MOTHER TONGUE EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY OF GRADE THREE CHILDREN

By

MARTHA KHOSA

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Supervisor: Dr. L. Kajee

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DECLARATION

I declare that this research paper is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Masters in Educational Linguistics at the University of Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at any other University.

Signed: ......................................................

Date: ..............................................................
DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my:

- Dear husband Phineas Khosa for his continuous support and encouragement.
- Two children, Vincent and Rose for being so understanding and patient throughout my studies.
- Mother, Sarah Nomvela for her prayers and support during every step of my studies.
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ABSTRACT

This study sets out to examine the use of mother tongue education in one Grade 3 classroom in the foundation phase in the Limpopo Province of South Africa. The focus is on learners’ and parents’ whose children are in that Grade 3 classroom as well as educators’ experiences of the use of mother tongue education. The aims of this study were to examine how, when, why and by whom mother tongue is used in the Grade 3 classroom and to examine how mother tongue medium of instruction can contribute to the teaching of literacy in the Grade 3 classroom. With these aims in mind, data were collected from the Grade 3 teacher and the Grade 3 learners as well as the parents of these learners.

A qualitative approach was used to obtain data from the Grade 3 teacher, five Grade 3 learners as well as parents of these learners. Classroom observations and semi-structured interviews were used as means of collecting data. Interviews were conducted one-on-one and 6 lessons on Literacy as a learning area in the foundation phase were observed.

The findings in this study reveal that the mother tongue, Xitsonga was the dominant language during classroom activities. This was influenced by the learners’ inability to use the second language. It is also revealed that the teacher and learners as well as parents have positive attitude towards the mother tongue as a language of learning and teaching in schools. However, some parents still believe that their children should be taught through English as the medium of instruction hoping that they will be able to secure better jobs. Another finding is that not all learners’ language needs are catered for in black African schools, hence, such learners experience difficulties in learning through a language which is not their mother tongue. On the basis of the findings, the study recommends that the Department of Education should support the use of the mother tongue in the L2 classroom in order to strengthen literacy during early learning.

Key words/phrases: mother tongue, language policy, first additional language, language barrier
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

Many black South African learners face language barriers in the classroom. Some of the reasons for this include that learners who cannot use the language with which they are familiar in the classroom do not perform well (Owen-Smith, 2010: 16), and that they cannot “understand matters in another language” (SAPA, 2010: 6). The Language in Education Policy (Department of Education, 2002: 5) makes provision for learners’ home languages to be used for teaching and learning. This is also affirmed in section 29 of the South African Constitution (1996) that allows for linguistic choice. Thus, the premise is that through the use of mother tongue education, children are afforded collaborative literacy teaching and learning. Currently, however, it is most common to find learners taught in English from Grade one (Dikotla, 2009: 1).

This study sets out to examine the use of mother tongue education in one Grade 3 classroom in the foundation phase (which consists of Grades 1 to 3) in South Africa. The study is located specifically in Limpopo in the area of Khujwana under Mopani district. The term mother tongue refers to the first language that a child acquires and uses at home before attending school (Moyo, 2009: 2). It is used in the research literature in various ways, for example, it may denote “first language”, “home language”, “preferred language”, “native language”, “heritage language”, and sometimes “best language” (Ball, 2010: 10). For the purpose of this study, the term ‘mother tongue’ is used and when used, it includes all those elements. This study is concerned with the current use of mother tongue education in a Grade 3 classroom. The focus is on learners’ and parents’ whose children are in that Grade 3 classroom as well as educators’ experiences of the use of mother tongue education. Therefore, I am going to argue this based on the need for mother tongue education, academic literacy and the role of parents.
1.1.2 The need for mother tongue education

Research in children’s development and experience in early childhood education has shown that young children have unique styles that match their stages of development (Gallahue, 1993; Case & Okamoto, 1996; Bredencamp & Copple, 1997; Crain, 2000). Therefore, their environmental education needs to be designed to match their developmental needs, interests, abilities and learning styles (White & Stoecklin, 2008: 1) which will enhance effective outcomes of their learning. Consequently, this calls for mother tongue education, which affords children opportunities to learn through the language in which they are most familiar. Encouraging young children to learn through their mother tongue, according to Senadeera (2010: 1) helps them develop confidence, self-esteem and their unique identity within a multicultural society. When children are required to acquire an unknown language in an unknown cultural pattern, they are likely to experience anxiety; thus, they may tend to react very differently to such intense experiences (Menyuk & Brisk, 2005: 74).

Using English as the medium of instruction during early learning makes many black South African learners face language barriers in the classroom. Hallberg (2010: 1) says that a language barrier is a kind of psychological barrier in which language is a psychological tool that affects the communication being put across. According to the South African Department of Education (2005: 11), language barriers are often caused by forcing learners to communicate and learn in a language which they do not usually use at home and are not competent to learn effectively. Owen-Smith (2010: 16) concurs, when emphasizing that children who cannot use the language they are most familiar with, (usually the home language), are unlikely to perform well in their literacy tasks. Moreover, AfriForum CEO, Kallie Kriel indicates that it has been proven repeatedly that learners cannot understand another language (South African Press Association (SAPA), 2010: 6). Therefore, unless children are competent in their first language, they will always experience cognitive difficulties in their second language (Thomas & Collier, 2004: 61).

In view of the above, the central argument of this study is that proficiency in the mother tongue is viewed as the basis for learning another language.
1.1.3 Academic literacy

Local findings signal that literacy is problematic. This was also highlighted by Soudien (2008) at the official opening of the new Enlighten Education Trust Centre in Hermanus, when he indicated that “South African learners are performing woefully poorly” (Teacher Education and Research Programme (TEP) Conference, 2008: 5). Data gathered in South Africa by the Department of Education is further confirmation of the literacy problem facing South Africa. For example, 2001 findings showed that Grade 3 learners performed badly countrywide, as well as worldwide in literacy tasks (where they scored an average of 39%) (Prinsloo, 2008: 1). The results of the Grade Six Systematic Evaluation released in 2005 by the Department of Education (where learners scored 35% for language, 27% for mathematics and 41% for natural science) (Fleisch, 2008: 7) further proves that when children are assessed in a language other than their home language, they are disadvantaged (Ibid, 2008: 118). Much more recent 2011 feedback of Annual National Assessment (ANA) released by the South African Department of Education (where Grade 3 learners scored an average of 35% in literacy and 28% in numeracy) showed that Grade 3 learners are still experiencing difficulties with literacy and numeracy. This point will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

The findings of a Human Science Research Council in 2006 study of the language performance of about 78 000 Grade 8 learners (Prinsloo, 2008: 2) further signifies that poor literacy skills pursue learners through to their secondary school years. Following concerns of failure by black South African children to acquire literacy and numeracy skills in both local languages and English, Basic Education Minister, Angie Motshekga announced at a press conference in Pretoria (2010) that early learning should be conducted effectively through the mother tongue and that English as the second language will be taught as a learning area. Currently, children from Grades 1 to 3 are required to master basic skills in their home language(s). Thereafter, English is introduced as a learning area in Grade 3 in order to prepare learners to switch to English as the language of learning and teaching in the intermediate phase (Revised National Curriculum Statement, 2003:27).
1.1.4 The role of parents

Mother tongue education is still difficult to implement in South Africa for reasons including the variety of mother tongues among teachers and learners, lack of teacher training in the languages, as well as the lack of resources available in these languages (Carless, 2002: 389). The position is aggravated by parents who do not want their children to learn through the medium of indigenous languages because they believe that it will ruin their children’s ability to speak English with fluency (Jankie, 2010: 9). In contrast, Cummins (2001: 18) maintains that mother tongue instruction helps develop not only the mother tongue but also children’s abilities in other languages. This point will be expanded on in Chapter 2 on the basis of highlighting the involvement of parents in the use of mother tongue instruction at school. In addition to the difficulty in implementing mother tongue education, black African parents are afraid that their children will lose socio-economic mobility and access to higher ranking positions in society if they are taught in their home language (Mda, 2004: 184; Nomlomo, 2006: 102).

This urges many parents to choose education for their children through (the) dominant language, English; unknowingly going against children’s rights to education in a language they understand (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000: 3). As a result, many black African learners cannot read or write fluently in either language, and when communicating, they resort to code mixing, where they use words like (“ndihungry” (I am hungry), “ke ya studisha” (I am studying), or “nditired” (I am tired) (Jankie, 2010: 11). Owen-Smith (2010: 34) adds that black African parents’ eagerness for their children to become fluent in English makes them fall into the trap of suppressing their mother tongue. Moreover, parents’ negative perception of the mother tongue instruction devalues the mother tongue while raising the status of English (Alexander & Bloch, 2004: 2). Skutnabb-Kangas (2000: 4) cautions that the speakers of indigenous languages are responsible for “killing their languages”. The effect of favouring a dominant language (English) at the expense of indigenous African languages can have disastrous consequences for children and their families (Cummins, 2001: 16). This could create communication gaps between generations (grandparents with their grandchildren, and even parents with their offspring). For example, a child may be fluent in English, but only to realize that he/she cannot communicate with
members of his/her family (especially grandparents) because they may not be able to speak the language that the child is used to and vice versa. Thus, mother tongue provides the basis for learning another language (Guvercin, 2011: 3). Research (e.g. Alexander, 2008; Heugh, 2006) corroborates this by concluding that when children begin learning in their first language they are likely to succeed and that they can acquire a second language such as English, easily.

1.2. Aims

Children’s right to learn in their mother tongue has been expressed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1953. This served as an inspiration for South Africa in 1994 to consider developing local languages that were previously marginalized. Consequently, it was achieved by formalizing the implementation of bilingual/multilingual education based on literacy in a language familiar to the learner (Quane & Glanz, 2010: 1). The aim of this study is two-fold. First, the overall aim is to examine how, when, why and by whom mother tongue is used in the Grade 3 classroom. Second, the more specific aim is to examine how mother tongue medium of instruction can contribute to the teaching of literacy (reading and writing) in the Grade 3 classroom.

1.3. Research questions

This study is framed by two main questions:

- How is mother tongue medium of instruction currently used in the classroom of Grade 3 learners?
- How can mother tongue practices be utilized to strengthen literacy in the Grade 3 classroom?

1.4. Rationale

The rationale for this study is that early childhood education requires a flexible teaching approach that responds to the social and cultural contexts that influence children’s learning experiences, behavior and attitudes (Mallan, 2000: 62). In South Africa, where the majority of learners are black Africans, this calls for a teaching approach that promotes the use of mother
tongue education in the foundation phase. This study emphasises mother tongue as the language of learning and teaching in the foundation phase on the account of promoting communication, cultural identity, mental/cognitive growth and the benefit of bilingualism/multilingualism.

1.4.1 Communication

Communication and understanding between teachers, learners as well as parents is facilitated by the use of a language that is familiar to everyone. When children are offered opportunities to learn in their mother tongue, their parents are more likely to communicate with teachers and participate in supporting their children’s learning (Benson, 2002: 303). This enables parents to guide children through activities that are tasked to be completed at home, and parents can also access information on the account of their children’s progress at school, without fear of expressing themselves in their mother tongue. Blackledge (2000: 98) confirmed in his findings in Britain at the Valley Community Primary School that when parents are given real opportunities to participate in decision-making about their children’s schooling, the school will undoubtedly function effectively. For example, the Valley Community Primary School in Britain made provision for interpreters between teachers and Bangladeshi parents and written communication was conducted in both English and the parents’ language (Blackledge, 2000: 98-100) in order to update parents of their children’ progress at school and this facilitated effective communication.

Senadeera (2010: 2) further points out that when learners participate in activities organized around the use of mother tongue they are able to develop what Cummins (1979) calls Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) which enable a child to interact socially with teachers and peers when he or she is at school as opposed to Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) which is achieved when the speaker can use language in decontextualized ways, including writing, permitting the use of the language as a cognitive tool (Ball, 2010: 13). Dikotla (2009: 1) concurs, by stating that when children are taught in their mother tongue or in a language with which they are familiar they are able to learn far more readily than if they are taught in another language. This facilitates effective communication between teachers and
learners. Children with good communicative skills in a mother tongue are able to speak the language that is understood by everyone and it helps them to maintain and establish good relationships with their family members and their relatives. Guvercin (2011:3) cautions that it is perilous to carry out literacy education without proper regard to the language and learning needs of the communities concerned, hence, it promotes a perception of non-dominant languages as socially inferior and/or inadequate to support optimal early learning (Ball, 2009: 1).

1.4.2 Cultural Identity

Language is not only the means of communication; it is also used to connect a person’s relationship with the world and how he or she comes to feel about that world. Hong (2010: 24) asserts that language is a symbol of culture. Hechter (1994: 487) also argues that it is a tool that is used to identify cultural differences in a multiethnic society. International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) (2008: 8), a non-profit educational foundation which focuses on developing intellectual, personal, emotional and social skills to students aged 3 to 19 years, adds that language is integral to identity, which in turn determines how a person acts or behaves. Therefore, it is significant to give learners opportunities to learn through their mother tongue in order to keep them connected to their cultural identity (Benson, 2001: 48; d’Emilio, 2001: 77). Albó & Anaya (2003: 4) agree that learning through the mother tongue as medium of instruction helps children to maintain their communities’ cultural values and practices.

Building on the above-mentioned idea, International Baccalaureate Organization (2008: 8) asserts that learning that values children’s languages and cultures and affirms the identity of each learner promotes self-esteem and additive bilingualism (where another language and culture does not replace children’s mother tongue). Through the use of mother tongue children are able to learn everyday life patterns of different phenomena in relation to their own culture and other cultures. Quane & Glanz (2010: 4) emphasise that the mother tongue and the respective culture are key sources of identification and self confidence. Despite the pressure of living in a multicultural society, learners who can identify themselves with the language and culture they know best are able to acquaint themselves with other cultures and respect them
as well. This is what leads Quane & Glanz (2010) to conclude that mother tongue education expands learners’ possibilities to shape and participate in social interaction. On this account, Ball (2009: 1) urges parents to prioritize developing their children’s mother tongue proficiency and to deliver early childhood education programs in children’s mother tongue(s) for the sake of countering linguistic and cultural loss.

1.4.3 Mental/cognitive growth

Mother tongue has a very significant role to play towards shaping our thoughts and emotions. It provides the basis for the child’s ability to learn. This is what makes children attend early learning programs such as preschools and foundation phase with precious resources: their mother tongue (Ball, 2009: 1). Studies (e.g. Benson, 2002; Hoven, 2002; Kosonen, 2005) have also shown that if children are offered an opportunity to learn through their mother tongue from their early childhood, they are more likely to succeed in learning. Children use mother tongue as a prior knowledge to learn a new language (AI-Harbi, 2010: 1); hence, it ensures continuous cognitive development. Similarly, Quane & Glanz (2010: 4) argue that learners who first learn to read and write in their mother tongue develop the ability to learn English more rapidly and do better at school than those in all-English programmes.

Guvercin, 2011: 2 further argues that when a person speaks their mother tongue, a direct connection establishes between heart, brain and tongue. The effect of Guvercin’s (2011) view is supported by Nelson Mandela’s comment of “If you talk to a man (sic) in a language he understands that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language that goes to his heart” (Guvercin, 2011: 2). The findings of a team of scientists at Italy’s National Research Council in 2008 study of fifteen Italian interpreters who translated in English and Italian is confirmation of the significant role of the mother tongue in shaping people’s thoughts and emotions. Hence, it was found that the Italian interpreters’ brain waves had much higher amplitude when they used words in Italian as it is the language they had learned from childhood. Therefore, this proves beyond doubts that proficiency in the mother tongue accords children opportunities to acquire another language at ease, and it helps them to develop stronger levels of creativity (Vlach, 2010: 3).
1.4.4 Benefits of bilingualism/multilingualism

Bilingual/multilingual programs encourage teachers and learners to use more than one language. This serves as an advantage because it enables teachers to provide content area instruction in the learners’ L1; hence, the learning of new concepts is not postponed until learners are competent in the L2 (Benson, 2004: 3). Research in the academic literature, reported that bilingualism/multilingualism as opposed to monolingual schooling offers significant pedagogical advantages (Cummins, 2000; Baker, 2001; CAL, 2001) to both teachers and learners. In other words, classes with bilingual/multilingual education promote effective interaction between teachers and learners and the environment undoubtedly encourages what Quane & Glanz (2010: 5) call ‘active learning’. Furthermore, Benson (2004) claims that through bilingual/multilingual education; children acquire and develop literacy skills in addition to understanding and participating in the classroom.

Based on the above-mentioned claims, it is obvious that bilingual/multilingual children demonstrate self-confidence and are highly motivated while learning in the classroom (Dalby, 1985; Dutcher, 1995; ADAE, 1996). Urzagaste (1999: 10) and CAL (2001: 27) also found that bilingual schooling has positive effects on children’s pass rates and the dropout rates are lower. If children are denied opportunities to be literate in both their mother tongue and the second language, this can result in what Landry (1987) calls subtractive bilingualism or what Cummins (1994) calls semilingualism, which yields negative consequences on their academic performance. Furthermore, Ball (2009: 3) asserts that early transition from mother tongue to learning in a second language may lead to children losing their first language. Based on this account, Keeves & Darmawan (2007: 20) think that it is highly desirable that adequate level of competence in the learning of the mother tongue is achieved before any formal learning of a second language takes place through classroom instruction. The stronger the development of the mother tongue, the stronger the proficiency in the second language (Heugh, 2006: 7). As an additional consideration, Guvercin (2011: 4) points out that when children continue to develop their abilities in two or more languages throughout their primary school years they develop high proficiency in those languages. If they continue to have opportunities to develop their first
language skills in secondary schools, (Ball, 2009:3) claims that they can emerge as fully bilingual (or multilingual) learners. The idea of bilingualism/multilingualism is also supported by Krashen (1982: 10) who contends that bilingual/multilingual programs provide learners with both subject matter and literacy in the first language.

Therefore, in the light of the views of the rationale discussed thus far, this study emphasises the importance of learning through the mother tongue because it increases chances of communication between the school and the community, learners and teachers and between learners themselves.

2. Overview of the study

This study will be divided into six main Chapters.

Chapter 1 presents a detailed introduction to mother tongue as the language of learning and teaching in the foundation phase as well as the aim, research questions and rationale of the study.

Chapter 2 gives a detailed review of the available literature on key aspects of the study. First, mother tongue education is discussed with reference to the South African Policy in Language Education. The next section looks at language policies of three different African countries (e.g. Nigeria, Tanzania and Zimbabwe) that support mother tongue education during early childhood learning. Mother tongue versus first additional language is the object of the next section. Here, various theoretical perspectives given by different writers and different researchers on the role of mother tongue education towards facilitating reading and writing are discussed.

Chapter 3 gives a detailed overview of research methodology which is used for the collection and analysis of the data. Included is the design of the study, data collection, instruments, population and sample of the study.

Chapter 4 Describes and analyses data collected through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews as stipulated in chapter 3.

Chapter 5 interprets the data gathered in relation to the study.
Chapter 6 summarizes the findings of the study and the implications of these findings for the use of mother tongue medium of instruction in the Grade 3 classroom. Thereafter, I conclude with recommendations and limitations of the study.

3. Conclusion

Though the majority of South African parents still find it difficult to accept the mother tongue as the language of learning and teachings during early childhood learning, other parents have come to terms with the implementation of home language instruction. Hence, a vast number of schools that house foundation phase classes have already started implementing the policy of mother tongue education. This is what urged me to consider examining the current use of mother tongue in one of the schools that are committed to the realization of mother tongue education. It is anticipated that the findings of this study will need to provide answers to some South African parents, teachers as well as learners who are not yet convinced that competence and proficiency in one’s own language can facilitate learning second language easily. The following Chapter reviews language policies that support the idea of mother tongue education in South Africa and explores language policies from three different African countries (e.g. Nigeria, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe).
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The previous Chapter presented a detailed introduction to mother as the language of learning and teaching in the foundation phase as well as the aim, research questions and rationale of the study. This chapter provides a detailed review of the available literature on various aspects of the study.

I begin by discussing the Language in Education Policy (Act 27 of 1997) which emphasises the use of mother tongue in the foundation phase (Department of Education, 2002: 5). As already discussed in Chapter 1, it is affirmed in Section 29 of the South African Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) that everyone has the right to receive education in the official language(s) of their choice. In order to have a better look at the language policy, one has to look at its background, intentions and goals.

From this point I proceed to look at the language policies of three other African countries that support the idea of mother tongue education during early childhood learning such as Nigeria, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe. In this study the exploration of language policies from different countries will help navigate the broader understanding of the current use of mother tongue in the foundation phase.

A discussion of mother tongue versus First Additional Language instruction forms section three of this review. This includes theories related to the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction in the foundation phase. Literacy (reading and writing) through the mother tongue will be discussed in order to address and contextualise the research questions of this study.
2.1.2 The background of the Language Policy in South Africa

In this section I am going to discuss the background, intentions and goals of the Language in Education Policy (Act 27 of 1997) in order to answer the research questions mentioned in Chapter 1, Section 1.3. The Language in Education Policy (Act 27 of 1997) emphasises a change in the medium of instruction on the account of promoting African Indigenous languages; hence, it recommends that the mother tongue should be used as a medium of instruction during early learning. This change makes the home culture visible; it brings the home and the school closer together; it facilitates communication and participation in the classroom; and it allows learners to talk about their prior knowledge and experiences (Corson, 1999).

The Language in Education Policy (1953) regarding the African population under apartheid promoted the notion of divide and rule strategy (Kashula & Anthonissen, 1995: 98; Bennet, 1995: 7)) where every ethnic group was educated in their own mother tongue (Kamwangamalu, 2000: 124). For example, English mother tongue speakers had to be educated in English medium schools, Afrikaans mother tongue speakers had to go to Afrikaans medium schools and mother tongue speakers of indigenous languages had to be educated in their respective language medium schools. Heugh (1995: 42) confirms that mother tongue education during the apartheid era was applied to further the political interests of division among all communities.

