Fan & Chen, 2001; Keith, 1993; Steinberg et al, 1992). Many studies internationally have shown that there is a strong correlation between parent involvement and a child's success in school (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Henderson, 1987; Hickman, 1999) A researcher who has made a significant contribution to providing guidelines for the important role played by parents has been Epstein (1988), (cited by Hickman, 1999: 2; Jones & Allebone, 1998:1; Lewis, 1992:3) who described five types of parental involvement:

- Basic obligations of parents: this includes parents providing for the health and safety of their children as well as preparing their children for school.
- Parent involvement in learning activities in the home: this includes parents' initiation activities with their child or a child initiating the help through questions.
- Parental involvement at school: this includes volunteering of parents in the classroom and attendance at school performances or sports events.

- Parent involvement in governance and advocacy: this includes the parents assuming decision making roles.
- Basic obligation of the schools: this includes the school communicating with parents about school programs and the progress of children. It involves bridging the gap between the home and school and developing a joint partnership between the school and home in supporting the learners.

These five types of parental involvement will now be discussed with relevance to this study.

Safe Nurturing Home Environments

One basic obligation of parents is to create a safe nurturing home environment for their children. In this study, the teachers felt that the lack of a safe nurturing home environment may be contributing greatly to the written language difficulties experienced by these learners. In this study, many of the learners have been exposed to crime and abuse. Three female learners were gang-raped. Some learners have been exposed to drugs and alcohol abuse in their homes. It therefore appears that the parents are not fulfilling their obligations of providing a safe, nurturing environment for their children. However, there may be many possible reasons for this. The Cape Flats area is a socio-economically disadvantaged area. Learners in this study come from poor communities. Parents may work long hours or be unemployed. Often unemployment leads to stress and the abuse of alcohol (Forcier, 1988; Stuckler et al, 2009). Parents may therefore be unable to provide this safe nurturing home environment for the learners due to the problems they may be experiencing themselves.

In New York, Kendall-Tackett and Eckenrode (1996) found that abused and neglected learners had the highest number of grade repetitions in junior high school. Abuse and neglect appeared to exacerbate a decline in academic performance in learners as they entered junior high school (Kendall-Tackett & Eckenrode, 1996). The grade 5 learners and grade 6 learners in that study are also close to entering junior high school, which is equivalent to a South African grade 7. Therefore, SGBs and community organisations should try to link together and organise community

patrolling services which may help to reduce the crime in their neighbourhoods. This may help create safe nurturing home environments for the learners.

Another basic obligation of parents is to maintain authority at home. In this study ill-discipline amongst the learners was a barrier to written language development. The parents reported that the learners did not let them know when they had homework. Furthermore, when parents asked learners to do their homework, learners did not obey them. The parents felt that the learners need to obey them and complete their homework. Discipline at home and also self discipline was a problem amongst the learners. The learners need to be honest to their parents and let them know about homework, projects and assignments so parents may be able to check their work and give them support. However, the parents also need to maintain discipline at home so their children are aware that it is not correct to lie to parents or to go against their wishes. In a study by Steinberg et al (1992) in the USA, it was found that parental involvement is much more likely to promote academic success, when it occurs in an authoritative home environment.

Parent involvement in learning activities in the home

It has emerged in this study that parents, siblings and extended family members assist the learners with homework. Neighbours and community aftercare centres also assist the learners in reading and written language. In contrast, other learners did not receive any support from their parents or family members with their homework because their parents worked long hours and did not have time to help them. The teachers and the parents felt that there needs to be more parental involvement in education. The parents emphasised that they need to play a more active role in education and they need to motivate the learners in order for the learners to perform better at school.

In this study, all the parent participants – bar one - completed primary school. The parents who participated in this study have the basic functional literacy to assist their children with homework but often do not understand the school syllabus. They are unable to assist their children as they do not understand the work themselves. Teachers need to explain the homework to the parents so they may understand what is required of the learners and be more equipped to provide assistance to the learners with their homework. Parental support is vital to academic achievement (Ingram,

Wolfe & Lieberman, 2007; Jones & Allebone, 1998). One way of doing this is via a homework diary, where parents are given instructions and guidance on how to help their children with homework.

Although the parents placed great value on written language, they are often not able to provide support at home with homework. Parents often leave home for work long before their children leave for school as parents frequently work far away from their homes while their children usually go to a school close to their homes. On the other hand, some children go to schools far away from their homes, so both the parents as well as the learners, have to leave their homes very early in the morning. This results in parents often getting home from work very late. As parents have to prepare meals and care for their younger children as well as other domestic chores, there is little time to assist the learners with homework. Parents may be aware of the importance for them to support their children with homework, but they may often be physically exhausted after a long day and not have the time or the energy to help the learners. As parental support with homework is linked to increased academic achievement at school (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Steinberg et al, 1992; Xinyin, Mowei & Dan, 2000), lack of support from home has a negative effect on the development of their written language skills and hence hampers their academic performance at school.

In this study, some parents did limited reading and writing at home and therefore the learners in these homes have had limited exposure to reading and writing. A positive learning environment at home has a powerful impact on student achievement (Henderson, 1987; Ingram, Wolfe & Lieberman, 2007). T2 felt that the learners do not like to read and write, and it may be that, limited reading and writing exposure at home is a factor that could have contributed to the learners having an aversion to read and write. In a study by Senechal et al (1998) in Canada, it was found that home literacy experiences influenced the development of both oral and written language. The study also found that reading and writing exposure at home was related to the acquisition of written language skills (Senechal et al, 1998). So, if children were read to regularly by parents and exposed to books and writing materials, as well as reading and writing practice, written language development in school was enhanced.

However, there are many reasons why the learners in this study may not have not been brought up in literacy rich home environments. It has been found that children who come from low- income families are seldom exposed to regular reading and writing as these families often do not have the resources to create literacy rich environments (Lewis, 1992).

Learners in this study came from low-income homes which probably were not literacy rich environments as parents and learners reported doing little reading and writing at home. Literacy rich environments usually have an abundance of books, writing materials, charts, visual aids and often computers. In homes of low-income families, books and writing materials are not readily available as money may be scarce and parents have to spend money on food and basic necessities rather than on story books, crayons, colouring books and pencils. In low-income family homes, parents often do not read to their children from an early age and their children often do not have writing materials like crayons, paint and colouring books with which to practice their drawing and writing skills. Parents also often have to come home from work and then see to domestic chores like housekeeping and food preparation leaving limited time for them to read a book or complete a crossword puzzle.

Therefore, their children often do not see their parents engaging in reading and writing activities: Reading and writing does not become part of an everyday household activity. Even though Lewis (1992), states that reading at home makes for better readers at school, the learners in this study are not being exposed to reading and writing at home and this has a negative impact on their reading and written language development in the classroom.

However, limited reading by learners outside school appears to be a universal trend. In the USA, McKenna, Kear and Ellsworth (1995) conducted a national survey of 18185 learners from grades 1 to 6. It was found that learners in the middle school years (intermediate phase) were not interested in reading (McKenna, Kear & Ellsworth, 1995). Reading enhances written language development (Hafiz & Tudor, 1989; Tsang, 1996), so it is important that children become interested in reading from an early age and that this interest gets nurtured throughout the school years so that learners may become good readers and good writers as well. It is through parents that this positive attitude to reading in learners may be promoted.

Countries throughout the world have embarked on providing support and guidance to parents to assist them in supporting their children's reading and writing development. In the USA, several parent training programs have been developed in schools across various states (Hickman, 1999). In Missouri, the first program was the 'Parents as Teachers' program where parents are trained to teach their children skills at home. A second program, 'Success is Homemade' expanded on the parents' involvement from preschool to the end of high school. In California, it was mandated that the programs help parents to develop skills and foster conditions at home that support learning, have access to community and support services for children and families, promote clear communication between school and the family to school programs and children's progress, involve parents in school activities and support parents as decision makers and develop their leadership in governance, advisory and advocacy roles (Hickman, 1999).

Locally, there is a need for parent programs in schools as well so that parents may be trained on how to assist their children with learning activities at home. In this study, the parents and teachers were also concerned that the ESOL learners did not use English in the home and community. They believed that because the learners did not speak English to their friends and family, this hampered their oral English language skills and negatively affected their written language development. Both the teachers and parents felt that ESOL learners need to be exposed to English more and to speak English in the home and community to enhance their English oral language skills which would also improve their written language development. Parents and community organisations need to try to create further opportunities for the learners to practice their English language skills as oral language is very critical to the development of reading and written language (Gillam & Johnston, 1992; Parris, n.d.; Speech Pathology Australia, 2005). This will be discussed further in the next chapter under implications for the home/social community.

Parental involvement at school

The teachers reported that the majority of parents do not attend parent meetings, educational conferences or workshops at the schools. There are many possible reasons for this e.g. parents may not be able to get time off work to attend meetings

during the day, or they may have transport or financial difficulties where they do not have the money to pay a taxi to bring them to the school. However, many studies have found that there is a strong positive relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement of learners (Fan & Chen, 2001; Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Keith, 1993; Steinberg et al, 1992).

Therefore, parents need to get more involved in their children's education and school. Meetings with teachers need to be arranged to accommodate working parents. Workshops for parents need to take place in the evenings, but parents also need to make the time to attend school meetings and workshops because a significant factor in the poor academic achievement of the learners is a lack of parental involvement. If parental involvement is increased this may result in improved academic achievement. It has emerged in this study that the parents and teachers are aware that parental involvement needs to be greater, so this is a positive possibility to build on. The home-school divide needs to be bridged. This will be discussed later in this chapter.

Parent involvement in governance and advocacy and basic obligation of schools

In this study the parents felt very insecure about helping their children with homework as they did not understand the work or what needed to be done. Therefore, all parents would most likely benefit from guidance on how to support the learners at home. It has been found that about one-half to two-thirds of the variance in student achievement can be accounted for by home variables rather than school variables (Hickman, 1999). The role of parents in education has been long recognized as a significant factor in educational success and school improvement (Jones & Allebone, 1998). Research has also shown that schools struggling with unsatisfactory student achievement may benefit from focusing parent involvement efforts on building parenting capacity and encouraging learning at home activities (Ingram et al, 2007).

Universally there have been efforts to incorporate parent involvement programs into the school system. According to Hickman (1999), in the USA, there have been a number of attempts, since 1973, to mandate parent involvement programs at the local, state and national levels. The Canadian Education Department has also carried out extensive research on parental involvement in education (Canadian Council on learning, 2008). Lessons on how parents can provide support for

homework have been developed and implemented in Canada (Canadian Council on Learning, 2008). A further opportunity would be for parents here in SA to receive guidance from the schools on how to support their children at home. As mentioned already, this can be done via a homework diary, and a workshop at the beginning of each school term may be very beneficial as well. This will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Bridging the home-school divide

In SA, the establishment of SGBs has occurred since the rise of democracy (Mathonsi, 2001). A SGB is a body that represents all components of the school. It allows the community and parents as well as the school to be involved in making decisions regarding education. This is an example of an attempt to bridge the gap between the school and the home. Parents need to take charge of this opportunity and get involved in their children's education. Parents need to attend the SGB meetings so that they are aware of what is happening, not only at the school but also at the regional DoE and at the national level as well.

SGBs have been put forth as a mandate at the national level, which states that parents can be part of the body that makes decisions regarding a particular school. In the school investigated, there is a SGB in which parents have the opportunity to be involved in decision making regarding their children's education. There are parent-teacher feedback meetings at the end of each term and parents are given the choice of setting up appointments with the class teachers to discuss their children's progress during the school year. However according to the teachers, the attendance of parents at parent-teacher feedback meetings, is poor. This is due to many reasons, some of which have been discussed already. Other possible reasons will now be discussed.

Presently urban schools as well as the school in this study are faced with many factors that are contributing to a lack of parental involvement in education. Due to the rise of teenage pregnancies, urban schools are faced with very young parents, most of whom are single, poor, not well educated and in need of multiple services to help create a caring environment for their children (Lewis, 1992). Several studies have found that parent involvement in schools suffers because teachers do not understand different family cultures or even the circumstances that make parenting

difficult for poor families (Lewis, 1992). Sometimes, it is not a lack of parental interest in the education of their children that causes poor communication with the schools but rather parental feelings of alienation from the schools. The Education Writers' Association (1992) found that young African-American, Hispanic, Asian and rural Appalachian mothers felt ignored or misunderstood by the schools because of their poverty and/or lack of English proficiency (cited in Lewis, 1992: 3).

In this study, there were parents, who were ESOL speakers, came from the historically socio-economically disadvantaged community, and were poorly educated and single parents to their children. Feelings of alienation may also be present in the parents of this study. It is therefore important to form genuine school-family partnerships (Lewis, 1992). In the school investigated, the SGB allows parents and community members to be involved in decision making and governance. The school is fulfilling the basic obligations but the other ways to foster parental involvement e.g. training and supporting parents and the collaboration with community organisations has not yet been carried out. Education cannot be separated from the home, community and culture. NLS emphasises that cross-cultural contexts needs to be considered when developing teaching strategies and curriculum in the classroom and the home-school divide needs to be bridged (Kelder, 1996). Therefore it is important that parents be educated as to the importance of their role in education.

NLS also supports the principle that learning is an experience that occurs both at school and at home (Street, 2003). A further opportunity would be for teachers to be trained to learn specific techniques to invite parents to get involved in their children's education. The DoE needs to fund the development of teacher and parent programs. As society changes, the needs of the learners will change and the educational system needs to keep up with these changes in order to prepare the learners for their future. The DoE is vital in terms of the support for teacher and parent collaboration. Teacher education courses and programs in educational administration also need to include information on the relevance of parent involvement programs. Teachers and parents need to collectively consider the ways of bridging the home school divide.

In this study, there was limited contact between the parents and the school. However, there are further opportunities for the home and school to work together to

create a positive learning environment for the learners. Positive home conditions that support learning are a responsibility of families however the school should help families become informed and skilful at understanding their children and supporting their learning at home through various activities such as parent training and information giving (Epstein, 1992 cited in Lewis 1992:3). The schools should try to communicate with families about school programs and children's progress through notices, homework diaries, phone calls, visits, report cards, and conferences. This will be discussed further in the next chapter.

5.4.3. INDIVIDUAL BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The role of the school system and social/community has been discussed in detail. However, the learners also play a very important role in their education as they are the key players. Barriers within the learners that are contributing to their poor written language development include: poor foundation skills, limited reading and writing outside school and ill-discipline. Discipline has already been discussed under the section on social barriers as parents play an important role in developing self-discipline in learners. Similar to this study, some studies have found that difficulties in learning and teaching result in problems in the learners themselves and these include: learners who lack proper foundation for knowledge such as basic numeracy and literacy skills, study habits, work ethics and self-discipline as well as learners who do not attend school regularly and play truant (De Villiers, 1997; cited in Ngidi & Qwabe, 2006:530).

Foundation skills

The teachers and parents in this study felt that as the learners did not acquire the initial reading and writing foundation skills in the foundation phase, they were still struggling with reading and written language in the intermediate phase. These foundation skills would comprise of the grade 1, 2 and 3 phonics elements that the child has to learn to recognise, sound out, read and spell, i.e. basic grapheme-phoneme knowledge and segmenting and blending skills. These skills are part of phonological awareness skills (Bus & Van IJzendoorn, 1999). These phonics would start from simple single letter sounds (e.g. a, b, c) in grade 1 and extend into double

letter sounds (e.g. ar, ea, ou) in grade 2 and into multiple letter sounds in grade 3 (e.g. tion, dge, tch). By grade 4, the beginning of the intermediate phase, the learners need to be able to recognise, read and spell these sounds in words (e.g. witch, station, judge). However, as the learners have not acquired these phonic competencies in the foundation phase, they are still struggling in the intermediate phase.

