

**LITERACY DEVELOPMENT AND SELF-CONCEPT OF
ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS: AN
EXPLORATORY STUDY**

A.A. van Rhyn

**LITERACY DEVELOPMENT AND SELF-CONCEPT IN ENGLISH
SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY**

by

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DECLARATION

I, Anna Aletta van Rhyn, declare that the research thesis that I herewith submit for the degree qualification, PhD in Education, at the University of the Free State, is my independent work and that I have not previously submitted it, in part or in its entirety, for a qualification at another institution of higher education.

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A.A. VAN RHYN

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Dr. Annalene van Staden
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Dear Dr. van Staden

Requirements for submission of doctoral thesis: Ms. A.A. van Rhyn

The submission of the doctoral thesis of Ms. A.A. van Rhyn was discussed at a recent meeting of the Rectorate and the matter was referred to the Research Committee of Senate (RCS) for final a decision. The RCS wishes to confirm that the candidate can submit the doctoral thesis after complying with the following requirements:

- The PhD qualification is situated at NQF-exit level 10 and consists of a minimum of 360 credits.
- A doctoral thesis generally comprises between 70 000 and 100 000 words, or three publishable articles.

It is apparent that the candidate has met the requirements stipulated in the UFS policy document, and permission is given by the SRC for her to proceed to submit her doctoral thesis in article format, which comprises four related, publishable articles (between 70 000 and 10 000 words) for examination.

Kind regards,



Prof Corli Witthuhn
Vice Rector: Research
Chair: Research Committee of Senate



Literacy is a bridge from misery to hope. It is a tool for daily life in modern society. It is a bulwark against poverty, and a building block of development, an essential complement to investments in roads, dams, clinics and factories. Literacy is a platform for democratization, and a vehicle for the promotion of cultural and national identity. Especially for girls and women, it is an agent of family health and nutrition. For everyone, everywhere, literacy is, along with education in general, a basic human right... Literacy is, finally, the road to human progress and the means through which every man, woman and child can realize his or her full potential.

-Kofi Annan: Secretary general of the UN (1997-2006) and Noble price winner (2001)-

THIS STUDY IS DECICATED TO

Malan, my husband, best friend and co-traveller on the academic road

Every teacher who take ownership of his or her ability to unfold the precious world of literacy for learners in South-Africa

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SOLI DEO GLORIA

GENERAL ORIENTATION

This thesis was done on the basis of Regulation A105D of the University of the Free State. The requirement in respect of a doctoral thesis is that a doctoral degree comprises the submission of a doctoral thesis between 70 000 and 100 000 words, or at least three publishable manuscripts/articles on an approved research topic. With respect to this general rule mentioned above, the candidate has met the requirements stipulated in the UFS policy document and permission was given by the SRC for the candidate to submit her thesis, which comprises four related publishable articles, for examination.

As indicated on the title page, the overall title of this dissertation is:

LITERACY DEVELOPMENT AND SELF-CONCEPT IN ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

The dissertation consists of four related articles, namely:

Article 1: **LITERACY DEVELOPMENT AND SELF-CONCEPT OF ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS: A REVIEW OF THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES**

Article 2: **CHALLENGES FACING PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATORS OF ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN THE TSHWANE WEST REGION.**

Article 3: **IMPLEMENTING AN INTERACTIVE STORYBOOK READING INTERVENTION TO SUPPORT ESL LITERACY DEVELOPMENT: A SOCIAL CULTURAL LEARNING THEORY PERSPECTIVE**

Article 4: **EXPLORING THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN SELF-CONCEPT AND LITERACY ACHIEVEMENT: A CASE STUDY AMONGST GRADE 4 ESL LEARNERS**

The summary, which appears at the back of this dissertation, also serves as a summary of the findings and conclusions that the researcher came to in each article.

GENERAL ORIENTATION

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GENERAL ORIENTATION

LITERACY DEVELOPMENT AND SELF-CONCEPT OF ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

1. Introduction

Literacy is one of the major contributory factors pertaining to the overall wellbeing and positive self-concept of every individual (Hosogi, Okada, Fujii, Noguchi & Watanabe, 2012:1; Schalock, Brown, Cummins, Felce, Matikka, Keith & Parmeter, 2002:457-470). 'Self-concept' is a term used to refer to how someone thinks about, evaluates or perceives him- or herself. A child who fails to achieve literacy skills usually develops a lack of confidence in his/her ability to succeed, contributing to low self-esteem. An inability to read and write has an overall negative impact on the self-assertion of an individual; therefore, literacy also plays a key role in the socio-economic independence of every person. According to Archambault, Eccles and Vida (2010:804), literacy skills are essential for daily functioning. They are associated with better employment rates, higher socio-economic status and higher quality of life. Many youths who do not acquire basic reading and writing abilities become early school leavers, with a deleterious impact on their expected quality of life. Research stresses the importance of a positive self-concept and confidence in the successful execution of literacy tasks (Bornman & Rose, 2011:138; Nel & Nel, 2013:102). The inability to read inevitably leads to lowered self-concept and ability to succeed.

As a developing country, South Africa faces many challenges. The unique composition of its population, its complex socio-economic factors, eleven official languages and a troubled educational system are all factors contributing to its literacy challenges (Prinsloo, 2011:29). The development of literacy starts at a very young age and according to Lenyai (2011:90), emergent literacy includes knowledge and appreciation of books, phonological and alphabet knowledge, as well as print awareness. The total context within which children are raised has a strong impact on the provision of essential emergent literacy activities. Lack of appropriate language stimulation, low literacy levels among parents, and low educational expectations can severely limit the literacy levels of learners.

Although the Constitution of South Africa recognises the individual status of eleven official languages, the application thereof, as well as the accessibility of each language on formal and informal levels, is not implemented in practice. Research highlights the advantage of first language (L1) education, especially during the first formal years (Van Staden, 2011:10).

Although only one in ten South African children's mother tongue is English, the majority are taught in English by teachers who also have a mother tongue other than English. A further complication is the aspiration of many South African parents to have their children educated in English, because they believe it is the language of empowerment. The following statistics corroborate the claim: A recent government report revealed that 58.1% of Grade 3 learners did not achieve the acceptable and requisite performance level (Department of Education, 2011). In a Performance in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) report, South Africa was ranked last out of 40 countries. Only 35% of Grade R learners in South Africa meet the minimum criteria for early literacy development (Vally, 2012: 617).

Against the above background, the need for urgent practices to improve the quality of the literacy performance amongst South African learners is evident. Thus, the core aim of this study, presented as four related, publishable articles (discussed in par. 8: Layout of thesis) is the development and implementation of a literacy intervention programme for Grade 4 English Second Language (ESL) learners, in the Tshwane West Region. The schools were selected because they have similar socio-economic challenges and cater for L1 and ESL learners in parallel-medium contexts.

2. Theoretical Framework

In exploring the literacy development and self-concept of ESL learners in South Africa, the researcher utilised three main theoretical lenses, namely Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, Cummins' Linguistic interdependence hypothesis (1994), and Shavelson's multidimensional and hierarchical model of self-concept (Marsh, Byrne & Shavelson, 1988). In view of the interaction between the three main theories mentioned, the researcher complements these in Article 3 by incorporating the work of a leading social-cultural theorist, namely Vygotsky (1978), in developing and implementing an interactive storybook literacy intervention with ESL learners in Grade 4.

Reviewing the three main theories that were considered for grounding this research entailed the following. First, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory argues that both intrinsic and extrinsic factors should be taken into account when investigating the literacy development, scholastic progress and self-esteem of second language (L2) learners. The related, publishable articles will attempt to explore and illustrate the interrelationship between intrinsic and extrinsic barriers to learning, as well as how these pose a possible challenge to literacy development and self-concept formation of ESL learners. This includes a discussion on what joint influences, the different levels of Bronfenbrenners' systems theory (i.e. microsystem,

mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem), may have on the scholastic environment that interplays in the child's development, including the child's self-concept (Swart & Pettipher, 2011:12). This theory should help to provide an understanding of the interaction between individual learners and their contexts, and its effect on individual growth and change. Secondly, this study utilises Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Theory (1979:2009), which posits that the level of L2 competence which a ESL learner attains is partially a function of the type of competence he or she has developed in L1 prior to extensive exposure to L2 (Coetzee-Van Rooy, 2010:27; Eva & Reka, 2013:177). In South Africa, a large group of children from deprived backgrounds commence their school career with poorly developed L1 abilities, only then to be educated in a second language (Schlebusch & Thobedi, 2005:306). In developing the literacy intervention programme, the researcher incorporated the Vygotskian principles in further support of Cummins' linguistic interdependence hypothesis. According to Vygotsky (1978), social interaction amongst peers and significant others plays an imperative role in the language and literacy development of individuals. With regard to literacy development and the current study, it underscores the importance of exposing ESL learners to language-rich activities imbedded in the reading or telling of stories, rhymes, playing games and informal discussions about reading and literacy development. Vygotsky's perspective identifies a child's *zone of proximal development* (ZPD), as an important factor or 'area' that informs language and literacy development. According to Vygotsky, the ZPD is an 'area' between what a child can do alone and with help (Vygotsky, 1978). A child's ZPD is made up of skills that are just beyond the child's reach, and that the child can reach or achieve with the support (for example via scaffolding) of teachers, parents and peers (Van Staden & Griessel, 2011).

Thirdly, the researcher discusses ESL learners' self-concept development, as viewed by theorists in favour of a multidimensional and hierarchical model of self-concept, which divides general self-concept into academic and non-academic components, including highlighting on the different dimensions' interplay in forming an individual's general self-concept (Marsh & Craven, 2006; Marsh & Martin, 2011). Focusing on determinants affecting the self-concept development of the ESL learner in the South African education context, the researcher also elaborates on how Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and Cummins' linguistic interdependence hypothesis interacts and contribute to self-concept development. In this regard, researchers posit that a healthy academic self-concept contributes to academic achievement, positive educational outcomes and an improved quality of life for an individual (Archambault et al., 2010:804; Marsh & Martin, 2011:59).

3. Problem Statement and Research Questions

The need for urgent strategies aimed at improving literacy skills in both first (L1) and second language (L2) learners in South Africa is apparent. The above-mentioned PIRLS report (Vally, 2012:617) emphasises the need for urgent and intensive intervention. The negative impact of poor literacy skills on the self-concept and overall quality of life accentuates the need for intervention.

This crisis not only affects young Pre-School and Foundation Phase learners, but also learners in other grades. According to a Country Progress Report (Department of Education, 2013:48), 29% of Grade 4 children in South Africa failed to reach the lowest international benchmark of 400 for reading literacy. Without intervention or help, this will inevitably lead to early school dropout rates, a lifelong struggle against poverty, and diminished human dignity.

This exploratory research is presented via four related, publishable articles, guided by four main research questions, namely:

1. What theoretical perspectives inform the literacy development and self-concept formation of the ESL learner in the South African education context?
2. What challenges do teachers experience in their quest to produce creative, responsive literacy environments for L2 learners?
3. Can the literacy difficulties Grade 4 ESL learners' experience significantly improve after the implementation of an interactive storybook literacy-intervention programme?
4. What is the self-concept experience of ESL learners and its relationship with literacy abilities?

4. Purpose of the Research and Objectives

Currently, most of the research and interventions aimed at rectifying the literacy problem are concentrated on Pre-School and Foundation-Phase learners. A large group of learners in the Intermediate Phase (Grade 4-6) lacks proper and age-appropriate literacy skills. Healthy and balanced self-esteem, good quality of life and future successful inclusion in the labour force are at risk. Intervention regarding this problem is urgently needed.

The main aim of this PhD study was explore the interplay between ESL learners' literacy development and their self-concept development. In achieving the core aim, the following aims that are explored in each of the four related, publishable articles are germane to the issue:

- In Article 1, the different theoretical perspectives that elucidate the literacy and self-concept challenges the ESL learner in South Africa is faced with are explored;
- Article 2 explores the challenges teachers of ESL learners experience in their quest to produce creative, responsive literacy environments for ESL learners;
- Article 3 introduces a discussion on literacy development, the literacy challenges ESL learners face and develops and implements an interactive storybook literacy programme to support the reading and spelling skills of Grade 4, ESL learners sampled in this study;
- Article 4 explores ESL learners' self-concept formation: this inter alia include, discussing the interplay of various intrinsic and extrinsic factors in the self-concept formation of the ESL learner and determining whether an interactive storybook literacy-intervention programme may contribute to an improved self-concept for these learners.

5. Research Design and Research Methodology

A multi-method research design was followed, using both qualitative data-gathering methods (e.g. semi-structured interviews) and quantitative gathering methods (e.g. diagnostic and standardised measures).

5.1 Participants

With regard to the qualitative research design, the researcher made use of purposive sampling whereby five schools in the Tshwane West Region were invited to participate in the research. These five schools were selected because they experience similar socio-economic challenges and cater for L1 and L2-learners in parallel-medium contexts. Individual interviews will be conducted with Grade 4 to Grade 6 teachers ($N = 10$). Two teachers per school were selected for the individual interviews. With the assistance of the chairpersons of the different site-based support teams (at the respective schools), 10 Intermediate Phase learners (Grade 4 to Grade 6) who experience literacy backlogs were identified to participate in the project. These learners were involved in the execution of quantitative research designs, for example, the administration of standardised and diagnostic instruments to investigate the impact of literacy barriers on their academic functioning, including determining their individual self-concepts, prior to and after the application of the interactive storybook intervention programme (see 5.2).

5.2 Data-gathering and analyses

The qualitative data gathering methods included the recording and transcription of all interview responses. Individual interviews were conducted with two teachers at each of the sampled schools ($n = 10$) to explore their views and experiences concerning the literacy problems

experienced by ESL learners, and the effect thereof on their everyday functioning and self-concept. Analysis of qualitative data was done during data collection and after all the data had been collected. Analysis included organising data into categories and identifying patterns and relationships between categories. Finally, the data were interpreted.

Pertaining to the quantitative data gathering techniques, 50+ learners were identified from the five participating schools and learners who met the criteria, were invited to take part in this intervention study:

The criteria for selection included:

- Participants had to be a Grade 4 ESL learner whose home language is one of the traditional African languages, for example: Xhosa, Zulu, Sesotho, etc.;
- The participating learners already had to be identified as experiencing literacy backlogs;
- Ages: between 9 and 11 years old;
- Only participants whose parents had signed the written informed consent letters were included in this study.

The following standardised and diagnostic measuring instruments were administered as pre- and post-tests prior to and after the intervention period:

- The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale was used to assess the overall self-concept of each participating learner. This is a self-reporting questionnaire designed to assess self-concept in children between the ages of 7 and 18 years;
- Progressive Achievement Tests in Reading (PAT-R): comprehension, vocabulary, and spelling:
 - Comprehension: Booklet 2 – Year levels 1, 2 and 3
 - Vocabulary: Booklet 2 – Year levels 4, 5 and 6
- UCT Reading, Reading Fluency, and Spelling tests – these are standardised for South African samples, currently used by the Gauteng District-based Support Teams (DBSTs) including:
 - UCT reading tests
 - UCT reading fluency tests
 - UCT test for spelling

Concerning the quantitative data analysis, descriptive and inferential statistics were applied. With regard to the literacy intervention study (cf. article 3) Mann Whitney *U*-tests were performed to investigate whether the progress of learner participants is statistically significant

after the intervention period. Pertaining to Article 4, *t*-tests and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis were performed, first, to investigate whether ESL learners' self-concept could significantly improve after the implementation of a literacy intervention programme. Secondly, Pearson correlation analyses were utilised to investigate the possible relationships that existed between the different self-concept dimensions, including how these dimensions contributed to ESL learners' general self-concept. Pearson correlation analyses were also performed to establish the possible relationship between ESL learners' general self-concept and each of the literacy measures included in this study, namely reading fluency, word reading, vocabulary, reading comprehension and spelling. All tests and scores were validated by an independent marker.

6. Ethical Considerations

- Informed consent

Informed written consent was obtained from the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE), principals, teachers and parents of participating schools. In addition, they were informed about the purpose and importance of the study, as well as when it would be conducted. Participants were too young to give consent; therefore, written consent was obtained from their parents or guardians.

- Privacy, confidentiality and anonymity

Participants' anonymity is protected by de-identifying them or using pseudonyms. All data collected are regarded as strictly confidential and will be stored for a minimum of three years. All records of collected data will be kept in a safe and secure place at the University of the Free State.

This research forms part of a broader research project, entitled "Cognitive linguistic processing and literacy development of L1 and L2 children with typical and atypical patterns of development" and is funded by the South African National Research Foundation (NRF) (Grant number 87728). The Ethics Board of the faculty of Education approved the study and granted ethical clearance for the research (UFS-EDU-2013-0074).

7. Value of the Research

This study should contribute towards better education in general, as well as to the field of Psychology of Education in the following manner:

- It will draw attention to the impact of poor literacy skills on learners who have not received the necessary and sufficient support for literacy problems during their foundation phase.
- Resulting from the research, an intervention programme is envisaged which could be applied in the Intermediate Phase to address the literacy problems of L2 learners.
- A report containing the results of the research as well as of the intervention programme will be distributed to participating and interested persons, colleagues, the GDE and education unions.

8. Layout (*Article format*)

This PhD thesis consists of four publishable articles. The title of each article, including what it entails, is set out below:

Article 1:

LITERACY DEVELOPMENT AND SELF-CONCEPT OF ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS: A REVIEW OF THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

In the first article, a literature review is undertaken to investigate both the extrinsic and intrinsic factors influencing first (L1) and second language (L2) acquisition, including exploring the theories in which this study is grounded, namely Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, Cummins's Linguistic Interdependence Theory and Marsh and Shavelons' multi-dimensional self-concept scale. The researcher also explores how these three theories relate to ESL learners' literacy development and the interplay of scholastic abilities on the self-concept of ESL learners.

Article 2:

CHALLENGES FACING PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATORS OF ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN THE TSHWANE WEST REGION

The second, empirical article explores the experiences and challenges of teachers teaching ESL learners and the effect thereof on their everyday functioning, literacy achievement and self-concept development. A qualitative research design was used to explore the experiences of ESL teachers via semi-structured interviews. Deriving from the data, the major challenges experienced by teachers teaching ESL learners were identified. Recommendations on improving the literacy skills of ESL learners, including a whole-school approach to teaching and learning, were made by the participating teachers. Future research recommendations, including language supportive learning and translanguaging, were discussed.

Article 3:

IMPLEMENTING AN INTERACTIVE STORYBOOK READING INTERVENTION TO SUPPORT ESL LITERACY DEVELOPMENT: A SOCIAL CULTURAL LEARNING THEORY PERSPECTIVE

The third article comprises both a theoretical discussion and an empirical paper. In the theoretical discussion aspects such as emergent literacy development, the components of language and prerequisite skills to effective reading development are discussed. The empirical section of this article elaborates on the development and implementation of an intervention programme, which inter alia utilised interactive storybook reading in combination with activities to improve ESL learners reading and reading comprehension. These include strategies to develop ESL learners' reading skills such as reading fluency, word reading, vocabulary and reading comprehension.

Article 4:

EXPLORING THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN SELF-CONCEPT AND LITERACY ACHIEVEMENT: A CASE STUDY AMONGST GRADE 4 ESL LEARNERS

The fourth article reports the results of the Piers Harris Self-concept Scale, including determining the possible relationship between ESL learners' literacy skills and their self-concept formation. In addition, it also investigates how different self-concept dimensions contribute to the general of total self-concept of ESL learners. Finally, it determines if ESL learners' self-concept can improve significantly after the implementation of a literacy intervention programme.

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ARTICLE 1

LITERACY DEVELOPMENT AND SELF-CONCEPT OF ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS: A REVIEW OF THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

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ARTICLE 1

LITERACY DEVELOPMENT AND SELF-CONCEPT OF ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS: A REVIEW OF THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

ABSTRACT

Statistics reveal that the quality of literacy performance of learners in South Africa is weak. Various factors, such as the complex socio-economic circumstances in South Africa, including poverty, the policy of having eleven official languages, a troubled educational system, the legacy of apartheid, and a high rate of unemployment have contributed to the low levels of literacy among a large part of the population. Drawing on Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory and Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Theory, this theoretical paper explores the interplay between extrinsic and intrinsic factors that contribute to first-language (L1) and second language (L2) acquisition, and the effect of these factors on the self-concept of ESL learners. An exposition of each of the theories is conducted, including discussing how these theories relate to the literacy development, scholastic abilities and the self-concept of ESL learners. Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory demonstrates the interactive role of various extrinsic and intrinsic factors within the different systems on the total functioning of the individual. These include the interaction between individual learners and their contexts, as well as the effect of this interaction on individual growth and change. A learner's experiences at school, support systems at home and in the community, relationships with peers and friends, as well as the availability of essential resources will have a direct effect on the quality of his or her scholastic success, including his or her literacy and self-esteem.

Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Theory emphasizes the interaction between the language of instruction and the type of competence the child has developed in his or her L1, prior to commencing his or her school career. The learner who has developed adequate literacy skills in his or her first language will be able to make stronger progress in acquiring literacy in a second language. Another important element in language acquisition is self-concept, which is the overall image that one has of oneself and one's strengths and weaknesses. Successes tend to have a positive effect on learners' self-concept, while failures and perceived weaknesses have a negative impact on the self-concept. Through an intensive examination of the theories underlying this study, the researcher is able to demonstrate the interaction between the various systems wherein an individual function, the systems' prospective influence on his or her literacy and academic ability, as well as the role of an individual's self-concept in the whole process. Literacy problems cause scholastic problems and prevent success, with a devastating effect on many learners' self-concepts, their quality

of life and future well-being. Sadly, due to the fact that many of South African government schools are non-functional, a large proportion of South African learners do not get quality education. Researchers, educational role-players and policymakers have to act fast, with intensive remedies to stop the continuous circle of unemployment, poverty and despair resulting from the absence of a basic human right: to get quality education in one's mother tongue.

Keywords: *Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory, Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Theory, first language (L1), second language (L2), English Second Language literacy, extrinsic factors, intrinsic factors, systems, interdependence, interaction, self-concept.*

ABSTRAK

Statistiek dui aan dat die gehalte geletterdheidprestasie van Suid-Afrikaanse leerders swak is. Verskeie faktore, soos die komplekse sosio-ekonomiese omstandighede in Suid-Afrika, insluitende armoede, die beleid van elf amptelike tale, 'n gebrekkige onderwysstelsel, die nalatenskap van apartheid, en 'n hoë werkloosheidsyfer het bygedra tot die lae geletterdheidsvlakke onder 'n groot deel van die bevolking. Deur gebruik te maak van Bronfenbrenner se Bio-ekologiese Sisteemteorie en Cummins se Linguistiese Interafhanklikheidsteorie, ondersoek hierdie teoretiese artikel die wisselwerking tussen ekstrasieke en intrinsieke faktore wat bydra tot eerstetaal- (L1) en tweedetaal- (L2) verwerwing, en die effek van hierdie faktore op die selfkonsep van ESL-leerders. 'n Uiteensetting van elk van die teorieë word verskaf, insluitende 'n bespreking van hoe hierdie teorieë verband hou met die geletterdheidsontwikkeling, skolastiese vermoëns en die selfkonsep van ESL-leerders. Bronfenbrenner se Bio-ekologiese Sisteemteorie demonstreer die interaktiewe rol van verskeie ekstrasieke en intrinsieke faktore binne die verskillende sisteme in die totale funksionering van die individu. Hierdie sluit in die wisselwerking tussen individuele leerders en hulle kontekste, asook die effek van hierdie wisselwerking op individuele groei en verandering. 'n Leerder se ervarings op skool, ondersteuningstelsels tuis en in die gemeenskap, verhoudinge met die portuurgroep en vriende, asook die beskikbaarheid van noodsaaklike hulpbronne sal 'n direkte uitwerking op die gehalte van sy of haar skolastiese sukses uitoefen, insluitende sy of haar geletterdheid en eiewaarde.