The Bantu Education Act (Act 47 of 1953) was introduced on the account of promoting segregation in education (Henrad, 2002: 20) and that was facilitated through the achievement of two main objectives. Firstly, it was meant to ensure the equal use of English and Afrikaans as media of learning and teaching in black schools. This encouraged bilingualism in South Africa in favour of English and Afrikaans at the expense of the indigenous languages. Secondly, it was intended to extend mother tongue education in black African schools from fourth through eighth grades (Henrad, 2002: 124) and this further promoted the philosophy of divide and rule as mentioned earlier in this section. Prah (1995: 68) argues that the reason behind the extension of mother tongue education through the eighth grade was meant to hamper black African learners’ proficiency in the official languages (English and Afrikaans) so that they may have limited access to securing better jobs (Desai & Taylor, 1997: 169). In addition, black
African learners were not supposed to match the academic achievements of English and Afrikaans speakers (Heugh, 1995b: 329) and this was facilitated on the account of protecting white learners from the threat of African competition (RESA, 1988: 6). Therefore, they were required to learn through three languages: Afrikaans, English and the mother tongue while white African learners received education through English or Afrikaans (Kamwangamalu, 2000: 126). This made black African learners resist education through the mother tongue because they associated it with inferiority (Nomvete, 1994: 11) and they also disliked learning Afrikaans as a subject since they regarded it as a symbol of oppression (Kamwangamalu, 2000: 126). The 1976 Soweto uprising heralded the rejection of Bantu Education, which marked the end of Afrikaans as a language of learning and teaching in black African schools. The use of the mother tongue instruction was reduced to 6 and later to 4 years, followed by a sudden switch to English medium (Heugh, 2002: 42).

The results of the 1976 uprising, according to Heugh (1995b: 330), boosted the status of English over Afrikaans and the African indigenous languages. Since the end of 1976 uprising, English has been the language of instruction in black high schools (Cluver & de, 1992: 104) and Afrikaans was offered as a subject throughout black African schooling. This led to the limited command of the medium of instruction in black African schools and it continues to “demonstrate a drastic decline in matriculation pass rates for black African learners” (Heugh, 2000: 24-25). Lolwana (2004: 47) adds a similar view when she says: “proficiency in the medium of instruction is the largest single factor affecting learner performance at school.”

At the end of the apartheid era in 1994, the new government of South Africa transformed its language policy to promote the development and use of languages within the society by officially recognizing 11 languages (English and Afrikaans as well as Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu). By adopting the position of balancing the status of 11 languages, South Africa acted in line with the 1986 “Organisation of African Unity” (OAU) Language Plan of Action for Africa which induced member states to recognize all languages within their boundaries (Kashioki, 1993: 13). Thus, it is recommended in the South African Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) that everyone has the right to use the
language of his or her choice and that each person also has the right to instruction in the language of his or her choice. This is subject to the provision of the equality of status and “parity of esteem” to all the 11 official languages in South Africa (Alexander, 2003: 16). However, the right to choose language(s) of one’s choice does not apply to the nine official languages (indigenous African languages), but to English in opposition to Afrikaans. Hence, it is equal to drawing on the apartheid discourse that denied speakers of African languages the right to choose language(s) of their choice. It is true that the right to choose the language of education is entrusted to parents and the School Governing Body of any particular school. However, the implementation of this right is guided by the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996).

Section 6 (3) of the South African Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) emphasises the use of any particular official language on the account of practicability, expense, regional circumstances and the balance of the need and preferences of the population. However, this contradicts what is stipulated in the Language in Education Policy (Act 27 of 1997) whereby parents’ and learners’ choices of languages are superseded by the government’s material conditions of being ‘practicable’. Thus, even where it is practicable, the language choice can be undermined as a result of inadequate resources.

Therefore, it seems unlikely that the existing policy framework will be able to change the situation in the short term. This is what makes Kamwangamalu (2000: 128) contend that the principle of multilingualism in South Africa does not seem to have made any progress towards developing the status of the African indigenous languages. As already discussed in Chapter 1, South Africa has made a commitment to a multilingual approach with the objective of developing African languages and empowering people through these languages, it is still difficult to implement this policy. Reasons behind this counteraction include that many black African parents believe that English is the language of empowerment and aspire to have their children educated in English (Gules, 2005; Kgosana, 2006: 17). African indigenous languages are not considered by most black African parents. This is confirmed by the Provincial Director of the Department of Education in Gauteng, Mokoena (1998), who sees the problem not as with the
language policy but with parents’ perceptions of languages (Osborn, 2007: 7). Deumert (2000: 413) adds, “Many parents, whose home language is a language other than English, prefer their children to receive their schooling in English rather than their mother tongue.” This implies that black African parents still believe that fluency in English will open doors of opportunities for their children and this is part of what makes many parents prefer English over their home language. To make matters worse, parents who resist change go to the extent of sending their children to non-government schools where none of the African languages are taught (Osborn, 2007: 7). English, in this case is afforded what Bourdieu (1991) calls symbolic power which makes English supersede the power of mother tongue instruction in South African schools. Thus, many black African parents consider their indigenous languages good only for social purposes (Alexander, 2002: 119), not for education.

In this light, Moyo (2009: 7) asserts that indigenous African languages are still accorded a subordinate place to English, which enjoys prestigious official status as a lingua franca in South Africa. Holmes (1997: 86) writes: “the lingua franca describes a language serving as a regular means of communication between different linguistic groups in a multilingual speech community.” The status of English as a lingua franca in South Africa remains a challenge to the development of the indigenous languages because even the speakers themselves do not place much value in their native languages (Osborn, 2009: 3). The reason behind this attitude is that “most black African people continue to equate mother tongue based education with the ravages of Bantu Education” (Alexander, 2008: 10).

As a result this gives way for English to be used as a vital means of communication in different South African sectors (Kamwangamalu, 2000: 128). For example, English in South Africa is mostly used in education, administration, jurisdiction and other government-controlled and non-government institutions (Osborn, 2007: 9). This is in spite of the fact that the mother tongue speakers of English in South Africa comprise of a mere 8.2% of the population as of the year 2011 (Statistics South Africa, 2011), when compared to the most numerous linguistic groups that are found in South Africa (Henrad, 2002: 26). The trend to privilege dominant languages according to Skutnabb-Kangas (2009: 29) threatens the well-being of languages that
are considered inferior by their speakers. Lack of teacher training in the mother tongue and First Additional Languages and insufficient provision of resources in the foundation phase classes also contribute to the problematic implementation of home language instruction (Pandor, 2005: 15; Manyike, 2007: 22). Teachers are offered short in-service training courses and this often leaves most teachers with limited language skills and inadequate understanding of the multilingual teaching method that is relevant to the newly introduced curriculum (Benson, 2004:7). The position is further aggravated by the lack of resources required to facilitate multilingual programs in the foundation phase. However, people may show reluctance towards supporting mother tongue education, but if the government engages effective interventions, the process may be slow but hopefully it will finally yield good results.

The precept of the Language in Education Policy (Act 27 of 1997) is to maintain home language and provide access to effective acquisition of additional languages. The aim thereof is to facilitate communication across the barriers of colour, language and region, while creating an environment in which respect for languages other than one’s own would be encouraged (Department of Education, 1997). In the next section I am going to present a detailed exploration about the intentions and goals of the South African Language in Education policy.

2.1.3 The intentions and goals of the Language in Education Policy

The Language in Education Policy (Act 27 of 1997) aims to promote multilingualism and language rights in South Africa (Kamwangamalu 2000: 127). This led to the adoption of mother tongue as the medium of instruction from Grades 1 to 3. The ability to learn another language is enhanced through mother tongue proficiency as discussed in Chapter 1. Hence, the Language in Education Policy (Act 27 of 1996) is formulated basically to promote and develop all official languages by establishing additive multilingualism as an approach to language in education and also to support the teaching and learning of all other languages as explained in paragraph 5 of the South African Constitution (Act 108 of 1996).
The current Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga (2010) announced that:

The language chosen by the learner as a language of learning and teaching shall be taught as a subject or as a first additional language, from Grade 1 and not from grade 2. The teaching of English would therefore occur alongside mother tongue instruction for those learners who choose English as the LoLT. English will subsequently not replace the home language in the early grade.

Following this line of thinking, it is clear that the mother tongue should be adopted as the language of learning and teaching from Grades 1 to 3 whilst teaching English as a subject. This is based in an attempt to address the overall high failure rate experienced by black African learners in South Africa. Another reason for this adoption as discussed in Chapter 1 is based on encouraging learners to be competent in both languages. Basically, it has already been demonstrated in research conducted internationally (cited by Geneese, Paradis & Crago, 2004: 168) as well as in South Africa (Heugh, 2000; Macdonald, 1990) that learners are able to develop academic language proficiency more effectively in their home language or alternatively, in multilingual education. In addition, the Department of Education (2002: 5) states that learners or their parents have the right to inform the school of language(s) they wish to be taught in when applying for admission. Bearing in mind that South Africa is a multilingual society, in order for the language policy to be implemented successfully, a provision is available to cater for learners whose home language is not offered in the school where they are seeking admission, hence, that will be determined by the availability of resources to meet such demands.

2.2 The language policies in Nigeria, Tanzania and Zimbabwe

Historically, language policies were used to promote one official language at the expense of others. Today, many countries have adopted a strategy of designing policies that are meant to protect and promote regional and ethnic languages whose vitality is threatened (Gordon, 2005: 45). In order to attain a broader understanding of the current use of mother tongue in the foundation phase, I am going to look at the language policies in education of Nigeria, Tanzania and Zimbabwe; thereafter I will link these language policies with the South African Language in Education Policy (Act 27 of 1997).
I have chosen Nigeria, Tanzania and Zimbabwe on the basis that they are multilingual countries as is South Africa. Their experiences of mother tongue instruction, which started long before South Africa will help navigate a broader understanding of the use of the mother tongue in the foundation phase of South Africa. For example, the use of the mother tongue as the language of instruction in Nigeria began from the late 1970s; hence, an official document to this effect was published in 1977 and revised in 1981 when it was officially laid down as a policy for the whole country. In 1965, Swahili was declared the only language of instruction for the whole primary school cycle and English is taught as a subject in Tanzania (Swilla, 2009: 1), whereas in Zimbabwe, a significant policy change was effected in 1987 (revised in 2004) for the child’s home language to be used as the medium of instruction (Peresuh & Masuku, 2002: 30).

Nigeria and Tanzania support long-term mother tongue development. This experience is a lesson to South Africa that prolonging mother-tongue instruction gives children sufficient time to develop competency in their mother tongue. This is also confirmed by the success of a six-year Yoruba Medium Primary School Project, which demonstrated that a full six-year primary education in the mother tongue with the second language (L2) taught as a subject gives better results than all-English schooling (Fafunwa et al. 1989; Akinnaso, 1993; Adegbiya, 2003). In Nigeria, young children are expected to learn through their mother tongue for at least six years and in Tanzania, mother-tongue instruction extends up to seven years. There is much research (e.g. Macdonald, 1990; Heugh, 2003, 2006) as discussed previously in Chapter 1, which strongly advocate that learners should learn through the medium of their home language for as long as possible. This is what makes Heugh (2002) contend that at least six to eight years of very good second language teaching is vital before learners are ready to use it as a medium of instruction. Heugh (2006) further indicates that early-exit from first language instruction to second language instruction has never been productive in terms of reducing black African learners’ failure and dropout rates.

In South Africa like Zimbabwe, children are currently learning through their mother tongue from Grades 1 to 3 (for only three years). This early transition, according to Heugh (2006: 7) is not sufficient; hence, it leads to underachievement. Fleisch (2008: 104-106) also feels that it is
too demanding for learners to adjust learning through a language they have scarcely mastered. So far it has been intimated in South Africa at a language conference in 2006 by the then Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor that the initial period of mother tongue instruction will be extended to six years, but the proposal has not yet been taken seriously. UNESCO (2005: 2) suggests that “If time is taken to build second language skills on a solid foundation in the first language, the results can be high-level bilingualism and biliteracy” for countries that are still emphasising the three year period for mother tongue instruction in the foundation phase.

As discussed earlier in this Chapter, the South African Language in Education Policy (Act 27 of 1997) is committed to a multilingual approach, which gives room for the official recognition of 11 languages throughout the country. This is contrary to Nigeria’s, Tanzania’s and Zimbabwe’s language policies, which purposefully promote majority languages at the expense of other minority languages. Scotton (1993: 149-163) argues that such policies and practices promote a social mobilization strategy for people in power to establish and maintain their privileges via linguistic choices.

Many countries have come to a point of realizing the effectiveness of children’s home languages as media of instructions, especially during early learning. They are aware that most children who begin their education through their mother tongue are able to perform better than those who start school in a new language (Dutcher, 2003: 1). In the next section I am going to highlight the effectiveness of learning through the mother tongue against the First Additional Language.

2.3 Mother tongue versus First Additional Language

As previously mentioned in Chapter 1, mother tongue (L1) is learnt first (UNESCO, 2003: 15) and second language (L2) is learned later on in life (Kramsch cited in Cenoz & Gorter, 2008: 270). This is what makes a child arrive at school with knowledge of his/her mother tongue, an opportunity, which according to Cummins (2001: 16) may be used by schools to build on what children already know. Children acquire the first language by picking it up from their parents or caregivers around them – this makes them learn how to listen, understand and speak the language used in their social environment (Archarya, 2009: 2). The children’s experience of
their mother tongue from home based learning may not be sufficient to provide them with the academic knowledge (such as reading and writing) that is required of that language. Archarya (2009: 2) maintains that language is taught at school basically to open up its resources to the learner so that he/she may find the right words and sentences to convey the intended meaning. The mother tongue provides the basis for the child’s ability to learn another language. In his (2001) study, Cummins emphasises the need for a strong foundation in the mother tongue when he says: The level of development of children’s mother tongue is a strong predictor of their second language development (2001: 17). Cook (2001) adds that learners learn a second language more quickly when learning is first conducted in their first language. Nevertheless, there are a number of researchers (e.g. Willis, 1981; Nunan, 1991; Auerbach, 1993) who oppose the use of first language in a First Additional Language (FAL) classroom with the perception that “the more students are exposed to English, the more quickly they will learn; as they hear and use English” (Auerbach, 1993: 86).

The implication in response to this perception is that prohibition in the use of L1 in the First Additional Language classroom is likely to deprive learners of opportunities to learn First Additional Language better. Thomas & Collier (2002: 15) agree that it is a fallacy to think that children who are immersed in second language (L2) from the beginning learn the L2 better. Learning through L2 at early stages has been proven by several researchers (e.g. Delpit & Kemmelfield, 1985; Benson, 2002; World Bank, 2005; Jhingran, 2005) that it is much more complicated and demotivating to learners. Children’s understanding of concepts is limited if learning only in the L2, but the knowledge and skills they acquire in their first language “transfer across languages from the mother tongue to the school language” (Cummins, 2000: 28). It is impossible to teach in a context where English is not the predominant native language to create an intensive English-speaking environment in the short time that a formal L2 lesson takes place, especially for young learners. Hence, the mother tongue is necessary for beginners of L2 classroom lessons; because it enables the teacher to provide a quick and accurate translation of English words (code switching and mixing) (Schweers, 1999: 61).
Code switching and mixing justifies the use of mother tongue in second language classroom. Atkinson (1993: 240) supports the use of code switching and mixing in the L2 classroom when he said: “a careful limited use of L1” is not negative but positive on the account that it helps learners get the maximum benefit from activities that would have been carried out in the target language. Fleisch (2008: 109) refutes Atkinson’s (1993) claim by insisting that the practice of code switching and mixing consumes the teaching and learning time in the classroom. Several language theorists such as (Krashen, 1981; Macaro, 1997; Swain, 2000; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Cook, 2001) also emphasise the focus on L2. Thus, the belief is that code switching and mixing is not supposed to be used during lessons so that only the L2 can be used. Cook (2001: 402) asserts that learning only in the L2 provides learners with a natural communicative environment. Code switching and mixing in the L2 classroom can be encouraged by the level of second language ability on the part of either teachers or learners. Thus, not all the participants in the classroom are competent enough in the L2 to use it exclusively as the language of learning and teaching (Schweers, 1999: 6).

Setati et al. (2002) emphasise the use of code switching and mixing in the L2 classroom on the account of assisting learners in their understanding of concepts and ideas and in their communicating of these understandings. In their 2002 study on code switching in Mathematics and Science, Setati, Adler, Reed and Bapoo found that teachers of these subjects face difficulties in teaching L2 learners through the medium of instruction, English (Setati et al, 2002). Hence, they recommended that code switching should be encouraged as a means to enable learners to talk more freely in class and that learners should be encouraged to use their mother tongue as a learning resource (Setati & Adler, 2000: 252). Mother tongue instruction provides maximum exposure for children to use their mother tongue at school and at home. It helps them to discover who they are and it enables them to establish vital relationships with their family as well as developing good literacy skills (Read, 2003: 5). Thus, it is equivalent to gaining a vital sense of security and it is contrary to encouraging a learner to ignore his/her native language for the benefit of the First Additional Language.
The next section examines the use of mother tongue as medium of instruction in the foundation phase.

2.4 The use of mother tongue as medium of instruction

Historically, mother tongue instruction has been used by many ex-British colonies to encourage separation and unequal development amongst people of different races (Heugh, 2006: 5). Today, mother tongue education is applied in many countries, including South Africa on the basis of reducing poor performance (Dumatog & Dekker, 2003), increasing parent involvement (O’Connor & Geiger, 2009), promoting bilingualism/multilingualism (Chick & McKay 2001: 163) and promoting equal schooling for all learners (Heugh, 2003).

Mother tongue instruction creates opportunities for students to develop effective cognitive skills, which serve as a strong base to successfully learn a second language. Hence, research demonstrated that there is a continuum of interrelated connection between language and cognition, moving from the development of ‘social language proficiency’ to ‘academic language proficiency’ and then to academic achievement (Cummins 1984, 1992). The effect of mother tongue instruction towards increasing the level of learning was also demonstrated during the apartheid era, when black African learners were required to learn through the mother tongue for a full eight years of schooling. Thus, “despite serious discrepancies in expenditure between white and black children, there was surprisingly significant education success for black South African learners before 1976” (Heugh, 2002: 4).

Heugh (2002) further noted that after the 1976 Soweto Uprising the period of learning through the mother tongue declined steadily to a point where home language instruction was reduced to the first three years. The reduction of the mother tongue period for black learners heralded “a cycle of ever-decreasing educational competency” (Heugh, 2000: 18). A good example to this effect was demonstrated through the results of the Annual National Assessments programme, which was conducted in February 2011 for Grades 1 to 6 learners in public schools. The feedback shows that nationally, Grade 3 learners performed at an average of 35% in literacy and 28% in Numeracy, while the provincial performance scored between 19 and 43%, with the highest being the Western Cape Province and the lowest being Mpumalanga Province.
The figures below show learner performance in Grade 3 at specific levels from the Annual National Assessment tests.

**Figure 2.4.1.1: Learner performance in Grade 3 literacy** (Source Department of Basic Education, 2011: 17).

![Graph showing learner performance in Grade 3 literacy](image)

**Figure 2.4.1.2: Learner performance in Grade 3 numeracy** (Source Department of Basic Education, 2011: 18).

![Graph showing learner performance in Grade 3 numeracy](image)

The feedback on the results of ANA as indicated on the tables above is confined to Grade 3 learners and spread across nine provinces. The results of Grade 3 learners, performing at an “outstanding” level (Level 4 with aggregate scores of between 70% and 100%) in both literacy and numeracy, were 15% and 10% respectively. The findings of ANA (2011) shows that progress of the Grade 3 learners is still unsatisfactory in both Literacy and Numeracy. The result of this performance is attributed to the learners’ inability to read and write with comprehension (Department of Education, 2011: 29). Thus, mother tongue instruction is undoubtedly useful towards effecting positive changes for students’ performance from beginner levels.
The involvement of parents in the educational activities of their children contributes to their good performance in schools. This is supported by O’Connor & Geiger (2009: 260) in their study of working with English Second (or other) Language (ESOL) learners in the Western Cape that when parents help their children with school work at home, there is good progress towards children’s learning. Parents cannot help their children with school work if they do not understand English, or are unable to read and write English (O’Connor & Geiger, 2009: 253-269). Hence, the use of a familiar language for instruction facilitates parental involvement and strengthens community support for education (Pflepson, 2011: 2).

The current education system in South Africa offers opportunities for parents to be part of their children’s education and this is also endorsed by the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996). Parental involvement as defined by Kohl, Lengua, & McMahon (2000) encompasses three areas: direct contact with teachers, parental actions at school, and parental actions at home. The use of home language as medium of instruction creates opportunities for parents to learn with their children; hence, the challenge of low proficiency in English is addressed. Benson (2009: 17) argues that home language instruction at school increases parents’ participation in their children’s school work. Thus, parents are able to contribute their knowledge, expertise and language resources to their children’s educational experiences (Dumatog & Dekker 2003: 7). Dumatog & Dekker (2003) further indicate that parents are able to become their children’s consultants for the daily inquiries that their children have from school and this is “great compared to being shamed by their lack of knowledge of English” (Ibid: 6).

The use of mother tongue in the early years offers children opportunities to learn two or more languages. Chick & McKay (2001: 163) emphasise bilingual/multilingual programmes on the account of maintaining the first language, which is used as a base for learning another language. Effective bilingual/multilingual programmes help children to be able to read and write through their mother tongue and the target language. This is what makes education policies in many countries (e.g. Nigeria, Tanzania and Zimbabwe) strongly support the use of mother tongue medium of instruction and/or bilingual instruction (Meirim, Jordaan & Kallenbach 2010: 43). If the First Additional Language (FAL) is given priority at the expense of the home language, the First Additional Language will not be adequately learned, hence,
language proficiency for both languages will be compromised (Molepo, 2008: 22). Thus, discouraging children from developing their mother tongues urges the practice of monolingualism as opposed to bilingualism/multilingualism. The Middle Years Programme in Switzerland (2004: 7) further maintains that a genuine development of mother tongue and the acquisition of a second language have the capacity to enhance students’ cognitive abilities and can aid understanding when concepts are studied in both languages. Cummins (1996: 165) similarly maintains that bilingual/multilingual education has a positive effect on a child’s social and cognitive development. Studies conducted by Hakuta, Friedman & Diaz (1987) demonstrate that bilingual/multilingual children perform better on tests of analytical reasoning, concept formation and cognitive flexibility than children whose L2 is learned at the expense of the L1 (Ndamba, 2008: 174). The significance of bilingual/multilingual education urged South Africa to review its Language in Education Policy (Act 27 of 1996) from emphasising monolingualism to introducing the teaching of English as a learning area from Grade 1. Thus, with effect from 2012, Grades 1 and 2 learners should be taught English effectively as a learning area, while they continue to receive education through their mother tongue. This is considered on the account of giving learners sufficient time to cope with learning English for the first time in Grade 3 (The Citizen, 2011: 4).