Research has shown that learners require a solid foundation in oral language and phonological awareness skills before they can read and write (Good, Simmons & Kameenui, 2001; Speech Pathology Australia, 2005; Willenberg, 2007). If learners are struggling with oral language difficulties as well as problems in phonological awareness skills in the foundation phase, they would be at risk for experiencing reading and writing difficulties. Interventions to boost phonological awareness skills need to be integrated with teaching and reading to improve reading and written language skills (Hatcher, Hulme & Ellis, 1994). It is very important that learners leave the foundation phase and enter the intermediate phase with solid foundation skills that have initiated the development of reading and written language.

Therefore intermediate phase learners who did not get the opportunities to acquire the reading and writing foundation skills will need intervention. The foundation skills need to be established in these learners so that reading and written language development is promoted before they enter high school. In a study by Good, Simmons and Kameenui (2001) in Oregon USA, it was found that learners who did not acquire the early foundation literacy skills did not meet the reading benchmark goals (outcomes) in grade 3. It was concluded that these learners would need additional instructional support to achieve the reading benchmark goals (Good, Simmons & Kameenui, 2001).

Reading and Writing Outside School.

It also emerged that even though the learners felt that reading and writing was very important they often did not do additional reading and writing at home. The teachers felt that the learners are not interested in doing extra reading and writing to enhance their reading and written language development. Learners do not show much interest in written language tasks or reading at school, and also do limited reading or writing outside of school. Only a few learners visit libraries. However, reading and writing

tasks enhance written language development (Tsang, 1996). Therefore, a further opportunity would be if learners were to do more reading and writing outside of school, this would improve their written language in the classroom. However, although the learners placed great value upon written language and stated that it was very important as it improved the quality of one's life, improved scholastic performance and enhanced communication, there are presently insufficient opportunities both at school as well as outside school to enhance their written language development.

There are many possible reasons for this mismatch between high value placed on written language and low desire to practice writing skills. Learners have many additional interests: they may prefer to play sport or to socialise with their friends rather than sit down with a book or write letters or in diaries. They are also very interested in technology and many learners prefer typing on a computer rather than writing with a pen. Moreover, learners enjoy texting on cell phones rather than writing letters to friends and relatives. Books and writing materials may not be readily available at home and parents may not have taken children to libraries so these learners have not had opportunities to engage in reading and writing from an early age. Also, as these learners often have not been exposed to regular reading and writing by their parents they have not developed an interest in reading and writing. This has therefore resulted in them having an aversion to reading and writing at school which has hence, hampered the development of their written language skills.

Studies have shown that extensive reading and writing practice improves reading and written language skills significantly (Hafiz & Tudor, 1989; Tsang, 1996). It is crucial that the learners try to do more reading and writing at home. This may be achieved by arranging class visits to a public library, parental supervision of reading at home and the use of technology e.g. cell-phones and computers to stimulate interest in reading and writing as discussed in the sections on systemic and social strategies.

There are further multiple level opportunities that need to be put in place to promote the written language development of the learners. Poor written language development in the learners in SA is a crisis. It is therefore imperative that a new unified education model be put in place to take all the key role players into account

and pave the way forward to a better education for the learners in ordinary linguistically diverse classrooms in SA.

5.5. THE WAY FORWARD

The school system, home/social community as well as the individual learners are key role players in promoting written language development in ordinary linguistically diverse intermediate phase classrooms in the Western Cape. The home and school need to work together to promote the written language development of the learners. There has to be a **tripartite** partnership between the home/community, school system and learners in supporting the learners. The school system has to be an effective, inclusive system. It needs to provide effective opportunities to promote written language development amongst learners as well as taking into account and breaking down all the barriers that may arise and providing the necessary support. The home/social community needs to be involved in the education. Parents need to create a safe home environment as well as support in written language and learning activities at home. Learners also need to be motivated towards learning and developing their written language. Finally, further support from professionals or other sources e.g. remedial teachers, SLTs, occupational therapists, social workers, psychologists, doctors, etc. also need to be provided as part of the school system, should learners be experiencing difficulties that warrant the services of these individuals.

A model that integrates the school systems, home/social community, learners as well as any additional other support that will promote the written language development in ordinary linguistically diverse classrooms has been formulated by the researcher (see Figure 5.2).

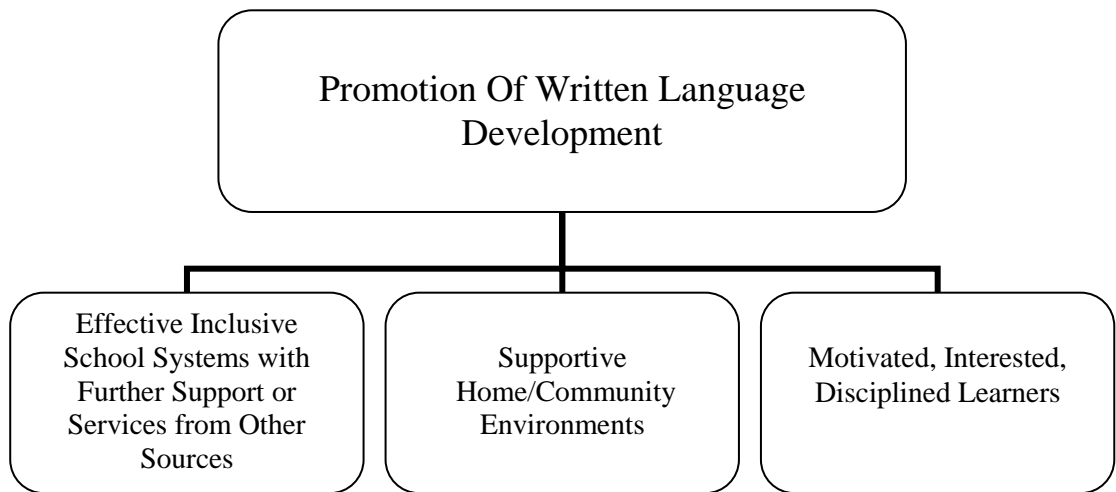


Figure 5.2. Summary of tripartite factors promoting written language development in ordinary linguistically diverse classrooms

Tripartite factors promoting written language development

From the above framework it can be seen that written language is not an isolated skill that is influenced and promoted solely by the school system. As emphasized by NLS, the home/social community as well as the influences of the individual learner contribute to the development of written language in learners in linguistically diverse classrooms. Furthermore, should barriers arise, support from other professionals or sources in addition to support given by the school and home may be necessary.

5.6. SUMMARY

Many studies have focused on the role that one party plays in learning and teaching i.e. the school system, social/community or individual and the barriers and challenges that arise from one of these parties. However, very few studies have tried to investigate the tripartite partnership of the school system (teachers, principals and DOE), home/community (parents) and learners as a group of stakeholders in learning and teaching in schools (Ngidi & Qwabe, 2006). This study investigated written language in linguistically diverse classrooms through the perceptions of the teachers (school system), parents (social/community) and learners (individual). In this study, the learners were not meeting the appropriate writing outcomes. As the poor matric results are a great concern throughout the country, it is vital that the written language

development of these learners be accelerated before high school so that they may be able to achieve grade level outcomes.

Written language is highly valued amongst teachers, parents and learners; however there are multiple barriers and challenges, impeding the written language development in the learners, at a school system level, social/community level as well as at an individual level. Present opportunities to promote written language development is insufficient and further opportunities at these multiple levels are required to promote the written language development of the learners.

It is very important to bridge the home-school divide as all these parties need to work together to promote the written language development of the learners. Finally, it has to be acknowledged that the influence of the home, community and culture on the academic skills of the learners is great. There is a need to integrate culture into academics. NLS emphasises that learning does not take place only in the classroom, but occurs in the home and community as well. Therefore, it cannot be only the school that is responsible for learning. There has to be a **joint partnership** between the school and home/community in supporting the learners and helping them to promote their learning, academic performance and written language development.

6. CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the conclusions of the study and the implications for the various levels of the school system, the home/social community, the individual learners and speech language therapists (SLTs). The limitations of the study, suggestions for future research and implementation issues are then presented.

6.2 CONCLUSIONS

With reference to the research question, aims and objectives it was concluded that: the teachers, parents and learners were very concerned about the written language development of the learners. The written language sample analysis confirmed that the learners in both grades 5 and 6 are not meeting the writing outcomes for the preceding grade. Written language is highly valued by the teachers, parents and learners. However, the value placed upon written language by the teachers is more classroom-focussed while the parents and learners view written language as a lifelong tool that is a necessary everyday skill. Teachers place value on written language as academic literacy; a more conventional, formal form of written language different from the informal written language used in everyday sms- texts and emails. In contrast, parents and learners feel that written language enhances life quality and value a broader range of written language tools.

Multiple level barriers in the school system, home/social community context and in the individual learners are impeding the written language development of the learners. These barriers range from limited reading and writing opportunities, didactic teaching strategies, limited training of teachers, language barriers, lack of resources in the school, unsafe home environments and lack of parental support and involvement

in learning and written language activities at home to poor foundation skills in reading and writing and limited reading and writing outside of school. Present, or immediate, opportunities at the *school level* include: a feeding scheme, reading books and writing opportunities in the classrooms, peer intervention, various teaching strategies and individual assistance to learners experiencing written language difficulties. Present opportunities at the *home/social community level* include: support with homework, written language and reading. Present opportunities at the *individual level* include using technology as a learning aid and acknowledging the importance of learning English. These present opportunities are however insufficient and further opportunities at these various levels are necessary.

Further opportunities, which would require some implementation strategies at the school system level include: training for teachers, remedial assistance, library at school, extra teachers and smaller classes, providing interesting and culturally related reading books, instruction and support on reading and written language in classroom, extra weekend classes for learners, more written demonstrations and guidance, more homework, homework diary and an IsiXhosa teacher. Further opportunities at the home/ social community level include: greater parental support and involvement, a safe nurturing home environment, increased discipline at home, motivating the learners and parental guidance for assisting the learners. Further opportunities at the individual level include: increased exposure and use of English outside school, increased reading and writing at home and at school and language support.

The school, home/social community and the learners collectively play a vital role in the written language and overall education of the learners. The home-school divide has to be bridged. A joint partnership between the school and home in assisting and supporting learners achieve the writing outcomes in their grade and future success in their academic career is necessary.

6.3 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

Although learners are currently not meeting the writing outcomes for their specific grade, they should not be viewed as ‘the problem’ - the school system and the

home/social community have a significant influence on the written language development of learners. There has to be joint partnerships amongst teachers, parents, learners and other support services (e.g. SLTs, remedial teachers, social workers, psychologists, occupational therapists, etc.) in supporting learners throughout their school careers so that they achieve grade level writing outcomes with improved academic performance resulting in positive outcomes at the end of their school career. While the study did not seek to define the roles and responsibilities, it is critical that these should be defined to support a coordinated effort.

The following important implications for the various role players have emerged: implications for the school system (teachers/school/education department), implications for the home/social community (parents, community residents), implications for the individual (learners) and implications for the role of SLTs (in partnerships with other support services/professionals) in linguistically diverse classrooms. These implications will now be discussed further.

6.3.1. SCHOOL SYSTEM IMPLICATIONS

Several implications for the school system have emerged from this study. These include:

Curriculum Modifications and Administration

Due to the extensive syllabus, teachers used an abundance of worksheets where learners just filled in single words. Writing of creative stories and compositions during the school day was limited, and learners were not receiving sufficient writing practise. Learners do not get provided with readers to read at school or home and the amount of reading done at school is limited. As reading and writing practice enhances written language skills (Semke, 2008; Tsang, 1996), it is vital that teachers provide *more reading and writing opportunities* for the learners at school.

While the DoE has acknowledged that reading and writing is of paramount importance in a child's school career (DoE, 2008), it needs to ensure that the *focus on reading and written language is increased* at school. The National Reading Strategy (NRS) which was developed in 2008 as a tool to promote reading in schools in SA will consist of teacher training programs, family literacy programs, supplying schools

with reading support materials as well as establishing library corners in all classrooms (DoE, 2008). In developing the NRS, SA is participating in the United Nation's campaign to increase literacy globally by 2015 (DoE, 2008). Locally, the WCED has implemented the National Foundations for Learning Campaign from 2009, which aims to improve literacy and numeracy of primary school learners in the Western Cape (WCED, 2009b). This campaign aims to lay a solid foundation for languages and mathematics in the foundation phase and intermediate phase in primary schools in order to improve academic performance (WCED, 2009b). It is important that all schools benefit from this opportunity.

The teachers, parents and learners reported that learners are given limited homework at school. However, it has been found that learners perform better at school, if they complete more homework especially from grade 6 onwards (American Psychological Association, 1998). *More homework* should be given to the learners. Furthermore, a *homework diary* should be provided to learners so parents can monitor that homework gets completed. Homework should also include assignments that involve reading and writing to promote written language development.

In the school in this study, some teachers carried out more written assessments while other teachers carried out more oral language assessments if learners were struggling with writing. In this way the learning barriers (e.g. written language) are accommodated for by some teachers and learners are given alternate methods of assessments. The teachers also felt that the pass and fail criteria for the grades were inappropriate. Even if teachers recommend that a learner stay behind in a grade, the DoE often passes the learner if he/she has already repeated a grade in that phase. This results in learners being passed over to the next grade without having satisfied the outcomes for the present grade. For example, learners who may not have satisfied the outcomes for writing and reading in grade 5 may still be passed over to grade 6. Therefore, it is important that emphasis be placed on the writing, reading and numeracy outcomes of learners when assessing if a learner should be passed over or not as problems in writing and reading are being carried over through the grades resulting in poor academic performance. There is a need for the DoE to set *consistent assessment guidelines* and pass and fail criteria through the grades so problems in written language and reading do not get carried through the grades but rather get

addressed before a learner moves into the next grade. It is also vital that strategies to develop written language be put in place to ensure that learners achieve the appropriate reading and writing outcomes at the end of their school career.

It was also found that teachers require *professional development* on how to support and promote language development as part of the curriculum as well as providing intervention for learners who are not meeting the outcomes for writing, reading, listening, and speaking. Teachers are not competently and confidently implementing the OBE syllabus. Further training with regards to administration of the OBE syllabus will assist teachers in improving their confidence and competence. This will enhance teaching and learning in the classrooms. The DoE needs to organise workshops and in-service training for teachers to enhance and improve teaching strategies.

The school may have an afternoon or appropriate time set aside for teacher education where teachers undergo in-service training or receive hands-on demonstrations in the classrooms. A different topic could be chosen every week and skills in this area could be discussed or demonstrated e.g. teaching strategies and classroom support strategies that teachers may employ to assist learners with written language development or integrating language teaching and learning across the curriculum. Teachers also value hands-on and practical in-classroom supports so this may also be a useful topic in workshops.

The WCED is establishing 49 circuit teams to provide in-depth support to needy schools (WCED, 2009b). This support will include teacher development, school leadership and management especially at primary schools (WCED, 2009b). These suggestions and promises have come forth from the DoE in SA. However, it is very important that these campaigns get carried out by the DoE and not be “paper promises”. It is also vital that teacher participation is achieved.

Infrastructure Improvements

Presently many schools are under-resourced. In this study, the school lacked a library, audio-visual equipment, a remedial teacher and an IsiXhosa teacher. It is vital that the school have a *library*. If the school were to set up a library, learners could borrow books and read regularly. The WCED should provide funds to schools

to set up libraries or more advantaged schools may assist with the setting up of libraries in disadvantaged schools. In the Western Cape, advantaged schools have requested the assistance of parents in their schools to donate books and help set up libraries in disadvantaged schools. Non- government organisations (NGOs) should also be approached by the school governing bodies (SGBs) for donations to help set up libraries. Another option would be the use of mobile libraries. There are mobile libraries that visit areas that do not have their own council library. The SGB can arrange for a mobile library to visit the school on certain days so learners may borrow books. Another option would be for the SGB or the school to arrange transport to take learners to the nearest public library to borrow books. Finally, parents should also become more involved and try to make time to take their children to the nearest public library.

