An intervention to improve reading comprehension for grade 8 learners.

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By

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ABSTRACT

Since the official opening of ex-model C (previously whites only) schools to learners of all races, cultures and languages, there has been an influx of black learners into these schools. Reasons for this are that many black parents believe the quality of education and resources available at these ex model C schools is better than those available in township schools (De Klerk, 2000). Parents also believe sending their children to English medium schools enables them to compete and be marketable in the global world of work.

This dissertation describes a qualitative case study of grade 8 learners who took part in a six week intervention conducted at a school in the Eastern Cape where they learn through an additional language (English). The purpose of the intervention was to equip these learners with skills to enable them to improve their reading and comprehension in this language. Participation in the intervention was voluntarily, based on a selection conducted of learners who wrote a baseline English assessment test.

Assessments done during the intervention suggest that isiXhosa home language learners fare academically weaker than their English and Afrikaans counterparts who learn through the medium of English. This correlates with findings done nationally and internationally with regard to South African learners’ literacy levels. This dissertation looks at the affective and cognitive effects of the intervention on its participants.

Literature on how additional language learning should be done is examined, as well as the Language in Education policy of South Africa (1997). Findings from the research suggest the importance of establishing a ‘safe’ teaching and learning environment for learning to take place optimally and indicate that interventions to improve English reading can produce positive results. Furthermore the research provides evidence that explicitly teaching reading strategies can improve the participants’ comprehension and overall language competence.
While English, as the language of technology and economics is acknowledged, it is argued in this dissertation that due to a lack of information to make informed choices, parents and learners become victims of the ‘straight for English’ phenomenon, and learners are robbed of an opportunity to reach their academic potential. However, if additional language learning takes place under the ideal conditions, learners can be enabled to become academically equipped to deal with the demands of learning through an additional language.

What is essential for the afore-mentioned to materialize is that learners need to be equipped with reading and comprehension skills in their home language first, for these skills to be effective in attaining the ‘other’ language. Also, learners need to be aware of the fact that they carry knowledge in their own language that can and should be used to learn (in) the additional language.
I would like to acknowledge my supervisor, Dr Jacqui Dornbrack, for supervising this research. It was indeed an honour to work with someone known for her academic expertise and high moral values. Dr Dornbrack enabled me in so many ways and having worked with her will affect how I do things and how I think for the rest of my life. Our relationship was not only about this research, but covered issues like current issues in South African politics, personal issues, work-related issues, race-issues, child-rearing and so many more. Jacqui, I once told you that you surround yourself with people who are as passionate about issues as you are. Thank you for including me in your circle.

Thank you to the headmaster and teachers at ‘Roots’ who made me feel welcomed and who could see the value in my research.

Mr J.W.M. Slingers, you had a huge impact on my life from 1990 to 1994 and then in 2006 you convinced me that I can and should take up my Master’s studies. Thank you for proof-reading this dissertation.

Then I need to thank my family: my mother Alice, sisters Talie and Gail and brother Clark. We have come a long way from where we started out and I believe that we represent hope to single-parent families like ours. Our lives are a manifestation of ‘in every bad there is good’. Talie, thank you for being a good role-model and good luck with your Master’s studies in 2009. Gail, congratulations on completing your NPDE in 2009 and Clark, I would not choose any other brother but you.

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Mornè and Jessè. Mornè, thank you for being a good father to Jessè. Mornè actually knows what I do at work and he grew into seeing sense and purpose in my studies. Working on Saturdays with Jacqui meant he had to fill time with Jessè at Kids Galore. Thank you. Jessè, who would be a little more naughty on days when I had to go and work with Jacqui: I love you. You are my purpose. Ma and O’d, thank you for always being available to look after Jessè on such days.

I would also like to thank the head of CES at NMMU, where I am currently working, Prof. Maritz Snyders. Thank you for allowing me time off work to complete my studies and to attend a conference relevant to my studies. Thank you for being so supportive.

I cannot but thank God for all the mercies He bestows upon me. Through all my experiences in life I have come to realize that ‘with God all things are possible’. Every achievement in my life is through His grace.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the wonderful learners with whom I worked. They courageously formed part of my intervention, despite the possibility of being branded. Thank you for seeing the purpose of my study. Thank you for believing that being part of this study would impact positively on your academic lives.

In particular, this dissertation is dedicated to your futures. I hope that this dissertation adds to those voices that advocate that the Department of Education should look at ways and means to help additional language learners to achieve their full academic potential. And if the phenomenon is not ameliorated in your time, it hopefully should be by the time your children go to school.
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>BICS</td>
<td>Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>CALP</td>
<td>Communicative Academic Language Proficiency</td>
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<tr>
<td>CUP</td>
<td>Common Underlying Proficiency</td>
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<tr>
<td>DoE</td>
<td>Department of Education</td>
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<td>LOLT</td>
<td>Language of Learning and Teaching</td>
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<td>MLA</td>
<td>Monitoring Learning Achievement</td>
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<td>OBE</td>
<td>Outcomes Based Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPP</td>
<td>Pause, Prompt, Praise</td>
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<td>PIRLS</td>
<td>Progress in International Reading Literacy Study</td>
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<td>PRAESA</td>
<td>Project for study of Alternative Education in South Africa</td>
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<td>RR</td>
<td>Reading Recovery</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAMEQ</td>
<td>Southern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality</td>
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<td>TIMMS</td>
<td>Third International Mathematics and Science Study</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZAD</td>
<td>Zone of Actual Development</td>
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<td>ZPD</td>
<td>Zone of Proximal Development</td>
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CHAPTER 1
1.1 INTRODUCTION

‘I was horrified to discover that these young children had received little systematic instruction in reading and read and wrote very little. In subsequent visits the extent of reading failure was confirmed over and over.’ (Fleisch, 2008:v).

This quote captures the essence of what my dissertation is about. I begin by explaining the reasons for Fleisch’s ‘horror’ and provide the reader with the concerning results from the (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) PIRLS conducted in 2006. Thereafter I elaborate on the research topic, question and aims, as well as the broader South African context. This is followed by a brief overview of the language context in South Africa with its different language practices and policies. A brief introduction of the methodology and methods employed is supplied, after which a chapter overview is provided.

One of the reasons underlying the reading failure is historical, political and economic in that there is a ‘bimodal distribution of achievement’ (Fleisch, 2008:v), the first mode being where the majority (70-80%) of South African Primary school children from disadvantaged schools ‘are completing their primary schooling without being able to read fluently in their school’s instructional language’. The second mode, the high achieving group, are predominantly from the black and white middle-class class families, who attend well-resourced schools and become ‘proficient readers’. Their literacy and mathematical abilities are at a level with other middle-class age-equivalent children elsewhere in the world. This group tends to gain university entrance and perpetuate their high achievement to the next generation. The first mode on the other hand, who are mainly working-class and poor children, are often forced to bring ‘their health, family and community difficulties with them into the classroom’, into a school system that is already under stress and struggling to cope with poor resources and underachievement. While a few exceptional learners manage to achieve excellence despite these difficulties,
the majority of children in this system ‘cannot read for meaning in any language and are not numerically competent’ (Fleisch, 2008: 3).

In addition to this, reading does not appear to be explicitly taught in schools. This is evidenced as far back as the then Minister of Education, Kadar Asmal’s confession ‘I was then concerned that the curriculum did not explicitly mention the need for students to know how to read and write’ (2003, in Fleisch 2008: 7). Since then, the need for teachers to explicitly teach reading and writing has been underlined as a continuing concern as stated by Duncan Hindle, 2007 (DoE: 2008). This has resulted in poor results even in schools that would fall into Fleisch’s ‘second mode’. Possible reasons for the poor results in this mode relate to issues of language policy and current practices in schools.

With the official opening of model C (previously whites only) schools to learners of all races, cultures and languages, there has been an influx of black learners into these schools. The ramifications of this have been widespread for all stakeholders. The tendency in most ex-model C schools is that Xhosa learners are taught through the medium of English (Heugh, 2001:18). Most learners enrol for English first language, despite it being their second or even third language. Most of these learners have isiXhosa as their home language (in the Eastern Cape where the study is situated) and stay in communities and are part of families where isiXhosa is the predominant medium of conversation. They are however expected to learn through and be taught in the medium of English, when most of them only interact with the language in the classroom. According to Landsberg, Kruger & Nel (2005:37) the latter results in these learners seldom being able to master the language of learning and teaching, English. Also, having an additional language as medium of teaching and learning encourages non-involvement of parents/caregivers and worsens the fact that they cannot help their children with their schoolwork (Dornbrack, personal communication: 14/03/2009).

The South African Department of Education’s Language in Education Policy promotes additive multilingualism, but it fails to state when the change of language of instruction should take place. One of the underlying principles of the Language in Education Policy
is that the home language should be maintained, while effective access is provided to the
acquisition of the additional language. In South Africa this generally does not happen as
most isiXhosa and Afrikaans learners attend ex Model C schools where they start their
schooling in the additional language, in the case of my study, English.

1.2 CLARIFICATION OF MY OWN POSITION AND THE ORIGIN OF MY
CONCERN.
I previously taught English Primary Language to Grade 8 learners, who in reality had
isiXhosa as their primary language and who stayed in communities where isiXhosa was
spoken. These learners were expected to cope with English Primary Language, as well as
learn content subjects through English, when their only exposure to English was at
school.

The language policy of this school was (and still is) bilingual: the language of teaching
and learning is either Afrikaans or English. The dominant language of conversation in
the staffroom was Afrikaans, 40% of the learners were isiXhosa home language speakers,
while 55% were Afrikaans home language speakers and 5% were English home language
speakers (in the true sense of the word). This has a few implications. One is that the
isiXhosa learners’ language has no status or representation in the Language Policy at the
school. Also, the absence of isiXhosa-speaking teachers worsens the fact that the
isiXhosa learners have no one whom they could identify with linguistically or have as a
role-model. Furthermore, learners were sent to detention if they conversed in their
mother tongue (isiXhosa) in class. The use of their mother tongue was seen as a
contravention of the school’s language policy and as rudeness (back-chatting in a
language which the teacher does not understand). Due to their parents’ choice of their
language of learning, these learners were sometimes wrongfully branded as ‘intellectually
challenged’. Not only did this rob them of their sense of belonging, it also demonised
their cultural being. These learners were being disadvantaged culturally, linguistically
and cognitively.
So, in essence this school (like many others) contravenes the South African Language in Education Policy (1997), which promotes multilingualism through additive bilingualism. The learners referred to in my previous paragraph clearly did not experience an additive approach where their ‘home language was used for learning and teaching wherever possible’ (Revised National Curriculum Statement of 2005, DoE, 2002:5). Gudschinsky (1977:200) rightfully states that children will learn a second-/additional language more readily, and more effectively, if they are taught to read and write in their own language first. As early as 1953 UNESCO reported that ‘[T]he best medium for teaching a child is through his/her mother tongue’.

All cultures, religions and language(s) should be valued in classrooms if we hope to achieve learners who have good self esteem and are respectful of others; this is of particular importance given the previous oppression in South Africa and the current state of education. Suppression of any kind will only contribute to the uncertainty in the Education system in South Africa. The urgent need for intervention in language and literacy issues is further illustrated in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) conducted in 2006 which reveals the extent of the language concerns.

1.3 NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ASSESSMENTS

Some national and international assessments on South African schools’ literacy levels are reasons for concern. In the Monitoring Learning Achievement (MLA) cross-national study with grade 4s, literacy levels were assessed as 48.1% (Fleisch, 2008). With the PIRLS study conducted in 2006, South Africa’s grade 4s achieved the lowest score (Howie et al., 2007) compared to the other 72 countries that were also part of the study. The findings of my research are consistent with the findings of the PIRLS assessment, which showed that Afrikaans learners were the strongest in the assessment and that English learners performed second best. The study showed isiXhosa learners (as part of the eleven (11) language groups that were assessed) were the weakest. With the SAMEQ II (Southern Africa Consortium for Measuring Educational Quality), findings for grade 6s revealed, in the words of Moloi and Strauss (in Fleisch, 2008:19), that ‘more than half the
children in South Africa’s primary schools are not even reading at a minimum level to allow them to survive’.

Findings by Howie in Fleisch (2008) suggest that learners who ‘always’ or ‘almost always’ spoke the language of the test scored a higher mean than those who ‘never’ used the language of the test at home. Howie (in Fleisch, 2008:99) summarizes her findings on language and achievement as follows:

the most significant factor in learning science and mathematics isn’t whether the learners are rich or poor. It’s whether they are fluent in English

In the Western Cape Grade Six 2003 assessment study, research illustrated that the children who spoke English as their home language had a higher mean score on the literacy test, compared to the isiXhosa first language speakers. The report noted that English as a home language is a strong predictor of success. The report concludes that while having English as one’s home language does not guarantee academic success, it strongly improves one’s chances (Fleisch, 2008: 100). All these findings point to one fact: children whose home language is not the same as the language of teaching and assessment consistently score significantly lower than first language schoolchildren. This has to be urgently addressed.

1.4 VALIDATION OF MY ACCOUNT OF LEARNING.
I believe that teachers need to focus on what learners can do, rather on what they cannot do. So, even though one of the programmes that I drew from during my intervention (Reading Recovery) does not advocate that one should use the learners’ mother tongue to facilitate additional language learning, it is exactly what I did in my intervention designed to address reading problems in a grade 8 class in the Eastern Cape. Also during my teaching experiences and during the intervention, I had scenarios where learners could speak English (communicative competence), but could not read or write it (academic competence). I believe that this happens as English learning is not internalized; it carries little meaning. Facilitating through the mother tongue could bridge this challenge to
understanding the additional language. During the intervention I acknowledged and used prior learning (language spoken at home) to facilitate additional language learning (English) when learners were given time to discuss texts and tasks. I believe that this established a positive self-image in learners, because they then realized that their mother tongue is a resource rather than a problem. The aim of the acknowledgement was to make them aware of the fact that the more they know in their mother tongue, the more they would be equipped to understand content in English.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTION AND AIMS
My research question is as follows:

How does a short intervention programme impact the English reading and comprehension skills of second language learners in a selected context?