Cummins se Linguistiese Interafhanklikheidsteorie beklemtoon die wisselwerking tussen die taal van onderrig en die tipe vaardigheid wat die kind in sy of haar L1 voor die aanvang van die sy/haar skoolloopbaan ontwikkel het. Die leerder wat toereikende geletterdheidsvaardighede in sy of haar eerste taal ontwikkel het, sal in staat wees om veel

beter vordering te maak in die verwerwing van toereikende tweedetaalgeletterdheid. Nog 'n belangrike element in taalverwerwing is selfkonsep, wat die oorkoepelende beeld is wat 'n persoon van sy/haarself en sy/haar eie sterktes en swakhede het. Suksesse het 'n positiewe uitwerking op leerders se selfkonsep, terwyl mislukkings en waargenome swakhede 'n negatiewe uitwerking op 'n persoon se selfkonsep uitoefen. Met behulp van 'n intensiewe ondersoek van die teorieë wat ten grondslag van hierdie studie lê, was die navorser in staat om die wisselwerking tussen die onderskeie sisteme waarbinne 'n individu funksioneer, aan te toon, die sisteme se verwagte invloed op sy of haar geletterdheid en akademiese vermoë, asook die rol van 'n individu se selfkonsep in die hele proses. Geletterdheidsprobleme veroorsaak skolastiese probleme en belemmer sukses, met 'n vernietigende effek op talle leerders se selfkonsep, hulle lewensgehalte en toekomstige welstand. Ongelukkig ontvang 'n groot gedeelte van Suid-Afrika se leerders nie gehalte-onderrig nie, as gevolg van die feit dat talle Suid-Afrikaanse staatskole nie-funksioneel is. Navorsers, onderwysrolspelers en beleidmakers moet vinnig optree, met intensiewe remedies om die voortdurende kringloop van werkloosheid, armoede en wanhoop te verbreek, die resultaat van die afwesigheid van 'n basiese mensereg: dat leerders gehalte-onderrig in hulle moedertaal mag ontvang.

Sleutelwoorde: *Bronfenbrenner se Bio-ekologiese Sisteemteorie, Cummins se Linguistiese Interafhanklikheidsteorie, eerste taal (L1), tweede taal (L2), Engels Tweedetaalgeletterdheid, ekstrinsieke faktore, intrinsieke faktore, sisteme, interafhanklikheid, interaksie, selfkonsep.*

1.1 Introduction

Literacy is one of the major factors contributing to the overall wellbeing and positive self-concept of every individual (Hosogi, Okada, Fujii, Noguchi & Watanabe, 2012:1; Schallock, Brown, Cummins, Felce, Matikka, Keith & Parmeter, 2002:457–470). Literacy refers to the ability to read and write, as well as the ability to use language proficiently (Collins Dictionary, 2016); while 'self-concept' refers to how someone thinks about, evaluates or perceives oneself. And so, a child who fails to achieve literacy skills usually develops a lack of confidence in his or her ability to succeed, contributing to a low self-concept.

Illiteracy has an overall negative impact on the self-assertion of an individual, and thus literacy also plays a key role in the socio-economic independence of every person. According to Archambault, Eccles and Vida (2010:804), literacy skills are essential for daily functioning. They are associated with better employment rates, higher socio-economic status and an improved quality of life. Many youths who do not acquire basic reading and writing skills leave school at an early age, with a deleterious bearing on their expected quality of life. Research highlights the importance of a positive self-concept and confidence in the successful execution of literacy tasks (Bornman & Rose, 2011:138; Nel & Nel, 2013:102). The inability to read and write inevitably leads to lowered self-concept and a reduced ability to succeed.

As a developing country, South Africa faces many challenges. The unique composition of its population, its complex socio-economic factors, the existence of eleven official languages and a troubled educational system are all factors contributing to the literacy challenges faced by learners (Prinsloo, 2016:52). Although the Constitution of South Africa recognizes the individual status of the eleven official languages, in practice it is difficult to apply so many languages and make them accessible as languages of teaching and learning in schools (Department of Education, 2010a: 14-16). Research highlights the advantage of first language (L1) education, in particular during the initial formal years (Van Staden, 2011:10). Although only one in ten South African children is a mother tongue speaker of English, the majority are taught in English by teachers whose mother tongue is not English (Hugo, 2008:65; Nel & Swanepoel, 2010:55). A further complication is the aspiration of many South African parents to have their children educated in English as they believe that English is the language of empowerment which will provide opportunities for their children to break the chains of poverty and to excel in their future jobs (Le Cordeur, 2012:6). It all adds up to a problematic picture concerning the literacy levels of our learners. A recent government report revealed that 58.1% of Grade 3 learners did not achieve the acceptable and requisite performance level (DoE, 2011). In a Performance in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) report, South Africa was ranked last of a total of 40 countries. Only 35% of Grade R learners in South Africa meet

the minimum criteria for early literacy development (Vally, 2012:617). Recent statistics regarding the PIRLS 2016 show no improvement and underscore the devastating facts about the literacy abilities of our learners. According to the 2016 PIRLS report 78% of South African Grade 4 children were not able to reach the lowest benchmark compared to 4% internationally. 78% of South African grade 4 learners cannot read for meaning. They are not able to retrieve basic information from the text to answer simple questions. A further outcry is that there is no statistically significant difference between the records for 2011 and 2016 (Howie, Combrinck, Roux, Tshele, Mokoena, & McLeod, 2017:2-5).

As mentioned before, the term 'literacy' refers to the ability to read and write and to use language competently (Bouwer & Dednam, 2016:172). In contrast to certain developmental achievements, such as learning to walk and talk, learning to read and write is not a natural process. According to Nel and Nel (2013:90), reading is not only the decoding of letters into sounds and words but also involves the complex process of integrating prior knowledge and experiences with the written word in order to comprehend the message. Comprehension is also influenced by the information and experience that the reader brings to the printed page (Nel & Nel, 2013:90). The successful acquisition of literacy is open to a wide range of influences. The lack of or limited exposure to the printed word during the early pre-school years will have a negative impact on the development of literacy in the individual (Buckingham, Beaman & Wheldall, 2013:431). According to Lenyai (2011:90), emergent literacy includes knowledge and the appreciation of books, phonological and alphabetic knowledge, and print awareness. The total context within which children are raised has a strong impact on the provision of essential emergent literacy activities. Inadequate language stimulation, low literacy levels among parents and low educational expectations can severely limit the literacy levels of learners (Van der Berg, 2008:146). Nel and Nel (2013:87) stipulate that literacy develops from the following essential pre-requisites: well-developed oral language abilities; exposure to written language to understand how text works; cognitive maturation, where metalinguistic awareness allows the child to see language as a unit; and good quality of instruction.

From the above, it is evident that the environment and experiences of children in their pre-school years have a significant effect on their literacy skills. A study by Buckingham et al. (2013:428–446) determined that the home learning environment in which the young child grows up has an important impact on the future literacy abilities of the child. The socio-economic status of a family may influence the quality of the home learning environment. Hartas (2011:910), for example, has found that children living in poverty, as well as the children of mothers without any educational qualifications, have weaker literacy abilities than their peers in more educated and economically well-off families. If one takes this into account, the intricate

socio-economic circumstances in South Africa, including poverty and unemployment, contribute to a rather negative picture of the literacy abilities of a large part of our population. A struggle to become fully literate and the results of academic failures will have a negative effect on the self-concept of the individual.

Against this background, the need for urgent practices to improve the literacy performance of South African learners is evident. The main aim of this article will be an exploration of the theories in which this study is grounded, namely Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory and Cummins's Linguistic Interdependence Theory, and how these theories relate to literacy development, scholastic abilities and self-concept in English Second Language (ESL) learners.

This study will be conducted within a transformative paradigm, the main characteristic of which is, according to Mertens (1999:4), the view that the lives and experiences of marginalized groups are of central importance. Both intrinsic and extrinsic factors should be taken into account when investigating the literacy development, scholastic progress, and self-esteem of ESL learners. This theoretical paper will explore the complex interplay between intrinsic and extrinsic barriers to learning and how these barriers pose a possible challenge to the development of literacy and the self-concept of second language learners. Firstly, the researcher will draw on Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory to investigate the joint influences exerted by the different levels of the environment on a child's development (Swart & Pettipher, 2016:12). Bronfenbrenner's theory will be used to promote understanding of the interaction between individual learners and their contexts, and the effect of this interaction on individual growth and change. Secondly, the researcher will draw on Cummins's Linguistic Interdependence Theory (1979:2009), to explore its applicability to the literacy development of L2 learners within the South African educational context. Cummins's theory holds that the level of L2 competence that a bilingual learner attains is partially a function of the type of competence he or she has developed in L1 prior to extensive exposure to L2 (Coetzee-Van Rooy, 2010:27; Cummins, 1979:2009; Eva & Reka, 2013:177). In South Africa, a large group of children from deprived backgrounds begin their school careers with poorly developed L1 abilities, only to be educated in a second language (L2) (Schlebusch & Thobedi, 2005:306). Thirdly the researcher will explore the self-concept development of the ESL learner by drawing on the work of Marsh and Shavelson (1988), which describes self-concept as a multi-dimensional construct.

The interaction between Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory, Cummins's Linguistic Interdependence Theory and the resulting effect on the self-esteem on ESL learners will be the main focus of this theoretical paper.

1.2 Problem statement and research questions

The need for urgent strategies aimed at improving literacy skills in both first- and second language learners in South Africa is apparent. The pre-PIRLS 2011 study ranked the South African Grade 4 learners as the group with the lowest reading achievement internationally (Van Staden, Bosker & Bergbauer, 2016:4). It emphasizes the need for urgent and intensive intervention. Various researchers postulate that the absence of well-developed literacy skills has a negative impact on ESL learners' self-concept and their quality of life, thus accentuating the need for early intervention (Archambault et al., 2010:805; Galbraith & Alexander, 2005:28; Swärd, 2013:319). As seen from the mentioned pre-PIRLS study in 2011, the crisis is applicable to learners not only in the Foundation Phase but also in the higher grades. Without intervention, it will inevitably lead to high dropout rates early in their school careers and a lifelong struggle against poverty and a lack of human dignity.

The questions under discussion for this article are:

- How does Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory relate to the plight of the second language learner within the South African educational context?
- How is Cummins's Interdependence Theory relevant to the literacy development of ESL learners in South Africa?
- How does Marsh and Shavelson's multi-dimensional self-concept theory relate to the self-concept formation of ESL learners with literacy backlogs?

1.3 The aims of the research

Currently, most of the research and interventions aimed at supporting the literacy problems of South African learners have mostly focussed on pre-school and foundation-phase learners. However, a large group of learners in the intermediate phase (Grades 4–6) do not possess adequate and age-appropriate literacy skills (Le Cordeur, 2012:78; Van der Berg, 2008:146; Van Staden et al., 2016:4). Healthy and balanced self-esteems, a good quality of life and future successful inclusion in the labour force are at risk.

The main purpose of this theoretical paper is to explore the theoretical underpinnings that inform the plight of the second language learner within the South African educational context. In doing so, the researcher in the current study will investigate the interplay between

Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory and the circumstances of the second language learner within the South African educational context. The micro-, meso-, exo- and macro-systems, within Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, and their interaction with the quality of education, literacy skills and self-concept of the ESL learner will be investigated. Secondly, the influence of Cummins's Linguistic Interdependence Theory on the literacy development of the ESL learner will also be investigated. In this theory, Cummins postulates that the level of L2 proficiency that a bilingual learner reaches depends on the level of competence he or she has developed in his or her mother tongue before extensive exposure to L2. Thirdly, with regard to the self-concept development of the ESL learner, the researcher, as mentioned before, will draw on the work of theorists who view self-concept as a multi-dimensional construct (Marsh, Byrne, & Shavelson, 1988). Emanating from the above a very important objective of this article is to establish the impact of the interaction between intrinsic and extrinsic factors, in combination with the implications of Cummins Linguistic Interdependence Theory and how it affects the self-concept of the ESL learner in South Africa.

1.4 Research design and methodology

In this theoretical article, the researcher aims to establish how the interplay between Bioecological Systems Theory of Bronfenbrenner and Cummins's Linguistic Interdependence Theory relates to the literacy development, scholastic abilities and self-concept of ESL learners. In the process, previous research, as reported in journal articles and other scientific sources, will be reviewed.

Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory explains the interactions of the different systems of the environment on the development and functioning of the individual. The Linguistic Interdependence Theory of Cummins hypothesizes that the level of L2 competence that a bilingual learner reaches is partially a function of the type of competence the learner has developed in his or her L1 prior to extensive exposure to L2 (Coetzee-Van Rooy, 2010:27). The interplay between the two theories and the effect thereof on the total development and the self-concept of the individual will be discussed.

1.5 Literature review

The following question will be discussed in this section: How does Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory relate to the plight of the second language learner within the South African education context? The Bioecological Theory of Bronfenbrenner will be analysed and applied to the circumstances of the ESL learners in South Africa. Subsequently the second question underlying this article will be investigated: How is Cummins's Interdependence

Theory relevant to the literacy development of ESL learners in South Africa? Lastly the third question will be addressed: How might different intrinsic and extrinsic factors at play in the various systems surrounding a learner, in combination with poor literacy in L2 due to the implications of Cummins's Linguistic Interdependence Theory, influence the self-concept of ESL learners in South Africa?

1.5.1 Bronfenbrenner's Biological model

Urie Bronfenbrenner developed a Bioecological Model that explained the direct and indirect influences of the environment on a child's life. Bronfenbrenner (1994:1646) states that both the environment and the developing person are important in the development process. In order to understand human development, one needs to examine the different systems of interaction that are not related to a single setting but should also take into account the influence of the environment beyond the situation that contains the subject. The interacting dimensions that are central to this process include the following: personal factors, process factors, contexts and time (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2010:40). Every person in any dimension of life will be influenced by a multitude of factors which will have different effects on the total functioning of each person. In short, McGuckin and Minton (2014:38–39) describe the social development of a child in terms of the Bioecological Model proposed by Bronfenbrenner.

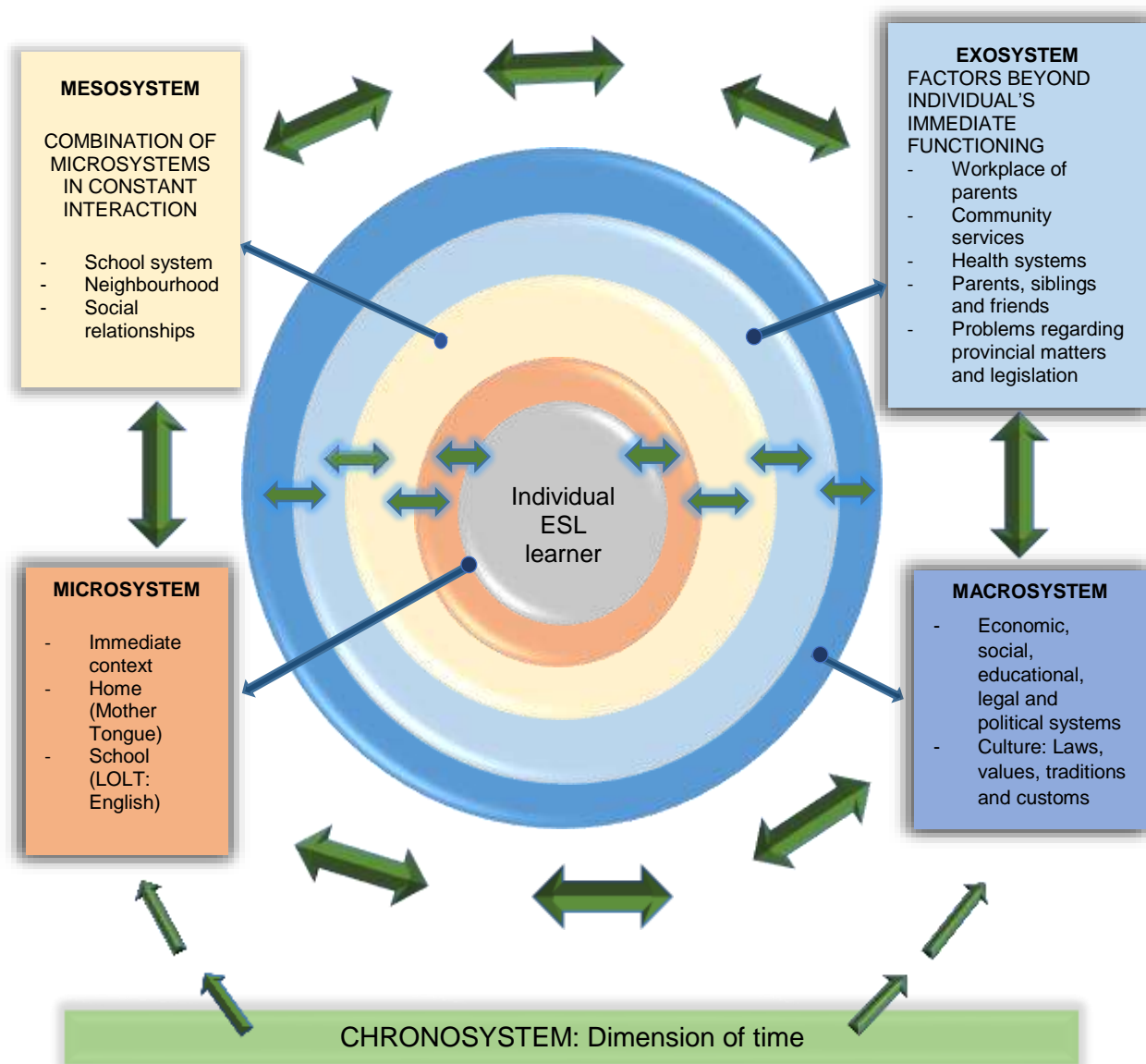


Figure 1-1: Urie Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model of Human Development (Woolfolk, 2014:76)

In the microsystem, the socialization of the child, which forms the foundation of literacy, is influenced by those who are the closest to the child. More interaction with different people will enhance the child's development and literacy. The mesosystem is the connection between the different contexts in the microsystem, for instance, the interrelationships between the home and the school, after-school care and the home, the home and the neighbourhood. Strong and diverse links with high levels of communication between the different contexts are likely to have a powerful influence on the child's overall development (McGuckin & Minton, 2014:38). Although the child is not directly involved in the exosystem and the macrosystem, these systems have an indirect influence on the child's life. In the exosystem, the child's life at home

can be influenced by how fulfilling a parent or both parents experience their occupations. Factors like economic stability, social justice and equality in the macrosystem may also influence the total development of a child (Swart & Pettipher, 2016:15). In the chronosystems, challenges such as divorce, changes in the family structure, relocation and changes in socio-economic status may also influence the development and happiness of a child (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000:121; Donald et al., 2010:38; Guhn & Goelman, 2011:206).

For a clear understanding of the influence of the different systems in Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model on the literacy development and self-concept of ESL learners, it is useful to differentiate between intrinsic and extrinsic factors. In any system, differing degrees of intrinsic and extrinsic factors interact with and reinforce each other and have a major influence on the development of the individual or, in this case, the learner, in his or her own environment (Bornman & Rose, 2010:28; Swart & Pettipher, 2016:13–15). Due to the specific circumstances in which a large part of South Africa's citizens exists and functions, both extrinsic and intrinsic factors are likely to influence the functioning of the ESL learner in South Africa. *Extrinsic factors* are factors that operate essentially from outside the person, for example, inadequate educational resources or poverty. *Intrinsic factors* are usually within the person, for example, intellectual impairment and congenital illnesses, as well as every person's genes. According to Bronfenbrenner's theory, these different factors are in constant interaction, resulting in complex influences on the development, education, and learning of children in South Africa (Swart & Pettipher, 2016:13-15).

The quality of literacy of ESL learners in South Africa, apart from the influences by and within the different systems of the Bioecological Model of Bronfenbrenner, is also influenced by certain challenges with regard to the language of learning and teaching (LOLT). These problems will be discussed in depth in Article 2, but they include the parents' choice to have their children educated in English, the poor quality of education at certain schools, dysfunctional schools, and the requirement of the curriculum for the LOLT, which is often the learners' second or even third language, as the first language.

1.5.1.1 The microsystem

The smallest of the systems in Bronfenbrenner's theory is the *microsystem* (Swart & Pettipher, 2016:14). The microsystem includes the child's immediate context, which affects the developing child directly. The activities, roles and interpersonal relations between individuals and the systems in which these participate, for example, the learner's family, school, and friends are included in the microsystem (see Figure 1.1, p 10). In this environment, the child's initial frame of reference concerning the world and his or her moral grounding are shaped.

Usually, this system provides a feeling of belonging, love, support and protection. According to Swart and Pettipher (2016:14), this system ought to support a strong basis from which the child can venture to explore and develop. The influence of significant others plays an important role in the development of the individual. The distinctive personalities, temperaments, and systems of belief of others can also influence the development of the individual. It is clear that the whole development of a child, even in areas such as scholastic success and literacy, is embedded in the microsystem (Donald et al., 2010:38; Swart & Pettipher, 2016:14).

According to Figure 1:1 (p 10), the microsystem in which the child is exposed to his or her first and very important influences forms an integral part of various other influential systems. Complex interactions constantly occur which have a direct influence on the individual person - in this case, the ESL learner. These interactions, which usually occur in personal, long-term relationships, are extremely important because they shape the development of the individual. They are termed proximal interactions (Donald et al., 2010:40). A proximal process involves interactions between the developing human being and persons, objects and symbols, in his or her immediate environment. Donald et al. (2010:40) emphasizes that these interactions are not one-sided; rather, they take place in both directions, separately or simultaneously. The use of language forms a large part of the interactions. To be effective, the interactions must occur regularly and over a period of time. Due to each individual's level of maturity, as well as variations in the person's social contexts, changes occur in the different systems that affect the development of the individual (Donald et al., 2010:40). At this stage, it is important to note that the interaction between the ESL learner and his or her family usually occurs in the mother tongue, while the learner interacts mainly in the L2 while at school. There are two major types of outcomes produced by the proximal interactions, namely competence and dysfunction. Competence is demonstrated by the acquirement and development of the ability to conduct one's reactions and behaviour in any part or domain of life. Dysfunction refers to periodic difficulty in maintaining control and growth in different domains of development (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000:115; Donald et al., 2010:40). Inadequate communication due to mother tongue communication (at home) and problems with L2 communication (at school) may have a negative effect on the ESL learners' sense of competence. According to the individual's experiences, a sense of competence or dysfunction may have a lasting effect on his or her scholastic success and self-concept.

Bronfenbrenner later expanded his theory to include person characteristics, which are instrumental in shaping the course of future development. These characteristics include the influence of *dispositions*, *ecological resources* and *demand characteristics* (Swart & Pettipher, 2016:12). Dispositions are defined as forces that can mobilize and sustain proximal processes

or interfere with, limit or prevent these processes. For example, impulsiveness, aggression, feelings of insecurity and shyness, or, in contrast, curiosity and responsiveness to initiatives. Ecological resources consist of bio-psychological accountabilities, for example, genetic barriers, physical and or brain impairments as well as assets that influence the person's ability to engage meaningfully in proximal processes (Swart & Pettipher, 2016:13). Examples of assets are abilities, knowledge, and skills. Demand characteristics have the capacity to provoke or dampen reactions from the social environment and they can promote or disturb psychological growth. In addition, demand characteristics include factors such as fussiness *versus* happiness or passivity *versus* hyperactivity. It is important to note that the development of a person's characteristics depends mainly on the availability of options in a given culture at a particular point in time (Swart & Pettipher, 2016:13). It is evident that even in the first core segment of functioning, several elements may, at an early stage, already have an influence on the literacy development, scholastic success, and self-concept of an ESL learner.

Another negative dimension to an already bleak picture is the impact of the HIV and AIDS pandemic in South Africa. Although there seems to be a decline in the number of cases in recent years, mostly due to better medical care and education, there are still a staggering number of children affected by the pandemic. Many parents, family members, and other caretakers within the microsystem die due to the illness. Statistics provided by Statistics SA indicate an increase of 3.9% of deaths due to HIV disease from 2012 to 2013. The total number of persons living with HIV in South Africa increased from an estimated 4,72 million in 2002 to 7,03 million by 2016 (Statistics SA, 2017:7). This has resulted in the problem that young children often are forced to act as heads of households or they become homeless because they have nobody to take care of them. In these cases, education is seldom an option. Some children are forced into sex work or theft and other criminal activities in order to survive (Prinsloo, 2016:55). This perpetuates the cycle of poverty and misery. Although the number of AIDS-related deaths declined consistently since 2006 from 325 241 to 150 759 AIDS related deaths in 2016 (Statistics SA, 2017:7), the impact still remains problematic. Some orphans have a grandparent or older relative caring for them – a positive outcome in terms of love and care – but many of these caretakers are elderly people who can communicate only in their mother tongue. As most of the learners receive their schooling in English, their caretakers are not always able to give the children the necessary support with homework and school-related matters.