The role of a library in promoting reading for enjoyment is an important addition to classroom literacy teaching (Harrison, 2001). It is vital that the learners get access to books, so they may engage in reading which will ultimately enhance their written language as well as their oral language. It is also important that the library be supplied with audio-visual equipment (e.g. televisions and DVD players). It has been found that interest and learning is enhanced amongst the learners with visual aids (e.g. computers). Televisions and DVD players may also be used to further enhance teaching strategies. For example, learners may be shown films and documentaries that would supplement teaching.

The DoE has acknowledged that a library is vital to the development of reading and written language in schools (DoE, 2008). The Quality Improvement, Development, Support and Upliftment Programme (Qids-UP) has begun providing resources, including libraries in poor schools (WCED, 2009b). While the DoE has stated that it is undertaking many ventures to improve infrastructure, resources, reading, writing and quality of education in schools, many schools have yet to benefit from these.

The school in this study does not have a remedial teacher. It is vital that the school has a *remedial teacher* to provide reading and written language support for struggling learners (Sharif al-Shureify, 2004). As there are many learners who are struggling with written language as well as reading, remedial education could be

classroom based or learners may be seen in groups. Moreover, parents or members of the community may also volunteer to be teacher aids or assistants to the remedial teacher. These volunteers may be trained by the teachers and remedial teachers so that they may be able to assist in the classroom and/or during remedial lessons.

The school does not have an *IsiXhosa teacher*. All the learners expressed a desire to learn to read and write in IsiXhosa. Learners, who were not IsiXhosa first language speakers together with the IsiXhosa first language learners, also expressed an interest in learning IsiXhosa. It should be noted that although parents and learners wanted to learn in an English medium of instruction school by choice, the learners also wanted to learn IsiXhosa as a subject (i.e. they wanted multilingual literacy). Reading and writing in the mother tongue supports reading and writing skills in a second language (Martin, 2004; Obanya, 2004). Therefore the appointment of an IsiXhosa teacher at the school would be beneficial to first language IsiXhosa learners. However, the teaching of IsiXhosa at the school would also benefit all learners at the school as they would be able to acquire multilingual literacy. The teachers in this study also suggested that they acquire basic IsiXhosa as a means of connecting with learners speaking IsiXhosa. Teachers were able to switch between English and Afrikaans, but not IsiXhosa. Should teachers acquire basic IsiXhosa, it would improve communication between teachers and IsiXhosa speaking learners which would enhance teaching and learning in linguistically diverse classrooms in the Western Cape where IsiXhosa is the dominant African language.

Parents, learners and teachers felt that language support would lead to improved spoken English language skills, which in turn would promote written language development amongst English second or other language (ESOL) learners. Learners, who are encountering language difficulties in English, which is the language of learning and teaching (LoLT), are presently not receiving support to assist them with improving their language development. As oral language is closely linked to written language (Bishop & Clarkson, 2003; Locke, Ginsborg & Peers, 2002; Parisse, n.d.), their written language skills are also hampered. It is important that learners receive additional *language learning support* in English, which will build and accelerate their English language development. Language learning support may be provided by an English language teacher, remedial teacher as well as a SLT.

As SLT's are experts in the field of language, they may be able to provide support to learners and parents in oral and written language skills.

There are no government posts for SLTs in ordinary schools in SA at the present time and there is no remedial teacher at the school to provide extra language lessons to the learners. It is vital that the DoE in SA creates posts for SLTs and remedial teachers as they both form part of the 'Education Support team' that would support the teachers, learners and parents in fostering and improving oral language, written language, reading, assisting teachers and learners in interpreting IsiXhosa and English in the classroom and overall academic performance in learners. SLTs and remedial teachers may have posts that are community based rather than school based and hence serve a few schools in the area. The DoE may need to review the language of learning policy and necessary supports.

There were 48 learners in the grade 5 class, which is 13 more than the recommended teacher: learner ratio (Chuenyane, 2008). Teaching and learning were hampered in this classroom because learners were not able to receive individual attention from the teacher when they had difficulties with the schoolwork. Therefore, it is vital that the number of learners in a classroom be kept to the stipulated ratio of 1 teacher: 35 learners. This would ensure that the teacher is able to assist learners individually. This would also reduce the noise levels in the classroom and make the classroom more conducive to learning (Kirk et al, 2007).

Previously, it had been found that it is not a shortage of teachers that is causing the overcrowding in classrooms, but rather a shortage of classrooms and schools (Chuenyane, 2008). The DoE in SA is aware that overcrowding in classrooms impedes learning and teaching and is a severe barrier that needs to be eliminated. Some plans have been set in motion to achieve this. The WCED has created 150 new *teacher posts* in primary schools in the Western Cape to reduce the teacher: learner ratios in classrooms and build a strong foundation in primary schools (WCED, 2009b). However, 12000 new classrooms across the country need to be built (Chuenyane, 2008). The government needs to allocate more funding towards education and the building of schools to create *more classrooms* and prevent overcrowding.

School – Home/Social Community Collaborations

This study found that there was limited involvement and support of parents in school activities. Although the school has a SGB, there is limited involvement of parents in fund raising. Parents need to become more involved in their child's education. The school should try to help parents become leaders through training, involving them in meaningful decision making and providing information to the parents and SGB. Parents should serve in participatory roles and also become activists through involvement in advocacy groups. The teachers stated that many parents do not pay the school fees and as fund raising is also limited at the school, funding is a problem. Parents should get together and set up fund raising events which will help raise funds for the purchase of additional resources. The school, SGB and parents should also try to collaborate with agencies, businesses, cultural organizations in the community to help with donations. These donations can help with improving resources and infrastructure at the school. The school and the community will therefore share responsibility for the education of children and have a joint partnership in supporting the learners.

Parents should try to assist teachers, children or other school personnel as volunteers. The school should also try to vary their schedules to encourage such involvement and recruit and train volunteers. For example, in some schools, unemployed mothers often spend one morning a week doing individual reading with learners from their child's class. As the learners are struggling with reading in this study, individual reading lessons once a week will be beneficial because due to large numbers of learners in the class, the class teacher often is not able to listen to each child read. Teachers should also request and guide parents to monitor and assist their children at home. Some parents may not be aware that their child needs support from home. In this study, many parents did not know how to help their children.

Many parents would like to support their children with homework at home, but they are often unable to because they do not know how to. This problem has been encountered universally (Hickman, 1999; Jones & Allebone, 1998; Lewis, 1992). Many schools in other countries (e.g. the USA) have implemented parent training workshops where parents receive training and guidance on how to support and assist their children at home (Hickman, 1999). These schools have found the workshops to

be successful (Hickman, 1999; Ingram et al, 2007). Schools here in SA should carry out *parent training workshops* to assist and guide parents on how to support their children at home (Ingram, Wolfe & Lieberman, 2007). This would result in increased parental support and involvement which would lead to improved academic achievement amongst the learners (Jones & Allebone, 1998). In the workshop, the teacher may outline to the parents what work is going to be covered during the term and provide a written schedule with examples, demonstrations or instructions so parents are clear on how to assist their children. This will assist parents in becoming more involved in their child's education as well as make them feel a part of the school resulting in a joint partnership between the school and the parents in promoting the education of the learners.

The situation of single parent households as well as lack of both parents is prevalent in many schools. Due to the high HIV/AIDS prevalence in SA, many children are orphans resulting in child-headed households, in which learners require support and supervision from adults. Schools may need to recruit volunteer parents to carry out home visits to provide child support to learners.

Presently many schools make use of a SMS system where the schools send parents text messages on their cell phones about meetings, events and extramural activities at the schools. The teachers in this study have acknowledged that it is difficult for parents to attend meetings to discuss their child's progress due to work obligations. The school in this study could try to use the *SMS system* or a homework diary so there will be regular contact between the school and the home.

6.3.2. SOCIAL/COMMUNITY IMPLICATIONS

In this study certain home/social community implications have emerged. In order for the learners to achieve academically and meet the outcome standards for their grade, the parents and community need to overcome certain social barriers to create pro-learning environments for the learners. Parents and society have a responsibility towards its children.

Parental/Social Community Responsibilities

The learners in this study live in the Cape Flats area which has a high crime rate. Many of the learners have been exposed to crime and abuse. As abuse and neglect affects academic achievement (Kendall-Tackett & Eckenrode, 1996), it is important that the parents and community come together to create *safe nurturing home environments* for the learners. This will ensure that learners are able to achieve academically.

Poverty has also been a huge concern. The Cape Flats area is a historically-socially disadvantaged area. Most of the learners in this study come from poverty stricken homes. Behind poverty is usually a lack of employment for parents (McCord & Borat, 2004) often resulting in financial stresses and abuse of alcohol and drugs (Stuckler et al, 1999). This leads to parents not being able to care for and support their children adequately. Hence, it is very important that *more jobs* be created. This will assist in unemployed parents obtaining a job, thereby alleviating financial stresses. Parents may then be able to provide a safe, nurturing, supportive home environment for the learners which may lead to improved written language and reading performance and a positive outcome at the end of high school. Learners who have completed high school successfully will then have an increased chance of securing employment and an improved life quality.

As *parental involvement* and support are linked to academic achievement, it is vital that the parents provide support to the learners with their homework at home (Canadian Council on Learning, 2008). Parents should also be involved in the school. Parents should attend meetings and workshops at the school and be in regular contact with their children's teachers to monitor their child's progress.

The parents in this study prefer their children learning in English over learning in their mother tongue. They place great value on English as they view it as the universal language. Parents feel that their children need to improve their English language skills which will in turn help enhance their written language skills. Hence, parents and community organizations also need to try to create opportunities for the learners to practice their English language skills outside school. This could be done via the formation of youth groups where the learners get to interact with other children of the same age. Activities can be planned where the learners get to speak to

each other in English while engaging in a stimulating activity. There could also be English language lessons provided in these youth groups by a volunteer from the community who is proficient in English. Parents may start with having an “English hour” at home everyday, where all the members of the family communicated in English for that hour. Parents need to be at home and be able to model good English in order for this strategy to be effective. This would help the learners understand that English is a language of communication not only at school but also at home and reduce their perceptions of it as a foreign language. This may help them feel more comfortable with speaking English to their teacher in school and promote their oral competence and ultimately their written competence as well.

Parents should also consider the value of *bilingual education* especially until learners become competent in English. Bilingual education in both mother tongue and English would assist learners in learning in the foundation phase. However, the challenge would be educating parents about the value of bilingual education and especially the value in learning in the home language (i.e. the African languages or Afrikaans), as parents in SA are very much in favour of their children learning in English (Vesely, 1998).

Parents need to ensure that there is *discipline* at home and that learners complete their homework as this will enhance their academic achievement (Steinberg, et al, 1992). Parents need to set good examples, establish routines, use natural and logical consequences, be firm and use reminders in order to maintain discipline at home (Bailey, 2005:2). Furthermore, parents may encourage learners to do more reading and writing at home, if they expose the learners to regular reading and writing by themselves. Parents need to be good role models so that children may learn from the examples they set (Bailey, 2005:2). If a homework diary is implemented, this would prove useful in helping parents monitor homework. Parents need to be strict about a routine homework time. In order to help the learners become self-sufficient and independent, parents need to listen and guide them and set limits that are reasonable and fair (The parent report, 2009). These measures may need to be implemented by parents until the learners become self-disciplined.

6.3.3. INDIVIDUAL LEARNER IMPLICATIONS

In this study a few individual implications for the learners themselves, have emerged. This suggests that the learners need to make certain changes within themselves in order to improve their written language skills, promote their academic achievement and meet their writing outcomes for their grade, but, this needs to be done in partnership with the school and parents.

Motivation and Responsibility

Learners need to be *self-disciplined* and set time aside for reading, writing and homework and to complete their homework. They need to be aware that increased reading and writing will enhance their written language skills and promote academic achievement (Hafiz & Tudor, 1989). They need to be able to organise their time effectively to have a balance between social activities and academic work. Learners need to get books from the libraries and engage in reading. This will also promote reading and writing development. Computers and other technology (e.g. cell phones and DVDs) may also be used to encourage and interest learners. Finally learners may form “study groups” with other learners to encourage and stimulate each other to learn, read and write more extensively outside school.

6.3.4. IMPLICATIONS FOR SPEECH-LANGUAGE THERAPISTS

Finally, certain implications for SLTs have emerged from this study. Teachers, parents and learners have emphasised the need for further support at the school. There is a need for an “education support team” at the school of which it is vital that the SLT be a part of. In this study it has emerged that learners are presenting with written language, reading as well as English spoken language difficulties. Teachers, parents and learners feel that it is vital that support be provided for written language, reading and English spoken language. SLTs are the communication language experts (ASHA, 2001). This indicates that there is a need for SLTs, in partnership with teachers, parents, learners and other support services in linguistically diverse classrooms in ordinary schools, help learners improve their written language, reading and spoken

language skills in order to achieve academically and meet the writing outcomes for their grade.

SLTs in Ordinary Schools in South Africa

Presently in SA, there are no DoE posts for SLTs in ordinary schools. SLTs are presently employed in government hospitals and special schools where they assess and treat learners with verbal and written language difficulties. However, it is acknowledged that there is need for SLTs in SA to expand their services to learners in ordinary schools who are not developing age appropriate literacy and numeracy skills (Du Plessis & Louw, 2008; Lewis, 2004; Wium, 2010). This study has shown that the 'at risk' population is a large one- clearly if the general trend is that 2/3 of learners is not achieving the writing outcomes. It has been established that SLTs should play a critical and direct role in the development of literacy – of which writing is a part of - due to the strong connection between oral and written language (ASHA, 2001; Ehren & Whitmire, 2009; Justice, Invernizzi & Meier, 2002). Protocols of SLTs in schools have been developed in the USA as explained in chapter one, and although similarities may exist, there are also clear differences to the scenario in SA. USA is a first world country while SA is a new democracy and a developing country with several challenges both at the school system level as well at the social level. Therefore, the following protocol has been developed by the researcher to identify the potential roles of SLTs in ordinary South African classrooms: (see Figure 6.1)

- SLTs together with other professionals should be involved in policy making decisions regarding language across the school systems e.g. bilingual education, learning in ESOL as well as motivating for SLT posts in ordinary schools in SA.
- SLTs should collaborate with teachers in firstly identifying children who require speech and language intervention and secondly in providing language support to all learners early thereby preventing speech and language difficulties.
- SLTs should assist teachers in ordinary classrooms in the planning and teaching of English language lessons thereby enhancing English language learning in learners, and in collaborating with teachers in acknowledging and

understanding the total communication resource that the learners bring into the classroom rather than only focussing on whether a learner can speak and write English.

- SLTs should enhance and accelerate oral and written language development in learners by providing whole classroom- based language stimulation lessons.
- SLTs should provide oral and written language support to ‘at risk’ learners in small groups to prevent significant oral and written language difficulties.
- SLTs should identify and manage oral and written language problems in learners with speech language impairments requiring intensive individualised support in ordinary classrooms.
- SLTs should have workshops for parents and community members to provide guidance and counselling on the support and facilitation of oral and written language at home and in the community.