- The first aim of the intervention was to construct, out of the existing literature and practice, a short intervention. (This is further discussed in chapter 3).
- The second aim was to implement this intervention. (This is further discussed in chapter 3).
- The third aim was to assess the impact of the intervention. (This is further discussed in chapters 4 and 5).

1.6 ATTEMPTING TO ANSWER THE RESEARCH QUESTION
In addressing the research question, I drew on action research. Action research is a multi-focussed method of research, that designs an intervention(s) to address a particular concern. It involves a close examination of the effects of the intervention and reflects on its effectiveness in addressing the problem. If not, other possible intervention strategies are considered. Thus the research process is cyclical in nature. Action research is participatory and directly involves the researcher. In my intervention I was the ‘research tool’ in that I was directly involved with my participants. I saw my role as that of a change agent, who embraces the concerns of people who are facing the challenge of learning through their non-mother tongue.
Additionally, I used an interventionist strategy which makes use of understanding of a phenomenon to take action. This action seeks to bring about positive change (Beylefeld, 2005:1321). The intervention was designed along the following framework:

**Step 1**  
*I identified a concern.*

That English reading and comprehension was particularly difficult for isiXhosa learners. This was ascertained by a test I administered. (See test by Lilly Pretorius (Appendix A)). The participants of this intervention are learners who learn through English but who have a different mother tongue. I made use of a baseline assessment test, and from the results, identified and invited learners to become participants in the intervention.

**Step 2**  
*Data was gathered on the concern.*

I obtained information on reading and comprehension intervention strategies.

**Step 3**  
*I developed possible intervention(s) and implemented it.*

The intervention took place over 6 weeks and I used a combination of theoretical and practical ideas from Clay (1979), Ogle (1986), Krashen (2003) and McNaughton, Glynn and Robinson (1981).

The focus of the intervention was vocabulary development and reading comprehension. With the Reading Recovery approach, the process of reading and difficulties in reading are seen as ‘complex’ (Clay, 1995:15). Clay argues (1995:4) that with Reading Recovery, building on the learner’s strengths will inculcate a sense of control in this learner over his/her activities. Clay is of the opinion that children use contextual cues in predicting and working out unknown words; therefore, there is relevance in the use of Scaffolding (as advocated by Vygotsky (1934), Bradley and Bradley (1994) and Ovando, Collier & Combs (2003)) as a reading- and comprehension development strategy. Clay (1995) also recommends that Reading Recovery takes place in the school, outside of the mainstream classroom.
The intervention took place in the school staff room, with invited participants during mutually agreed on selected English periods. Learners were mentally stimulated as they were always active, having to read and write in each intervention, using knowledge which they already possessed (be it in whichever language) to make sense of new content.

**Step 4 Evaluation.**

Participants’ English March term results (before the intervention) and their English June term results (after the intervention) were examined and the baseline assessment was re-administered to the whole class. Indications are that most of the participants improved in their English term results as well as in the English reading test. A more obvious finding was their improvement in terms of their confidence and attitudes to English reading.

Having given the reader a background to my research and a brief understanding of the methods used and data gathered, I now give an outline of the whole dissertation.

**1.7 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS**

*Chapter 1*

Here, I introduced the reader to the research topic and contextualized the topic. I enlightened the reader about my position on the topic and briefly discussed the methodology and methods used to generate data.

*Chapter 2*

This chapter provides the theoretical framework for the study. Firstly, I describe the language policies of the Department of Education. Thereafter, I outline the gap between policy and practice. This is followed by literature on reading.

*Chapter 3*

I introduce the reader to qualitative research and the interpretivist tradition into which my research falls. I discuss the methodology used for the research intervention: a combination of characteristics of action research and intervention research. These methodologies allowed me to use multiple strategies in generating data such as secondary data, interviews, observations, reflective journals. I also used a test designed by
Elizabeth Pretorius (UNISA) as a baseline assessment, to establish my point of intervention and to identify the participants of the intervention. The test is attached as Appendix A.

Chapter 4
This chapter presents the analyzed data that was generated from the baseline test, interviews, observations, journals and post-intervention assessment. I discuss these findings against theoretical arguments described in chapter 2.

Chapter 5
Here I discuss the findings and make recommendations. Chapter 5 sums up the conclusions drawn from the analyzed data and presents recommendations to begin to address some of the critical literacy issues facing South Africa.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION
In this chapter I review literature on the language situation in South African schools. I begin by acknowledging English as an international language of communication, and a language of business. I discuss concerns about the way in which additional language learning takes place in most South African schools and look at the tendency of non-mother tongue instruction and reasons for its prevalence among black South Africans. I look at how additional language instruction should be practised, compared to how it is being practised, as well as the negative consequences of this. I outline the language and learning policies as set out by the Department of Education (DoE) as well as literacy in relation to Outcomes Based Education (OBE).

Included in this section is a discussion of the differences between Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) as advocated by Cummins (1981). I then turn the attention of my readers to ways to improve reading. I discuss reading comprehension and its importance in learning and outline different perspectives on reading. This will be contextualized in terms of South Africa. I draw on an international perspective on reading and discuss some intervention techniques which are relevant to my study. I then reflect on Reading Recovery programmes and their relevance to my research. Finally, I inform my readers of why my intervention programme can be described as eclectic.

2.2 WHY NON-MOTHER TONGUE INSTRUCTION?
Many parents place their children in ex-model C schools where English is the language of learning and teaching, despite the fact that they have had very little exposure to English (Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB), 2000). Parents appear to be unaware of the importance of home language in the cognitive development and the acquisition of additional languages (Lemmer, 1995:90). However, parents realise the status given to
English and, wanting the best for their children, place them in English medium schools to acquire the social and linguistic capital that has the highest economic currency in South Africa today. This has serious cognitive and social consequences on the every-day lives of these children. It should be mentioned that in South Africa the National Senior Certificate (matric external examination) is written in either English or Afrikaans. So, this practice not only happens in ex-model C schools but also in township schools. In township schools the practice might only differ in that teachers teach in the home language of both the teacher and learners (in the Eastern Cape this language is isiXhosa), but then the learner has to write the exams in English, when content was explained to them and meaning is made by them in a different language.

2.3 ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

The acquisition of the additional language should be based on a sound mother tongue and should be an additive process. Additive multilingualism refers to the acquisition of an additional language, while maintaining the home language which has a complementary effect on the learner’s cognitive and social development. Socially, learners feel accepted when their home language is used in making them understand content. Also, when the teacher is able to facilitate understanding in the home language, it creates a social bond and an environment of teaching and learning between the teacher and his/her learners (Lemmer, 1995; Skutnabb-Kangas & Toukomaa, 1976). Within an additive approach the transfer to English as LOLT (language of learning and teaching), the home language needs to continue being taught as a subject to ensure its maintenance and development (PRAESA: Obanya, 2004). However, the South African Department of Education’s Language in Education Policy of 1997 does not specify how this should be implemented (Heugh 1999, Webb 2002). This has resulted in confusion and a lack of implementation.

The common approach to language and education in South African classrooms where the additional language replaces the mother tongue as medium of instruction, is in contradiction to the South African Language in Education Policy of 1997 which promotes additive multilingualism. Additive multilingualism implies that an additional language should be developed in conjunction with the further development of the learner’s home
language. This is in accordance with the Revised National Curriculum Statement of 2005 (Department of Education, 2002:5) which states that ‘the learner’s home language should be used for learning and teaching wherever possible’. Also, research suggests that an additional language should not be introduced before the mother tongue has been well developed and mastered by the learner (Obanya, 2004:22).

2.3.1 Additional language instruction in the South African context

In South Africa most parents place their children in previously model C schools which usually follow a subtractive approach to language development. With this approach there is no real development in either the mother tongue or the additional language. This has serious effects on the cognitive- and social development of the learners. Cummins and Swain (1986) found that cognitive development is more successfully achieved when a person’s mother tongue is used as a language of learning and teaching. Without sound cognitive skills, learners struggle to make sufficient academic progress in the additional language. Roseberry-McKibben & Brice (2000:5) are of the opinion that skills and knowledge which are developed in the first language will be transferred to the additional language (in this case English) as the language of learning and teaching and this additional language will build on the underlying conceptual-linguistic foundation of the mother tongue. The latter is based on Cummins’ Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) theory (1981:29), which states that

‘(T)o the extent that instruction in Language x (home language) is effective in promoting proficiency in Language x (home language), transfer of this proficiency to Language y (the additional language) will occur provided there is adequate exposure to Language y (the additional language) either in school or the home environment and that there is adequate motivation to learn Language y (the additional language).

CUP suggests that if a learner has cognitive and academic proficiency in the mother tongue this will transfer to and aid in the acquisition of cognitive and academic proficiency in the additional language (Cummins, 1991:166-167). Baker (1996:18) supports the idea of transfer of knowledge and skills between languages. He suggests
that there is a CUP through which bilingual learners can access concepts and skills developed in their first language to use them in their additional language and vice versa. Cummins (2001:17) is of the opinion that a learner’s CUP can be developed, if the learner is motivated enough to acquire and is exposed sufficiently to both languages. He warns (2001:74) that learners whose CALP in the language of learning and teaching (the additional language) is weak are disadvantaged and will remain so unless they are instructed in a way which facilitates comprehension and active participation.

However, it needs to be acknowledged that there is limited material/language structures available in isiXhosa (or any other African languages for that matter) to facilitate the development of additional language structures (Plüddemann, Braam, Broeder, Extra, October, 2004:24; Lemmer 1998:228). It is argued that all languages develop through use and the more one uses a language, the more likely it is to develop (Plüddemann, 2002:55). Heugh (1995:48) argues that the development of new terminology should not be a problem for any language, as speakers of a language might decide to coin new terms or to borrow terms from other languages, whichever option will best facilitate communication and understanding among its speakers. Langhan (1996) says that African languages have to be developed to become a vehicle of meaningful learning for its speakers, thus making additional languages supplementary in the learning process. Macdonald and Burroughs (1991:68) suggest that African home language courses should run ahead of the rest of the curriculum in order to develop concepts and cognitive skills in children’s home language.

A negative consequence associated with English replacing the mother tongue is that there might be individual loss of confidence. Additional language learners might struggle to identify with their own culture, as they practise a different culture at school from what they do at home. They might feel a potential loss of identity and a sense of displacement which could lead to the disruption of family communication patterns, as the learners start to hold different beliefs and opinions from that of their parents (Lemmer, 1995: 51). If schools do not support mother tongue development, causing the home language to deteriorate, the additional language will not develop sufficiently and this results in
learners having low to no proficiency in both the mother tongue and the additional language. This is one of the negative effects of establishing the additional language at the cost of the home language (Roseberry-McKibbin & Eicholtz, 1994:161). McDonald (1991) believes that most non-mother tongue learners are ‘semilingualists’ (having a very low to no level of proficiency in both the home language and the additional language) as a result of the ‘straight-for-English’ approach. The ‘straight-for-English’ tendency is growing in popularity due to the lack of understanding among parents and teachers about the role of the mother tongue in cognitive development and its role in the acquisition of subsequent languages (Lemmer 1995).

2.4 POLICY AND PRACTICE

The tendency at previously model C schools is that they are multicultural and multilingual in theory, but not in practice (De Klerk, 2000:202). Many educators at these schools equate success with the mastery of English. Teachers at ex model C schools are still predominantly white, and have English or Afrikaans as their mother tongue. These teachers have little to no proficiency in the mother tongue of the learners they are teaching and are therefore not able to use the learners’ home language to facilitate the development of the additional language (Laufer, 2000:12). So, by implication, these teachers are unable to practise additive multilingualism.

Language and education policies in South Africa promote additive bilingualism, but in reality most isiXhosa learners experience subtractive bilingualism (Alexander, 2000:15) where they lack proficiency in both languages as their mother tongue has never been developed. This results in the learners’ education being based on a submersion model of additional language acquisition, whereby their first language is replaced with English, as a poorly developed LOLT (PRAESA, Occasional Papers No. 11). Lemmer (1997:444) says the aim of the submersion model is to increase majority language usage in the classroom while decreasing the usage of the learner’s mother tongue in the classroom. In such classrooms the teachers usually are monolingual and have no knowledge of the learner’s mother tongue. The results are that isiXhosa learners become semi-lingual, and
have very low proficiency in both their mother tongue and their language of learning and teaching.

Having identified the problems associated with the subtractive approach to multilingualism, I now turn to a more specific concern facing many learners in South African schools, that of poor literacy due to poor reading and comprehension abilities in the additional language.

2.5 LITERACY IN RELATION TO ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION AND OUTCOMES BASED EDUCATION (OBE), BICS AND CALP

Some isiXhosa learners who take the subject English first language have proficiency in communicating in and through English, yet experience difficulties in communicating academic English. These learners have mastered BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills). The acquisition of BICS relies heavily on visual cues and social context and it takes approximately 2 years to develop (Cummins: 1981;1986). Having mastered BICS, it is mostly assumed that learners will be academically able to learn through and in their additional language. Research has proven this to be wrong. Learners need CALP (Communicative Academic Language Proficiency) in their additional language to facilitate academic comprehension and resulting success if the additional language is the medium of instruction. BICS is acquired through language processes of mainly pronunciation, vocabulary and grammatical patterns, whereas CALP requires skills of analysis, synthesis and evaluation, with the appropriate language processes of semantic and functional meaning. The learner requires 5 to 7 years to acquire sufficient CALP to perform well on academic tasks (Cummins: 1981/1986/1991; Roseberry-McKibbin & Brice 2000). To acquire BICS and CALP simultaneously within the school situation is emotionally and cognitively demanding on any learner. isiXhosa home language learners at former model C schools face the formidable task of acquiring CALP while having to master academic content at the same pace as that of English home language speakers. Cummins (1981: 16-29) recommends the early and gradual introduction to English in primary schools in order to allow the learner sufficient time to acquire CALP, which is needed to master the upper primary and secondary syllabus.
Cummins recommends ‘early introduction’, provided that the mother tongue is appreciated, encouraged, maintained and developed. Cummins (1979: 222-251) is of the opinion that the development of the mother tongue aids a non mother tongue learner’s academic progress, provided that a high level of proficiency is present in the mother tongue and that the mother tongue has been developed. Research has provided evidence that black children in South Africa fail to master English reading because they have not mastered basic reading skills in their own languages (De Klerk, 1995; Pretorius 2002).

