TEACHING IN MULTILINGUAL CLASSROOMS

by

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RESEARCH ESSAY

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SUPERVISOR: Mrs JV Fourie

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A Fable

In a house there was a cat, always ready to run after a mouse, but with no luck at all. One day, in the usual chase the mouse found its way into a little hole and the cat was left with no alternative than to wait hopefully outside.

A few minutes later the mouse heard a dog barking and automatically came to the conclusion that if there was a dog in the house, the cat would have to go. So he came out, only to fall into the cat’s grasp.

“But where is the dog?” – asked the trembling mouse.

“There isn’t any dog – it was only me imitating a barking dog,” explained the happy cat, and after a pause added, “My dear fellow, if you don’t speak at least two languages, you can’t get anywhere nowadays.”

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To my family for their love, understanding and unstinting support during my studying.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all the participants who so readily agreed to be interviewed and who shared their feelings and experiences with me.

A very special thank you to my supervisor, Mrs Jean Fourie for her expert guidance, support and encouragement. I appreciate all the time she spent with me.

To all those teachers and children in multilingual classrooms everywhere in our beautiful country, I admire your courage, fortitude and resilience.
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT: “Teachers Making Sense of Teaching in Multilingual Classrooms.”

RESEARCHER: E.L. Hooijer

SUPERVISOR(S): Mrs J.V. Fourie

The Academic Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education and Nursing of the Rand Afrikaans University evaluated the research proposal and consent letters of the above research project and confirms that it complies with the approved Ethical Research Standards of the Rand Afrikaans University. Permission was granted for research to continue on Monday, 7 June 2004.

The researcher demonstrated his/her intent to comply with the approved Ethical Research Standards during conduct of the research project.

Recommendations were made by the committee which will be conveyed to you and, if complied with, will improve the quality of your proposal.

Yours sincerely

MARIE POGGEOPOEL (PROF)
CHAIRPERSON: FACULTY COMMITTEE FOR ACADEMIC ETHICS
ABSTRACT

The educational changes brought about by the South African Constitution and the Language in Education policy has resulted in the emergence of multilingual classrooms in South Africa. The focus of the inquiry was to find out how teachers make sense of teaching in such classrooms. Much of the current literature regarding second language teaching focuses on either the recommendation of different methods of teaching a second language or describing the experiences of second language learners. There are not many studies that try to understand the phenomenon from the teacher’s point of view. This study describes the lived experiences of six Intermediate Phase teachers, teaching second language learners in multilingual classrooms. The research context was an ex-Model C school in Gauteng where each of the official languages are represented as home languages among the learners. The research design was qualitative in nature and data collection techniques included interviews, observation and document perusal. The findings from the data reflect that teachers found teaching in multilingual classrooms both challenging and difficult. The inability to communicate with second language learners or speak other official languages was cited as contributing to the challenge. A lack of adequate training in language acquisition and a need for support in teaching multilingual classes was expressed by the teachers. The study concludes that teachers in multilingual classrooms need support and recommendations were made of how this could be accomplished. The results of this inquiry show that further research in this area pertinent to the South African context is indicated.
SAMEVATTING

Die verandering in die onderwys wat teweeg gebring is deur die Suid-Afrikaanse grondwet en die Taal in Onderwys-beleid, het gelei tot die ontstaan van veeltalige klaskamers in Suid-Afrika. Die doel van die ondersoek was om vas te stel hoe onderwysers daarin geslaag het om in sulke klaskamers onderrig te gee. Baie van die huidige literatuur oor tweedetaalonderrig fokus op verskillende metodes waarop 'n tweede taal aangeleer kan word en hoe die leerders dit ervaar. Daar is min studies wat probeer om dié verskynsel uit die oogpunt van die onderwyser te beskou. Dié studie beskryf die belewenis van ses onderwysers in die Intermediêre Fase wat tweedetaalonderrig in veeltalige klaskamers aanbied. Die navorsing is gedoen in 'n voormalige Model C-skool in Gauteng waar al die amptelike tale verteenwoordig was as moedertaal by die leerders. Die navorsingsontwerp was kwalitatief van aard en onderhoude, waarnemings en verskeie dokumente was gebruik om gegewens vas te stel. Die bevindings van die studie dui daarop dat die onderwysers dit sowel uitdagend as moeilik gevind het om veeltalige klasse te onderrig. Die onvermoë om in ander amptelike tale te kommunikeer of te praat, is uitgelig as bydraend tot dié uitdaging. Die onderwysers het gewys op 'n gebrek aan behoorlike opleiding in taalaanlering en 'n behoefte aan steun in die onderrig van veeltalige klasse. In dié studie word die gevolgtreking gemaak dat onderwysers in veeltalige klaskamers bykomende steun nodig het en aanbevelings is gedoen oor hoe dít bereik kan word. Die gevolgtrekkings van hierdie ondersoek dui daarop dat verdere navorsing op dié gebied in die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks aanbeveel word.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## SECTION 1 .................................................................................... 1

**ORIENTATION** .................................................................................... 1

1.1 **INTRODUCTION** ............................................................................................. 1

1.2 **BACKGROUND INFORMATION** .................................................................... 2

1.3 **PROBLEM STATEMENT** ............................................................................... 3

1.4 **RESEARCH AIM** ............................................................................................ 4

1.5 **MOTIVATION** ................................................................................................. 4

1.6 **RESEARCH DESIGN** ..................................................................................... 5

1.7 **VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY** ........................................................................ 8

1.8 **ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS** ....................................................................... 9

1.9 **CONCLUSION** .............................................................................................. 10

## SECTION 2 .................................................................................. 11

**LITERATURE REVIEW** ............................................................................. 11

2.1 **INTRODUCTION** .......................................................................................... 11

2.2. **THE SOUTH AFRICAN HISTORICAL CONTEXT** ...................................... 11

2.3 **INCLUSION** .................................................................................................. 13

2.4 **MULTILINGUALISM** ..................................................................................... 17

2.4.1 **Languages in South African Classrooms** .............................................. 17

2.4.2 **Explanation of Terms** ............................................................................... 18

2.4.3 **Second Language Acquisition** .................................................................. 19

2.4.4 **Approaches to Second Language Learning** ........................................ 20

2.5 **LANGUAGE AND CULTURE** ....................................................................... 22

2.6 **TEACHER BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES** ....................................................... 23

2.6.1 **Teachers’ Beliefs about Language** .......................................................... 24

2.6.2 **Teachers’ Beliefs about Learning and Teaching** .................................... 26

2.6.3 **Teachers’ Beliefs about Culture** ............................................................... 27

2.7 **CONCLUSION** .............................................................................................. 27

## SECTION 3 .................................................................................. 28

**THE RESEARCH PROCESS** ........................................................................ 28

3.1 **INTRODUCTION** .......................................................................................... 28

3.2 **QUALITATIVE RESEARCH** ....................................................................... 28

3.3 **THE RESEARCH CONTEXT** ....................................................................... 30

3.3.1 **The Context** .............................................................................................. 30

3.3.2 **The Participants** ........................................................................................ 33

3.3.3 **Interviews** ................................................................................................ 35

3.3.4 **Observations** ............................................................................................... 37

3.3.5 **Documents as a source of information** .................................................. 38

3.3.6 **Researcher’s Journal** ............................................................................... 39

3.4 **DATA ANALYSIS** .......................................................................................... 39
LIST OF FIGURES

3.1 A Flow Diagram of the Research Process ........................................29
3.2 An Example of the Coding of Raw Data ...........................................41
3.3 An Example of the Categorising of Codes ........................................41
4.1 Themes Extrapolated from the Findings ...........................................46
LIST OF TABLES

3.1 Distribution of Home Languages at the Specific School used in the Inquiry .......................................................... 32

3.2 Graph Showing Languages Spoken in the Grade 4 and 5 Classes ........................................................................ 33

3.3 An Example of Open Ended Interview Questions .................. 36

3.4 An Example of the Rephrasing of Interview Questions .......... 36

3.5 An Example of the Transcription of Field Notes ..................... 38

3.6 An Example of Information from School Documents .............. 38

3.7 Examples of Data from Researcher’s Journal ....................... 39
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BICS:  Basic interpersonal communication skills.

CALP:  Cognitive academic language proficiency.

DNE:  Department of National Education.

GDE:  Gauteng Education Department.

INSET:  In Service Training.

LOLT:  Language of Learning and Teaching.

NCESS:  National Committee for Educational Support Services.


RNCS:  Revised National Curriculum Statement.

SMT:  School Management Team.
SECTION 1

ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

As a result of the political changes in South Africa since 1994 which led to the adoption of the new Constitution, everyone now has the right to a basic education in the official language of their choice (Act 108 of 1996, section 29 (1)). Classes that were segregated according to race and language in the old South Africa have now become more integrated. In the last decade, teachers in public schools have faced increasingly diverse classrooms so that children from different cultural backgrounds who speak different home languages are now found in the same classroom (Lemmer & Squelch, 1993:2; Winkler, 1999:77).

Schools have thus had to change with the times to meet the challenge of teaching linguistically diverse learners, while still maintaining educationally acceptable standards of learning (McKay & Hornberger, 1996:ix). From my observations as a Learning Support Specialist, it would seem that many teachers have felt unsure about how to deal with children who do not speak the language of instruction used in the classroom. They do not appear to understand the characteristics of these second language learners, such as how children who learn in a second language first develop conversational competency before academic proficiency as described in Vaughn, Bos and Schumm (2000:296).

This research essay seeks to express the responses of a number of such teachers and how they make sense of their teaching situations. It is intended that the recording of their specific experiences will lead to recommendations for support that may be of benefit to other teachers in the same position.
1.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

I am currently practising as a Learning Support Specialist at a multicultural Primary School in Gauteng. The rich cultural diversity in the school community is borne out by the children’s speaking different home languages. Not only are each of the official languages represented but there are also children from other countries who speak languages such as French, Portuguese, Korean and Chinese. Therefore, in any one class there may be between eight and ten different home languages being spoken by the children. These children are usually at different stages of acquiring and speaking English and are regarded as second language learners.

Mouton (2001:27) alleges that personal observations and reflections often generate investigations. My observations are that most of the teachers at my school seem to respond to the children who are not proficient enough in English (the Language of Learning and Teaching or LOLT) by referring them to my remedial class. All too often these teachers have labelled the children as being ‘learning disabled’ or ‘remedial cases’, and declare that they cannot teach them until they can speak English. The teachers do not seem to realise that they themselves are quite competent and are able to help and teach such children, despite the language barrier. These are the teachers that I should like to investigate. Agnihotri (1995:6) claims that teachers, who recognise multilingualism in the classroom as an asset, will be able to ingeniously exploit the different languages available in their classrooms as a valuable resource.

Multilingualism in classrooms and communities, learners learning in a second language and learners with language barriers are now worldwide phenomena (McKay & Hornberger, 1996:47). Studies such as Sechele (2002); Oerson (2002) and Allie (1999) refer to the effect of learning in a second language on the learners themselves and how they acquire and learn in a second language. Alternatively, authors such as Jacobs and Farrell (2001) give recommended methods of teaching second language learners. There is a gap in the literature concerning how teachers are able to make sense of teaching in these multilingual...
classes, particularly when those learners have come from schools where they started learning in their mother tongue, but then were sent to a school where the LOLT is English. Van Tonder (1999:4) ascribes this phenomenon to people believing that their own language is not important and their seeing English as a language of empowerment for their children. My research will therefore focus on teachers teaching children such as these.

The policy of inclusion is another important issue affecting teaching in South Africa particularly in multilingual classes. Inclusive education, while being a global agenda, has specific implications for South African teachers owing to the unique circumstances in our country. The term ‘inclusion’ implies change and involves a process of reform and restructuring of the education system and each school, so that all children regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, language or disability can have access to all the educational and social facilities offered by the school (Department of National Education, 2001:16). Above all, it requires a change in attitude to children who are different or come from diverse backgrounds. Diversity is to be valued and supported in the classroom and the curriculum should be made accessible to all learners. According to Mittler (2000:3), many teachers have difficulty changing their thinking just because the system has changed; they need support in transforming their values and beliefs in such a way that their practice then becomes more inclusive.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

In view of the above discussion this study will investigate teachers, who teach children in multilingual classrooms where more than three or four different home languages are spoken by the children. The emphasis will be on how they make sense of teaching in multilingual classrooms.

The specific research question is therefore:

How do teachers make sense of teaching in multilingual classrooms in inclusive primary schools?
Sub questions include:

- How do teachers manage to include all children in multilingual classrooms?
- How do teachers teach children who do not speak the medium of instruction as a first language?

1.4 RESEARCH AIM

The main aim of this research is to investigate how teachers experience teaching in multilingual classrooms in a South African context within an inclusive framework.

1.5 MOTIVATION

As mentioned above I am undertaking this study because a number of second language speakers are referred to me as ‘remedial problems’. Their teachers perceive that they can’t teach them until they can speak English properly. Some of these learners then develop what is referred to as ‘behaviour problems’ due to their inability to make sense of and respond to what is going on in the classroom.

I have observed that the teachers themselves do not seem to have any understanding of how children acquire a second language, i.e. the phases that learners go through or the time that it takes to acquire a second language. When I have mentioned, for instance, that a child learning in a second language may take up to two years to develop conversational English (Vaughn, et al. 2000:296) and that learners need to be given time before teachers resort to negative labelling, the teachers concerned do not seem to understand what I am talking about. They appear to be too pressurised by all the administrative paperwork required, as well as the completion of learning programmes and work units, and say that they don’t have time to spend with children experiencing language barriers. However, although these instances seem few and far between, there
are moments when these same teachers become excited about their teaching and the achievements of their learners.

The motivation of my study would then be twofold. The findings could be used both to understand the lived reality of these teachers in order to recommend In Service Training (INSET) courses, and to develop support or reflective groups for teachers; and secondly they could improve classroom practice and ultimately improve each child’s learning. The findings will also contribute to the body of knowledge associated with multilingualism and learning.

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN

My research inquiry will follow the qualitative approach to research. Qualitative research concerns itself more with attempting to understand a particular phenomenon from the perspective of the people involved, in contrast to a quantitative research design where hypotheses regarding the relationship between two or more phenomena are explored. Quantitative research often tries to establish a causal relationship between variables whereas qualitative research tries to understand phenomena in their entirety in a bid to understand a particular person, programme or situation. It is mainly used to investigate the meaning that people give to their experiences (Collins, Du Plooy, Grobbelaar, Puttergill, Terre Blanche, van Eeden, van Rensburg & Wigson, 2000:89-91).