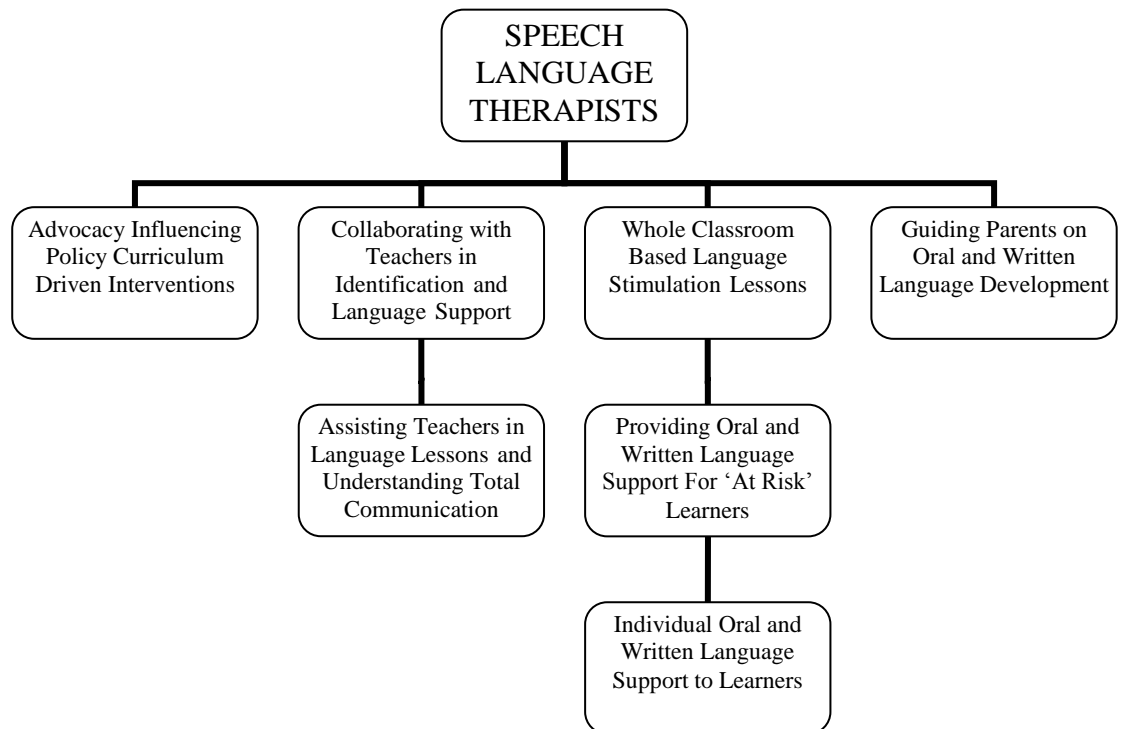


Figure 6.1: Proposed role of SLTs in ordinary linguistically diverse South African classrooms

6.4. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There are several limitations to the study which will be discussed below.

- Little research exists on the tripartite relationship of teachers, parents and learners in written language development of intermediate phase learners in the Western Cape classrooms. Therefore, the researcher had to consult literature from international studies which may not always be applicable to the South African context.
- Another limitation arose from the fact that only two classrooms were investigated as there was only one researcher involved in this study. If more researchers were involved in this study, then more classrooms would have been investigated. This would have provided more in-depth information which could have aided in the transferability of the results to other sites and increased the trustworthiness and rigour of the study.
- In this study only a small number of parents participated. If more parents had participated, more data would have been generated. This would have enhanced the results obtained. One way of achieving this would have been to visit the homes of the parents. With only one researcher, this was not possible due to time constraints.
- With regard to the data collection methods, the classroom observations were not video-recorded. The researcher therefore had to rely on notes taken during the observations. Should the observations have been recorded more detail on the results would have been available. Furthermore, the individual interviews with the learners were carried out before the focus group sessions. This could have influenced the feedback provided by the learners during the individual interviews as they could have been feeling nervous of the individual research interview process. Therefore, individual interviews should be carried out after focus group sessions or alternated with the focus group sessions.
- Limitations in the interpretation of the results include lack of comparison data from other similar studies in the Western Cape and limited ability to generalize the findings of this research to other services. It has emerged that apart from SLTs, other interventions and services are also required to support

the learners (e.g. remedial education, social services/workers, psychologists, occupational therapists).

6.5. RESEARCHER REFLECTIONS

Although not a limitation, this research process was a challenge for many reasons. This study was not carried out within the traditional speech-language therapy domain, where the emphasis would have been on disorder and the medical model. Rather, this study tried to emphasise the social model that considers the influence of society and culture on learning. Many complexities arose as the researcher from a SLT background had to step into a new context. Despite the extensive literature search the researchers' knowledge is partial as there have been no known studies of this nature in the Western Cape. Therefore, this study can be refined and shaped further. It was a challenge to manage the vast data, organise categories as well as to show the inter-relationships in this study. This study has empowered the researcher to learn and grow with the knowledge generated.

6.6. FUTURE RESEARCH

During the course of this study, several areas which require further research were identified.

Significant areas for future research would be investigating the reading and written language of learners in the foundation phase (grades 1-3) and in the senior phase (grade 7). Both, teachers and parents have indicated that a lack of solid foundation skills for reading and writing in grades 1-3 are a significant cause of literacy difficulties in the intermediate phase. As parents and teachers also reported that difficulties in primary school get carried over to high school, investigating the reading and written language of learners in grade 7, before the start of high school would provide relevant information on the support required by high school learners. Longitudinal studies may be carried out investigating reading and written language development at different phases in a child's schooling.

Another vital area for future research would be investigating the structure of the home environments and the influence it has on the language learning and academic performance of the learners. Teachers in this study have stated that the

home environment and parental support is vital to the academic progress of a child. Literature has also indicated that the home environment and parental support influence a child's performance at school (Henderson, 1987; Hickman, 1999; Keith, 1993). Comparison studies may be carried out in schools where parents are actively involved in their child's education and learning and in schools with minimum parental involvement.

An important area for future research would be investigating the pre-reading and pre-writing foundation skills (i.e. emergent literacy skills) in Grade R. It has been found that emergent literacy development influences the development of reading and written language from grade 1 (Willenberg, 2007). Research in this area will also provide guidelines on early intervention which is very important to prevent reading and writing problems in the later grades at school.

The role of SLTs as well as the outcome of SLT intervention on the learners in linguistically diverse foundation phase classrooms and intermediate phase classrooms is another important area for future research. (Wium, 2010). This could be done via an action research design or an intervention study. SLTs could go into schools that have been documented as having poor literacy levels and provide support as indicated in the above protocol, for a period of time. Literacy levels as well as input from key role-players could be reassessed after this period of time to note the benefits of SLTs in schools as well as any modification to their roles.

The influence and impact of complementary/vernacular schools on academic performance in learners is also an area that should be researched in the future. In the Western Cape, there is a large Muslim community. Learners from this community attend Arabic lessons/vernacular school on a daily basis after school resulting in a longer school day. Parents in this study reported that learners get home late after attending vernacular school and therefore do not have time to do homework or further reading and writing as they are tired.

6.7. REPORTING AND IMPLEMENTATION

A range of activities using formal and informal media will be used to circulate the study findings locally and nationally and to explore follow-up possibilities (WHO, 2001). For example findings will be disseminated to:

- academia via research publications and conferences
- schools via summary reports and presentations
- policy makers via summary report and pamphlet (see appendix D)
- media via summary report
- participants through discussion
- SLTs through clinical forum discussions
- University departments via summary reports.

The dissemination process has already commenced. Workshops were carried out with the learners and teachers at the school in this study in November 2009. The learners, teachers and researchers participated in an interactive workshop on the current performance, value and barriers to written language development. The opportunities to promote written language at school and home were also discussed. The learners and the teachers found the workshops to be very informative and empowering.

6.8. SUMMARY

Multiple level barriers were impeding the written language development of learners who were therefore not meeting the writing outcomes for their grade. Multiple level opportunities to promote the written language of learners were identified by teachers, parents and learners. Hence, multiple level implications, for the school system, social/community, the individual (learner) and SLTs have emerged in this study. Future research is also required in the areas of reading and written language in the foundation phase, structure and influence of the home environment on academic performance of learners, emergent literacy skills in preschool, and SLT intervention in ordinary schools as well as the influence of complementary/vernacular schooling. The limitations in the study occurred as only two classrooms were investigated and a limited number of parents participated. This limited the amount of data generated as well as the generalisation of results.

Finally, the results of this study will be disseminated to educational institutions, the participants as well as to the DoE in SA. Papers detailing this study will also be submitted to peer-reviewed academic journals. It is motivated that the strategies identified in this study as well as the implications of this study be considered by the key role-players, who may follow up on the recommendations thereby assisting the learners to improve their written language development and achieve academically which will, ultimately create a better future for them.

REFERENCE LIST

- Aiken, T.D. & Catalano J.T. 1994. *Legal, ethical and political issues in nursing*. Philadelphia: F.A. Davis Company.
- Aitchison, J. 2001. Reading and writing in the new South Africa: literacy and adult basic education and training in South Africa. In *Knowledge, information and development: an African perspective*. C. Stilwell, A. Leach & S. Burton. Eds. Pietermaritzburg: School of Human and Social Sciences, University of Natal. 134-152.
- American Psychological Association. 1998. Research shows homework does boost academic achievement; but overemphasising grades and performance may lead to cheating. *Science daily, March. 4. 1998*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.sciencedaily.com> [2009, May 13].
- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. 2001. Role and responsibilities of speech-language therapists with respect to reading and writing in children and adolescents. *ASHA. 21* (suppl.) 17-28, Rockville, MD.
- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. 2002. Designing and implementing an early literacy screening protocol: suggestions for the speech-language pathologist. *Language, speech and hearing services in schools. 33*: 84-101.
- Anthonissen, C. 2009. Bilingualism and language shift in Western Cape communities. *Stellenbosch papers in linguistics PLUS. 38*: 61-76
- Applebee, A.N. 1984. Writing and reasoning. *Review of educational research. 54*(4):577-596.
- Bailey, S.J. 2005. Discipline: a parent's guide for school children. *Montguide, MT 200501*. Montana: Montana State University. 1-2. [Online]. Available: www.msuetension.org/publications [2009, September 9].
- BALID n.d. Family literacy in South Africa – some examples. [Online]. Available: www.balid.org.uk/pdfs/family-literacy-South-Africa.doc [2010, February 10].
- Bartlett, L. 2005. Identity work and cultural artefacts in literacy learning and use: a sociocultural analysis. *Language and education. 19*(1): 1-9.
- Barwick, M.A. & Siegel L.S. 1996. Learning difficulties in adolescent clients of a shelter for runaway and homeless street youths. *Journal of research on adolescents. 6*: 649 – 670.

- Betz, C.L., Ruccione, K., Meeske, K., Smith, K. & Chang, N. 2008. Health literacy: a paediatric nursing concern: background. *Paediatric nursing*. 34(3): 231-239.
- Bishop, D.V.M. & Clarkson, B. 2003. Written language as a window into residual language deficits: a study of children with persistent and residual speech and language impairments. *Cortex*. 39 (2): 215-237.
- Bloch, C. 1998. Literacy in the early years: teaching and learning in multilingual early childhood classrooms. *PRAESA occasional papers No. 1*. Cape Town: PRAESA
- Bloch, C. 2006. Theory and strategy of early literacy in contemporary Africa with special reference to South Africa. *PRAESA occasional papers No. 25*. Cape Town: PRAESA.
- Brice Heath, S. 1983. *Ways with words: language, life and work in communities and classrooms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bristor, V.J. & Drake, S.V. 1994. Linking the language arts and content areas through visual technology. *Journal of technological horizons in education*. 22(2): 74-77.
- Britten, N. 2000. Qualitative interviews in healthcare research. In *Qualitative research in health care*. 2nd ed. C. Pope & N. Mays, Eds. London: BMJ Publishing Group. 11-18.
- Bryan, T., Burstein, K. & Bryan, J. 2001. Students with learning disabilities: homework problems and promising practices. *Educational psychologist*. 36 (3): 167-180.
- Burger, D. Ed. 2009. South African Government information: education. In *South Africa Yearbook 2008/2009*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.info.gov.za/aboutsa/education.htm#Policydevelopments> [2010, March 11].
- Bus, A.G. & Van IJzendoorn, M.H. 1999. Phonological awareness and early reading: a meta-analysis of experimental training studies. *Journal of educational psychology*. 91(3): 403-414.
- Canadian Council on Learning. 2008. *Parent's role in their children's homework*. Canada: Canadian Council on learning.
- Cellular-news. 2008. *Cell phone usage continues to increase in the USA*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.cellular-news.com/story/30323.php> [2009, December 3].
- Centre for Evaluation and Assessment. 2006. *PIRLS of Wisdom: The what, where, when and how of the International reading literacy study in South Africa*. Pretoria: Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria.

- Chinnery, G.M. 2006. Emerging Technologies: Going to the mall: Mobile assisted language learning. *Language learning & technology*. 10(1): 9-16.
- Cho, H. n.d. *Literacy as social practice*. University of Hawaii. [Online]. Available: <http://www.hawaii.edu/cslr/literacyasocialpractice.pdf/> [2007, March 19].
- Christenson, S.L.; Thurlow, M.L.; Ysseldyke, J.E. & McVicar, R. 1989. Written language instruction for children with mild handicaps: is there enough quantity to ensure quality? *JSTOR: Learning disability quarterly*. 12(3): 219-229.
- Chuenyane, G. 2008. *Overcrowding at 6000 schools*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.mnews24.com> [2009, September 13].
- Ciampaglio, S. 2008. Teamwork helps struggling readers: response to intervention program pairs SLP, reading teachers. *ASHA leader*. September, 23, 2008.
- Constantinescu, A.I. 2007. Using technology to assist in vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension. *Internet TESL journal*. 13(2). 1-6.
- Cummins, J. 2003. BICS and CALP. *Bilingual education web: working papers on bilingualism*. 19: 121-129.
- Cunliffe, S.; Norman, A.; Richardson, T.; Saul, A. & Young, A. 2006. Intermediate phase learners' experiences of communication in linguistically complex classrooms. Unpublished undergraduate speech-language pathology research project. University of Cape Town.
- Dachs, T.E. 1998. *A pilot study of eight grade 5 classrooms in kwaZulu-Natal*. Witwatersrand: Joint Education Trust.
- Dada, S. & Alant, E. 2002. A comparative study of the attitudes of teachers at special and educationally inclusive schools towards learners with little or no functional speech using communication devices. *South African journal of education*. 22 (3): 213-218.
- Department of Education. 1997. *The language in education policy and national curriculum statement*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.thuthong.doe.gov.za/getlanguages/languages/FAQ/tabloid/2087> [2009, September, 22].
- Department of Education. 2001. *Education white paper 6: special needs education – building an inclusive education and training system*. Pretoria: Department of Education.
- Department of Education. 2002. *Revised national curriculum statement grades R – 9 (schools) POLICY. languages: English – Home Language*. Pretoria: Department of Education.

- Department of Education (DoE). 2003a. *Mainstream education: foundation phase. national report on systemic evaluation*. Pretoria: DOE
- Department of Education. 2003b. *School governing bodies*. [Online]. Available: www.capegateway.gov.za/eng/pubs/public-info/S/14675 [2010, May, 18].
- Department of Education. 2008. *National reading strategy*. Pretoria: Department of Education.
- Douetil, J. 2005. *Reading recovery national network: school of early childhood and primary education*. London: University of London.
- Du Plessis, S. & Louw, B. 2008. Challenges to preschool teachers in learner's acquisition of English as language of learning and teaching. *South African journal of education*. 28(1):53-75.
- Du Plessis, S. & Naude, E. 2003. Needs of teachers in preschool centres with regard to multilingual learners. *South African journal of education*. 23(2): 122-129.
- Durrheim, K. & Wassenaar, D. 1999. Putting design into practice writing and evaluating research proposals. In *Research in practice: applied methods for the social sciences*. M. Terreblanche & K. Durrheim. Eds. Cape Town: University of Cape Town press. 54-71.
- Durrheim, K. 1999. Quantitative analysis. In *Research in practice: applied methods for the social sciences*. M. Terreblanche & K. Durrheim. Eds. Cape Town: University of Cape Town press. 96-122.
- Dyson, A.H. 1991. Viewpoints: the word and the world- reconceptualising written language development or do rainbows mean a lot to little girls? *Research in the teaching of English*. 25(1): 97-123.
- Ehren, B.J. & Whitmire, K. 2009. Speech-language pathologists as primary contributors to response-to-intervention at the secondary level. *Seminars in speech and language*. 30(2): 90-104.
- Fan, X. & Chen, M. 2001. Parental involvement and students' academic achievement: a meta-analysis. *Educational psychology review*. 13(1): 1-22.
- Flick, U. 2009. *An introduction to qualitative research*. 4th ed. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Foley, J. & Thompson, L. 2003. *Language learning: a lifelong process*. London: Oxford University Press, Inc.
- Forcier, M.W. 1988. Unemployment and alcohol abuse: a review. *Journal of occupational medicine*. 30(3): 246-251.