1.5.1.2 The mesosystem

With the further growth of each individual, new relations and interactions develop, resulting in the formation of the *mesosystem*. The mesosystem is a combination of microsystems that are

in constant interaction with one another (Figure 1.1, p 10). It includes slightly higher-order environments, such as the whole school system, the neighbourhood and social relations, including friends and peer groups (Swart & Pettipher, 2016:14). A learner's experiences at school, support systems at home and in the community, relationships with peers and friends as well as the availability of essential resources (all part of the mesosystem) will have a direct effect on the quality of his or her scholastic success, including his or her literacy and self-esteem.

South Africa faces many challenges such as poverty, unemployment, political instability as well as overpopulation which are caused by unplanned urbanization. In this milieu, the negative influence on the quality of education should not be under-estimated. Moreover, problems such as unemployment, a culture of vandalism and violence, a lack of order, morality and structure add to the deterioration of social and emotional wellbeing of societies. Services such as health, education, and social support are under strain, inadequate and, in cases, malfunction, thereby adding to the decline of communities (Prinsloo, 2016:53). Millions of people lack the resources to obtain food and clothes, pay school fees and transport and, in numerous cases, they resort to non-payment practices, which contribute to the further decline of services (Prinsloo, 2016:53). Where regular schooling does occur, Buckingham et al. (2013:429) argue that the following components of socio-economic status correlate significantly with literacy: household income, parents' occupations, and parents' education.

The early home language environment has a significant impact on the acquisition and development of early literacy skills. Households with a lower socio-economic status tend to have lower quality home language environments. Along similar lines, a study by the Australian Institute of Family Studies (2011: Online) finds that 62% of parents with a tertiary education read to their children every day, while only 28% of children of parents who did not complete school are read to daily. A study by Hartas (2011:910) has shown that children from low socio-economic backgrounds and the children of parents without educational qualifications show less success in literacy as well as in social development. In a study conducted by Bradley and Putnick (2012:76-91), it was found that poor socio-economic factors have a negative impact on learners' literacy abilities. It is important to acknowledge that there are numerous learners in South Africa who, despite all the odds like poverty and limited resources available to them, excelled and became successful and caring people. It, however, remains a struggle for people in strained circumstances and many are unsuccessful. South Africa has eleven official languages, and English is the mother tongue for only one in ten children. However, the majority of South African children are taught in English, often by teachers whose mother tongue is also not English (Hugo, 2008:65). During recent years the impact of the suspect quality of some of

the ESL teachers' own English ability on the quality of the literacy of the learners came under the spotlight. Hugo and Nieman (2010:61); Nel and Müller (2010:636); and Uys, Van der Walt, Van den Berg and Botha (2007:77) suggested that many South African ESL teachers who have to teach subject content in English but whose mother tongue is not English are themselves not sufficiently proficient in English to assist learners to acquire academic literacy in English. In this study the interviews conducted with teachers from five different schools during the qualitative data-gathering phase of the study as discussed in article 2, indicate that the teachers' lack of proficiency in English may be a previously unrecognized cause of the literacy problems of ESL learners. These teachers provided various reasons for the literacy problems experienced by the ESL learners in their classes but none had any reservations or expressed any concern regarding their own ESL abilities. Research by Pretorius (2002a:173; 2002b:93) further emphasizes the problem by stating that the continuous circle of teaching by teachers who are not mother tongue English speakers adds to the continuous decline of the quality of literacy of ESL learners.

One of the products of the decline of society is often the deterioration of moral and values systems. High levels of crime, rape, abuse and violence against women, children and the elderly have become daily occurrences (Prinsloo, 2016:54–55). The effect of these crimes on the overall psychological well-being of people trying to make an everyday living is devastating and adds to the cycle of poverty and hardship. On the other side of the scale is the modern, strong materialistic outlook of the 21st-century world citizen. Often essentials that money cannot buy, such as faith, time, and strong and healthy relationships, are replaced by materialism and the collection of material status symbols (Prinsloo, 2016:55). The effect of the interaction of various microsystems within the mesosystem has a negative impact on the ESL learner.

1.5.1.3 The exosystem

Interrelated with the mesosystem is the *exosystem*, which includes factors beyond the individual's immediate functioning (Swart & Pettipher, 2016:15). It includes settings such as the workplaces of the parents, community services, and health systems, as well as more informal systems, for example, the parents' network of friends and the friends of siblings. Problems in the management of provincial matters and legislation may also indirectly have an influence on the individual (Figure 1.1, p 10). For example, learners suffering from chronic illnesses may frequently be absent from school as a result of poor health services; there may be problems with the management of education in a province and parents' work stress may also lead to a strained relationship with the learner. These examples are the tip of the iceberg

of matters in the exosystem that have a negative impact on the quality of the ESL learner's literacy.

A factor that also contributes negatively to the literacy ability of children in South Africa is the wide scope of language and cultural differences within the population. Language and culture form part of the exosystem. The morals, values, and customs of different cultural groups are not always the same and may cause misunderstanding, a lack of trust and hostile behaviour. It is not a given that the teachers and learners at a school have the same value systems or the same insight into each other's beliefs and customs. South Africa has eleven official languages. Before 1994, English and Afrikaans were the only official languages in a country where the mother tongue of most of the citizens was neither of these two languages. Although it is important that the Constitution of South Africa recognizes the eleven official languages and promotes mother tongue education, there are difficulties in the practical implementation of this policy (Prinsloo, 2016:53). Apart from poverty, illness, limited resources and other extrinsic factors, the mother tongue teacher-learner ratio is a significant problem with not enough qualified mother tongue teachers to meet the needs of all the learners. The result is that most learners in South Africa receive school instruction in a second language, in classrooms with more than forty other learners. Often the language of instruction used by the teacher is also not his or her mother tongue. As will be explained further on in the article, according to the Linguistic Interdependence Theory proposed by Cummins, it has a serious, often negative, impact on the literacy ability of the learner.

1.5.1.4 The macrosystem

The consistency and similarity across different settings within a culture form the *macrosystem*. According to Bronfenbrenner (Guhn & Goelman, 2011:206), the macrosystem forms the master model of the micro-, meso- and exosystems. The macrosystem refers to the all-encompassing institutional patterns of the prevailing culture, which includes the economic, social, educational, legal and political systems. Hook (2009:506) states that the laws, values, traditions and customs of a particular society can be found at the macrosystem level. This level may also, explicitly and implicitly, grant meaning to activities, social networks, and different roles, as well as to the interrelationships between these. In South Africa, the macrosystem confronts the system with challenges such as unemployment and poverty, with associated health and social risks, which may have a profound impact on the academic development, the quality of literacy and eventually the self-concept of many learners. These problems are worsened by the fact that the quality of education for large parts of our population is among the lowest in the world (Basson & Le Cordeur, 2013:384; Vally, 2012:617). Prinsloo (2016:53) has identified the following factors that contribute to barriers in the provision of quality

education for every learner in South Africa: poverty, under-development, environmental deprivation, unplanned urbanisation, unemployment and negative expectations for the future, the disintegration of family life, a decline of moral and value systems and an alarming increase in violence against women and children.

In November 2017, South Africa's unemployment level was stated to be 27.7% (Statistics SA, 2017). More than a quarter of the population of the country is unemployed. For all these people, everyday life becomes a struggle for existence. In circumstances like these, attaining literacy through learning and schooling is challenging and, for many parents of learners, it becomes the least of their problems. The interdependence and interaction of the different systems in Bronfenbrenner's model is an ongoing process. When a person experiences a problem or problems, the cause or the solution should not be sought in one or some of the systems in isolation without taking the interaction between the different systems into account.

1.5.1.5 The chronosystem

Bronfenbrenner also considered the dimension of time, the *chronosystem*, as an essential influence on the development of the individual (Hook, 2009:506). Time entails the patterning of events and development over the lifespan of an individual. Time also constitutes an extensive level of ecological influence, including diverse factors such as changes in family size, places of residence and employment. Larger scale cultural changes are caused by factors like war and economic cycles. In South Africa, high levels of unemployment, violence, violent strikes and cultural differences between groups of people which are not managed in a respectful and sensitive way have a destabilizing effect on the scholastic development of a large number of learners (Prinsloo, 2016:52).

Time has a prominent place in the micro-, meso- and macrosystems (Swart & Pettipher, 2016:15–16). It has previously been stated that the proximal interactions that occur in relationships have a defining influence on the development of the individual. These proximal interactions are affected by personal factors as well as the social contexts in which they occurred. The effectiveness of proximal processes tends to be undermined in environments that are unstable and unpredictable across space and time. Bronfenbrenner states in his later research (Swart & Pettipher, 2016:16) that proximal processes involve *more complex reciprocal interaction*. For these processes to be more effective, they need to occur on a *regular basis over an extended period of time*. Bronfenbrenner also distinguishes between micro-time, meso-time, and macro-time. Micro-time represents continuity *versus* discontinuity; meso-time indicates the periodic nature of the episode in terms of days and weeks while macro-time includes the changing expectations and events that occur within and across

generations and are responsible for changes over the course of lifetimes. An example is the poverty, violence, and abuse which are continuous issues in South African society and affect a large group of ESL learners in the country (Swart & Pettipher, 2016:16). The unemployment rate in South Africa is 27.7 %. According to the Victims of Crime Survey by Statistics SA (2017:25), there is an alarming increase in violent crime resulting in murder from the 2015/2016 year: 14 930 victims, to the 2016/2017 year's 16 201 victims. South Africa's murder rate is five times the world average and, according to the South African Police, most murders happen in low socio-economic areas (Lamprecht, 2015:1).

Insight into Bronfenbrenner's theory provides an understanding of the dynamic interaction between the different influences on the development of a person. In South Africa, a developing country, the people consist of a unique and diverse mixture of different population groups and cultures. Economic stability and growth, education and health services face huge challenges. The gap between rich and poor is substantial, with an unfortunate escalation of the numbers of poor people which has an ongoing negative effect on the development, education and quality of life of poor people (Basson & Le Cordeur, 2013:384; Prinsloo, 2016: 52). The effects of all the factors influencing an individual from as early as before birth, the interrelated interactions and the effects of these on the overall functioning of an individual during each stage of life are far-reaching.

When considering Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory, it is evident that intrinsic as well as extrinsic factors constantly interact and play an important role in the daily functioning of every person, including the ESL learner. In the microsystem, the interaction between the child and different people in the family, peers, and friends enhance the child's overall development, including his or her literacy. Socio-economic problems like poverty, unemployment as well as associated problems like substance abuse and domestic violence often deprive the child of the necessary stimulation and exposure to an environment which stimulates the skills that are essential for successful literacy acquisition. The effect of a LOLT that is not his or her mother tongue on an ESL learner, who has been deprived of the essential pre-school development of skills, may add to the possible barriers to learning and other future difficulties. This problem usually started at the home environment in the microsystem but is strengthened by the same deficiencies in the mesosystem – which connects the different contexts in the microsystem. Interrelationships between the home and the school, after-school care and the home, the home and the neighbourhood form part of the mesosystem. Strong and diverse links between the different contexts will have a powerful influence on the child's overall development. The exosystem and the macrosystem both have an indirect influence on the life of a child. The exosystem includes factors beyond the individual's immediate day-to-

day functioning. Settings such as the workplaces and associated stress of the parents, the provincial management of schools and health services form part of this system and have an indirect influence on the development and functioning of the learner. In the second article, a more in-depth discussion of the influence of non-functional schools and the whole issue of the availability of mother tongue education will clearly indicate the influence of the exosystem on the quality of the literacy of the ESL learner. The macrosystem consists of the laws, values, traditions and customs of a society. This level may also, explicitly and implicitly, grant meaning to activities, social networks, and different roles, as well as their interrelationships. Bronfenbrenner also considers the dimension of time, the chronosystem, as an essential influence on the development of the individual (Hook, 2009:506). The ordering of events over the lifespan of an individual, and changes in family size, places of residence and employment belong to the chronosystem. In South Africa, high levels of unemployment and violence are likely to have a destabilizing effect on the scholastic development of a large number of learners (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000:121; Donald et al., 2010:38; Guhn & Goelman, 2011:207). The ESL learner who is already hampered by socio-economic problems at home and in the community will experience a backlog in pre-literacy stimulation, thus beginning his or her formal schooling with a backlog. To be educated in a second language rather than in the mother tongue aggravates an already bad situation concerning the literacy of these learners.

It is therefore clear that the constant interaction of extrinsic and intrinsic factors from the micro-, meso-, exo- and macro systems, whether they are positive or negative, along with the passing of time in the chronosystem has a profound effect on the quality of life, literacy, academic development and overall functioning of the ESL learner in South Africa. Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory is useful for understanding the plight of the ESL learner within the South African educational context. This theory enables the researcher to highlight the ways in which the different factors interact within the various systems in the individual's daily life. Applying Bronfenbrenner's theory allows us to emphasise the influence of extrinsic as well as intrinsic factors on the quality of the literacy of ESL learners in South Africa.

1.5.2 Cummins's linguistic interdependence theory

In the following section, the researcher will examine the influence of the Interdependence Theory of Cummins on the literacy development of ESL learners in South Africa.

The previous discussion of Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory has highlighted that the majority of South African learners do not receive formal education in their mother tongue, but rather in English. For most of these learners, English is their second or often their

third language (Hugo & Nieman, 2010:60; Pretorius, 2002b:92; Nel & Muller, 2010:70). Before the new political dispensation in 1994, English and Afrikaans were the only official languages. Learners whose mother tongue was not Afrikaans or English received their schooling from Grade 4 onwards in English. The new Constitution provides for eleven official languages (SA:1997). Only a small part of South African learners' mother tongue is English, but the majority are taught in English by teachers who also have a mother tongue other than English (Du Toit and Nel, 2014:77; Prinsloo, 2016:63). Many South African parents idealize an English education for their children because they see it as a language that is widely in use, not only in South Africa but worldwide (Le Cordeur, 2012:6). In an overview entitled *The Status of the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) in South African Public Schools*, the Department of Education (2010a:22) states that English is the dominant language for learning and teaching due to a combination of factors. English is not only widely associated with economic growth but it is also the language used for further studies. Many people see it as a global language and one that is commonly used in the working environment. According to the Linguistic Interdependence Theory of Cummins, education in a language that is not your mother tongue may negatively affect the literacy development as well as the academic performances of learners (Cummins, 1979:233; Eva & Reka, 2013:177).

In his theory, Cummins postulates that the level of L2 competence that a bilingual learner attains is partially a function of the type of competence he or she has developed in his or her L1 prior to extensive exposure to an L2 (Coetzee-Van Rooy, 2010:27; Eva & Reka, 2013:177). The influence of the L1 on the L2 is subject to adequate exposure to the L1 and the motivation to learn the non-dominant (L2) language (Verhoeven et al., 2012:177). The two languages are thus supported by shared concepts, knowledge derived from learning and other experiences, as well as the cognitive abilities of each learner (Chuang, Joshi & Dixon: 2011:98).

According to Cummins (1979:233), the interdependence of L1 and L2 results in a linguistic symbiosis that is mirrored in both written and spoken language. Cummins (1979:233) proposes that there is an interaction between the language of instruction and the type of competence the child has developed in his L1 prior to the beginning of his or her school career. In the course of learning one language, a person acquires a set of skills and implicit metalinguistic knowledge that can be drawn upon when working in another language. Cummins (1979:233) states that this common underlying proficiency (CUP) provides the basis for the development of both L1 and L2. He therefore theorizes that academic ability transfers across languages. The learner who has developed good literacy skills in his or her first language will be able to make stronger progress in acquiring literacy in a second language (Cummins, 2000:173).

Although South Africa has eleven official languages and despite the fact that only one in ten South African children speaks English as his or her mother tongue, the majority of learners are taught in English. Their teachers often also have a mother tongue other than English (Hugo, 2008:65; Nel & Swanepoel, 2010:55). In most of these cases, the learners are submerged in the LOLT (English) at the expense of their mother tongue. A high percentage of Grade R and Grade 1 learners have fundamentally weak literacy abilities due to poor literacy environments in their early childhood years (Bradley & Putnick, 2012:76-91; Hartas, 2011:910). When they start formal schooling in Grade 1, they are entirely immersed in the L2 environment before they have become fully proficient in their mother tongue. This results in poor competence in both their mother tongue as well as the LOLT. Although it may appear that the ESL learners adapt easily to social communication in the LOLT, the lack of academic proficiency has a negative impact on the academic side of their schooling and future success.

Effective communication in L2 is dependent on what Cummins calls Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). These Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills include the skills that allow learners to use L2 in their everyday lives, including for informal listening and speaking skills, which are typically acquired quickly by most learners (Cummins, 2008:487-488). However, language competence at the BICS level does not equip a learner to execute cognitive operations adequately. Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency forms the basis for a learner's ability to cope with academic demands, such as the ability to engage in cognitively demanding and problem-solving tasks (Koda, 2007:19; Schleich & Thobedi, 2005:309; Van Staden, 2011:12). Learning in the mother tongue improves the process of developing a more sophisticated vocabulary and grammatical knowledge (CALP) which enables the learner to meet the academic demands of his or her education. The literacy abilities of ESL learners often reflect only the BICS status in English, their language of learning (LOL) and not the CALP status which is essential for academic learning. For the ESL learner in South Africa, this can have adverse consequences on scholastic progress. The difference between the phonology of English and the mother tongues of the majority of learners in South Africa is vast. It has implications not only for the learner's oral usage of English but also for their comprehension, reading and writing skills (Nel & Nel, 2013:111).

Cummins (1979: 224-225) furthermore distinguishes between additive (immersion) and subtractive (submersion) bilingualism. In additive bilingualism, the first language (L1) continues to be developed and the first culture to be valued while the second language is added. By contrast, in subtractive bilingualism, the second language (L2) is added at the expense of the first language and culture. This happens when a child is fully immersed in the second language

environment before he or she becomes proficient in the basics of the mother tongue. As early as 1979, Cummins (1979:225) claimed that learners in submersion programmes are made aware of their failure because they find it difficult to communicate with their teacher and friends in their second language – which is the language used at school. According to Castro, Paez, Dickinson and Frede (2011:16) and Murphy (2003:30), various studies have shown that a strong foundation in a child's first language is essential for the successful acquisition of a second language. The negative impact of this on the ESL learners of South Africa is evident, as most of these learners are immersed in a second language at the expense of their mother tongue (Nel & Nel, 2013:111).

As discussed in 1.5.1 (p 9), Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory underscores the interplay of socio-economic factors, such as poverty, a lack of resources, whether or not parents spend quality time with their children, and scholastic or academic factors (for example, the poor quality of educational services, curricular problems, and under-qualified teachers). The interaction between the various factors contributes to learners' having an insufficient foundation in their mother tongue, or home language. Consequently, learners struggle to achieve competency in the language of learning at school as well as in their mother tongue. Another factor that surfaced during the researcher's fieldwork for this doctoral study, is that the majority of ESL learners are unable to read or write proficiently in their mother tongue. In Grade R they are usually fully immersed in an English-speaking environment and their preparation for literacy is done in English. The immersion in a foreign language environment before having mastered the basic aspects of the first language adversely affects the cognitive development of learners. This observation is in stark contrast to the Cummins's hypothesis because in practice it implies that a learner's L1 has not been fully established when they are immersed in English as the L2 (Murphy, 2003:30; Nel & Nel, 2013:111).

Cummins further identifies the Threshold Hypothesis and the Developmental Interdependent Hypothesis which explain the different outcomes of immersion and submersion programme (Cummins, 1979:227-233). The Threshold Hypothesis is concerned with the cognitive and academic results of different patterns of bilingual skills, while the Developmental Interdependence Hypothesis addresses the interdependence of the development of L1 and L2 abilities. According to the Threshold Hypothesis, Cummins establishes certain aspects of bilingualism that may have a positive impact on cognitive growth and that will probably only come into effect when the learner has attained a certain minimum of competence in a second language. This hypothesis distinguishes two threshold levels of bilingual competence. The attainment of the first or lower threshold level is adequate to avoid any negative academic effects, especially in the earlier grades. A possible explanation for this is that, in the early

grades, the learners' interaction with their environment and the influence of this interaction on their cognitive development is less dependent on facilitation through language than it is in higher grades. Attaining a higher threshold level of bilingual competence may have cognitive benefits for the learner. Bilingual children need to know when to use which language, words and syntactic structure. To be able to do so requires highly developed executive functions which are responsible for cognitive processes (Cummins, 2001:16, Janssen, Bosman & Leseman, 2013:2; Verhoeven, Steenge & Van Balkom, 2012:177). The Developmental Interdependence Hypothesis states that the level of L2 competence that a learner may achieve depends on the level of competence that the learner has achieved when intensive exposure to L2 begins. An initially high level of development and competence in the L1 may lead to similar levels of competence in the L2 (Janssen et al., 2013:3).

Critics of Cummins's theory have cited confusion due to misinterpretations of the terms CALP and BICS, and the difficulty in determining the nature of the bilingual proficiencies that constitute the thresholds (Geva, 2014:5; Verhoeven et al., 2012:177; Genesee, 1981:39-45). Cummins (1981:23) reacted by emphasizing that the CALPS/BICS distinction was not a distinction between 'communicative' and 'cognitive' aspects of language proficiency. According to his theory, BICS refers to only the prominently developed aspects of communicative proficiency and that children's social and rational communicative skills encompass much more than superficial aspects such as pronunciation and fluency. Teachers frequently base their intuitive positive judgments of (minority language) students' English proficiency only on their BICS abilities. He also stresses that CALP is socially grounded and can only develop within the matrix of human interaction (Cummins, 1981:23). Over the years Cummins's Linguistic Interdependence Theory has been continuously refined and remains a dominant and dynamic academic theory that plays a leading role in research into L1 and L2 education.

The impact of Cummins's theory is especially applicable to the scenario of the ESL learner within the South African context. The general process is that the learners are fully immersed in English as the language of education from as early as Grade R. Most learners tend to obtain BICS in English easily, which allows them to use English colloquially. According to Cummins (1981:24), this often leads to the (incorrect) assumption that these learners do not experience problems with English as their L2 and will be able to be academically successful with English as the language of teaching and learning (LOLT). As demonstrated by Cummins's theory, language competence at the BICS level does not equip a learner sufficiently to execute cognitive operations effectively. Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CAPS) forms the basis of a learner's ability to participate in tasks which require higher cognitive functioning and problem-solving abilities (Koda, 2007:19; Schiebush & Thobedi, 2005:309; Van Staden,

2011:12). Teaching and learning in the mother tongue grant learners access to more sophisticated vocabulary and grammar resources and empower them to use these resources, thereby enabling learners to meet the educational requirements related to his or her age. This is a privilege that the ESL learner studying in English is often denied because he or she is not being educated in his or her mother tongue.

To have a clear picture of the situation of the ESL learner in South Africa, it is also important to consider the current Language in Education Policy. In the Revised National Curriculum Statement of the Department of Education in 2002, the importance of additive multilingualism, as well as the necessity of teaching indigenous languages, was emphasized (Le Cordeur, 2012:8). This Statement stipulates that all learners should acquire their mother tongue and study at least one additional language as a subject from Grade 1; moreover, all learners should study an indigenous language for at least three years when completing the General Education and Teaching (GET) phase. It is important to observe that, although the Department of Education prescribes mother tongue education for learners up to Grade 3, a quantitative report by the Department of Education (2010a:12) highlights that a total of 80% of Foundation Phase learners receive their schooling in their mother tongue, and that the remaining group (20%) comprises 600 000 learners. It is even more significant that from Grade 4 onwards, the majority of learners does not learn in their home language, and that English and Afrikaans are the dominant LOLT after Grade 3 (DoE, 2010a:14). Despite the benefit of mother tongue education, which is grounded in research, this is not a reality for a large proportion of learners in South Africa.

Although the Language in Education Policy is commendable, the practical implications are far-reaching. Data on linguistic distribution suggest that the distribution of languages in South Africa is complex (DoE, 2010a:15). All eleven official languages are represented in each province in South Africa. To provide quality mother tongue education for eleven different cultural groups within an already troubled educational system in each of the provinces is arguably not attainable. Factors contributing to the dilemma include the lack of qualified and competent teachers in each of the mother tongue groups, and the limited infrastructure and resources, particularly in rural areas as well as in overcrowded urban areas (Banda, 2000:52; Nel & Swanepoel, 2010:48; Prinsloo, 2016:64).