I am interested in how teachers make sense of teaching multilingual classes and hence would be studying a phenomenon and not attempting to find any causal relationships between different variables. The qualitative approach is usually chosen when the researcher aims to understand human phenomena and investigate the meaning that people give to the events they experience (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004:3). In keeping with the aim of my research, qualitative methods are ideal for discovering how these teachers make meaning within their particular social contexts.
Duff and Early (1996:3) state that most research undertaken concerning second language learners and teachers has been done in experimental classroom like laboratory settings using quantitative investigations of classroom behaviours. However, owing to the influence of phenomenological ideologies, Duff and Early (1996:3) contend that as more second language learners are found in mainstream classrooms worldwide, qualitative research methods are more useful in uncovering the complex realities associated with these types of situations.

The participants would be selected on the basis of the following criteria: they must be primary school teachers at an ex-Model C state school where the medium of instruction is English, teaching language in multilingual classes where the children speak at least three or four different home languages. The primary unit of analysis would then be the teachers.

Qualitative studies explore what the qualities of certain phenomena are and how human interaction takes place. The knowledge thus generated is largely descriptive and empirical, as it is derived from the person’s experience and the observation of the researcher. These descriptions would aim to be as detailed and as rich as possible so that the actions, meanings and feelings of the participants’ experiences can be recorded fully and interpreted (Henning, et al. 2004:9).

In the design of my study, I am trying to understand what systems of thought shape how teachers experience their teaching contexts and direct their actions in the classroom. The aim is to determine how these participants construct meaning and use it to make sense of their everyday reality in their teaching situations. This inquiry would then draw on elements from both the interpretivist and critical frameworks of social science. ‘Interpretive’ because this framework states that knowledge is constructed by observable phenomena and by descriptions of people’s intentions, beliefs, values and reasons, meaning making and self understanding (Henning, et al. 2004:19). So in essence, I will be interpreting my observations of teachers in multilingual classrooms to determine their values, understanding and knowledge constructions. This is also a critical
study as my chosen framework holds that facts can never be isolated from the
domain of values and can only be fully understood within social and economic
contexts which are themselves influenced by current ideology (Henning, et al.
2004:23). The socio-political background to language issues in multilingual
classrooms in South Africa would then have a bearing on how teachers make
sense of teaching in these situations.

The qualitative design of this inquiry lends itself to different methods of data
collection. In order to ascertain what the participants think and feel and how they
describe their subjective reality, I will use different types of interviews. Both in-
depth individual interviews with each of the participants, as well as a focus group
interview for additional information, will be conducted. The nature of these
interviews will be semi-structured or discursive to encourage openness where
facts, ideas and opinions are expressed along with deepest emotions and the
retelling of personal life experiences. The focus group interview will be used in a
similar vein. All interviews will be audio-taped and transcribed for use in data
analysis (Greeff, 2002:300-305).

Observation techniques will be used to get an idea of the teacher in her natural
setting (the classroom) and to observe how she interacts with multilingual
learners in the actual teaching environment. Document and artefact analysis will
also be used. The type of document envisaged to be examined would include:
the children’s books, labels on the walls in the classroom, the teachers
preparation and planning files, current policy documents and school policy
documents. Tables will also be drawn up showing quantitative data such as the
number of different languages spoken in the school, as well as in individual
classes. In addition to this, I will keep a research journal where observations and
anecdotal incidents regarding second language learners at the school will be
recorded.

Interpretive research aims at looking beyond the pure reporting of what was said
to interpreting the content. This involves working with the data to understand it
and to find relationships between constructs and concepts in an attempt to
identify patterns of meaning and related themes (Mouton, 2001:108). The data will be organised by doing content analysis and determining codes and possible categories.

The language action, the way participants phrase their understanding, any symbolic use of language or anything that indicates how the participants make sense of their reality, will be noted. The characteristics of narrative analysis (Henning, et al. 2004:122), will also be borne in mind as teachers often have insightful stories to tell about their experiences. Themes will be noted and used to explore the meaning discovered and thereafter related to the theoretical framework and relevant literature as findings of the study.

1.7 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

There are a number of ways that validity and reliability are ensured in qualitative research designs. The following strategies apply to this study and have been used as a guide when designing the study and selecting research methods.

According to Henning, et al. (2004:148-150) validity in qualitative research is determined by three criteria. The first one is that of good craftsmanship resulting in a well researched and written investigation, which I propose to do. The second criterion involves whether other people, including the participants in the study agree that the observations made are true and that the findings make sense to them. The participants in my study will be afforded the opportunity to read the findings and to comment on the relevance thereof. The third criterion has to do with the practicality of the findings as well as the empowerment of the participants i.e. there must be some beneficial outcome attached to the inquiry. It is intended that the findings will help develop support and beneficial INSET courses for teachers in multilingual classes.

Merriam (1998:204 & 207) describes a number of strategies that can promote both validity and reliability. Some of the strategies she describes will be used in this inquiry to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings. Triangulation, the use
of different data collection techniques, such as interviews, observations and artefact analysis, will be employed in order to substantiate the research findings. The researcher will ensure that adequate engagement in the data collection process takes place by allowing sufficient time for the collection of data and for each research task to be executed in a proper fashion. An audit trail will be created by the keeping of meticulous notes and transcripts of all interviews, observations and procedures. These would then be available for scrutiny by appropriate parties. A rich, thick description will be written giving an articulate account of the findings in a manner that is more than just a listing of the facts or empirical data discovered.

Successful research should provide the reader with a credible understanding of the research problem. Although each research situation will be unique in that it will describe the specific reality of the participants at a particular time, the data should be reliable and able to be replicated in a similar situation. Larsen-Freeman (1996:165) gives a very apt metaphor regarding the degree to which one can generalise from such studies. She describes how if one was to study a grain of sand each would be completely different, but through studying it and others like it, one can begin to learn about the beach. Therefore some of the findings generated from my study may be common enough to make cross-context connections to other similar situations.

1.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In qualitative research there are a number of ethical concerns to consider especially as we are dealing with real people and how they make meaning within their realities. These concerns must be dealt with at the outset. One needs to obtain permission from the institution involved. Informed consent to participate should be obtained from all respondents. Awareness of the possible intrusiveness of the research should also be negotiated. This should be done in writing. Research goals should be made clear to everyone involved, and the participants and institutions should be informed as to what will be done with the findings of the research. Participants should be assured of their anonymity and
that their privacy and sensitivity will be protected. This includes protecting the identity of any dissenting participants in such a manner that they would not be recognisable (Duff & Early, 1996: 22). Researchers should always bear in mind that their research should not harm anyone in any way nor should it exploit those among whom the research is done.

1.9 CONCLUSION

This research study will endeavour to investigate how teachers make sense of teaching multilingual classes. The literature includes a number of research studies concerning language and second language acquisition. However, nearly all of these focus on the child and various theories of language acquisition. There do not seem to be many studies undertaken that try to understand the phenomenon from the teachers’ point of view. My observations are that teachers have specific issues concerning this topic. The qualitative approach has been posited as the best way to uncover and describe the lived experience of such teachers from their ‘insider’ perspective. The findings should yield a rich description of teachers’ reality, and how their systems of meaning have been constructed through the social discourse in our country. These findings can then be used to support teachers and improve the learning of all children in multilingual classrooms.
SECTION 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

A literature review in qualitative research attempts to build a logical theoretical framework within which to locate the inquiry and to discuss the underlying assumptions behind the research problem (Marshall & Rossman, 1995:28).

According to Henning, et al. (2003:27), a good literature review lays the foundation for research and can be used to argue one’s case by showing the relevance of any findings in relation to existing knowledge. It is difficult to understand and describe the actions, practice and values of teachers in multilingual classrooms in South Africa without examining the context in which they occur. Mittler (2000:1) states that what happens in schools or in a particular education system does not happen in a vacuum, but is a mirror of the society in which that school is situated. The beliefs, attitudes and practices of the community will inevitably affect the functioning of the school and its effectiveness.

As a starting point for my research this section will therefore briefly examine the available literature concerning the historical background, concepts of inclusion, second language learning, multilingual classrooms and certain attributes of teachers pertaining to language learning related to the South African context. Thus this literature study will also form the basis of my theoretical framework.

2.2. THE SOUTH AFRICAN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In South Africa’s troubled history, language has always been a contentious issue, particularly regarding issues of instruction. For instance, in 1822 Lord Somerset attempted to enforce the Anglicisation of the Cape Colony by compelling the use of English in all spheres of public life including schools where teachers were given incentives to teach in English. This was met with resistance by the Dutch
farmers who refused to send their children to state schools (Le Cordeur, 1986:86). In 1903, according to Spies (1986:223), when English was made the medium of instruction in government schools the resentment that resulted caused the Boers to establish the Christian National Education movement. Spies further describes how, when the Union of South Africa came into being in 1909, the then constitution entrenched English and Dutch as the official languages. It was later amended to include Afrikaans instead of Dutch. When the Republic of South Africa was declared in 1961, the Nationalist party gave equal language rights to both English and Afrikaans as official languages. At this time provision was made for nine additional official languages in each of the ‘Bantustans’, although English and Afrikaans continued to be the dominant languages. These other official languages together with English and Afrikaans became the eleven official languages that are recognised today (Du Plessis, 2000:105).

Van Schalkwyk (1988:120) stated that one of the anthropological grounds for the creation of differentiated schools was differences in language and cultural ideals. He stated that coupled with the language of a people one usually finds its traditions, cultural attitudes and beliefs which need to be preserved through education in the mother tongue. The assumption was therefore that each group of people wanted to be educated as a group and provision should then be made for separate schools. Consequently in the South African context separate schools for Tswana, Xhosa, Zulu and Northern Sotho speakers as well as English and Afrikaans speakers came into being.

While the above sounded very noble it was however during these apartheid years that many learners were discriminated against and the legacy of so called Bantu Education is still well known. In the language arena, children who spoke languages other than English and Afrikaans could only learn through their home language for the first four years of school and thereafter had to complete their schooling in one of the official languages. Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2002:219) have called this policy “subtractive bilingualism”. The 1976 Soweto uprising on June 16th of that year occurred on the day that Afrikaans was to be made compulsory as the language of instruction in half the subjects in Standard 5
and Standard 6 at black high schools across the country (Parsons, 1994:331; Davenpoort, 1986:311). Davenpoort (1986:311) further explains that Afrikaans was seen as the language of the oppressor while English was regarded as an international language. Many people were also afraid that the education of black children would suffer due to this policy. Students marched in Soweto in protest, the police fired on the crowd, people were killed and unrest swept through the country at that time.

In 1994, after the peaceful birth of the ‘New South Africa’ transformation became one of the key phrases and the Education system was not exempt. Attention was immediately focused on the creation of a more equitable education system that would reflect the democratic right of every person in our country to an education in an attempt to redress the inequalities of the past. Part of this redress was to give people (who previously could not learn in their mother tongues under the apartheid government) the right to choose the language of instruction they desired for their children.

According to Mansour (1993:84) language choice is usually determined by social processes and the purpose for which it is intended. In multilingual societies the purpose is often communication between different ethnic groups who find themselves in the same classroom. This situation together with the prevailing international approach to Inclusion and the new democracy in South Africa called for major changes to the old education system in order to develop a more inclusive and just system.

2.3 INCLUSION

Educational policy and in particular approaches to language teaching in South Africa were thus influenced by this new thinking vis-à-vis inclusion. The philosophy of inclusion has been shaped firstly by the socio-economic and cultural changes worldwide particularly in industrialised societies, as well as in South Africa, which demanded changes in the role of education within their societies. Secondly, the development of and commitment to more democratic
values gave rise to the human rights discourse. This resulted in a recognition of the inequalities and discriminatory practices inherent in Western educational practices against people with disabilities who were traditionally excluded from ordinary schools, and a change of attitude towards diversity (Sands, Kozleski & French 2000:5; Dyson & Forlin, 1999:25; Engelbrecht, 1999:7).

This change of attitude was evident in various international conferences attempting to redress the view of disability and education for disabled learners in the light of human rights and social justice. The most influential of these was the Salamanca Statement produced under the auspices of UNESCO in 1994 and which has served as a guide for inclusion practices internationally (Dyson & Forlin, 1999:31). Briefly this document addressed such principles as schools accommodating all learners regardless of their disability/diversity in the most cost effective way and employing the most efficient use of resources. The Statement defines the extent of inclusiveness thus: schools should accommodate all learners regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This would extend to disabled and gifted learners as well as learners from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and learners from disadvantaged or marginalised groups (Dyson & Forlin, 1999:32).

Inclusion thus differs from integration in that it implies a change in the school system (particularly in the curriculum, assessment, enrolment and the grouping of children) based on the change in values whereby diversity is now welcomed and even celebrated (Mittler, 2000:10). However, in practice, many teachers still find themselves operating from an integration point of view in that they believe that the child must adapt to the school system and not the school adapting to the diverse needs of the child.

A global agenda regarding inclusive education thus evolved out of the redefining of attitudes towards disability and diversity and the building of educational policies on the principles of social justice and human rights. Each country or national education system had to develop its own policy for inclusion based on its own peculiar educational, social and economic situations and needs (Dyson &
Forlin, 1999:39). Internationally there are many different interpretations of inclusion, but in South Africa this concept has been influenced by the Constitution and the White Paper on Special Needs Education (2001).

Inclusive education refers therefore to education policies that are based on the philosophy and values of inclusion. It entails the development of an education system that would be able to accommodate a wide range of diverse needs as normally as possible within general education classrooms. The emphasis is on the system which should accommodate all learners as far as possible regardless of language, culture, social, physical, intellectual and emotional factors. It assumes a change in attitudes and values whereby the emphasis falls on the system to change and adapt to meet and support a diversity of learning needs (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002:33; Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001:311). It therefore celebrates diversity regardless of whether it devolves from language, gender, nationality, social class, race or disability. It also implies that children have the right to attend a school in their neighbourhood and that all teachers are responsible for all children and can adapt the curriculum to carry out this responsibility (Department of National Education, 2001:19-20).

The New South African Constitution states quite categorically that everyone has the right to a basic education. It qualifies this statement further by stating that all learners have the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where that education is reasonably practicable (Act 108 of 1996, section 29 (1) & (2)). This led to a number of changes concerning language learning and teaching in South Africa.