- Frith, U. 1985. Beneath the surface of developmental dyslexia. In *Surface dyslexia, neuropsychological and cognitive studies of phonological reading*. K. Patterson, J. Marshall & M. Coltheart. Eds. London: Erlbaum.ure. 301-330.
- Gee, J.P. 1996. Vygotsky and current debates in education: some dilemmas as afterthoughts to discourse, learning and schooling. In *Discourse, learning and schooling*. D. Hicks. Ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 269-282.
- Gee, J.P. 1998. *The new literacy studies and the social turn*. Madison: University of Wisconsin. [Online]. Available: <http://file://f:/jamesgee.htm> [2007, March 13].
- Gerber, R.E. 1996. *Outcomes-based education: an introduction*. Port Elizabeth: Faculty of Education, PE Technikon. [Online]. Available: <http://www.petech.ac.za/robert/obe/>. [2007, August 26].
- Gillam, R.B. & Johnston, J.R. 1992. Spoken and written language relationships in language/learning-impaired and normally achieving school-age children. *Journal of speech and hearing research*. 35: 1303-1315.
- Gisler, P. & Eberts, M. n.d. *Top 10 ways to improve reading skills*. [Online]. Available: <http://school.familyeducation.com> [2009, May 13].
- GM South Africa Foundation. 2006. *Peace education 2006-2009*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.gmsouthafricafoundation.com/project> [2010, February 10].
- Godwin-Jones, R. 2005. Emerging technologies: messaging, gaming, peer-to-peer sharing: language learning strategies & tools for the millennial generation. *Language, learning & technology*. 9 (1): 17-22.
- Good, R.H.; Simmons, D.C. & Kameenui, E.J. 2001. The importance and decision making utility of a continuum of fluency-based indicators of foundational reading skills for third-grade high stakes outcomes. *Scientific studies of reading*. 5(3): 257-288.
- Gottfred, K. 2008. On language and literacy. *ASHA Leader*, September, 23, 2008.
- Grief, S.; Meyer, B. & Burgess, A. 2007. Effective teaching and learning: writing. *National research and development centre for adult literacy and numeracy*. [Online]. Available: www.nrdc.org.uk [2010, February 25].
- Grolnick, W.S. & Ryan, R.M. 1989. Parent styles associated with children's self-regulation and competence in school. *Journal of educational psychology*. 81(2): 143-154.
- Hafiz, F.M. & Tudor, I. 1989. Extensive reading and the development of language skills. *ELT journal*. 43(1): 4-13.

- Harling, K. 2002. *An overview of case study*. Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University.
- Harrison, K. 2001. Policy making and development planning for the primary school library. *School libraries, literacy and reading*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.literacytrust.org.uk> [2009, May 13].
- Hatcher, P.J.; Hulme, C. & Ellis, A.W. 1994. Ameliorating early reading failure by integrating the teaching of reading and phonological skills: the phonological linkage hypothesis. *Child development*. 65(1): 41-57
- Henderson, A.T. 1987. Ed. The evidence continues to grow: parent involvement improves student achievement: an annotated bibliography. *National committee for citizens in education special report*. [Online]. Available: www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal [2009, August 11].
- Heugh, K. 2000. The case against bilingual and multilingual education in South Africa. *PRAESA occasional papers No. 6*. Cape Town: PRAESA.
- Hickman, C.W. 1999. *The future of high school success: the importance of parent involvement programs*. [Online]. Available: <http://horizon.unc.edu/projects/HSJ/Hickman.html> [2009, May 17]
- Holloway, I. 1997. *Basic concepts for qualitative research*. Oxford: Blackwell Science Ltd.
- Ingram, M., Wolfe, R.B. & Lieberman, J.M. 2007. The role of parents in high-achieving schools serving low-income, at risk populations. *Education and urban society*. 39 (4). 479-497.
- Ivey, G. & Broaddus, K. 2001. Just plain reading: A survey of what makes students want to read in middle school classrooms. *Reading research quarterly*. 36(4): 350-377.
- Jones, L. & Allebone, B. 1998. *Researching 'hard to reach' groups: some methodological issues*. Goldsmiths University of London. [Online]. Available: www.nottingham.ac.uk/csme/meas/papers/joneshtml [2009, May 17].
- Jooste, N. 2003. Learning through a second language: a comparative study of the performance in reading comprehension between first-language English learners and second-language English, first language IsiXhosa learners at the grade 5 level. Unpublished M.Sc. Speech-language Pathology Dissertation. University of Cape Town.
- Jordaan, H. & Yelland, A. 2003. Intervention with multilingual language impaired children by South African speech-language therapists. *Journal of multilingual communication disorders*. 1(1): 13-33.

- Justice, L.M. 2006. Evidence-based practice, response to intervention, and the prevention of reading difficulties. *Language, speech and hearing services in schools*. 37(4): 284-297.
- Justice, L.M.; Invernizzi, M.A. & Meier, J.D. 2002. Designing and implementing an early literacy screening protocol: Suggestions for the speech-language pathologist. *Language, speech and hearing services in schools*. 33: 84-101.
- Kapp, R. 2004. Reading on the Line. An analysis of literacy practices in ESL classes in a South African township school. *Language and education*, 18(3):246 – 263.
- Kathard, H. 2005. What kind of collaborative actions will enhance communication for socialization and learning in linguistically-complex intermediate phase (grade 4-6) classrooms in the Western Cape? *RCD Grant application*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town.
- Kathard, H. & Pillay, M. 2006. Practice innovations: language practitioners in (South African) classrooms. *International journal of learning*. 13: 3-13.
- Keith, T.Z. 1993. Does parental involvement affect eight-grade student achievement? Structural analysis of national data. *School psychology review*. 22(3): 474-496
- Kelder R. 1996. Rethinking literacy studies: from the past to the present. *Proceedings of the 1996 World Conference on literacy*. Literacy online. Available: <http://www.literacyonline.org> [2007, March 16].
- Kelly, K. 1999a. From encounter to text: collecting qualitative data for interpretive research. In *Research in practice: applied methods for the social sciences*. M. Terreblanche & K. Durrheim. Eds. Cape Town: University of Cape Town press. 379-397.
- Kelly, K. 1999b. Calling it a day: reaching conclusions in qualitative research. In *Research in Practice: applied methods for the social sciences*. M. Terre Blanche & K. Durrheim. Eds. Cape Town: University of Cape Town press. 421-437.
- Kelly, K. 2006. From encounter to text: Collecting data in qualitative research. In *Research in practice*. 2nd ed. M. Terre Blanche, K. Durrheim & D. Painter. Eds. Cape Town: University of Cape Town press. 285-318.
- Kendall-Tackett, K.A. & Eckenrode, J. 1996. The effects of neglect on academic achievement and disciplinary problems: A developmental perspective. *Child abuse & neglect*. 20(3): 161-169
- Kiernan, P.J. & Aizawa, K. 2004. Cell phones in task based learning – are cell phones useful language learning tools? *ReCall*. 16: 71-84

- Kim, J. 2003. Challenges to NLS: response to “what’s new in new literacy studies”. *Current issues in comparative education*. 5(2): 118-120
- Kingston, P.T., Shanmugan, K., Selvaraj R., Anand R. & Bharanitharan R.M. 2005. *Problems in writing disability among the school children*. Coimatore: Bharathiar University.
- Kirk, O.; Maharaj, L.; Moifo S.; Naran, V.; Salamon, B. & Williams, L. 2007. Learners’ perceptions of communication in linguistically complex classrooms. Unpublished undergraduate speech-language pathology research project. University of Cape Town.
- Kitzinger, J. 2000. Focus groups with users and providers of healthcare. In *Qualitative research in health care*. 2nd ed. C. Pope & N. Mays. Eds. London: BMJ Publishing Group. 20-28.
- Kitzinger, J. 2005. Focus groups in research: using group dynamics. In *Qualitative research in health care*. I. Holloway. ed. Berkshire: Open University Press. 56-70.
- Kvale, S. 1996. *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. California: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Lankshear, C. & Knobel, M. 1998. Critical literacy and new technologies. *Paper presented at the American Education Research Association*. San Diego. [Online]. Available: www.everydayliteracies.net/critlitnewtechs.html [2010, January, 19].
- Lewis, A. 1992. Helping young urban parents educate themselves and their children. *ERIC/CUE digest*. 85: 1-7.
- Lewis, F. 2004. Speech therapists in schools: Curriculum integration and curriculum innovation- challenges to the school speech-language therapist of today. *Communiphon*. Winter 2004 (337): 36-37.
- Lillis, T. & Scott, M. 2007. Defining academic literacies research: issues of epistemology, ideology and strategy. *Journal of applied linguistics*. 4(1): 5-32.
- Locke, A., Ginsborg, J. & Peers, I. 2002. Development and disadvantage: implications for the early years and beyond. *International journal of language and communication disorders*. 37 (1): 3-15.
- Longman. 2010. *Dictionary of contemporary English*. [Online]. Available: www.Idoconline.com/dictionary/formteacher [2010, May 23].

- Low, P.B. & Siegel, L.S. 2005 A comparison of the cognitive processes underlying reading comprehension in native English and ESL speakers. *Written language and literacy*. 8 (2): 207 – 231
- Magubane. K. 2008. Major plans to combat illiteracy. [Online]. Available: www.medioclubsouthafrica.com [2010, February 9].
- Martin, K. 2004. Multilingualism in South Africa: the role of mother tongues in achieving social equity. *Global perspectives on human language: the South African Context*. [Online]. Available: www.stanford.edu/~jbaugh/saw/Kahdeidra-Multilingualism.html [2009, May 18].
- Mathonsi, V. 2001. 'Transforming Governance and management of education: a case for South Africa.' *Panel presentation at the South African democratic teachers union (SADTU) policy development conference, April 17-21, 2001*. Gallagher Estate, Midrand-Gauteng: SADTU.
- Maxwell, D.L. & Satake, E. 2006. *Research and statistical methods in communication sciences and disorders*. Canada: Thomson Delmar Learning.
- McCord, A. & Borhat, H. 2004. Employment and labour market trends. In *HSCR (2004) human development review for 2003*. Pretoria: HSRC.
- McKenna, M.C., Kear, D.J. & Ellsworth, R.A. 1995. Children's attitudes toward reading: a national survey. *Reading research quarterly*, 30(4): 934-956.
- McMillan, J.H. & Schumacher, S. 2001. *Research in education: a conceptual introduction*. 5th ed. New York: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.
- McMillan, J.H. & Schumacher, S. 2006. *Research in education: evidence-based inquiry*. 6th ed. Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Mullis, I.V.S.; O' Martin, M.; Kennedy, A.M. & Foy, P. 2007. *IEA's progress in international reading literacy study in primary schools in 40 countries*. Boston College: TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Centre.
- Naucler, K. & Magnusson, E. 1999. Reading and writing development: A longitudinal study from preschool to adolescence: status report. Lund University. *Department of linguistics working papers*. 47: 169-180.
- Nelson Mandela Foundation. 2004. How far have we come? *Reflections from the first 10 years of basic education transformation*. Johannesburg: Nelson Mandela Foundation.
- Neuman, W.L. 2006. *Social research methods: qualitative and quantitative approaches*. 6th ed. Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.

- Ngidi, D. & Qwabe, J. 2006. The partnership of parents, educators, and principals in creating a culture of teaching and learning in schools. *South African journal of education*. 26 (4): 529-539.
- Nicolosi, L.; Harryman, E. & Krescheck, J. 1989. *Terminology of communication disorders: speech-language-hearing*. 3rd ed. Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins.
- North Central Regional Educational Laboratory. 2002. *Glossary of education terms and acronyms*. [Online]. Available: www.info@ncrel.org [2010, April, 20].
- Obanya, P. 2004. Learning in, with and from the first language. *PRAESA occasional papers No. 19*. Cape Town: PRAESA.
- O' Connor, J. & Geiger, M. 2009. Challenges facing primary school educators of English second (or other) language learners in the Western Cape. *South African journal of education*. 29 (2): 253-269
- Overett, W. & Kathard, H. 2006. Profiles of outpatient speech-language therapy and audiology clients at a tertiary hospital in the Western Cape. *South African journal of communication disorders*. 53: 49-58.
- Owen, D. & Davis, M. 1991. *Help with your project: a guide for students of health care*. Great Britain: British Library Cataloguing-in-publication data.
- Owens, R.E. Jr. 2005. *Language development: an introduction*. 6th ed. New York: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Palincsar, A.S.; Brown, A.L. & Martin, S.M. 1987. Peer interaction in reading comprehension instruction. *Educational psychologist*. 22(3&4): 231-253.
- Parisse, C. n.d. Oral language, written language and language awareness. *Inserm, Paris*. DOI: 10.1017/S0305000902295343.
- Patton, M.Q. 2002. *Qualitative research & evaluation methods*. 3rd ed. California: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Pascoe, M., Stackhouse, J. & Wells, B. (2004). Phonological therapy within a psycholinguistic framework: promoting change with a child with persisting speech difficulties. *International journal of language and communication disorders*. 39: 1-32.
- Pluddemann, P., Xola M. & Mahlahela-Thusi, B. 2000. Problems and possibilities in multilingual classrooms in the Western Cape. *PRAESA occasional papers no. 2*. Cape Town: PRAESA.

- Pope, C., Ziebland, S. & Mays, N. 2000. Analysing qualitative data. In *Qualitative research in health care*. 2nd ed. C. Pope & N. Mays. eds. London: BMJ Publishing Group. 75-87.
- Prensky, M. 2006. Learning in a digital age: listen to the natives. *Educational leadership*. 63(4): 8-13.
- Pretorius, E. & Naude, H. 2002. A culture in transition: poor reading and writing ability among children in South African townships. *Early child development and care*. 172(5): 439-449.
- Prinsloo, M. & Stein, P. 2004. What's inside the box? Children's early encounters with literacy in South African classrooms. *Perspectives in education*, 22(2): 67-83.
- Robson, C. 1993. *Real World Research: a resource for social scientists and practitioner-researchers*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Rubin, H.J. & Rubin, I.S. 1995. *Qualitative interviewing: the art of hearing data*. California: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Rubin, H.J. & Rubin, I.S. 2005. *Qualitative interviewing: the art of hearing data*. 2nd ed. California: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Sapa, 2010. Concern over poor matric results: *Business report: news by sector*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.busrep.co.za/index.php?fsectionId=566&fArticleId=5305078> [2010, January 27]
- Scherman, V.; van Staden, S.; Venter, E. & Howie, S. 2008. South African performance in PIRLS 2006: a national crisis. *Symposium Papers: National Reflections on International comparative Achievement Studies (Part 4)*. Pretoria: University of Pretoria.
- Schlemmer, L. 2004. Beyond left and right: state versus parents. [Online]. Available: <http://www.hsf.org.za/resource-centre/focus/issues-31-40/issue-35-2004/> [2010, February 8].
- Seale, C., Gobo, G., Gubrium, J. & Silverman, D. 2007. Introduction: inside qualitative research. In *Qualitative research practice: concise paperback edition*. C. Seale, G. Gobo, J.F. Gubrium & D. Silverman. eds. London: Sage Publications Ltd. 1-11.
- Semke, H.D. 2008. Effects of the red pen. *Foreign language annals*. 17(3): 195-202.