As discussed in Chapter 1, the Bantu Education Act (Act 47 of 1953) was meant to isolate and convince black African learners of their permanent inferiority (Luthuli, 2006: 35). In an attempt to address the root of this inequality in South Africa, the curriculum transformed on the account of emphasising equal education opportunities for all learners. The South African Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) also emphasises equal access to education for all children. Mother tongue education during early learning is used as a valuable resource in the promotion of equal access to meaningful education. The adoption of a more appropriate school language (the mother tongue) makes a positive difference and this is equal to making educational opportunities more equitable for all learners (Benson, 2005: 5-6). Heugh, Benson, Bogale & Yohannes (2007: 11) emphasise that mother tongue medium of instruction reinforces the equitable delivery of quality education to which all learners have access. However, when the L1
is not valued and supported by the education system, the child’s sense of identity will be completely destroyed.

2.5 The role of mother tongue towards enhancing reading and writing

Learning to read and write is easier in a familiar language. It makes reading and writing easier in the target language. Thomas & Collier (2004: 70) emphasise that children may experience cognitive difficulties in their second language (L2) if they do not reach a certain threshold of literacy in their first language (L1). Thus, literacy, according to Pretorius (2002: 175), may either function as a key to academic achievement or remains impenetrable barrier to access higher education. MacKenzie (2008: 8) asserts that everywhere in the world, children who learn through their mother tongue are able to learn to read and write efficiently. Nolasco (2010: 1) highly recommends mother tongue for beginner learners as it enables them to immediately construct and explain their world without fear of making mistakes. Several researches to this effect continue to reveal that learning to read and write in the mother tongue facilitates access to another written language (Reh, 1981; Ryan, 1993; Goody, 2001; Grin, 2005). Consequently, it is significant to acknowledge the role of mother tongue in the acquisition of reading and writing.

Teaching children to read in their first language helps them to learn to read in the second language. On this note, Webb (1999: 3) contends that it is the learners’ first language that provides a rich cognitive preparation for second language learning. He further argues that it is the skills acquired in the L1 that provide for an easy transition to the second language medium. The Language in Education Policy (Act 27 of 1997) specifies that all learners must learn to read through their mother tongue from Grades 1 to 3 (Department of Education, 1997: 7-8). This is based on the assumption that when learners have difficulty with using reading as a tool for learning, then their comprehension problems are a product of limited language proficiency (Zimmerman, Botha, Howie & Long, 2007: 3). Furthermore, Hudson (1982: 1) says: “Readers are able to process meaning which has been presented through print by using prior knowledge of the world to produce representations of anticipated meaning.” A good example to this effect is supported by Craig, Hull, Haggart & Crowder (2001: 46) when they assert that story reading is
the main basis for helping children connect and experience prior knowledge with the larger world of text. Thus, through stories, learners are afforded opportunities to practice working out meaning through a context (Gauteng Department of Education, 2001: 59). Loukia (2006: 9) adds that a story reading book is also good when complemented with pictures. She further argues that pictures in a story reading are better associated with words. Thus, a reading story, according to Loukia (2006) is more memorable if it is related to a sequence of pictures. The theory of reading is also supported by Jackson (2003), drawing on Vygotsky’s notion of spontaneous and scientific concepts. According to Vygotsky (1986), spontaneous concepts are learnt from one’s home environment whereas scientific concepts are learnt from school. Thus, it implies that spontaneous concepts are learned unconsciously through everyday experiences, whilst scientific concepts are schooled concepts that are mediated through cognitive academic language (Jackson, 2003: 12). When teachers shoulder the responsibility of developing reading habits among learners, they are sort of fulfilling Vygotsky’s notion of the scientific concept. Calia (2009: 88) adds that parents can also assist to develop literacy interest in children by reading stories to them or encouraging them to read daily and that will be directed towards achieving Vygotsky’s notion of spontaneous concept. Calia (2009) argues that encouraging children to read daily will expose them to language and reinforce the importance of reading.

Thus, it is evident that mother tongue education plays a vital role during early childhood learning. It offers learners the best introduction to literacy and helps them to acquire English as a second language. The reality to this effect is revealed by the impact of L1 literacy knowledge on L2 reading development (Bernhardt, 2005; Koda, 2005, 2007). Research (e.g. Carson, Carrel, Silberstein, Kroll & Kuehn, 1990; Upton & Lee-Thompson, 2001) shows clearly that reading in a second language enables readers to access their first language and often use their L1 as a reading strategy. When learners are given more opportunities for reading in the L1, they stand a good chance of improving their reading skills and language proficiency. However, when children begin reading through a second language, they are at risk of encountering reading difficulties in their home language and the target language (Verhoeven, 1990). A good example to this effect is provided by Williams’ (1998) study of “straight for English” approach in Zambia, which showed that children in their third year of school barely read because they were
supposed to learn through a second language, English as their medium of instruction. Based on the views and examples mentioned above, it is evident therefore that teaching children to read through their first language helps them to learn to read in their second language (Rasana, 2002).

Learners need to write in order to establish their understanding of curricular concepts. However, getting low proficient English second language learners to write in the L2 classroom can be a daunting task. Thus, Stapa & Majid (2009: 46) emphasise that writing in the second language classroom can be demoralizing to learners when the process of generating ideas is far more complicated. Therefore, they insist on the use of L1 to assist learners in generating ideas for L2 writing. They further argue that allowing learners to generate ideas in the L1 helps them to identify the linguistic structures that will assist in transferring their ideas into the L2.

McCarthey, Gou & Cummins (2005: 72) also caution that children may experience cognitive difficulties in their second language if they are not competent in their first language. However, studies show that the transfer from learners’ L1 to their L2 writing affects the quality of their L2 writing. Boroditsky (2001) also found that when abstract thoughts are shaped by L1, it tends to affect L2 use. Corder cited in Stapa & Majid (2009: 47) declares that learners are not slaves to their L1 in learning L2. Hence, L1 should be used selectively, particularly when the teacher deems it necessary.

The use of first language in the second language is believed to occur “privately and subvocally” (Vygotsky, 1978: 28). Thus, L2 writing capitalizes much on the L1 available resources to develop accuracy in writing. This idea is supported by Collier & Slater (1987); Oster (1989); Lazar (1993) and Vethamani (2004) who advocate that accuracy in writing can be developed by exposing learners to their mother tongue literature. This, according to Collier & Slater (1987: 3) is emphasised on the account of exposing learners to the formation and function of sentences, the diversity of possible structures and the different ways of linking ideas. The significant role of mother tongue in facilitating writing is also supported by different research studies (e.g. Friedlander, 1990; Uzawa, 1996; Woodall, 2002) which revealed that writers use their first language (L1) while writing in L2. In the case of experiencing cognitive overload while writing in
the L2, writers are said to apply what (Manchón, Roca de Larios & Murphy, 2000: 112) call “back-tracking’ as a means to prevent cognitive overload (reverting to L1 use). This makes L1 useful when communicating ideas that are abstract. Stapa & Majid (2009: 42) argue that generating ideas for writing is crucial and they further indicate that “it falls in the realm of the pre-writing stage which evokes complex cognitive skills.” Thus, when learners decide on what they want to write about, they use long-term memory to retrieve information and that is where they rely on their L1 to release knowledge and experiences stored in the long-term memory. On this note, Thomas & Collier (2003: 64) contend that cognitive and academic development in the first language is essential to the development of second language. Therefore, it is vital for children to be proficient in their mother tongue so that they may be able to utilize the literacy skills that they have acquired in their first language to develop accuracy in their second language writing.

2.6 Conclusion

The use of mother tongue, particularly in Grade 3, has become a challenge in South African schools. The main goal is that by the end of Grade 3 all learners should be competent in their mother tongue. This means that learners should be ready to make the transition to the second language, since they will be required to use it in Grade 4 as the medium of instruction. In terms of determining the period of maintaining mother tongue education in the foundation phase, Heugh (2006) argues that children should have as much time as they need to acquire proficiency in their L1 so that they can be in a position to learn another language.

The chapter looked at the South African Language in Education Policy (Act 27 of 1996) with the examples of language policies of various African countries such Nigeria, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. Thereafter, the significance of mother tongue against First Additional Language during early childhood learning was discussed and the use of mother tongue as medium of instruction was also presented. Finally, the role that mother tongue plays towards enhancing reading and writing in the classroom was highlighted. The following Chapter (Three) examines the research design. It explains the sampling method and the research approaches the researcher followed when collecting data.
CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

In the preceding Chapter, the literature review was presented. This Chapter aims to describe the research approach, design, methodology as well as the procedures and techniques of data collection and analysis used. Furthermore, validity and reliability as well as ethical issues will be discussed. This includes the how, when and by whom of the subject under study. The figure below shows the frame of the research process, including the initial meetings that were held.

Figure 3.1.1: Frame of the research process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE RESEARCH PROCESS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1</strong>: An informal meeting with three school principals of the foundation phase was held on April 2011 to establish the schools’ stance on mother tongue education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 2</strong>: A convenient sampling technique was used for the selection of the targeted school amongst the 3 schools that were identified. One school was selected on the account of supporting the use of the mother tongue in the foundation phase (Grades 1 to 3).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 3</strong>: I carried out an initial, semi-structured interview with the teacher of the grade 3 classroom with the purpose of finding out how mother tongue as the medium of instruction is used in the grade 3 classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 4</strong>: A purposive sampling was used to identify five learners on the basis of their performance in learning through the mother tongue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 5</strong>: A meeting was arranged to inform parents of Grade 3 learners about this research on April 2011.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 6</strong>: I interviewed parents of the Grade 3 learners with the purpose of understanding their experiences of mother tongue education in the foundation phase.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 7</strong>: I interviewed five learners selected from the Grade 3 classroom for the purpose of finding out their experiences on learning through the mother tongue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 8</strong>: I conducted classroom observations during school hours. These observations took place twice a week, for thirty minutes per lesson activity, over the period of one school term on June 2011.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 9</strong>: Presentation and analysis of collected data: the data collected through semi-structured interviews were analysed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 10</strong>: Once the data was presented and analysed, an interpretation was undertaken to determine answers to the research questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 11</strong>: Validity and reliability is used to ensure trustworthiness throughout this study.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.2 Research Approach

This study uses a qualitative design as I wish to obtain a more detailed understanding from the perspectives of a Grade 3 teacher, a sample of Grade 3 learners as well as parents of these learners. This view is supported by Henning, van Rensburg & Smit (2004: 5) who say: “a qualitative approach denotes an inquiry in which the qualities, the characteristics or the properties of a phenomenon are examined for the better understanding of it.” Ezzy (2002: 45) adds that qualitative methods are those which “identify a person’s understanding of the situation as something to be discovered rather than assumed.” Thus, a person is at liberty to uncover and understand what lies behind the use of mother tongue medium of instruction in a Grade 3 classroom, simply, by availing himself/herself closer to the context in order to gather authentic details relevant to the study.

The study employed case study methodology within a foundation phase school context in a Grade 3 classroom in order to afford the researcher an opportunity “to build up the body of tacit knowledge on the basis of which people act” (Gomm, Hammersley & Foster, 2000: 7). This is supported by Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007: 253) when indicating that case study “provides a unique example of real people in real situation, enabling readers to understand ideas more clearly than simply by presenting them with abstract theories or principles.” According to Welman, Kruger & Mitchell (2005: 25), case study research is directed at understanding the uniqueness and idiosyncrasy of a particular case in all its complexity. This means that by involving case study methodology, the study is guaranteed to be presented accurately in accordance with the experiences of the participants.

3.3 Research Methodology

According to Strydom & Venter (2002: 255), research methodology should include a description of participants, target school, sampling plan, data collection procedures and instruments.

3.3.1. Sampling strategy

Sampling arises directly out of the issue of defining the population on which the research will focus (Cohen et al, 2007: 100).
3.3.1.1 Sampling technique

This study employed convenient sampling to select the target school, with focus specifically on a school that supports the use of the mother tongue as the language of instruction. According to Cohen et al (2007: 113) convenient sampling involves choosing the nearest individuals to serve as respondents and continuing that process until the required sampling size has been obtained. To ensure a representative sampling, the school was chosen from three schools in the Limpopo Province under Khujwana circuit in the Mopani district on the basis of the school’s commitment to the realization of mother tongue education. The school’s stance on mother tongue education was established from three school principals through interviews conducted prior to the study, as well as the possible existence and implementation of a language policy.

Henning et al (2004: 71) highlight that the need for “extra” sampling may arise during the process of the study. In this light, purposive sampling technique was deemed suitable for this study. Purposive sampling is accommodated in order to select five learners from a Grade 3 classroom on the basis of their performance in learning through the mother tongue. One of each learners’ parents were selected as a sample for the purpose of cross-checking the responses given by learners and a grade three teacher in the interview.

3.3.2 Research site

The study took place at Bodweni Preparatory School; the real name of the school has been changed for ethical reasons. The school is based in the area of Khujwana under Mopani District in Limpopo and it is situated around Mohlaba Head Kraal. The school serves an average of about 320 learners, contrary to the previous enrolment, which used to range from the minimum of 500 to 650 learners. The school admits learners from Grades 1 to 6 and has a staff of close to eight educators, one principal and one Head of Department. This school is the main feeder school for the Junior Secondary School at which I am currently teaching. Most learners who attend Bodweni Preparatory School are from families that are in a low-income category. The school is classified under quintile 1, which qualifies learners to be exempted from paying school fees.
3.3.3 Target school

Bodweni Preparatory School, founded in 1993 is a public Xitsonga medium (in the foundation phase) and English medium (from Grades 4 to 6) day school. The original name of the school is given to honour the chief’s daughter of the village where it is located. One hundred and four kilometres northeast of Polokwana lies Mohlaba Head Kraal, picturesquely situated between Lenyenye and Tzaneen, near the hamlet of Mohlaba Cross. The school caters for boys and girls from Grades 1 to 6. It has one or two classes per Grade with a maximum of thirty to forty children per class. The school currently has 320 learners enrolled. A fully integrated, extended school day is offered and all children are encouraged to participate in sport and cultural activities. The school is governed by the School Governing Body (SGB), which comprises members elected from the parent body after a period of three years. The SGB is selected in accordance with the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996).

3.3.4 Target population

According to Welman et al (2005: 52), “the population encompasses the total collection of all units of analysis about which the researcher wishes to make specific conclusions.” A population in this context will refer to the Grade 3 teacher, a sample of five Grade 3 learners as well as the parents of these learners. Descriptive details of all participants will be provided in Chapter 4.

My intention was to work with three Grade 3 teachers, ten Grade 3 learners as well as ten parents of these learners. However, the school has one classroom for Grade 3 and only one teacher is responsible for teaching the Grade 3 learners. I chose five learners (two boys and three girls) instead of ten learners. The five learners were chosen on the basis of their performance in learning through the mother tongue and that was established through the Grade 3 learners’ first term (March, 2011) assessment report, which was produced by the Grade 3 teacher during the interview. The Grade 3 classroom consists of thirty three learners, eighteen girls and fifteen boys, aged between nine and eleven years. The learners in this school were from diverse educational, language, social and cultural backgrounds. The majority of the learners speak Xitsonga as their mother tongue.
3.3.5 Data collection

According to Cohen et al (2007: 181), there are various data collection methods that a researcher may utilize when using a qualitative approach, and these include interviewing, observation, field notes, audio recordings, documents, and video recordings. Qualitative researchers are not bound by any step by step plan to use specific research methods. The researcher may employ any research methods which best suit the purpose of the study. For this study two methods were used to collect data, namely: classroom observations and interviews. These methods were used to solicit the rich data dealing with learners, teachers as well as parents’ experiences of learning through the mother tongue.

Table 3.3.5.1: Summary of data gathering instruments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research instrument</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>No of responses</th>
<th>Male/female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observation</td>
<td>Written schedule</td>
<td>1 educator</td>
<td>female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>9 questions for the learners</td>
<td>5 learners</td>
<td>3 females + 2 males</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11 questions for the educator</td>
<td>1 educator</td>
<td>female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9 questions for parents</td>
<td>5 parents</td>
<td>5 females</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3.6 Classroom observation

There are two types of observations, namely, simple observation, wherein a researcher remains an outside observer, and participant observation wherein a researcher is simultaneously a member of the group he/she is studying in a research (Cohen et al, 2007: 396-398). In this study I used the simple observation method, which was conducted for a period of one school term and I observed six lessons (see Appendix 6) offered by the educator of a grade 3 classroom. I also used an observation schedule (for each activity) to collect data (see Appendix 3). There were items on the schedule to be completed during the observation. The researcher observed the mother tongue used by the educator in presenting her lessons, and the learners in learning through the mother tongue.
Table 3.3.6.1: Summary of observations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Learners</th>
<th>Learning area</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td>First Additional Language</td>
<td>Identifying Verbs</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td>First Additional Language</td>
<td>Reading Comprehension</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td>First Additional Language</td>
<td>Identifying Nouns</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td>Xitsonga</td>
<td>Story reading <em>(ku hlaya xitory)</em></td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td>First Additional Language</td>
<td>Reading aloud</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td>First Additional Language</td>
<td>Reading newspaper article</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I observed the classroom activities and I particularly concentrated on the mother tongue usage. The following were focal points of the observations:

1. The dominating language(s) during the classroom activity.
2. The way the Grade 3 teacher and the Grade 3 learners sometimes code-switch and mix languages.
3. The way the Grade 3 teacher motivates the Grade 3 learners to use their mother tongue.

3.3.7. Interviews

Interviews enable participants to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live and to express how they regard situations from their own perceptions (Cohen et al, 2007: 349). In research there are three types of interviews: structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews (Welman et al, 2005). Semi-structured interviews were used in this study (see Appendix 5) as according to Welman et al (2005), they can accommodate all age groups and also allow the interviewer to make a genuine assessment of what the respondent really believes (Cohen et al, 2007: 357). Interviews were conducted one-on-one within a period of one school term and parents were interviewed at their respective homes to avoid them having to travel to school throughout the interview process.
I interviewed the Grade 3 teacher, five learners of the Grade 3 classroom as well as the parents of these learners. I used the audio recorder to record the teacher, the Grade 3 learners as well as the parents. After every session of the interview, I played the recorder to make certain that everything was recorded. I also took notes during the interview session in case the audio recorder malfunctioned.

3.4 Data analysis

3.4.1 Techniques for analysing and interpreting data

Cohen et al (2007: 461) note that qualitative research involves organizing, accounting for and explaining the data because nothing speaks for itself. The role of the researcher as an “interpreter” is significant since it should be done in such a way that the reader is able to understand the phenomenon being studied. Thus, the researcher should be able to make sense of the gathered data such as the field notes gathered through the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the data collected (De Vos, 2002: 340).

Data analysis in this study will be used to examine how, when and by whom mother tongue is used in the Grade 3 classroom and to examine how mother tongue medium of instruction can contribute to teaching reading and writing in the foundation phase.

3.4.2 Techniques used to interpret and analyse data

A fundamental technique in the analysis and interpretation of data in qualitative research is that of discovering the classes of things, persons and events and the properties that characterize them (De Vos, 2002: 48). However, Streubel & Carpenter (1999: 40) caution that during this process, researchers must keep personal bias aside throughout the investigation, especially since qualitative investigation on research such as interviews are intense and personal in nature. To prevent the development of close relationship between participants and the researcher, these authors suggest the use of a technique called “bracketing.” This technique is defined as the process of putting aside one’s own beliefs, not making judgments about what one has observed or heard and remaining open to the data as it is revealed.
In order to prevent the above from happening, I used the analysing procedures identified by De Vos (2002: 340). These include the collection and recording of data, managing the data, reading and memoing (writing memos), describing, classifying and interpreting and lastly representing or visualizing. The research process, including the initial meetings that were held, took place over a three-month period (see Figure 3.1.1)

The first step, namely, the collection and recording of data was conducted through the use of field notes and the audio-recorder. Since I was going to use the audio-recorder, I made certain that I had enough batteries for the duration of my interviews.

The second step involved analysing and interpreting data. I managed data in this study by transcribing from the audio-recorder in word format.

The third step relates to the reading and writing of the collected data. After transferring the data from the audio-recorder, I read the transcripts repeatedly to familiarize myself with the gathered information. This is also supported by De Vos (2002: 343) when he says: “the qualitative researcher continues analysing by getting a feel for the whole data base.”

Fourth, I describe, classify and interpret the data gathered (De Vos, 2002: 344). I followed this procedure by categorizing and classifying data that were similar or dissimilar with each other in the study.

Lastly, I presented the data that was found in the text by discussing the results of the study and determined whether or not the data was useful in fulfilling the aims of this study. Thereafter, I summarized and linked data to the literature reviewed, the approaches and models discussed as well as the integrated model of mother tongue education that was developed.

### 3.5 Reliability

Reliability is concerned with the findings of the research and relates to the credibility of the findings (Welman et al, 2005: 145). In order to ensure reliability in this study, I used field notes where observations were documented to check whether there was corroboration between my findings and the information given by the participants. Hence, the quality of recording and
documenting data becomes a central basis for assessing reliability and that of succeeding interpretations” (Flick, 2009: 386). Reliability was also guaranteed by checking concretely the interview guides, generative questions in tests interviews and after the first interview against other passages in the same text or against other text such as the notes that were recorded during observations. Flick (ibid: 387) emphasises that “If reliability is used it may be more convenient to mistrust rather than to trust the dependability of the data.