My research questions will attempt to provide data that can build on the studies of BICS and CALP in the South African context with reference to reading in English.

Most isiXhosa learners attending previously model C schools have acquired BICS, but not CALP and are placed in the same class with English home language speakers. This puts them at risk of underachieving (Lemmer, 2003:1) academically as they not only have to acquire a certain standard of English, but also have to use English as a medium of learning for all academic disciplines. English home language speakers are in a better position to attain CALP, as social interaction through their language of learning (BICS) makes possible the transfer of cognitive academic proficiency from one language to another. For them there is no ‘other’. Cummins argues that there must be some minimal literacy development in the home language for cognitive development to transfer readily to the additional language and that this minimal level significantly aids the process of CALP development in the additional language (Cummins, 1991:166-167). Teaching time for English home language speakers can be more concentrated on CALP/'cognitive fluency’, as BICS/'surface fluency’ is developed in their every-day interaction, as a given.

2.6 THEORIES ON LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Theorists categorize the development of language into two categories, language acquisition and language learning. The former is the unconscious and unstructured process that takes place from birth to pre-school years and the latter is more formal and structured. Pereira (1984:50) states that at primary school learners use both.
Cummins theorises that active language acquisition happens during the early school years and around the age of 11 years (Cummins, 2001:7). Another theorist, Krashen suggests that language should be acquired rather than taught (the naturalistic approach). He feels that language should not be taught directly in early school classrooms and believes that speech will emerge once the acquirer has received and accessed enough comprehensible input. He theorises that inhibited environments (formal, structured classrooms) limits language acquisition, compared to a non-inhibited environment (Krashen, 1996:100).

Having discussed more general notions of language acquisition and language learning in South Africa, I now turn to my second body of theory on reading.

2.7 **READING**

Venezky (1984:13) states that reading usually implies oral reading (BICS) and comprehension (CALP) of a given text and that comprehension is simply assumed if a reader’s ‘pronunciation was correct and natural’. This belief can lead to unrealistic expectations of the teacher and even parents of the learner. This is important for my study as learners in my intervention (like so many other additional language learners) can read; the real challenge lies in them understanding what they are reading.

According to Pretorius and Ribbons (2005:139) reading includes decoding and comprehension. Decoding, is the more technical aspects of reading activity where written symbols are translated into language. Stanovich (1986) as cited by Pretorius & Ribbons (2005;139) states that alphabetic skills and phonemic awareness lead to the increasing automaticity of word identification skills on which accurate and fluent decoding is based. Knowing the letters of the alphabet and their different sounds is essential for accurate decoding. This approach to reading is bottom-up. Comprehension refers to the overall understanding process whereby meaning is constructed within sentence units, between adjacent sentences, and across larger units of text to the meaning of the text as a whole (Graves, Juel & Graves, 1998). Casanave (1988:283) states that successful reading comprehension depends not only on the readers’ ability to access appropriate content and formal schemata, but that it also depends on their ability to
monitor what they understand. She is also of the opinion that instruction in reading should simultaneously (to teaching reading) attempt to address comprehension. Reading can be said to be effective if,

- the reader is able to read for meaning.
- reads to remember content (studying).
- reads for language learning (decoding, syntax, vocabulary, etcetera).

It also involves interpretive skills; the ability to perceive author intention, awareness of theme, characterisation (not always applicable) and the use of language to create specific effects (Graves, Juel & Graves 1998). Interpretive skills refer to the reader’s ability to ‘read between the lines’ and not just to interpret the text at surface level. For successful comprehension the reader will try to assess the author’s intention. A reader reading with comprehension will also try to form a ‘bigger picture’ of the written text, by making use of schemata building to contextualise the text. Also, the language used and how language is used will be considered in order to reach a conclusion as to what type of emotion the writer wants to evoke in the reader of the text. Good readers are able to identify perspectives and positions advocated by authors.

Under ideal circumstances there tends to be different reading stages within the developmental phases a child experiences in his/her academic life. These stages are developmental and sequential (Pretorius and Ribbens, 2005). While the following section describes generalised stages/phases, not all reading will necessarily follow them.

Chall (1983) argues that reading develops over different developmental phases. Ideally, in the pre-school years, the development of emergent literacy takes place. Learners learn to construct meaning from visual cues, in contexts which are print-rich, where books are illustrated and caregivers read and process these books with the children. Generally children can speak several thousand words, but identify very few of them in print (Pretorius & Ribbons, 2005:140). Approaches taken to reading in this phase are prescriptive and basal. Prescriptive, meaning that the focus will be on letter-sound relationships and basal, implying one has big print books, giving contextual clues via
pictures. In the foundation phase (grades 1 to 3) the learners learn to read the print. They learn alphabetic principles, letter-sound relationships, recognise high frequency words and read simple texts, usually narratives containing language and thought processes within their experiential frame of reference (Pretorius & Ribbens, 2005:140). In this phase listening comprehension is more effective than reading. The decoding skills are strengthened and reading of simple language becomes more automised. In the intermediate phase (grades 4 to 9) the learners’ language knowledge and vocabulary expands and the learner starts to use reading as a tool for learning. In other words reading is done to gain more information on a specific topic/subject. They read information texts that go beyond their immediate frame of reference which builds on the knowledge they already possess, expanding their knowledge and frame of reference. Listening comprehension is mostly more effective than reading comprehension. The learner’s reading is expanded through a literature-based approach. (For example, contexts are expanded through reading short stories, etc). During the senior phase (grades 10 to 12) learners should now be able to read critically from a wide variety of texts with different viewpoints. Reading comprehension is usually better than listening comprehension for complex topics. This can be because reading is seen as a more effective form of learning. For weaker readers in this phase, listening comprehension is better than reading comprehension (Pretorius & Ribbens, 2005: 140). The developmental stages of reading are facilitated and take effect when additional language learning is developed in conjunction with the home language.

Important in the comprehension process is what the reader brings to the text (knowledge of the topic) and the ideas conveyed through the printed words in the text. Alexander and Jetton (2000) are of the opinion that the reader/learner’s general knowledge of the world and specific knowledge of the topic about which they are reading play a critical role in the comprehension process.

Therefore reading does not simply imply a decoding of sounds and letters but rather reading refers to the ability to make meaning of a text as well as to be able to offer a critique of that text. This is sometimes referred to as critical reading or critical reading
awareness (Janks, 2001). However, critical reading awareness will not be covered in this study.

2.7.1 Ways of improving reading
Research supports the importance of giving a child time for independent reading (Cooper, 1993). Independent reading enhances the learner’s reading comprehension, expands the learner’s background knowledge and accounts for one third of the learner’s vocabulary growth and promotes reading as a life-long activity.

In stressing the importance of reading, Krashen (2003:15) states that free, voluntary reading is one of the tools to facilitate BICS to help in the development of CALP. Studies on both first and second language acquisition confirm that those who read more often do better on a wide variety of tests (Stokes, Krashen & Kartchner 1998 in Krashen, 2003). Thus, it can be assumed that reading extensively and widely usually transfers into a good general knowledge and improved vocabulary (Cho & Krashen 1994 in Krashen, 2003: 16).

2.7.2 Reading instruction
Anderson and Guthrie (1999:302) are advocates of reading instruction. They believe that learning from texts is an important part of the process of learning and that when hands-on learning is combined with text based learning, learners learn more. They cite strong evidence which established that learners can be taught reading comprehension strategies and that such instruction is effective at improving the understanding of the texts which the learners read. (This was important for my research since I hoped to explicitly teach the participants of the intervention to read with understanding and to provide them with strategies to do so). By implication teachers need to explicitly teach various reading strategies. In South Africa, however, there is strong evidence that comprehension instruction does not occur in many classrooms (Pressley, 2002, pp11-27). I believe that before a teacher can attempt to facilitate comprehension instruction, reading instruction needs to have been successfully completed. South Africa is at the bottom of a literacy survey which was conducted world-wide (PIRLS 2006, as cited by Carte Blanche on
Sunday, 6 April 2006). This is concerning as those learners assessed are currently in grade 8 and these are the very people who will become the future leaders of our country.

**2.7.3 Reading perspectives**

In South Africa reading issues seem to be overridden by symptomatic language issues. Pretorius and Ribbons (2005:145) state that there is a tendency among many teachers to assume that reading in English is dependent on proficiency in the language. They argue that the assumption that learners will become better readers if their language improves, needs to be challenged. It can be argued that it is in accordance with the theory that BICS does not necessarily lead to CALP. People can acquire a language by being exposed to it extensively, but this does not necessarily imply that they will be able to read the language nor that they will be able to construct meaning from a variety of texts written in that language.

Hacquebord (1994) is of the opinion that improving language proficiency does not readily improve reading skills if learners do not already have reading skills in place. This builds on the evidence cited by Pressley (2002), in that comprehension is something that should be explicitly instructed alongside reading. Studies by Elley (1991) and Krashen (1993) further support the notion that language and cognitive skills develop through reading.

Teaching additional language learners to read in South Africa should be done in accordance with Cummins’ psycholinguistic theory which states that

> If academic development of minority students is the goal, the students must be encouraged to acquire a conceptual foundation in their mother tongue to facilitate the acquisition of English academic skills. Also, academic skills both in the first and additional languages should be promoted by providing opportunities for students to use written and oral language (reading) actively for meaningful communication.
There is little evidence of this happening in South Africa where additional language learners lack a conceptual foundation in their mother tongue, as parents opt for the ‘straight-for-English’ option (De Klerk 2000), leaving the learner with little to no foundation in their mother tongue to facilitate the acquisition of the additional language.

2.7.4 Reading reality in South Africa

First language learners (Afrikaans or English medium learners) in South Africa find it less difficult to master academic content at school compared to their additional language learner counterparts (the other nine African languages), who have the three-fold objective of mastering academic content at school and also learning and understanding the language of instruction at school. Not only is the chosen first language for these additional language learners English, (which is sometimes not even a second or third language to them but rather a foreign language) they also have to learn and understand the language first and then use the very same language (be it a second or foreign language) to learn and understand academic content subjects.

Reading, in the South African context is one of the most neglected learning activities (Pretorius and Ribbens, 2000), which is exacerbated by the multi-lingual reality of most teaching and learning contexts. Resources (or lack thereof) also play a pivotal role. Even if schools have plenty of books on display it means little to nothing in motivating the learner to read. Additional English language learners are mostly from communities where historically the written (European culture) is not as valued as the spoken (African-/Xhosa culture) by their parents, grandparents and elders who are their primary caregivers/teachers. So, most of these learners lack a culture of reading and this in itself hampers the educational prospects of such a learner. Lack of resources at home coupled with poverty and illness lead to many learners living in a print-poor environment, where there is neither an opportunity or inclination to read given the necessity to focus on other priorities such as food and employment. There are numerous research projects working on improving reading in the mother tongue at home (PRAESA). However, this is not the focus of the research.
Given the aforementioned contexts, it is understandable why many South African non-mother tongue learners of English have reading and comprehension difficulties. These learners experience decoding problems, as they might know the alphabet but do not necessarily know that these letters/one letter can represent many different sounds (phonemic awareness). This causes them to see a word/sound/letter, but this does not enable them to verbalize what they see. Their letters are not successfully decoded to form words. This lack of reading ability hampers comprehension. Reading, being a product of both decoding and comprehension, implies that if additional language learners understand the word, it could help them to read it.

Research has indicated that despite reading difficulties and poor reading contexts, interventions can be constructed to improve the situation.

2.8 AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE.
A case study of intervention techniques that might be relevant to my intended intervention programme

Rubenstein-Avila (2003/2004: 290) categorizes struggling readers into 3 categories:

1. Learners who spend so much energy on decoding printed words that they fail to derive any meaning.
2. Learners who can understand what is being read to them in spite of their limited word recognition skills.
3. Learners who are able to decode sentences, but fail to activate their schemata and thus do not interact with the text to ‘make meaning, expand on them, or provide a critique or even a summary.’

The traditional approach to remedying the struggling readers ‘deficit’ in literacy skills is to teach the basics through skill-based instruction (Gee 2004; Johannessen, 2004). This approach is based on some reports advocating that learners should improve their basic skills first in order for comprehension to take place naturally. In other words, for comprehension to take place learners must understand the sound-symbol relationship, become fluent decoders and develop fluency. However, reading for understanding is much more complicated than being able to decode text quickly (Cohen, 2007: 165).
Cohen undertook a case study with a struggling reader who was classified as struggling for the following reasons:

1. He had not learned to read strategically (Weaver, 2002 as cited in Cohen, 2007). He did not use context to establish a word’s meaning to assist him in reading.
2. He found no purpose for reading except because a teacher told him to do so (Krashen, 1993).
3. He failed the previous year’s English class.
4. He did not read for meaning (Rubenstein-Avila, 2003/2004). This assessment was based on the fact that the reader only decoded first and second-reads of a passage.

Cohen (2007:168) states that the 17 year old reader appeared to speak English fluently, but was reading with frequent hesitation, was writing with grammatical errors common for English Language Learners and had a limited vocabulary. This learner did not like to read, write or speak (in) English. A component of Cohen’s intervention involved working on reading or writing skills/strategies. Lessons were based on needs determined by assessments. The learner’s strength in reading was decoding and his weakness, making meaning. Cohen assessed that he needed to help him to create images in his mind of what he was reading in an attempt to ameliorate this weakness. Gambrell (1982) did research on mental imagery and confirmed that learners may need to be prompted repeatedly to focus on their mental images, or to create a ‘television in the mind’, as a way to monitor comprehension. Here, ‘think-alouds’ (Wilhelm, 2001) are helpful to demonstrate that one is creating a picture in one’s mind as one is reading. Cohen (2007:169) had the learner make use of connections with the text, text-to-self (personal), text-to-text and text-to-world. The learner also used sustained silent reading (high-interest, low reading levels) which created in him an enjoyment and understanding of reading. Then the learner did a Biography research project about a person of his choice, using a K (what I know), W (what I want to know), L (what I have learned) chart. This chart facilitates the learner to read up more and continuously about the person of his choice.
2.9 SIMILAR STUDIES CONDUCTED IN SOUTH AFRICA

2.9.1 The Molteno Project

The project started in 1974, at Rhodes University as an extensive evaluation of English teaching in primary schools where African languages are spoken. An investigation conducted revealed that learners were failing to read in English largely because they were failing to learn to read in their mother tongue. A highly successful British programme ‘Breakthrough to Literacy’ was initially developed in isiXhosa and piloted in the former Transkei. Success in the application of ‘Breakthrough’ was experienced in some 30 (thirty) schools with Grade 1 learners learning to read and write freely before the end of the first year of school. One thing that became very clear to the Molteno Project Board at the outset of the pilot programme was that teachers needed to be thoroughly trained to implement ‘Breakthrough’ effectively.