The South African Schools Act uses the principles of the Constitution to promote the rights of learners to quality education (Department of National Education, 1996:48). Section 5 (1) states that admission to public schools may not be in conflict with the Constitution and section 6 (1) repeats the right of learners to receive education in the official language of their choice at public schools where it is reasonably practicable.
The Language in Education policy of July 1997 states that:

- being multilingual should be a defining characteristic of being South African;
- the right to choose the language of learning and teaching is vested in the individual;
- the underlying principle is to maintain home languages while providing access to and the effective acquisition of additional language;
- the School Governing Body must decide on the language of learning and teaching in the school and must stipulate how the school will promote multilingualism


In 1996 the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and the National Committee for Education Support Services (NCESS) was instructed to investigate and report on the situation regarding Special Needs Education in South Africa. Apart from recommending the transformation of the education system into an integrated system whereby each centre of learning would have the capacity to respond to the particular needs of every learner irrespective of disability or differences in learning in line with the Constitution, it also commented on language learning. It recommends that because so many learners for various reasons had to be educated via a medium of instruction other than their home language, enabling mechanisms for support should be available at all centres of learning for learners who experience barriers to learning and development because of second language difficulties (DNE, 1997:79).

The recommendations of the NCSNET and NCESS led to the Report of the Working Group on Values in Education published in 2000, where the following values were listed as being critical to the establishing of a new inclusive education equity; tolerance, multilingualism, openness, accountability and social honour. These were found to be desirable and to be promoted through education in South Africa (Green, 2001:11).
The Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) for Languages (DNE, 2002:4) follows an additive approach to multilingualism. It states that all learners must learn their own language and at least one additional official language; furthermore, that learners should become competent in their additional language while their home language is maintained and developed. The Languages Learning Area describes all the official languages as either ‘home languages’, ‘first additional languages’ or ‘second additional languages’ with different assessment standards for each designation.

It should be clear from the preceding discussion that inclusive education is the way forward for South Africa. While it is a challenge to implement the inclusion of children with varying disabilities into ordinary classrooms, the accommodation of diversity and the prevention of learning barriers has become a pressing need. Many classrooms across our country have become multilingual over the last decade as parents have exercised their democratic right to choose the language of instruction for their children.

2.4 MULTILINGUALISM

2.4.1 Languages in South African Classrooms

Language in the classroom is a vitally important concern as it is the focal point of educational activity. Cazden (2001:2) states that everything that happens in the classroom is achieved through communication, and that spoken language is the vehicle through which the teacher communicates. Most of the knowledge we have is acquired through language and we express what we have learned through language.

South Africa is home to an estimated 43 million people, and has a very rich cultural history. While English is considered by many to be the lingua franca, there are in fact eleven official languages (twelve if one includes sign language). They are: English, Afrikaans, isiNdebele, Sesotho sa Leboa (Northern Sotho), Sesotho (Southern Sotho), siSwati, Xitsonga, Setswana, Tshivenda, isiXhosa and isiZulu. These eleven languages each have their own associated folklore,
popular culture, modern spoken idiom and literature. A multilingual classroom in the South African context can then be described as one in which there are more than two or three different home languages spoken by the children in that classroom. This could be any combination of the official languages or other languages such as French, Portuguese or Chinese. Dagut (1999:1 & 6) cites the examples of Barnato Park High School where at least eight different home languages are spoken in the Grade 8 class and Jeppe Preparatory where a typical class may represent ten different home languages.

Martin (1997:5) postulates that situations like these are due to the fact that black middle class parents who would like their children to achieve academically, see English as helping them realize this goal more than their mother tongue. Other reasons given for this preference for English as LOLT (rather than mother tongue instruction) is that the mother tongue was associated with the old system of Bantu Education which was an inferior type of education (Mwamwenda, 1995:169), and that English is seen as the language of liberation and a means to international communication (Alexander, 1995:2). There is also the perception amongst young people that a person “can’t do anything without English and that you need English for a good job” (Dagut, 1999:2). He further suggests (Ibid:4) that most of the current school-going youth are actually fairly hostile towards their indigenous languages and that in general South African society does not appear to value multilingualism.

2.4.2 Explanation of Terms
The term ‘bilingualism’ in the literature is often used to denote trilingualism and multilingualism as well as bilingualism. The terms bilingualism and multilingualism refer to the knowledge and use of more than one language by a person or group of people, either individually or in a particular society (Sridhar, 1996:47).

In the literature, the term ‘second language learners’ most often refers to children learning a second language in a separate classroom in order to be able to speak that language i.e. *they are not learning through the medium of a second*
language (Damen, 2003:73). Often these students may be required to take the course in order to be accepted into a particular school or programme. Foreign language classes on the other hand, tend to refer to mostly white (American) high achievers who are aiming to go to college and who are learning a foreign language voluntarily. The second language students by contrast, are more likely to be culturally diverse and their teacher a native speaker of the language being taught, and thus of a different cultural background to the students. In the foreign language class the students and teacher are generally from the same cultural background and would not need to be aware of the need for cultural transmission (Paige, Jorstad, Siaya, Klein & Colby, 2003:189-190). In the South African context second language learners, or children with language barriers, are children who are learning all their subjects through the medium of a language other than their mother tongue. These children have differing proficiencies in their mother tongue, and are often not able to read or write it.

Multilingualism in our country, according to an article in The Teacher (Grey, 2001) is defined as “a national framework for languages in education where each of the official languages, including South African Sign Language, is developed for use as a language of learning (medium of instruction)”. She adds, however, that because there are not enough qualified language teachers, many schools are struggling to implement the multilingual policy whereby a learner’s mother tongue is used as a medium of instruction and a second language is gradually introduced.

2.4.3 Second Language Acquisition
Brown (1994:1) claims that the learning of a second language is a complex process that demands a physical, emotional and cognitive response from the student. He further maintains that it is a commitment which affects a person’s whole life. Teachers therefore need to be aware of the nature of the components of a language system and how language is acquired.

In discussing the process of second language learning, Vaughn, et al. (2000:296) distinguish between basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and
cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). BICS refers to the conversational competencies such as greetings, small talk, pronunciation, basic vocabulary and grammar. This gives the learner the ability to communicate fairly fluently in ordinary situations. CALP refers to the more academic type of language needed in order to understand academic concepts, terminology and more abstract ideas. They maintain that generally BICS develops before CALP and that BICS can take between one to three years to develop and CALP between five to seven years. These time factors can vary considerably depending on individual circumstances and situations.

The teachers in this study all teach Intermediate Phase primary school children therefore the optimum age of learning a second language needs to be considered. Lightbown and Spada (1993:44) suggest that the age of acquisition of the second language is a very important factor in the mastery thereof. They assert that younger learners generally fare better than older students when learning a second language. Although older learners can attain high levels of proficiency, factors such as motivation and individual differences in aptitude for language learning are also important determining factors for eventual success. Brown (1994:67) however suggests that both adults and children have the capacity to acquire a second language at any age and that it is not the lack of innate ability that hampers acquisition, but rather cognitive or emotional variables.

2.4.4 Approaches to Second Language Learning

**Immersion** This occurs when learners attend a school where the language of instruction differs from that of their home language and they begin to learn in the second language from day one. They do not speak their own language at school. It is based on the view that learning in the target language from the beginning will result in more effective acquisition of the new language. Paige, et al. (2003:188) affirm that while this method increases comprehension of the new language it does not always result in greater expressive skills. This is in contrast to the practice of submersion, as described by Edwards (1994:197), whereby a
foreign language speaker is placed into a mainstream language class without any special provisions being made to accommodate him/her.

**Bilingual Education** There are different kinds of bilingual education. In the past in South Africa the language policy for learners whose home language was neither English nor Afrikaans meant that after Grade 4 the LOLT became one of the two official languages. Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2002:219) state that this is called ‘subtractive bilingualism’ as it denies, or takes away, the place and value of the learners’ mother tongue in the context of education. It can also have the effect of the learner losing his/her mother tongue in favour of the second language and becoming alienated from his/her family. The added danger is that the learner could lose one language before another is fully developed. Subtractive bilingualism has other negative consequences. These include poor cognitive development, poor scholastic achievement, poor self confidence, inadequate identity formation, a negative effect on the teaching and learning process and a devaluing of cultural and linguistic diversity. Bryan (2000:415) calls this phenomenon the monolingual principle where the medium of instruction is used to the exclusion of the child’s mother tongue. Because of this principle, the mother tongue was portrayed as a hindrance to the learning of a second language and translation was only allowed when there was no alternative.

Education using **‘Additive bilingualism’ or multilingualism** describes when a second or more languages are added to the first language during instruction in the classroom. Donald, et al. (2002:220) state that the longer the home language or mother tongue is taught in parallel with the second language the better the learner’s achievement at school. Bucuvalas (2002:2) agrees with this view and states that the missing variable in second language research is first language maintenance. The rationale behind additive bilingualism is that the skills learnt in the first language can be transferred to and aid the acquiring of a second language.

The Routledge Encyclopaedia (Bryan, 2000:82) states that up to 70% of the world’s population may be bilingual in some sense of the word. Agnihotri (1995:5)
observes that as the most densely populated regions of the world are multilingual, multilingualism is becoming more widely recognized as a natural phenomenon. He comments further that while people are becoming more multilingual, classroom practices appear to have become more monolingual. Some teachers seem to view diverse languages as an obstacle and forbid the children to speak any other language but the language of instruction. This has the effect of marginalising mother tongue languages and reinforcing the negative stereotypes associated with languages other than the classroom medium of instruction. Martin (1997:5) states that principals of both rural and urban schools in Kwazulu-Natal and the North West Province felt that a lack of teachers’ bilingual skills prevented a multilingual approach to classroom teaching. She further argues that teachers need to be trained in a multilingual approach and more effective use made of existing resources.

2.5 LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Damen (2003:12) states that language instruction can never be culture free and that to ignore the relationship between language and culture is “to play the language game without knowing the rules”. She maintains that any form of language teaching must involve a certain amount of culture learning which may be consciously or unconsciously taught. She defines cultural rules and values as being those that create the personal identity of people, communities and nations. These cultural guidelines are passed down, articulated and exercised through language.

Fairchild and Edwards-Evans (1990:81) suggest that multicultural education should be part of the content of a basic education. One of the purposes behind language teaching is to be able to understand and appreciate different cultures and the heritage that they represent (Department of National Education, 2002:5). Our Constitution states that no one may be denied the right to enjoy his/her culture and to participate in the cultural life of his/her choice (Act 108 of 1996, sections 30 & 31 (1) & (2)). Brody (2003:37) says that even when the goal of second language learning is communication, culture is inevitably involved as
language and culture are “inextricably intertwined”. She states further that a learner will only learn a second language to the degree that he acculturates and by how much he wishes to adopt the lifestyles and values of the target language. Lafayette (2003:72) maintains that we cannot make the assumption that language use is culture-free nor can we afford to ignore the interplay between language and culture. He adds that while some children may be willing to learn the second language for educational purposes they may not want to accept the cultural influences of that language and thus they may not learn to communicate as effectively.

Nicol (2004:17) reports that young people learning in English rather than in their mother tongue prefer English as it gives them access to television, films and the culture of their contemporaries in a globalised world. Their parents on the other hand feel that if they do not learn through the medium of their mother tongue while they are growing up, their children may lose the connection with their culture and the values which denote who they are. Tiedt and Tiedt (2002:19) also warn that there are a number of scholars who do not agree with bilingual teaching or multicultural education. Dissenting voices can be heard in South Africa, in various letters to newspapers. For example; Maroba (2004:14) writing to the *Sunday World* says, “let us not forget our languages, languages as communication and as culture are products of each other, let us attach the same importance to African languages as we do to English”.

### 2.6 Teacher Beliefs and Attitudes

Teaching is a very complex activity and methods, mannerisms and practice differ from teacher to teacher. There are many different dimensions to teaching; these include planning, assessing, presenting lessons, explaining concepts, asking questions, monitoring children’s work etc. This also applies to language teaching.

According to Paige, et al. (2003:190) we do not really know what goes on in second language classes and we know hardly anything about the knowledge and beliefs that teachers in language classes use to inform their practice. However
Richards and Lockhart (1994:30) contend that there are certain factors that can be used to examine these beliefs and thinking processes. Their assumption is based on the premise that what teachers do in the classroom and how they do it is an expression of what they believe and know and that this is what guides their practice. They state that a teacher’s belief system is usually based on the goals, values and beliefs related to their understanding of the systems in which they work and their position within those systems. Bryan (2000:608) suggests that beliefs are evaluative, develop over time and inferred from what people do and how they behave. They are used by people to manipulate knowledge and can endure even when particular knowledge is no longer valid or true. Bryan (2000:611) adds that beliefs are very closely tied to knowledge and that what a teacher believes about teaching will persist whenever new methods or approaches are evaluated. To this end Richards and Lockhart (1994:1-3) suggest that teachers should develop a reflective approach to their teaching; should examine their own practice critically and share insights and strategies with other teachers regularly.

**2.6.1 Teachers’ Beliefs about Language**

Classroom language refers to the verbal behaviour of both teachers and children in the classroom while teaching and learning. According to Bryan (2000:608) for successful language acquisition to take place, ‘teacher talk time’ is a crucial factor. Studies have shown that teachers tend to dominate classroom talk. While these teachers appear to take the proficiency of the children into account, they still tend to ‘talk’ to the average learner in the class. However he further argues that how teachers organise classroom communication depends largely on what they believe, their attitude to teaching and the knowledge they have about language teaching and language acquisition.

The way teachers teach language can be influenced by their own experiences of learning a second language (Richards & Lockhart, 1994:31). This could be true in the South African context as the teachers in the study would have had to learn a second language, probably Afrikaans, while they were at school. This experience may have shaped the way teachers teach second language learners
as, according to Polio (1996:63), the teacher is the most important factor in the learning of a second language in the classroom.