3.6 Validity

The question of grounding this study is ensured by validity. Welman et al (2005: 142) define validity as “the extent to which the research findings accurately represent what is really happening in the situation”. For the research process in this study, as a non-participant observer, I refrained from talking in the classroom in order to listen attentively so as to record concrete data. I validated the study by seeking feedback on the findings and presentations in the field. Thus, the process of guaranteeing validity and reliability in this study served as an attempt to “act sensitively in the field” (Flick, 2009: 390).

3.7 Ethical considerations

It is always emphasized that whenever a researcher designs a research study, he/she must be guided by the following ethical principles: informed consent, respect for privacy and confidentiality, no harm to research participants, and no deception of research participants (Gilbert, 2008: 146-147).

I attempted to obtain informed consent through an open communication process. This involved writing letters to the Department of Education and to the principal of the school, requesting permission to conduct research at that sampled school (see Appendix 1). The next stage was the actual contact with the head master, the teacher of a Grade 3 classroom, learners of the Grade 3 and the parents taking part in the project. Research participation was entirely voluntary and participants were fully informed of the aims and objectives of the research. Since children differ from adults in cognitive and linguistic development (Cohen et al, 2007: 374), I considered giving them a special care, which focused on what Merton & Kendal (1946) call
focus groups, which was structured to suit the age level of interviewing Grade 3s of between 9 to 11 years. The first session of interviewing learners on focus groups was a bit frustrating because children were able to listen to one another’s responses and repeated what other learners have already indicated. Therefore, I changed tactics to interviewing them one-on-one and the questions were structured to suit their age level (between 9 to 11 years). Care was also taken to establish rapport, empathy and sensitivity geared at creating an environment that was conducive to safe disclosure.

Privacy implies an element of personal privacy whereas confidentiality means that the information will be handled confidentially. Strydom & Venter (2002: 67) states that the privacy of the participants could be violated if the researcher uses tape recorders or hidden cameras without the consent of the participants. Participants’ right to privacy was also respected. Before the interviews commenced, I sought permission from the participants to record the interview (see Appendix 2). I also explained the role of the audio-recorder to the participants. When the permission was granted, I informed the research participants that the recorded information would be destroyed at the end of the study and that if they wanted, they could have access to the recordings. Participants were also told that they could request the audio-recorder to be switched off at any time during the interview. I also informed the participants that they will remain anonymous.

During research, participants could be exposed to emotional or physical harm (Strydom & Venter, 2002: 64). Therefore, as a researcher, I was required to inform the participants of any possible harm, at the start of the interview. However, reasonable steps were taken to prevent any harm from taking place. I took every step necessary to prevent any harm. In that way, I was able to offer the participants an opportunity to make their decision about participating or not to participate in the research.

Strydom & Venter (2002: 66) states that qualitative researchers sometimes lie by giving incorrect information about the aims or goals of the research. This is mainly done to hide what the research participants will experience when they participate in the study. The goals of the current study and the research procedures followed during the investigation were clearly
stated during various phases of the research. Firstly, during the search for research participants, the researcher arranged to meet with the participants (see Figure 3.1.1). Secondly, the researcher conducted a workshop and at the end of the workshop the aims of the study as well as research procedures to be followed during the study were emphasised. Lastly, when the researcher was establishing rapport and the voluntary participation of research participants, the informed consent form which clearly stated the objectives of the study and the procedure followed during the research, was explained to participants. The researcher also allowed the participants sufficient time to ask questions relating to this study.

3.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, the qualitative research which was employed to collect data was discussed. The use of this design was based on the fact that its objectives are mainly to describe, analyse and interpret the phenomena under investigation. I used convenient sampling technique to select the targeted school which suited the purpose of the study (school that supports the use of mother tongue). Purposive sampling technique was also used in order to select learners on the basis of their performance in learning through mother tongue. Through the use of these methods, a sample of one school was chosen and five learners of a Grade 3 classroom were selected for the purpose of interviews. The method of classroom observation was employed to enable the researcher to observe six lessons offered by the Grade 3 teacher on mother tongue usage. The method of face-to-face interviews was also employed on the basis of obtaining a picture of the participants’ experiences of learning through the mother tongue in the Grade 3 classroom. The ethical principles that guided the study as well as the techniques for analysing and interpreting data were also addressed in this Chapter. In the following Chapter, I discuss how data that were collected in this Chapter were described, classified and interpreted.
CHAPTER 4

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I describe, classify and interpret the data collected during field work. Cohen et al (2007: 461) explain analysis as the process of “making sense of data in terms of the participants’ definitions of the situation...” Data collected from the Grade 3 teacher and the Grade 3 learners as well as parents of these learners are analyzed in accordance with the classroom observations and interviews. The purpose of my study is to explore how, why and by whom mother tongue is used in the Grade 3 classroom and to examine how mother tongue medium of instruction can contribute to the teaching of literacy in the Grade 3 classroom. I identified the patterns from my raw data and categorized them into themes. The data is presented thematically. Themes from my data were directed by my research questions as indicated in Chapter 1, which are as follows:

- How is mother tongue medium of instruction currently used in the classroom of Grade 3 learners?
- How can mother tongue practices be utilized to strengthen literacy in the Grade 3 classroom?

4.2 Summary of themes and categories used to analyze classroom observations and interviews

As mentioned in Chapter 3 the qualitative researcher analyzes data by organizing it into categories on the basis of themes, concepts or similar features (Cohen et al: 461). The report of my findings is organized in terms of two possible themes which were identified in the analysis from the classroom observations and interviews. Each of these themes relates to how mother tongue education is currently used in the grade 3 classroom to enhance literacy. The following table is a representation of the themes and categories I identified in my analysis and each theme is directed by the first research question as mentioned above:
### Table 4.2.1: Identification of themes and categories in the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research question</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How is mother tongue medium of instruction currently used in the classroom of Grade 3 learners?</td>
<td>1.1 The contextual analysis of the school and the background of the Grade 3 teacher, learners as well as parents.</td>
<td>• Profile of the school and the teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.2 The importance of learning to read and write through the mother tongue</td>
<td>• Profile of learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Profile of parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Mother tongue provides the basis for learning another language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Mother tongue as an indicator of cultural identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Mother tongue for mental/cognitive growth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.3 The contextual analysis of the school and the background of respondents

In this section I outline the background information of the school, the Grade 3 teacher and the Grade 3 learners as well as parents of the learners with whom I worked in my study. I used pseudonyms for the school and for all the respondents for the sake of confidentiality, privacy and anonymity.

#### 4.3.1 Profile of the school and the Grade 3 teacher

The pseudonym of the school is Bodweni Preparatory School, based in the area of Khujwana under Mopani district in Limpopo and it is situated around the village of Mohlaba Head Kraal. As previously mentioned in Chapter 3, my intention was to work with three teachers of the Grade 3 classrooms. However, the school has one class of Grade 3 and only one teacher is responsible for teaching the Grade 3 learners. Therefore, I worked with one female Grade 3
teacher. The pseudonym of the teacher teaching grade 3 learners is Jane and she has 33 learners in her class. She is a qualified teacher with a Junior Primary Teachers Diploma and she graduated in 1994 from Hoxani College of Education. She has 17 years experience in teaching the Foundation phase. The school has a mini library with only a few old storybooks relevant for all Grades (Grades 1 to 6).

Looking at the profile of the school and the teacher, one realizes that the school is not overcrowded, normally, many black African schools house about three to four classes of the same Grade, but this school has one Grade 3 classroom. The point that was indicated by the Provincial Director of Education in Gauteng (1998) in Chapter 2 that black African parents and teachers send their children to English-medium schools (formerly whites only) (Osborn, 2007: 7), seems to be one of the contributory factors to the decline of the school enrolment.

4.3.2 Profile of Grade 3 participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learner</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Home language</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nsovo</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Xitsonga</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thabo</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Sepedi</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fikile</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Xitsonga</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhulani</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Xitsonga</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mashudu</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Venda</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The grade 3 classroom is dominated by Xitsonga speaking learners and only few learners whose home language is Sepedi and Venda. The learners’ age group ranges from 9 to 11. The number of female learners is higher than the male learners. Sepedi and Venda speaking learners are taught through Xitsonga medium because the school does not have resources to cater for these learners’ needs.
4.3.3 Profile of parents

Table 4.3.3.1: Profile of parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Home language</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Marital status</th>
<th>Highest level of qualification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rose</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Xitsonga</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Std 5 (grade 7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Sepedi</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>House-maid</td>
<td>Widow</td>
<td>Std 7 (grade 9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cynthia</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Xitsonga</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Std 2 (grade 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cate</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Venda</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Std 6 (grade 8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julia</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Xitsonga</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Std 7 (grade 9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many parents of the Grade 3 learners at Bodweni Preparatory School are literate and that is revealed by the level of their qualifications, where some were able to reach up to the level of Standard 7 (Grade 9). I intended to work with male and female parents, but it turned out that I could only work with five female parents because most of them are single parents and one, a widow. The age of the parents ranges from 30 to 45. As discussed in Chapter 3, most learners in this school are from the low-income category. This is proclaimed by the high rate of unemployment that was discovered from the profile of parents.

In the next section, I am going to examine the experiences of the Grade 3 teacher, and the Grade 3 learners as well as parents of these learners with regard to the use of mother tongue medium of instruction in the Grade 3 classroom. The purpose is to understand the experiences of using mother tongue and how this could enhance literacy in the Grade 3 classroom.
4.4 The importance of learning to read and write through the mother tongue

As stated in Chapter 2, mother tongue is a precious treasure which makes a child arrive at school with knowledge that may be used to build on what he/she already knows (Cummins, 2001: 16). Linguists and educational psychologists agree that the use of the mother tongue as the language of instruction in the early years of education has many advantages; in my study I identified the following three categories through interviews with the Grade 3 teacher, Grade 3 learners and parents of these learners as well as the Grade 3 classroom observations:

- Mother tongue provides the basis for learning another language
- Mother tongue as an indicator of cultural identity
- Mother tongue for mental/cognitive growth

As discussed in Chapter 2, the mother tongue provides the basis for the child’s ability to learn another language (Cummins, 2001: 17). Thus, learners learn a second language more quickly when learning is first conducted in their first language (Cook, 2001: 410). The experience of the Grade 3 teacher during her schooling is confirmation to the importance of learning through the mother tongue. She had this to say:

"It is crucial to learn in the mother tongue before learning in any foreign language. I read a lot in Xitsonga than in any other language. When I was in Grade 3, I could read fluently on my own and this gave me an opportunity to learn how to read in English. (Extract from teacher interview, May 2011)."

Jane was taught to read and write through her mother tongue and she had seen its value. She believes that reading and writing through the mother tongue is crucial. According to Cummins (2001: 17) reading and writing through the mother tongue is a strong predictor of the children’s second language development. Jane further said it was easy for her to read and write through her own language, Xitsonga because she was able to understand what her teacher said in class. The literature discussed in Chapter 2 further reveals that learning to read and write is easier in a familiar language (MacKenzie, 2008: 8). The teacher went on to say that her mother was able to help her with most of her school work. Now that her Grade 3 learners are learning through the mother tongue just like she was taught in the past, she believes that by the end of the year,
many learners in her Grade 3 class will be able to read and write in Xitsonga as this is also specified in the Language in Education Policy (Act 27 of 1997). Hence, it will be easy for them to learn another language. Similarly, Cate, one of the mothers said:

Our children should read and write in their mother tongue in order to build on the second language. I learned Afrikaans when I worked for the Afrikaans people, it was easy for me because I would think in my own language then I would be able to come up with words in Afrikaans. (Extract from parent interview, May 2011).

The parent and the Grade 3 teacher were taught in a traditional and teacher-centred way. They both believe that learning through the mother tongue prepares for learning to read and write through another language; this is evident in Jane’s classroom during an English reading lesson that I observed. The extract below is constructed from my field notes and presents a thick description of classroom observations on June 2011.

Extract 1

It is June 2011; I arrive at Jane’s class in time to join them as they sing the school song. After the singing, the teacher says: “Vana, ahi khongeleni xikhongelo xa hosl” (Children, let us all say the Lord’s prayer). Thereafter, Jane gives learners photocopies of an extract from an English reader, Benny Misses the Bus. She says: “Hi ta hlaya tsalwa ra ‘Benny Misses the Bus’ leswaku hi ta hlawula maviti lawa tirhisiweke eka tsalwa lerl” (We are going to read the text, ‘Benny Misses the Bus’ in order to identify different nouns that are used in the text). Jane reads the text and learners read silently from their photocopied sheets. She writes few nouns on the chalkboard and asks learners to identify more nouns from their texts, but instead they started making noise. One learner says: “A hi swi twisisi leswaku ti ‘nouns’ i yini.” (We do not understand nouns). Jane says: “Ti ‘nouns’ I maviti” (Nouns are naming words). She further says: “Maviti ya hi pfuneta ku thya swilo, vanhu kumbe tindhawu hi ku hamba-hambana ka tona hikuva ku vulavurisana aku nga ta olva exikarhi ka vanhu loko ahi nga tirihisi maviti.” (Every person, place or thing is identified with a name, without which we would not be able to communicate or understand one another). She then asks learners: “Xana I maviti wahi lama hi nga matirhisaka ku thya swilo?” (Which words can we use as common nouns?) One of the learners answered: “tafula.” Jane repeats the word, “tafula” in the learners’ language, Xitsonga and she translates the word to English, meaning “table”. Jane also uses pictures to show learners different common nouns such as “xitulu” (chair), “buku” (book), malamula (oranges) etc. She gives learners another chance to identify nouns from the text. The whole class works quietly on the text in order to identify more nouns and some learners managed to finish the exercise in time. (June 2011).
The extract shows that the use of mother tongue is the key to communication and understanding in the First Additional Language classroom. The teacher uses the learners’ own language to help them “transfer skills from the familiar language to the unfamiliar one” (Benson, 2004: 2). For example, after she had explained what a noun is in the learners’ own language, it became simple for the learners to understand the concept “riviti” (noun). Therefore, it was easy for the learners to identify nouns from the text and this was demonstrated by the learners’ ability to identify more nouns from the classroom. Learning to read and write through the mother tongue in the Grade 3 classroom is vital because it creates opportunities for the teacher to maintain a positive learning atmosphere in which learners feel comfortable to learn.

It is clear that without the use of the learners’ mother tongue in the First Additional Language classroom, there would be no meaningful communication between the teacher and the learners. Hence, effective learning would not have taken place. However, as already discussed in Chapter 2, L1 interference is completely discouraged by several language theorists (Krashen, 1981; Macaro, 1997; Swain, 2000; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Cook, 2001). They emphasise the focus on L2 with the belief that learning will take place among learners as long as they are able to understand the message conveyed through the L2. The argument for discouraging L1 in a L2 classroom does not ‘hold water’ because according to what transpired in Jane’s class, learners were able to understand the meaning of the concept “noun” as it was explained in their own language.

Thus, learners in Jane’s class demonstrated progress in their learning because the teacher used their own language to support their language learning (Cameron, 2001: 199). Willis & Willis (2007) also claim that it is impossible to avoid using L1 in L2 classrooms, especially with beginners because they are not yet experienced with the L2. Although learning through the mother tongue is supported by my participants as well as the literature, it is not what is happening in some schools. For example, in Bodweni Preparatory School, Xitsonga is used as the medium of instruction for the foundation phase. However, there are some children who do not speak Xitsonga as their home language. It was discovered from the profile of the learners
that besides Xitsonga learners in the Grade 3 classroom, there are Venda and Sepedi speakers. This is also Jane’s concern when she says:

I have a problem in enabling these learners to read through Xitsonga because it is not their home language. They only have opportunities to speak Xitsonga here at school, but when they go home they speak Venda or Sepedi. (Extract from teacher interview, May 2011).

As already discussed in Chapter 2 learning through a foreign language at an early stage has been proven by several researchers, (e.g. Delpit & Kemmelfield, 1985; Benson, 2002; World Bank, 2005; Jhingran, 2005) that it is much more complicated and demotivating to learners. The Venda and Sepedi learners in Jane’s class do not have the same opportunities of learning compared to those who are Tsonga speakers. It is significant to note that whereas the South African Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) advocates the right to choose the language of learning and teaching, it is not what is happening in Jane’s school. It is worth remembering that Jane’s school is a rural school which comprises of multilingual learners who are taught in a language which is not their mother tongue. Hence, there is contradiction in the Language in Education Policy (Act 27 of 1997) whereby parents’ and learners’ choices of languages are superseded by the government’s material conditions of being ‘practicable’.

My findings in Jane’s class during the English reading lessons that I observed from the extract on the previous page was that it was easier for some learners to learn through the language of instruction because it is their home language; this is what made some of these learners identify nouns from the English reader faster than the other learners in class. However, learners whose language is not Xitsonga found it difficult to learn as this was revealed by Jane during the interview. Hence, it is possible to see discrepancies in the use of language policy, as the school offers Xitsonga as the language of learning and teaching to children whose home language is Venda or Sepedi. My interpretation of this phenomenon is that the teaching of reading and writing through the language which is not the learners’ language, creates difficulties for the Grade 3 teacher to enable these learners to read and write, which on the other hand, disadvantages these learners.
Learning through the mother tongue is central to how children establish their participation in their families and cultures, and the primary means by which they gain access to cultural knowledge (Ball, 2009: 1). As already mentioned in the literature in Chapter 2, mother tongue is one of the most powerful tools used to identify cultural differences in a multiethnic society (Hechter, 1994: 487). It provides children with a sense of belonging. All the parent participants and the Grade 3 teacher believe that the role of mother tongue in promoting cultural identity is also a crucial factor because it helps a child to identify himself/herself with the language and culture he/she knows best. When the teacher was asked to explain how she encourages learners to use their mother tongue in the classroom, she said:

I read Xitsonga stories to them through the mother tongue and I even encourage them to bring traditional pictures from home, we use these pictures to decorate the class. I also use these pictures to clarify learners of the stories we read in class and I give them exercises about the pictures. (Extract from teacher interview, May 2011)

The teacher uses a teaching approach that includes the reading of stories that are written in the learners’ language, Xitsonga. She believes that by reading these stories in an interesting and enjoyable way, learners are exposed to their cultural identity and they also develop language proficiency. When Jane reads stories in class she makes certain that the storybook reading is relevant to her learners’ culture. Language and culture are like the two sides of the same coin. Thus, Jane feels that she cannot use the mother tongue in her Grade 3 classroom without accommodating her learners’ culture. Teaching a language involves teaching the culture of its people, hence, “one cannot learn to use a language without knowing the culture of the people who speak that language” (Kramsch, 1988: 63). The approach of using language to encourage a critical understanding of the concept of culture is also supported by the Department of Education (2002) because it has the ability to create the right learning environment for the beginner learners (van Staden & Watson, 2007: 3). Jane teaches learners to read and write through their mother tongue, she does this in order to encourage them to develop interest in their mother tongue.

The following extract describes how Jane uses the learners’ L1 to keep them connected to their culture:
The learners in Jane’s class are seated according to groups in the Xitsonga reading class. Jane introduces the lesson. The topic is a story about a young man whose dream is to become a famous actor. It is titled “Mphikizana wolowo”, meaning (That Competition). The story book is taken from the class reader. Jane reads the text aloud while learners follow silently. Thereafter Jane said: “Hi ta hlaya tsalwa leri ha un’we un’we loko hi ri karhi hi tsavula maendli eka tsalwa leri” (We are going to read the story individually as we are searching for doing words from the given passage). She pointed at one learner to read the first paragraph and the learner reads as follows: “A ku ri hi Khotavuxika ku nga si fika nkarhi wa ku wis a ka swikolo, loko ntlawa wa mina wa drama wu twa mahungu yo tsakisa. Nhloko ya xikolo a tivisa eka nhlangano wa namixo. “Avuxeni vadyondzi. Ndzi mi khomele mahungu yo tsakisa. Tani hi laha mi swi tivaka kuri ntlawa wa hina wa drama awu nghenele mphikizana wa Segarona, wu hlawuriwile ku ya yimela Xifundza xa Gauteng eGrahamstown.” (It was the month of June before the school closes, when my drama group was told about the good news. The principal announced during morning devotion. “Good morning learners. I have good news for you. As you know that our drama group participated in the Segarona competition, they have been selected to represent the Gauteng Province in Grahamstown”). After reading the paragraph, Jane tells individual groups to help each other identify and underline the verbs in the paragraphs. Then the second learner reads the second paragraph and they underlined the doing words from it, until learners have completed underlining the verbs from the passage.

This extract demonstrates how Jane uses reading stories that are written in the learners’ L1 to expose them to their culture and to promote literacy in the classroom. This is supported by Craig et al (2001: 46) when they assert that story reading is the main basis for helping children connect and experience prior knowledge with the larger world of text. The Gauteng Department of Education (2001: 59) further adds that stories help learners to practice working out meaning through a context. Jane uses a Xitsonga class reader, “Mphikizana wolowo”, (That competition) to develop her learners’ reading skills in their mother tongue. She gives her learners more opportunities for reading in their L1 as it a prerequisite for the children to learn to read in their mother tongue from Grades 1 to 3 (Department of Education, 1997: 7-8). Learning through the mother tongue offers learners the best introduction to literacy and helps them to acquire English as a second language (Mwamwenda, 1996). When learning is first conducted through the learners’ first language it becomes easy for them to learn. Studies (e.g. Benson, 2002; Hoven, 2002; Kosonen, 2005) have also shown that if children are offered opportunities to learn through their mother tongue from their early childhood, they are more likely to succeed in learning. Hence, it is demonstrated from the above extract that learning
through one’s mother tongue means that discussions in the classroom are not ‘artificial’ and that the constraints imposed by efforts to use appropriate register in English disappeared. Senadeera (2006: 1) emphasises that learning through the mother tongue helps children develop confidence and self-esteem. Learners in the Xitsonga lesson felt free to converse and use language with the aim of achieving understanding and that was demonstrated through their ability to identify the correct verbs which were used in the text. Cummins (1992) argues that initially learning should be contextualized and therefore emanate from a familiar ground. Thus, it is advisable for the foundation phase teachers like Jane to start from prior-knowledge because it gives learners access to disciplinary discourse. The use of a familiar language in Jane’s lesson facilitated the learning and development of the subject matter concepts and knowledge on the part of her Grade 3 learners. Therefore, it was easy for Jane and her Grade 3 learners to be partners in learning. The classroom interaction in the Xitsonga lesson also suggests that the use of the mother tongue can sometimes help learners to achieve more clarity in the teacher’s instruction and explanation and therefore encourage learning. This suggestion is also supported by Biggs’ (2003) notion of explicitness as a way to deep learning.