What was ‘Breakthrough to Literacy’?

‘Breakthrough to Literacy’ was a mother tongue literacy course for the first 3(three) years of schooling, based on a learner-centred and language experience approach. It systematised the Language Experience Approach to the mother tongue enliteration process, using the oral/aural skills the child brought from the home into the classroom as the basis for learning to read and write. ‘Breakthrough’ is now available in all official South African languages. It has been extensively evaluated and found to be unmatched as a mother tongue literacy course for both children and adults. With regard to language, teachers trained and utilising ‘Breakthrough’ competently combine phonics, look-and-say and Whole language methodologies to result in a Balanced approach to Literacy teaching and learning. One of the main features of the programme is while it integrates language skills, it also highlights reading and writing development. Both skills have been traditionally neglected. The former is vital for the creation of a culture of learning. The latter is central for assessment purposes and in the working world. (http://www.The Molteno Project.co.za :accessed June 2008).
2.9.2 *The Home Language Project (HLP)*

The HLP’s mission statement is to promote the ongoing learning and use of the African languages along with languages for international communication so that children can maintain their own language roots and use of their own language as a resource for learning as well as develop global communication links. It works with and through home languages in the contexts of a parallel need for proficiency in English (or any other international language). It is concerned with addressing African economic and social development at its roots. It represents a collaborative effort by a group of historically advantaged state schools to address a critical aspect of disadvantage in education, not just for the sake of their own learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, but for the sake of all learners from multilingual situations, particularly those in schools which lack the resources to experiment. It treats all indigenous languages in the same way. It was started 2001 by the School Governing Body (SGBs) of 6 English medium state schools. It teaches reading and writing in all indigenous African languages and provides a library of ‘reading for pleasure’ books in all these languages. It allows all other official languages to be used alongside English in the same classroom and it offers in-service educator training in the application of its models. It was initiated by parents and aims to support the child’s own language alongside English and to use it as a resource for teaching and learning instead of ignoring it. This project has been providing direct assistance to approximately 600 learners per year since 2001. Most of these learners come from Soweto, Alexandria and Hillbrow in Johannesburg (http://www.The Home Language Project.co.za: accessed in June 2008).

2.9.3 *READ’s New Heights Home Language Core Reading Programme*

The use and training of home language materials were piloted in 100 Eastern Cape primary schools in 2006. Evaluation findings, as evaluated by Murray and JET education suggest that the READ programme is having a positive effect on schools who are exposed to this intervention.
**READ’s home language materials and methodologies:**

Materials are written in Zulu and Xhosa and READ subscribes to the fact that it is better to learn to read in the home language. Materials are aligned to the NCS (National Curriculum Statement) as learners have the opportunity to read real books and work with phonics. They have opportunities to read, write and develop vocabulary. The READ course is well-structured. It is coherent and educationally sound and easy for teachers to grasp. It makes use of high quality graded materials which support literacy development, via Storybooks, Big books and Teachers’ Guides. Materials are motivational. Tasks are set out at an appropriate level of challenge and scaffolding is provided where necessary. READ materials encourage learners to value literacy and to develop a positive self-concept. It enables learners to develop a sense of self-efficacy with regard to reading, writing and vocabulary. It also enables learners to get into a ‘positive feedback loop’ (www.READ’s New Heights Home Language Core Reading Programme.co.za: accessed June 2008).

### 2.10 AN OVERVIEW OF READING AND COMPREHENSION RECOVERY PROGRAMMES.

#### 2.10.1 Reading Recovery

Reading Recovery (RR) originates from New Zealand and was designed to detect learners who were behind in their academic careers early. The recovery approach is preventative in nature (D’Agostino, 2004:23). Assumptions underlying RR are that: reading is a social activity, as it should take place in a low-anxiety context and should be an enjoyable experience (Krashen 2003:15). It is more than the behaviour of reading words as this merely indicates automisation and not necessarily understanding. Children begin to read by attending to various facets of printed texts e.g. in the beginning to read stage, children pay more attention to the visual stimulation (pictures) accompanying the written text. Also, in this stage large print texts are more engaging to these readers. Those tasks children must pay close attention to when they are learning to read gradually require less attention as they become more proficient learners (Clay, 1993). In other words, the more a child reads, the more automised it becomes and one should bear in
mind that comprehension can only effectively occur if decoding has been mastered. (Oakhill & Cain, 1998).

Reading Recovery combines extensive teacher education with an emphasis on the development of phonological awareness and the use of contextual information to assist reading. Teachers make moment-to-moment decisions to support the child’s learning. During each lesson, the child reads many little books, 2-3 books that they have interacted with previously (a reading of the previous day’s book and the introduction and reading of a new story). The child’s independence and reading behaviour is assessed on the reading of the previous day’s book. Additionally, books become more challenging as learners progress with support from the teacher. It is proposed that magnetic alphabetic letters be used for sorting, visual discrimination and word analysis. Specially trained RR teachers learn to observe, analyze and interpret the reading and writing behaviours of individual learners and to design and implement an individual programme to meet each learner’s needs. Rumbaugh and Brown (2000: 13-30) found that learners who underwent a recovery programme improve self-concepts due to enhanced feelings of importance. They are also most likely to become independent readers, more confident, positive, self-accepting, proud, adaptable and eager to complete tasks.

The participants of my study have exited the foundation phase of their learning and therefore my intervention cannot claim to be preventative in nature, but rather facilitative in the sense that learners are in the intermediate phase of their education.

RR assumes that reading is a social activity. What I used from this programme is that I tried to make reading an activity that took place in a low anxiety context, making it sociable and interactive. My intervention also concentrated on decoding, as I regard it as a pre-requisite for comprehension. Therefore, I incorporated spelling tests in my intervention. The intervention was conducted with a group yet I tried to address individual needs during the intervention. My intervention was loosely structured, as I attempted to meet the needs of individual participants as they arose. I used alphabetic words to facilitate the construction of sentences.
2.10.2 Pause, Praise, Prompt

In addition to selecting aspects from RR, I will also draw on McNaughton, Glynn & Robinson’s (1981) Pause, Prompt, Praise (PPP) as an intervention programme. This intervention places the essence on involving parents in overcoming children’s difficulties in reading.

The rationale for the latter as cited by McNaughton, Glynn and Robinson (1981:4) are:

- Insufficiently trained teachers
- The right of parents to take part in their children’s schooling
- Research suggesting that early educational initiatives where parents were trained to teach children who had fallen behind could produce lasting effects.

The aim of PPP is ‘to provide support for older low progress readers’ without encouraging overdependence on a more competent other (Glynn, 1985:181). Its initial sample population were 10-12 year olds who experienced reading difficulty. PPP has also lead to a greater significance of cultural contexts for children’s learning. Procedures in PPP are designed to take into account 3 basic learning principles, namely: the opportunity to read meaningful texts, the difficulty level of texts and the need for individualised instruction (McNaughton et al,1981:11). Positive feedback should follow successful attempts at reading text, whereby tutors should praise students in order to reinforce desired reading behaviour. During my intervention I made use of this technique, for responses or attempts made to respond from my participants. It should be remembered that the consequences of mistakes also influence learning. Therefore, tutors have to pause to think about the nature of the mistake and allow for learners to self-correct, and prompt to offer appropriate cues for unfamiliar words.

The relevance and applicability of some aspects of PPP to the intervention proposed by my research are exactly the rationale on which the programme is based. In South Africa, we have many insufficiently trained additive multilingual teachers. Some of the underlying principles of PPP were part of my intervention techniques.
Constraints relevant to PPP in the South African context are time and the parents’ level of education. Most parents are either too busy working (e.g. middle class), or unemployment makes them demoralised and inactive in their children’s education. Some parents might be limited to no education, implying little to no proficiency in English to enable them to constructively help their children in acquiring reading skills. PPP is suited to the context of this research as it focuses on older- low-progress learners. Due to the time limitation of my intervention, parents were not involved with the intervention. I did however, converse with the parents of the intervention participants and explained the purpose of the intervention to them. No parent felt that his/her child should not be part of the intervention and some asked me to contact them when homework was given, as they would want to help their children where they could.

2.10.3 Free, Voluntary Reading

Krashen (2003:15) proposes free voluntary reading as an effective way of increasing literacy and language development and reading comprehension, vocabulary, grammar and writing. He sees it as an important part of the solution to make the transition from ‘conversational’ language ability (BICS) to ‘academic’ language ability (CALP). Studies in both second- and foreign language acquisition confirm that those who read more do better on a wide variety of tests. Elley’s research in South Africa and Sri Lanka (as cited in Krashen 2003, 19) revealed that children who were encouraged to read for pleasure outperformed traditionally taught learners on standardised tests of reading comprehension and other measures of literacy. In South Africa, English Additional Language learners who lived in print-poor environments were given access to sets of high-interest books, which were placed in their classrooms. The books were used for read-alouds by the teacher, for shared reading and for silent reading. In every case the research results show these learners out-performing those in comparison classes and the gap widened with each year of reading. Conclusions made by Elly were substantiated by research done by Mason and Krashen (1997) and Lao and Krashen (2000) as mentioned in Krashen (2003). Lee and Krashen (1997) propose that those who read more have less ‘writing apprehension’ because of their superior command of the written language (Krashen, 2003:23). Free reading is also an excellent source of knowledge: those who read more,
know more (Stanovich, West and Harrison, 1995). Krashen (2003, 24) suggests that we motivate learners to read by giving them access to plenty of interesting and comprehensible reading material and also to provide them with time to read.

I embrace this approach put forward by Krashen, especially in light of the South African Education Department which has made reading core in creating a culture of reading and learning. This, once again, underlines the view held by Pretorius and Ribbens (2005:145) that the central issue in South African classrooms should not be learning, but rather reading as reading is a pre-requisite for learning. The general assumption made when learners fail is that they cannot learn, but learning cannot take place when learners can not read. Therefore, I tried to inculcate a love for reading and wanted the participants of the intervention to understand the purpose of reading in achieving academic success. I spoke to the principal of the school where my intervention took place about the importance of reading and it was not an idea I had to sell to him. He informed me that he and his staff have come to realise this fact and that they are therefore having a 45 (forty-five) minute reading period three times a week, but he admitted that not all the teachers on his staff used the periods for their intended purpose.

After the brief overview of reading recovery programmes (from which I drew on some characteristics for my intervention), I now turn to the test I used in selecting my participants.

2.11 THE BASELINE ASSESSMENT TEST

Before the intervention, I administered a test designed by Lilly Pretorius (Literacy Department of UNISA). I decided on using this test as the South African Education Department has no standardized test(s) to assess language and comprehension. The test seemed appropriate to test the language comprehension of grade 8 learners, as Lilly Pretorius designed the test to specifically assess the comprehension skills of grade 8 learners. Permission was obtained from Lilly Pretorius to use her assessment. The intervention was guided by the outcomes of a baseline assessment test that was written by the whole Grade 8F class. I instructed the 38 learners in the class to indicate in the right-
hand side of the question paper (on which they wrote the answers) which language they speak at home.

- 8 of them indicated that they converse in English at home,
- 18 indicated that they converse in Afrikaans at home and
- 12 indicated that they converse in Xhosa at home.

This was done to establish which of these learners, by own admission, were mother tongue and non mother tongue learners.

The purpose of administering a baseline test was to ascertain the actual reading and comprehension levels of all the grade 8 learners and then to select the weakest performers and to invite them to attend the intervention. I used the results to direct my intervention activities. Evaluation of the test and results was done twice: First, for baseline assessment and then again for summative assessment (to see if there was any development after the given intervention).

2.12 AN ECLECTIC APPROACH

Having reviewed all of the afore-mentioned interventions, I selected aspects of what had worked and adapted them to meet the assessment and intervention needs of my particular participants. As with Reading Recovery and Cohen, I made moment-to-moment decisions to support the individual learners’ learning. Thus, my intervention was eclectic in terms of strategy and approach. The intervention is presented in chapter 4.

2.13 CONCLUSION

After having reviewed the above literature with regard to the research question, I now describe the research methodology and techniques used to obtain data during the intervention.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodology employed in this research as well as the selected methods used to generate data. Also included in this chapter is a description of the intervention I designed.

3.1 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

3.1.1 A mixed-method approach

While this research is predominantly qualitative in nature, I do make use of some quantitative approaches in analyzing test and examination results. In administering the baseline test, I draw on some quantitative aspects. These results are reflected in percentages given and I use these percentages later on (post-intervention assessment) to assess whether those learners who participated in the intervention have made any improvement(s). I am making use of such an approach as I believe it gives me a clear indication of ‘before’ and ‘after’ the intervention. As the purpose of the intervention is not to look at the product (results so much), but rather at the processes involved, the approach is more qualitative in nature.

3.1.2 Qualitative in nature

Denzin and Lincoln (1994:2) state that ‘qualitative research is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach in its subject matter’. A naturalistic approach means that I interacted with my participants and observed them in their day-to-day context. The qualitative approach is subjective, based on knowledge and practices as experienced in the multiple realities lived by participants in their everyday lives. The research did not seek to verify an ‘ultimate truth’ but rather sought to understand the multiple truths that it believes reality consists of (Schumacher & McMillan, 1993:373).