Richards and Lockhart (1994:32) state that the importance both teachers and learners attach to the language (e.g. English) will influence how it is taught and learned. Some people view English as economically important, i.e. the language of business and finance and a means to international communication (Alexander, 1995:2). In South Africa, English is seen by many as an important language for securing an economic future for the country. Other people see it as a force which diminishes other mother tongue languages and culture (Michaels, 2004:2). Nicol (2004:18) notes that English is seen as the only language of power that is used at high state functions with the result that ordinary people are marginalised from such decision-making forums, ultimately undermining democracy. He also takes the view that the language ability of children is diminished when they are taught in a language other than their mother tongue. Agnihotri (1995:3&5) claims that most children in multilingual societies can learn a number of different languages at the same time when the focus is not on language learning, but rather on learning itself. He argues further that there appears to be a positive correlation between cognitive flexibility, school achievement and multilingualism. Cazden (2001:162 -163) concurs with this citing the example of using the children’s knowledge of their home language as a resource in understanding the more complex concepts in English. She found that when a concept was explained using the term in an African language this generated more English equivalents of the concept resulting in a richer understanding of the lesson for the whole class. Multilingualism can therefore be used by teachers as a classroom resource, especially if the different languages are used creatively to explain nuances and concepts, expand vocabulary and compare grammatical structures.

Mansour (1993:21) writes that it is fairly common for African children to have been exposed to three of four different languages before they start school. Bryan (2000:418) holds that many children today learn more than one language simultaneously, often as a result of having parents who speak different languages at home. In some societies it is not uncommon to use mixed codes in
different social settings. “Code switching” is the term that applies to this phenomenon of moving between two languages by using phrases and words in one language to explain a concept in another (Bryan, 2000:83). Sridhar (1996:56-57) illustrates the notion of code switching further: when there are two or more different languages in a community; members of that community frequently switch from one language to another and may even switch languages in the middle of sentences. He adds that this poses a problem for some teachers as they perceive children who code switch as being lazy or as having an inadequate command of language. He however argues that this practice actually enhances communication resulting in greater linguistic and cultural interaction and that it is common in multilingual countries around the world.

2.6.2 Teachers’ Beliefs about Learning and Teaching
Teachers’ beliefs about learning are usually influenced by their training, teaching experience and whether or not they prefer a learner-centred or teacher-centred approach to the teaching of language (Richards & Lockhart, 1994:34). Bryan (2000:620) argues that any teaching method is inevitably linked to the current educational policy within a particular country. A learner-centred and activity approach is at present the recommended approach for the teaching of language in South Africa as set out in the RNCS (DNE, 2002:1). This approach espouses the integration of different language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) with learning experiences, so that language skills develop gradually.

Teachers have different expectations about the learning process. Therefore closely related to teachers’ beliefs about learning are their expectations of (the learning of) their students. Fairchild and Edwards-Evans (1990:79-80) hold that teachers teaching children whose mother tongue differs from that of the language of instruction often have much lower expectations of those children and may in fact unconsciously demand less from them and even provide less feedback and input to them. They state further that teachers must not assume that mother tongue differences are correlated in any way with academic success. While this research was primarily done on African American children, it is worth noting that
negative expectations and behaviours on the part of teachers may result in ‘self-fulfilling prophecies’ in any classroom where children learn language.

2.6.3 Teachers’ Beliefs about Culture
Whilst most teachers believe that they are not biased, Grossman (1995:59) writes that many studies have argued the opposite. He explains that teachers often teach superficial stereotypes, for example “igloos” and “tepees” instead of promoting the understanding of experiences, attitudes, life-styles and problems experienced by these different native American cultural groups (Ibid:90). To this end, teachers should monitor themselves to ensure that they do not reinforce cultural stereotypes and prejudice in the classroom. According to Paige, et al. (2003:195) learning can be inhibited when there is conflict between the culture of the teacher and that of the children in the classroom. Damen (2003:72) acknowledges that it is a very difficult task to teach second language learners and be aware of the accompanying cultural beliefs at the same time. She recommends that teachers explain cultural meanings conveyed through body language and the various senses to avoid misunderstandings (Ibid:81). Modiba (2003:51) proposes that a strategy for meaningful education is one that uses the different cultures in the classroom as “scaffolding for learning”.

2.7 CONCLUSION

This literature review has outlined a theoretical framework against which an investigation can be carried out of how teachers make sense of teaching in multilingual classrooms. The historical context in South Africa within which the teachers find themselves was discussed. New education policies, such as Inclusion and the Language in Education Policy, have also been reviewed. Multilingualism and second language acquisition have been defined and teacher attitudes and beliefs towards English, language learning and culture have been explored. These are the theoretical guidelines which I will use to investigate how teachers in multilingual classrooms inform their practice. The teachers’ perspectives on these and any other issues that might result from the investigation are what I am seeking to discover and record.
SECTION 3

THE RESEARCH PROCESS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

My own work experience has prompted this inquiry. I have become increasingly aware that teachers are having difficulty integrating children who speak a different language to the LOLT into the classroom. Some teachers have labelled these children “remedial problems”, others “language barrier children” but the common denominator is that these teachers feel unsure about how to teach them and would like the problem to be solved.

This section will explain the research design, data collection methods, data analysis and how the research was structured. It will also address against a theoretical foundation of qualitative methodology the process that was followed. Figure 3.1 is a flow chart of the research process that was followed in this inquiry; however the discussion of the process will not follow the linear description shown in the flow chart but rather will be elaborated with examples and explanatory annotations within the context of the inquiry.

3.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Qualitative research is the preferred method for this study because it is a process which embodies a number of different forms of inquiry, all of which aim to describe social phenomena as they occur in their natural settings. Merriam (1998:6) asserts that reality is constructed by individuals as they interact with their social world; it is these constructions that the qualitative researcher is interested in. The meaning that has been constructed is what constitutes how people (in this instance, teachers) experience and make sense of their world.

The understanding of a particular context, in this case, the interactions between
all the participants in a multilingual classroom, is therefore the objective of the inquiry (Merriam, 1998:6). In order to understand the teachers’ point of view it was thus necessary to look at the context in which the teachers construct their meaning.

THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Figure 3.1 A Flow Diagram of the Research Process.
3.3 THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

3.3.1 The Context

My study is situated in Gauteng, South Africa where the education system has recently changed to become more inclusive, allowing parents to choose the medium of instruction for their children. As explained in section 2, this right is now enshrined in both the Constitution of South Africa and the Language in Education Policy (1997) which state that the right to choose the language of learning is vested in the individual. The thinking behind this change in policy may have been that most parents would automatically then choose mother tongue instruction for their children. However this did not happen. Many black and Afrikaans-speaking parents instead exercised their preference for English by sending their children to ex-Model C schools or state schools where the medium of instruction was English. The consequence has been that many teachers now find themselves in multilingual classrooms and need support in coping with their new circumstances.

Murray (1999:1) confirms that since 1991 there has been a considerable movement of black learners into ex-Model C schools. Pretorius (2001:1) writing for the Sunday Times alleges that South Africa is caught up in a “tug of war” at the moment concerning the role of English as a medium of instruction in schools. She argues that while education policy makers are wanting to make a child’s mother tongue the compulsory medium of instruction for at least the first four years of school, parents and children alike believe that learning in English will give them “the edge” in their studies, work and life. This has resulted in children learning through the medium of a second language. Their teachers who are currently having to adapt to a new curriculum and have had little training in multilingualism and second language teaching, must at the same time find innovative ways to teach them.

The teachers whom I have selected to investigate teach in just such a multilingual school in Gauteng. According to Grey (2001:3) Gauteng is the
province where all of the official languages are spoken, so it is in classrooms in Gauteng where the greatest number of different languages present themselves. Quantitative methods were used to account for the total number of children at the research site who are learning in their second language in the whole school.

Different methods of data collection help a researcher investigate and understand from different viewpoints the phenomenon being researched. While this is a qualitative inquiry, quantitative methods were used to supplement and illustrate certain aspects of the inquiry. This was done to further enhance the data collection process and to gain multiple perspectives. I have done this in line with the view of Glesne (1999:8) who writes that qualitative methods combined with quantitative methods reap the benefits of both verbal and numerical data. Nevertheless, in a qualitative inquiry, quantitative data will always remain supplementary.

The quantitative data used in this inquiry was obtained by simple survey methods. The first survey was completed by the teachers themselves as a part of the Annual Schools Survey return required by the Gauteng Education Department (GDE) in March each year. This data was used to complete Table 3.1 which illustrates the distribution of home languages of the schoolchildren. I added the percentages myself.

The school where the participant teachers are employed is truly multilingual as can be seen in Table 3.1. There are children who speak each of the official South African languages as home languages as well as children who speak other mother tongues, such as Portuguese and French. Although the LOLT at the school is English only 53.9% of the children speak English as a mother tongue. Some of the children cannot speak English at all when they are first enrolled at the school.

While a number of the children learn to speak English very well, others struggle to acquire the LOLT. New children are enrolled regularly, some of whom have
not attended an English medium school before, whilst other children are in various stages of acquiring English as a second language.

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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XiTsonga</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.8%</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>667</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1 Distribution of home languages at the specific school used in the inquiry. *(Information adapted from the Department of Education's Annual Survey for ordinary schools 2004).*

The second survey was conducted by the researcher herself during the last week of the second term of 2004. Each child in the Grade 4 and 5 classes was asked what language they spoke at home and the results were recorded on a class list. These results were later tallied and converted into a graph (Table 3.2) illustrating the multilingual nature of these classes. The graph depicts the number of children in each class speaking either English as a home language, or other official South African languages; a third column shows those speaking any other languages. In one of the Grade 5 classes, for example ten different home languages are represented. It is noteworthy that in two of the classes, there are more second language learners than children whose mother tongue is English. More general information about the school can be found in the textbox on the next page.
THE RESEARCH SITE

The school is situated in a small town east of Johannesburg. It is both a residential area as well as an industrial hub. The industries can be classified as light industries consisting of factories ranging from paint factories to pie factories to panel beating workshops. There is a shopping area within walking distance. It is an ex-Model C urban primary school now classified as a State school which is well established and over sixty years old. There are approximately 800 children and 28 teachers. It has a swimming pool and a computer centre. Although it is fairly well equipped, the buildings, desks and chairs are beginning to need a lot of maintenance.

The children tend to come from middle to low income homes and some families qualify for subsidies. The occupations of the parents vary from domestic workers and sales personnel to teachers and business managers. A few parent are self-employed and at the opposite end of the scale many are unemployed. Only about sixty percent of the families contribute to school fees. The school population is very diverse, being both multicultural and multilingual. Some of the children come from other countries on the African continent. Many of them do not live in the feeder area but their parents work nearby which allows them access to the school. These children are then transported into the area each day, many of them having to get up fairly early to get to school on time. There are also some children who are fed every day by the school.

3.3.2 The Participants

In a qualitative research inquiry the researcher herself is the primary instrument for data collection. According to Merriam (1998:7), she mediates the data while
She is involved physically with the participants, the setting as well as the documents. She observes behaviour and hears directly from the participants themselves.

She utilises an inductive research strategy i.e. she is not testing existing theory but rather trying to describe and understand a phenomenon which has not been adequately explored. Intuitive knowledge gleaned from the research site and participants in this manner can then lead to the understanding of the research problem and the building of theory.

The sample of participants in qualitative research is usually small and purposefully selected. The participants in this inquiry were chosen on the basis of the following criteria: they had to be primary school teachers working at a state school, teaching through the medium of English in multilingual classes where many of the children spoke at least three or four different home languages. These criteria were important to ensure that the participants have appropriate knowledge relating to the research question. I chose participant teachers of Grade 4 and Grade 5 because within these classes there is a very wide level of language skill competency. My observations suggest that teachers teaching these grades experience more difficulty as children in the Intermediate Phase (Grades 4 to 6) are expected to be able to read and write at a certain level, and some of these children are not yet at that stage because they are second language learners. Therefore the data collection process centred on these participants, as well as the context in which they were teaching.

As it is usually words and actions that form the basis of the data, qualitative researchers use a variety of methods for gathering information. McMillan (2000:272) and Glesne (1999:31) state that the use of different data collection methods boosts the credibility of the inquiry through the technique of triangulation. By means of this technique a researcher will assemble data by interviewing a number of different participants, on site observations and the use of an assortment of documents. She will then compare these looking for common patterns, noting if patterns are repeated and whether the evidence from each
type of data agrees. The methods used must be able to capture the particular meaning people construct through their language and behaviour. The methods used in this inquiry were archetypal, namely interviews both of individuals and a focus group, observations of classroom interaction, analysis of pertinent documents and the keeping of a researcher’s journal. The data collection process began with some interviews, followed by some observation sessions; then documents were gathered before further interviews were conducted.

3.3.3 Interviews
This is the most common form of data collection. Merriam (1998:71) describes interviews as a “conversation with a purpose” where the interviewer elicits information from the participant. This type of information generally comprises participants describing of opinions, feelings, experiences, meanings and intentions during the interview. Such information cannot be directly observed but must be brought out through dialogue. I chose a number of teachers of varying ages and experience for individual and focus group interviews as I believed that they would be an information-rich sample. These teachers all trained to teach in English medium schools with the expectation that they would be teaching children whose mother tongue was English. They did not expect to be confronted with so many children choosing to learn in a second language. While some of these teachers say they can speak Zulu, they do not use it in the classroom to facilitate learning. Individual interviews were conducted with three of these teachers in the form of semi-structured interviews.

These interviews promoted dialogue with each participant and obtained the participant’s own perceptions of their experiences in multilingual classrooms. The questions were also semi-structured in accordance with McMillan (2000:166) who states that open ended questions can be specific enough in intent to explore the research question while still allowing for individual responses. To this end a list of guide questions related to the research question was compiled. Flexible wording was used as each interview progressed to allow for emergent questions and responses. The strength of qualitative interviewing according to Glesne (1999:69-74) is that in listening to a participant, one learns about what one
cannot see and one obtains explanations of such experiences. Questions were not posed in any specific order and in each interview the participant’s response led to further questioning that could not have been anticipated before. Table 3.3 gives an example of flexible questioning which pointed to further questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GUIDELINE QUESTION</th>
<th>PARTICIPANT 1 RESPONSE</th>
<th>NEW QUESTION IN RESPONSE TO P1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you believe there are any better solutions to the circumstances? (Interview 1, Participant 1, lines 142 - 143)</td>
<td>…. they have come here for whatever reason…. (Interview 1, Participant 1, line 148)</td>
<td>You said “whatever reason” do you have any idea what the reasons might be? (Interview 1, Participant 1, line 160 - 161)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3 An example of open ended interview questions.