- Senechal, M., LeFevre, J., Thomas, E.M. & Daley, K.E. 1998. Differential effects of home literacy experiences on the development of oral and written language. *Reading research quarterly*. 33(1):96-116.
- Sharif al-Shureify, M.A. 2004. Panacea for under-achievement in schools? *Yemen times*. 13(745):1-3.
- Simmons, D.C.; Fuchs, L.S.; Fuchs, D.; Mathes, P. & Hodge, J.P. 1995. Effects of explicit teaching and peer tutoring on the reading achievement of learning disabled and low performing students in regular classrooms. *Elementary school journal*. 95(5):387-408.
- Skutnabb-Kangas, T. 2002. *Why should linguistic diversity be maintained and supported in Europe: guide for the development of language policies in Europe*. Strasbourg: University of Roskilde.
- Smith, C. 1996. Teaching Japanese- English bilingual children to read English at home. *Internet TESL journal*. 2(12): 1-13.
- Snow, C.E., Burns, M.S., & Griffin, P. 1998. *Preventing reading difficulties in young children- executive summary*. USA: National Academy of Sciences.
- Soudien , C. 2008. Misrecognition: policy in pursuit of justice? *Keynote address to the EASA/OVSA Conference, January 2008*. Langebaan: EASA/OVSA. 1-11.
- Speech Pathology Australia. 2005. Reading and Spelling are language-based skills: speech pathology is a language-based profession. *Submission to the national inquiry into teaching and literacy: Department of Education, Science and Training*. Melbourne: Speech Pathology Australia.
- Stackhouse, J. & Wells, B. 1997. *Children's speech and literacy difficulties: a psycholinguistic framework*. London: Whurr Publishers.
- Stake, R.E. 1998. Case Studies. In *Strategies of qualitative inquiry*. N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln. Eds. California: Sage publications, Inc.
- Stats SA. 2003. *Census 2001: census in brief*. Pretoria: Stats SA.
- Stein, P. 2008. Literacies in and out of school in South Africa. In *Encyclopaedia of language and education*. 2nd. Ed, Vol. 2. B.V. Street & N.H. Hornberger. Eds. USA: Springer
- Steinberg, L., Lamborn, S.D., Dornbusch, S.M. & Darling, N. 1992. Impact of parenting practices on adolescent achievement: authoritative parenting, school involvement and encouragement to succeed. *JSTOR: Child development*. 63(5): 1266-1281.


- Stone, T.J. 1993. Whole language reading processes from a Vygotskian perspective. *Child and youth care forum*. 22 (5): 361-373.
- Street B. 2003. What's new in new literacy studies: Critical approaches to literacy in theory and practice. *Current issues in comparative education*. 5 (2): 77-88.
- Stuckler, D., Basu, S., Suhrcke, M., Coutts, A. & McKee, M. 2009. *The public health effect of economic crises and alternative policy responses in Europe: an empirical analysis*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/3283302> [2009, December 10].
- Szabo, C.P., Dhai, A. & Veller, M. 2006. HIV – positive status among surgeons-an ethical dilemma. *South African medical journal*. 96(10): 1072-1075.
- Taylor, M.C. 2005. Interviewing. In *Qualitative research in health care*. I. Holloway Ed. Berkshire: Open University Press.
- Taylor, N. & Vinjevold, P. Eds. 1999. *Getting learning right: report of the Presidents education initiative research project*. Johannesburg: Joint Education Trust.
- Tellis, W. 1997. Application of a case study methodology. *The qualitative report*. 3(3): 1-18. [Online]. Available: <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR3-3/tellis2.html> [2010, April 11].
- Templeton, L. 2007. MXit: Are your kids hooked? In *South African reader's digest: July, 2007*. Cape Town: Media24.
- TES Scotland. 2005. *New advice pack for school libraries in Scotland: 27 May 2005*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.literacytrust.org.uk> [2009, May 13].
- The parent report. 2009. *Teaching our children self-discipline*. [Online]. Available: www.theparentreport.com [2009, May 23].
- Troccoli, K.B. 1994. Children's nutrition and learning. *ERIC digest*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.ericdigests.org/1994/nutrition.htm> [2009, December, 10].
- Tsang, W.K. 1996. Comparing the effects of reading and writing on writing performance. *Applied linguistics*. 17(2): 210-233.
- UNESCO. 2001. *Children out of school*. Paris: UNESCO: Department of International Development.
- UNESCO. 2010. *Equal education statement on 2009 matric results*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town. [Online]. Available: <http://blogs.uct.ac.za/blog/educblog/2010/01/08/equal-education-statement> [2010, January 27].

- UN Department of Public Information. 2008. *End poverty 2015: millennium development goals*. [Online]. Available: www.un.org/millenniumgoals/education.shtml [2010, May 19].
- University of Hong Kong. 2006. Read and write: a Jockey Club learning support network. *Project overview*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University. [Online]. Available: www.hkjc.com/english/news/images/spldfactsheet-e-doc. [2007, March 19].
- Unsworth, L. 2001. *Teaching multiliteracies across the curriculum: changing contexts of text and image in classroom practice*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Vesely, R. 1998. Multilingual environments for survival: the impact of English on IsiXhosa-speaking students in Cape Town. *PRAESA Occasional papers no.5*. Cape Town: PRAESA.
- Walton, J.R. 2002. Global- mindedness and communication competency: teachers in multicultural classrooms. *Journal of research on minority affairs*. April.19: 50-81.
- Wasik. B.A. & Slavin, R.E. 1993. Preventing early reading failure with one-to-one tutoring: a review of five programs. *Reading research quarterly*. 28(2): 178-200.
- WCED, 2009a. *WCED-News: R20 million boost to improve literacy and numeracy*. Western Cape: WCED.
- WCED. 2009b. *WCED launches foundations for learning campaign: back-to-school*. January 2009. Western Cape: Western Cape Education Department.
- Wilkinson, L.C. & Silliman, E.R. 2001. Classroom language and literacy learning. *Reading online*. 4 (7) 1-22.
- Willenberg, I. 2007. Foundations for literacy: emergent literacy competencies of grade R learners on the Cape Flats. *South African journal of communication disorders*. 54: 20-28.
- Wium, A.M. 2010. The development of a support programme for foundation phase teachers to facilitate listening and language for numeracy. Postgraduate doctoral thesis. *University of Pretoria: Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. [Online]. Available: www.upetd.up.ac.za/thesis/available/etd-05152010-233034/ [2010, June, 25].
- World Health Organization. 1992. *Health research methodology: a guide for training in research methods*. Geneva: WHO regional Publications.

- World Health Organization. 2001. *Putting women first: ethical and safety recommendations for research on domestic violence against women. (Pamphlet)*. Geneva: World Health Organization.
- Xinyin, C., Mowei, L. & Dan, L. 2000. Parental warmth, control and indulgence and their relations to adjustment in Chinese children: A longitudinal study. *Journal of family psychology*. 14(3): 401-419.
- Yin, R.K. 2003. *Case study research: design and methods*. 3rd ed. California: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Zanin-Yost, A. & Donaldson, C. 2005. How to speak out (visually) at your library. *Library philosophy and practice*. 7 (2): 1-4. [Online]. Available: <http://unllib.unl.edu/LPP/donaldson-zanin-yost.html> [2009, December 4].
- Zipprich, M.A. 1995. Teaching web making as a guided planning tool to improve student narrative writing. *Remedial and special education*. 16(1): 3-15.

Appendix A1: Ethics Approval from University Of Cape Town Research Ethics Committee

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN



Health Sciences Faculty
 Research Ethics Committee
 Room E52-24 Groote Schuur Hospital Old Main Building
 Observatory 7925
 Telephone (021) 406 6338 • Facsimile (021) 406 6411
 e-mail: hscres.ctrjeth@uct.ac.za

10 December 2007

REC REF: 460/2007

Ms I Navsaria
 c/o Prof H Kathard
 Communication Sciences & Disorders
 Health & Rehab
 11 Floor
 OMB

Dear Ms Navsaria

PROJECT TITLE: EXPLORING AND UNDERSTANDING WRITTEN LANGUAGE IN LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE CLASSROOMS IN THE WESTERN CAPE

I thank you for submitting your study to the Research Ethics Committee for review.

DATE OF MEETING: 30 NOVEMBER 2007

DECISION: It is a pleasure to inform you that the Ethics Committee has **formally approved** the above-mentioned study.

This serves to confirm that the University of Cape Town Research Ethics Committee complies to the Ethics Standards for Clinical Research with a new drug in patients, based on the Medical Research Council (MRC-SA), Food and Drug Administration (FDA-USA), International Convention on Harmonisation Good Clinical Practice (ICH GCP) and Declaration of Helsinki guidelines.

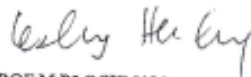
The Research Ethics Committee granting this approval is in compliance with the ICH Harmonised Tripartite Guidelines E6: Note for Guidance on Good Clinical Practice (CPMP/ICH/135/95) and FDA Code Federal Regulation Part 50, 56 and 312.

Please note that the ongoing ethical conduct of the study remains the responsibility of the principal investigator.

Please quote the REC, REF in all your correspondence.

xxxxx

Yours sincerely



PROF M BLOCKMAN
 CHAIRPERSON, HSE HUMAN ETHICS

Appendix A2: Permission to Conduct Research from WCED

Navrae
Enquiries Dr RS Cornelissen
IMibuzo

Telefoon
Telephone (021) 467-2286
IFoni

Faks
Fax (021) 425-7445
IFeksi

Verwysing
Reference 20080418-0049
ISalathiso



Wes-Kaap Onderwysdepartement
Western Cape Education Department
ISebe leMfundo leNtshona Koloni

Mrs Indira Navsaria
7 Wistaria Avenue
PINELANDS
7405

Dear Mrs I. Navsaria

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: EXPLORING AND UNDERSTANDING WRITTEN LANGUAGE IN LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE CLASSROOMS IN THE WESTERN CAPE.

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **21st April 2008 to 26th September 2008**
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr R. Cornelissen at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number.
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the following school:
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

**The Director: Research Services
Western Cape Education Department
Private Bag X9114
CAPE TOWN
8000**

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Signed: Ronald S. Cornelissen
for: **HEAD: EDUCATION**
DATE: 21st April 2008

MELD ASSEBLIEF VERWYSINGSNOMMERS IN ALLE KORRESPONDENSIE / PLEASE QUOTE REFERENCE NUMBERS IN ALL CORRESPONDENCE /
NCEDA UBHALE IINOMBOLO ZESALATHISO KUYO YONKE IMBALELWANO

GRAND CENTRAL TOWERS, LAER-PARLEMENTSTRAAT, PRIVAATSAK X9114, KAAPSTAD 8000
GRAND CENTRAL TOWERS, LOWER PARLIAMENT STREET, PRIVATE BAG X9114, CAPE TOWN 8000

WEB: <http://wced.wcape.gov.za>

INBELSENTRUM /CALL CENTRE

INDIENSNEMING- EN SALARISNAVRAE/EMPLOYMENT AND SALARY QUERIES ☎0861 92 33 22
VEILIGE SKOLESAFE SCHOOLS ☎ 0800 45 46 47

Appendix A3: Written Permission from School Principal

The Principal

Dear Sir/ Madam

Permission to Conduct Research Study

I am currently registered in the Speech Language Pathology course at the University of Cape Town as a Master's student. To fulfil the requirements of my Master's degree I need to conduct a research project. I am interested in researching written language in linguistically and culturally complex classrooms in the Western Cape and to generate strategies that will improve written language difficulties experienced by learners. My aim is to obtain information that is beneficial and practically employable in linguistically and culturally complex classrooms.

Many learners are experiencing written language difficulties given the nature of linguistic complexity in Western Cape. In this study, the intention is to examine the nature of written language in classroom contexts in the intermediate phase as a basis for generating solutions to written language challenges. The study intends to engage collaborative efforts of speech-therapists/researchers, teachers, learners and parents in creating solutions to written language challenges. The detailed research proposal is attached.

The study is exploratory in nature and intends to understand the nature of written language and the potential solution to current challenges. The study is designed to explore linguistically complex intermediate phase classrooms using a case study approach, incorporating the involvement of teachers, learners and parents. The inclusion of specific classrooms engaged in the study will depend on informed consent from School principals, SGB Chairperson, teachers, parents/guardians and learners who are able to participate in a voluntary capacity. The researchers and research assistants will comply with all of the ethical guidelines outlined in the proposal.

The intermediate phase classrooms will be selected by examining their linguistic complexity which includes learners' language profiles, language of instruction, and presence of communication impairments. Given that the composition of classrooms change on an annual basis, the specific sites and participants can only be identified during the initial term of each academic year. The researchers will study the nature of written language through observation in classrooms, interviewing teachers, learners and parents/guardians and analysing written language samples of the learners. There will be a process of prolonged engagement with participants at relevant sites to ensure that rich data is generated to warrant in-depth understanding of the identified sites. However, great care will be taken to ensure that there is minimal disruption to scholastic activities. Confidentiality will be maintained and the names of the participants and schools will not be revealed. However, issues that may be contributing to written language difficulties amongst learners may be found. Participants may be aware of their involvement in these issues and this may create concern. However, it is important that these issues be explored sensitively in order to generate strategies that will enhance written language amongst learners and provide benefits of this study.

You will receive an annual update reflecting the research process. At any point in the process, the researchers will be available to discuss any aspect of concern that might arise. The final write up of results will be shared with your School and the results will also be disseminated through academic publications.

I hereby request permission to conduct this study in selected classrooms at your School.

Thank you for considering this request. The researcher will contact you for your response.

This project has received Ethical clearance through the University of Cape Town:
REC Ref: 460/2007.

Regards

Indira Navsaria
(Researcher)
Telephone: 083 412 9346
E-mail: navsaria12@networld.co.za

Prof. Harsha Kathard
(Research Supervisor)

Appendix A4: Written Permission from Chairperson of School Governing Body

The Chairperson
The School Governing Body

Dear Sir/ Madam

Permission to Conduct Research Study

I am currently registered in the Speech Language Pathology course at the University of Cape Town as a Master's student. To fulfil the requirements of my Master's degree I need to conduct a research project. I am interested in researching written language in linguistically and culturally complex classrooms in the Western Cape and to identify strategies that will improve written language difficulties experienced by learners. My aim is to obtain information that is beneficial and practically employable in linguistically and culturally complex classrooms.

Many learners are experiencing written language difficulties given the nature of linguistic complexity in Western Cape. In this study, the intention is to examine the nature of written language in classroom contexts in the intermediate phase as a basis for generating solutions to written language challenges. The study intends to engage collaborative efforts of speech-therapists/researchers, teachers, learners and parents/guardians in creating solutions to written language challenges. The detailed research proposal is attached.

The study is exploratory in nature and intends to understand the nature of written language and the potential solution to current challenges. The study is designed to explore linguistically complex intermediate phase classrooms using a case study approach, incorporating the involvement of teachers, learners and parents/guardians. The inclusion of specific classrooms engaged in the study will depend on informed consent from School principals, the Chairperson of the SGB, teachers, parents/guardians and learners who are able to participate in a voluntary capacity. The researchers and research assistants will comply with all of the ethical guidelines outlined in the proposal.

The intermediate phase classrooms will be selected by examining their linguistic complexity which includes learners' language profiles, language of instruction, presence of communication impairments. Given that the composition of classrooms change on an annual basis, the specific sites and participants can only be identified during the initial term of each academic year. The researchers will study the nature of written language through observation in classrooms, interviewing teachers, learners and parents/guardians and analysing written language samples of the learners. There will be a process of prolonged engagement with participants at relevant sites to ensure that rich data is generated to warrant in-depth understanding of the identified sites. However, great care will be taken to ensure that there is minimal disruption to scholastic activities.

You will receive an annual update reflecting the research process. At any point in the process, the researchers will be available to discuss any aspect of concern that might arise. The final write up of results will be shared with your School and the results will also be disseminated through academic publications.

I hereby request permission to observe in selected classrooms at your School. Written permission will be obtained from the school principal, the teachers, the parents/guardians and the learners to carry out the other procedures in this study e.g. interviews and focus groups.

Thank you for considering this request. The researcher will contact you for your response.

This project has received Ethical clearance through the University of Cape Town:
REC Ref: 460/2007

Regards

Indira Navsaria
(Researcher)
Telephone: 083 412 9346
E-mail: navsaria12@networld.co.za

Prof. Harsha Kathard
(Research Supervisor)

Appendix B1: Information Letter and Informed Consent: Teachers

Dear Teacher.....