In this type of research, I am the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Creswell, 1994:145; Cohen & Manion, 1994:37). A characteristic of the methodology used in qualitative research is that smaller sample numbers are used. Typical data gathering methods include participant observations, in-depth interviews, group interviews.
and documentation collection. Within a qualitative design the researcher states his/her worldview upfront (Mertens, 1998:8). I strived to be flexible and always open to change. I had no pre-conceived ideas of where the research would lead or on what the effects of the intervention would be, but had clearly defined objectives and goals (De Vos, et al., 2002:357).

My design was emergent in nature (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Cohen & Manion, 1994:37) in that data was constructed or generated based on the sample population’s perceptions and experiences and as the need arose, methods were added. The design was flexible and guided by the interaction(s) of the sample population and their different realities. The methodological implication of an emergent design is that research questions cannot be definitely established before the research begins; rather, they will evolve and change as the study progresses (Schumacher & McMillan, 1993:91; Mertens, 1998:15).

The focal point of my research was to understand challenges faced by additional language learners in reading English and to design an intervention to work towards assisting a selected group of grade 8 learners to develop strategies to improve their reading and understanding. I made use of multiple data collection methods that included observations, interviews and document reviews.

3.2 UNDERPINNING PHILOSOPHY

This research is guided by an interpretive philosophy, but ultimately seeks to be transformative. My aim was to learn from a phenomenon, while also attempting to initiate change in terms of it. Transformative research focuses on generating new ideas and also works to ‘transform’ or improve. (Rivet, Calabrese Barton, Groome & Suh, 2003: 1). Because it is situated in the nexus between knowing and doing, it provides for an action orientation (Rivet, et al., 2003:2). Rather than doing research ‘on’ the teachers and students, I was conducting research ‘with’ them (Rodriquez, 2001) to build a collaborative partnership that was focused not only on learning new information, but also on transforming the current situation (Rivet, et al., 2003:4).
I initially drew on characteristics, methods and techniques involved with action research, while following an interventionist strategy. The latter seeks to understand a particular phenomenon, while attempting to use this understanding in guiding it to take action about this emerging knowledge. This action is change-orientated and seeks to bring about change that has positive social value, such as improved educational practices (Zuber-Skerritt 1996, as cited by Beylefeld, 2005:1321).

3.3 CASE STUDY OF SELECTED LEARNERS IN SCHOOL

A case study approach was used, as Stake (1995) states that ‘case study researchers may focus on a program, event or activity involving individuals rather than a group per se’. At the end of this intervention I wanted to establish the effects of the intervention on individual learners who participated. According to Stake (2000) in Creswell (2002:485) the bilingual school falls under one of the types of qualitative case studies.

3.4 ACTION RESEARCH

3.4.1 Weaknesses of action research

Action research has become one of the most advocated and used methodologies. This being the case does not imply that the methodology has no drawbacks. Reason and Rowan (1981) in McNiff (1992:7) argue that action research ‘is softer, more feminine in its approach. The validity of the approach lies in the skills of the enquirer…’ Therefore, it is important that the researcher is accurate in documenting the data generating processes and the analysis there of, so as to ensure validity. Another shortcoming is that general conclusions cannot be made from action research case studies conducted in specific contexts. Waters-Adams (2006:3) argues that educational research through action research does not produce understanding that has universal truth…action research can produce generalisations about practice, but such generalisations are only part of a wider search for understanding.

My research intervention takes place in a specific context and it cannot therefore be assumed to have the same effects in another context. However, in keeping with the nature of qualitative research, a deeper understanding of a context can be obtained.
Therefore, findings of this research cannot be generalized but can be used as a guide for the same type of intervention done in a similar context.

3.4.2 Aspects of action research

McKernan (1996:15) identifies three types of action research, namely scientific, practical deliberative and critical emancipatory. The scientific puts emphasis on measurement and control; the practical deliberative focuses on human interpretation and detailed description; critical emancipatory seeks to organise action to overcome social and psychological constraints. Practical deliberative responds to the immediate situation that may be problematic and emphasises the process rather than the outcome. According to Zuber-Skerritt (1996:85) the critical emancipatory ‘aims at changing the system itself or those conditions which impede desired improvement in the organisation’.

Both practical deliberative and critical emancipatory are relevant to my research, as my research attempted to understand the problematic processes involved for a learner receiving education in his/her non mother tongue and my intervention sought to provide strategies to assist learners to become more effective readers. The goal of emancipatory action research is the empowerment of participants and the building of their self-confidence (Zuber-Skerritt, 1996: 84-85), which is part of what I wanted to achieve with my intervention. As I do not teach English at the school where I conducted my research, my research could not claim to be action research as I was not reflecting on my own practices.

Action research is multi-focused, focusing on both the development of knowledge through research and intervention (being action) taken to deal with the occurrence of a particular phenomenon (Cohen & Manion, 1994:186). Also, it involves a close examination of the effects of such intervention and reflection on whether this intervention dealt effectively with the problem. If not, other possible intervention strategies need to be considered. Thus, action research is cyclical in nature, resulting in a mutually advantageous outcome for the participants, and a better understanding of the research problem, as well as producing possible ways of addressing and improving the problem.
I saw my role as that of a change agent, who embraces the concerns of people who are challenged.

Having clarified which aspects of action research I used, I now continue with a discussion on a practical approach.

3.5 A PRACTICAL APPROACH
My collaboration with the school and teachers can be referred to as ‘process consultancy’ (Carr & Kemmis, 1986: 203). According to them a collaborative intervention takes place between the practitioner(s)/teacher(s) and (an) outside person(s) who assumes the role of researcher, facilitator, tutor or mentor. My role was to advise the practitioner/teacher while we participated in the process of planning, implementation, observation, reflection, evaluation and renewed planning on teaching and learning practices. Carr and Kemmis (1986:203) state that with this type of research the participants monitor their own educational practices with the immediate aim of developing their own ability to make judgements. The proposed intervention of my research was guided by theory, which I accumulated as a researcher, and by practice of both the teacher(s) and learners involved.

3.6 THE RESEARCH PROCESS
The process of my research involved the following:
Step 1: Identify a concern
Poor reading skills and understanding among secondary school learners.
Step 2: Gather data on the concern.
Tested and identified particular areas of reading problems that needed to be addressed. From these results participants were selected.

Step 3: Develop possible intervention(s) and implement them.
This is where my strategy shifted slightly from Action Research, overlapping with Interventionist Research. My intervention was developed on theory and the purpose of my intervention was to support and not substitute existing teacher
practices. The main purpose of my intervention was to provide the participants with reading strategies based on theory of reading improvement. These strategies were developed from an eclectic combination of the following theories:

- **Reading Recovery** (developed by Dame Professor Marie Clay, New Zealand, 1979).
- **Praise, Pause, Prompt** (McNaughton, Glynn, Robinson and Quinn, New Zealand, 1979).
- **KWL** (what I know, what I need to know, what I have learnt) (Ogle, 1986)
- **Engaging them in free, voluntary reading** (Stephen D. Krashen, 2003).
- **Comprehension monitoring strategies** (Baker, 2002; Klinger, Vaughn, & Schumm, 1998; NICHD, 2000; C.E. Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998).

### 3.7 RESEARCH SITE

I selected my research site because I knew that there are additional language learners at this school and I had existing ties with the school, as I completed my high school qualification and also taught at the school.

The school uses a dual-medium: learners are instructed in either English or Afrikaans. The medium is selected by the learners and/or their parents. With regard to discipline and performance this school is deemed better than others in the Western areas. The culture of teaching and learning is perceived to be better at this school than at other Western areas schools. I have named this school ‘Roots’.

Roots qualifies as a promenading school (Gultig, Ndhlovu, Betram, 2007), as it is a school which is well-known for its previous successes. Based on the latter, the school draws academically strong learners. It has a stable staff, where most of the staff have been at the school for more than twelve years (one has been at the school for 39 years).

In terms of management there is a definite hierarchy, where certain roles are associated with certain teachers and teachers are clear about their workload responsibilities. The management of the school is male-dominated. The school was built in 1964, with a

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1 In this instance, ‘Western areas’ refers to previously disadvantaged ‘coloured’ communities.
capacity to school 650 learners. It currently has 1330 learners. Initially the school had mostly ‘coloured’ learners, but this has changed after 1994 and currently the school has approximately 50% black learners. Most of these black learners or their parents were born and attended school in a black township. Some of these learners and their parents now stay in the previously ‘whites only’ suburbs.

As I completed matric at this school in 1994 and taught there, I knew it had an ‘English class’ which basically consists of predominantly black learners, who are instructed through the medium of English. On asking permission to do my research at this school from the principal, I was informed that the class to use for my intervention was the grade 8Fs.

3.8 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS
My participants for the intervention were grade 8 learners who learn through English but who have a different home language. I made use of purposive sampling. I used 12 such learners (based on a baseline test (Appendix A) the whole class wrote). According to Singleton, Straits, Straits & McAllister (1988:153) this type of sample is entirely based on the judgement of the researcher, in that the sample is composed of elements that contain the most characteristics representative of typical attributes of the population. At the school where I conducted the research, they follow a 10 day cycle and I had Fridays to do my research. For 6 weeks (April 18&25, May 9, 16, 23 & 30) I met with the participants on Fridays during their English period, which usually was from 9h00 until 10h00 in the school staffroom.

3.9 ETHICAL MEASURES
I obtained the principal’s permission to use the school for this study. I described the nature of my study to him and highlighted the purpose of it. The principal immediately agreed because, according to him, teachers and learners at his school could only gain from the knowledge from this study. I then presented the principal with a time and content outline of my planned intervention.
I went to the class which was identified for my research and explained to them the nature and purpose of my proposed research. I handed out consent forms to be signed to the whole class from which my participants were to be selected. I communicated on three occasions to the class that even if all of them filled in the consent forms and all of them wrote the baseline assessment test, only some of them would be selected to be part of the intervention. Two parents refused permission for their children to be part of the selection, but gave permission for these learners to be part of the baseline assessment.\(^2\)

Learners were also informed that participation in the intervention was voluntary and that if they were selected to be part of the intervention, they could withdraw at any stage. All ethics forms and data can be seen as appendices (see forms D/496/05, D/497/05 and the form designed by the Faculty of Education: NMMU).

### 3.10 DATA GATHERING TECHNIQUES

#### 3.10.1 Secondary data

Johnson and Christensen (2004:192) define secondary data as existing data or readily available data. This type of data is usually collected, recorded or left behind at an earlier time, usually by a different person from the current researcher and often for an entirely different purpose. It is used for corroboration and includes personal documents (journals entries), official documents, physical data and archived research data. In my research I made use of official documents (March school reports). The purpose was to corroborate whether there was any difference in English subject and content subject results after the intervention. I drew a comparison between the March results (prior intervention) and the June results (after intervention) to see if there were any significant differences in the two sets of English results. These results will be analyzed and discussed in chapter 4.

#### 3.10.2 Observations

Murray-Thomas (2003:60) defines observation as gathering information by means of watching and/or listening to events, then recording occurrences. Observations can be direct, where the researcher immediately sees or hears what is happening or they can be

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\(^2\) The learner who fared weakest in the baseline assessment, was also one of two learners whose parents refused selection for intervention.
mediated, when the researcher hears/sees a reproduction of an earlier event. Observations can be directed by the questions the researcher is attempting to answer. Questions guiding the observer’s attention can range from the very general to the very specific. However, one should guard against seeing what one wants to see. Advantages associated with direct observations (Murray-Thomas, 2003:62) are that it requires no special equipment and it is amenable to different contexts. Murray-Thomas also states that an accurate record of what occurred is often difficult for the observer to produce.

3.10.2.1 What I observed

In my intervention I observed the participants when they sat in groups throughout the intervention and then I recorded what I observed. I divided my participants into four groups and asked each group informal questions. My purpose was to ascertain the learners’ level of interaction with the content at hand.

During the six weeks of the intervention, I observed general things like the participants’ interaction with content, strategies they used to make content meaningful, their interaction with each other. I conducted classroom observations so that I could see the participants’ classroom confidence, how comfortable they were to ask the teacher/myself/their classmates when they were not sure about instructions given. I also observed habits, such as use of dictionaries.

3.10.3 Interviews

Johnson and Christensen (2004:178) see an interview as an interpersonal encounter, where the interviewer has to establish rapport with the interviewee and the interviewer must be impartial to the responses of the interviewee. The interviewer must try to limit biased research data by obtaining the trust of the interviewee(s) by explaining why the research is done. Also, in establishing this trust, the interviewer should point out that the responses are anonymous and confidential. The type of interview I used was the informal conversational interview (Johnson and Christensen, 2004:181). With this type of interview questions emerge from the immediate context and are asked in the natural course of events. There is no pre-determination of question topics or wording.
Advantages of this type of interview are that they increase the salience and relevance of questions because they emerge and observations can occur. Also, they can be matched to individual circumstances.

I used face-to-face and one-on-one interviews with my participants. During the intervention I would informally and in a conversational manner ask my participants some questions. This was done to establish if participants felt confident sharing their personal knowledge. I used general questions with the purpose of establishing a rapport between the participants and myself and of getting to know them better and giving them opportunities to speak English for a real purpose. Examples of such questions would be:

- ‘Tell me more about yourself.’
- ‘What do you dream of becoming one day?’
- ‘Tell me more about your family.’

3.10.4 Reflective journals

Participants were asked to write journal entries after each session. Williams and Wessel (2004) state the purpose of reflective journals is to deepen students’ understanding of experiences and to foster thinking skills that actively engage them in learning. It should be noted that most of the time when participants were asked to reflect on a particular activity or to answer questions, they were asked to do so in their journals. After some sessions journals were left with me and I made copies of their notes. These notes were then used as data. Spalding and Wilson (2002) indicate the following benefits of journalling:

[Journals] serving as a permanent record of thoughts and experiences;
providing a means of establishing and maintaining relationships with instructors, serving as a safe outlet for personal concerns and frustrations;
and, as an aid to internal dialogue (p.1396).

I believe that participants saw their journal writing as a safe outlet, as they made personal comments. The journal entries contributed to the accumulation of data pertaining the affective results of the intervention.
Having provided the reader with the methods used to generate the data, I now briefly discuss the trustworthiness of the research design.