The teacher also gives learners opportunities to bring traditional pictures from home; she uses the pictures to illustrate her reading stories. This is another way that Jane uses to connect her Grade 3 learners to their culture. Literature discussed in Chapter 2 also reveals that story reading books are good when complemented with pictures (Loukia, 2006: 9). Thus, pictures in a story reading are better associated with words (Ibid: 9). Jane creates a bridge between her learners’ home and the classroom. The picture below shows the traditional view of Jane’s Grade 3 classroom.
Figure 4.4.2.1: Teacher Jane’s pin board: The incorporation of culture, home and classroom

- Traditional pillow (Xiseketelo)
- Water pot (Khuwana ra mati)
- Learner’s work of traditional art (votshila bya ndhavuko)
- Traditional chair (Xitulu)
- Wooden crushers (Tshuri)
- Girl with Tsonga traditional outfit (Xibelana)
- Wooden plate (Ndyelo)
The visual displays on the notice board of Jane’s classroom link the teacher and the learners to their cultural world. It also expresses social relations between the teacher and her learners because they share the same cultural and linguistic background as this was discovered from the profile of the teacher and the learners. Most of the items such as the wooden crushers, wooden plates, water pots and traditional outfit pictured in figure 4.4.2.1 are commonly used by the Tsonga people. When it comes to encouraging learners to develop an interest towards the use of the mother tongue, the teacher says that she allows learners to wear their traditional outfits on casual days. The pictures displayed on the notice board, particularly the one showing a girl wearing a Tsonga traditional outfit also serves as an inspiration for the learners to familiarize themselves with their culture. Jane also indicated that she gives learners opportunities to become creative through cultural artwork. The drawing on the notice board of the incorporation of culture, home and classroom is a creation by one of Jane’s learners. She displays the picture in order to motivate other learners.

Jane also uses stories to help learners comprehend and practice reading and writing skills. Her method of teaching through the mother tongue is also corroborated by Valdes (1986: 137) who claims that literature “transmits the culture of the people who speak the language in which it is written.” Jane said:

Learners wear traditional outfits on casual days and I award a learner who has worn a complete traditional outfit. My classroom wall and notice boards are filled with posters and pictures, and I give children opportunities to make traditional artwork. (Extract from teacher interview, May 2011).

Jane supports the use of mother tongue; she promotes the culture of learning through giving learners opportunities to celebrate their cultural identity. Jane is aware that teaching cultural awareness in her Grade 3 classroom is important. She uses motivational strategies to encourage learners. Freeman (1992: 203) emphasises that teachers like Jane are able to teach to the strength of the whole child because they value the language and culture of their learners. It is also interesting to note that Jane maintains the value of her learners’ language by creating classroom displays which celebrate the culture of the Tsonga people. She encourages her learners to produce pieces of art that they were able to visualize while listening to the
story. Jane uses different methods of teaching in her classroom to encourage learners to enjoy learning through their mother tongue. She does this in order to capture the attention of the learners. Benson (2001: 48) and d’Emilio (2001: 77) also emphasise the significance of giving learners opportunities to learn through their mother tongue in order to keep them connected to their cultural identity. Julia, one of the mothers, said:

I thought our languages would disappear for good, and make our children lose their identity, now that our languages can be used as medium of instructions; it feels like our pride is restored. (Extract from parent interview, May 2011).

Ostler (2000: 3) reports that many linguists predict that by the year 2050 half of the world’s languages will disappear if they are not widely used or recognized as official languages. Mother tongue instruction in the foundation phase eases Julia’s fear of watching her language “disappear for good”. Julia believes that learning through the mother tongue in the foundation phase is a drive to save her language from disappearing. It is a pride of every ethnic group to see their languages passed to their next generation. Julia knows that when her language dies, her culture will also cease to exist making her community lose its sense of identity; identity being closely associated with language. Therefore, it is vital to keep languages alive rather than to wait for their extinction and thereafter endeavour to resuscitate them.

The above responses illustrate that the use of the mother tongue in the Grade 3 classroom is significant because it helps children to develop close relationships with their families and their communities. It eases the fear of killing the indigenous African languages as cautioned by Skutnabb-Kangas (2000: 4) and it also provides maximum exposure for children to use their mother tongue at school and at home. However, parents also hope that learning through the mother tongue will help their children to maintain links with their cultural backgrounds and maintain their identity. Read (2003: 5) asserts that the use of mother tongue instruction helps children to discover who they are and it enables them to establish vital relationships with their family as well as developing good literacy skills.

It is significant in my findings to note that the use of mother tongue as the medium of instruction in the Grade 3 classroom does not exist in isolation rather it is interwoven with culture. Thus, it affords children opportunities to gain access to their cultural knowledge.
The teacher in this study feels that learning through the mother tongue should be complemented by reading traditional stories, allowing learners to wear their traditional outfits on casual days and involving them in creating a classroom that depicts a traditional view. Respecting learners’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds in educational settings is also supported by linguists and educational psychologists.

Another issue that emerged from the use of the mother tongue as the language of instruction in the early years of education is the development of cognitive/mental ability, which leads to the academic achievement of a learner. The Grade 3 teacher in this study teaches through the language which is familiar to her learners. This was reflected in her lesson presentations. When asked about the advantage or disadvantage of learning through the mother tongue, Jane responded:

Learners catch up faster than when one teaches through the medium of English and they are able to follow the activity. It makes them to participate and show their capability in learning to read and write through the mother tongue. (Extract from teacher interview, May 2011).

Jane conceptualized the use of mother tongue instruction as enabling learners to develop good literacy skills in their mother tongue. She believes that it is easy to manage learners who are taught through their own language because they are able to respond positively to the learning instruction. Jane thinks that exposing children to their first language enhances their mental development. She feels that the mother tongue has an active and beneficial role to play in instructed second language acquisition/learning. The UNESCO Committee of 1953 also emphasises that children learn faster through their first language than an unfamiliar linguistic medium. This is revealed in Jane’s class as already indicated in the first category of this Chapter in which I observed learners being noisy because they did not understand the lesson on nouns in the L2, until Jane explained what a noun is in the learners’ own language. The literature discussed in Chapter 2 also reveals that second language learners have to first master strategies for negotiating meaning in print in their first language in order to acquire successful second language literacy (Collier, 1990: 622). Cynthia, one of the mothers, had this to say about the advantage or disadvantage of learning through the mother tongue:
When children do not understand the language that is used in the classroom, they are much more likely to become unsuccessful in their learning. Access to quality education really only happens when the mother tongue is used as the language of learning. Our children’s achievement is improving but still not satisfactory. (Extract from parent interview, May 2011).

From the above response, it is evident that Cynthia is attentive to her children’s education. She believes that the role of mother tongue is important in providing quality education for her children. She feels that the exclusion of the L1 during early learning makes learning difficult in the classroom. Cynthia believes that the use of the mother tongue is the best way to help her children develop a strong foundation in educational concepts. She is aware that the success of learning depends on what the learner already knows. Menyuk & Brisk (2005: 77) note that learners can access their prior knowledge through the language that is familiar, whereas learners who rely only on the knowledge acquired through the L2 have limited access. Thomas & Collier (1997, 2002, 2004) emphasise that the educational success for learners is predicted by the amount of formal schooling they received in the L1. Thus, a strong foundation of the mother tongue is able to strengthen the learner’s cognitive development and the second language development. When learners are deprived a strong foundation of the mother tongue, just as it is a current practice in South Africa where children are given mother tongue instruction for a period of three years, it makes parents like Cynthia think that “the learners’ achievement is still not satisfactory” (Cynthia). Cate had this to say about the use of mother tongue during early learning:

I think our children should learn all the subjects through English because it is the language that they will use to speak to the white people. If our children start learning in their mother tongue they will have limited chances of speaking and listening to English. If they don’t know English, they will not get employed. (Extract from parent interview, May 2011).

White people, according to Cate are associated with superiority. This is an ideology that was planted upon the black African people during the apartheid era. Though South Africa is declared a democratic country, parents like Cate still associate success with proficiency in English. She believes that it improves ones status to be fluent in English because it helps one to
communicate with white people. Cate also thinks that the ability to secure a better job might be difficult if one is unable to speak English fluently. This emanates from the current practice of using English during job related interviews and it also applies to positions that are available for the teaching of African indigenous languages (Osborn, 2007: 8). Cate has a negative attitude to the use of the mother tongue as the language of instruction. The fact that English is seen as a means “to achieve unlimited vertical social mobility” (Kamwangamalu, 2000: 121) encourages Cate to believe that English is the best language for the education of her children. She thinks that English paves the way for employment.

According to Bourdieu’s (1986: 3) view of ‘cultural capital’, English is associated with higher socio-economic status, hence, it is believed to provide better opportunities for those who are proficient in English. As already discussed in Chapter 2, English in this case is afforded what Bourdieu (1991) calls symbolic power which makes it supersede the power of mother tongue instruction in South African schools. Where parent’s support for mother tongue instruction is minimal, as seems to be the case with Cate, children may lose confidence in themselves, the family, society and the nation to which they belong and seek an alternate identity (Guvercin, 2011: 3). Cate does not appreciate her own language though her reasoning appears to make sense to her. She equates education to knowledge and proficiency in English. The pedagogical implication of gaining access to the second language via the first language does not make sense to her. She undermines the quality of her home language as medium of instruction. She does not realize that mother tongue education will benefit learners and the community at large. She prefers that children should use English as a medium of instruction. According to Cate, the use of mother tongue in the classroom will deprive learners their chances of mastering English. Rose expressed similar views:

“My child already speaks Xitsonga; she needs to learn English to do well in school and to get a good job. (Extract from parent interview, May 2011).”

Cate and Rose perceive English as the powerful language and that speaking it well will allow access to a better employment and business opportunities for their children. They believe that
English is necessary to achieve high levels of learning. They neglect the L1 in learning for fear that the first language negatively interferes with the learning of a second language. In contrast, researchers (e.g. Benson, 2002; Hovens, 2002; Moses & Wiggleworth, 2008) argue that children’s ability to learn a second language does not suffer when their mother tongue is the primary language of instruction throughout primary school. Alexander (in Suzman, 2010: 13) also points out that the thorough development of a child’s language skill is a reliable predictor of future cognitive competence. Thus, it seems vital to develop strong mother tongue proficiency as it has already been argued by several language theorists that it has advantages, such as identified in this study.

Both parents resist mother tongue education in favour of English which they view as a language of knowledge. They believe that English is the best choice of LoLT and that it is more important for the future of their children. English is viewed as creating better opportunities for future success. Both parents’ only concern is to provide support for their children to adjust to English as the second language and be proficient in the language. Their interest centres on showing their children the importance of the second language, English in their lives. The literature discussed in Chapter 2 revealed that “Many parents, whose home language is a language other than English, prefer their children to receive their schooling in English rather than their mother tongue” (Deumert, 2000: 413). Moyo (2009: 7) highlights the same concern that indigenous African languages are still accorded a subordinate place to English, which enjoys prestigious official status as a lingua franca in South Africa. Therefore, it is significant to convince parents like Cate and Rose who resist change that literacy skills in the mother tongue can make it easier to learn additional languages.

4.5 Conclusion

In this Chapter, I have reported my findings on the current use of mother tongue as the medium of instruction in the Grade 3 classroom by exploring the contextual analysis of the school and the background of the Grade 3 teacher and the Grade 3 learners as well as parents of these learners. Thereafter, I examined the importance of learning to read and write through
the mother tongue. In the next Chapter I will discuss the issues which further emerged from the classroom observations and interviews in order to answer the second research question, “How can mother tongue practices be utilized to strengthen literacy in the Grade 3 classroom?”
CHAPTER 5
DATA INTERPRETATION

5.1 Introduction
In the previous Chapter the findings of the study were discussed in order to answer the first research question, “How is mother tongue medium of instruction currently used in the classroom of Grade 3 learners?” In this Chapter I will present the findings and interpretation of the empirical study in order to answer my second research question, “How can mother tongue practices be utilized to strengthen literacy in the Grade 3 classroom?” I base my findings, discussions and interpretations on the strategies which were used by my research participants to promote literacy through the mother tongue in the Grade 3 classroom. Data collected from the classroom observations and interviews were used to support the three themes that emerged.

5.2 Strategies used to promote literacy through the mother tongue
As already discussed in Chapter 2, black African learners were taught to read and write through the mother tongue in the old dispensation. The method of teaching through the mother tongue was denounced after the 1976 Soweto uprising and this built opportunities for the English language to be used as the medium of instruction throughout black African schooling. The declaration of South Africa as a democratic and multilingual country in 1994, led to the official recognition of eleven languages, which I have already mentioned in Chapter 2. This urged the South African Department of Education to officiate the use of mother tongue as the medium of instruction in the foundation phase (Grades 1 to 3). Hence, foundation phase teachers like Jane employ mother tongue as a facilitation tool to help learners learn L2 more easily. Therefore, three teaching strategies, code switching and mixing, communication and motivation, were identified in this study with regard to the use of L1 as helpful teaching and learning tools in the Grade 3 L2 classroom. The table below shows the strategies and explanation of each strategy.
### Table 5.2.1.1: Teaching techniques used to promote literacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method/Technique</th>
<th>Explanation of Strategy</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Translating new language</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Giving instructions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Code mixing</td>
<td>Code mixing refers to “the speech in which the alteration between the two languages used consists of shorter elements, often one single word” (McCormick 1995: 194)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Communication</td>
<td>Communication involves the provision of information to relevant stakeholders (Mestry &amp; Grobler, 2007: 178).</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Teacher-parent interaction</td>
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<td>• Teacher-learner interaction</td>
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<td>• Learner-learner interaction</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Motivation</td>
<td>Motivation is seen as a way of encouraging the continuation of good behavior.</td>
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#### 5.2.1 Code switching and mixing

Code switching and mixing is perceived as an advantage to some and a detractor by others. Hence, the success of mother tongue during early learning depends in part on the types of methods/techniques used. Code switching and mixing has come to be viewed as a highly purposeful strategy which facilitates both communication and learning in the classroom. It is also seen as a “legitimate strategy” in the L2 classroom (Cook, 2001: 105). Myers-Scotton (1993) proposes a distinction between the two terms, stating that code switching occurs when bilinguals alternate between the two languages during one interaction with another bilingual person, while code mixing is the use of words, affixes, phrases and clauses from more than one language within the same sentences. Code switching and mixing enables the teacher to balance the use of L1 and L2 in the second language classroom. Cameron (2001) agrees that judiciary and planned use of mother tongue can promote learning and enhance learners’ competence level in the target language. Adendorff (1993) also emphasises the use of code switching in the L2 classroom on the account of building up learners’ understanding of the subject matter. Setati, Adler, & Bapoo (2002) add that code switching and mixing practices are necessary in schools where English is taught as a learning area and used as the language of learning and
teaching. Merritt, Cleghorn, Abagai & Bunyi (1992) also agree that L1-repetition of L2 concepts is useful for reinforcing concepts, however, they maintain that if over-used, it may end up exhausting too much lesson time. Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir (2004) expresses similar views as Merritt et al (1992) when suggesting that it can halve the time available for learning. The literature discussed in Chapter 2 further argues that the practice of code switching and mixing consumes the teaching and learning time in the classroom (Fleisch, 2008: 109). The issue of time consumption was also confirmed by Jane during the interview that: “some concepts are not easily translated to Xitsonga, and some Tsonga words are too long when translating them to English.” (Extract from teacher interview, May, 2011). It is interesting to note that while theorists like Macaro (2001) insists that there is no strong evidence to avoid L1 in L2 classrooms, Jane indicated a clear challenge of using code switching in her Grade 3 English classes. The class time-table allows her the maximum time of approximately 15 to 30 minutes per activity. Jane struggles to recoup time on the account of spending a lot of time translating English words to Xitsonga.

Using the target language only in the L2 classroom can lead to some problems because there would be no guarantee that the instructions and explanations are understood correctly by L2 learners. Jane employs code switching to effect learning in her L2 classroom and she does this despite the fact that it consumes most of her teaching time in the Grade 3 classroom. This is the method I observed Jane using in her classroom to encourage learners to participate during classroom activities. An example of Jane’s reading lesson from a newspaper article from The Teacher, entitled ‘Obesity – the Silent Killer’ (see Appendix 8) follows. However, the article seems like a difficult passage for Grade 3 learners but Jane justified this when she said: “I do not have sufficient language books to cater for learners’ daily reading activities, so I sometimes use newspaper or magazine articles, it is easy, and I just make photocopies for each learner, unlike expecting two or three learners to share a book”. Lack of resources available in the home language and the First Additional Language as discussed in Chapter 1 makes it difficult for Jane to teach the Grade 3 learners. Hence, she resorts to using newspaper and magazine articles because they are easily accessible.
Extract 1

I visited Jane’s Grade 3 class in June 2011. She arranges learners and let them seat in groups. Jane introduces the lesson of the day to the learners. She gives newspaper handouts to the learners. Learners were initially requested to bring along pictures of healthy and non-healthy food. The teacher says: “Vana ahi hlawuleni ti ‘pictures’ leti kombaka swakudya leswi nga lulamela ku dyiwa minkarhi hinkwayo ni leswi swi nga lulamelangiki ku dyiwa minkarhi hinkwayo” (Children, let us identify pictures of healthy food that are supposed to be eaten everyday and non-healthy food that are not supposed to be eaten everyday). Thereafter, the teacher starts the lesson with the phonics dealing with the following vowel sound, -ea- sounds: eat (ku dya), ear (ndleve), easy (le swo olova), each (hi xinw’ei hi xinw’e) and eagle (xinyanyana). Jane teaches these sounds at the beginning of the lesson and she writes them on a chart. She then points to the sounds and learners sounded them. After teaching the phonics, Jane focuses on the following vocabulary words from the text: obesity (ku nyuhela ngopfu), fat (ku nyuherisa hi mafurha), health (rihanyu), takeaways (swakudya leswi xaviwaka swi swekiwile), disease (vuvabyi), heart (mbilu), and exercise (vutiolori). She writes the words on flash cards and put them upside down so that learners cannot deliberately choose a simple word from which to construct a sentence. One learner volunteers to pick the word, ‘exercise’, he constructs a sentence as follows: ‘Exercise is good for our body’ (Vutiolori byi lulamele mirhi). The same pattern is used with all the words. One learner picks the word ‘overweight’, she struggles with the pronunciation and the teacher helps her. But when it comes to the meaning and putting it into a sentence, the learner failed. Then the teacher says: “Loko va ku munhu u ‘overweight’ hi loko a nyuhele ku tlula mpimo.” After all the vocabulary words were put into sentences, the teacher gives learners a class activity in which learners read aloud from group to group. However, in this, Jane sometimes asks individuals and sometimes the whole group to read aloud. Jane pointed at the first group to read the first paragraph and it read as follows: ‘October 15 to 19 is National Obesity Week and it aims to improve awareness of obesity. The Government Employees Medical Scheme would like to provide you with some information on obesity and how to overcome it’. The process of reading in groups continues up to the last group in the class.

Looking at Jane’s lesson, it is interesting to note that learners were able to read fluently and with understanding, despite the fact that the passage did not seem to match their developmental level. The evidence being that throughout the lesson I observed, learners were able to answer questions on each task they were given. Only few learners struggled to read. When asked during the stimulated recall why some learners could not read fluently, Jane answered that it was the background of the learners as they are used to their home language and to switch straight to English is a problem. This is what made Jane resort to mixing English with Xitsonga in order to help learners follow the activity. Jane adopted the position of using the learners’ home language as a learning resource to help them understand English concepts. This is also supported by Setati et al (2002) when they advocate that code switching may be used as a teaching strategy where the learners’ linguistic competence in English enables them not to understand certain concepts. However, Bunyi (2005) stands firmly against using L1 for
explaining concepts in the target language. He further argues that it will make learners rely on key information that is presented in their L1 and do not need to work hard to understand L2. On the other hand, Setati et al (2002: 140) emphasise that there is a dilemma among teachers between “access to meaning and access to English.” Thus, despite the fact that they can reformulate concepts in the L1, learners still need to receive and produce the content in the target language as it is the language that will be used when they are assessed. However, Reilly & Ward (1997) emphasise that denying learners a chance of using their mother tongue in the L2 classroom, is like telling them to be quiet, thus, hampering their communication attempts. Hence, code switching and mixing in Jane’s classroom serves as a solution at this point because it enables learners to understand concepts in their home language.

Jane employs Xitsonga as a facilitating tool in her English class and she admits:

> Personally, I am compelled to switch to Xitsonga during my English lessons so that I can help my learners to understand difficult words in English. I use code-switching because it gives me the platform to capture my learners’ attention. (Extract from teacher interview, May 2011).

Jane uses code switching in her classroom with the knowledge that it is contrary to the current method of teaching in the Grade 3 classroom. Code switching may be regarded as a traditional method but Jane thinks it is a good way to have learners understand the subject matter if teaching is conducted in a language with which learners are not familiar. Jane also thinks that code switching from the target language to the first language seems to make a positive contribution to the learning process. This is confirmed by Ncoko, Osman and Cockcroft (2000) in their study of Zulu-English code switching in a South African primary school. Ncoko et al (2000: 239) conclude that code switching is the norm among school children and that it may serve as a potential benefit in the educational setting. Chick (2000: 12) also found out in a study which was carried out in KwaZulu Natal that the use of Zulu in learning was advantageous since there was a quick progress in the classroom as “brighter and more fluent learners can explain to others exactly what is required”. Thus, code switching does not only give the teacher a platform to clarify with learners L2 concepts, it also creates opportunities for learners to help one another during pair or group work. This point will be expanded on in the second theme of this study on the basis of highlighting Vygotskian sociocultural theory which involves the mediation
of learning. Cameron (2001: 199) provides guidelines for the beneficial use of L1 with children. For example, he suggested that teachers can resort to L1 for translating new language, giving instruction, providing feedback, checking learners’ comprehension and chatting with learners. In this study, I subdivided the main category, code switching and mixing into two subcategories: translating new language and giving instructions.