Glesne (1999:74) also suggests that a researcher should pilot her questions. This was a very valuable exercise as it allowed for the refining of questions; some were reworded others completely rephrased to gain the understanding of the participant’s world that the researcher was aiming for. Table 3.4 shows how a question was rephrased between interviews. The guideline questions used in each interview have been listed in Appendix 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION – 1ˢᵗ INTERVIEW</th>
<th>REPHRASED QUESTION – 2ⁿᵈ INTERVIEW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do you and your colleagues make sense of teaching in multilingual classrooms?</td>
<td>At our school you are faced with children in class who speak different home languages and yet the medium of instruction is English – how do you and your colleagues cope with this?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.4 An example of the rephrasing of interview questions.

Glesne (1999:67) suggests that interviewing more than one person at a time in what Greeff (2002:306) refers to as a focus group interview, is very useful. Discussion of the topic with a small group of participants can aid disclosure as well as yield multiple viewpoints on a specific topic. I used this as a supplementary way of collecting data, when I felt that a level of saturation (Strydom & Delport, 2002:336) had been reached (with no new information coming to light during individual interviews). Teachers who were not interviewed individually were asked to participate in a focus group interview. Three teachers agreed to be interviewed in this way. The same guideline questions were used.
3.3.4 Observations

Merriam (1998:94) states that observations, although highly subjective are “first hand encounters” with the phenomenon one is investigating and as such are a valuable research tool. Observation in the research setting is nevertheless planned intentionally to record behaviour as it happens.

“Participant observation” as described by Glesne (1999:44-45) is a process whereby the researcher becomes part of the research setting in order to observe firsthand the actions and interactions of the participants. Researchers must decide for themselves how involved they will become in the setting i.e. whether their observation technique will be largely ‘observer’ or largely ‘participant’. She suggests that one might find oneself fulfilling different roles on this continuum at different times during the observation sessions. However she adds that even if one decides to be primarily an observer (as in this case), one will still have some interaction with both the setting and participants. This did in fact happen. In some instances individual children personally came up to greet me during observation sessions and on one occasion one child actually asked if I was writing a report on his class, to which of course the reply was ‘no’. Another effect to be aware of is that the participant may be so conscious of both one’s verbal and nonverbal behaviour that this influences his/her actions in the setting (Ibid:41). In one session the participant was eager to draw my attention to the behaviour of the children who attended support classes; in another the children asked for my help in following their teacher’s instructions.

The researcher must therefore decide what she is going to focus on during observation. I decided to sit at the back of the class and observe the interactions between each teacher and the children during language lessons. Two English first language lessons and one Afrikaans additional language lesson were observed. Each was arranged with the teacher’s consent at a time that she found convenient. It was explained to each participant that the observation was for intentions of the inquiry only and that it would not be used for any other purpose.
What has been observed must be carefully recorded by means of extensive field notes. I made abbreviated notes in a notebook that described the activities and interactions taking place (in the classrooms). I also wrote down certain direct quotations. These were later typed out in more detail as suggested by Glesne (2002:49-50). My reflections and comments as participant observer were added during the transcribing process. Table 3.5 shows an example of the field notes, the more detailed version as well as my perceptions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXAMPLE OF FIELD NOTES</th>
<th>TRANSCRIBED DETAILED NOTES</th>
<th>RESEARCHER’S PERCEPTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OBSERVATION 1, LINE 96</td>
<td>T = Nathan (L1) go home and practice</td>
<td>The teacher told Nathan to go home and practice his reading. (He was reading in English)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.5 An example of the transcription of field notes.

3.3.5 Documents as a source of information

Documents are any kind of written or printed material found on site pertaining to the research question. Documents and artefacts found on site are a more objective source of data for corroborating the researcher’s interviews and observations. According to Glesne (2002:58) they can influence the direction taken in interviews and suggest what should be observed in the setting.

I decided to look at the teacher’s preparation files, and the school’s Mission Statement, Vision and Language Policy. Table 3.6 gives an example of information sourced from school documents. The type of posters and signs on the walls in the classrooms were noted as well as whether there were any books or notes which the teacher referred to as resource material (visible) in the classroom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXTRACT FROM THE MISSION STATEMENT</th>
<th>EXTRACT FROM THE SCHOOL’S LANGUAGE POLICY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“….School is committed to providing a quality and balanced English language education…..”</td>
<td>2.1“The promotion of the ideal that language, literacy and communication is intrinsic to human development and lifelong learning.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.6 An example of information from school documents.
3.3.6 Researcher’s Journal

I was advised by my supervisor to begin a researcher’s journal early on in the year to record incidents, interactions and my own personal thoughts pertinent to my research question. This was a challenge and required discipline to firstly notice relevant incidents and then to remember to record them timeously. Table 3.7 gives examples of data recorded in the researcher’s journal.

**EXTRACT FROM RESEARCHER’S JOURNAL**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Entry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25/06</td>
<td>While doing the survey of the different home languages spoken by the children in each class – one Grade 6 teacher on seeing the results remarked maybe that’s why this class (6.2) is so difficult to teach as it has such big cultural mix (lines 223 -226).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23/07</td>
<td>The debate of whether a child can be a possible retention when he or she is a language barrier child is still carrying on. They tend to automatically assume that only black children are language barrier children and forget that one or two of the white children who are battling come from Afrikaans speaking homes (lines 300 -302).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.7 Examples of data from the researcher’s journal.

### 3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative research methods are generally underpinned by the interpretivist paradigm because of the assumption that reality or multiple realities are socially constructed. McMillan (2000:4) explains that these realities are each connected to actions that transpire naturally and that these actions are influenced by the perspectives of the participants. Neuman (2003:75) states that what we are trying to do is to discover the reasons and motives that direct a person to act in a particular manner. Therefore a researcher tries to determine what is meaningful to the participant and to see things from his/her point of view. He states further (Ibid:79) that interpretive theory attempts to portray another person’s reality by disclosing the meanings, values and feelings that inform their actions in a particular setting. Most social actions or behaviours can be construed in different ways depending on the context so it is difficult to call the data obtained objective, rather it is subjective to the participant’s personal meaning constructs. According to Henning (2004:103) interpretive research is not just the effortless collection of data but the working of that data so as to reveal the essence of the participants’
experience and reasons for behaving and believing the way they do. It is not just a simplistic reporting of the facts alone. Flick (1998:178) states that the interpretation of data is the very essence of qualitative research.

The first step in analysing the data, according to McMillan (2000:264) and Flick (1998:179) is to organise it by reading through the raw data, looking for words or phrases that are prominent, and then to assign codes to these units or portions of the data. These codes are then grouped into possible categories commensurate with the interpretation of the content. Thereafter the researcher must attempt to “see the whole” (Henning, 2004:106), by looking at relationships between the categories and how they relate to and provide insight into the research question. This is an inductive process as categories were not pre-determined but rather emerged from the data itself.

After each interview was transcribed, I divided the raw data transcripts into segments of meaning, summarised each segment and ascribed a code to it. The constant comparative method of data analysis was used in that each new piece of raw data was compared to the data already coded. It was then grouped into categories with similar segments of meaning as described in Maykut and Morehouse (1993:134). A new category was established if the new segment did not fit in with those already coded and categorised. Figure 3.2 shows how the raw data was segmented and coded.

The codes were then grouped together into categories from which themes and sub-themes were generated. The categories were assigned so as to reflect the purpose of the research. A full list of codes and categories can be found in Appendix 4. Figure 3.3 gives examples of codes that were assigned to raw data and then grouped into different categories. Appendix 6 gives a full list of categories and the codes assigned to each.
EXAMPLES OF RAW DATA DIVIDED INTO SEGMENTS ⇒ CODES

Data from Interview 1, participant 1

“I think it’s very difficult because a lot of the kids that don’t speak English or who English is not the first language and then kids who’ve got I mean / I’ve got 3 children in my class that don’t speak English/ so for them it’s very difficult and I / you can see that they its, its often you don’t have time to go and explain things to them umm/ /” (lines 4 – 11).

“I mean having kids that can’t speak English” / (lines 26 – 27).

“coz it just doesn’t make sense for them to be here and sit and struggle” (lines 29 -30).

Figure 3.2 An example of the coding of raw data.

CODES ⇒ CATEGORIES

Behaviour problems (BP) ⇒ Classroom Management
Difficult for teacher (DT) ⇒ Teacher’s knowledge
Difficult for L2 (DL2) ⇒ Teacher’s impressions
Time (T) ⇒
Grouping of learners (GL) ⇒

Figure 3.3 An example of the categorising of codes.

3.5 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

For research to have any impact on educational practice or theory it must be both valid and reliable to ensure trustworthiness in the findings. Merriam (1998:201) mentions several strategies to promote validity and reliability. I used a number of
these strategies to boost the trustworthiness of this research inquiry. They include:

3.5.1 Triangulation
Triangulation is a strategy whereby different types of data collection techniques are employed to collect data from different sources in order to substantiate and confirm the findings (Merriam, 1998:204). If various methods and techniques yield similar results, the greater the validity and reliability of the findings will be. I used individual and group interviews, observations, a researcher’s journal and artefact perusal by way of triangulation to confirm the findings and to disclose as many aspects of the phenomenon as possible.

3.5.2 Adequate Engagement in Data Collection
This strategy ensures that enough time will be allowed in collecting the data so that as much information as possible can be sourced to describe and explain the phenomenon. I worked according to a set programme that allocated sufficient time for each research task.

3.5.3 Audit Trail
This involves the rendering of a detailed account of all the methods, procedures and decisions made during the research process. To this end, meticulous notes (concerning all methods, observations and procedures) were kept. Each interview was audio-taped and later transcribed. The actual audio tapes and original transcriptions of interviews as well as observations and field notes have been kept to facilitate an audit trail.

3.5.4 Rich, Thick Description
Henning, et al. (2004:6) says that this is the most distinguishing factor of qualitative research as it describes the lived experience of the participants in the study. She states that a “thick description” means the writing of an articulate account of the findings beyond just the facts or empirical data discovered. It involves interpreting the data against the information in both the literature and the theoretical framework which located the study, and then using this evidence to
write a coherent argument. According to Merriam (1998:211) this means providing enough of a description of the research phenomenon so that readers will be able to determine the extent to which their situation matches the context of the study, and whether the findings can be generalised or not. The description of my findings were enriched by the social and political issues relating to teachers in multilingual classrooms depicted in my theoretical framework and by the insight gained into the experiences of the participating teachers.

3.5.5 Member Checks

After the findings were written up, a member check was done to further enhance the trustworthiness of the findings. The participants who were interviewed were asked to give their opinion of the text and whether it was a true reflection of their views or not. These comments were included in Section 4.

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is important that any research inquiry should be conducted in an ethical manner Merriam (1998:212). This is to ensure the protection of all participants in research studies and to ensure that there is no form of exploitation resulting from their participation. The research proposal for this inquiry was submitted to the Ethic’s Committee of the University and I was granted permission to continue with the inquiry. A copy of this letter is included in the front of this essay. I then took a number of additional steps to make certain that the inquiry was carried out as ethically as possible.

Firstly, informed consent was obtained from the Principal to conduct my research inquiry at the school. Permission was obtained to do the research on the school premises, to interview Grade 4 and Grade 5 teachers, to observe the teachers in their classrooms and to peruse documents. These included the School’s Vision and Mission statement, Language Policy, the teachers’ preparation and notebooks. The Principal was assured that the research would be carried out in the strictest of confidence and that the name of the school or names of teachers
and learners would not be mentioned at all. A copy of the consent form is included in Appendix 1.

Each participant was informed about the nature and purpose of the study, as well as their right to confidentiality and anonymity. They were assured that their participation was voluntary and that they retained the right to withdraw their participation at any time without discrimination. The names of participants or learners mentioned in the text were changed to further protect their privacy. The teachers were also assured that there would be no interference in their teaching or classroom management and that the researcher would take up as little of their time as possible. A consent form, a copy of which is included in Appendix 1, was completed by each participant. Potential benefits of the study such as teachers’ expressed opinions leading to specific training courses or more research multilingual classrooms were discussed. The teachers were invited to read the findings and comment on whether they agreed with them (see Section 4). All participants were also offered the option of reading the completed research essay if they so desired.

Lastly, the audio tapes used in the inquiry and all copies of documents relating to the study will be kept securely until this research essay has been marked and finalised. Thereafter they will be destroyed to further protect the participants in the study.

3.7 CONCLUSION

In this section the research process has been described in detail. The diverse nature of the school in the study was depicted. Reasons were posited for the choice of institution and the participants interviewed in the inquiry. Data collection methods were described in detail and related to relevant research theory. The techniques used in data analysis were explained and examples of each stage of the analysis process were given. The rigorous systematic examination of the data in this way provided a means of describing the lived experience of (these) teachers coping with multilingual classrooms from the
perspectives of the participants themselves. The categories that emerged from this method of data analysis then made up the findings of the inquiry. These findings were then used to give a rich description of teaching within a multilingual classroom.
SECTION 4

DISCUSSION OF MAIN FINDINGS AS THEMES

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Data analysis makes sense of the data that has been collected. The next step in the analysis process is to identify key factors and the relationships between them. In this way the researcher can transcend the factual data and interpret the findings of the inquiry. As this is a research essay with space constraints, only the most prominent findings and those that best illustrate how teachers experience teaching in multilingual classrooms will be described as suggested in Maykut and Morehouse (1993:150). The findings will now be described in the

Figure 4.1 Themes extrapolated from the findings
form of recurring themes. Although some of the themes appear to be fairly dominant, they are all interrelated and influence each other (Figure 4.1).

4.2 TEACHERS’ IMPRESSIONS

The research focus was teaching in multilingual classrooms with the sub-question “how do teachers make sense of teaching in such classrooms?” Whereas all of the participants appear to have accepted quite easily that multilingual classrooms are a natural ongoing consequence of the new South Africa, none of the teachers mentioned any policies regarding language or the constitutional right to choose the language of instruction, let alone their being a causal factor for multilingual classrooms:

I can say that put all these second language children in one class but there you also going to have multi-language where ever you go, whatever you do even if you go to another country the same thing is going to happen..... (Interview 3, lines 87-90).

When asked what they thought the reasons were for the existence of multilingual classes, one teacher gave the example of a child who had moved to the school as his mother, a domestic worker had recently moved with her employers into the area. Another reason given was that a Chinese father wanted his child to learn to speak English. One teacher spoke about the fact that as we are now living in a multi-faceted society, the school should decide whether they want “academic excellence or all-round personal development” (Interview 2, lines 123 -124). The same teacher, while not connecting any changes to the constitutional right to language choice now vested in parents, further commented that Afrikaans used to be the language of instruction for some of the children and that now “we” have standardised it to English.