In summary, then, Cummins's theory emphasizes the interaction between the language of instruction and the type of competence the child has developed in his or her L1 prior to starting his or her school career. While mastering his or her mother tongue, a person acquires a set of linguistic skills, the so-called CUP. Common Underlying Proficiency provides the basis for the development of both the first language (L1) and the second language (L2). A well-developed

literacy basis in the first language will lead to the successful acquisition of literacy in a second language (Cummins, 2000:173). Due to the negative impact of various intrinsic and extrinsic factors in Bronfenbrenner's different systems on the development of the ESL learner in South Africa, many ESL learners' mother tongue proficiency is also deficient. The absence of a strong Common Underlying Proficiency is likely to have a negative impact on the acquisition of abilities to acquire a second language.

Cummins further distinguishes between BICS and CALP. Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) encompass the skills that allow learners to use their second language in everyday life, including for informal listening and speaking skills. Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) forms the basis of a learner's ability to engage in cognitively challenging tasks. When applied to ESL learners in South Africa, Cummins's Interdependence Theory reveals that the literacy abilities of these learners in English, their LOLT, are often only at the BICS level, due to a poor or absent CUP. This low level of literacy is likely to have a disturbing impact on the scholastic progress of these learners and, eventually, on their self-concept and their quality of life. Cummins (1979: 224–225) also differentiates between additive (immersion) and subtractive (submersion) bilingualism. This distinction is applicable to the majority of South African schools with learners whose home language is not English, where a submersion program is followed. A high percentage of Grade R and Grade 1 learners have fundamentally weak literacy abilities due to poor literacy environments in the early childhood years. These learners are entirely immersed in the L2 environment before becoming fully proficient in their mother tongue. The poor literacy performance of South African learners illustrates the effect of immersion in a second language at the expense of the mother tongue. Learners are more likely to become literate in a second language when they have acquired an adequate level of literacy in their first language.

When one reflects critically on both Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory and Cummins's Theory of Language Acquisition, it is apparent that the interplay between intrinsic and extrinsic factors may affect the development of the self-concept and the quality of life of the majority of South African second language learners. Bronfenbrenner's theory states that interacting dimensions (for example, individual factors, process factors, contexts and time) are central to the optimal development of an individual. Against the background of poverty, underdevelopment, environmental deprivation, unplanned urbanisation, learning a second language from ESL teachers, unemployment and other societal challenges affecting the lives of South Africa's learners, Cummins's Language Acquisition Theory highlights that most ESL learners in South Africa face significant barriers in attaining literacy.

As discussed in the introduction of this article, literacy is one of the major contributory factors that influence the overall wellbeing of learners and foster a positive self-concept (Hosogi et al., 2012:1; Schalock et al., 2002:457–470). A child who fails to achieve adequate literacy skills, irrespective of whether these are in his or her L1 or L2, usually develops a lack of confidence in his or her ability to succeed, contributing to a lower self-concept. In the next section, the researcher will discuss the interplay between the development of second language learners' self-concept and their literacy abilities, which results in either a stronger or weaker academic self-concept. This, in turn, may influence ESL learners' quality of life.

1.5.3 Self-concept

The notion of self-concept is defined as an idea of the self which has been constructed from the beliefs one holds about oneself and from the responses of others (Woolfolk, 2014:95). Historically, self-concept was described as a single, global domain and was referred to as self-esteem. Over time multidimensional perspectives have developed that emphasize various components of self-concept (Marsh & Craven, 2006:134). The acceptance of a multidimensional rather than a unidimensional perspective of self-concept varies across social science disciplines. In educational psychology, there is widespread acceptance of a multidimensional perspective, with its focus on Academic Self-Concept (ASC) and the relation of ASC to academic achievement, student learning and other academic outcomes (Marsh, Byrne & Shavelson, 1988:367). For the purposes of this study, the researcher will use the following definitions of self-esteem and self-concept described by Marsh and Martin (2011:6), Slavin (2012:63) and Woolfolk (2014:97) as follows: Self-esteem is the global, overall perception of self-worth a person has of his or her own characteristics. It is an affective reaction. In contrast, self-concept is more of a cognitive structure. It is a person's perception of his or her own abilities, strengths, weaknesses, attitudes, and values – a belief about who you are (Woolfolk, 2014:95).

Snowman and McCown (2009:85) describe self-concept as the evaluative judgement that people make of their competence in specific areas such as academic performance, social interactions, and personal appearance. It is therefore clear that self-concept is the overall image that one has of oneself and one's strengths and weaknesses. This image is influenced by one's own beliefs, one's circumstances, the reactions of other people, as well as the misfortunes and successes in one's life. Woolfolk (2013:95) describes the development of self-concept as continuous self-evaluation in various situations.

Self-concept is one of the oldest areas of research in the social sciences, having started as early as in the 1890's, but the development of a theory and measurement of self-concept were

slow (Marsh & Craven, 2006:134-135). During the 1970s, Shavelson reviewed the existing research and provided a theoretical definition and a model of self-concept. In this multidimensional and hierarchical model, general self-concept is divided into academic and non-academic components (Marsh, Byrne & Shavelson, 1988:367; Marsh & Craven, 2006; Marsh & Martin, 2011). Academic self-concept or ASC includes one's mental image of one's abilities in academic domains. There is also a distinction between general ASC and domain-specific ASCs (Figure 1.2, p 28). General ASC reflects the learner's own evaluation of his or her academic abilities regarding the academic process (school), while domain-specific ASC reflects the learner's impression of his or her ability in a specific subject, for example in mathematics or English (Marsh, 1990:625; Marsh, Byrne & Shavelson, 1988:379). According to Woolfolk (2013:95), Marsh and fellow researchers have identified up to 17 different self-concepts in academic and non-academic areas. These include literacy, mathematics, problem-solving, art and computers in the academic area and physical appearance, popularity, relationships and emotional stability in the non-academic area (Woolfolk, 2013:95).

Self-concept develops through continuous self-evaluation and sometimes as a result of comparison with other people in different situations. The verbal and non-verbal reactions of significant people in different situations also play a role in the development of self-concept. The results of a study conducted by Verschueren, Doumen and Buyse (2012:243), show that each social relationship in a child's life contributes in a unique way to the child's self-concept. For example, the mother/child, child/peers and learner/teacher relationships can have a positive or negative effect on the self-concept of the child. This emphasizes the effects that Bronfenbrenner's interacting intrinsic and extrinsic factors in the different systems (1.5.1, p 11) may have on the total functioning and, specifically, on the quality of literacy of the ESL learner. From the microsystem (the interactions between the ESL learner in his/her closest relations) to the mesosystem which includes his or her interactions with the school system including the teachers, friends and caretakers, right through to the macrosystem which includes policies regarding schools and language in education, the learner is subject to influences which may have an effect on his or her self-concept.

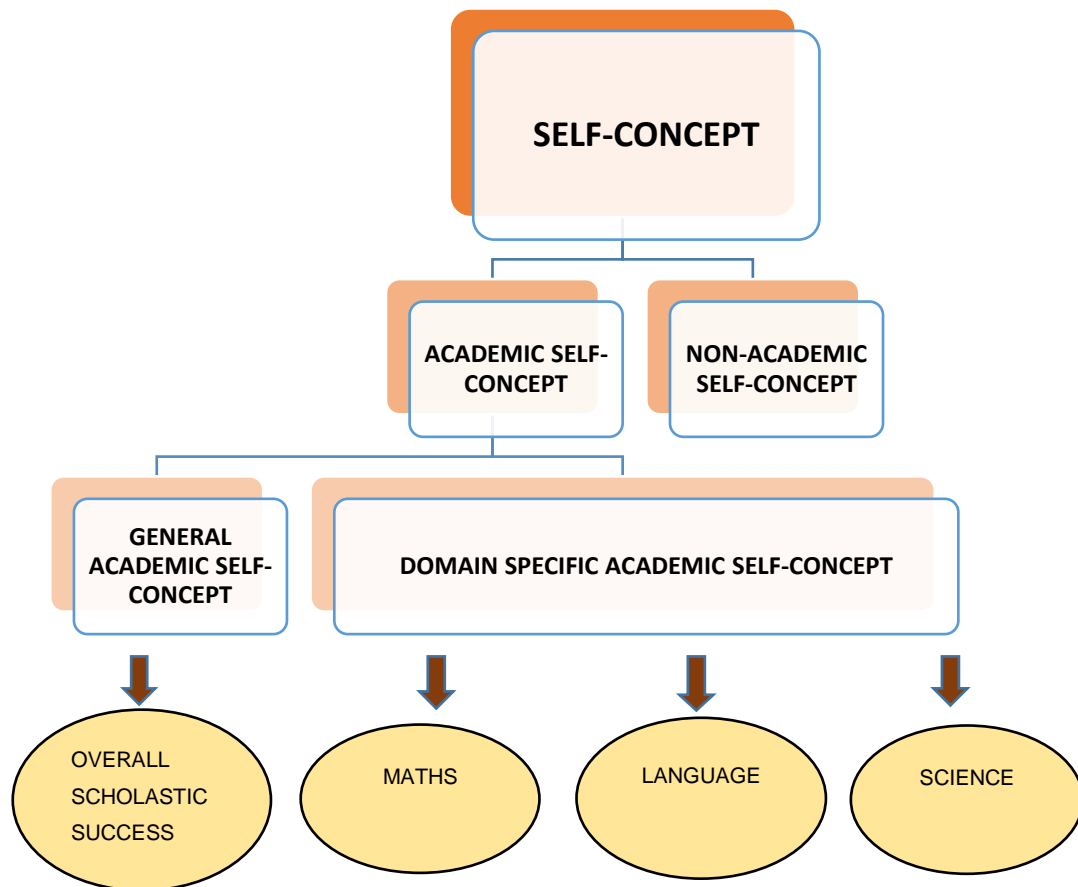


Figure 1-2: The distinction between general ASC and domain-specific ASCs. Adapted from Marsh and Cravin (2006:137)

The role of a positive self-concept in promoting academic achievement, as well as achievement in other domains is evident. A healthy self-concept allows the development of positive feelings about one's abilities. Research has demonstrated that a healthy academic self-concept leads to increased academic achievement and other educational outcomes, employment and socio-economic status (Archambault, et al., 2010:804; Chiu & Klassen, 2009:372; Marsh & Martin, 2011:59; Snowman & McCown, 2009:85). Inquiries into which came first, ASC or academic achievement leads to the development of the Reciprocal Effects Model. In studies conducted by Marsh and Craven (2006) and Marsh and Martin (2011), the Reciprocal Effects Model (REM) it was found that academic self-concept and achievement are mutually reinforcing. The results of these studies provide theoretical, methodological and empirical support for the REM, positing that ASC and achievement reinforce each other. The application of the REM to a large percentage of ESL learners in South Africa, in combination with the implications of the Bioecological Systems Theory of Bronfenbrenner and the effect of the Linguistic Interdependence Theory proposed by Cummins, raises concerns about the global as well as academic self-concept of these learners. As illustrated by Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological

Systems Theory, every individual operates in an integrated ecological system. Both intrinsic and extrinsic factors influence the development and achievements of the individual. Literacy forms the basis of academic achievement and ultimately contributes to the quality of the learner's ultimate qualifications and employment. The potential impact of impoverished learning environments, family income, the educational qualifications of parents and social relationships on the self-concept of learners, as described by Bronfenbrenner's theory, is further supported by Hartas's (2011:894) research. Hartas investigated the relationship between the socio-economic status of the parents and home learning on children at the ages of three and five, and its impact on the child's literacy and socio-emotional competence at the end of the first year of primary school. The researchers used data obtained from a national longitudinal study in England about the 'New Century's Children' and their families and used socio-economic measures, home learning measures and the foundation stage profiles of the children (Hartas, 2011:896). Socio-economic and home-learning measures were obtained from face-to-face interviews with parents when the children were three years old and again at the age of five. The profiles of children at the foundation stage were obtained from teachers' ratings of children's performances at the end of the reception year (Hartas, 2011:896). The research confirmed that children living in poverty and children with mothers without any educational qualifications performed poorly in literacy and social development compared to their peers from educationally and economically wealthy families (Hartas, 2011:910).

Apart from extrinsic barriers to learning due to the environmental circumstances of the learner as described in paragraph 1.5, certain learners experience scholastic barriers to learning. Ideally, the identification of a barrier should already be made in the Foundation Phase in order to give the learner optimal support (Prinsloo, 2016:64, Swart & Pettipher, 2016:20). This does not happen in the case of the majority of learners due to a variety of reasons, and the learners progress, perhaps at a slower rate than their peers, to the intermediate phase. The presence of one or more barriers to learning, in combination with education in a second language, significantly undermines learners' future literacy and academic successes. A national research study conducted by Hugo in 2008 to ascertain the type of problems experienced by primary school learners when learning in a second language, determined that learners often lack the self-confidence to speak in English and that they are very shy. This has a negative effect on their self-concept and their ability to be academically successful (Hugo, 2008:68). A study performed by Pinxten, Wouters, Preckel, Niepel, De Fraine and Verschueren (2015:124) stresses the fact that students form their academic self-concept to a large extent by comparing their own performance in different academic domains with the performance of other students. As discussed, failure has a negative impact on the self-concept of a person. A situation in which learners experience barriers from an early age without the necessary support to

overcome them, could lead to academic failure which ultimately may have an adverse impact on the learner's self-concept (Snowman & McCown, 2012:387; Woolfolk, 2014:96). Failure to achieve literacy skills usually causes a lack of confidence in one's ability to succeed and thus contributes to a low self-concept (Archambault, Eccles & Vida, 2010:805). A low self-concept regarding any aspect of life may undermine an individual's confidence concerning other aspects of his or her life. A person's self-concept regarding his or her ability to complete a task has a direct influence on his or her expectations of successfully completing the task. It also influences perceptions of the importance of the task to oneself, as well as the motivation to complete the task and the effort one is willing to expend to successfully do so. Without adequate support, the problems of self-concept worsen alongside learning barriers, with each aggravating the other.

The literature has shown strong interactions between Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory, the Linguistic Interdependence Theory proposed by Cummins and the status of a person's self-concept. The researcher argues that the interaction of intrinsic and extrinsic factors within the different systems wherein the ESL learner functions, in combination with the implications of Cummins's theory, is likely to have an impact on the self-concept of ESL learners in South Africa.

1.6 Conclusion

In this theoretical paper, the researcher explored the interrelationship between the intrinsic and extrinsic barriers to the development of adequate literacy skills of ESL learners. In addition, this theoretical paper investigated the impact of literacy development on the self-concept of ESL learners.

The first aim of this theoretical paper explored how Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory relates to the plight of the ESL learner within the South African education context. From the literature review, it is evident that a large part of the population of South African learners is prone to the negative effects of unemployment, poverty and associated socio-economic problems. The successful acquisition of literacy is largely dependent on a stimulating and print-rich environment for the young child. During the formative years of his or her life, the interaction between the young child – and later the young learner – and his or her nearest family and friends (the micro-system according to Bronfenbrenner) is extremely important in the development of the individual (Swart & Pettipher, 2016:14). Unemployment, poverty and associated problems have an adverse effect on the amount and quality of interactions in the child's family setting and social relationships. As discussed in 1.5.1.1 (p 11), the frequency as well as the quality of informal discussions, through which the young child may learn, are

sometimes disrupted or even halted due to the need to provide the basic food and shelter required for survival. The stress accompanying the fight for survival as well as possible lack of education of the parent/s or adults in the life of the young learner may have a further degenerative effect on the acquirement of literacy of the child.

In the mesosystem, a combination of microsystems is in interaction with one another. It includes environments such as the school system, neighbourhood, friends and peer groups (Swart & Pettipher, 2016:14). As described in 1.5.1.2 (p 13), poverty, unemployment, and overpopulation lead to secondary problems including vandalism and violence, a lack of order, morality and structure in societies. Services such as health, education, and social support are under strain, inadequate and, in cases, malfunction, thereby adding to the decline of communities (Prinsloo, 2016:53). South Africa has eleven official languages. Although English is the mother tongue of one out of ten learners, the majority of learners are taught in English, often by teachers who also have a mother tongue other than English (Hugo, 2008:65). The impact of this particular situation will be discussed in article two, and when it is analysed according to the systems theory of Bronfenbrenner, the effect on the quality of the literacy of the ESL learner is significantly negative. The exosystem includes factors beyond the individual and, in the case of this study, the ESL learners' immediate functioning. According to Swart and Pettipher (2016:15), it includes settings such as the workplaces and friends of the parents, services and health systems, provincial management and legislation. In this case, when we apply the theory of Bronfenbrenner on the ESL learner, the interactivity between the different systems emphasize the ripple effect of problems already present in the microsystem on the future functioning of the individual. It becomes most evident in the macrosystem which includes factors like unemployment, poverty, education and health issues – factors which already have an influencing presence in the microsystem. The impact of the factors on the different systems of Bronfenbrenner on the plight of the ESL learner within the South African educational system becomes clear during the discussion. The discussion of a wide range of problems already present in the microsystem, with the impact growing bigger through the different systems, proved the negative and profound influence of the different systems on the plight of the ESL learner in the South African context.

The second aim of the article was to investigate how Cummins's Interdependence Theory is relevant to the literacy development of ESL learners in South Africa. Cummins highlights the importance of adequate L1 development and continuous exposure to L2 while the learner is becoming bilingual. In South Africa, a large group of children from deprived backgrounds commences their schooling career with poorly developed L1 abilities, only to be educated in L2, with widespread negative consequences for their future academic success and quality of

life (Schlebusch & Thobedi, 2005:306). According to Cummins, a person, while mastering his or her mother tongue, acquires a set of linguistic skills or the so-called CUP. Common Underlying Proficiency provides the basis for the development of both the first language (L1) and the second language (L2). A well-developed literacy basis in the first language will lead to better ability in the successful acquiring of literacy in a second language (Cummins, 2000:173). A negative factor contributing to the poor quality of literacy of many ESL learners is the fact that only a small part of South African learners' mother tongue is English but the majority are taught in English. Sometimes the teachers also have a mother tongue other than English (Du Toit & Nel, 2014:77; Prinsloo, 2016:63). Many South African parents idealize an English education for their children. They reason that it will open doors for their children and will better their chances of getting proper jobs. Cummins (1979: 224-225) stresses the fact that, in order to gain full academic competency in a second language, the mother tongue must be well established, must be strong and must continue to develop while the second language is added. Considering the negative interactive influences of the systems theory of Bronfenbrenner on the plight of the second language learner in South Africa, Cummins's Interdependence theory further emphasizes the predicament in which the ESL learners in South Africa are in terms of their literacy development. The application of these two theories on the literacy development and plight of the ESL learner in South Africa sheds a clear light on the causes for the alarming statistics concerning the literacy levels of South African ESL learners, as discussed in on page 4 of this article.

This article, thirdly aimed to determine how Marsh and Shavelson's multi-dimensional self-concept theory relate to the self-concept formation of ESL learners with literacy backlogs. In doing so the different intrinsic and extrinsic factors at play in the various systems surrounding a learner, in combination with the abovementioned poor literacy in L2 due to the implications of Cummins's Linguistic Interdependence Theory, and how it may influence the self-concept of ESL learners in South Africa, was discussed.

Self-concept is the inherent image that the individual has of his or her strengths and weaknesses. Significantly, this image is influenced by elements such as his or her own beliefs, daily circumstances, relationships as well as accomplishments and failures (Snowman & McCown, 2009:85). Woolfolk (2013:95) describes the development of self-concept as a process of continuous self-evaluation in various situations. It becomes clear that a learner's self-concept about his or her ability to master a task, like reading or writing, has a direct influence on his or her expectations of successfully completing the task. Shavelson provides a theoretical definition and a model of self-concept (Marsh & Craven, 2006; Marsh & Martin, 2011). Shavelson divides general self-concept into two subsections: academic and non-

academic self-concept. This model also distinguishes between general academic self-concept and domain-specific academic self-concept (Figure 1.2, p 28). The results of a study conducted by Verschueren, Doumen, and Buyse (2012:243) show that each social relationship in a child's life contributes in a unique way to the child's self-concept. Self-concept also develops through continuous self-evaluation, comparison with other people as well as from the verbal and non-verbal reactions of people in different situations. Studies conducted by Marsh and Craven (2006) and Marsh and Martin (2011) test the Reciprocal Effects Model (REM), which posits that academic self-concept and achievement are mutually reinforcing. The results of these studies provide overwhelming support for the REM, positing that ASC and achievement reinforce each other. Therefore, the negative effects which emerged when applying the theories of Bronfenbrenner and Cummins on the development of literacy of the ESL learner in South Africa will also have a negative impact on the academic as well as on the general self-concept of the ESL learner.

In conclusion, a Country Progress Report (DoE, 2013:48), stated that 29% of Grade 4 children in South Africa failed to reach the *lowest* international benchmark of 400 for reading literacy. Similar results were reported in 2011 as part of the Annual National Assessment (DoE, 2011). A number of international assessment programs over a cycle of years provided poor evidence concerning quality education and the literacy of South African learners (Van Staden et al., 2016:1). There has clearly been no improvement over the last eight years.

As discussed in this article, the quality of literacy of an individual, has a direct influence on his or her future. The first seeds for the development of literacy are sown in the home environment or, according to Bronfenbrenner, in the microsystem. With an unemployment rate of 27.7% (Statistics SA, 2017), the home environments and associated support regarding the education and learning of different families tend to be far from ideal. With a day-to-day struggle to find food to eat and a roof over the head, stimulation of literacy skills and improvement of basic skills are not an option at all. The plans of the Department of Education of South Africa to make grade R compulsory for all pre-school children are a step in the right direction. For a learner to start his or her formal school career with a cognitive and emotional backlog due to his or her socio-economic circumstances is problematic. Different factors, like the absence of proper nutrition and a safe and stimulating environment, further contribute to the situation.

Although the Constitution of South Africa provides for eleven official languages, most of the learners are taught in English by teachers who also have a mother tongue that is not English (Du Toit & Nel, 2014:77; Prinsloo, 2016:63). The reasons for this state of affairs are extensive and vary from parents' preference to have their children educated in English, under-qualified teachers to non-functional schools. Unfortunately, a large percentage of schools in South

Africa are not functional (Van den Berg & Louw, 2006:6; Taylor, 2008:4). This fact will be further discussed in Article 2. Parents or guardians with the necessary financial means therefore choose to send their children to schools where they can get a proper education – mostly not in their mother tongue but in English. The possible negative impact thereof is thoroughly discussed in 1.5.2 (p 19) in this article. The overall pedagogical implication of the status quo in South African schools is that quality education in their mother tongue is not available for the marginalized majority of learners in South Africa. A battle to scholastically survive has a negative influence on the self-concept of the individual, as described in 1.5.3 (p 26) of this article. With all odds against them, these learners will become part of the growing number of unemployed, illiterate and desperate citizens of our country without the ability to escape from the circle of poverty.

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ADDENDUM A: CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

Literacy

The ability to read and write, as well as the ability to use language proficiently (Collins Dictionary, 2016).

Self-concept

The overall image that one has of oneself and one's strengths and weaknesses. This image is influenced by one's own beliefs, one's circumstances, the reactions of other people, as well as the misfortunes and successes in one's life (Snowman & McCown, 2009:85; Marsh & Martin, 2011:61; Woolfolk, 2014:97).

English second language learners

Learners who come from non-English-speaking homes and backgrounds, and who typically require specialised or modified instruction in both the English language and in their academic courses (Nel: 2015: XIV).

Bilingualism

Refers to the ability to communicate effectively in two languages, with more or less the same degree of proficiency in both languages (DoE, 2010a:3).

First language (L1)

It refers to the very first language a child learns. Also referred to as 'mother-tongue' or 'native language' (Van der Walt, Evans & Kilfoil, 2009:3).

Second language (L2)

An additional language learnt after the first language (Van der Walt, Evans & Kilfoil, 2009:6).

Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory states that both the environment and the developing person are important in the development process. In order to understand human development, one needs to examine the different systems of interaction that are not related to a single setting but should also take into account the influence of the environment beyond the situation that contains the subject. The interacting dimensions that are central to this process include the following: personal factors, process factors, contexts and time (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2010:40).

Microsystem

The microsystem forms the child's immediate context, which directly affects the developing child. It includes the activities, roles and interpersonal relations between individuals and the systems in which these participate, for example, the learner's family, school, and friends (Swart & Pettipher, 2016:14).

Mesosystem

The mesosystem is a combination of microsystems that are in constant interaction with one another. It includes slightly higher-order environments, such as the whole school system, the neighbourhood and social relations, including friends and peer groups (Swart & Pettipher, 2016:14).

Exosystem

The exosystem includes factors beyond the individual's immediate functioning. Settings such as the workplaces of the parents, community services, and health systems, as well as more informal systems, for example, the parents' network of friends and the friends of siblings play a role in the exosystem. Problems in the management of provincial matters and legislation may also indirectly have an influence on the individual functioning (Swart & Pettipher, 2016:15).