5.2.2 Translating new language

Jane employs code switching for the purpose of giving learners immediate translation of the new language. Translation according to Harbord (1992) appears to be a natural phenomenon and an inevitable part of second language acquisition. Literature discussed in Chapter 2 emphasises that the mother tongue is necessary for beginners of L2 classroom lessons because it enables the teacher to provide a quick and accurate translation of English words (Schweers, 1999: 61). For example, I noticed during the First Additional Language lessons that Jane translated abstract words to help learners understand her explanations. Below is an extract of the field notes from Jane’s lesson.

Extract 2

I arrive three minutes late in Jane’s class in June 2011. Learners are already seated in groups and each group consists of five to six learners. Learners are grouped according to different abilities in reading and writing. Jane presents a lesson about a ‘reading comprehension’- ku hlaya Xikambela-ntwisiso, and that is the terminology the teacher translated for the learners. Jane reads the passage to the learners. Learners are reading silently from their textbooks (page 25). When the teacher reads the passage to the learners, occasionally, she uses the learners’ own language to translate vocabulary words from the passage: ‘bus’ (bazi), ‘building’ (Muako), ‘stage’ (xiteji) and ‘aeroplane’ (xihahampfhuka). Jane writes the words on the board. She points at the first word and asks learners to read the word aloud. All learners read simultaneously and correctly. The teacher asks learners: ‘What do you use a bus for?’ (Xana bazi hi ri tirhisa ku endla yini?) One of the learners says: “Bazi ri tirhisiwa ku fambisa vanhu eka tindhawu to hambana-hambana” (A bus is used to transport people to different places). The Teacher says: “There are different means of transporting people” (Ku na tindlela to hambana-hambana leti ti tirhisiwaku ku fambisa vanhu). Another learner responds: “Kokwana va ri ava khandziya swikalichana loko va famba mayendo yo leha” (My grandfather told me that they used carts to travel long distances). Jane takes out the picture of a cart and shows every learner. She goes to the next word, until all the words are dealt with in the passage. (June 2011).
The issue of translating new words in extract 2 has been viewed as a positive application and it is also supported by Nation (2003) who recommends the translation of L2 words into their equivalent L1, especially when teaching beginners. Jane considers translation as a critical means to ensure learners’ comprehension. For example, when she read the passage to the learners occasionally, she used the learners’ own language, Xitsonga to translate the words ‘bus’ (bazi), ‘building’ (Muako), ‘stage’ (xiteji) and ‘aeroplane’ (xihahampfhuka) after her English explanations. Malmkjær (1998:1) indicates that the issue of using translation in language teaching is one on which most language teachers like Jane have a view. However, from the turn of the twentieth century onwards, many theoretical works and practical methods in language teaching presumed that a second language should be taught without reference to the learners’ first language. Zemach (2006: 16) also agrees that mother tongue in the L2 classroom decreases the opportunities for the learners to practice speaking and listening to English. It has become a popular belief that the translation of L1 gets in the way with the acquisition of L2. While the role of translation may have been denounced in L2 teaching, from Jane’s perspective; translation remains a valuable resource towards effecting learning in her Grade 3 second language classroom.

Jane also used pictures or drawings to illustrate words as according to Harbord (1992), it is not always possible to translate word-by-word from L2 to L1. Hitotuzi (2006: 169) also believes that “one can use props such as flashcards, cutout figures and realia for words representing concrete items; as for the representation of abstract items, drawing on L1 equivalents might solve the problem whenever contextualization, mimicry, and other techniques fail to gloss them convincingly.” Learners in Jane’s class indicated interest in their activity. This is evident through the responses that were given by the learners in class. Some were able to give examples that linked their learning with their cultural experiences and that was demonstrated through the response of a learner who brought the experience of his grandfather’s means of transport during their olden days. The strategy of using L1 to provide the meaning of a word is often mentioned in the literature (e.g. Harbord, 1992; Prodromou, 2000; Cameron, 2001) and many studies have advocated a positive and facilitative role of translation in learners’ L1 learning (e.g. Atkinson 1987; Newmark 1991; Husain, 1994; Kobayashi & Rinnert 1992; Kern, 1994; Husain 1995).


5.2.3 Giving instructions

According to Altinyelken (2010: 152), code switching is also useful in the L2 classroom for giving instructions for an activity. Jane resorted to L1 for giving instructions and this helped to capture the learners’ attention in the classroom. Ross (2000: 65) asserts that using the learners’ first language in class helps them achieve the instructional goals and overcomes some of the limitations of the English-only instruction. Jane frequently used English to give learners instructions and then switched to Xitsonga to help them understand what she said in the classroom. The following extract describes how the Grade 3 teacher used the L1 as a facilitating tool in a second language reading lesson:

Extract 3

Jane: Now pay attention; we are going to read in groups. I want group one to start and everyone should look in your reader.

(Vana yingiselani, sweswi hi ta hlaya tsalwa ra hina hi ku ya hi mintlawa leyi hinga avanyisiwa hi yona. Kutani n’wina van’wana mi nga hlayiki mi ta landzelerisa tsalwa mi miyerile).

Group 1: One morning Benny woke up late. His alarm clock rang but he went back to sleep. He only woke up after seven o’clock. Benny jumped out of bed when he saw the time.

Group 2: “Oh no!” he said. “It is late and I am going to miss the bus!” He ran to the ‘batrumi’ and washed his face. Then he put on his uniform in a hurry.

Jane: [interrupted]. Say; ‘ba-’, all of you! Again! ‘ba-‘. Look at the same sounds as ‘ba-‘ on the board. [Pointing to each sound] Children, sound the words in English. Now you are right.

(Vana, vulani leswaku ‘ba-‘, hinkwenu! Nakambe! ‘ba-‘. Langutani marito lawa ma nga ni mpfumawula wo fana na ‘ba-‘ exitsalelweni. [A karhi a kombetela]Vana hlayani mimpfumawulo ya marito lawa hi Xinghezi. Ahaa! Se mi swikotile).

Jane: Look at the word list on the board again; do you see a word similar to the sound ‘ba-‘? Ok, sound out all the words which begin with the sound ‘ba-‘yes! Again – again children – very good!

(Langutani nakambe marito lama nga longoloxiwa exitsalweni; xana ma ri vona rito leri ngani mpfumawulo wo fana ni rito’ba-‘? Hi swona. Hlayani mimpfumawulo ya marito lawa hinkwawo ya ku sungula hi mpfumawulo wa ‘ba-‘. Ahaa, nakambe! – nakambe! vana, hi swona, mi swi kotile).

Learners: bath, barb, bark, bar, baa.
Extract 3 illustrates that Jane uses Xitsonga to give learners instruction only after first giving them instructions in English, apparently to ensure that every learner fully understands what to do. For example, when Jane gave learners an instruction to read the text in groups, the whole class started reading because they did not understand her instruction in English. After explaining in the learners’ language, Xitsonga, what the learners were supposed to do, they easily followed the instruction and this proved to be quite effective judging from the learners’ positive responses. Jane also teaches her Grade 3 learners how to read English words. She used the phonic method to help her learners sound out words in English. The art of sounding out words and reading them based on the sounds their letters make can sometimes be frustrating, particularly, among learners who still need to develop their L2.

Jane was patience when teaching phonics to learners; she gave them opportunities to sound out words in their mother tongue. However, Cameron (2001: 199) discourages Jane’s practice of producing instruction in the target language and immediately repeating it in the L1 as this will prevent learners from making an effort to understand the target language. Rather, the L1 can be used to familiarize learners with the language and gradually introduce them to the target language (Green, 1970; Reilly & Ward, 1997). I believe that Jane acted judiciously by repeating the instruction in the L1 as she had already indicated during the interview that English is difficult for her learners, particularly because they have limited opportunities of using it at home. After the classroom observation, Jane was interviewed about her occasional use of Xitsonga in the classroom and how she viewed the common criticism that using the L1 reduces the learners’ exposure to English. She points out that:

The main reason I use Xitsonga in the classroom is that sometimes learners – because of their low proficiency level in English – fail to follow me when I only use English to explain the meaning of the text or to give instructions. I frequently allow classroom talk in L1 because my learners are still young and they have not yet developed their L2 ability. (Extract from teacher interview, May 2011).

Jane believes that the use of the L1 to explain difficult concepts for L2 learners is a good way to learn a second language. She thinks that learners in her class participate effectively when she switches to their home language. Jane is able to supply bilingual input during her L2 lessons because she speaks the same home language, Xitsonga as her Grade 3 learners. She felt that
her Grade 3 learners need more explanation in their own language because they have not yet made adequate progress in English and that was revealed through the class exercises that Jane gave learners during my observations. Jane used the learners’ language so that they could be able to read and write what they learned and she allowed them to interact in their own language during pair or group discussions. In the case of discouraging the use of code switching in the L2 classroom, Merritt et al (1992: 1-2) advocate for the relaxation of the official policy which condemns code switching in cases where it is unavoidable, such as with young learners. The official reversion to the traditional method of code switching in the L2 classroom will obviously relieve Jane of her guilty conscience because she uses code switching despite the fact that it is prohibited. This is also responding to learners with minimal English proficiency in Jane’s class because they constantly need more teacher code switching to reach an understanding of a concept which they would be unlikely to reach in the L2. Xitsonga in Jane’s classroom is used on occasions when English explanations fail to work; hence the L1 plays a supportive and facilitating role in the Grade 3 classroom. It was also demonstrated by several empirical studies that it is quite difficult to find classroom discourse fully in a single language (e.g. Martin, 2005; Arthur & Martin, 2006).

5.2.4 Communication

According to East & Evans (2006: 11), communication refers to the giving and receiving of information through the use of spoken words, signs, gestures, symbols or writing. In the view of this study, I view the process of communication as involving effective interactions between teachers, parents as well as learners. However as already mentioned in Chapter 2, effective communication between teachers, parents and learners centres on the use of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction in the foundation phase. Therefore, in order to respond to this theme, I identified the following three sub-categories: teacher-parent interaction, teacher-learner interaction and learner-learner interaction.
5.2.4.1 Teacher-parent interaction

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996) extended the right to the parents to participate in their children’s learning. It is also mentioned in Chapter 1, “when children are offered opportunities to learn in their mother tongue, their parents are more likely to communicate with teachers and participate in supporting their children’s learning” (Benson, 2002: 303). Justice & Ezell (2000, 2002, 2004) also emphasise that parent-child interaction plays a significant role towards increasing early literacy skills. Good communication implies that schools should be able to provide vital information to the parents about the day-to-day running of the school (Mestry & Grobler, 2007: 178). Thus, parents and teachers can work together by setting goals and objectives which assist in improving the progress of a learner at school. Jane sees communication as an effective strategy for parental involvement in the educational activities of the learners. Communication between teachers and schools fosters parental involvement that has been shown to increase academic success (Epstein, 2005), as well as improve student behavior (Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Sandler, Whetsel, Green, Wilkins, & Closson, 2005). With regard to facilitating communication between teachers and parents for the benefit of the learners, Jane had this to say:

I arrange to meet with parents on a monthly basis to show them how they can help their children with the homework tasks. (Extract from teacher interview, May 2011).

Jane is aware that parents are important in the process of educating their children. She is supportive of parents helping their children with reading and writing at home. When children are in situations where the important people around them read and write regularly, they become aware that ‘what I say can be written down’, and read (Bloch, 2006: 10). Jane prepares clear strategies for involving parents to assist their children with homework activities. This is demonstrated through her efforts of holding meetings with parents to workshop them on how they should help their children with homework. Mestry (2004) corroborates that parents are able to make valuable input to their children’s literacy progress when they are equipped with clear strategies for intervention in reading and writing with their children. Jane is able to make up time for the reading and writing of her learners in class by encouraging them to practice reading and writing at home with the help of their parents. She is aware that parents have the
strongest influence on their children’s first language acquisition. Hence, she believes that it is significant for the parents of the L2 learners to preserve their mother tongue while simultaneously providing their children with an education in a second language. However, this will only benefit children whose parents are literate in both languages, Xitsonga and English. As already mentioned in Chapter 2, the need to promote multilingualism in South Africa is a priority, hence, the Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motsheka (2011) extended learning and teaching hours for Grades 1 and 2 with half an hour to accommodate the teaching of a second language (The Citizen, 2011: 4). Research shows that if young children continue to build their home language at the same time as learning an additional language, development of both languages is enhanced. Therefore, it is important for early childhood professionals to encourage families and communities to support children’s home language development and maintenance. Ross (2000) also argues that the maintenance of the mother tongue promotes positive orientation toward the facilitation of English proficiency.

Robb (2003) and Browne (2004) suggest that parents can help their children’s literacy activities at home by reading to their children every day, translating English stories into the mother tongue and taking children to the local library in order to find books that children can read at home. Studies of learners from primary to secondary schools show a beneficial relationship between parental involvement and learner variables such as academic achievement, sense of well-being, attendance, learner attitudes, homework and educational aspirations (Gonzales-De Hass et al, 2005; Koonce & Harper, 2005; Hill & Craft, 2003). Jane believes that homework is the primary form of encouraging parents to participate effectively in the educational activities of their children. She is able to keep parents adequately and timeously informed about the well-being and progress of their children at school.

Jane is able to fulfill her professional obligation with parents as it is maintained that ‘Partnership’ between parents and professionals requires a much greater commitment of time, resources and goodwill (Heath, 1993; Weinberger, 1996). Her ability to promote harmonious relationships with parents and also recognizing them as partners in education is also
acknowledged by the South African Council for Educators (Republic of South Africa, 2000). Jane strongly believes that the success of her Grade 3 learners at school may be ensured by a higher attendance of parents at the parent-teacher meetings and their full commitment to their children’s educational activities. Thus, it is important to consider both cultural and linguistic practices associated with various parents when planning events such as parent-teacher meetings. When parents are given real opportunities to participate in decision-making about their children’s schooling, they will not be embarrassed to use their mother tongue in their meetings with teachers.

5.2.4.2 Teacher-learner interaction

Teacher-learner interaction usually happens between the teacher and one learner or many other learners. The use of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction does not only facilitate communication between teachers and parents; it also creates meaningful interaction and understanding in the classroom. For example, Jane said:

Not using the mother tongue is impossible, especially with young learners. I have to use the mother tongue to help learners understand what I say in class. It simplifies things. (Extract from teacher interview, May 2011).

Jane believes that learning through the mother tongue urges ‘active learning’ in her Grade 3 classroom. She finds prohibition of mother tongue in her language classroom to be practically impossible. Nation (2003) argues that exclusion of the mother tongue is the criticism of the mother tongue itself and has harmful psychological effects on learners. Using the mother tongue in the L2 classroom seems to be convenient for Jane. She views the use of mother tongue in her Grade 3 classroom as part of a teaching strategy in making meaning come more effectively and efficiently. She thinks that young learners should be taught in the language which they understand and through which they can learn because they have not yet developed L2 competency to understand what is said in class. Harmer (2009) also emphasises that teachers must pay attention to the language the learners are able to understand, i.e. teachers should provide an output that is comprehensible for the level of all the learners.
Jane emphasises that effective communication in the classroom is facilitated by the use of the language that is familiar to both teachers and learners. Alidou (2003) has similar views when indicating that the use of learner-centered pedagogy is facilitated by the use of a language that both teachers and learners understand. Effective communication leads to better teaching on the part of the teacher and better learning for the learners. Jane believes that the use of mother tongue medium of instruction helps children to read and write meaningfully. She emphasises that learners are able to make sentences out of the Tsonga words more often than in any other language and that was demonstrated during my observations when Jane asked the learners to write different names of animals in both languages, Xitsonga and English. Literature discussed in Chapter 2 reveals that writing in the L2 classroom can be demoralizing to learners when the process of generating ideas is far more complicated (Stapa & Majid 2009: 46). Therefore, Stapa & Majid (2009) support Jane’s practice of giving learners opportunities to write different names of animals in their L1 because it assists learners to generate ideas for L2 writing. This is corroborated by Manchón, Roca de Larios & Murphy (2000: 112) who suggest that learners should call for a ‘back tracking’ (reverting to L1) in case L2 they experience cognitive overload while writing in L2.

Jane also thinks that learners need to be drilled in reading and writing through their mother tongue on a daily basis. The history of grammar teaching has also shown that drilling is one of the effective strategies in facilitating L2 learning (Che Mat & Ying Soon, 2010: 52). However, Isaacs & Carroll (1999) assert that frequent drilling has serious disadvantages. They further imply that it can cause anxiety and undermine students’ understanding of facts, especially those with learning disabilities (Ibi, 1999). Jane thinks that using a language that is familiar to both teachers and learners impact positively on teaching practices in multilingual classrooms and she feels that learners are able to communicate better with their teachers and among themselves when they all speak the same language.
5.2.4.3 Learner-learner interaction

Learner-learner interaction occurs through designing groups and pairs where learners can enhance their competence in using communication and language. Cook (2001) recommends that learners use the L1 with each other when explaining tasks, negotiating their roles and checking their production and understanding. A similar view is taken by Cameron (2001) who mentions that learners prefer using the L1 when seeking help from peers or teachers. Richards & Lockhart (1996) argue that group work promotes collaboration among the learners; it creates the sense of a learning community that reduces learners’ isolation. Learners in Jane’s classroom used their L1 when they worked in pairs or groups. An example was taken from Jane’s lesson when she asked learners to work in groups in order to complete a written activity in class: Extract 4 that follows is the thick description of Jane’s lesson to show the use of mother tongue in the Grade 3 classroom:

Extract 4

The learning area is English First Additional Language and the activity is the teaching of ‘Verbs’- ‘Maendli’. Jane tells learners that verbs are ‘doing’ or ‘action’ words.” She further explains the word ‘verb’ in the learners’ own language, Xitsonga, when she says: “Maendli i marito lawa ma tirhisiwaku ku endla swo karhi”. Jane reads the poem ‘To my Parents, Thank you’ to the learners. Learners read silently from their photocopied sheets. She does guided reading with the learners. Jane uses this opportunity to check reading for meaning by asking questions. Jane used Xitsonga when asking learners questions like: ‘riendli hi rihi lani?’ meaning ‘which one is the verb?’ Thereafter, Jane asks learners from each group to help one another identify verbs that are used in the poem. As learners are identifying verbs they mix English and Xitsonga to say: “always na important ti nge vuriwi riendli wena mani”, meaning “always and important cannot make a verb”. Some learners were speaking Sepedi. Jane is walking around helping learners to identify the correct verbs from the poem. She sometimes switched discourse markers when concluding turns with “a hi swona?” meaning (is that not so?) or using final clarifications like “ma swi twisisa?” (do you understand?)

The use of the mother tongue in this extract seemed to generate a lot of discussion and it involved learners actively and quite enthusiastically. Learners are able to express themselves, contribute to discussions and develop their intellects as conversations are carried out in a language that is familiar to them (Gacheche, 2010: 7). During the observation, I could not access some of the learners’ conversations as the whole class was quite engaged in discussions,
but I could hear learners interacting through Xitsonga and some used Sepedi. It was also interesting to note that other learners relied on the explanations of their peers, where they would ask for more explanations and their peers clarified them through the mother tongue. Learners were comfortable with listening to their peers in group work. In Vygotskian perspective, the role that more capable learners play toward assisting their peers with the task that they could otherwise not complete is referred to ‘peer mediation’, thus helping other learners through the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). The teacher expected the learners to take on a greater degree of responsibility for their own learning.

5.2.5 Motivation

It has been suggested that the use of L1 reduces learners’ anxiety and enhances the effectiveness of reading and writing in the L2 classroom (Harbord, 1992: 354). L1 use with respect to reducing anxiety reminds me of Krashen’s (1982) affective filter hypothesis which encourages the use of the L1 to help learners lower their affective barriers in the language classroom and assists all language learners with comprehension. Thus, the use of the mother tongue helps to create a less threatening atmosphere in the L2 classroom. Responding to the question, why is it significant to use L1 in the Grade 3 classroom? Jane said:

My learners don’t have English background as the language of communication. When I tell them jokes in English, they do not laugh, not that they do not want to share the joke, but that they cannot understand even a simple joke in English. Before the start of lessons, I give them chances to tell about their news in their L1. It helps to reduce their anxiety. (Extract from teacher interview, May 2011).

Jane consistently employs practices that directly reflect her beliefs. She believes that the L1 is useful in the Grade 3 classroom. This is also supported by Cole (2001) who argues that the use of the mother tongue provides learners with a more secure and easy to learn atmosphere (Cole, 2001). She is aware that her Grade 3 learners’ knowledge of the second language is limited. Jane believes that trying to explain a point in the L2 is a waste of time. She is guided by the composition of her class in order to know how much L2 is required. Jane thinks that frequent L2 use makes learners experience anxiety. Her pedagogical views are supported by
research findings (e.g. Auerbach, 1993; Atkinson, 1993), which recommend that the L1 reduces learner anxiety compared to teaching the L2 as a monolingual language. They further emphasise that the L1 maximizes students’ learning especially with lower level learners in the L2 classroom (Auerbach, 1993; Atkinson, 1993). However, many classrooms today discourage the use of the L1 in the L2 classroom as it is seen as an impediment of L2 learning (Auerbach, 1993: 15). This claim is corroborated by Phillipson (1992: 185) who says: “English is best taught monolingually” in order to avoid L1 interference. Jane believes that the L1 is much more functional and suitable and that it facilitates the learning process in her Grade 3 classroom. She also believes that it is her responsibility to motivate learners. Jane feels that she will not be able to compromise her teaching practice for the sake of adhering to the strictly enforced English-only classroom practices at the expense of her Grade 3 learners. She uses motivational strategies to lower her learners’ anxiety.