Each participant in her own way expressed very clearly that it was difficult teaching in a multilingual classroom and repeated that certain aspects of it were very difficult. In fact the predominant feeling is illustrated below:

I think it’s very difficult because a lot of the kids...... (Interview 1, lines 4-5)
It’s difficult because in today’s classrooms the, the classes.... (Interview 2, lines 19-20)
It’s difficult very, very difficult because those children..... (Interview 3, lines 21 -22)
It’s very difficult, very difficult like Mary said … (Group interview, line 25)
Lemmer and Squelch (1991:2) acknowledge that teaching in multicultural and multilingual classrooms is both challenging and demanding. Meanwhile Rounds (1996:45) describes the different cultural mix and native languages of the learners and their different levels of proficiency as contributing to the complex nature of many classrooms today. A different position is taken by Mittler (2000:133) who states that such teaching is not as difficult as it appears, since teachers actually already have the skills and knowledge for success in these environments, but lack confidence in their own competence.

The participants mentioned a number of factors that contribute to making their task more difficult. The main reason given for these difficulties was the fact that a lot of the children did not speak English as a mother tongue. This was noted as being particularly difficult when the children did not speak English at all, having been enrolled in Grade 4 or 5 and not having started at the school in Grade 1:

I've got three children in my class that don’t speak English ..., and they can't speak it they can't read it they're not going to manage work (Interview 1, lines 7-8 and 36-37).

Van Tonder (1999:5) and other scholars assert that a good knowledge of the mother tongue will assist a child in learning a second language more quickly, but he adds that, where basic literacy skills have not been developed in the home language, children may experience difficulty in learning another. The participants bore this out as the repeated complaint was that some of the second language children could not read and write in English, and the teachers needed to adapt and simplify set work:

I decide to include the Zulu, Xhosa and Sotho words as well...they were not able to tell me the correct word automatically but needed prompting (Researcher's journal, lines 124-126).

One teacher said that one did not always have time to explain things to those children and they get left behind, while others said that they should be at a certain level of proficiency before being accepted into the school but also acknowledged that children can’t be turned away. Another problem was that if there was not another child in the class who could translate or be paired with the newcomer and then it became particularly difficult. Some teachers said that those children should be started at a Grade 1 level to help them understand.
Since most of these teachers were Intermediate Phase teachers, so they did not really know how to teach Grade 1 language skills.

**Communication** appeared to be a big concern as all the participants mentioned battling to get the children to understand what they should be doing. Even when allowing other children to translate, they were still unsure as to whether the translation was correct or not. They gave the impression that they felt they were losing control:

..they don’t understand me and I don’t understand them (Interview 1, lines 76-77)
..you don’t know if the child is translating properly.. (Group interview, line 107)

but the only problem is their home languages, they still speak English it’s just that they have a problem with comprehending what we do in class (Group interview, lines 16 -17).

**Time** is a factor, as more than one teacher mentioned a lack of time to spend with these children. The time factor was linked to the number of learners in the class, as almost all of the teachers said that they would be able to do “more” if there were fewer children in the class:

..and that’s time consuming so it’s not easy (Group interview, lines 12 -13).
..I think when, when you’ve got 33 children in the class and 45 minute lessons that’s you know kind of a minute per child (Interview 1, lines 356 -358).

They mentioned that when they were busy explaining or assisting second language learners the other more capable children became bored or needed extra work to prevent them from becoming a **behaviour problem**. The participants found the balance between the different levels of competence in their classrooms hard to manage. The issue of children misbehaving came up regularly in discussion about accommodating second language learners. They were worried that either the rest of the class would misbehave or the children who did not understand would become disruptive. This appeared to be quite a dilemma.

The time consuming additional task of having to prepare extension worksheets for the more competent children or easier work for those children who could not understand was also described as being difficult, because it was not part of normal **preparation**. In the same vein, some teachers said that they needed to adapt their lessons by using other methods to communicate, for example
pictures. But again, this was difficult and time-consuming and perceived as an extra demand. Nevertheless, while the teachers claimed to adapt their lessons and worksheets there was no actual evidence of this in any of the lessons observed, nor in the units of preparation perused by the researcher. It appears as if these tasks are so overwhelming that they are overlooked most of the time due to other demands on the teacher. This is illustrated by what one of the teachers said:

..I just feel that I’m caught up in a rut and the work load is too much, the admin is too much, that is what, that instead of attending to your, your kids who need you, you rather sit because you need to send in your admin..(Interview 3 lines 225 – 229).

There is a genuine concern amongst all the teachers about the second language learners and how they would like to be able to help and teach them more adequately, as shown by the following excerpt:

Well it’s just like I said because of the explaining, it is difficult, at the end of the day I’m just thinking what has this child learnt? (Group interview, lines 421 – 423).

Concern was also expressed for the future of the second language learners in how the teachers felt pressured by the conflict of trying to help them catch up and prepare them for high school and yet at the same time feeling incapable of doing this. More than one teacher described the situation as being “unfair” on the children and as inhibiting their learning:

and it’s placing a lot of pressure on us trying to get that child to pass and go into high school (Group interview, lines 174 -176).

..I mean when I got little Thabo .. I said it’s, it’s unfair on him, never mind on me.. (Group interview, lines 433 – 434).

Each of the participants went on to describe the difficulties as leading to irritation and frustration, as being stressful and ultimately as damaging their self confidence and self-esteem, almost to the point of feeling helpless. They mentioned more than once that when they went home and reflected that some children had not really learnt anything, they were perturbed and felt bad about themselves:

..Well I think what I don’t like, let me start with that, is the frustration and not doing enough with them and that’s very disturbing and I, and I didn’t like, I didn’t feel good about that... (Interview 2, lines 455-458).

The apparent lack of progress made by the second language learners and the
rest of the children in the class was another disconcerting factor for the teachers. They felt that they were working very hard to help these children learn and at the same time complete the required units of work. However, they did not see the results and progress amongst their learners that they were expecting and this again gave rise to feelings of frustration. Some blamed the problem on a lack of motivation on the part of the learners, while others complained of a lack of support and acknowledgement:

  Its not that we don't know how to teach or what to teach it's just the receptiveness of the children… (Group interview, lines 116 -117)
  …your confidence takes a knock as if you were used to getting a certain standard and then all of a sudden you feel as if you know like what am I doing wrong you know although you've adapted your teaching you're trying to change, you're trying to teach sometimes you just feel why I'm not getting through (Group interview, lines 147 -153).

Two of the teachers said that they often felt like giving up and changing their careers, but they still went back to school the next day to try again. Some of this helplessness appears to stem from the teachers not knowing how to teach basic language skills. It may also be because they do not understand the way children acquire first or second language. Whereas all the participants were apparently honest about their efforts, it emerged that many felt that they were not trained or properly equipped to teach in this way. This is the prerequisite mentioned by Brown (1994:1) when he stated that teachers should be aware of the nature and components of language and how it is acquired.

On a more positive note, the participants acknowledged that while the actual teaching might have been a problem, multilingual classes were interesting and had taught them a lot. Their knowledge of different cultures had increased, as had that of all the children in their classes. Many of the children were learning phrases and words of other languages during normal interaction at school, and all but one participant agreed that on the whole the children were accepting of each other and the diverse nature of their school environment.

4.3 TEACHERS’ KNOWLEDGE

Most of the teachers interviewed felt that they were ‘good’ teachers but the
circumstances in which they found themselves was unfair on all concerned. It did not appear as if they were against inclusion per se, but only that the language issue was the problem:

I think it’s unfair for the kids as well, because it’s a like the one child I’ve got he’s a very intelligent child, but the only reason why he’s not doing well is that he’s finding it difficult to understand... its not his fault, its not mine its just the language (Group interview, lines 43-48).

This statement generated a discussion about how the teachers would like to be able to speak some of the other official languages of South Africa, although it would be difficult to choose which one, as all language groups were represented in the school. A similar issue concerning inability to speak other languages arose while discussing the practice of allowing children to translate for a child who could not yet speak English. Most of the participants expressed unhappiness with this method as they lacked control over what was being said because they were unable to speak the language at hand:

...you don’t know if the child is translating properly coz you don’t speak the language yourself (Group interview, lines 107 -108).

Notwithstanding the practical aspect of actually speaking other languages, the general consensus amongst the participants was that they felt unable to teach the second language learners adequately mostly because of insufficient knowledge about the teaching of Basic English language skills. Because all were trained as Intermediate Phase teachers they did not have the same knowledge and insights as Foundation Phase teachers have for teaching beginning reading, spelling and writing skills:

..or if you’ve been involved with the lower grades and they learn to read and phonics and that sort of thing then you’ll be able to… (Interview 2, lines 251 -253).

The participants also mentioned that they did not know which levels the children were actually working on or how to assess these levels. They felt that there was a “structure” that they were unaware of that would help them know at which “level” to place the children, and then they would learn more easily:

..they didn’t actually tell us how difficult it really was and how difficult all these different things, all these different cultures and languages and different levels of children and you know and how difficult it all really is to kind of put together and keep control of.. (Interview 1, lines 452 – 457).

Another area where teachers felt inadequately equipped was related to culture.
They all said that culture had an impact on their teaching but were not able to articulate what the effect was. One teacher said that she had bought a book about cultural differences to help her and the other children understand what some of the different practices were that might cause cultural misunderstandings or disruptions in class. Another said that it seemed that some of the black children had forgotten their cultural backgrounds, so cultural issues were not really relevant. This would confirm the fears of people such as Maroba (2004) and Nicol (2004) as quoted in Section 2, who stated that if children do not learn in their mother tongue they will lose their cultural values.

This perceived lack of knowledge contributes to the feelings of frustration and inadequacy felt by most participants at one time or another in the classroom. Numerous references were made to second language learners being “left behind”, “pushed aside” or “lost” in the classroom. Modiba (2003: 57) acknowledges that teachers in South Africa are not really being equipped to face the challenges of teaching in multicultural classrooms. Tiedt and Tiedt (2002:410) take the issue further by stating that, to be successful in a multilingual, multicultural classroom, teachers need to be empowered. This sense of empowerment originates from having enough basic knowledge about multiculturalism to be confident in the classroom. They concur that empowerment is largely an intrinsic force coming from within the teacher, but that feelings of confidence and esteem can be enhanced by ensuring that teachers have been afforded the opportunity to develop their knowledge and skills. This knowledge would include basic language acquisition skills, pedagogic theory and issues concerning multilingual education practices in line with current educational policy.

4.4 TEACHING METHODS

According to Vista University’s Educator’s Guide (2003:51), teachers in multilingual classrooms should combine different methods for successful learning to take place. Each participant did mention that she used different methods to help second language children who had difficulty understanding. These methods included placing children in groups, pairing them with another child who was able
to translate instructions, preparing easier work, individual attention and the use of pictures to explain concepts. Nevertheless the general feeling was that group work or one-on-one interaction seemed to be the most successful:

..I do it individually with them but when it’s group work and things like that I get learners who are able to help them a lot and I sit there and I help them.. (Interview 3, lines 34 -37).

During observation it was noted that the teachers’ did most of the talking in the classroom as Bryan (2000:608) notes. In the Afrikaans lesson, the teacher actually translated most of the words for the children so that they could understand the comprehension passage being studied:

The teacher reads the first sentence, the children shout out, “what’s this word, what’s that word”, the teacher translates almost every word (Observation 3, lines 53 -54).

Agnihotri (1995:7) suggests that multilingualism can be used as a resource in the classroom. Cazden (2001:162) recommends that a child’s home language be used to enhance the learning of concepts in a second language. However when the researcher posed the question about allowing the children to use different languages in the classroom as suggested above, there was a mixed response. While most of the participants were happy to allow limited conversation in mother tongue languages, they felt apprehensive as they could not control what was being said. Two of teachers felt that because the LOLT of the school was English, the only way the children with a language barrier would improve their skills was to speak as much English as possible:

because if you allow them to speak in their own language you actually not encouraging them to learn another… (Interview 2, lines 227-229).

No mention was made by the teachers of the recommendations in the RNCS language document, nor of the Language in Education Policy.

4.5 THE TEACHERS’ NEED FOR SUPPORT

The plea for support of various forms for both the teachers and the second language learners was perceptible throughout all of the interviews. The teachers talked about specialized teachers, bridging classes, extra mural classes and classes arranged in conjunction with other schools in the area as being options for teaching English literacy skills to help second language learners catch up and
cope in their respective grades. ‘Fast tracking’, the practice of accelerating the learning of language barrier children through different grade levels, was discussed as an option but the participants could not agree on the merits of this method. Some of the participants voiced the opinion that the Education Department should provide them with some type of syllabus, or step-by-step programme which would enable the teachers to teach second language learners more successfully:

I think that, that there needs to be um actual, maybe a syllabus or um a whole lot of structured work for the language barrier children.. (Interview 2, lines 130 -133).
.. so there should be a structured um system whatever in place to help us to deal with these kind of children.. (Group interview, lines 310 -313).

All participants were unanimous in their assertion that they had not had any training in second language teaching or in language acquisition skills. One teacher suggested that she felt that a course related to second language teaching in multilingual classrooms would be far more beneficial for them than some of the courses they had had to attend. Every one of the participants agreed that they would like to know more about the phenomenon of multilingualism and second language learning.

Other proposals for support included meeting with other teachers from other schools in the area, similar to the present cluster meetings, but with a view to sharing ideas, programmes and support. They believed this would help them realise that they were not the only ones feeling stressed about the challenges of teaching linguistically diverse children. In a sense this idea concurs with McGroarty (1996: 31), who recommends that teachers meet with colleagues to find ways of adapting their teaching effectively to help children with language barriers. Richards and Lockhart (1994:1-3) note that as teachers often say that many of the traditional approaches to teaching do not generate enough practical help, teachers themselves should evaluate their own teaching practice in a reflective manner. This would help them make changes to their teaching, and enable them to develop their own successful strategies. The encouraging aspect of my discussion with the participants was that all wished to extend their knowledge in this area and were willingly to learn more about the theory and strategies for improving effective learning in their multilingual classrooms.
4.6 TEACHERS’ COMMENTS ON THE FINDINGS

Five of the six participants were invited to read this section on the findings and to record their comments. Each participant agreed with the findings saying that they were a “fair analysis of what was discussed”. Two of the participants added further comments about the fact that South Africa is a multicultural, multilingual country and that it is the duty of the teachers to adapt and find ways to teach second language learners:

We as teachers have to learn to adapt and make time to educate these learners (Participant 3, lines 15 -16).