Macrosystem

The macrosystem forms the master model of the micro-, meso- and exosystems. The macrosystem refers to the all-encompassing institutional patterns of the prevailing culture, which includes the economic, social, educational, legal and political systems. The laws, values, traditions and customs of a particular society can be found at the macrosystem level (Hook, 2009:506; Guhn & Goelman, 2011:206).

Chronosystem

The chronosystem, is the dimension of time as an essential influence on the development of the individual. Time entails the patterning of events and development over the lifespan of an individual (Hook, 2009:506).

Interdependence

Dependence between two or more people, groups or things (Collins Dictionary, 2016).

Interaction

A mutual or reciprocal action or influence (Collins Dictionary, 2016).

Cummins's Linguistic Interdependence Theory

Cummins's Linguistic Interdependence Theory postulates that the level of L2 competence that a bilingual learner attains is partially a function of the type of competence he or she has developed in L1 prior to extensive exposure to L2 (Cummins, 1979:2009).

Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS)

BICS are typically acquired quickly by most learners and include the skills that allow learners to use L2 in their everyday lives, including for informal listening and speaking skills (Cummins, 2008:487-488).

Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)

CALP forms the basis for a learner's ability to cope with academic demands, such as the ability to engage in cognitively demanding and problem-solving tasks (Koda, 2007:19; Schiebush & Thobedi, 2005:309; Van Staden, 2011:12).

Additive bilingualism (immersion)

The first language (L1) continues to be developed and the first culture to be valued while the second language is added (Cummins, 1979: 224-225).

Subtractive bilingualism (submersion)

The second language (L2) is added at the expense of the first language and culture (Cummins, 1979: 224-225).

Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP)

Linguistic skills acquired by a well-developed literacy basis in the mother tongue. A well-developed literacy basis in the first language will lead to the successful acquisition of literacy in a second language (Cummins, 2000:173).

ARTICLE 2

CHALLENGES FACING PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATORS OF ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN THE TSHWANE WEST REGION

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ARTICLE 2

CHALLENGES FACING PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATORS OF ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN THE TSHWANE WEST REGION

ABSTRACT

Although mother tongue education is embraced by the Constitution of South Africa, only one in ten learners who are taught in English has English as his or her mother tongue. This state of affairs has a serious impact on the literacy skills of not only the learners but also of the teachers who have to educate and support these learners. In line with this, it is disturbing to note the results of a Performance in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) report, which ranks South Africa last out of 40 countries. The current research study explored the challenges that teachers experience in their quest to create responsive literacy environments for ESL learners. This empirical paper utilised a qualitative research design and explored the experiences of ESL teachers via semi-structured interviews. Purposive sampling was employed whereby 10 teachers from five different parallel-medium schools in the Tshwane West Region were sampled to take part in this research. From the data, different themes were identified. It appears that one of the major challenges in teaching ESL learners is the fact that the language of learning and teaching (LOLT) is not the mother tongue of the learners. The fact that the curriculum requires of the learners to take the LOLT on L1 level contributes to an already difficult situation at schools. The teachers maintain that there are problems with discipline due to large classes, limited resources and support to individual learners. As a result, the teachers are unable to respond to individual learners who struggle to master their schoolwork. The research concluded that the quality of the teachers' own second language (L2) literacy is possibly a negative factor in educating ESL learners. The impact of the large percentage of dysfunctional state schools was also investigated. Recommendations by the participating teachers on improving the literacy skills of ESL learners include extended exposure to the printed word, reading and cultivating a love for reading, as well as the use of technological aids to stimulate and maintain learners' attention and curiosity. A whole-school approach to teaching and learning, which entails the strengthening of reciprocal relationships between teachers, learners and their parents, including the successful management of disciplinary problems, is seen by some of the teachers as the ideal to address literacy and other scholastic problems learners may experience successfully. Future research recommendations, including language supportive learning and translanguaging, were briefly considered.

Keywords: first language (L1), English Second Language (ESL), mother tongue, language of learning and teaching (LOLT), literacy, experiences, challenges, teachers, discipline, language supportive learning, translanguaging.

ABSTRAK

Alhoewel moedertaalonderrig onderskryf word in die Grondwet van Suid-Afrika, is Engels die moedertaal van slegs een uit tien leerders wat in Engels onderrig word. Hierdie stand van sake het 'n ernstige uitwerking op die geletterdheidsvaardighede van nie alleen die leerders nie, maar ook op die onderwysers wat hierdie leerders moet onderrig en ondersteun. Terselfdertyd is dit onrusbarend om kennis te neem van die resultate van 'n Prestasie in Internasionale Leesgeletterdheidstudie (PIRLS)-verslag, wat Suid-Afrika laaste uit 40 lande plaas. Die huidige navorsingstudie ondersoek die uitdagings wat opvoeders ervaar in hulle soeke daarna om responsiewe geletterdheidsomgewings vir ESL-leerders te skep. Hierdie empiriese artikel het 'n kwalitatiewe navorsingsontwerp gebruik om die ervarings van ESL-opvoeders met behulp van semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude te ondersoek. Doelgerigte steekproefneming is gebruik waardeur 10 opvoeders van vyf verskillende parallel-medium skole in die streek van Gauteng-Wes gekies is om aan hierdie navorsing deel te neem. Verskillende temas is vanuit die data geïdentifiseer. Dit blyk dat een van die vernaamste uitdagings by die onderrig van ESL-leerders die feit is dat die taal van onderrig en leer (TVOL) nie die moedertaal van die leerders is nie. Die feit dat die kurrikulum van die leerders vereis om die TVOL op L1-vlak te neem, dra by tot 'n alreeds moeilike situasie in skole. Die onderwysers is van mening dat daar dissipline probleme ontstaan as gevolg van groot klasse, beperkte hulpbronne en ondersteuning aan individuele leerders. Gevolglik is onderwysers nie in staat om ag te slaan op individuele leerders wat sukkel om hulle skoolwerk te bemeester nie. Die navorsing kom tot die gevolgtrekking dat die gehalte van onderwysers se eie L2-geletterdheid moontlik 'n negatiewe faktor in die onderrig van ESL-leerders is. Die impak van die groot persentasie disfunksionele staatskole is ook ondersoek. Aanbevelings deur die deelnemende onderwysers wat betref die verbetering van die geletterdheidsvaardighede van ESL-leerders sluit in omvattende blootstelling aan die gedrukte woord, lees en die aankweek van 'n liefde vir lees, asook die gebruik van tegnologiese hulpmiddels om leerders se aandag en leergierigheid te stimuleer en te handhaaf. 'n Heelskoolbenadering tot onderrig en leer, wat die uitbou en versterking van wederkerige verhoudinge tussen onderwysers, leerders en hulle ouers behels, insluitende die suksesvolle hantering van dissiplinêre probleme, word deur sommige van die onderwysers as die ideaal beskou om geletterdheid en ander skolastiese probleme wat leerders mag ervaar,

sukksesvol aan te spreek. Toekomstige aanbevelings, insluitende taalondersteuningsleer en transtaligheid, is kortliks oorweeg.

Sleutelwoorde: *eerste taal (L1), Engels Tweede Taal (ESL), moedertaal, taal van onderrig en leer (LOLT), geletterdheid, ervarings, uitdagings, opvoeders, dissipline, taalondersteuningsleer, transtaligheid.*

2.1 Introduction

Only one in ten South African children's mother tongue is English – and yet the majority of learners are taught in English, often by a teacher whose mother tongue is not English either (Hugo, 2008:65). Although the Constitution of South Africa recognizes the individual status of each language, due to various historic and other problems, the majority of the official languages in South Africa are not accessible to many people, on formal as well as informal levels (Le Cordeur, 2012:6). In the political dispensation before 1994, English and Afrikaans were recognized as the only official languages, which, along with other policies, led to a dysfunctional education system (Le Cordeur, 2012:8; Pretorius, 2002:93). Many South African parents also want to have their children educated in English as they believe that English is recognized worldwide as the language which will open opportunities for their children and thus enable them to break the chains of poverty and excel in their future jobs (Le Cordeur, 2012:6).

To have a full understanding of the implications of choosing English as the language of learning and teaching (LOLT) (as opposed to mother-tongue education), it is important to take note of the history that preceded the present language-in-education policy. During the apartheid era in South Africa, education was organized along racial lines. During a child's primary school years, mother tongue education was promoted, followed by the secondary school years in either English or Afrikaans. Consequently, Afrikaans and English mother tongue learners benefited from this policy while mother tongue education was stigmatized because it is being associated with the policies and limited opportunities under the apartheid regime (Banda, 2000:51; Plüddemann, 2015:189). The education available in African languages fell under the Department of Bantu Education and was regarded as being below standard (Van Wyk, 2014:205). And so, during the apartheid era, a combination of policies and practices led to dysfunctional education for most African people. Pretorius (2002:93) describes the influence of apartheid education as follows:

The deleterious policies and practices of apartheid education gave rise to an extremely dysfunctional education system characterised by poor teaching, reliance on rote teaching and learning, low proficiency levels in the medium of tuition, overcrowded classrooms, poor school management, low levels of professionalism and few resources.

Accordingly, it is no wonder that, years later, many people still associate mother tongue education with low quality and limited opportunities. In recent years South Africa has experienced a continuous decline of the economy partly due to a severe drought as well as

ongoing strikes caused by unresolved labour disputes in the mining and factory sectors (Pretorius & Machet, 2004:129). Thousands of people have lost their jobs and the price of food and other essential items has escalated by the day. Poor communities in the larger cities in South Africa are characterized by overpopulation that is mainly caused by unplanned urbanization. People from the rural areas and neighbouring countries stream to the cities in search of employment and a better life. This puts huge pressure on educational services, including the provision of adequate facilities and resources to accommodate the needs of all the learners.

Another topic of concern is the poor quality of education in too many schools in South Africa years after the start of a new and democratic dispensation. Van den Berg and Louw (2006:7) state that the particularly high variation in the efficiency of South African schools leads to the trend of parents sending their children to schools which function effectively and deliver good quality education rather than to a dysfunctional school nearer to home. Unfortunately, this state of affairs also involves sacrificing mother tongue education to education in the second language (L2), usually in English. The first reason that comes to mind is that many of the dysfunctional schools are in low socio-economic communities and that they still bear the consequences of a marginalized and under-resourced era of apartheid education. This conclusion does not seem waterproof in the light of the distribution of performance rates of high schools in Senior Certificate Mathematics 2004, which demonstrated that 14 % of African schools are top or moderate performers despite their history of discrimination and deprivation (Taylor, 2008:4). The researcher concludes (with proof of research which highlights the causes of low quality of education and dysfunctional schools) that the problems are mainly caused by poor management of the individual schools (Van den Berg & Louw, 2006:6); the absence of a culture of learning and teaching (Weeks, 2012:2); and high levels of teachers' absenteeism and late coming due to unreliability of public transport, lack of commitment and/or union militancy (Taylor, 2008:7). In surveys performed by the Department of Education into the characteristics of poor high schools which perform well in the Senior Certificate Exams, a sense of responsibility and shared enterprise, a culture of hard work and an emphasis on good performance are features of the ethos of that schools (Christie, Butler & Potterton, 2007:104).

2.2 Problem statement and research questions

The end of apartheid has brought large-scale political and educational reform to South Africa. In a multilingual country with eleven official languages, mother tongue education is seen as a basic human right (Van Wyk, 2014:206) and as such was incorporated into the Constitution. In so far as it is practically possible, everyone has the right to mother tongue education for at

least the foundation phase. Due to various reasons, parents often opt for English education instead of mother tongue education. Large groups of learners start their formal schooling in a second language, usually English, as their language of education and learning (LOLT). Unfortunately, as a result learners fail to acquire the basic literacy and numeracy skills and due to the fact that they are not learning in their mother tongue, they also have limited proficiency in the LOLT (Le Cordeur, 2012:1). Teachers often have to teach big classes, including classes which incorporate various cultural groups, in a language which is no one's mother tongue.

All the mentioned factors work interactively and cause a situation where mainly families with the necessary material resources are able to provide quality education for their children, even if it is not mother tongue education. For most of the South African population who live in poverty, quality education is not an option and the cycle of poverty and the inability to move forward continues, creating the so-called 'Matthew effect' (Pretorius, 2002:96, Van Staden, 2016: 22-23). Due to poverty and other socio-economic factors, many learners are condemned to low-quality education without the essential resources to support learners who have problems with literacy and mathematics. Too often this leads to unsuccessful scholastic progress, poor or even no qualifications, a life of unemployment and the constant battle to survive – a downward spiral.

There is no need to further emphasize the strain on the different educational services except, and especially, to stress the pressure on the teachers in the classroom. Schools and classrooms are overcrowded and teachers who are appropriately qualified are not readily available. Often the language of instruction used by the teachers, in most cases English, is also not the teachers' mother tongue. Teachers are confronted with learners from various cultural groups in one classroom (Lemmer, Meier & Van Wyk, 2014:1; Van Wyk, 2014:206). Although parents often prefer English to mother-tongue education, many of them rely on the teacher to not only teach the learner English but they also expect the teachers to support their children's cultural foundation as well as instil them with their own individual norms and values (Du Plessis & Louw, 2008:58). Such a state of affairs has an on-going impact on the dynamics in the classroom and school, the quality of education and also on the motivation and enthusiasm of the teacher to foster the true potential of every learner in his or her classroom.

To have a better understanding of the role of the teacher in the English Second Language (ESL) classroom, this study will explore the experiences and challenges of some of the teachers who teach ESL learners as well as the effect thereof on their everyday functioning.

The following research question guides the research in this article:

- What challenges do teachers experience in their quest for creative, responsive literacy environments for ESL learners?

2.3 The aim of the investigation

Currently most of the research and interventions aimed to rectify the literacy problem are concentrated on pre-school and foundation-phase learners (Lebese & Mtapuri, 2014:75; Pretorius, 2015:49). A large group of learners in the intermediate phase (Grade 4–6) lack proper and age-appropriate literacy skills. Healthy and balanced self-concept, a good quality of life and future successful inclusion in the labour force are at risk. Thus it is clear that intervention for this problem is urgently needed. The teachers are an inextricable part of the scholastic and personal success of the learners in the intermediate phase and, for the purpose of this study, the grade 4 learners specifically. Without a teacher, no proper education can take place. The influence of a good teacher goes far beyond the walls of the classroom. As described in the first article of this series, according to the theory of Bronfenbrenner, each system of an individual's life interactively influences the other systems. The influence of a learner's education, the quality thereof, as well as the support he or she receives from the teachers, have lifelong consequences. The researcher, therefore, aims to determine the challenges that ESL teachers experience in their quest to establish creative, responsive literacy environments for ESL learners.

2.4 Research methodology

The study of this article will be conducted from a phenomenological point of view. Through a phenomenological study, one can attempt to understand people's perspectives and gain insight into a particular situation (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014:152; Feza, 2015:459). McMillan and Schumacher (2010:24) describe the phenomenological study as the non-judgemental collection of data on how individuals make sense out of a particular experience or situation.

This study pursues a qualitative data-gathering method in the form of semi-structured interviews with the teachers. A qualitative method was chosen because it allowed the researcher to gain insight into the work, experiences, and challenges of teachers educating ESL learners. It also helped the researcher to discover the challenges which may exist within the daily functioning of ESL teachers as well as their view on the literacy difficulties of ESL learners. In addition, it helped to formulate potential solutions for some of the difficulties (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014:148). A qualitative method also enabled the researcher to obtain information directly from the teachers thus guaranteeing the authenticity and paving the way for practical and appropriate solutions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:323).

2.4.1 Participants and groups

With regard to the qualitative research design, the researcher used purposive sampling whereby five, parallel medium schools in the Tshwane West Region were invited to participate in the research. The schools were selected on the grounds that they have similar socio-economic challenges and cater for L1 and ESL learners in parallel medium contexts. Individual interviews were conducted with Grade 4 ESL teachers ($N= 10$). Two teachers per school were selected for the individual interviews which explored the experiences and challenges of teachers teaching ESL learners and the effect thereof on their everyday functioning. To protect the anonymity of the participants and the schools where they are employed, their names and the names of the schools are not used in the research. Participants are referred to as teachers of the groups (i.e. school) one, two, three, four and five. All the participating teachers teach ESL learners using English as the language of learning although 99 % of the learners' mother tongue is not English. Not one of the ten participating teachers speaks English as his or her mother tongue. One of the participating teachers is also fluent in Tswana (see 2.4.1.3).

The groups are described below.

- 2.4.1.1 Group 1:** The two teachers in this group were from a parallel-medium school and taught grade 4 ESL learners. One of the teachers had 35 years' teaching experience, ten of which were spent teaching ESL learners. The second teacher had two years' ESL teaching experience. The school is situated in a middle-class to lower middle-class suburb.
- 2.4.1.2 Group 2:** The two teachers in this group were from a parallel-medium school and taught grade 4 ESL learners. One of the teachers had seven years' teaching experience, two of which were spent teaching ESL learners. The second teacher had two years' ESL teaching experience. The school is situated in a middle-class to lower middle-class suburb.
- 2.4.1.3 Group 3:** The two teachers in this group were from a parallel-medium school and taught grade 4 ESL learners. One of the teachers had 17 years teaching experience, ten of which were spent teaching ESL learners. She also speaks Tswana fluently. The second teacher had two years' ESL teaching experience. The school is situated in a middle-class suburb.
- 2.4.1.4 Group 4:** The two teachers in this group were from a parallel-medium school and taught grade 4 ESL learners. One of the teachers had ten years' teaching

experience, two of which were spent teaching ESL learners. The second teacher had eight years' ESL teaching experience. The school is situated in a middle-class suburb.

2.4.1.5 Group 5: The two teachers in this group were from a parallel-medium school and taught grade 4 ESL learners. One of the teachers had five years' teaching experience, four of which were spent teaching ESL learners. The second teacher had seven years' ESL teaching experience. The school is situated in a lower middle-class suburb.

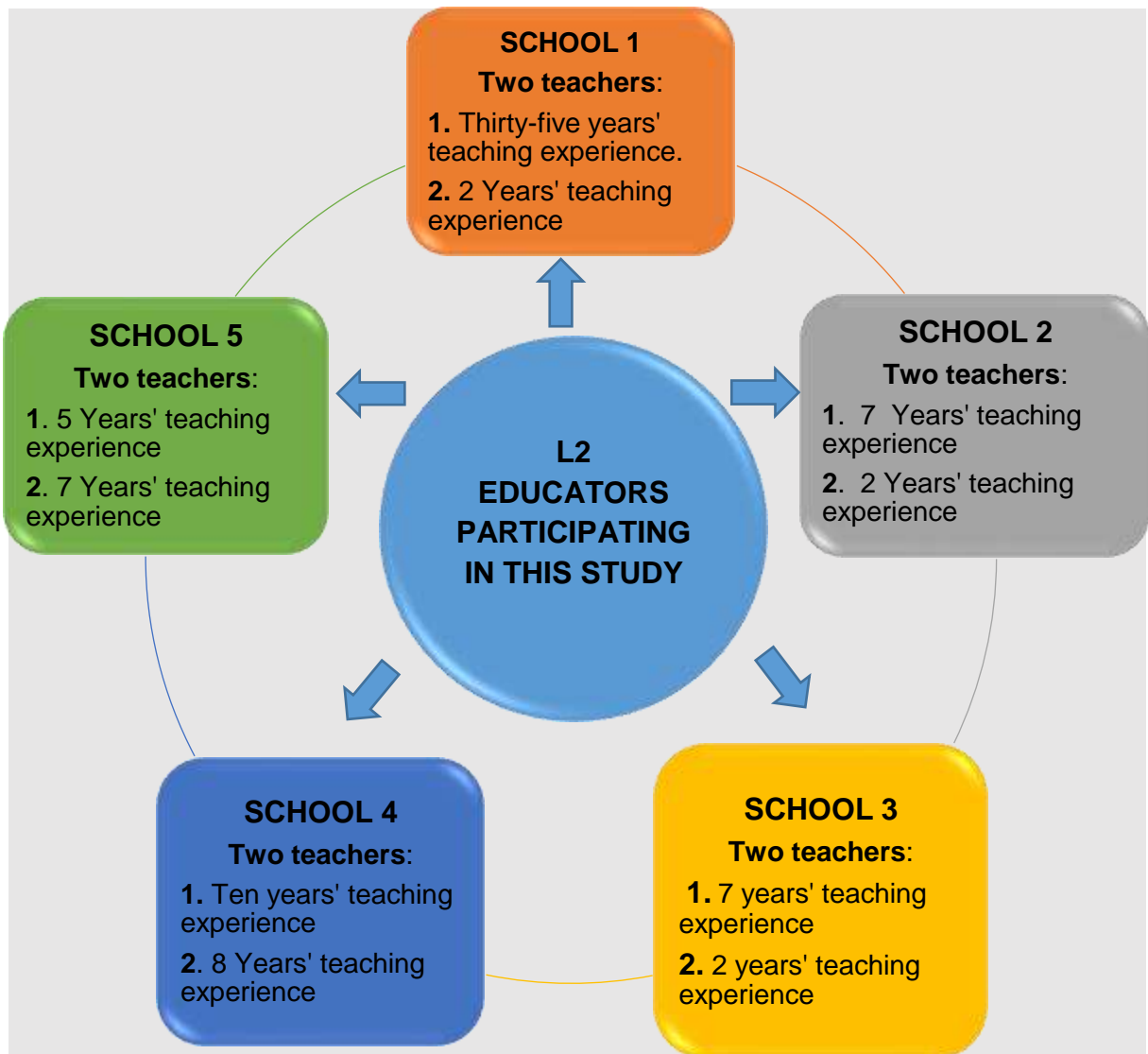


Figure 2-1: Indication of the number of years of teaching experience of the teachers participating in the study.

2.4.2 Ethical considerations

2.4.2.1 Informed consent

Written consent was gained from the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE), as well as from the principals of the participating schools. The GDE, the principals and the teachers of the participating schools were informed about the purpose and importance of the study and when it was conducted.

2.4.2.2 Privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity

Participants' anonymity is protected by de-identifying them or by the use of pseudonyms. All data collected will be seen as strictly confidential and will be stored for a minimum of three years. All records of the collected data will be kept in a safe and secure place at the University of the Free State.

This study forms part of a National Research Foundation (NRF) project at the Faculty of Education at the University of the Free State. The title of the project is: *Cognitive linguistic processing of L1 and ESL learners with typical and atypical patterns of development*. The Ethics Board of the Faculty of Education has approved the study and granted ethical clearance for the research (Ethical Clearance Number: UFS-EDU-2013-0074).

2.4.3 Data gathering and analyses

Data was gathered by means of semi-structured interviews using the same leading questions for every group (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014:156). Using interviews as a qualitative data-collection instrument enables the researcher to obtain information that may not be accessible through other means (Okeke, 2015:211). Individual interviews were conducted with two teachers at each of the sampled schools ($N=10$) to explore their views and experiences concerning the literacy problems experienced by ESL learners, and the effect thereof on the learners' everyday functioning and self-concept. The teachers' insights into the socio-economic background of the learners were taken into account. The set of questions were predetermined by the researcher and can be viewed in Addendum B, p 67.

The interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants. The researcher used a voice recorder as well as the recording application of a cell phone as a backup. The teachers were eager to participate because they saw their contribution as part of the process to improve the quality of teaching and learning. After the interviews had been completed, the records were transcribed. The transcriptions of the interviews were provided to the participants to confirm

that the summaries reflected their views, feelings, and experiences. A content analysis of the data was executed. Content analysis is a process of looking at data from different angles in order to identify keys in the text which will help with the interpretation of the data (Nieuwenhuis, 2010:101). The analysis included organizing data into codes, categories and identifying patterns and relationships between categories. Finally, the data was interpreted.

2.5 Research findings

A set of questions was used as a guideline during the interviews. The complete set of questions is available in Addendum B, p 67. During each interview, the questions were asked in the same order. Discussions were allowed to digress in order to have a clear picture of the context (Dakwa, 2015: 299); however, the conversations were always directed back to the original question in order to obtain valid information. Questions that dealt with similar topics were grouped and discussed together. In the findings, in order to have a meaningful discussion, the researcher discussed some of the questions in combination with others. The combination of questions will be clearly indicated. The interview questions posed by the researcher are marked in bold.