Lightbrown & Spada (1999: 163) emphasise that the right way teachers can influence learners’ motivation is by making the classroom a supportive environment in which students are stimulated and engaged in the activities. Jane believes in providing a secure learning environment for her Grade 3 learners. The beliefs that Jane expresses about the role of the L1 in language teaching were noticeable in her classroom practices. She is careful not to frustrate learners in her classroom, especially because she mentioned that they are not yet familiar with the L2. I observed in her classroom that at the beginning of each day whenever Jane marks the register she gives learners opportunities to explain how they are feeling in their own language. Schweers (1999: 7) emphasises that “starting with the L1 provides a sense of security and validates the learners’ lived experiences, allowing them to express themselves.” In the table that follows from a classroom observation, two to five learners would be given a platform to talk about their personal experience:
Table 5.2.5.1: Learners’ personal experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learner</th>
<th>Experiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L1</td>
<td>‘Ndzi pfukile, vamosa va ri va ta ndzi xavela xikanyakanya loko ndzo pasa, swa ndzi tsakisa. Ndzi ta kota ku tlanga ni munghana wa mina ekaya. Mina a ndzi swi koti ku rheyila xikanyakanya, kambhe munghana wa mina u ta ndzi dyondzisa hikuva yena l khale ari na xona. “I am fine, my mom is going to buy me a bicycle when I pass, I am happy. I will be able to play with my friend at home. I do not know how to ride a bicycle, but my friend will teach me because he already has his own bicycle.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2</td>
<td>“Sesi u ri a ndzi swi koti ku hlaya ni ku tsala, kutani ndzi fanele ku thlelela eka ntlawa wa vumbhirhi. Mudyondzisi, u nga ndzi dyondzisa ku tsala niku hlaya?” “My sister says I cannot read so I must go back to Grade 2. Can you teach me to read and write like other children my age?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L3</td>
<td>“A ndzi tsakangi, munghana wa mina u nghena xikolo xa valungu, hikokwala ho kota ku vulavula xilungu ku tlula mina. Andzi swi koti ku tsala ni ku hlaya hi xilungu ku fana na yena.” “I am sad, my friend goes to the white school and she speaks English better than I do. I cannot read and write in English. I want to go to the English school so I can speak English like my friend.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L4</td>
<td>“A ndzi swi tsakeli ku hlaya, kambhe tolo ni madyambu manana ava hlaya na man xibukwana xa switori, swi ndzi tsakise ngopfu ku hlaya na manana hikuva u ndzi dyondzise ku peletela marito ya xilungu lawa a ma ndzi tikela ku ya hlaya.” “I do not like reading, but last night I read a story book with my mom, it was interesting to read with her, she helped me to pronounce English words that sounded difficult for me.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L5</td>
<td>“Mina ndza chava ku hlaya ekaya na manana hikuva a ndzi swi lavi leswaku a tiva leswaku a ndzi swi koti ku hlaya, o nga ta ndzi hlundzukela.” “I am scared to read at home with mom, I do not want her to know that I cannot read she will get angry.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above responses, it is clear that what happens at home has a substantial bearing on learners’ literacy development or impairment. Rowe (1991: 20) supports this when indicating that learners’ home experiences have significant influence on learners’ interest in reading, attitudes towards reading and attentiveness in the classroom. Jane believes that it is important to constantly praise and encourage learners in order to become confident. She also thinks that using Xitsonga to teach grammatical concepts provides some motivation to the more reluctant learners. She said that:
I use Xitsonga especially to explain tenses of English. In Xitsonga, we do not have many tenses just like English... if I explain the concepts behind these tenses using English; the learners will find it difficult to understand. I teach learners different sounds in English. For example, I explain to them that the sound /t/ in English is different from the /t/ in Xitsonga. (Extract from teacher interview, May 2011).

Jane found it useful to use the learners’ L1 in order to explain grammatical concepts which are not present in the learners’ mother tongue, such as the use of tenses. Jane judiciously uses the L1 and the L2 in her Grade 3 classroom. She is intending to develop her learners’ abilities in their mother tongue and the second language. Her intentions are supported by Cummins (2001: 17) when asserting that “Bilingualism has positive effects on children’s linguistic and educational development.” Jane uses the L1 to contrast some of its aspects with the target language. Deller (2003: 26) adds that the mother tongue should be used as a resource to notice differences and similarities between the two languages. Comparing the learners’ L1 to the target language places the learners in a position where they will become more acquainted with certain aspects of the L2. Jane knows that her Grade 3 learners always experience anxiety when faced with expressing themselves through the L2, probably because they can’t pronounce most of the L2 letters or sounds, as it was noted during her reading lesson in Extract 1. If learners are aware of the differences, they are likely to reduce language interferences and intervention from their own language (Ross, 2000: 62. Thus, Jane believes that if her learners are aware of the differences that exist between English and Xitsonga, when they communicate through the L2, they are likely to minimize language interference and intervention from their mother tongue. She further believes that raising learners’ consciousness of the non-parallel nature of language is likely to allow learners to think comparatively about the use of their L1 and the L2.

5.3 Conclusion
This Chapter reported the findings of how mother tongue practices are currently used to promote literacy in the Grade 3 classroom. Different strategies such as code switching and code mixing, communication as well as motivation were discussed and interpreted in order to answer the second research question in this study. The next Chapter (Chapter 6) details the summary of the whole study as well as its conclusions, recommendations and limitations.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

6.1 Introduction

In the previous Chapter, I analysed and interpreted data presented in this study. The focus of my study has been on learners’, educators’ as well as parents’ experiences of the use of mother tongue education in the Grade 3 classroom. In this Chapter, I present an overview and reflections on my findings. I highlight the main argument and the strength of my study in relation to the Grade 3 learners’ and parents’ of these learners as well as the educator’s experiences in learning through the mother tongue in the Grade 3 classroom. The main strength of the study is the finding that the mother tongue is used as a learning tool in the Grade 3 L2 classroom, despite the fact that it has been denounced by several theorists. I also describe some limitations of the study and make a few recommendations for further research in this field.

6.2 Potential value of my study

The potential value of this study is drawn from the following research questions:

- How is mother tongue medium of instruction currently used in the classroom of Grade 3 learners?
- How can mother tongue practices be utilized to strengthen literacy in the Grade 3 classroom?

Central to this study, is my involvement as a language educator in the Junior Secondary phase. The study gave me insight into the significant use of mother tongue as the medium of instruction during early learning. This will enable me to provide better support for my Junior Secondary phase learners with regard to the use of the mother tongue as a tool in the L2 classroom. The study provided me with valuable insight in terms of understanding how early exposure to mother tongue influences learners’ literacy in acquiring the L2. It helped me to
understand the influence of the context in which early exposure to learning through the mother tongue is based.

6.3 Reflections on the research process

This section provides an overview of my research journey. It includes lessons learnt during the journey that added layers to my understanding of carrying out research in education. In my role as a language educator, I will encourage the foundation phase educators to apply effective measures such as Jane’s (the Grade 3 teacher) towards teaching through the mother tongue. The process of the research was indeed valuable and an eye-opener to me as a researcher.

Since my goal was to obtain a deep understanding of how, when, why and by whom mother tongue is used in the Grade 3 classroom and how mother tongue medium of instruction can contribute to the teaching of literacy (reading and writing) in the Grade 3 classroom, I located my study in an interpretative paradigm. I used a qualitative approach which helped me to collect data. This helped me to identify methods/techniques across the data which enabled me to obtain answers to my research questions. It gave me an opportunity to understand the way my participants use different techniques to enhance and promote literacy through the mother tongue.

The main purpose of my study was to inform my own practice as a language educator, and it succeeded in this regard.

6.4 Overview of key findings

The key findings of this study are derived from the interviews with respondents and classroom observations. This study has established that mother tongue; Xitsonga was the dominant language during classroom activities despite the overt Language in Education Policy (Act 27 of 1997) that stipulates the use of English only in the L2 classroom. What emerged strongly from these findings is that the way the Grade 3 teacher and the Grade 3 learners use the mother tongue in the L2 classroom is influenced by the learners’ inability to use the second language, English. In the context of the Grade 3 teacher’s practice, it is observable that her approach to the use of mother tongue as a learning resource works well for her with her Grade 3 learners.
The findings also reveal that the teacher, learners as well as parents have a positive attitude towards the mother tongue as a language of learning and teaching in schools, given the role of the mother tongue as a link to their cultural experiences. However, some parents still believe that their children should be taught through English as the medium of instruction. Parents consider their indigenous languages good only for social purposes (see Alexander, 2002: 119), not for education.

Another finding is that not all learners’ language needs are catered for in black African schools, hence, such learners experience difficulties in learning through a language that is not their mother tongue. Thus, although the South African Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) advocates the right to choose the language of learning and teaching, there are discrepancies in the way the policy is administered. For example, in Jane’s class it was easy for some children to learn through the language of instruction because it is their home language. However, learners whose home language is not Xitsonga experienced difficulties in learning and this was confirmed by Jane during the interviews.

### 6.5 Recommendations

After reflecting on my findings, I offer the following recommendations for the schools, the Department of Education, teachers, parents and learners in terms of promoting the use of the mother tongue as the language of learning and teaching in the foundation phase:

#### 6.5.1 Recommendations for the schools

Jane confirmed that some children in her Grade 3 classroom find it difficult to learn. The reason behind this is that the school offers Xitsonga as the language of learning and teaching to children whose home language is Venda or Sepedi. This is despite the recommendations of the South African Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) that everyone has the right to use the language of his or her choice and it is further superseded by the government’s material conditions of being ‘practicable’. Therefore, the recommendation here is that the school should inform parents of the ‘real’ medium of instruction before parents register their children at that particular school so that they can make informed decisions with regard to their children’s school placement. The
advantage is that even if the relevant school is located a distance from their respective homes, the Department of Education is able to cater for the transportation of learners who travel long distances from home to school on a daily basis.

6.5.2 Recommendations for the Department of Education

The Department of Education prohibits code switching and mixing in the L2 classroom. This is based on the account that learning only in the L2 provides learners with a natural communicative environment (Cook, 2001: 402). However, replacing learners’ L1 with English has never been fruitful. This was also confirmed by Jane during the interview that: “… learners - because of their low proficiency level in English – fail to follow me when I only use English to explain the meaning of the text or to give instructions.” (Extract from teacher interview, May 2011). The literature discussed in Chapter 2 revealed that the practice of code switching and mixing in the L2 classroom assists learners in their understanding of concepts and ideas and in their communicating of these understandings. (Setati et al, 2002). Thus, in order to promote literacy during early learning, Luckett (1995: 75) proposes an effective implementation of additive bilingual policy where both languages are valued and reinforced in the L2 classroom. In the views of the language theorists such as Setati et al (2002) and Luckett (1995), who perceive code switching as an aid to L2 learners, I therefore recommend that the Department of Education should support learners and teachers in strengthening language and literacy during early learning.

6.5.3 Recommendations for the parents

Some parents believe that their children should be taught through English as the medium of instruction so that they can have access to a better employment. They do not want their children to learn through the medium of indigenous languages because they believe that it will ruin their children’s ability to speak English with fluency (Jankie, 2010: 9). In contrast, research (e.g. Benson, 2002; Hoven, 2002; Moses & Wiggleworth, 2008) argue that children’s ability to learn a second language does not suffer when their mother tongue is the primary language of instruction throughout primary school. Therefore, it is recommended that parents should
prioritize developing their children’s mother tongue(s) and that according to Calia (2009: 88) can be achieved by reading vernacular stories to them or by encouraging them to read daily.

Black African schools used to cater for about three to four classes of the same grade, but today, many schools like the one researched have one or two classes of the same grade. The reason behind this shortfall as indicated by the Provincial Director of Education in Gauteng (1998) is that black African parents and teachers send their children to English-medium schools (Osborn, 2007: 7). This exposes children to learning through English as the medium of instruction; hence, the need for a strong foundation in the mother tongue is significant (Cummins, 2001: 17). Therefore, it is recommended that parents should enroll their children at schools where they will be able to start learning adequately through their mother tongue, and this will also boost the enrollment of black African schools.

6.5.4 Recommendations for the teachers

Jane feels that her Grade 3 learners should be drilled in reading and writing through their mother tongue on a daily basis. However, Isaacs & Carroll (1999) assert that frequent drilling has serious disadvantages. They further imply that it can cause anxiety and undermine students’ understanding of facts, especially those with learning disabilities (Ibid, 1999). With regard to drill and practice method, Jane seems quite misguided in her approach. Thus, teachers like Jane, who are currently teaching literacy in the foundation phase, indicate a need for further training in how to use the mother tongue when teaching reading and writing.

Difficulty in accessing language reading materials makes Jane resort to using newspaper articles to help her Grade 3 learners develop their reading proficiency. However, some articles seemed difficult for the level of the Grade 3 learners. As discussed in Chapter 1, it is recommended that the foundation phase teachers should select reading sources that are designed to match children’s developmental needs, interests, abilities and learning styles (White & Stoecklin, 2008: 1).
6.5.5 Recommendations for the learners

Many black African learners cannot read or write fluently in either English or their mother tongue(s). Thus, when they communicate, they resort to code mixing where they use words like “ndihungry” (I am hungry), “Ke ya studisha” (I am studying) or “nditired” (I am tired) (Jankie, 2010: 11). McCarthy et al (2005) emphasise that children may experience cognitive difficulties in their second language if they are not competent in their first language. Therefore, it is recommended that learners should be proficient in their mother tongue. This will enable them to utilize their literacy skills in their L1 to develop accuracy in their second language and it will also help to minimize language interference in their communication of both languages.

6.6 Limitations of the study

I used the case study method, focusing on one classroom in one school in the Khujwana region, working with a small sample of one Grade 3 teacher, five Grade 3 learners as well as five parents of the Grade 3 learners. Therefore, the findings are not generalisable to all parents, teachers and learners in the region and to South Africa as a whole. A larger sample studied over a longer period of time would have given more generalisable results but the time constraints of a mini dissertation did not allow for this. Nevertheless, the findings provided me with unique experience into what happens when the mother tongue is used as a learning tool in the Grade 3 literacy class in South Africa. Kaufmas (cited in Smulyan, 2000: 43) explains:

By viewing social change through the lens of individual experiences, we are able to move away from infinite generalizations and abstractions and into the realm of individual constructions of meaning. Through the examination of...individuals’ lives, we gain access both to multifaceted meaning of the self-within the culture and to a richer, more detailed portrait of the culture which contributes to and is constituted by those meanings.

At a practical level, I realized that the time frame given in conducting the mini dissertation is a limiting factor on the depth and scope of this kind of study as mentioned earlier. Because of time and resource constraints, my findings are based only on classroom observations which were related to one Grade 3 teacher and interviews of five Grade 3 learners, one Grade 3
teacher as well as five parents of the Grade 3 learners. If I had more time and resources, the study may have included more respondents, more schools and even more learners in Grade 3.

Another limitation was that I did not have male parents to obviate gender bias. The reason for this was that most of the mothers in this school are single parents or widows.

6.7 Suggestions for further research

I believe there is a need for follow up research in the use of mother tongue as medium of instruction in the foundation phase in South Africa. Recommendations from such research could be used to enhance academic achievements particularly in the field of literacy (reading and writing) from Grade 1.

Further research could be undertaken in the following areas:

- An exploration of teachers, learners as well as parents’ experiences regarding the use of mother tongue as the medium of instruction in the foundation phase.
- A critical investigation of how children are taught through the mother tongue in the South African context.
- A further investigation of how the L1 can assist L2 learning.
- An investigation into how parents’ involvement can contribute to children’s educational success.

6.8 Conclusion

In spite of the limitations mentioned above, this study has achieved its objectives of understanding how the mother tongue is used in the Grade 3 classroom and how it can contribute to the teaching of literacy in the Grade 3 classroom. Whereas the use of L1 is prohibited in the L2 classroom, I found that it was useful for the learners who did not speak English as their home language. This finding could inform classroom practice in the sense the use of the L1 should be encouraged for the benefit of the learners and the teachers. Given that South Africa is a multilingual country, the practice of using English only in a multilingual school should be reconsidered. It has also come to the researcher’s notice (through the interviews
with parents) that some parents believe that English is the best choice of LoLT and that it is more important for the future of their children. Thus, this perception, though valid from the parents’ point of view can be an obstacle to the progress of multilingual instruction in the South African schools.
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Brock-Utne, B. (1993). "Education in Africa: Education for self reliance or recolonization?” In


The Citizen, Johannesburg, 28 December 2011.


APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: PERMISSION LETTERS

APPENDIX 1(a): LETTER TO THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

P. O. Box 997
Letaba
0870
18 April 2011

The Head of Department
Department of Education
Private Bag X 9489
POLOKWANE
0700

Dear Sir

RE: APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT ACADEMIC RESEARCH

I hereby wish to apply for permission to conduct academic research at Tinghitsi primary school under Mopani district at Khujwana circuit.

I am a Masters of Education (Educational Linguistics) student at the University of Johannesburg (UJ). I am also a senior phase educator at N’wahungana Junior Secondary School. I am undertaking a study titled: “Mother Tongue Education: A case study of grade three children in the foundation phase”.

The aim of the study is to examine how, when, why and by whom the mother tongue is used in a grade 3 classroom and to examine how mother tongue medium of instruction can contribute to the teaching of reading and writing. This study will help educators and parents to understand the significance of mother tongue education in the foundation phase.

The research problems will be investigated by using a qualitative approach.

The qualitative component will consist of a case study. I will conduct classroom observations as a non-participant observer. Educators, parents as well as learners will be interviewed.
I will try to arrange all the interviews in such a manner that the normal school programme is not interfered with. I would appreciate it if you could please respond to this letter by posting your response to the above mentioned address. I would be grateful if you could also e-mail your response to khosamartha@webmail.co.za.

Please find attached a copy of a letter from the University of Johannesburg (UJ).

I trust that this will be given your kind consideration and time.

Kind regards

____________________________
Mrs. M. Khosa
APPENDIX 1(b): LETTER FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

Enquiries : Nemalili Eastern (Manager: Office of the HOD)
Tel Ext. : (015) 290 7702
Date : 11 May 2011

Mrs. M. Khosa
P. O. Box 997
Letaba
0870

Khosamartha@webmail.co.za
0790799154

Dear Madam

RE: APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT ACADEMIC RESEARCH

1. Thank you for your letter dated the 18 April 2011 but received on the 11 May 2011. We are indeed humbled by the interest displayed by you on matters which of course affects our Education system.

2. In the light of your request, I therefore grant you permission to conduct research at Tinghitsi Primary school under Mopani District for your Masters of Education in Linguistics (University of Johannesburg).

3. It is however important to indicate that prior arrangements to conduct the latter should be arranged in advance so that teaching and learning is not sacrificed.

Research Letter: Mrs. M. Khosa
Page 1 of 2

Cnr 113 Bloed & 24 Excelsior Street, POLOKWANE, 0700 Private bag X9489, POLOKWANE, 0700
Tel.: (015) 290 7652/7655, Fax.: (015) 297 037, E-mail: mnlivv@edu.limpopo.gov, ramulubadim@edu.limpopo.gov

The heartland of Southern Africa - development is about people!
4. Once more, we wish you all of the best in your studies and assure you of our cooperation in this regard.

Yours Sincerely

[Signature]

11 May 2011

Benny Boshielo
Head of Department-Education
Limpopo Province

Cc: Senior General Manager: Mr. M. Thamaga
    District Senior Manager (Mopani): Dr. L. L. Mafena
APPENDIX 1(c): LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL

P. O. Box 997
Letaba
0870
22 March 2011

The Principal
Tinghitsi Primary School
Pivate Bag X 1438
LEtaba
0870

Dear Sir

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT ACADEMIC RESEARCH

I am a Masters of Education (Educational Linguistics) student at the University of Johannesburg (UJ). I am also a senior phase educator at N’wahungana Junior Secondary School. I am undertaking a study titled: “Mother Tongue Education: A case study of grade three children”.

The aim of the study is to examine how, when, why and by whom the mother tongue is used in a grade 3 classroom and to examine how mother tongue medium of instruction can contribute to the teaching of reading and writing. This study will help educators and parents to understand the significance of mother tongue education in the foundation phase.

The Department of Education has granted permission to conduct the research and the letter to this effect is attached.

Your school has been conveniently selected as part of the sample school to be polled. It would be greatly appreciated if the selected foundation phase educators and Xitsonga-speaking foundation phase learners participate in the research.

The research problems will be investigated by using a qualitative approach.

The qualitative component will consist of a case study. Learners, educators as well as parents will be interviewed.

I undertake to ensure strict confidentiality with the information collected and all respondents will remain anonymous. A copy of the report would be made available to the Department of
Education or made available to the school on request. If permission is granted please sign the attached a copy of a letter from the University of Johannesburg (UJ) and return.

I trust that this will be given your kind consideration and time.

Kind regards

________________________

Mrs. M. Khosa
APPENDIX 1(d): LETTER TO THE TEACHER

P. O. Box 997
Letaba
0870
03 May 2011

Dear Grade 3 teacher

I am a Masters of Education (Educational Linguistics) student at the University of Johannesburg (UJ). I am also a senior phase educator at N’wahungana Junior Secondary School. I am undertaking a study titled: “Mother Tongue Education: A case study of grade three children”.

The Department of Education and the school principal has granted me permission to conduct the research.

In order for me to complete the research I require your permission to interview you and also to record the interview.

It will be a confidential interview and you will remain anonymous. You can be assured that no individual’s or school’s name will be published. The interview will be conducted at home.

Your assistance in granting me permission to conduct and record the interview will be greatly appreciated, as this is vitally important to the study.

If permission is granted please sign the attached copy of a letter from the University of Johannesburg and return.

Kind Regards

________________________

Mrs. M. Khosa
Dear Parent

I am a Masters of Education (Educational Linguistics) student at the University of Johannesburg (UJ). I am also a senior phase educator at N’wahungana Junior Secondary School. I am undertaking a study titled: “Mother Tongue Education: A case study of grade three children”.

The Department of Education and the school principal has granted me permission to conduct the research.

In order for me to complete the research I require your permission to interview you and also to record the interview.

It will be a confidential interview and you will remain anonymous. You can be assured that no individual’s or school’s name will be published. The interview will be conducted at home.

Your assistance in granting me permission to conduct and record the interview will be greatly appreciated, as this is vitally important to the study.

If permission is granted please sign the attached copy of a letter from the University of Johannesburg and return.