… Very fair, you’ve captured everybody’s opinions and views (Participant 4, line 20).

4.7 CONCLUSION

The findings of the inquiry have been described as themes, with interrelated sub themes. The main finding was that teachers experience teaching multilingual classes as difficult. A number of different factors, such as communication, inability to speak a second language, discipline and a lack of training and support, were cited as contributing to the challenge. Each of the participants also spoke about the need for support, and suggested various forms that such support could take. On the positive side, the teachers felt that they had learnt a lot from their teaching experiences and that although the teaching was challenging, multilingualism added “sparkle” to the classroom.

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1 One of the participants had left the school and could not be asked to comment.
SECTION 5

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this section an overview of the research inquiry and all its facets will be presented. The findings will be summarised and the implications of the study discussed. Limitations of the study will also be examined; thereafter recommendations resulting from the findings and discussions will be outlined.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

As a result of the introduction of the new Constitution in South Africa in 1996 and the political changes that have occurred over the last decade of democracy, the right to choose the language of instruction now rests with the individual. Parents have exercised this right and enrolled their children in English medium schools: as a consequence many classrooms in the country have become multilingual and multicultural. Schools have therefore had to adapt to meet the challenge of teaching linguistically diverse learners while still maintaining educationally acceptable standards. Teachers in these classrooms now teach children whose mother tongue differs from the LOLT of the school. In my experience I found that some of these teachers appear to respond to such children either by labelling them as “remedial cases” or by stating that they can not teach them until they can speak English. The purpose of this inquiry was then both to describe how these teachers experienced teaching in multilingual classes with a view to suggesting recommendations for other teachers in the same position.

A literature review was undertaken which built a logical theoretical framework within which to locate the inquiry. To be able to understand and describe the practice and response of teachers in multilingual South African classrooms the context in which they occur was examined. To this end a brief historical
background was depicted of language in the South African context, leading up to the introduction of democracy and the new Constitution. Inclusion and its effect on educational policy in South Africa was explored in the light of the acceptance of diversity as a natural phenomenon of a multicultural society. The Language in Education policy and its impact on the RNCS was acknowledged. Thereafter different terms such as “bilingualism” and the various types of “bilingual education” were clarified. Second language acquisition and different approaches to second language learning were discussed, as well as the influence that culture has on language. Teachers’ attitudes and beliefs concerning language, learning, teaching and culture were acknowledged as being important contributors to success in a multilingual classroom. This theoretical framework was then used to investigate and report on how teachers make sense of teaching in a multilingual classroom.

The school where the inquiry took place is an ex-Model C school situated on the East Rand. The LOLT of the school is English, however only 53.9% of the children attending the school speak English as a home language. The group of participants was small yet purposefully limited as the six teachers chosen to participate comprised an informative rich sample. The criteria for selection were that the participants had to be teaching at a state school through the medium of English in a multilingual classroom (i.e. where the children speak at least three or four different home languages). The participating teachers were all Intermediate Phase teachers of either Grade 4 or Grade 5 learners, which portrayed a wide level of competency as far as language skills were concerned. Pseudonyms were used to assure participants of confidentiality and anonymity and they had right to withdraw their participation at any time without any resulting discrimination.

The objective of the inquiry was to describe and understand the interactions in a multilingual classroom and how teachers make meaning in that particular context. A qualitative research design was therefore the preferred research method for this study. Data was collected by means of semi-structured individual and group interviews, as well as classroom observations. The latter concentrated mainly on teaching methods and the language interaction within the classroom. I kept a
researcher’s journal and collected various documents to compare with the data obtained from the interviews. In order to achieve a deep understanding of the lived experience from the participants’ viewpoint, the data was systematically examined. Transcripts from the interviews, observation sessions and the journal were analysed and codes and categories were determined and later formulated into themes. Qualitative research is largely interpretive and seeks to describe meaning from the perspective of the participants. To this end, a rich, thick description was written interpreting the lived experience of the participants against the theoretical guidelines constructed in Section 2. Provisions for trustworthiness in validity (authenticity) and reliability (consistency) were ensured through triangulation, which is the use of different methods of data collection and the creation of an audit trail. All audio tapes, transcripts and documents have been kept and are available for inspection to anyone who wishes to verify the research process. Five of the six participants were invited to read the description of the findings and to comment thereafter. All five agreed that the findings were a true reflection of their experiences in multilingual classrooms. The research was done as ethically as possible.

5.3 CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM THE FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

The following main findings emerged in answer to the research problem of how teachers experience teaching in multilingual classrooms. Participants found teaching in a multilingual classroom interesting, but the actual teaching was very difficult. The teachers expressed stress, frustration and feelings of incompetence and lowered self esteem principally when the children did not appear to progress. The teachers cited poor communication resulting from second language learners not being able to understand classroom interaction, especially if the children had not yet learnt any Basic English skills. Another factor was a perceived inability to accommodate different levels of proficiency in the class, particularly when the children could neither read nor write in their home language either. Time was another problematic factor, as was the administrative work involved in doing extra preparation (in addition to the required paper work). The teachers reported that they used different methods in the classroom to teach second language learners,
with group-work and one-on-one teaching as being the most effective methods. As Intermediate Phase teachers, their own lack of knowledge and inexperience in teaching Basic English skills contributed to their job difficulties. All the participants believed that they needed support to be able to do their work more effectively. The nature of the support they suggested varied from additional training to specialised teachers to resource material provided by the Education Department. All participants expressed willingness to learn more about multilingualism and strategies for improving effective learning in their classrooms.

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH INQUIRY

The study was conducted by a single researcher for purposes of a research essay and was limited to one particular context, namely a specific primary school on the East Rand where the LOLT was English. The participants were six Intermediate Phase teachers teaching Grades 4 and Grades 5; teachers teaching other Grades at the school may have attributed different meanings to these experiences.

The researcher was only concerned with how these specific teachers constructed meaning in the context of teaching second language learners in multilingual classrooms. As a research essay is subject to a limited focus, this study did not explore other factors within the school that could also have had a bearing on the lived experience of these teachers, such as the effect of the School’s Code of Conduct or their relationships with one another and/or the School Management Team (SMT). Owing to the constraints of a research essay, the time available for the completion of the research inquiry was also limited.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

Rounds (1996:45) says that multilingual classrooms can be very complex environments, especially when one considers the differing levels of proficiency of the children, their different home languages, cultures, learning styles, attitudes and motivation. The findings of this study have shown this to be the case at this
particular school. Because of the diverse nature of such classrooms, some general guidelines for accommodating multilingual learners have been included in Appendix 7. The following specific recommendations will be discussed in the light of the results of this particular study.

Inclusion is described as a “journey” by Mittler (2003:133-134), who adds that on this journey, teachers have a right to expect proper **professional development and support**. He states that such training must prepare teachers to teach all children and at the same time allow for opportunities to have their fears about inclusion addressed. He suggests that teachers need time to work through and accept changes without group pressure. It is in this area that the teachers in the study feel let down. Their perceptions are that they have not been given enough support. It is important to ensure that in the restructuring of the whole school, inclusion practices do not exclude the teachers’ views and need for support.

Secondly, Van Tonder (1999:7) suggests that teachers should be exposed to a programme that promotes the understanding of behaviours peculiar to **second language acquisition**. He distinguishes those behaviours from others that actually indicate a learning problem. Such a programme would include topics such as BICS and CALP and recommendations on the use of other languages in the class and “code switching”. This knowledge would help teachers with differentiation and the planning of strategies that use different learning styles to ensure each child’s learning, so that all children can participate in lessons and make progress. This learning could take the form of INSET courses or workshops. The focus of the training should be on developing teacher thinking rather than instructional skills as teacher thinking affects the quality of learning in the classroom more (Watkins, 2003:243). The teachers in this study expressed the desire to learn more about **language acquisition and development** as they felt “things like that are more important, like the languages and how you do it” (Group interview, lines 298-299). This would also include clarification of the language policy and the understanding of how and when to apply Home Language assessment standards, as described in the RNCS. The teachers also need to know when to assess second language learners on First Additional
Language assessment standards. These sentiments are echoed by Young (1995:109) who recommends that teachers in South Africa should attend Language Awareness programmes. Fundamental questions such as how languages are acquired, the relationship between language and thinking and the role of parents in language acquisition are addressed in such programmes.

In the same vein, these teachers need training and confidence in using multilingualism as a resource in the classroom without being afraid of losing control due to erroneous peer translations. Damien (2003:83) terms this occurrence “interpretive translation” and defines it as using different languages to express the same meanings, which increases proficiency and facilitates understanding. Teachers need to be trained in the use of more than one official language in the classroom at tertiary institutions so that they can enter multilingual school classrooms more confidently. New resource materials (Van Tonder, 1999:9) that facilitate learning in more than one language need to be accessed to make the use of more than one language in the classroom more practical.

Collaborative teaching as described by Mittler (2003:123) where there is more than one teacher in a class, is another solution. Two classes can be combined and the teachers take it in turns to teach, support each other and help the children. Lay assistants such as unemployed parents, grandparents or older children in the school who speak different languages can be used to facilitate communication and give feedback to the teacher (Richard-Amato, 1988:190).

Moreover, teachers can be encouraged to become more reflective in their teaching practice. Reflective teaching practice according to Richards and Lockhart (1994:1-2) occurs when teachers examine their own teaching. One way for teachers to do this is by collecting information about teaching in order to examine their beliefs and assumptions critically, and to decide whether any aspects of their teaching could be changed to become more effective. Critical reflection could be done either individually or in groups. The teachers in this study confirmed that they would like to meet with other teachers from other
schools to commiserate and share ideas. Mittler (2000:122) proposes that teachers meet regularly to discuss general concerns relating to barriers to learning and how to ensure participation of all groups of children in the learning process. He states that it should not be a formal meeting under the control of the SMT but rather teachers helping themselves and making their own decisions. The need for support expressed by the teachers during interviews could be met in this way.

5.6 IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this inquiry have implications for further research in this field. As these teachers found teaching in a multilingual classroom difficult and stressful, there would probably be other teachers in the same position. This could also be the case at schools where the LOLT is one of the other official languages. A larger study involving more schools, could determine whether this is the situation or not. Rounds (1996:59) asserts that we have a responsibility to study and research second language classrooms to increase our understanding of learning and teaching. This is very pertinent to the South African situation, as the context and languages spoken are quite different to those where most research has been done.

The participants in this particular context were not able to use multilingualism as a resource in the classroom; therefore an action research project could be initiated whereby teachers are enabled to use this valuable resource. Other research studies could be undertaken to determine the precise need for support with a view to designing specific INSET courses to meet these particular needs.

5.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Agnihotri (1995:5) states that the most densely populated regions of the world are multilingual and that children don’t necessarily find learning another language problematic. Duff and Early (1996:4) declare that worldwide there is a “mushrooming population” of second language learners receiving their education
through the medium of English. This is true for many schools in South Africa and in particular at the school used in this inquiry. While Mittler (2003:133) maintains that the task is not as difficult as it seems as teachers have most of the knowledge but just lack confidence in own competence, the teachers in this study found teaching in multilingual classrooms difficult. They expressed the need for emotional and educational support. Tiedt and Tiedt (2002:409) confirms this need for support as teachers assume new roles in the managing of inclusive classrooms and the teaching of more diverse learners. This is also the conclusion reached by the researcher in this inquiry. Teachers need more support either in their initial training courses or in the form of INSET courses to build their confidence to teach multilingual children.
REFERENCE LIST


APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Consent Letters

APPENDIX 2: Guideline Interview Questions

APPENDIX 3: Key used in Transcription of Interviews and Observations

APPENDIX 4: List of Codes and Categories

APPENDIX 5: Examples of Data Analysis

APPENDIX 6: Codes and Categories

APPENDIX 7: General Guidelines for Teaching in a Multilingual Classroom
Appendix 1

RESEARCH STUDY Consent Letter

Dear Principal,

My name is Liz Hooijer and I am currently a Master’s student at RAU. My field of study is Educational and Learning Support. Part of the requirements of the Master’s degree is a research essay on a topic in this field. I have chosen to investigate how teachers make sense of teaching in multilingual classrooms. The purpose of the study is therefore to understand how teachers in multilingual classrooms, manage to teach and include children who can’t speak the medium of instruction as a first language.

To this end I would like your permission to interview three or four teachers on your staff to find out what their experiences of this situation are. The investigation would include the answering of questions, observing the children in their classes, looking at their books and the school’s Mission Statement and Language Policies and discussing lesson plans. The interviews will take place during a teacher’s free time or after school hours. I can assure you that there will be no interference with the teaching or classroom management of the teachers concerned.

The results of my investigation will be written up in the strictest of confidence. The name of the school, names of teachers interviewed or the names of the learners will not be mentioned at all. Views and responses will be completely anonymous and nobody besides myself or my supervisor will be aware of who the participants were. Any teacher’s participation will be entirely voluntary and they will retain the right to withdraw their participation at any point without discrimination. If you have any questions, I can be contacted at the number below.

Teachers will be able to voice their opinions concerning teaching multilingual classes and to describe their experiences. This could lead to more support being given to teachers in this situation as well as further research being done in this area. If you are interested, feedback can be provided to you and a summary or copy of the research essay can be made available to you.

Thank you for your help.

Liz Hooijer (Cell phone number)

________________________________________

I __________________________, have read the above information and hereby give permission for teachers on my staff to participate in this study.

Signed __________________________ Date: __________________________
RESEARCH STUDY Consent Letter

Dear Teacher

My name is Liz Hooijer and I am currently a Master's student at RAU. My field of study is Educational and Learning Support. Part of the requirements of the Master's degree is a research essay on a topic in this field. I have chosen to investigate how teachers make sense of teaching in multilingual classrooms. The purpose of the study is therefore to understand how teachers in multilingual classrooms, manage to teach and include children who can't speak the medium of instruction as a first language.

To this end I would like to interview yourself and a number of other teachers to find out what your experiences of this situation are. The investigation would include the answering of questions, observing the children in your classroom, looking at their books and discussing lesson plans. I can assure you that there will be no interference with your teaching or classroom management and that I will endeavor to take up as little of your time as possible.

The results of my investigation will be written up in the strictest of confidence. The name of the school, names of teachers interviewed or the names of the learners will not be mentioned at all. Views and responses will be completely anonymous and nobody besides myself or my supervisor will be aware of who the participants were. Your participation will be entirely voluntary and you will retain the right to withdraw your participation at any point without discrimination. If you have any questions, I can be contacted at the number below.