Information about research study: invitation and consent to participate

This study intends to understand the nature of written language challenges and to generate solutions in linguistically complex classrooms. Written language is regarded as central to performance in a grade. Current classrooms are complex because there is a diversity of languages spoken, the increasing number of learners learning in a second language, differences in language and cultural practices of learners and teachers and inclusion of learners with communication impairments with minimal additional support. These factors pose great challenges to written language skills of learners.

Speech-language therapists are required to provide relevant classroom based interventions to assist with the development of oral and written communication. The implementation of the Revised National Curriculum Statement requires that therapists and teachers work collaboratively to enhance written language skills of the learners. However, currently very little local knowledge exists to supportive this intervention.

The research process requires an in depth understanding of classroom activities, the nature of written language in classrooms, as well as the challenges and opportunities. The researcher will observe in the classroom and analyse the written language of the learners to determine their writing abilities. Teachers are invited to participate in discussions in which they highlight key issues around written language challenges. Through this process, local and relevant solutions might be generated. These discussions may be audio or video recorded and the tapes will be destroyed after the study is completed. The study requires active participation of teachers over a prolonged period. However, you are free to withdraw from the study at any point.

The identities of all participants will be protected and your name or any information which might identify you will not be revealed. The study may reveal issues that are contributing to written language difficulties amongst learners in the classroom and this may cause concern to teachers. However, it is important that these issues be explored sensitively in order to find strategies that will enhance written language amongst the learners and hence provide benefits of the study. The research times will be negotiated and every effort will be made to reduce any disruptions to the education programme. There are no financial rewards for participating in the study.

Thank you for considering this request.

Regards

Indira Navsaria

Telephone: 083 412 9346

E-mail: navsaria12@networld.co.za

Response Form: Teachers

I have read the invitation and understand the nature of the research study.

I can/cannot participate in the study (delete which is not applicable)

Name: (in block letters) _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Contact Number: _____

School: _____

Appendix B2: Information Sheet about the Project for School Principal/Chairperson of SGB/Teachers

Project title: Enhancing communication in linguistically diverse classrooms

What is the project about?

This project has two goals:

1. To gain an understanding of communication (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and communication difficulties in classrooms where there are learners and teachers who speak in many different languages and also have different language abilities.
2. To be able to work towards solving some of the difficulties by including the learners, teachers, parents/guardians and others who can be of help.

Who is doing this project?

The project team is made up of speech-language therapists and teachers who are interested in how communication in classrooms can be improved. The researchers are students who are studying speech-language therapy and audiology and lecturers and researchers who have an interest in contributing to improved education for all children.

While the research team has initiated the project, its success depends on collaborative participation of learners, teachers and significant others.

Why is it important to know about communication in the classroom?

Communication (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) is important for learning and for making friends. Learners spend approximately 12 years in the classroom and at each grade have different communication needs which help them to learn. Young children might learn the basic language and words while older learners must know about how to use their words and understanding of language to learn new things. Older learners must learn to communicate verbally (by speaking) and through writing. Learners have difficulties in learning in classrooms when communication breakdowns occur.

Because communication is so important, it is valuable to know more about what helps and doesn't help so that learners are able to learn in the best possible environment. We have very little research in this area and this has been cited as an aspect of concern in a preliminary study conducted by the researchers.

What will be done?

There are many different types of activities that will occur during the research process. These include:

Observations in classrooms: The researchers will spend time in classrooms looking and listening carefully during regular classroom activities. They will observe the patterns of communication during various activities and lessons, the facilitation of written language tasks and the nature of the written language of learners. During this time the two researchers will sit in positions which do not interfere with the learners and teachers and write notes about what they see and hear. They will not interfere or disrupt these lessons in any way. Field notes will be made.

Discussions with learners: The researchers would like to speak to learners in small groups of 6-8 learners and individually to understand how they experience communication in classrooms, the value they place on the written language and the support that they would like to receive to enhance their written language. The interview setting will be relaxed to make learners comfortable. They will begin with a fun icebreaker activity. Learners will be free to

share any of their experiences. Where learners are uncomfortable in group discussions, an individual discussion will be arranged. They will be asked questions like:

What are the languages you speak at school and home?
 When is it easy to speak in the classroom?
 What language do you prefer to write in?
 What helps you to learn to read and write?
 What help would you like to receive to help you with written language?
 What do you do if you don't understand something?

Discussions with teachers: The researchers will also discuss communication, written language and written language difficulties in the classroom with teachers to gain an understanding of their experiences.

Discussions with parents: The researchers will also discuss written language skills and difficulties of the learners with parents and the support that parents presently provide to assist learners in improving written language. Further support and strategies that may also assist learners will be discussed.

Discussions will be audio recorded and video recorded for research purposes only. The video and audio recordings will be stored in a safe place and can be viewed by the researchers only. It will not be used for any other purpose. The recordings will be erased upon completion of the project requirements.

Analysis of Written Language Samples of the Learners: Written language samples will be analysed to determine the capabilities of the learners. Names of learners will not be revealed and confidentiality will be maintained.

When and where will the discussions happen?

The times for the discussions will be after school at school. There will be no disruptions to the classroom activities. The researchers will communicate with teachers and learners to set up times on days which are convenient for you. The discussions will be for about 90 minutes per group. Discussions with individual teachers and learners will be approximately 45 min. If there is a need for additional time or follow-up discussion you will be contacted in advance.

Will the public know that it was you who took part in the study?

The names of the teachers, learners and parents who took part in the study will not be revealed at any point in the study. Their names will not be written into any report on the project and will not be mentioned in any discussions about the research project. During discussions there will be a conscious effort not to mention names of learners but rather to talk about the issues of concern. The learners and parents will also be given information on issues of revealing names during the discussions.

Do you have to take part?

Although all teachers, learners and parents are encouraged to take part since it is important to hear what they experience in the classroom and at home, they are not forced to participate. A consent form will be sent to you where you can indicate whether you want to take part or not. There is no consequence for non-participation.

Will there be a reward?

There is no money given to anyone who takes part in the study. Learners, parents and teachers will receive a small token of appreciation to thank them for taking part.

Is there any risk or harm in taking part in the project?

There is no procedure used that will physically harm you or the learners. During the study certain issues may arise that contribute to the written language difficulties experienced by the learners. These issues may directly involve some of the participants either in the classroom or in the home. However, it is important to explore these issues sensitively in order to provide solutions to written language difficulties and obtain benefits from the research.

Will there be any benefit to participating in the project?

The researchers will be able to understand the types of communication and written language difficulties through discussions with learners, parents/guardians and teachers. The

suggestions for strategies to improve communication and written language in classrooms will also be shared. Researchers will also publish the findings so that more people can benefit from what is learned in this project. Also, the findings will be shared with the Department of Education so that they can consider the results in educational planning and policymaking.

What will happen if we discover learners with specific communication difficulties?

The researchers will not assess individual learner's communication abilities. However, should the discussions reveal that there are learners or teachers experiencing specific problems for which she/he could be helped e.g. complaints that they cannot hear properly. Information about where you will be able to get help will be made available.

Who can you contact if you need more information?

If you need any information during the project then please contact:

Indira Navsaria
Telephone: 083 412 9346
E-mail: navsaria12@networld.co.za

Harsha Kathard
Research Supervisor

Appendix B3: Information Letter and Informed Consent: Parents/Guardians

Dear Parent/Guardian.....

Information about research study: invitation and consent to participate

This study is about understanding the nature of written language difficulties and finding ways to help the learners improve their written language in classrooms. Written language is important in the assessments of all learning areas in a grade. The classrooms today are complex because there are many languages spoken and some learners are learning in a language they do not know well. Teachers don't always know the home languages of learners and some learners have difficulties speaking, listening, reading and writing.

Your child's experience of classroom communication and written language is an important aspect of this study. The researchers are trying to understand the *written language of learners* in classrooms and their difficulties and support for coping with problems. The experiences of learners and the support provided by parents are very important to understand because it will explain the nature of difficulties and help to find solutions. The study will require parents to share talk about the written language of their children and the support that is being provided to assist written language of learners. These discussions will be video recorded. The tapes will be destroyed after the study is completed. In addition, the researchers will sit in the classroom and watch the lessons to understand how the learners learn. Books will also be looked at to understand the learner's writing abilities.

The researchers will explain the types of activities to be done at each point so that the parents understand what is being done. The researchers will not use the name of your child or of you in any report. Learners and parents are free to leave the study at any point. The research will be conducted at times that are convenient and will not disrupt classroom activities. There is no financial reward for participating in the study but you and your child will receive a small token to thank him/her for taking part.

Thank you for considering this request.

Regards
Indira Navsaria
Telephone: 083 412 9346
E-mail: navsaria12@networld.co.za

Response Form

Part A: Parents

I have read the invitation and understand the nature of the research study.

I _____ parent/guardian of ----- (name of learner) hereby consent to my participation in this study.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Contact number: _____

Response Form

Part B: Allocated Person

This form is only to be completed by “allocated person” if the parent is unable to read and understand the request independently.

I, have read the letter to (Parent’s name)

I have explained the contents of the form and provided clarification where necessary. He/she has understood the contents and has provided me with a verbal response indicating his/her willingness to participate in the study.

Name of “allocated person”.....

Signature:

Date:

Contact number:

Appendix B4: Consent for Learners
Information Letter and Informed Consent: Parents/Guardians for
Learner's Participation

Dear Parent/Guardian.....

Information about research study: invitation and consent to participate

This study is about understanding the nature of written language, difficulties experienced and finding ways to improve written language problems in classrooms. Written language is important in the assessments of all learning areas in a grade. The classrooms today are complex because there are many languages spoken, some learners who are learning in a language they do not know well, teachers don't always know the home languages of learners and some learners have difficulties speaking, listening, reading and writing.

Your child's experience of *classroom communication and written language* is an important aspect of this study. The researchers are trying to understand the written language of learners in classrooms, their difficulties and ways for coping with problems. The experiences of learners are very important to understand because it will explain the nature of difficulties and help to find solutions. The study will require learners share talk about different aspects of classroom communication and written language. These discussions will be audio or video recorded and the tapes will be destroyed after completion of the study. In addition, the researchers will sit in the classroom and watch what happens to understand how the learners learn. Books will be looked at to understand the learners writing abilities.

The researchers will explain the types of activities to be done at each point so that the learners understand what is being done. The researchers will not use the name of your child in any report. Learners are free to leave the study at any point. The research will be conducted at times that are convenient and will not disrupt classroom activities. There is no financial reward for participating in the study but your child will receive a small token to thank him/her for taking part.

Thank you for considering this request.

Regards

Indira Navsaria
 Telephone: 083 412 9346
 E-mail: navsaria12@networld.co.za

Response Form Part A: Parents

I have read the invitation and understand the nature of the research study.

I _____ parent/guardian hereby consent to
 _____ (learner's name) participation in this study.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Contact number: _____

Response Form: Part B

This form is only to be completed by “allocated person” if the parent is unable to read and understand the request independently.

I, have read the letter to (Parent's name).

I have explained the contents of the form and provided clarification where necessary. He/she has understood the contents and has provided me with a verbal response indicating his/her willingness to provide permission to participate in the study.

Name of “allocated person”.....

Signature:.....

Date:.....

Contact number:.....

Appendix B5: Information Letter and Informed Assent: Learner

Dear Learner.....

Information about research study: invitation and consent to participate

This study is about understanding your *written language* in the classroom. Written language is important in all subjects. We would like to know when you have difficulties, what the kinds of problems are and how you think written language can be better.

In order to understand what happens in your classroom, the researchers will spend time observing your daily activities. Your books will also be looked at to understand your writing abilities. After this they will ask some questions about the languages you use at school and at home. We would also like to talk to you in groups or on your own to listen to your story about written language in your classroom. There are no right or wrong answers. You can speak in a language that is easy to speak in. The discussions will be audio or video recorded and the tapes will be destroyed after the study is completed. The researchers will not use your name in the project so no one will know that it was your story. The researchers will explain the types of activities to be done at each point so that the learners understand what is being done. You can decide if you want to take part or not and if you join you can decide to leave if you want to. The researchers will explain all activities to you and will arrange to talk to you after school.

The researchers will also be sending a letter to your parents/guardians who must agree for you to take part in the project. The researchers will also explain the project in detail to you. We will use the information we get to help to make written language easier and better in the classroom.

Thank you for considering this request.

Regards

Indira Navsaria
 Telephone: 083 412 9346
 E-mail: navsaria12@networld.co.za

Response Form Part A: Learners

I have read the invitation and understand what the research study is about.

I hereby agree/ do not agree to participate in this study

Name: (in block letters) _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Contact number: _____

Response Form: Part B

This form is only to be completed by “participant friend” if the learner is unable to read and understand the request independently.

I have read the letter to (Learner- Participant’s name).

I have explained what the letter says and have made it as clear as possible. He/she has understood what the letter says and has provided me with a verbal response indicating that she/he will/will not participate in the study.

Name of “participant friend”

Signature:.....

Date:.....

Contact number:

Appendix C1: Classroom Observation Schedule

Physical layout

Number of learners:

Boys:

Girls:

Arrangement of classroom:

- Desks (no. and arrangement)
- Proximity of learners to each other
- Size of classroom:
- Can they see teacher?

Situation of classroom in school:

Board and other teaching aids:

- Wall charts/artefacts

Movement of learners:

- During lessons

Average noise levels in classroom:

- During lessons:
- Other: e.g. library in school/library corner in class

Lessons/Instructional Activities

- Types of lessons
- Activities
- Structuring of lessons
- Facilitation and Approach to written language work by Teachers
- Quality of written language work by learners
- Frequency of written language used in class / per day/per week/per month
- Value placed on written work

Homework:

- Type of homework provided
- Quantity of homework
- Frequency of homework
- Projects
- Support with homework at home

Communication during lessons

Teacher-learner talk

- Nature of exchange
- Types of instructional strategies
- Reinforcement/punishment
- Repetition/Feedback
- What he/she values
- Language/s used
- Initiation of communication
- Participation
- Asking of questions
- Rules
- Breakdown in communication

Peer talk

- What do they talk about
- When

- In what language
- Is this encouraged

Literacy

- Reading Books, work books, text books, comprehension of written material
- How often does he/she look at (or mark) their books
- Use of written communication in classroom – instructions, etc.

Timetable and scheduling**1) Description of daily schedule:**

Lessons:

Breaks:

Other:

2) Description of weekly schedule:

Lessons:

Breaks:

Other:

Appendix C2: Teacher Questionnaire

Profile of Intermediate Phase Teachers - Speech-Language Therapy Research Project

Notes

- To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, schools and teachers will not be identified.
- Please answer all the questions as best as you can.
- If you have any queries, or you would prefer an Afrikaans or IsiXhosa translation of the questions, please contact me on 0834129346.

SEX:

AGE:

1. Employment Experience

- 1.1. Please list all your teaching and related qualifications, together with the names of the institutions from where you obtained the qualifications, and the year of completion.

- 1.2. What grade do you teach currently? Please circle one block.

Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
---------	---------	---------

- 1.3. How many years have you taught the current and other grade levels?

Grade	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Years taught													

- 1.4. What school responsibilities do you have in addition to your class teaching?

- 1.5. What is/are your home language/s? Please circle. If you are bi- or multilingual, circle more than one block.

Afrikaans	English	IsiXhosa	Other (specify)
-----------	---------	----------	-----------------

- 1.6. What language do you use most in the classroom? Please circle.

Afrikaans	English	IsiXhosa	Other (specify)
-----------	---------	----------	-----------------

- 1.7. What other language/s do you use in the classroom? Please circle.