### 3.11 Strategies Used to Ensure Trustworthiness

Guba and Lincoln (1989) equate credibility with internal validity, transferability with external validity, dependability with reliability, and confirmability with objectivity. In qualitative research, credibility refers to a correspondence between the way the respondents actually perceive social constructs and the way the researcher portrays their viewpoints (Mertens, 1998: 80). In ensuring the credibility of my research, I made use of peer debriefing. My supervisor posed searching questions to help me confront my own values and to guide the next steps in my study. Also, progressive subjectivity was evident in my research in that I monitored my own developing constructions and documented the process of change from the beginning of the study until the end. Initially, when I started with the formulation of my research question, I did not believe in or allow the practice of learners discussing (in class) that which they struggle to comprehend, in their mother tongue. I have undergone a complete mind-shift with regard to this. I also made use of member checks, which is listed as the most important criteria for establishing credibility (Mertens, 1998:182). This criterion required of me to verify with my participants the constructions that developed as a result of data collected and analyzed. At the end of my intervention I asked my participants if they agreed with the data generated and findings I came across in working with them. It should however be mentioned that agreeability needs to be seen within the context of power relations; they would tend to want to agree with me as I was seen as a teacher figure. Transferability was ensured by giving a thick description (the contextualization of the school). Dependability refers to the stability of my research (and findings) over time. Because my design was emergent in nature, change was expected, and documented. Confirmability implies that the influence of my judgment should be minimized. An attempt was made to be objective, but it should be noted that this was very challenging as the nature of my research question arose because of my personal involvement with non mother tongue teaching and learning. I believe that using member checks aided me to ensure this, as I had to confirm my interpretations with the participants.
3.11 DATA ANALYSIS

I used thematic analysis for the journal entries and notes on observations of the participants during the intervention as well as the interviews I conducted with them. ‘Thematic analysis is a process for encoding qualitative information’ (Boyatzis, 1998: vi). It requires one to identify themes or patterns found in information. Boyatzis (1998) argues that a good theme is able to capture the qualitative richness of a phenomenon. Thematic analysis complements the more quantitative analysis that was provided by the test and subject results of the participants.

3.13 TRIANGULATION OF DATA

During the intervention I continuously recorded, analyzed and reflected on data collected on key issues identified. Triangulation was ensured when two mediA, my supervisor (as critical observer) and I recorded data on some of the interventions. To make sure that all the participants, the critical observer and the researcher shared interpretations, conversations were facilitated in which observations, criticisms and confirmations of those concerned were discussed. Another effort to facilitate triangulation was that the same test was used for the baseline assessment and post-intervention assessment. The function of this was not to necessarily see if the intervention made any quantitative improvements (individual marks), but to see if the intervention created a better understanding for the participants of the intervention. Further triangulation of this was facilitated by having the English class teacher reflect on the learning practices of the participants before and after the intervention. Also, the general performance of the participants compared to the rest of the class was examined after the intervention.
3.14 THE INTERVENTION

3.14.1 Administering the baseline/selection test.

1. Preparation for the test
   - Discussed ‘Happy feet’. (A movie (about penguins) that was recently on the circuit).
   - Schemata-building: everything they knew about penguins was written on the board.
   - Information was also obtained from them by asking them probing questions.

2. The test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Instruction</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Reference to test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading speed</td>
<td>Stop when I told them to</td>
<td>To ascertain their reading speed</td>
<td>The comprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section A</td>
<td>Encircle the correct letter</td>
<td>To test vocabulary</td>
<td>Questions 1-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section A</td>
<td>Encircle the correct letter</td>
<td>Inferential – to use evidence given and to reason</td>
<td>Questions 7-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section B</td>
<td>Fill in the missing words</td>
<td>Cloze - Draw on relation between text and phrases</td>
<td>Spaces left open (1-20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section C</td>
<td>Draw a circle around the word to which the underlined word(s) refer to</td>
<td>Anaphoric – pointing to something that was referred to.</td>
<td>13 underlined words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section D</td>
<td>Write down the meaning of</td>
<td>Word meaning</td>
<td>Questions 1-3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With regard to testing their reading speed, I have come to realize that reading speed does not by implication mean understanding. When I re-administer it for the post-intervention test, I will instruct the participants to write a short paragraph on what they have read, as reading for speed without meaning serves little purpose.

Before they individually attempted section B, I explained through the example given on the test page. We also completed examples on the board. After ascertaining that the participants knew what was expected of them, I instructed them to complete section B. Then they moved on to section C. I wrote the following sentences on the board:

‘The girl’s schoolbag is heavy. ___ is too heavy for her to carry.’ ‘When people speak of this girl they say she looks just like ___ mother.’

I got the participants to complete these sentences and had them explain to me why the given answers were the correct ones. We also examined the examples given under section C.

The purpose of section D was to establish whether participants knew the meaning of the underlined words. In marking these 3 questions, I had a problem with number 3. The memorandum does not clearly state whether one should mark for correct tense used. To me, the correct answer would have been ‘to have cried/cried’. Most of the learners wrote ‘cry’ which is not tense-correct, but I gave them the mark.

Lilly Pretorius makes it very clear that the test I used ‘only taps into comprehension’ which is exactly what I wanted to establish (see Appendix B). After getting the results of the test I began the intervention.
3.15 CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided the reader with the methodological choices made and the reasons for the choices, as well as an outline of the intervention. I will now present the chapter on data analysis and findings. This chapter will substantiate the BICS and CALP arguments as put forward in my literature review. Also, it will show that in my intervention reading was not as much of a challenge to my participants as was comprehension.
CHAPTER 4

4.1 ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Before reflecting on the analysis and findings of the intervention, I first present the results of the baseline test, followed by a discussion of how this informed the intervention. This chapter also presents the analysis and findings from the six (6) week intervention which included the observations, reflective journals and informal interviews with the participants. It discusses not only the intervention and its purposes, but also the significant affective results emerging from the intervention. The intervention was conducted on Fridays over 6 weeks (six (6) periods of fifty (50) minutes each). In total, I spent 5 (five) hours on the intervention with the participants. I start by presenting a tabulated summary of what the intervention entailed and thereafter I provide the reader with some general principles and approaches that underpinned my intervention. This will be followed by a more detailed analysis of the baseline assessment and the consequent results of the intervention.

4.2 ANALYSIS OF BASELINE TEST (CLASS)

After administering the baseline assessment, the following results were established with regard to the class average:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Vocabulary (Out of 6)</th>
<th>Inferential (Out of 6)</th>
<th>Cloze (Out of 20)</th>
<th>Anaphoric (Out of 13)</th>
<th>Meaning (Out of 3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Word speed</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>71.6%</td>
<td>63.3%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>69.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The test assessed various aspects of language knowledge. These included word speed, vocabulary, anaphoric understanding and comprehension of English. Word speed refers to the average number of words the participants read per minute. The vocabulary part of the test tested the word knowledge (knowing what the word means) of the participants. The inferential section tested how participants reach their conclusions on the basis of evidence provided. The cloze section required of the learners to draw on their innate
knowledge of English language, its structure and collocations, where prepositions follow certain verbs such as, *look into* … or *refrain from*… The anaphoric section tested their ability to refer back to something/someone and to establish whether they know what is being referred to. The meaning section tested their knowledge of the general meaning (not context-bound) of a word.

The class average reflected as follows. The vocabulary score of the class was above 71.6%. With the inferential- and close section their score was 63.3 and 54% respectively. Their anaphoric score was almost 69.2% and in the meaning section they scored below 33.3%.

### 4.2.1 Analysis of baseline test (per language group)

During our first contact session (18 April 2008) 31 learners wrote the baseline assessment test. By own description, 15 are Afrikaans home language speakers, 5 (five) English home language speakers and 11 isiXhosa home language speakers. From these test results I invited 12 learners to become part of the intervention. Coincidentally the home language group that scored the lowest was the isiXhosa home language speakers.

Broken down into performance according to home language, the results reflect the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home language</th>
<th>Word speed</th>
<th>Vocabulary %</th>
<th>Inferential %</th>
<th>Cloze %</th>
<th>Anaphoric %</th>
<th>Meaning %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
<td>153,4</td>
<td>78.3</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>73.8</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(15 learners)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>162,6</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>70.7</td>
<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5 learners)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>isiXhosa</td>
<td>148.3</td>
<td>56.6</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(11 learners)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Afrikaans home language speakers, who do English as a primary language fared better than the class average in every section. A possible explanation for this can be that these
learners are actually experiencing ‘correct’ mother tongue instruction in that their mother tongue (Afrikaans) is maintained at home and at school as a subject, and as instruction and learning of and in English does not replace Afrikaans. This practice correlates with Cummins’ CUP theory (1981) and with what the Education Department (1997)’s Additional language policy refers to.

The results of the English learners reflect that they are stronger than the rest of the class in reading speed and vocabulary. When one considers that these learners supposedly think and speak in no other language but English, one questions why they are not outperforming the Afrikaans learners. The test results seem to intimate that these learners’ BICS in English is established, as they possess the vocabulary which will enable them to have a conversation in English. However their CALPS has not been sufficiently developed as many of these ‘English’ learners do not have English as their Mother tongue.

The isiXhosa learners fare below class average in every section, except for reading speed. The findings of reading speed should be considered insignificant as the purpose of establishing their reading speed without establishing their understanding is questionable. Their general results suggest that these learners are not coping sufficiently with English as a school subject and probably even less so as the medium of instruction for their content subjects. Also, it supports my research objectives to assist additional language learners to build vocabulary in the additional language as well as meaning-making strategies.

It is clear from the analysis of the baseline assessment that additional language learners had a weakness in terms of understanding the meaning of what they read. Thus, the intervention was designed with the main focus on addressing comprehension, vocabulary acquisition and understanding for additional language learners. Having identified the isiXhosa learners as the weaker group, I set about designing the intervention. For it to be successful, the following approaches needed to underpin my intervention.
4.3 APPROACHES AND PRINCIPLES OF THE INTERVENTION

The intervention was guided by certain principles and approaches, which I will briefly outline. In all the activities I tried to

- Create a space for the participants where they felt at ease, asked questions, made mistakes and established relationships (Purkey & Stanley, 1991).
- Make extensive usage of group-work (based on Vygotski’s theory that learning is shared and should be a social experience).
- Ensure that participants drew on their own knowledge and understanding (Bradley & Bradley, 1994).
- Integrate content, therefore I included English and Natural Science. I worked with the teachers involved, sharing experiences and highlighting what transpired during the intervention.
- Validate learners’ home language, as participants were continuously encouraged to ‘talk-to-learn’ (Heugh 1995, 2003; Obanya, 2004).
- Develop meta-cognitive and reflective skills in the participants, (the use of reflective journals).
- Explicitly teach language, language structures and spelling.
- Positively reinforce good work, where participants were continuously praised for efforts made to take ownership of their learning, be it via reading, or writing something extra. (This is in line with PPP strategy).

What follows is an outline of the 6 week intervention.

4.4 INTERVENTION OUTLINE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAY</th>
<th>Purpose of task</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Texts/follow on activity</th>
<th>Findings/concerns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friday, 18 April 2008</td>
<td>Selected participants for intervention.</td>
<td>Wrote test</td>
<td>Marked tests according memo</td>
<td>isi Xhosa learners’ results weakest (4.2.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date: Friday, 25 April 2008</td>
<td>Task: Assess syntactical understanding</td>
<td>Action: Single words-build sentences. Took biographical details (verbatim)</td>
<td>Result: Discussed &amp; wrote on adaptation of giraffe/chameleon.</td>
<td>Notes: Inability to form meaningful sentence(s) (4.5.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date: Friday, 9 May 2008</td>
<td>Task: Establish what strategies were used for meaning making</td>
<td>Action: Identified difficult words and looked up meaning in dictionary. Group-work to out meaning of poem. Answered set questions.</td>
<td>Result: Poem hand-out (The Jellyfish) See Appendix C.</td>
<td>Notes: Excited and eager to look up words in dictionary. (4.5.4). Learners comfortable conversing in mother tongue. Jigsaw group-work effective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>Notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday, 16 May 2008</td>
<td>Taught strategies on reading and comprehension e.g. Scaffolding, talk-to-learn, dictionary usage</td>
<td>Jigsaw groups - Discuss poem in language of choice.</td>
<td>Poem hand-out. Answered questions individually.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduced a reading strategy (KWL)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Group work very interactive.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Speak freely when in mother tongue.(4.5.4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday, 23 May 2008</td>
<td>Observation: establish the learning practices of the participants</td>
<td>Comprehension done by English teacher (Appendix G)</td>
<td>They are independent. They tend to be confident. Teacher uses scaffolding (4.6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday, 30 May 2008</td>
<td>Tested spelling and comprehension.</td>
<td>Spelled words (from dictation (25 April 2008) and used them in sentences.</td>
<td>Refer to chapter 4.5.3 &amp; 4.5.6.1: Improvement w.r.t previous dictation test.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Usage of strategy (KWL) to understand the comprehension.

Reflect on own learning strategies.

Asking KWL questions.

What they could have done differently in the English class to facilitate the understanding of their learning?

Answered KWL

KWL to be used in any learning context.

Vocabulary does not necessarily imply understanding.

Application of KWL without instruction to do so.(4.6)

Monday, 18 August 2008

Post-intervention assessment

Test (Appendix A)

Done in class by all learners present.

Improvement for participants (4.8.1)

To address the initial area of weakness and those emerging from the intervention, I decided to develop certain strategies in my participants.
4.5 STRATEGIES TO BE DEVELOPED

- Increasing vocabulary through dictionary use.
- Teaching participants reading and comprehension strategies, like dictionary use, KWL.
- Talking-to-learn.
- Drawing on own knowledge/Scaffolding (Vygotski’s theories on zones of development).
- Using context to work out meaning.
- Reflecting on their learning.

This decision was based on the fact that during the intervention I came to be better informed about specific areas that required language development. These have been briefly mentioned in table 4.4, but are further discussed below. The first is the participants’ inability to formulate meaningful sentences.