2.5.1 Questions 1, 2 and 3

Questions 1, 2 and 3 will be discussed simultaneously. The scope of question 3 (which addresses the challenges the teachers experience in schooling ESL learners) differs largely from the factors influencing the literacy development of ESL learners in questions 1 and 2. However, during the interpretation of the data, the responses from the participating teachers to questions 1, 2 and 3 largely corresponded. The researcher decided to combine the three questions and thereby strengthen the evidence that was emerging from the interviews.

Question 1: **What extrinsic and intrinsic factors influence literacy development in your classroom?**

Questions 2: **How do these factors impact the ESL learners' literacy development?**

Question 3: **What challenges do you experience in creating responsive literacy environments for ESL learners?**

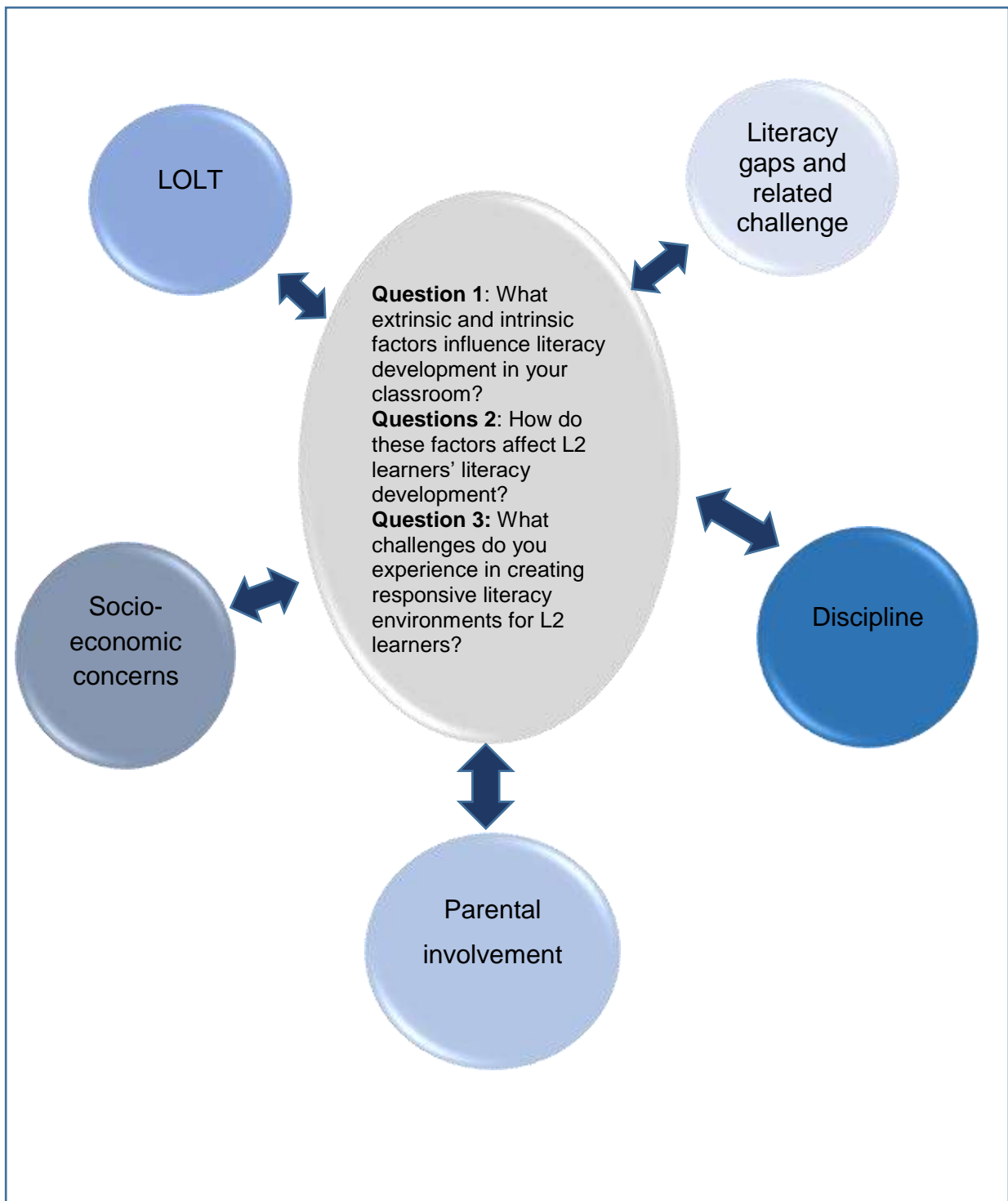


Figure 2-2: The main and corresponding themes identified in the answers to questions 1, 2 and 3

The different groups pointed out various similarities influencing the literacy development of the ESL learners in the different schools. Interesting individual observations also appear in the discussions.

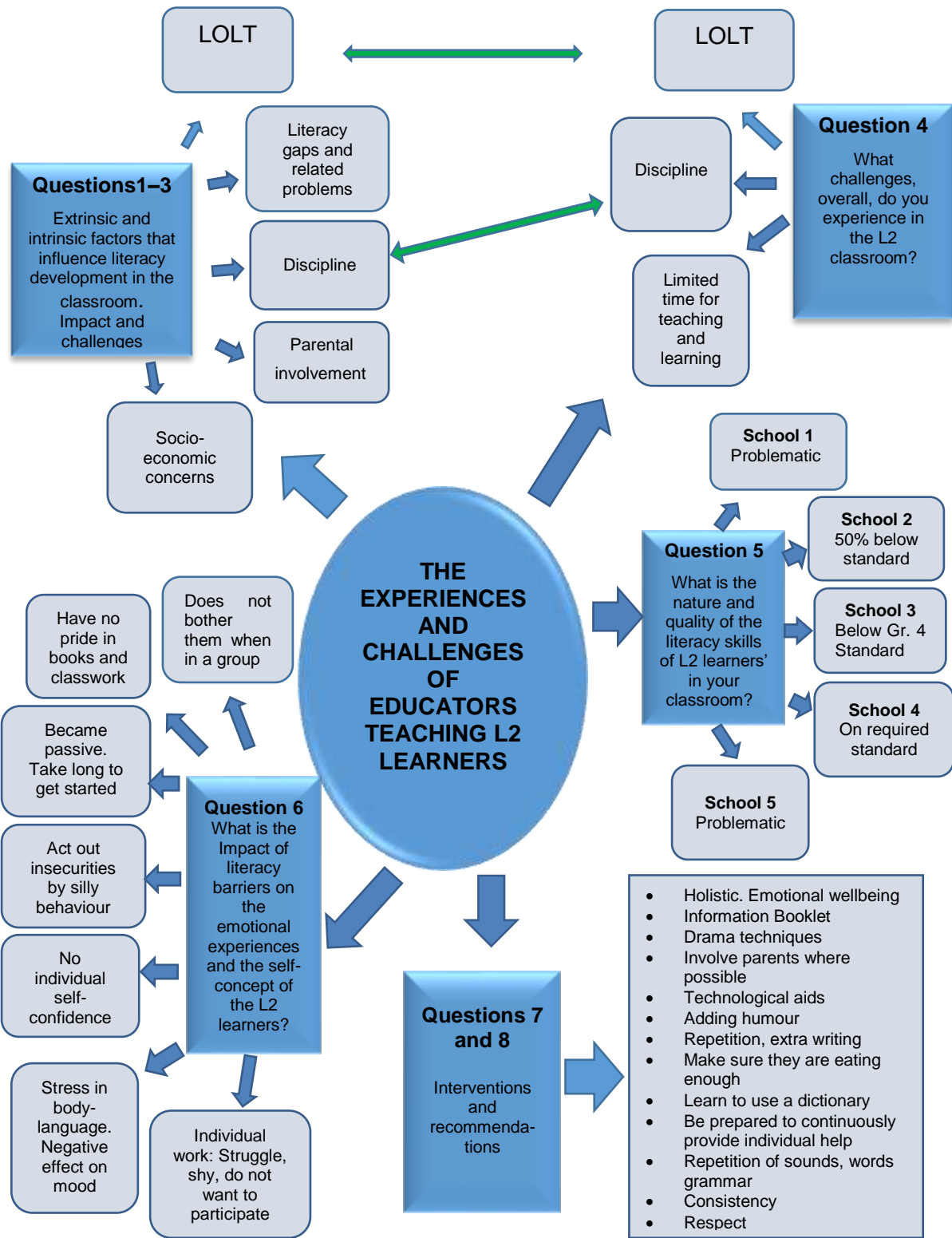


Figure 2-3: An oversight of the data analyses

2.5.1.1 LOLT is not the mother tongue of the learners

Teacher 2 of Group 1 pointed out that the LOLT (English) is often the third language of the learners:

English is not even their second language. They do not speak English or Afrikaans at home. No attention is given to the way they speak [English], at home or among their friends. They use their mother tongue.

Teacher 1 of Group 1 added:

The ESL learners who were exposed to English at an earlier age [before grade R] are able to progress with their school work. They also are more responsible with their school and homework. I think it is because they understand what they have to do.

Group 2 also stressed the fact that English is often the ESL learners' third or even fourth language. Teacher 2 of this group maintained that:

Most of the time English is the ESL learners' third or fourth language ... they do not understand what's going on in the class. The parents are often also not able to help them with their homework.

Teacher 1 added:

They [the learners] do not ask if they do not understand.

In group 3, the teachers felt that the fact that the LOLT is not the learners' mother tongue inhibits their responses in the classrooms and during tests and exams. Therefore assessments are not always a true indication of their knowledge. Teacher 1 declared:

These children cannot answer a test or exam paper properly.

The influence of the LOLT on the literacy environment and the climate of learning in the classroom were stressed by the second teacher who can speak Tswana fluently.

I speak Tswana fluently... It also helps a lot with education and learning. Sometimes when I took [sic] a long time explaining to them [sic] the meaning of a concept, I just name the concept in their mother tongue and they immediately understand the meaning.

For the teachers in Group 4, the biggest factor influencing the literacy development of the ESL learners is that they do not receive their education in their mother tongue. Both of them remarked that:

It is the parents. They think it [English as the LOLT] is how it ought to be. They do not act in the best interest of the child.

Although this group is very positive about the literacy abilities as well as the overall experience

with ESL learners, they declare that it is not easy to have a positive learning atmosphere in the class when the learners experience problems with literacy. Teacher 1 explains:

If they experience problems with literacy they tend to become disruptive.

Some people will think they have behavioural issues but it is a way to disguise their problems with the school work.

Group 5 adds to the view of other groups that because the LOLT is not the learners' mother tongue, it has a negative effect on the literacy development of the learners. Teacher 2 stated:

They live and operate in a context with no exposure to the LOLT. Their living contexts differ from the context and language usually used in the textbooks.

Many of this school's ESL learners experience difficulties. The mother tongue learners are inclined to progress from the beginning of the year where the ESL learner first has to master the language before he or she makes academic progress. Teacher 2 explained further:

Where a native learner may immediately proceed because he understands everything, ESL learners first have to learn the language and only then are able to progress with their school work.

The main theme identified in the discussion of question 1 was that learners are taught in an LOLT which is not their mother tongue. Conversations in the different groups made the reasons clear why learners attended schools and were taught in languages that were other than their mother tongue.

Although not directly part of question 1 or 2, the researcher deemed it valuable to highlight the reasons forthcoming from the group conversations as to why education with English as the LOLT was chosen above mother tongue education. As discussed in the introduction to Article 1, many South African parents believe that having their children educated in English will provide opportunities for the children to find good jobs in the future. Many of them see English as the language of empowerment which will help them break from inequalities of the past (cf. Article 1: p 2). Many South Africans also see English as a global language and one that is commonly used and widely associated with economic growth as well as being useful for further studies (cf. Article 1: p 19). The parents' reasons for their children's education in English concentrated on the high quality of education, better discipline, and general cooperation in the schools with English as the LOLT.

The teachers of group 1 are of the opinion that:

They [the ESL learners] do not get a quality education in most of the township schools.

The culture, sport, and academy [sic] are strong in the schools [schools where the LOLT

is English].

Teacher 2 of group 2 referred to the reasons that some of the ESL learners' parents provide:

Some of the learners in my class's parents are teachers at schools where the LOLT is their mother tongue but they sent [sic] their children to us. I have asked the parents why. They answered that the interaction and education are better here [at school 2].

Teacher 1 of group 3 shares the opinion:

I do not think the parents want to send their children to that [sic] schools because there are not always teachers who are willing to help and listen. They know in the schools where English is the LOLT, there is discipline.

Teacher 2 added:

Some of the learners in my class's parents are teachers in schools with their mother tongue as LOLT. They sent [sic] their children to us. Our academy [sic] is very good.

Teacher 1 expanded further:

They come to us because they know we work here. Our academy [sic] is of a high standard.

Teacher 2 of group 4 stated:

It is the choice of the parents. They think English education is the better for their children.

Teacher 1 of group 5 contributed to the reasons with:

They [the parents] choose to send their children to our school. They do not want to send their children to ... [school's name]. Here are better education, better circumstances, better transport...

2.5.1.2 Literacy gaps and related challenges

The teachers of group 1 indicated that there is a big difference between the literacy abilities of the ESL learners who were exposed to English as the LOLT at an earlier age in a crèche or grade R. Teacher 1 remarked:

In comparison with other ESL learners, they progress quickly. They can read better. Their discipline is better. The later they are exposed to English as LOLT, the more they are struggling [sic].

Teacher 2 indicated that quite a few of the ESL learners struggling with English as the LOLT often have to repeat a grade in the foundation phase or they progress to grade 4 but have to repeat grade 4. Although they usually pass grade 4 on their second attempt, she knew that the standard of their literacy would become a bigger problem. She commented:

There are those who were held back last year but will make it this year. Although they may pass grade 4, I suspect they will not make the next grade...

The teachers of group 2 identified the gap between grade 3 and grade 4 as part of the problem

which ESL learners experience. Teacher 2 stated:

The transition is very difficult for them. The adjustment between the two grades is too much for them. I think the work differ [sic] too much. I want to focus on grammar: style, tenses – how to speak the language, to read. But you have to do so many other things... Technical [sic] it is difficult. It is too much for them to learn at a given time.

Teacher 1 of this group attributes part of the ESL learners' reading problems to the absence of exposure to reading:

They do not do a [sic] basic reading or reading for the joy of it. They rather play electronic games. Technology makes them [too] lazy to read.

The overall feeling of the teachers in this group is that the literacy problems that ESL learners experience have an impact on their scholastic progress. Teacher 1 explained:

Some of the ESL learners' scholastic progress is slower [sic] and precarious. They read without comprehension. Their listening skills are not well developed. They read but it is as if they do not hear or understand what they are reading.

She expanded:

Their dexterity with the LOLT also affects the way they participate in the class. They do not ask questions if they do not understand something. Some tend to become frustrated and irritated and then become a hindrance to other learners. Some ESL learners take a long time to complete their work because of their difficulties with the LOLT.

Teacher 2 added:

As the volume of the school work became [sic] bigger and more difficult some of the ESL learners cannot keep up. They cannot cope with the school work.

The teachers of group 3 similarly experienced the gap between Grade 3 and Grade 4 as being too wide. Teacher 2 indicated the following:

When the learners start with grade 4, they are not able to write a paragraph or answer a paper in English. But they have to! They do not cope at all! It is not only with language. They do not understand the terminology of subjects like science and technology.

She continued:

I work with the marks of all the grade 4 learners. The average of the ESL learners in subjects like technology and science are [sic] 10 to 15 % lower than these [sic] of the mother tongue learners. The terminology in subjects like science and technology ... they have not [sic] a clue!

Teachers in this group are of the opinion that even if a learner understands the LOLT, he or she often does not have the ability to express himself or herself in the LOLT, thus hampering their literacy development and scholastic progress. Teacher 1 explained:

I think they understand but they do not know how to apply it. In grade 4 they have to be

able to answer an examination paper on their own. Many of the ESL learners cannot do it, because of the LOLT.

The teachers of group 5 likewise identified the leap between literacy in grade 3 and literacy in grade 4 as too big. Teacher 1 explained:

At first, you have to take small steps. They struggled [sic] to write sentences of more than three words. Now [later in the year] it [is] somewhat better, they [have] started to write five-word sentences.

The teachers in this group further indicated that their ESL learners also have problems understanding and associating with the contextual characteristics of the learning material due to their limited vocabulary but also due to big differences in the socio-economic circumstances of their own lives. The school serves a community characterized by poverty and high levels of unemployment. Teacher 2 indicated the following:

They have problems with reading as well as with understanding what they are reading. They are not used to the LOLT and sometimes do not understand what the teacher is saying. They do not have the ability to respond in detail. Some of the ESL learners do not pass a grade due to inferior literacy abilities. They do not want to participate in the classroom because of their literacy problems. Therefore there is deterioration of literacy skills instead of growing.

In contrast with the other groups, the teachers of group 4 are very positive about the overall progress and literacy abilities of the ESL learners. They identified the following factors as having an impact on the literacy development of some of the ESL learners:

A few of them are not proficient in English. They became [sic] a challenge because they became [sic] naughty and bother the other learners. They need individual attention which is not always possible.

2.5.1.3 Discipline

The teachers from groups 1 and 3 have strong views on the impact of disciplinary problems in classes on the quality of the overall teaching and learning atmosphere in the classroom. It automatically has a negative influence on the literacy development of the learners.

The teachers of group 1 mentioned that they experience disciplinary problems with the learners. Teacher 1 mentioned that the learners who have problems with the LOLT tend to be more undisciplined and disruptive. She remarked:

It has a big influence on their work. The undisciplined learners are also those who do not pay attention and, eventually, they are far behind with their schoolwork.

This teacher contributed the poor discipline to marital problems between the parents. Consequently, many learners are raised by only one of the parents or by their grandmothers.

Many of them came [sic] from divorced homes where the child stays with only the mother or the grandmother. There are often big disciplinary problems and it sometimes seems [as] if the mother does not want to get involved in the child's problems. I think the children need their father's input in their lives...

The teachers of this school attribute some of the disciplinary problems to the differences in the cultures of the learners and the teachers and each group's lack of insight into the important norms and values of the other group. For Teacher 2:

Discipline is one of the biggest challenges. The classes are so big, even to get them to keep quiet to continue with the work seems like a battle. If you incessantly have to reprimand them, the whole class turn [sic] against you and make [sic] it difficult to teach them.

One of the teachers observed that most of the children from indigenous cultures seem to accept discipline more easily from a man than from a woman. In this school, they have a male assistant for every class group because of the disciplinary problems with ESL children. Teacher 2 stated:

Their behaviour is so [sic] that every English class has a male assistant. If the assistant is absent there is chaos in the class. It is a culture [sic] thing.

One of the teachers of group 3 is of the opinion that problems with discipline in the English classes are one of the biggest factors influencing the literacy development in the ESL classrooms:

There are differences in the ways we [the teachers] and the parents see discipline. Discipline is a big issue in the classes.

However, the other teacher in the same group does not experience any disciplinary problems. She pointed out that she is fully proficient in Tswana.

I do not have any discipline [sic] problems. I speak Tswana fluently. The learners respect me.

She seems to have a more holistic view on the reasons some learners have disciplinary problems:

Those learners who have discipline [sic] issues. You can be certain there are problems at home. When I see a child struggles [sic] with behaviour [sic] problems, I contact the home. Almost every time there is a problem at home that we [the school] are not aware of.

Group 4 contradicted the other four groups by having an overall positive outlook on the

teaching and learning of ESL learners. However, during the discussion teacher 2 of this group mentioned the noise and talking when classes change classrooms between periods and explained that it takes some time for the learners to settle before the class can start.

They enter the class with a big noise. Between classes they walk in the corridors in small groups, talking and making a noise.

The other teacher immediately answered with the comment:

But it is their culture. It is not something bad. They are passionate about life.

Teacher 2 immediately agreed. She however admitted:

My biggest challenge is the few learners who have problems with literacy. They become naughty...

2.5.1.4 Parental Involvement

Teachers in two of the groups pointed out the lack of involvement of parents in their children's work were a factor that hampers the learner's literacy and academic development. Both teachers in group 1 identified it as a big problem. Teacher 1 stated:

Parent evenings are attended by very few parents. You have to force the parents with letters and telephone calls to attend the parent evenings

The second teacher added:

When one of the learners' mother [sic] eventually attended a meeting, after much pleading from the teacher and only near the end of the term, she blamed the school for his problems. But we can see an improvement in his work, he is trying very hard but maybe it is too late...

Teacher 1 of group 5 declared that the involvement of parents with the school and their children's school work is poor:

I reckon one out of 10 parents is involved.

She added:

They tend to become involved at the end of the year when they see their child is not going to pass.

Unlike the rest of the groups, the teachers in group 4 experienced that the parents were indeed involved with the school. Teacher 1 stated that:

The turnout for parent evenings is very high. The parents have a positive attitude. They want all the detail [sic] information regarding their children's development and performance. Many of the learners' workbooks are signed on a daily basis by a parent which proved that they look every day through the books and are involved with the homework of the learner.

2.5.1.5 Socio-economic concerns

It is general knowledge that socio-economic factors have an overall influence on the total functioning of the individual.

Teacher 1 of group 1 expressed her concern with the long distances that many learners have to travel to school.

I think they have to travel very far in the mornings ... many of them are tired when they arrive at school. Some wake up 4:00 in the morning ... then after school, they again have to wait a long time for their parents or the taxi.

Both of the teachers in group 5 rated the socio-economic challenges as the biggest factor which influences the literacy development of the learners in their school. Teacher 1 stated that:

Most of the learners are coming [sic] from poor families. [They are] not only financially poor but there are also no resources available at home to stimulate their literacy development. They struggle to understand basic concepts. Their vocabulary is limited.

Teacher 2 added:

Their parents are not able to assist them with learning, sometimes [not] even with basic things.

The teachers also experience that the learners are not motivated to learn and to be successful. They attribute it to the everyday survival struggle some of the families' experience. Teacher 1 expanded:

They do not have the will, the motivation to succeed. It is something that has to be nurtured at home.

The main and corresponding themes identified in the answers to questions 1, 2 and 3 are:

- the LOLT;
- the literacy gaps and related challenges;
- discipline;
- a lack of parental involvement
- self-concept and emotional problems and
- socio-economic concerns

2.5.2 Question 4

What challenges – overall – do you experience in teaching ESL learners?

It is interesting to observe, when interpreting the responses of all the participating teachers to question 4, that the main themes corresponded with a large part of the themes highlighted in

the data derived from the answers to questions 1, 2 and 3. It, therefore, emphasizes the validity of the factors that have an impact on the teaching and learning of ESL learners, provided by the participants in this research project.

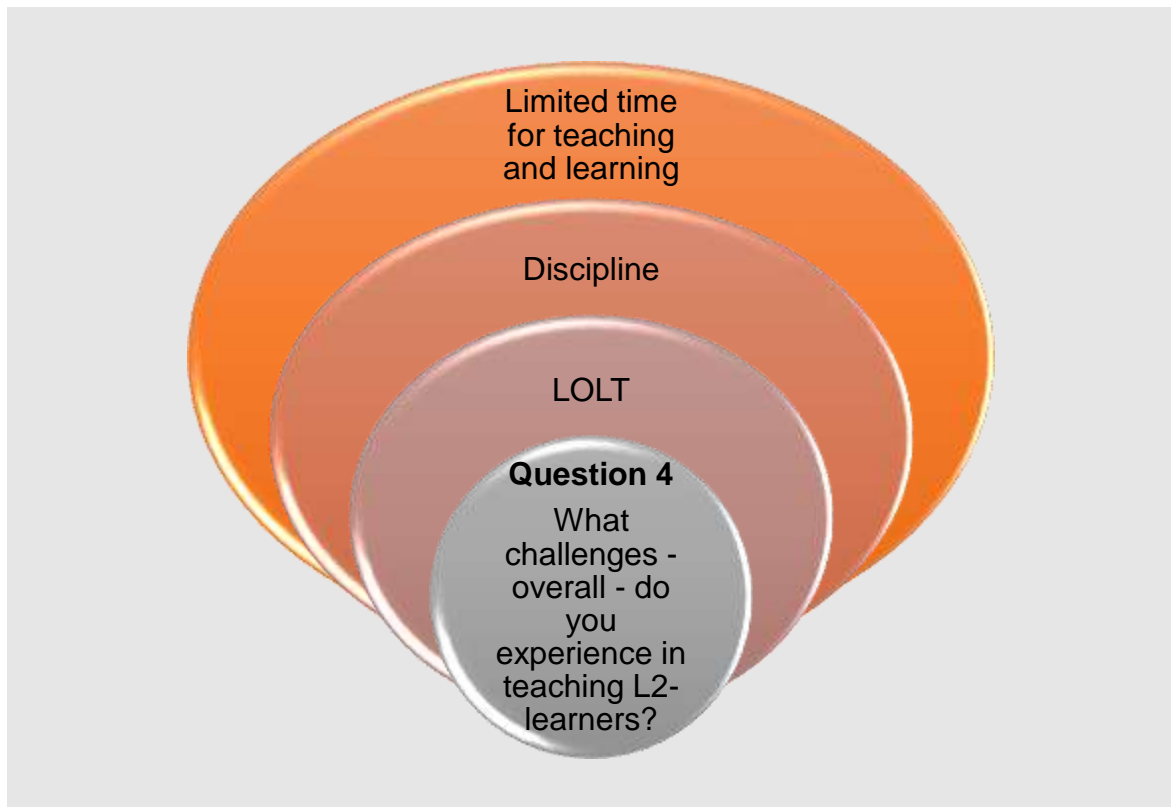


Figure 2-4: Challenges experienced by teachers learning and teaching ESL learners

2.5.2.1 Language of Learning and Teaching

The difference between the LOLT and the learners' mother tongue forms the foundation of the challenges the teachers described in their response to question 4.