Afrikaans	English	IsiXhosa	Other (specify)
-----------	---------	----------	-----------------

1.8. In the table below, rate your level of language proficiency as: 'good', 'average' or 'limited'.

	Afrikaans	English	IsiXhosa	Other (specify)
Oral language				
Written language				

Learner profile

1.9. How many learners do you have in your class?

Less than 30	31 – 35	36 – 40	41 - 45	More than 45
--------------	---------	---------	---------	--------------

1.10. What is the age range of the learners?

1.11. What is the average age?

1.12. How many are Girls? Boys? Total number?

1.13. What are the home languages of your learners? Please specify how many speak each language.

Afrikaans	English	IsiXhosa	Other (specify)
If learners are from bilingual or multilingual homes, please state the languages and numbers here.			

1.14. How many learners in your class do you consider to be adequately proficient in speaking the language of learning?

1.15 How many learners in your class experience communication barriers to socialisation and learning i.e. how many are not adequately proficient in speaking the language of learning?

2. Written Language in the Classroom

2.1. Please describe the value or importance of written language in the curriculum.

2.2. How often do you set written language tasks for your learners?

TASK	FREQUENCY PER WEEK
Creative writing	
Language Comprehension tasks	
Spelling tests	
Other	

2.3. How many learners in your class experience written language difficulties? Suggest some possible reasons for these difficulties.

2.4. Please describe the consequences if learners do not meet the outcomes for written language in the curriculum.

3. Difficulties And Barriers Experienced By Teachers

Please describe the kinds of communication barriers and difficulties you experience in the classroom, as the *teacher*. Suggest some possible reasons for these difficulties.

4. Support for Teachers and Learners

4.1 What support is provided for learners who experience written language difficulties?

4.1.1 At School:

4.1.2 At home

5. **Additional Support**

5.1 What further support or strategies should be provided to learners who experience written language difficulties?

5.1.1. At School

5.1.2 At Home

Additional notes and comments

- **Please use the back page if you need more space to explain your answers.**
- **Please do add any comments and suggestions which in your experience may help to understand the nature of written language in the classroom, the barriers and opportunities to enhance written language in the classroom.**

Please check that you have answered all the questions

Thank you for your time and consideration

INDIRA NAVSARIA (UCT Speech-Language Therapy Researcher):

Cell phone: 0834129346

Appendix C3: Interview Schedule- Individual: Teachers

Exploratory question

Tell me about the expectations of written language for grade 5.

Probes and possible follow up questions

What kinds of difficulty or challenges were encountered?

How do you approach written language tasks in your class?

How important is the oral vs. written language in the class?

What are the pass/fail criteria in the grade?

How important is written language in the assessments of the learners in the different learning areas?

Tell me about the oral and written communication of the learners.

What are the quality and style of the written language of the learners e.g. vocabulary, grammar, spelling, punctuation, narration?

What were the consequences?

How do you try to support the learner with written language difficulties?

What was the outcome?

What are the continuing barriers?

What are some support strategies that may assist the learners at school?

What are the support strategies at home that may assist the learners?

Appendix C4: Learner Questionnaire

Name: _____ Sex: _____ Race: _____
How old are you? _____

1. What language or languages can you speak? (List **all** languages even those that you are not very good at; list them from best to worst). *For example, write the number 1 and next to this your best language. Then if you can speak another language, write 2 and next to this your next best language. If you have a third language but can only say a few things in this one, then you would write 3 and the name of that language next to it.*

2. What language or languages do YOU usually speak when you are at home? *(Please name the person that you speak this language to if you use different languages with different people, e.g. English – to parents; IsiXhosa to my sisters.)*

3. Who lives with you and what language or languages do they speak?

4. What language do you speak best? _____

5. What language do you understand the best? _____

6. What language can you read best? _____

7. What language can you write best? _____

8. What programmes do you like to watch on TV, and / or listen to on the radio?

9. What language or languages do you learn at school?

10. In what language or languages do your teachers usually speak to you?

11. What language or languages do you speak to your friends at school in?

In the classroom: _____

On the playground: _____

12. When you are not at school which language or languages do you speak to your friends in?

13. What is your best language for learning at school? (*In other words, when your teacher explains how to do something which language helps you understand best?*)

14. I would like my teacher to speak to me in (write in the name of language or languages)

15. At school, it is hard for me to speak in... (Write all languages that apply)

16. At school, it is hard for me to understand people who speak... (Write all languages that apply)

17. At school, it is hard for me to read... (Write all languages that apply)

18. At school, it is hard for me to write... (Write all languages that apply)

19. Are you taught any languages outside school? If so, what are they?

Appendix C5: Interview Schedule- Individual and Focus Group: Learners

EXPLORATORY QUESTIONS:

1. Tell me about your writing/written language.
2. Tell me about what writing you do outside of school? E.g. sms-texting, letters, lists
3. Tell me about what reading you do outside of school?
4. Tell me about what sort of help you would like to receive at school and your home to improve your writing/written language.

Follow up probe questions:

1. Do you think writing is important?
2. What help does your teacher/school give you to improve your reading or written language if you are experiencing difficulties
3. Do you get help with your homework at home?
4. What have you learnt at home or from your community that helps you at school?

Appendix C6: Parent/Guardian Questionnaire

SEX:

1. What is your relationship to _____
2. How old are you? _____
3. What is your first language? _____
4. What language or languages do you speak at home to your family?

5. What is your occupation? _____
6. What level of education have you completed? _____
Primary school Secondary School Tertiary Education
7. How many children live in your house? _____
8. How well do you read in the language of learning¹ of your child?

9. How well do you write in the language of learning of your child?

10. How well does your child read the language of learning?

11. How well does your child write in the language of learning?

12. How often do you read? _____
13. What do you read? _____
14. How often do you write? _____
15. What do you use writing for? _____

¹. Language of learning – refers to the language that is the medium of instruction in the class of the learner. This will be explained to the parents.

Appendix C7: Focus Group Question Guide: Parents/Guardians

Exploratory Questions:

1. Tell me about your child's written language.
2. What sort of help does your child receive at home with his/her written language homework?
3. How important do you think written language is?
4. What support should children get from school that would help them improve their written language?

Follow-up and Probe questions:

1. What support would help your child with written language at home?
2. Does your child receive any help with his/her homework at home?
3. Is your child a member of the local library?
4. Does the family engage in reading or writing regularly?
5. What support does your child or other children in his/her class receive at school to improve their reading or writing?

Appendix C8: Written Language Analysis Schedule 1

GRADE 5 SAMPLES ANALYSED AGAINST GRADE 4 ENGLISH HOME LANGUAGE EXPECTED
WRITING OUTCOMES

GRADE 5

LEARNER:

<u>EXPECTED OUTCOMES</u>		<u>MEETS OUTCOMES</u>	
<u>PRESENTATION</u>		<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
Neat and legible handwriting	Comment:		
Appropriate Headings	Comment:		
Appropriate Spacing for paragraphs	Comment:		
Appropriate Indentations	Comment:		

<u>PARAGRAPH LEVEL</u>		<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
Length of the overall piece?	Comment:		
Are there paragraphs?	Comment:		
Uses topic and supporting sentences to develop a coherent paragraph	Comment:		
Does each paragraph introduce a new idea?	Comment:		
Cohesion – Do the paragraphs link?	Comment:		
Appropriate grammar	Comment:		
Appropriate spelling	Comment:		
Appropriate punctuation	Comment:		

<u>Sentence Level</u>		<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
How many words per sentence?	Comment:		
Phrase and Clause Usage?	Comment:		
Use of Adjectives?	Comment		
Use of adverbs?	Comment		
Shifts from one tense to another consistently and appropriately	Comment		

<u>WORD LEVEL</u>		<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
Selects and uses a wide variety of words drawn from language experience, activities, literature and oral language of classmates and others	Comment:		

<u>Overall Narrative Structure</u>		<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
Narrative Structure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Overall flow - Character development - Interest evoked - Awareness of the specific purpose and reader 	Comment:		

Appendix C9: Written Language Analysis Schedule 2**GRADE 6 SAMPLES ANALYSED AGAINST GRADE 5 ENGLISH HOME LANGUAGE EXPECTED WRITING OUTCOMES****GRADE 6****LEARNER:**

<u>EXPECTED OUTCOMES</u>		<u>MEETS OUTCOMES</u>	
<u>PRESENTATION</u>		<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
Neat and legible handwriting	Comment:		
Appropriate Headings	Comment:		
Appropriate Title	Comment:		
Suitable graphics	Comment:		

<u>PARAGRAPH LEVEL</u>		<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
Length of the overall piece?	Comment:		
Are there paragraphs?	Comment:		
Uses topic sentence and relevant information to develop a coherent paragraph	Comment:		
Does each paragraph introduce a new idea?	Comment:		
Cohesion – Shows different ways of linking paragraphs	Comment:		
Appropriate grammar	Comment:		
Appropriate spelling	Comment:		
Appropriate punctuation	Comment:		

<u>Sentence Level</u>		<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
How many words per sentence?	Comment:		
Extends sentences by using noun phrases	Comment:		
Extends sentences by using Adjectival Phrases and clauses	Comment:		
Extends sentences by using adverbial phrases and clauses	Comment:		
Shifts from one tense to another consistently and appropriately	Comment:		
Uses direct and indirect speech appropriately and effectively	Comment:		

<u>WORD LEVEL</u>		<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
Selects and uses a wide variety of words drawn from various sources	Comment:		
Uses dictionary to check words	Comment:		

<u>Overall Narrative Structure</u>		<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
Narrative Structure - Overall flow - Character development - Interest evoked - Awareness of the specific purpose and reader	Comment:		

Appendix D: Suggested Pamphlet for Policy Makers

Written Language Expression in Linguistically Diverse Classrooms in the Western Cape

Researcher: Indira Navsaria – University of Cape Town

This single- site case study investigated written language in one grade 5 and one grade 6 classrooms in one urban school in the Western Cape. Two teachers, 65 learners and 19 parents participated in this study.

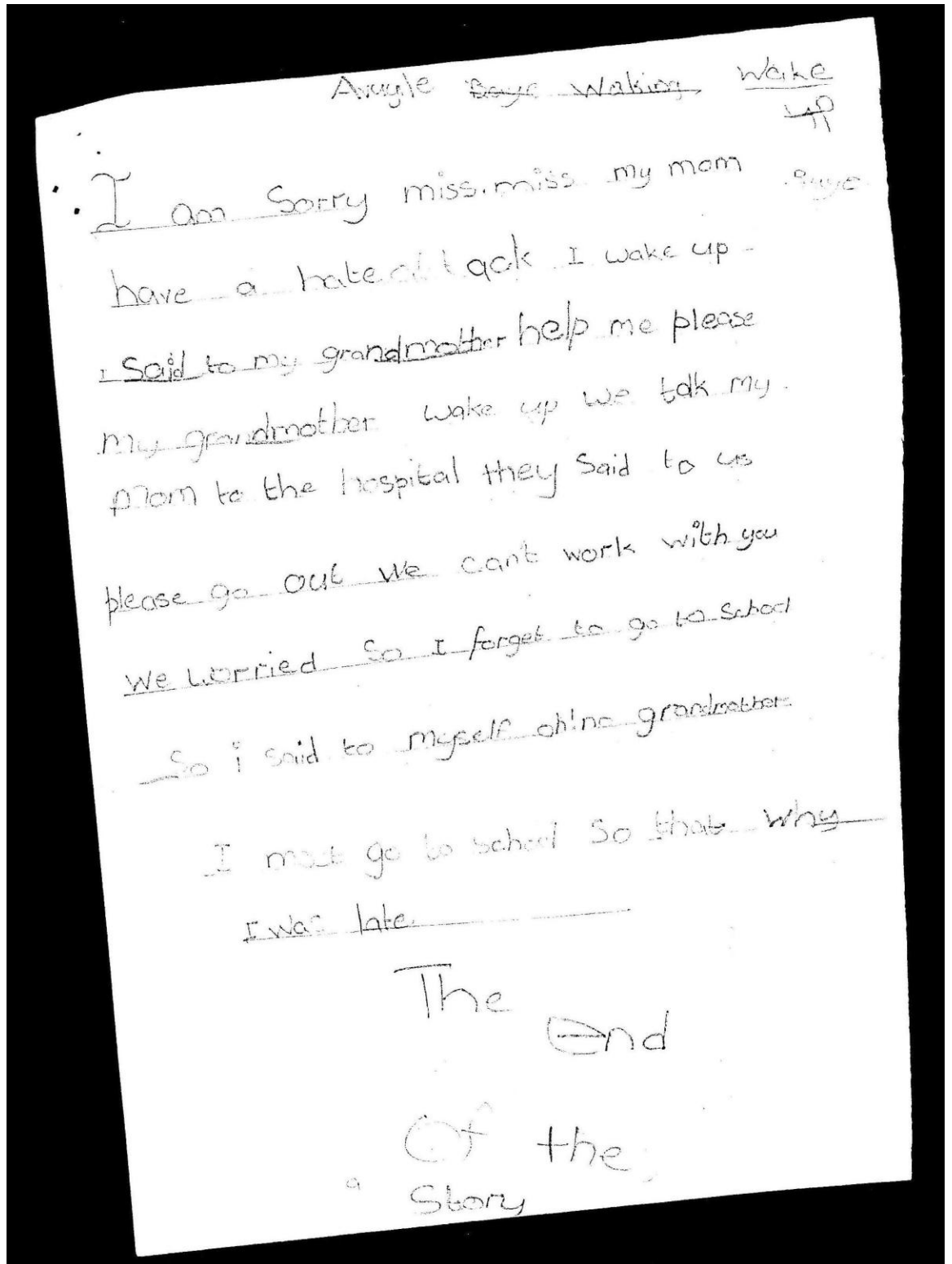
Results

- Not one single learner in either classroom met all the writing outcomes for the preceding grade
- Written language was highly valued by all the participants
- Multiple level barriers at the school system, social/home and individual/ learner levels impeding the written language development of learners, included: limited training - and lack of support - for teachers, limited reading and writing opportunities at school and home, limited resources at the school, lack of parental support and undisciplined learners
- Present opportunities for the development of written language both at school and at home were insufficient
- Further opportunities that would promote written language development at these different levels included: increased reading and writing opportunities at school and home, increased resources at the school, increased parental support and safe nurturing home environments and increased motivation in learners

Implications

- Curriculum modifications and administration (e.g. more writing tasks)
- Infrastructure improvements (e.g. more classrooms, libraries at schools, teacher, remedial teacher and other educational support posts including SLTs, social workers)
- Increased school-home-community collaborations
- Increased parental responsibility and involvement
- Motivated interested learners

Appendix E1: GRADE 5 WRITTEN LANGUAGE SAMPLE - 1



Appendix E2: GRADE 5 WRITTEN LANGUAGE SAMPLE - 2

Mis I am sorry that I am
lat Because I was lat
wen I stand up I for got
to dres me and I was lat
an my mommy send me
to the shop and I wen
to skool an so my
mommy calld me so
I had to dres me brush
my hare
X

Appendix E3: GRADE 6 WRITTEN LANGUAGE SAMPLE - 1

Gr: 6 (13)

Kewtown
Albion
7764
16 May 2008

Dear Miche

How you doing? My friend has AIDS But she is living healthy. She gets every Tuesday for check ups. She is very scared about it. But she is keeping her strong.

When she found out that she had ~~AIDS~~ she wanted to kill herself. But i tried to stop her but she never would listen to a person.

Everytime when she thinks about it she would kill her self but then i stop her. She hides her sickness away. She is scared people will make fun of her. Bye

Your friend

Appendix E4: GRADE 6 WRITTEN LANGUAGE SAMPLE - 2

Gr. 6 (15)

Nyanga

7753

16 May 2008

Dear Xolela!

How are you? I hope you feel good. I want to tell you about a girl who has HIV. She says HIV is a bad sickness. She says she must eat the tablets everyday. A thing that is very bad to eat tablets for you have

She must eat right food and she must live in a good place where she can't get TB and other sickness. She must also exercise she must not sleep everyday.

She also says that there is no cure for HIV she says she does not now mean there is going to be a cure for HIV yet. See you

Your friend