4.5.1 Sentence structure

The nine participants who attended the first session were placed in groups and asked to formulate sentences from magnetic words. These words were of varying difficulty ranging from monosyllabic words such as ‘is, are, not…’ to bi-syllabic such as, ‘silly’, enjoy’ and then tri-syllabic, such as, beautiful’, history’. There were words from each word class. Learners were told they could work together and discuss their sentences before placing them on the table for me (and my supervisor) to see. We both walked around watching them complete the activity. When they indicated that we could read their sentences, these were some of what we read:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘I carry famous and begin house’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Enjoy a beautiful dream with love and let the silly behind’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘I love beginning history style’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These sentences do not convey meaning. I briefly (due to time constraints) advised these participants that a good sentence consists of a subject, verb and object and that the order
of these is important in conveying meaning. I gave them an example of ‘The boy kicks the ball.’ Construction and deconstruction of syntax helps with comprehension, therefore participants should be able to locate the subject (who) and the verb (what) of any sentence, in attempting to make the sentence meaningful. I advised the participants to use this technique (breaking up of sentence into its parts) when a sentence or passage is confusing.

4.5.2 Lack of drawing on existing knowledge

In designing the intervention, I wanted to include a content subject. I decided on Natural Science (NS) as the teacher was eager to assist and be assisted and also because I had access to the teacher’s guide of the subject. At the time, learners were doing Adaptation of Animals (NS).

Learners were asked to speak about or write down what they know about animals that have adapted to their environments. I wanted students to make use of their prior knowledge (Bradley and Bradley, 1994) so I asked them to reflect on how they had adapted to high school. Once they had answered this, I indicated that what they had done was to ADAPT ie, make changes to suit their new environment. In nature animals and humans adapt to their environment. I then asked them to think of examples of animals that they knew of who had ADAPTED to suit their environment. One learner responded by answering that he now wears a different uniform to show which school he attends. In this way I was attempting to provide scaffolding for the concept of adaptation. Scaffolding refers to ‘providing contextual supports for meaning through the use of simplified language, teacher modelling, visuals and graphics, co-operative learning and hands-on learning’ (Ovando, Collier & Combs, 2003: 345). This relates to Vygotsky’s theories on zones of development. My interpretation is that the (ZAD) zone of actual development (what a child can do alone and unassisted) should facilitate or serve as a support base for the (ZPD) zone of proximal development (anything that the child can learn with the assistance and support of a teacher or peer(s)). Having now provided support for the concept, I referred them back to their textbooks where they were required to read up on how different animals adapt to their environment.
As argued by Laufer & Hadar, 1997 and Krashen, 2003, having an extensive vocabulary in the target language is essential both for establishing meaning and for academic achievement. Therefore I built in vocabulary development in each session. One of the more explicit ways of achieving this was through dictation and spelling.

### 4.5.3 Vocabulary development

I gave them a dictation (25 April 2008), from the NS textbook, covered in the NS classroom the previous day (see Appendix 7). My motivation for including this, was to ascertain how many words participants remembered. Participants received immediate feedback from me in terms of the words they spelt incorrectly. After these words were identified, learners were given a chance to look up the correct spelling from a hand-out of the specific page used from the NS textbook and were told that they would be expected to write a spelling test on these words, where they could also be asked to use these words in sentences to show their meaning.

Researchers seem to agree that the number of exposures needed for the mastery of new words hinges on many factors such as the salience of the word in context (Brown, 1993), the richness of the contextual clues, the learner’s interest and the size and quality of his/her existing vocabulary (Laufer & Hadar, 1997; Nation & Hwang, 1995). Also, research has shown that there is a strong correlation between vocabulary size/knowledge and academic achievement (Krashen, 2003). Therefore it was important for me to develop the vocabulary of my participants through continued exposure to key words and concepts relevant to content they were covering in class.

With the last intervention (30 May 2008) 14 learners attended my intervention session. Participants wrote a spelling test, based on the previous dictation.
4.5.4 Participants’ use of language.
In analysing a poem (9 May 2008), I wanted to see how the learners used language in making themselves understand the content. What I observed was that learners made use of exploratory talk. Barnes (1992:126) defines this technique as a necessary part of talking to learn. He states that it is likely to be most effective in the learners’ main language, because learners need to feel safe when they are exploring ideas.

During the observation session (23 May 2008) learners did group work. I heard no English in discussion groups. Learners either spoke isiXhosa or Afrikaans and whoever was writing, wrote in English. Participants automatically switched over to their mother tongue, when they were given group discussion time. This is known as code-switching. I feel it important to mention that I do not regard code-switching as a teaching or learning technique, but rather as a means to facilitate teaching and learning in an additional language classroom. By adopting this approach, participants are able to establish context more easily than they would if they had to keep to the target language. The participants’ English once the content was translated was not grammatically perfect and the responsibility of translating fell on the scribe alone. This is not ideal.

4.5.5 Group work
In analysing the poem (9 May 2008) participants made use of the jigsaw technique, whereby participants in each group were given numbers and same number participants formed expert groups. Discussions were conducted in their expert groups. The original groups then reconvened, discussed the whole text and shared their expertise. Information was then pooled. Once again, through this practice scaffolding was provided, as participants were first provided with peer assistance before independent practice of answering the set questions. Also, through this practice every member had to contribute to the group feedback, thus their attained knowledge was acknowledged.
4.5.6 Dictionary usage and vocabulary learning

Knight (1994) found that learners who used a dictionary in addition to guessing through context, not only learned more words immediately after reading, but also remembered more words after two weeks. She also found that low verbal ability participants benefited more from the dictionary than high verbal ability participants, who in turn, benefited more from contextual guessing. In a study conducted by Luppescu and Day (1993) results suggested a clear advantage for participants using dictionaries compared to those not using dictionaries in vocabulary learning through reading. During the analysis of the poem (9 May 2008), I provided the participants with dictionaries to look up difficult word and they actively engaged with these dictionaries. During the observation session (23 May 2008 -in the English class with the teacher), learners were given a hand-out and what was obvious was that no dictionaries were taken out or provided to the learners to look up the meaning of difficult words. The importance of resources is discussed further in the following chapter.

4.5.6.1 The task of vocabulary learning

McCarthy (1984) states that the purpose of vocabulary ‘should include both remembering words and the ability to use them automatically in a wide range of language contexts when the need arises’. Vocabulary learning strategies should, therefore, include strategies for ‘knowing’ as well as ‘using’ a word.

The last intervention activity (30 May 2008) conducted with the participants was based on the above suggestion. Participants were given a spelling of ten (10) words, taken from the dictation they were given previously. They had to spell a given word and use it in any sentence to show its meaning. Examples of sentences written by the participants are given and a short discussion of these follow:

- Their behaviourly a bad.
- I want to reproduce that girl.
- I cannot adaptation this things.
- I care for my environment.
The first three sentences clearly indicate that the participants had little understanding of the meaning of the words they had to use in sentences. The last sentence indicates understanding.

4.6 THE KWL READING STRATEGY

What was also apparent during my observation of the participants’ learning practices (23 May 2008) was that most participants of my intervention sessions were very assertive in terms of their own learning practices. Four of them were group leaders, 5 of them were scribes and 4 of them were presenters during their given group work activities and feedback sessions. I also heard and saw how my participants applied the KWL method (introduced and taught to them on 16 May 2008). One of the learners from the intervention told the rest of his group that they should first write down and discuss what they already know about the topic which the teacher wanted them to discuss. In testing their understanding of the topic, I observed how my intervention participants started to read the hand-out and make notes on the paper, of what they understood from their reading. One of the shyest and weakest participants, asked a question softly to her group mate who had also participated in the intervention and she then directed the very same question to the group for discussion. There was definite active engagement with regard to the topic.

When the teacher asked the group, ‘How do you check if you understand what you’ve read?’ Three of my intervention participants responded. One said he read first, then closed the book and asked himself ‘what have I learnt?’ He then told himself what he had learnt and then opened the book to check if he was right. Another one of the participants said that she read the text twice then asked herself questions on the text. One of the stronger participants of the intervention said he ‘just read something first to get a general idea or to form a picture’. This correlates with Gambrell’s (1982) research on mental imagery, which states that the creation of a ‘television of the mind’ is a way to monitor comprehension. The active participation of learners who had participated in the
group indicated that they had grown in confidence and that they had acquired skills and strategies that enabled their learning.

Having discussed the intervention and areas of concern that emerged during the intervention as well as some results observed in the classroom, I now turn the attention of the reader to more specific results that emerged from the intervention. These results will be grouped in terms of cognitive and affective gains. I start with the affective advances, which seem to complement what was observed in chapter 4.6.

4.7 AFFECTIVE GROWTH

Below is a list of journal entries made by the participants which strongly indicate the sense of enjoyment they felt while participating in the intervention.

4.7.1 Journal entries indicating affective growth are as follows:

- ‘happy’ appearing in 4 responses
- ‘excited’ appearing in 2 responses
- ‘nice’ appearing in 2 responses ‘love’ being part of the project
- ‘proud’ about what I learn
- ‘great’ teachers are helping me with my English (appearing in 3 responses)

Implication of a ‘safe’ space by:

- ‘wish your are not going to leave us’
- ‘nobody bosses people around’
- ‘don’t laugh at you when you said the wrong word’
- ‘they help me’
- ‘wish to be with the intervention until grade 12’
- ‘talk about ourselves and our families’
- ‘we are being telled to talk about our feelings’
- ‘I was openly talking, I didn’t think maybe some of the children are going to laugh because of my broken English. It was like talking alone in my room.’

Heugh (1995) implies that the acquisition of English ‘at the cost of’ has devalued indigenous languages and the self-concept of their speakers. This is substantiated by the
fact that the participants felt safe. These participants felt safe enough to speak out as
nobody laughed at them or the mistakes they made. One of the objectives of the whole
language approach (referred to in chapter 2, which is the approach of this intervention) is
that learners would feel comfortable using English without fear of ridicule or criticism

Lemmer and Squelch (1993:45) recommend that educators should strive to get to know
additional language learners by showing interest in their cultural background. This, I
believe, is reflected by participants being encouraged to talk about themselves and their
families. Purkey and Stanley (1991:68) suggest in getting to know your learners, teachers
should establish and maintain a ‘warm, understanding, supportive climate in which
learners feel comfortable and able to work productively. The references to the
participants ‘enjoying’, ‘being proud’, ‘loving being part of the group’ suggest that they
felt supported and comfortable.

A self-esteem enhancement technique used were the journals in which learners could
express their feelings (Purkey & Stanley, 1991). Also, the article High School Literature
Comprehension through active, strategic reading suggests ‘a dialectical journal to
respond to a text and participating in small group and whole class discussions, engage
and motivate learners by asking them to tap into their experiences and to make
connections to other texts and other viewpoints’. Motivation is a fundamental pre-
requisite for learning. Lamprecht (1989:3) is of the opinion that motivation implies a
force within a human being that leads to action directed towards obtaining a specific goal.
He states that motivation like intelligence, cannot be measured, but can only be deduced
form someone’s actions. This fundamental pre-requisite to learning is suggested by the
response from participants who indicated

- (I want to) ‘keep on going to the class to improve English’.
- (I)’wish to be with the intervention until grade 12’.

The extensive body of research carried out over the decades, (Gardner & Lambert, 1972;
Naiman et al, 1978; Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993; Oxford &
Shearin, 1994; Dörnyei, 2001) seem to confirm that attitudes and motivation are in many instances the best overall predictors of success in language learning.

What participants wrote in their journals suggest that these learners felt safe and that a platform was created for them to be themselves. If one reflects on what is being suggested by what is written in their journals one could read low self-esteem and a feeling of inadequacy into it. Thompson (2000:80-92) says that ‘in order to foster acceptance, self-confidence, learning and achievement, teachers of English Additional language learners need to make the classroom a haven for children, create meaningful learning situations for their learners and never give up on them.’

Having dealt with and discussed the affective advances of the participants during the intervention, I now turn the attention of the reader to the cognitive gains.

4.8 COGNITIVE GROWTH

4.8.1 Post-intervention testing

In order to situate the effects of the intervention in the larger context of what had been going on in the classroom, I again conducted the Pretorius test (Appendix A). I used the same test I used for baseline assessment for post-intervention assessment. The reason for this was that I could then use the results to make direct comparisons for the intervention group with regard to before (baseline) and after (post-intervention).

I returned to the school (18 August 2008) to do the post-intervention test with the whole class. The same learners, test and setting were used for the post-test. The only difference was that this time learners were instructed to write down what they understood from what they have read after the minute of reading. The test results are reflected below:
What is evident from the above is that all learners across language groups had a decline with regard to word speed. A reason for this might be that they knew that they would be tested on what they had read after the minute. With regard to vocabulary, the English home language group shows a decline and this can be because they might be passive about language and vocabulary acquisition ‘as English is their home language’, whereas the other two language groups would make a definite effort to expand their knowledge of the English language, as it is their language of teaching and learning, but not the language spoken at home. For the inferential section, the Afrikaans home language group is the only group that shows a drop in average. I cannot explain this. With the *cloze* section, the isiXhosa home language group is the only group that shows an increase in average with regard to this section and this might be because they were formally instructed on techniques to make meaning from the language.

With the anaphoric section, the Afrikaans home language group is also the only group that shows a decline in terms of group averages. Once again, I cannot explain this. With the meaning section all group averages improved and this might be due to their continued exposure to the English language in their English and content subject classes. It is noteworthy that the participants of the intervention improved in all sections.
4.8.2 A comparison of the grade 8 learners’ English March and June results.

This was done to see if the participants had made any significant improvement. This is the tabulated comparison:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class average</th>
<th>March average</th>
<th>June average</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31 learners</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>56.3</td>
<td>7 (+)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Afrikaans home language learners</th>
<th>March average</th>
<th>June average</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 learners</td>
<td>53.2</td>
<td>62.4</td>
<td>9.2 (+)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English home language learners</th>
<th>March average</th>
<th>June average</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 learners</td>
<td>55.4</td>
<td>48.6</td>
<td>6.8 (-)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>isiXhosa home language learners</th>
<th>March average</th>
<th>June average</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11 learners</td>
<td>45.4</td>
<td>56.8</td>
<td>11.4 (+)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After the intervention the isiXhosa learners had the highest average performance difference.