Kind Regards

________________________
Mrs. M. Khosa
Dear Parent

I am a Masters of Education (Educational Linguistics) student at the University of Johannesburg (UJ). I am also a senior phase educator at N’wahungana Junior Secondary School. I am undertaking a study titled: “Mother Tongue Education: A case study of grade three children in the foundation phase”.

The Department of Education and the school principal has granted me permission to conduct the research.

In order for me to complete the research I require your permission to interview your child and also to record the interview.

It will be a confidential interview and your child will remain anonymous. You can be assured that no individual’s or school’s name will be published. The interview will be conducted at your child’s school.

Your assistance in granting me permission to conduct and record the interview will be greatly appreciated, as this is vitally important to the study.

If permission is granted please sign the attached copy of a letter from the University of Johannesburg and return.

Kind Regards

Mrs. M. Khosa
APPENDIX 2: CONSENT FORMS

APPENDIX 2(a): A CONSENT FORM TO THE DEPARTMENT

Informed Consent/Assent Form

Project Title:
Mother Tongue Education: A case study of grade three children.

Investigator:
Martha Khosa

Date:
6 May 2011

I hereby:
☐ Agree to be involved in the above research project as a participant.
☐ Agree that my child, ________________________ may participate in the above research project.
☐ Agree that my staff may be involved in the above research project as participants.

I have read the research information sheet pertaining to this research project and understand the nature of the research and my role in it. In addition, I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details I requested. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

☐ Please allow me to review the report prior to publication.

Name: ________________________________________________

Phone or Cell number: ____________________________________________

e-mail address: ________________________________________________

Signature: ____________________________________________________

If applicable:
☐ I consent/assent to audio recording of my/the participant’s contributions.
☐ I consent/assent to video recording of my/the participant’s contributions.

Signature: ____________________________________________________
APPENDIX 2(b): A CONSENT FORM TO THE PRINCIPAL

Informed Consent/Assent Form

Project Title:
Mother Tongue Education: A case study of grade three children.

Investigator:
Martha Khosa

Date:
6 May 2011

I hereby:
☐ Agree to be involved in the above research project as a participant.
☐ Agree that my child, ____________________________ may participate in the above research project.
☐ Agree that my staff may be involved in the above research project as participants.

I have read the research information sheet pertaining to this research project and understand the nature of the research and my role in it. In addition, I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details I requested. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

☐ Please allow me to review the report prior to publication.

Name:

Phone or Cell number:

E-mail address:

Signature:

If applicable:
☐ I consent/assent to audio recording of my/the participant’s contributions.
☐ I consent/assent to video recording of my/the participant’s contributions.

Signature:
APPENDIX 2(c): A CONSENT FORM TO THE TEACHER

Informed Consent/Assent Form

Project Title:
Mother Tongue Education: A case study of grade three children.

Investigator:
Martha Khosa

Date:
6 May 2011

I hereby:
☐ Agree to be involved in the above research project as a participant.
☐ Agree that my child, ___________________________ may participate in the above research project.
☐ Agree that my staff may be involved in the above research project as participants.

I have read the research information sheet pertaining to this research project and understand the nature of the research and my role in it. In addition, I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details I requested. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

☐ Please allow me to review the report prior to publication.

Name:

Phone or Cell number:

e-mail address:

Signature:

If applicable:
☐ I consent/assent to audio recording of my/the participant’s contributions.
☐ I consent/assent to video recording of my/the participant’s contributions.

Signature:
APPENDIX 2(d): A CONSENT FORM TO THE PARENT

Informed Consent/Assent Form

Project Title:
Mother Tongue Education: A case study of grade three children.

Investigator:
Martha Khosa

Date:
6 May 2011

I hereby:
☐ Agree to be involved in the above research project as a participant.
☐ Agree that my child, __________________________ may participate in the above research project.
☐ Agree that my staff may be involved in the above research project as participants.

I have read the research information sheet pertaining to this research project and understand the nature of the research and my role in it. In addition, I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details I requested. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

☐ Please allow me to review the report prior to publication.

Name: ________________________________________________________________
Phone or Cell number: __________________________________________________
e-mail address: _________________________________________________________
Signature: ____________________________________________________________

If applicable:
☐ I consent/assent to audio recording of my/the participant's contributions.
☐ I consent/assent to video recording of my/the participant's contributions.

Signature: ________________________________

________________________________________

Auckland Park Kingsway Campus | Corner Kingsway and University Road Auckland Park
PO Box 524 Auckland Park 2006 Johannesburg Republic of South Africa | Tel +27 11 489 2911 | www.uj.ac.za

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APPENDIX 2(e): A CONSENT FORM TO THE PARENT ON BEHALF OF THE LEARNER

Informed Consent/Assent Form

Project Title:
Mother Tongue Education: A case study of grade three children.

Investigator:
Martha Khosa

Date:
6 May 2011

I hereby:
☐ Agree to be involved in the above research project as a participant.
☐ Agree that my child, ____________________________ may participate in the above research project.
☐ Agree that my staff may be involved in the above research project as participants.

I have read the research information sheet pertaining to this research project and understand the nature of the research and my role in it. In addition, I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details I requested. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

☐ Please allow me to review the report prior to publication.

Name:

Phone or Cell number:

e-mail address:

Signature:

If applicable:
☐ I consent/assent to audio recording of my/the participant’s contributions.
☐ I consent/assent to video recording of my/the participant’s contributions.

Signature:
APPENDIX 3: CLASSROOM OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Teacher</th>
<th>Learners</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Date: ______________________  School: __________________
Teacher: ____________________  Grade: __________________

Observer: ____________________  Time & Duration of Observation: ______________
APPENDIX 4: TEACHER’S DAILY LITERACY PROGRAMME

DAILY TEACHER ACTIVITIES DURING LITERACY TIME
GRDES 1-3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Activity Description</th>
<th>Minutes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Oral work at the beginning of each day</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Mark the register and as learner’s name is called they say how they are feeling etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- 2-4 learners tell their news (personal experiences)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Day Chart, Month Chart, Birthday Chart and Weather Chart</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading and Writing Focus Time</th>
<th>Minutes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gr 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gr 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gr 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Shared reading or shared writing</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Sing a song/say a poem or refer to a vocabulary chart if appropriate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Introduce the text and new vocabulary, Draw out learners’ prior knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Read the text, modeling a reading strategy, e.g. predicting, using illustrations, noticing punctuation, reading different types of text etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Read the text with the learners joining in, using shared reading techniques. Or write a short text using shared writing techniques.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Check understanding and encourage learners to respond to the text through focused questions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Word and sentence level work: Do one of the following:</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonics/spelling:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Say a rhyme (phonemic awareness): learners listen for target sound.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Teach the new letter-sound or word family in context (shared text).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Reinforce with a directed oral activity, e.g. a game, a sorting or matching activity etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sight words:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- e.g. 15, 40, on the, is, do, in the, in the, is, do, on the, in the, is, do, on the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Show the word in context (shared text) and out of context (flashcard, board).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Reinforce spelling, meaning and use, e.g. ‘writing’ it in the air, using it etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Find the target words in shared text. Revise the meanings. Reinforce, e.g. learners make their own oral sentences with the words, make up riddles etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- e.g. making own sentences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State sight words in between the words</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. **Group, guided and independent reading/writing**

Learners work individually, in pairs or in groups to:

- Complete a written activity based on the class work, e.g. drawing a picture and writing a caption about the story, completing a simple comprehension, writing daily news, sentence completion, copying words into personal dictionaries, matching words, filling in words etc.

or

- Read graded readers or small versions of the shared text and complete a worksheet.

**Guided reading**

- While this is happening, groups of same-ability learners do Guided Reading with the teacher. They read a text at their developmental level (this can be the shared text or another text). The teacher uses the opportunity to:
  1. revise reading skills and strategies already taught (sight words, sounding out, prediction, etc.)
  2. listen for fluency
  3. check reading for meaning by asking a question.

5. **Handwriting**

- Copying writing patterns, letter formation, words and sentences.

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
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</table>

6. **Writing**

- Learners are given a writing frame using a shared text as a model and do own writing, e.g. a list, message, recipe, story.

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. **Listening and speaking**

- Read aloud a story to the class
- Have learners work with the story: respond to the story, re-tell the story, dramatise the story, discuss the story, write the new vocabulary into their personal dictionaries etc.

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. **First Additional Language**

- If learners are to use this language as the LOLT further on, use the same methodologies (shared reading, word and sentence level work)

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Reading for enjoyment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Everyone, including the teacher, reads a book of their choice (reading for enjoyment).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|  | 30 minutes daily |
APPENDIX 5: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

APPENDIX 5(a): INTERVIEW QUESTIONS WITH THE TEACHER

Section A: Biographical Data

1. Name (optional) : ___________________________
2. Gender : ___________________________
3. Age : ___________________________
4. Home language : ___________________________
5. Years of teaching experience : ___________________________
6. Highest level of qualification : ___________________________

Section B: Teacher’s views on the current use of mother tongue instruction

1. How is mother tongue currently used in your classroom?
   __________________________________________________________

2. Whom is it used by?
   __________________________________________________________

3. When is mother tongue used in your classroom?
   __________________________________________________________

4. How do you maintain the value of your learners’ home language?
   __________________________________________________________

5. How do you clarify learners in your classroom of English concepts that are difficult to understand?
   __________________________________________________________

6. How do you accommodate learners who do not speak Xitsonga in your classroom?
   __________________________________________________________

7. How does mother tongue medium of instruction contribute towards enhancing reading and writing in your classroom?
   __________________________________________________________

8. Why is it significant to use mother tongue as the medium of instruction?
9. How do you make up time to for the learners to cope with reading and writing through the mother tongue?

_________________________________________________________________________

10. What do you prefer, home language or English as the medium of instruction? Why?

_________________________________________________________________________

11. What is your experience in teaching literacy, numeracy and life skills in the learners’ home language?

_________________________________________________________________________

APPENDIX 5(b): INTERVIEW QUESTIONS WITH PARENTS

Section A: Biographical Data

1. Name (optional) :____________________________________
2. Gender :____________________________________
3. Age :____________________________________
4. Home language :____________________________________
5. Occupation :____________________________________
6. Highest level of qualification:____________________________________

Section B: Parent’s views on the current use of mother tongue instruction

1. Which language do you speak at home with your children?

_________________________________________________________________________

2. When is mother tongue used at home with your children?

_________________________________________________________________________

3. What do you prefer, home language or English as the medium of instruction? Why?
4. How do you encourage your children to develop positive attitude towards their mother tongue?

5. Why is it significant to use mother tongue as the medium of instruction in the Grade 3 classroom?

6. How are you involved as a parent in your child’s school activities?

7. How do you maintain the value of your mother tongue at home?

8. How do you encourage your child to use his/her mother tongue at home?

9. What do you think about the policy of allowing children’s home language to be used for teaching and learning at school?
APPENDIX 5(c): INTERVIEW QUESTIONS WITH LEARNERS

Section A: Biographical Data

1. Name (optional) : ___________________________
2. Gender : ___________________________
3. Age : ___________________________
4. Home language : ___________________________
5. Grade : ___________________________

Section B: Learner’s views on the current use of mother tongue instruction

1. What language do you speak at home?
   _____________________________________________________________

2. When do you use your mother tongue at school?
   _____________________________________________________________

3. What is the medium of instruction at your school?
   _____________________________________________________________

4. Does your teacher mix languages when she teaches you?
   _____________________________________________________________

5. When and where do you use English?
   _____________________________________________________________

6. What do you enjoy most when learning through your mother tongue?
   _____________________________________________________________

7. Which language do you use when you speak to your parents and friends?
   _____________________________________________________________
8. How does the use of your mother tongue help you towards learning?

___________________________________________________________________

9. What do you prefer, home language or English as the medium of instruction? Why?

___________________________________________________________________
## APPENDIX 6: OBSERVED LESSON PLANS

### APPENDIX 6(a): LITERACY (IDENTIFYING VERBS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Area:</th>
<th>Grade: 3</th>
<th>Date: June/2011</th>
<th>Time: 30 minutes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Context:** Building Language skills

**Content:** Poem: To my Parents, Thank you

**Learning Outcome 1:** The learner will be able to listen for information and enjoyment. The learner will be able to respond appropriately and critically in a wide range of situations.

**Learning Outcome 4:** The learner will be able to write different kinds of texts for a wide range of purposes.

**Assessment standard 1:** Learn about the nature of the alphabetic writing system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Learner</th>
<th>Teaching strategies</th>
<th>Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Teacher reads the poem to the learners</td>
<td>- Listen when the teacher reads.</td>
<td>- Whole class discussion</td>
<td>- Photocopied sheets of a poem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- She does guided reading with the learners.</td>
<td>- Identify verbs from the poem.</td>
<td>- Group discussion Individual work.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Asks learners to identify verbs from the poem.</td>
<td>- Work in groups to identify more verbs from the poem.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Asks each group to help one another to identify more verbs that are used in the poem.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Expanded opportunities:**

Learners use code switching and mixing to help them identify verbs.

**Homework:**

Learners are supposed to identify verbs from the poem and write short sentences from the pictures given.
# APPENDIX 6(b): LITERACY (IDENTIFYING NOUNS)

**Learning Area:** Literacy  
**Grade:** 3  
**Date:** June/2011  
**Time:** 30 minutes

**Context:** Building Language skills  
**Content:** Reader: Benny Misses the Bus

Learning Outcome 3: The learner will be able to read for information and enjoyment.  
- The learner will be able to respond critically to the values of the text.

Learning Outcome 4: The learner will be able to write different kinds of texts for a wide range of purposes.

Assessment standard 3: Be exposed to frequent regular spelling-sound relationships.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Learner</th>
<th>Teaching strategies</th>
<th>Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| - Teacher reads the text to the learners  
- She writes few nouns on the chalkboard.  
- Asks learners to identify more nouns from the text.  
- She uses pictures to show learners different common nouns. | - Learners read silently from their photocopied sheets.  
- Identify nouns from the text.  
- Learners work in groups to identify nouns. | - Whole class  
- Group discussion  
- Individual work. | - English reader  
- Chalkboard  
- Pictures |

**Expanded opportunities:**  
Learners did not understand nouns when the teacher explains in English.

**Homework:**  
Learners are given an activity to fill in the correct nouns in the spaces provided.
Learning Area: Literacy  Grade: 3  Date: June/2011

Time: 30 minutes

Context: Reading aloud  Content: Reading a comprehension passage

Learning Outcome 3: -The learner will be able to read for information and enjoyment.
      -The learner will be able to respond critically to the values of the text.
Learning Outcome 4: The learner will be able to write different kinds of texts for a wide range of purposes.

Assessment standard 1: Use reading to obtain meaning from it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Learner</th>
<th>Teaching strategies</th>
<th>Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| - Teacher reads the passage to the learners  
- She writes vocabulary words on the chalkboard.  
- Asks learners to read the words aloud.  
- She uses pictures to help learners understand what she says.  
- Asks learners to explain the purpose of a bus. | - Learners read silently from their text books.  
- Learners read simultaneously and correctly.  
- Explains the purpose of a bus. | - Whole class.  
- Group discussion.  
- Individual work. | - English text book.  
- Chalkboard.  
- Pictures. |

Expanded opportunities:
Learners did not understand nouns when the teacher explains in English.

Homework:
Learners are given an activity to fill in the correct nouns in the spaces provided.
### APPENDIX 6(d): LITERACY (READING ALOUD)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Area: Literacy</th>
<th>Grade: 3</th>
<th>Date: June/2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time: 30 minutes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Context:** Reading aloud  
**Content:** Reader: Benny Misses the Bus

**Learning Outcome 3:** The learner will be able to read for information and enjoyment.

Assessment standard 1: Use reading to obtain meaning from it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Learner</th>
<th>Teaching strategies</th>
<th>Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| - The teacher models reading aloud by reading first.  
- She gives each group a chance to read aloud.  
- Asks learners to drill and practice reading sounds.  
- She asks learners to sound out all the words which begin with the sound ‘ba-’. | - Learners read silently from their text books.  
- Learners from each group get a chance to read aloud.  
- Learners identified and sounded out words from the word list which begin with the sound ‘ba-’. | - Whole class.  
- Group discussion. | - English reader.  
- Chalkboard.  
- Word list. |

**Expanded opportunities:**  
Learners could not pronounce some English words.

**Homework:**  
Learners are given an activity to read the pictures from the text in order to write five sentences of what they see in the pictures.
APPENDIX 6(e): LITERACY (STORY READING)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Area: “Ku tsala niku hlaya”, (Literacy)</th>
<th>Grade: 3</th>
<th>Date: June/2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time: 30 minutes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Context:** “Ku hlayela ehenhla”, (Reading aloud)  
**Content:** “Ku hlaya xitori”, (Story reading)

Learning Outcome 3:  
-The learner will be able to read for information and enjoyment.  
-The learner will be able to respond critically to the values of the text.

Learning Outcome 4: The learner will be able to write different kinds of texts for a wide range of purposes.

Assessment standard 2: Have frequent and intensive opportunities to read.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Learner</th>
<th>Teaching strategies</th>
<th>Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| - Teacher reads the text aloud to the learners  
- She tells learners that they will read the story individually.  
- She pointed at one learner to read the first paragraph.  
- She tells individual groups to help each other identify and underline doing words from the text. | - Learners read silently from their text books.  
- Learners read paragraphs of the text individually.  
- Learners read and underline doing words from the text. | - Group discussion.  
- Individual work. | - Xitsonga reader. |

**Expanded opportunities:**
Learners did not understand nouns when the teacher explains in English.

**Homework:**
Learners are given an activity to identify and write verbs in the pictures that are in the text.
### APPENDIX 6(f): LITERACY (READING A NEWSPAPER ARTICLE)

**Learning Area:** Literacy  
**Grade:** 3  
**Date:** June/2011  
**Time:** 30 minutes

**Context:** Building Language skills  
**Content:** Reading a newspaper article

**Learning Outcome 3:** The learner will be able to read for information and enjoyment.  
**Learning Outcome 6:** The learner knows and is able to use the sounds, vocabulary and grammar of an additional language.  
**Assessment standard 3:** Be exposed to frequent regular spelling-sound relationships.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Learner</th>
<th>Teaching strategies</th>
<th>Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Teacher asks learners to identify pictures of healthy and non-healthy food. - She writes different phonics beginning with the vowel sound, -ea on a chart. - Asks learners to sound them. - Thereafter, she writes different word vocabulary on flash cards.</td>
<td>- Learners identified pictures - Learners sounded words beginning with the vowel sound, -ea.</td>
<td>- Whole class - Group discussion</td>
<td>- Newspaper article - Chart - Pictures - Flash cards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- She asks learners to choose words from the flash cards and construct sentences from each word.</td>
<td>- Learners constructed sentences from the vocabulary words in the text.</td>
<td>- Individual work.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Expanded opportunities:** Some learners could not construct sentences from English word.  
**Homework:** Learners are given an activity to read the article aloud from group to group.
One morning Benny woke up late.
His alarm clock rang but he went back to sleep.
He only woke up after seven o’clock.
Benny jumped out of bed when he saw the time.
“Oh no!” he said. “It is late and I am going to miss the bus!”
He ran to the bathroom and washed his face.
Then he put on his uniform in a hurry. His shoes needed polish but there was no time. He packed his school bag and ran to the kitchen to get the lunch his gran had made for him.
Benny looked at the clock on the kitchen wall.
It was already half-past-seven.
In five minutes’ time the bus would be at the bus stop.
Obesity — the silent killer

Serious health problems that are often linked to obesity can be significantly reduced through simple lifestyle changes. The importance of maintaining a healthy weight cannot be overstated, as maintaining a healthy weight has been linked to reduced risk of developing various chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease, and certain types of cancer.

Exercising regularly and consuming a balanced diet are key components of a healthy lifestyle. Regular physical activity, such as walking, cycling, or swimming, can help improve cardiovascular health and overall fitness. Additionally, eating a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains can provide essential nutrients and fiber, which aid in weight management.

The role of genetics in obesity cannot be ignored, as some individuals may be more predisposed to weight gain due to genetic factors. However, understanding that weight management is achievable with consistent effort can help motivate individuals to adopt healthier habits.

Ultimately, addressing the issue of obesity requires a multifaceted approach, combining education, policy changes, and support systems to create an environment that promotes healthy living. By adopting a proactive stance towards weight management, individuals can significantly reduce their risk of developing obesity-related health problems.
Hi ve hi fika eGrahamstown endzhaku ka tiawara ta khume-nkombo. Miako ya kona a yi nga ri leswi a hi ohekete kuri yi ta va xi swona. Futhi ematshan'wini yo etlela ehoteleni ya manyunya, hi etlele enkampeni ya masocha ya le Grahamstown.

Siku le ri thandlamako hi pfukile hi ri na nyanyuko wo tilulamisela ntlangu. "Tsemoa...!" ku nghelelela mudyondzisi. "Mi nga rivali kuri mi fanele mi koka rinoko ra vhleleri handle ka swona va ta navela ku ri mi huma exitejini hi ku haliisa. SUNGULA!" Sibongile a sungula kambe hi matimba. "Kambe manana, a ndzi lavi ku ambala rhoko yo leha onge ndzi ya ekerekeni, na kambe ehandle ka swona a ndzi mukhegula mina." Vutulamiseri byi fambe kahle hambi leswi a ku tithimela ngopfu.
AAPPENDIX 10: LEARNERS’ WRITING ACTIVITY

Learner’s Name: .................................................................No: ........................................

Grade: 3________________________________________________________________learning area: literacy (FAL)

Learners’ class activity: Writing activity

Learning Outcome: 5, Assessment standard: 7

Read the following pictures below and write five short sentences of what you see from the pictures.
APPENDIX 11: LEARNERS’ WRITING ACTIVITY

Vito ra mudyondzi (Learner’s name): ................................................................. No: ....................................

Ntlawa 3 (Grade 3)  learning area: literacy (Xitsonga)

Switoloveto (Learners’ class activity): Ku hlamula swivutiso hi ku tsala (Writing activity)

Learning Outcome: 3, Assessment standard: 1

Languta swifanisa laha hansi kutani u tsala ntlhanu wa swivulwa hi swona (Read the following pictures below and write five short sentences about the pictures.

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