Teacher 1 of group 1 observed that:

English is not even their second language.

The second teacher added:

Their parents sent them to schools where English is taught as a home language but it is not even their second language.

Group 2 also stressed the LOLT as the main challenge in the education and learning of ESL learners. Teacher 2 declared:

Most of the time English is the learners, second, third or even fourth language. They do not understand a word English. If they read, it is without comprehension.

That the LOLT is not the learners' mother tongue was identified by the teachers in group 3 as the main challenge. Teacher 2 stressed:

When they came in [sic] grade 4 they must be able to write, for example, a paragraph. They are not able to do it. In grade 3 they never even write a test. They have problems with the terminology in subjects like science. They do not understand the concepts in English.

The teachers in group 4 also identified the LOLT as a challenge but only for the learners who have certain scholastic difficulties. According to the teachers in this group, English as the LOLT for learners from indigenous language groups in their school is addressed from grade 1. There is close cooperation between the teachers in the different grades to ensure that the LOLT does not aggravate scholastic problems. They agreed that:

Each teacher built on the foundation of the previous year – especially the grade 3 teacher. When they come to grade 4, they are ready.

The biggest challenge for group 5 is also the LOLT which is not the mother tongue of the learners. This problem is aggravated by the socio-economic problems experienced in this environment. The learners are not exposed to good literacy practices.

There is no literacy exposure at home – Teacher 1.

The second teacher added:

They [the parents] are not able to help the children, even with the basics.

Teacher 2 clarified the reason for the failure of some of the learners:

Many learners did not pass the first year due to the LOLT which they cannot speak or understand. They have to take English as a first language when it is, in fact, their second or even third language.

2.5.2.2 Discipline

Discipline remains a constant issue and challenge for the teachers. One of the teachers in group 1 attributed disciplinary problems to dysfunctional families:

The children are often in one-parent families where the child lives either with the mother or the grandmother. Due to various reasons, the mother does not want to become involved in the problems the child experience [sic] at school.

The other teacher in group 1 added that the absence of a father figure sometimes causes big problems, especially with discipline:

It has a big influence on their schoolwork. The learners without discipline are also those causing trouble in the classroom.

The large classes of ESL learners proved to be a challenge for the teachers of group 2:

The large class groups also have a negative influence. It took [sic] a long time to get everyone silent and concentrating.

Teacher 2 in this group explained:

There are 45 learners in a group. One teacher is not able to give individual support to every learner who needs it.

In group 3 discipline also came forward as a challenge but not to all the teachers. Teacher 1 declared:

I think the biggest problem in my classes is discipline and the accompanying lack of concentration.

The second teacher is fluent in Tswana and according to her she does not experience disciplinary problems because she speaks the learners' language:

I do not experience any discipline problems [sic] – nothing at all. I speak Tswana fluently. They have big [sic] respect for the fact.

The teachers of group 4 attributed the disciplinary problems they experienced to learners' struggling with scholastic and concentration problems. These learners usually take a long time to start working, have difficulties in paying attention and tend to be unable to complete their assignments. The teachers, however, do not see it as a challenge. They agreed that:

They took [sic] long to start with the work. They are causing [sic] trouble, bothering their friends. They use their behaviour to hide their scholastic inabilities.

2.5.2.3 Limited time for teaching and learning

Teachers from four out of the five groups agree on the fact that there is not enough time available to provide extra and individual support and exposure to learners who need it. To be able to do it remains a daily challenge. Teacher 1 of group 1 stressed:

If you do [sic] not have to waste time on disciplining the learners, you can [sic] do so much more work...

Teacher 2 of group 2 is of the opinion that, because it takes much longer to get the learners in large groups to settle down, it does not leave enough time for teaching as well as individual attention to learners who have problems:

In classes with between 40 and 45 learners, the quality of the work got [sic] done are [sic] poorer than these in smaller groups. A large group took [sic] longer to settle down and the number of individuals needing individual attention is bigger. There is not enough time. It remains a challenge...

Teacher 2 of group 3 explained that, because of the fact that the ESL learner has to take the

LOLT (which is not his/her mother tongue) as a first language, too much precious teaching time is wasted:

Many learners in our ESL classes are not able to cope with the LOLT as the first language. There do not remain [sic] enough time to spend on the second additional language as prescribed by the CAPS...

Teacher 1 of school 5 maintained that it is hard to get the learners into a weekly routine to use the class time optimally:

After holidays, even Mondays and Tuesdays [after a weekend], it is chaos. At [sic] Wednesday you more or less have them in a routine ... Weekend ... Monday – it is again a struggle...

2.5.3 Question 5

What is the nature and quality of the literacy skills of ESL learners’ in your classroom?

The teachers at all five schools agreed that, in most cases, the learners who experience problems with the LOLT, and therefore with literacy, tend to fall further and further behind in their scholastic progress. During the foundation phase, it is easy and often seen as not too big a problem – and one which can be solved. If it is not addressed, the degenerative impact on the learners’ scholastic picture will become very clear after grade 4.

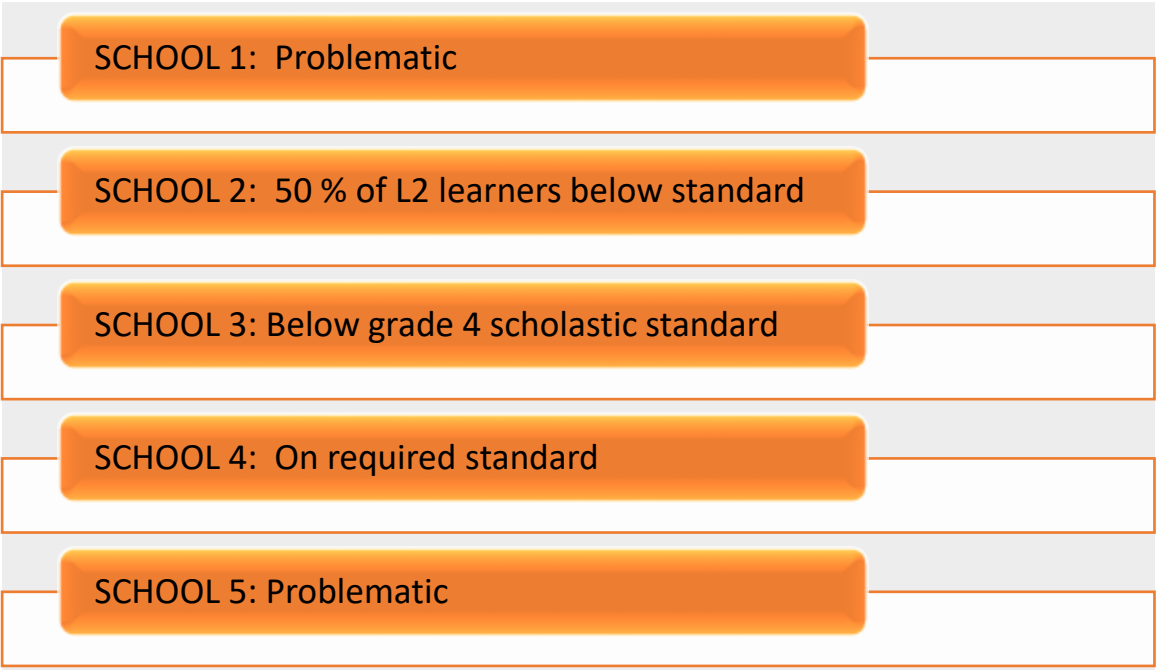


Figure 2-5: Nature and quality of the literacy skills of ESL learners’ in the classroom

The teachers in this group 1 see the nature and quality of many ESL learners as problematic. The one teacher feels:

For many learners, English are [sic] not even their second language but they have to take it as their Home Language. If they receive [sic] their education in their mother tongue they will [sic] perform much better.

The other teacher is saddened by the fact that:

There are those who have to repeat grade 3. Maybe they are going to pass grade 4 but grade 5 will again be a problem.

In group 2, the teachers put in plain words that more than 50 % of the learners are below standard in terms of the quality of their literacy skills. Teacher 1 shared her experience:

In the beginning, the work is not that much. They worked slow [sic] but they coped. As soon as the work became more and more complicated, the problems started. The gaps became bigger.

Teacher 2's opinion is:

I will say [that] 50 % of the learners are performing at an average level but at least 50 % do not cope.

They shared the outlook that:

They [the learners] cannot read with comprehension.

The teachers in group 3 see the learners' literacy skills as being below grade 4 scholastic standards. Teacher 2 stated:

English as [the] LOLT as well as in the form of the first language is too difficult for them. I took [sic] the handbook and make it easier at first, to help them to cope.

The other teacher added:

This is my third year with grade 4 English learners. They are not even able to make sentences with the words in the correct order.

Teacher 1 also says:

They do not understand the subject concepts in subjects like science and maths.

In contrast with all the other groups, the teachers of group 4 think their learners' literacy skills are on par. They, however, add that they use the literacy skills of the Afrikaans mother tongue group as a yardstick and that the Afrikaans mother tongue group at this school is in general scholastically weaker. Teacher 1 stated:

Most of the learners in the English as LOLT group perform very well: 80 %.

She added:

In the top ten group of grade 4, eight of the ten learners is [sic] learners with English as

LOLT.

The teachers of group 5 are firmly convinced that at their school the grade 4 ESL learners' literacy skills are well below standard, despite the teachers' best efforts. Teacher 1 told:

If they [Grade 4 ESL learners] have to write sentences, it is usually three-word sentences.

Both emphasized the fact that the learners have to take English as their LOLT (while it is not their mother tongue) as the reason for the problem. They reason that English as a LOLT – and therefore as L1 – is too difficult for the learners whose mother tongue is not English. This has an overall negative impact on their scholastic progress as it is the LOLT for all the subjects. Teacher 1 explained:

The learners have English as [their] LOLT and they also have to take English as a first language. When they started in Grade R or 1, they first have [sic] to learn to understand and speak the language. They began with a backlog which is nearly impossible to wipe out.

2.5.4 Question 6

What is the impact of literacy barriers on the emotional experiences and the self-concept of ESL learners?

The teachers at the five different schools are of the view that the barriers to literacy do not seem to have an obvious influence on the learners in group situations although the learners with literacy problems are reluctant to read or talk individually in front of the group. When they have to read or speak as an individual to the teacher, they became shy and uncertain of themselves. The teachers of all the schools agreed that difficulties with literacy have a degrading effect on the self-concept and emotions of the learners.

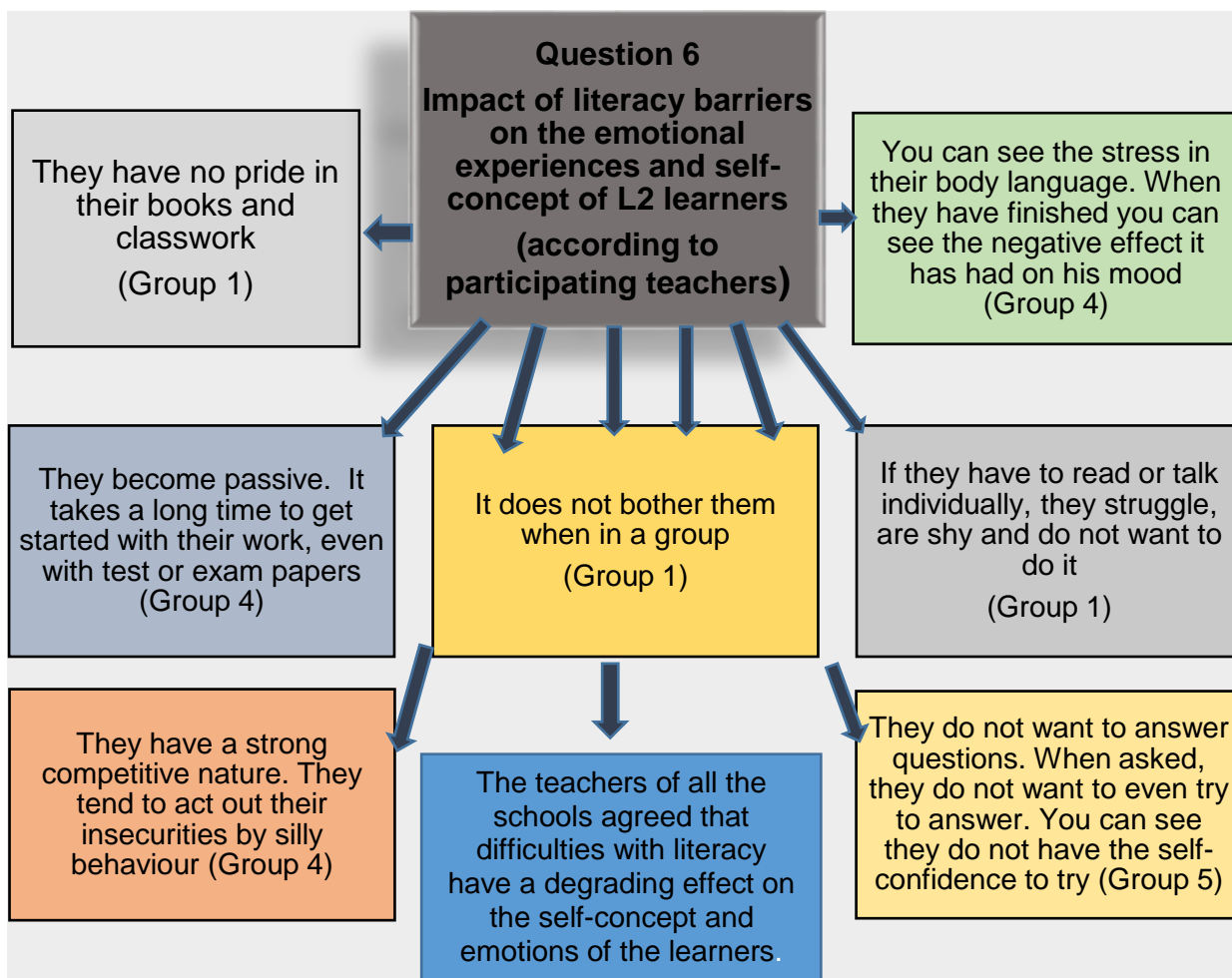


Figure 2-6: Impact of literacy barriers on the emotional experiences and the self-concept of ESL learners

Teacher 1 of group 1 stated:

It does not look if it bothers them when they are in a group. They are boisterous and loud. But if they have to talk to me individually, they became shy and withdrawn.

Teacher 2 added:

In the group and between friends they tend to have big mouths. But when they have to do individual oral presentations they are shy, you cannot hear what they are saying.

Teacher 1 observed:

The quality of their books also shows to me something about their self-concept. Some of the books are dirty and torn. They show no pride in their schoolwork.

She continued:

Some of them show no appreciation for books. You can see they have no literacy background.

Teacher 1 in group 1 stated the following regarding the impact of literacy barriers on the self-concept of learners:

It has a big influence on their self-concept. If they have to do an individual reading for marks and they have trouble reading the passage they became [sic] frustrated or shy. Some of them even started [sic] to cry.

The other teacher in group 1 made the observation that learners who are in the care of their grandmothers tend to be emotionally weaker while the learners who are in single-parent families tend to be more streetwise and able to fend for themselves. The impact of scholastic difficulties on their self-concept seems to be smaller or they are more resilient. Teacher 2 explained:

If the granny is the caretaker the learner, especially girls, tend to be not as independent as the rest of her peers.

She added:

If the learner came [sic] from a single-parent family, they are [sic] more resilient.

A teacher in group 4 emphasized the strong competitive nature of especially the boys of certain indigenous cultures. In groups, they hide their inabilities under a cloak of bravado, jokes and show-off behaviour. She stated:

They have a strong competitive nature. They tend to act out their insecurities by silly behaviour.

A teacher in group 4 observed that a learner with literacy and scholastic difficulties becomes passive in the classroom. He or she tries to divert the attention from their scholastic inabilities to behaviour issues like taking a long time to start with written work or to complete work, interfering with other learners and behaving unacceptably. She remarked:

They became [sic] passive. It took [sic] a long time to get started with their work, even with test or exam papers.

In circumstances where they have to show their literacy, their self-concept regresses, they become nervous and they show physical signs of stress like sweating, trembling hands and inability to answer questions. The other teacher observed:

You can see the stress in their body language. When they are finished you can see the negative effect it had [sic] on their mood.

The teachers in group 5 also remarked on the passivity of the learners with literacy problems. If not asked directly, they do not participate in the group. Teacher 2 explained:

They do not want to answer questions. When asked, they do not want to even try to

answer. You can see they do not have the self-confidence to try.

An important contribution was made by teacher 1 of this group who said that the self-concept of a learner with scholastic problems can be greatly influenced by the way the teacher handles the problem and treats the learner.

The teacher has to manage it very well. The individual must not feel afflicted [sic] if he or she answered wrong [sic].

2.5.5 Question 7

Can you recommend any successful interventions you have applied in addressing ESL learners' problems with reading, writing, and spelling?

The teachers in group 1 stressed the importance of repetition of sounds, words, and grammar as well as individual support to the learners.

Teacher 1:

I repeat the vocabulary over and over.

She continued:

You have to be prepared to continuously help them on an individual basis.

Teacher 2 suggested:

Learn [sic] them to use a dictionary. If they do not know how to spell a word, they have to look it up in the dictionary.

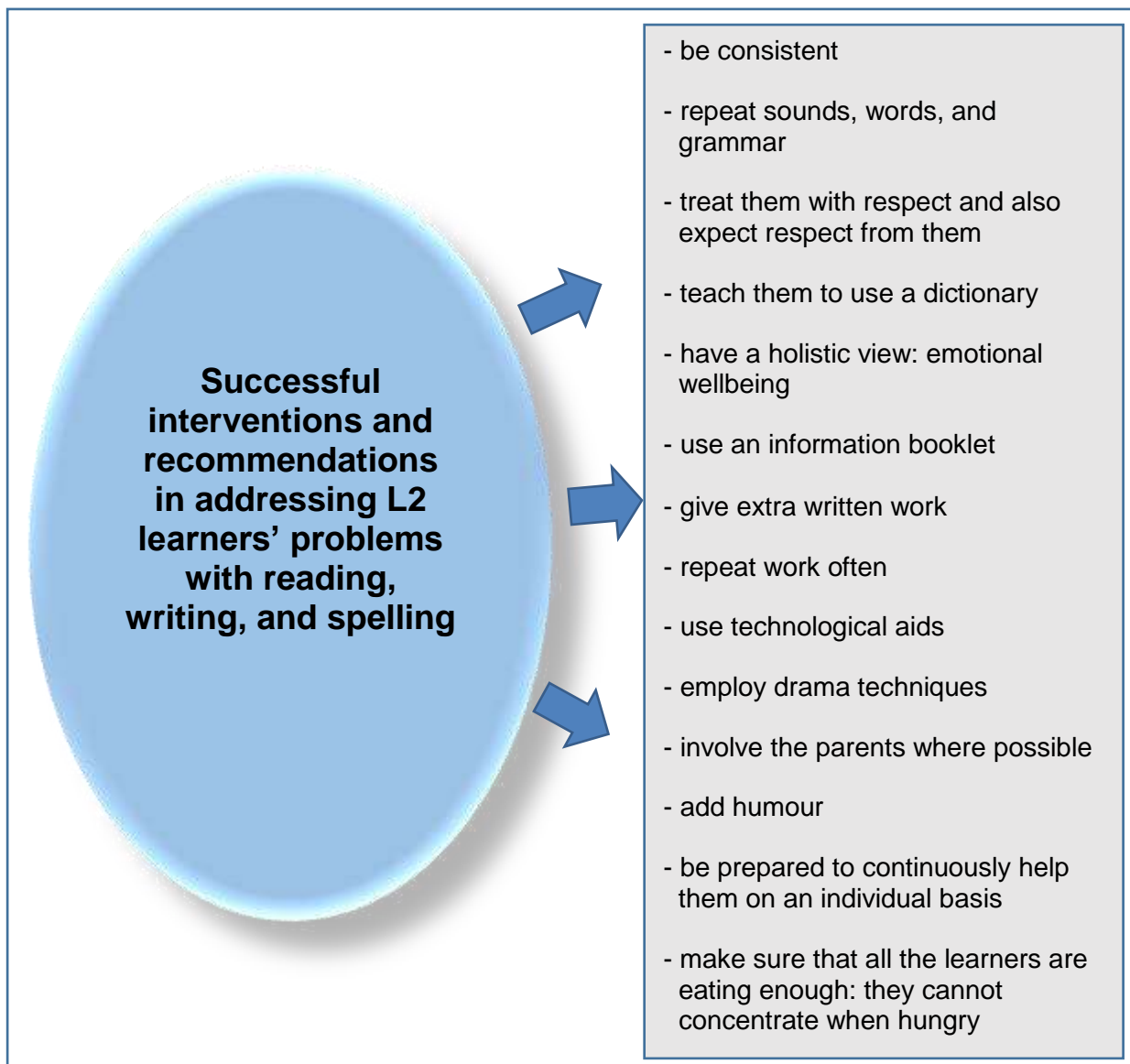


Figure 2-7: Interventions and recommendations in addressing ESL learners' problems with reading, writing, and spelling

The teachers of group 1 were of the opinion that ESL learners must be exposed to a print-rich environment and that the nurturing of a love for reading and books should be a conscious effort on the part of the teacher. Where possible the parents must be encouraged to join the effort.

Teacher 1 explains:

They do not have an appreciation for books. At the end of the year, their school books are in a dilapidated state.

Teacher 1 commented that she always makes sure that the learners have work to do. If they are constructively engaged with work, they tend to concentrate better and there are fewer disciplinary problems.

Learn [sic] them to use a dictionary.

Both of them stressed the importance to make sure that all the learners eat enough.

We have a feeding scheme at our school. Most of the learners in the ESL classes are benefitting [sic] from this scheme. If they are hungry, they cannot concentrate.

For the teachers of group 2, writing is as important as the oral repetition. By adding extra writing to the process, different senses are involved which help with the consolidation of the literacy skills. Teacher 2 explained her method:

To write out the work, help them to think about and remember the work. I make time for extra remedial work, extending on the theme that we are busy with. The same work but in another form...

Teacher 1 encourages the parents to be involved with their child's school work. She explained:

I write the homework down for the mom and communicates [sic] with parents about problems the learner may experience. A WhatsApp-group with interested parents during certain times also help [sic].

The teachers of group 3 proposed that if parents choose English as the LOLT above mother tongue education, the children must be exposed to English as their LOLT at least from their grade R year. Teacher 2 summed it up:

If they [the parents] know that they are going to send their child to a school where the LOLT is not the child's mother tongue, the child must start Grade R at that school to help him or her cope with the LOLT.

The younger teacher in this group (teacher 1) recommended that the school management must be wary of placing inexperienced teachers with ESL learners. Beginner teachers often become overwhelmed by the challenges in teaching ESL learners and leave the teaching profession because of it. She explained:

It was very, very hard for me to start working with the ESL learners. If it was [sic] not for [her colleague], I would have quit teaching.

Teacher 2, who is able to converse fluently in English as well as Tswana (apart from her mother tongue), stressed the importance of personal involvement with the learner who is experiencing either scholastic or emotional problems. If a learner presents with inappropriate behaviour, she immediately starts to look into the matter and usually finds deeper, underlying issues like problems at home as the cause of behavioural issues. She stated:

I believe that behaviour [sic] problems, as well as scholastic problems, are frequently caused by problems at home. If the child receives love and acceptance at home, they [sic] will not ask for it through negative behaviour at school.