The Afrikaans home language speakers are reflected as the strongest learners with regard to their March and June average improvements. Also in terms of the average difference, they improved above the class average improvement. The English home language learners fared above the class average in March but declined by 6.8% in June. There seems to be no obvious reason for this. The isiXhosa learners fared below class average for both the March and June exams, but had the largest improvement.
4.8.3 *A break-down of pre and post intervention averages for examination performance in English*

A break-down is given of the eleven (11) participants who attended consistently. To make the break-down reader-friendly participants will be given pseudonyms. Marks are given in percentages as they were reflected on their reports.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>June</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quiet</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oulik</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phantom</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Busy</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khanye West</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good manners</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hector Petersen</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smiley</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorry</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small boy</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What can be seen from above is that there is a significant increase in the percentage for most of the participants, some of which could be ascribed to the influence of the intervention.
4.8.4 A break-down of the results of the spelling test and previous dictation is given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words dictated</th>
<th>First Dictation Number of participants who misspelt each word (9 participants)</th>
<th>Spelling test taken from earlier dictation. Number of participants who misspelt word (14 participants)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>predators</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>behaviourally</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>environment</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shelter</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suited</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>physically</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>survive</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>escape</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reproduce</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adaptation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It should be mentioned that I did not explicitly teach these participants how to spell, as I assumed that at this stage of their schooling this skill had been taught and acquired. This is addressed in chapter 5.

Many of the participants felt that the intervention developed them. This can be seen from the journal entries below.

4.8.5 Journal entries indicating cognitive growth, includes the following:

- ‘I am learning more than I expected’.
- ‘learn other words that I don’t know’.
- ‘learn new words and their meaning’.
- ‘I learn to talk and tell someone about myself’.
- ‘I keep on going to the class to improve my English’.
- ‘It improves my second language very well, especially my reading’.
4.9 REFLECTION ON THE INTERVENTION

The above diagrams show the cyclical nature of my intervention, being based on action research.

CYCLE 1
The intervention having been implemented, needs to be assessed which was done through an analysis of the affective and cognitive results. Having done this, I have to reflect (as a researcher) on the benefits and short-comings of that which were implemented. On reflection, benefits that emerged from the intervention are:

- the level of co-operation between the participants.
- the level of confidence shown by them during the observation (23 May 2009).
- the ‘safe’ space that was created for them during the interventions, and this can be seen through them conversing in their mother tongue without the fear of being reprimanded.
- the fact that the participants wanted to be part of the intervention and had no draw-backs because they might be branded.

Short-falls of the intervention are:

- insufficient time spent with the participants to really be able to claim life-changing language practice effects.
- insufficient time spent on assessing their individual reading practices.
• insufficient development of their writing skills. As writing and reading go hand-in-hand.

• not being able to fast track the long term effects of the intervention on the expansion of vocabulary dealt with and their understanding and use of such vocabulary.

Having provided the findings of the research, I will now move on to the following chapter in which I will discuss the conclusions, recommendations and concerns that came about from the above findings and analysis.
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE LEARNING
This study builds on previous studies (Heugh 2001, Lemmer 1997, Bloch, Roseberry- Mckibben Brice 2000) and others that show that learners who have to study through the medium of their second or third language are hugely disadvantaged and that the choice made by parents of which school (and language) their children are to learn at (and in), needs careful consideration. English is an international language of communication, yet parents need to be made aware of the preferable manner of acquiring this additional language. Parents need to know that English language learning and teaching should not happen ‘at the cost’ of one’s own mother tongue. The practice of ‘straight for English’ where learners are enrolled for school (grade R) in English classes is detrimental to the future academic performance of learners. Parents need to be informed that for their children to become successful English learners, they need to be able to read and write in their mother tongue.

5.2 IMPROVING READING
This study, despite its brevity, has clearly indicated that a reading intervention can improve the reading ability and language of the participants. Furthermore, an intervention, if designed along principles of sound reading instruction and presented in a safe and nurturing environment, can equip learners with definite reading strategies to be used to further develop their reading and learning abilities. While there is criticism levelled against removing learners from the mainstream group which might lead to stigmatisation, this study has shown that the learners enjoyed being separated and that they wanted to have more individualised tutoring. It can be argued that the learners were fully aware of their weaknesses in English reading and that they knew that such an intervention, rather than lead to them being stigmatised, could enable them to cope better.
5.3 POLICIES AND PRACTICES
The South African Department of Education advocates an additive multilingual approach, which means competence should be gained in the additional language, while maintaining the home language. This Language in Education Policy lacks existing measures to ensure that what the policy prescribes is executed correctly. The PIRLS study has revealed the concerning low levels of literacy in both English and the mother tongue.

In a document released by the Department of Education in January 2008 (Teaching Reading in the Early Grades –A Teacher’s Handbook) a Reading and Writing Focus time of one hour per day is recommended. With the PIRLS study indicating a national lack of literacy in all schools, the school where the intervention was done also adopted this guideline. However, there is a discrepancy between what the policy prescribes and how it is done in practice. This one hour per day is mostly not used for the intended purpose (personal communication with school’s principal). Most teachers, especially if they are not language teachers, use this hour to prepare for the rest of the day or to get their administration up-to-date. If teachers lack a culture of reading, how can they teach it to their learners? In a current study being done by PRAESA (University of Cape Town) on behalf of the Western Cape Education Department, early findings reveal a lack of culture of reading amongst intermediate phase teachers’ literacy practices (presentation done by Peter Pluddemann, 8 November 2008, RASA Conference, Durban).

5.4 ASSESSMENT RESULTS OF PARTICIPANTS
The findings of the baseline and post-intervention assessment correlates with the findings of the PIRLS study done in 2006. The Afrikaans home language learners do better than their other home language counterparts when it comes to language, literacy and comprehension (in this school). With the Afrikaans learners’ acquisition of the additional language their home language is kept alive during their conversations with friends (during breaks, after school, during socialization), family (this is the language their parents converse in) and in class (they use this language to clarify for themselves and
mostly the teacher is able to use this language to clarify a difficult term). So, their 
additional language learning is not ‘at the cost of’ Afrikaans, their home language.

The results of the English learners reiterate the fact that, even if they are stronger in terms 
of English vocabulary, it does not imply academic competence. BICS does not imply 
comprehension ability in the language and, I believe, comprehension core in academic 
success. CALP is what learners need to perform well on academic tasks.
The baseline assessment results of the isiXhosa learners indicate that they are the weakest 
when it comes to language, literacy and comprehension. Looking at their results, one can 
see they are indeed ‘victims of choice’. Most of them are from ex-model C primary 
schools or from township schools where they were taught in the English medium class. 
They are victims of the ‘straight for English’ phenomenon. Learning in and through 
isiXhosa is additional language learning for them. For them, there is nothing to ‘add 
onto’. These learners can be regarded as having experienced subtractive bilingualism, 
where they lack proficiency in both the mother tongue and the additional language 

In this study, attention was paid to explicitly teaching academic language and skills. 
Skills such as analysing, interpreting and summarising were taught and the academic 
terminology associated with these skills was also taught. Likewise language was 
integrated with content subjects.

5.5 FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE SUCCESS OF THE 
INTERVENTION
The intervention can be said to have been successful. The reasons for this are multiple. 
Having existing ties with the school proved useful. The fact that I completed my high 
school years there, taught at the school with my two sisters and still have a sister teaching 
there ensured open communication between myself and the school. When teaching at the 
school, I was an English additional language teacher and therefore I knew the concerns of 
the staff with regard to this phenomenon. My research enabled me to give back to the 
school (in the form of knowledge during the intervention). I believe this made my
presence more authentic, compared to just being there to take and not give in return. Another reason for its success was that I worked with the teachers. I worked with the English teacher and I made it clear to him that I was not there to criticize his classroom practices but rather that we worked as a team. This enabled me to obtain valuable information and share findings with him.

Another reason for its success was that the participants were carefully selected and that the intervention took place on the school grounds. Furthermore the flexible approach with the intervention design enabled me to make necessary changes to suit the changing needs of the participants. Coming from the university, I had the necessary symbolic status required as well as material resources such as providing participants with dictionaries when needed and also providing them with NMMU journals to use as journals.

5.6 LIMITATIONS
The intervention was conducted over 5 hours and I realised that this time is too limited to expect significant shifts. However, the intervention showed that creating a concentrated intimate space where reading techniques are explicitly taught has both affective and cognitive gains. The school lacks the availability of educational resources (like an active library, English books, newspapers, magazines and dictionaries) which are pivotal in the development of language and the acquisition of an additional language. Not being a member of the staff, sometimes proved challenging, as period times would be adjusted for the day and I would not be made aware of this. Also, I would have wanted to have more interaction with content teachers and would have wanted to include more content subject in the intervention, but due to time-constraints and the workload of teachers this proved not viable.

Having a small group to work with in the intervention made my work easier but in terms of addressing the national needs, it made a very small difference. Ideally an intervention should also empower teachers to continue with the work started to enable them to maintain the momentum gained during the intervention. Momentum was gained with regard to participants’ interest in their own learning, development of reflective skills,
realising the importance of having resources to develop additional language learning and ‘teacher-talk’ about the importance of reading with regard to academic success.

5.7 CONCLUSIONS

5.7.1 Standardised reading tests
The South African Department of Education does not have standardized tests to test reading and comprehension and this proves a difficulty in assessing the reading and comprehension levels of learners.

5.7.2 Teacher training
Teachers have not been sufficiently trained to cope with the demands of the Language in Education Policy which promotes additive multilingualism as most of them are from mono-linguistic higher institutions. The current language concerns in South Africa are not exclusively the problem of language teachers as they affect all other (content) subjects. Therefore, ameliorating this problem should be a concern for all teachers as it affects all forms of learning. Teachers need to realise that creating a safe educational environment facilitates the learning process and when the learner has a sound affective foundation, positive cognitive development occurs.

5.7.3 ‘Pull-out’ classes
The existing notion is that learners being pulled out from classes for additional help is a negative experience and that they do not like it, as they are branded negatively. The participants of my intervention contradicted this notion, as they liked being pulled out for the intervention.

5.7.4 Use of mother tongue during classroom activities
Previously, and in some instances currently, code-switching –which is ‘talk-to-learn’ -by learners has been regarded by most teachers as leading to chaos. Teachers feel that when learners converse in a language which they are not familiar with it leads to loss of control. My research has found that there is constructive interaction when learners are allowed to converse about the content in their mother tongue.
5.7.5 Learner-centred
A learner-centred approach was applied and learners were encouraged to participate. Selected learners were informed upfront that participation in the intervention was voluntary and this seemed to motivate them more. Participants were also told that they should draw on their existing knowledge in dealing with new content and this seemed to excite them, knowing that they do have something to contribute.

5.8 RECOMMENDATIONS
5.8.1 The Department of Education (DoE)
The DoE should set in place standardised tests for language and comprehension testing. Many intervention programmes have been piloted at primary schools to ensure early identification and intervention. This seems to be the trend nationally and internationally. The DoE should, however, also ensure intervention programmes for high school learners, as the reality is that high school teachers have learners in their classroom who struggle to read and write, or even to understand at their grade level.

For the Language in Education Policy to be effective, teachers need to be trained multilingualists. Therefore, I would propose that alongside English the other dominant language(s) of the province should be a compulsory part of teacher training. This would help teachers to rid themselves of the ‘loss of control’ feeling.

In an article by Lilly Pretorius, ‘Playing football without a ball’ (2007) she uses this metaphor to get across a very important message: we get the best coaches in the world to coach Bafana Bafana (because we want them equip them to perform at their best), therefore we should get the best English teachers to teach our learners English. The social science teacher should not be teaching English, if he/she was not trained to do so. The DoE is adamant on only using trained Mathematics and Physical Science teachers to teach these subjects. I recommend that they adopt the same approach when it comes to English teaching.
5.8.2 School Management Teams (SMTs) and teachers

In grades 1 to 3 reading needs to be explicitly taught to learners (Chall, 1983). In grades 4 to 9 language knowledge and vocabulary should be expanded and learners should start to use reading as a tool for learning. Reading texts should go beyond the immediate frame of reference of learners, building on knowledge which they already possess. Grade 10 to 12 reading should be seen as an effective form of learning. Reading and comprehension strategies should be taught to learners by all teachers. If learners lack these they will struggle to understand and master information in any given subject.

A strategy like scaffolding can and should be used by all teachers as it facilitates the acknowledgement of prior knowledge.

Learners should also be allowed to ‘talk-to-learn’ in all classes. Current English additional language teachers should draw on the multilingual skills of learners in classes to facilitate this process. ‘Talking-to-learn’ usually has optimal effect during group-work. I have found jigsaw group-work to be more effective and to have more structure than just random group-forming. I have found that it is intimidating to be chosen as the scribe of the group as the onus falls on the scribe to translate the ‘talk-to-learn’ which mostly happens in the mother tongue which is different to the reporting language. Therefore, I would advise teachers to make sure that when learners do the write-up to report back, all members of the group be part of this process.

Learning areas should include vocabulary sections, where learners have to identify and look up vocabulary which they are not familiar with. If key concepts are part of this vocabulary learning it also helps with making the content more accessible for the learner. For vocabulary acquisition to happen effectively, resources like an active library and dictionaries are necessary.

Ameliorating the reading and language concerns should be a task taken on by all teachers at a school, and not only the language teachers.
Mechanisms should be put in place by the SMTs to ensure that the reading periods are used as prescribed and not to complete administrative duties.

5.8.3 Learners
Learners should be made aware that they should not be passive in their learning. They need to actively become part of the learning process where they constantly reflect on what they are doing to get to learn concepts and information. They need to know and voice what they bring to their learning.

They also need to reflect on what they could do differently following time to understand, incorporate and use what they have learnt.

5.9 CONCLUSION
Reading and comprehension are said to be processes and not products, therefore they cannot happen in the English class exclusively. Strategies to teach the acquisition of additional language reading and comprehension can also not happen once-off, but should continuously take place in all language and content classes.

This study has shown that with patience and research an intervention which develops reading strategies can work and therefore it is essential that teachers and teacher educators (those training the teachers) continue to actively teach reading so that we can address the low literacy rates and ensure that all learners in SA are given equal chances to achieve their goals. What also emerged during this study is the importance of creating a safe environment for learning to take place in. Learning becomes more active and interactive when learners know that they have something to contribute to their own learning.
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