You will be able to give your opinion concerning teaching multilingual classes and to describe your experiences. This could lead to more support being given to teachers in this situation as well as further research being done in this area. If you are interested, feedback can be provided to you and a summary or copy of the research essay can be made available to you.

Thank you for your help.

Liz Hooijer (cell phone number)

_____________________________________

I __________________________, have read the above information and hereby consent to my participation in this study.

Signed: ___________________________ Date: ___________________
APPENDIX 2

GUIDELINE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. At our school you are faced with children in class who speak three or four different home languages and yet the medium of instruction is English. How do you and your colleagues cope with this?

2. How do you feel about teaching children who can’t speak or understand the medium of instruction properly?

3. How do you manage to include different language speakers in all lessons?

4. What teaching methods do you find work best?

5. What are the biggest problems that you face?

6. How do the children in your classes differ from your expectations?

7. How does this impact on your teaching?

8. Can you suggest any better solutions?

9. What role if any does culture play?

10. Some people say that you should allow the children to use different languages in class – What is your opinion about this?

11. You were trained to teach through the medium of English, what do you know about second language learners and language acquisition in general?

12. What kind of support if any, do you think teachers should be given?

13. What positive changes has multilingualism brought about?

14. What particular aspects of multilingualism do you find problematic

15. To sum up how would you describe your teaching experience in a multilingual classroom?
APPENDIX 3

KEY used in transcriptions of interviews and observations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SYMBOL</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Researcher asks a question. Question and any other comment made by the researcher in the interviews were typed in bold.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2:</td>
<td>Participant’s response to the question. Each participant was given a number from 1 through to 6.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(italic)</td>
<td>Writing in italic and in brackets reflects researchers own comments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x x x</td>
<td>These denote words that could not be deciphered; the number of x’s shows the approximate number of words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ dog?]</td>
<td>Square brackets were used to indicate words that were not clear and the question mark to show that the researcher guessed the word.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laughing and non verbal gestures</td>
<td>These were shown in brackets like this: (chuckles)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underlined words.</td>
<td>Words that the participant emphasised were underlined.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>……</td>
<td>Continuous dots were used to denote pauses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(L2) Underlined words in a different font</td>
<td>Denotes Afrikaans words.</td>
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</table>

## APPENDIX 4

### LIST OF CODES AND CATEGORIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CODES</th>
<th>CODES CONTINUED</th>
<th>CATEGORIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Difficult for teacher (DT)</td>
<td>36. Workload (WkL)</td>
<td>Communication problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Not enough time (T)</td>
<td>37. Attitude to colleagues (AC)</td>
<td>Teacher’s knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Lang. teaching as extra mural (XM)</td>
<td>38. Job satisfaction (JS)</td>
<td>Teacher’s impressions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Children at different levels (DL)</td>
<td>39. Multilingualism (M)</td>
<td>Support for teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Academic and emotional problems (AEP)</td>
<td>40. Lack of appreciation (Lapp)</td>
<td>Support for L2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Teacher frustrated (TF)</td>
<td>41. Change (CH)</td>
<td>Classroom management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Language Barrier (LB)</td>
<td>42. Proficiency level (PL)</td>
<td>Teaching Methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Slow progress (SP)</td>
<td>43. Can’t speak English (CE)</td>
<td>Positive effects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Learning difficulties (LD)</td>
<td>44. Support teacher (SupT)</td>
<td>Awareness of change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Separate schools (SS)</td>
<td>45. Teacher feels inadequate (Tina)</td>
<td>Influence of culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Private schools/ bridging classes (PS/BC)</td>
<td>46. Resources needed (RN)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Transport difficulties (TD)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Ethos of school (SE)</td>
<td>47. Disadvantaged background (Db/g)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Curriculum/ programmes (C/P)</td>
<td>48. Teachers lack of experience (Texp)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Co operation with other schools (OS)</td>
<td>49. Teachers knowledge base (TK)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Cultural differences (CD)</td>
<td>50. Expands knowledge (ExK)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Behaviour problems (BP)</td>
<td>51. Teacher’s language skills (Tlang)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Acceptance of change (Ch)</td>
<td>52. Afrikaans (Afr)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Attitude to LOLT (LOLT)</td>
<td>53. L2 lack basic skills (L2sk)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Use of other langs. in class (OL)</td>
<td>54. Use pictures (pic)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Taught lower grades (FP)</td>
<td>55. Translation (Tr)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Need for training courses (TC)</td>
<td>56. Group work (GW)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Support Groups (Sup)</td>
<td>57. Individual attention (IA)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Atmosphere in class (Cat)</td>
<td>58. Peer tutors (Ptut)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Parents/ parental choice (P)</td>
<td>59. Preparation &amp; planning (P&amp;P)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. History of SA (SAH)</td>
<td>60. Reasons for Multilingual class (RM)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Resources ( R)</td>
<td>61. Language acquisition (LQ)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Assessment (Ass)</td>
<td>62. Easier work (EW)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. L2 struggle (L2S)</td>
<td>63. New curriculum (NW)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Inclusion (Inc)</td>
<td>64. Teacher learnt a lot (TL)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Reading (Rd)</td>
<td>65. Children accepting of each other (CAc)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Learner’s motivation (LM)</td>
<td>66. Different cultures interesting (DCI)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Learner’s attitude (LA)</td>
<td>67. 11 official languages (Olang.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Monitoring of L2 (L2M)</td>
<td>68. Cultural misunderstandings (CM)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Teacher’s control (Con)</td>
<td>69. Policy documents (PD)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 5

EXAMPLES OF DATA ANALYSIS

Various extracts have been taken from the researcher’s journal, interviews and the documents perused to show how semantic units of raw data were coded during the process of content analysis.

**Researcher’s journal**

An example of raw data taken from the researcher’s journal, dated February 2004.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEMANTIC UNIT</th>
<th>CODE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24/02 SBST meeting – the second language/ language barrier policy was discussed.</td>
<td>(LB) 7. Language barrier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The LO HOD (chairperson) said that these children are not to be referred to me and can’t be included in my support programme.</td>
<td>(SupT) 44. Support teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teachers must use “capable learners” in groups to assist these children,</td>
<td>(GW) 56. Group work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When told that this sometimes doesn’t work – told that nonsense it works every time so the teachers must do it.</td>
<td>(AC) 37. Attitude to colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers very unhappy about this</td>
<td>(Tina) 45. Teacher feels inadequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/03 I was asked to compile “booklets” at different levels to “spoonfeed” teachers because they are not helping the learners with language barriers.</td>
<td>(R) 27. Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The booklets are to be targeted at language barrier kids who can’t speak/read/write English at grade level.</td>
<td>(L2sk) 53. L2 lack basic skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/03 Teachers told that I’m making the booklets and asked to give a list of names of learners with language barriers so the booklets can be given to them to take home and do.</td>
<td>(LB) 7. Language barriers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I suggested that the teachers should rather use these as a guide to help children in class when they couldn’t do grade work.</td>
<td>(R) 27. Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/03 During a support class lesson with the Grade 4’s while we were negotiating class rules and discussing rights and responsibilities and the children were suggesting rules for our class – one of them said that a rule should be that they can’t speak in their own languages in class.</td>
<td>(OL) 20. Use of other languages in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/03 While teaching the Grade 2’s maths and to explain the concepts of before and after which the children were struggling with</td>
<td>(LD) 9. Learning difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>introduced the Zulu words “phambili” and “emvua” …</td>
<td>(M) 39. Multilingualism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interview data
An example of raw data taken from Interview 3, dated 5th August 2004.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEMANTIC UNIT</th>
<th>CODES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question: How do you and the other teachers experience teaching in a multilingual classroom? Participant 3: It's very difficult, very, very difficult, because those children require individual attention, because some of them speak different languages from the kids in your class, who can help them you know, cooperative learning, but it's become very difficult because you sometimes you tend to get a discipline problem, and when you teach your mainstream kids, your you know, first language you find and then when you go to assist the others your kids are going off at a tangent, and it is difficult at times very difficult. Q: Is there a way that you can manage to include all the different language speakers in all the lessons? P3: Well recently that's what I've done, well I felt that uhh when it comes to written work there I do it individually with them, but when it's group work and things like that I get learners who are able to help them a lot and I sit there and help them and I tend to put them in their own group so they can help each other and it works I mean even though they speak different languages they able to help each other and I give them an instruction, I simplify it down for them. Q: So what teaching methods would you say actually work? P3: Group work, Co operative learning Individual attention I mean there you have to do that, you as a teacher have to do some extra work and try to explain this to kids, you can't say oh you speak another language goodbye.</td>
<td>(DT) 1. Difficult for teacher (IA) 57. Individual attention (LB) 7. Language barrier (Ptut) 58. Peer tutoring (BP) 17. Behaviour problems (P&amp;P) 59. Preparation and planning (DT) 1. Difficult for teacher (IA) 57. Individual attention (GW) 56. Group work (Ptut) 58. Peer tutoring (EW) 62. Easier work (GW) 56. Group work (IA) 57. Individual attention (WKL) 36. Workload (LB) 7. Language barrier</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### GRADE 4 MINUTE BOOK 24/05/2004

| Academic problems: Three lists of names noted, Gr 4.1 7 names, Gr 4.2 6 names and Gr 4.3 6 names. | (LD) 9. Learning difficulties |
| Going to Support teacher, gets individual attention in class, have peers next to them to facilitate, and there’s corrective teaching. | (SupT) 44. Support teacher |
|                                                                                       | (IA) 57. Individual attention |
|                                                                                       | (Ptut) 58. Peer tutoring |

### SCHOOL LANGUAGE POLICY

| 1.5 No pupil at this school will be penalised for expressing him/herself in a language that is not the language of teaching and learning. | (OL) 20. Use of other languages in class |
| 2.2 The preservation of the home languages, whilst at the same time to make accessible the use of other languages. | (OL) 20. Use of other languages in class |
| 2.3 The support to master more than one language. | (M) 39. Multilingualism |

### RNCS INTERMEDIATE PHASE GENERIC TRAINING JULY 2004

| P106 What is your understanding of additive multilingualism? | (TK) 49. Teacher’s knowledge base. |
| Does your school context require additive multilingualism? | (LB) 7. Language barrier |
| Are teachers allowed to use more than one language when presenting an activity to a class? Explain. | (OL) 20. Use of other languages |
| What challenges do you foresee in this regard? | (AC) 18. Acceptance of change |
| As an inclusivity requirement how can one manage multilingual classes? | (Inc) 30. Inclusion |

For examination purposes a copy of all raw data; the interview transcripts, observation notes and the researcher’s journal was handed in, in electronic format.
APPENDIX 6
CODES AND CATEGORIES

List of how the codes were matched with each category.

Communication problem
4. Children at different levels (DL)
7. Language barrier (LB)
19. Attitude to LOLT (LOLT)
20. Use of other languages in class (OL)
29. L2 struggle (L2S)
42. Proficiency level (PL)
43. Can’t speak English (CE)

Teacher’s knowledge
21. Taught lower grades (FP)
26. History of SA (SAH)
31. Reading (Rd)
48. Teacher’s lack of experience (Texp)
49. Teacher’s knowledge base (TK)
51. Teacher’s language skills (Tlang)
61. Language acquisition (LQ)

Teacher’s impressions
1. Difficult for teacher (DT)
5. Academic and emotional problems (AEP)
6. Teacher frustrated (TF)
8. Slow progress (SP)
9. Learning difficulties (LD)
32. Learner’s motivation (LM)
33. Learner’s attitude (LA)
36. Work load (WkL)
37. Attitude to colleagues (AC)
40. Lack of appreciation (Lapp)
45. Teacher feels inadequate (Tina)
53. L2 lack basic skills (L2sk)

Support for teachers
3. Lang. teaching as extra mural (XM)
11. Private schools/bridging classes (PS/BC)
15. Cooperation with other schools (OS)
21. Need for training courses (TC)
23. Support groups (SG)
34. Monitoring of L2 (L2M)
43. Support teacher (SupT)
45. Resources needed (RN)
Classroom management

2. Not enough time (T)
14. Curriculum/Programmes (C/P)
17. Behaviour problems (BP)
24. Atmosphere in class (Cat)
27. Resources (R)
28. Assessment (Ass)
35. Teacher’s control (Con)
59. Preparation and planning (P&P)

Teaching methods

52. Use pictures (pic)
55. Translation (Tr)
56. Group work (GW)
57. Individual attention (IA)
58. Peer tutors (Ptut)
62. Easier work (EW)

Positive effects

38. Job satisfaction (JS)
50. Expands knowledge (ExK)
64. Teacher learnt a lot (TL)
65. Children accepting of each other (Cac)

Awareness of change

10. Separate schools (SS)
18. Acceptance of change (Ch)
42. Change (CH)
60. Reasons for multilingual class (RM)

Relevance of policies

13. Ethos of school (SE)
25. Parents/parental choice (P)
30. Inclusion (Inc)
39. Multilingualism (M)
52. Afrikaans
63. New curriculum (NW)
67. 11 official languages (Olang)
69. Policy documents (PD)

Influence of culture

12. Transport difficulties (TD)
16. Cultural differences (CD)
47. Disadvantaged background (Db/g)
66. Different cultures interesting (DCI)
68. Cultural misunderstandings (CM)
APPENDIX 7

General guidelines for teaching in a multilingual classroom

Vaughn et al (2000:302) recommend the following general guidelines for accommodating linguistically diverse learners in the classroom:

- Communicate clearly, speak slowly in short sentences, pace lessons appropriately, involve learners in decisions, monitor learners’ progress, and provide immediate feedback.
- Integrate learner’s home language into classroom activities to build trust and self-esteem, to promote cultural diversity, and to make lessons more comprehensible.
- Respond to the language not to the correctness of pronunciation and grammar.
- Simplify your language; don’t use “big” elaborate words or idioms without very clear explanations.
- Demonstrate the concepts, use visual aids, objects, pictures etc., use concrete examples, have hands on activities that involve active learning tasks.
- Group same language speakers together (peer tutoring), however bearing in mind the limitations of group work and that children with poor communication skills are often left out of group interactions which further limits their access to knowledge as described by Mc Groarty (1996:33).
- Use all the senses in lessons to facilitate learning.
- Learn as much about the language and culture of the children as possible (parents can help build a framework of words for the concepts and terminology used in the classroom).