The insight into the existing problem – even if the teacher is not able to resolve the matter – tends to help the learner cope and this positively influences the learner’s behaviour. The teacher, however, agrees with her colleague that it is time-consuming, especially with large classes and because the extent of the emotional wellbeing of the class often affects her own family time and responsibilities. Sadly, this is a valid reason why many teachers choose to not become emotionally involved in their learners’ problems.

A creative recommendation from teacher 1 of group 3 is to provide of a booklet containing general, everyday phrases in the language of the representative indigenous group in the area. The booklet should also contain basic information about the norms and values of the different cultural groups in the school in an effort to give everybody insight in the functioning of everyone. It could become part of the schools’ vision and mission and could also be made available for the learners to take home. Teacher 2 suggested:

...provide a booklet, from grade 1, including difficult concepts and phrases in their mother tongue as well as the LOLT. It will be helpful in the explanation of different concepts.

Although there is a recent trend to provide a third, indigenous language in the training of teachers, it is not sufficient as most of teachers are older and have not received the training in African languages as well as training regarding the norms and values of different cultures.

The teachers of group 4, who also stated that discipline is not a problem in their classes, stressed the importance of understanding the different cultural values of the learners in the class. Likewise, the teacher should explain his or her cultural values to the learners and the whole class. Teachers and learners should make a daily, conscious commitment to respect each other. Teacher 2 stressed:

I handle them with respect and also expected [sic] respect from them.

Teacher 1 elaborated:

I took care to find out what is important to them in terms of respect and I apply it.

She added:

If they behave rudely I only asked [sic] them if I respected [sic] their culture. They have to answer ‘yes’ because I do! I then ask them to respect my culture as well. End of the problem.

The teachers in this group found that consistency in the everyday management of the class as well as respectful communication without sarcasm goes a long way. If the teacher consistently persists with respectful communication, the chances are good that the learners will buy in and

behave likewise. Teacher 1 stressed:

Consistency is very important to them. If you do not keep your word or do not apply rules consistently it has a negative influence on their behaviour.

The teachers in this group proposed that one should often make use of humour. By demonstrating to the learners that learning can be enjoyable too, one helps to break down the barrier which is often formed by continuous academic difficulties. It also helps break down cultural barriers in the teaching situation. Teacher 1 part this advice:

I took [sic] a few minutes to change the atmosphere. Tell a joke or a funny story. Sometimes you have to connect with the inner child...

The teachers in group 5 found the help of technological aids very useful. Out of the five schools, the learners in this school are at the lowest level of the socio-economic ladder. The teachers found that music, games, and rhymes, specific with an electronic basis are very effective in ensuring attentive and involved learners. They use electronic aids which are available for free on the Internet. Teacher 1 recommended:

There are a large variety of learning and teaching aids on the Internet – especially music and songs. The learners love it – the rhythm. They participate and remember... They absolutely love technology.

Teacher 2 added:

There are grammar games with instructions. They have to follow the instructions. They like it and remember the learning content.

One of the teachers added that she also dramatizes various aspects of literacy. The peer phase of the grade four learners relished the acting out different scenarios for the group's enjoyment. Teacher 1 told us:

I have discovered that especially my grade 4 group loves drama. They read it and before long they are acting [sic] it out.

This group also recommended that the teacher should start working at a slower pace during the first term to enable the learners to pick up the loose strands. Teacher 1 explained:

Start at the elementary things, the basic work. Do not assume that you are going to do all the work according to the CAPS in the first term. It is not going to happen. In the second term, you may start to work a little bit faster.

They advised teachers to make sure the themes which they choose for reading and grammar are interesting for the learners. Teacher 2 added:

You have to find something that interests them, something that they want to read. Otherwise, you and they are going to get nowhere.

2.6 Discussion

In the following subsections, the themes identified from the data are discussed.

2.6.1 Intrinsic and extrinsic factors influencing literacy development in classrooms

It is clear that the problems experienced by the teachers (and learners) in ESL classrooms directly connected with the theories in which this study is embedded. Within Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems approach (Swart & Pettipher, 2016:10–17), the joint influences of the different levels of the environment on the development of the child were investigated in Article 1 of this series. It is apparent that the interaction between individual learners and their contexts have an effect on the growth and change of each individual learner. The second theory in which this study is grounded is Cummins's Linguistic Interdependence Theory (1979:2009). According to this theory, the level of ESL competence which a bilingual learner attains is, to an extent, a function of the type of competence he or she has developed in his or her mother tongue, prior to general exposure to ESL (Coetzee-Van Rooy, 2010:27; Cummins, 1979:2009; Eva & Reka, 2013:177). Thirdly the multidimensional and hierarchical model of self-concept as proposed by Marsh, Byrne and Shavelson (1988:366) also forms part of the study. As indicated in Article 1, the interplay of the different systems wherein the learner functions (Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems approach), in combination with the influence of Cummins's Linguistic Interdependence Theory on the literacy and academic skills, will eventually influence the self-concept of the learner.

Derived from the data, the following themes became clear:

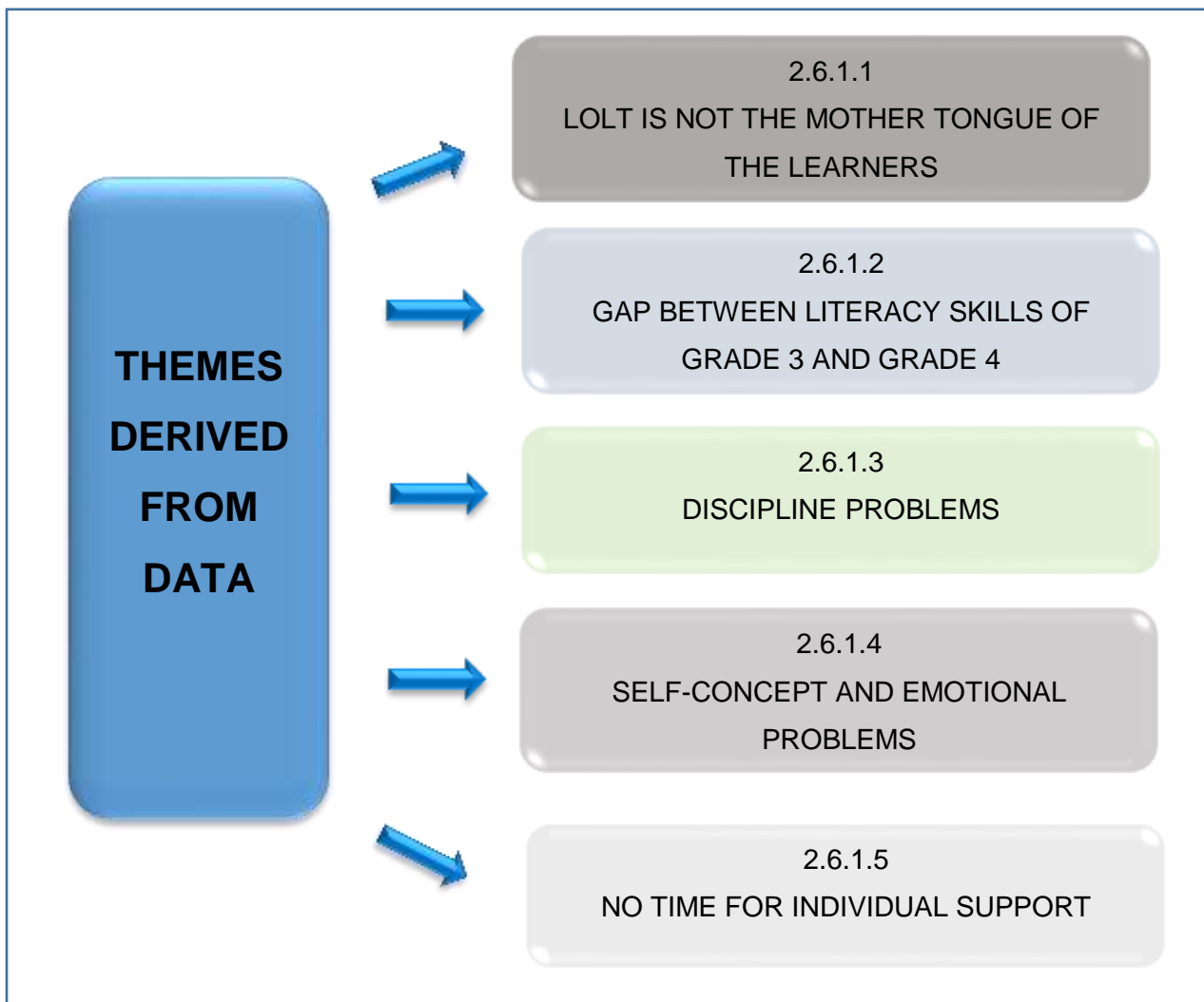


Figure 2-8: Themes derived from the data

2.6.1.1 The impact of teaching in an LOLT which is not the mother tongue of the learners

The data, obtained from semi-structured interviews with the teachers from five different schools, clearly indicates that one of the biggest challenges facing the education of ESL learners is the problem of teaching them in English as the L1 instead of mother tongue education. The curriculum requirements of English as the LOLT are those of an L1 language, where in most cases it is the learners' second or even third language.

Effective communication in the ESL relies on what Cummins calls, Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). The

concept of Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills describes the skills which allow learners to use ESL in informal communication, including informal listening and speaking skills (Cummins, 2008:487-488). These skills are usually easy to acquire but do not equip a learner to execute cognitive operations with adequate ability. Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency forms the basis of a learner's ability to cope with academic demands, such as the ability to engage in cognitively demanding and problem-solving tasks (Koda, 2007:19; Schlebusch & Thobedi, 2005:309; Van Staden, 2011:12). When learning occurs in the mother tongue, the process of developing a more sophisticated vocabulary and grammatical knowledge (CALP) improves. A solid, developed CALP enables the learner to meet the academic demands of his or her education. Unfortunately, the literacy abilities of many ESL learners often only reflect the BICS status in English, their language of learning (LOL) and not their CALP status which is essential for academic learning and success.

Also identified by the teachers of four out of the five schools is the difference between the prescribed L1 skills of grade 3 and those of grade 4. According to them, the gap between the literacy skills of the two grades is too wide, contributing to the grade 4 learners' struggle. The problems are not situated only in the language-learning area but within the whole curriculum, as the LOLT is not their mother tongue. Nel and Nel (2016:200) indicate that there is a large cognitive leap from the foundation phase to the intermediate phase, which exacerbates the struggle of the ESL learner with limited English proficiency to meet the scholastic demands. Pretorius and Spaul (2016:1466) affirm that the lack of language proficiency in the LOLT often holds dire consequences for learning across the curriculum in the different phases. On accessing the nature and quality of the ESL learners' literacy skills, teachers at three of the five schools estimated that 50 % of their ESL learners are up to or above standard, with the rest fluctuating between being below standard to having serious literacy problems. The teachers of the remaining two schools estimate that the literacy skills of most of their ESL learners are below standard. It is in line with the evidence from results of the PIRLS 2006 as well as of the pre-PIRLS 2011 where the average achievement for the reading literacy of Grade 4 ESL learners was well below the fixed international reference average (Van Staden, Bosker & Bergbauer, 2016:4).

Although not one of the participating teachers' mother tongues is the same as the LOLT in their classrooms, no one mentioned it as a possible problem that influences the quality of the literacy education the learners receive. In contrast to previous studies carried out by other South African researchers which underscore the big challenges teachers experience in the classrooms, research indicates the negative effect on the literacy acquisition of learners who are taught by teachers who are not fully proficient in English (Dixon, Zhao, Shin, Wu, Su,

Burgess-Brigham, Gezer & Snow, 2012:41; Hugo & Nieman, 2010:61; Nel & Müller, 2010:636; Theron & Nel, 2005:228). Nel and Swanepoel (2010:50) stress the fact that the teachers' poor use and knowledge of the LOLT are transferred to the learners when the teachers' knowledge of the second language is not at an acceptable standard for teaching purposes.

It has been scientifically demonstrated that mother-tongue education is the best and most successful form of educating learners. (Banda, 2000:51; Desai, 2016:344; Hugo, 2008:63; Van Staden, 2011:10). The participating teachers unanimously agree that the lack of quality mother-tongue education is the root of the escalating scholastic and literacy crisis in South Africa. During the process of the data collection, the question that frequently arose in the mind of the researcher was whether the lack of adequate literacy skills could simplistically be contributed to the absence of mother tongue education alone. Although there is general agreement that the lack of mother-tongue education may form the basis of the literacy problems, there seems to be no solution to the problem of why three out of the five participating schools claim that at least 50 % of the ESL learners' literacy is below standard. In addition, a fourth school reasons that most of their ESL learners' literacy abilities are below standard. While working with recent literature on language studies in South Africa, it became obvious to the researcher that to have a full understanding of education, it is important to have a look at possible reasons for the poor quality of education in South Africa. When one considers that the five schools participating in this study are functional, with teachers who deliver quality education, it is still obvious that the too many ESL learners – according to the participating teachers – have serious problems in mastering literacy in the language of learning. The truth is that 80 % of South African schools are dysfunctional. It is fair to make the assumption that the quality of literacy of learners from dysfunctional schools must be very poor considering a Country Progress Report (Department of Education, 2013:48) which indicated that 29 % of Grade 4 children in South Africa failed to reach the lowest international benchmark of 400 for reading literacy. According to their teachers, a large percentage of learners in the participating, well-functioning schools in this study have difficulty in achieving literacy proficiency. Therefore the literacy abilities of learners in non-functional schools must be and are below par. As briefly discussed in 2.1 (p 2) of this article, the causes for the malfunctioning of schools can mainly be contributed to the poor management and the absence of the will to take ownership of the situation. In addition, secondary factors are to blame for the schools' inability to provide quality education to learners. According to Van den Berg and Louw (2006:7), research indicates a great variation between the efficiency of South African schools.

A study conducted by Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu and Van Rooyen (2010:167) emphasizes that the promotion of a culture of learning and teaching is a high priority for the management team

of each school. Too often the managers of the schools retreat into their offices and do not take ownership of the main function of the school, namely teaching and learning. Bush et al. (2010:167) propose that the vision for every school should be to place learning and teaching in the centre, to have clear expectations of the learners and teachers and to demonstrate good practice in their own teaching and leadership activities. According to Taylor (2008:22), poorly functioning schools often do not get the necessary support from structures on provincial and district levels. He describes most of these structures as ineffective organizations which lack the authority and expertise necessary to intervene in struggling school systems. Spaul (2015:39) underlines the tragedy that quality education is available only to those who can afford it by identifying two different and differentiable educational systems attended by the rich (functional schools) and the poor (non-functional schools). Despite a new democratic political dispensation, the South African Education system is, according to Spaul (2015:38), dualistic and a key mechanism through which the unequal society that existed before 1994 is replicating itself. To address the problem Spaul (2015:39) proposes possible policy options which include:

- introducing a national reading campaign to address the literacy and numeracy skills of all learners;
- finding ways to increase the quality and quantity of the teaching skills as well as the content knowledge of teachers in order to increase the quality of education;
- conducting a countrywide audit of district officials and curricular advisors to ensure the credibility of all teachers whose appointment should be according to merit and subject expertise; and
- implementing comprehensive and invasive actions to address the learning backlog that has accumulated by the time learners reach high school, in order to reduce the high number of learners who drop out of school early.

The short discussion briefly highlighted the impact of the non-functional schools in our education system on the literacy development and the future of many of the learners of our country.

When one examines the teachers' views of the impact of the literacy barriers on the emotional experiences and self-concepts of the learners, all the teachers agree that it does not seem that it has a negative impact on the learners in group-related activities. In groups, the learners tend to hide their difficulties and insecurities behind different behaviour patterns like bravado, playfulness or acting in a silly manner. However, when they have to perform individual tasks like reading or speaking in front of the class or the teacher, they became self-conscious, nervous and shy or – in some cases – passive, sullen and even aggressive and refuse to

participate. All the teachers agreed that literacy difficulties have a degrading effect on the self-concept and emotions of the learner.

2.6.1.2 Literacy gap in curriculum and the difference in the prescribed L1 skills between of grade 3 and grade 4

The second theme derived from the data is, according to the participating teachers, a seemingly large gap between the prescribed literacy skills of grade 3 and grade 4. They observed that the learners in grade 4 struggle to meet the L1 outcomes.

Eight out of the ten participating teachers are of the opinion that the gap in the curriculum of the language of learning and teaching between the foundation phase and grade 4 is too wide. The problem is further complicated by the fact that the learners are expected to master English as a mother tongue (L1) language where, in most cases, it is the learners' second or even third language.

The problems forthcoming from this are supported by research. Clegg and Simpson (2016:362) point out the large gap between the English language ability of the learner and the English language demands of the curriculum (2016:362). They argue that the curricula are designed for mother tongue speakers and often do not accommodate the ESL learning barrier of most South African learners. Curricula tend to have a lack of alignment between the complex language demands of the curriculum and the limited English of the learners and, sometimes, even the teachers. Textbooks are designed largely as for English mother tongue speakers and, to date, teacher education has not included substantial training in a pedagogy appropriate for learning through the medium of English as a second language (Clegg & Simpson, 2016:363). Milligan, Clegg, and Tikly (2016:330) underline the argument by stating that the readability and understanding of textbooks used in English LOLT classrooms are difficult for learners with a low level of English mastery. Milligan et al. (2016:329) elaborate by stating that very little reading is done in primary classrooms where the LOLT is not the mother tongue of the learners. Clegg and Simpson (2016:364) are of the opinion that the term 'transition', which the curriculum uses to describe the change from the mother tongue to the language of learning and teaching (English), is not correct. They argue that the change is usually marked by a sudden and abrupt switch from the mother tongue to English and not by a carefully planned and supported process of change (2016:364). This practice leads to a situation in which learning is compromised and explains the poor literacy proficiency of ESL learners in South Africa. As identified by the participating teachers in this research, Clegg and Simpson (2016:363) also stress that the language problem is exacerbated by other limiting conditions

such as large classes, limited resources, unmotivated teachers, and poverty. Clegg and Afitska (2011:73) conclude that teaching in a classroom where most of the learners are indigenous mother-tongue speakers, and the use of a European language of learning which the learners do not understand well seems to grossly undermine the outcomes that even an excellent teacher tries to reach.

2.6.1.3 Disciplinary problems

A theme which surfaced clearly in the interviews concerns the disciplinary problems. Three of the schools indicated that they experience disciplinary problems which can be attributed to the language as well as to cultural differences between the learners and also between the learners and the teachers. Contributing factors to the disciplinary problems are parents who are not involved in their children's school careers, single-parent families and dysfunctional families. Because of the rapid urbanization and a lack of proper and fully functional schools, ESL classes in functional schools are crammed full with an educator-to-learner ratio of at least 1:40. The large classes contribute to the disciplinary problems. In any classroom there are learners who need individual attention to assist them in solving their problems. This kind of attention is not possible in large classrooms and the absence of essential support has multiple implications. A study conducted by Marais (2016:6) to explore student teachers' challenges when teaching in overcrowded classrooms outlines several difficulties. Overcrowded classrooms have a negative effect on academic achievement as well as on the management of discipline. In addition, because it is not possible to give each learner the necessary support, there is a consequent lack of motivation by the learner to persevere. What is more, larger class groups limit the use of a variety of teaching strategies and inhibit proper assessment. Learners who do not receive essential individual assistance with literacy or other scholastic problems experience increasing difficulties and deteriorating grades (Harty & Alant, 2016:125). Scholastic problems often lead to frustration on the part of the learner, often resulting in attention seeking and unacceptable behaviour. If not managed with care – which is difficult in a large class – it has a negative impact on the educator, the rest of the learners and the overall learning climate in the class. In a study by O'Connor and Geiger (2009:216), teachers of English Second or Other Language Learners (ESOL) indicate that large classes contribute to discipline and behavioural problems, thus limiting or preventing time and opportunity for individual support to learners. If one includes the fact that the LOLT is the mother tongue of neither the learners nor the teacher in many cases, the problems multiply.

Disciplinary problems in schools, however, are widespread, not only in South Africa but all over the world (Wolhuter, Van der Walt, & Potgieter, 2013:1). Various sources identify serious

disciplinary problems such as violent behaviour, theft and vandalism through to problems like disrespect, disruptive behaviour, rudeness, dishonesty and no interest in their school work (Eloff, Oosthuizen, Wolhuter & Van der Walt, 2013:2; Kourkoutas & Wolhuter, 2013:2; Leefon, Jacobs, Le Roux & De Wet, 2013:2; Wolhuter & Van Staden, 2008:390). Factors contributing to disciplinary problems in schools can be learner related, parent related, teacher related, school related and/or society related (Wolhuter et al., 2013:2; Eloff et al., 2013:2). These authors emphasize the influence of the different systems wherein the individual functions as contributing factors to the learner's behaviour. The ecosystemic theory of Bronfenbrenner, one of the theories in which this study is embedded (as discussed in article 1) thus play a continuous and important role in the understanding of the different systemic influences on the functioning of each individual learner, as well as his or her behaviour in the school system. It became obvious from the fieldwork with the five participating schools in this study, that school four, which has a whole-school approach and treats the learners with respect and insight into each learner's systemic background, does not have any disciplinary issues with the learners. Kourkoutas et al. (2013:6) conclude their study by recommending a whole-school approach which takes the background of the learner's family, school and society into account in the overall management of the school. Their results are supported by a study conducted by Bush et al. (2010:167) which indicates that when the management teams of schools focus more strongly on the overall elements of teaching and learning as well as on the learners' achievements, the quality of learning and teaching improve. It also contributes to a positive learning climate.

2.6.1.4 Self-concept and emotional problems

Self-concept is described by Woolfolk (2014:95) as a person's perception of his or her own abilities, strengths, weaknesses, attitudes, and values (cf. Article 1, p 25). General self-concept is divided into academic and non-academic parts. Academic self-concept includes an individual's mental image of his or her abilities in academic domains. In the scholastic domain, literacy forms the basis of academic achievement and progress. The lack of academic success usually has a negative influence on the self-concept of the learner (Marsh, Byrne & Shavelson, 1988:379). Although the participating teachers in this study do not frequently observe self-concept problems when the learners socialize in informal circumstances, they all agree that difficulties with literacy have an adverse effect on the self-concept and emotions of the learners. The teachers report that they observe the lack of a positive self-concept usually when a learner has to individually engage in scholastic activities. The following behaviour is detected: the learner became shy and does not want to participate in the scholastic activities; the learner became passive and took a long time to get started with the work; the learner exhibit stress-

related body language, like excessive sweating, not being able to answer questions or contribute to a conversation and/or became sullen. Some of the learners act out their insecurities by silly behaviour. One of the teachers also observed that the books and classwork of learners who are academically struggling sometimes are messy and incomplete, or not at school at all. The impact of scholastic success on the social-emotional development of learners is underscored by a study by Jones, Brown, Hoglund and Aber (2010:829). The study employed an experimental design including 942 3rd-grade children in 18 New York City public elementary schools. Firstly, data on the learner's social-cognitive processes, behavioural symptomatology and literacy skills and academic achievement (e.g., reading achievement) were collected. The learners were then exposed to the 4Rs Programme as an intervention over a one-year period. The 4Rs Programme links the teaching of social-emotional competencies and the teaching of fundamental academic skills (Jones et al., 2010:830). According to the results, learners with the highest level of baseline behavioural risk (based on teacher reports) presented the greatest positive difference in teacher report of academic skills between the intervention and control schools (Jones et al., 2010:836). The study thus emphasizes the reciprocal effect of academic success on the self-concept and emotional wellbeing of a person (Marsh, Byrne & Shavelson, 1988:379). The study by Jones et al. (2010:830), as well as the theory of the reciprocal effect of academic success and self-concept and emotional wellbeing of a person by Shavelson (Marsh, Byrne & Shavelson, 1988:379) is further supported by a study by Haynes, Hamilton-Lee and Comer (2001), examining the differences in the six self-concept dimensions of the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale. One-hundred-and-forty-eight (148) above average, average and below average achieving high school sophomores were included in the study. The six self-concept dimensions include the following: Behavioural Adjustment, Intellectual and School Status, Physical Appearance and Attributes, Freedom from Anxiety, Popularity, and Happiness and Satisfaction (Piers & Herzberg, 2002:24-26). The adapted 2002-edition of the Piers- Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale was also utilized in this PhD-study (cf. Article 4). Fifty of the participating learners were, based upon classroom grades, as above average, 50 as average and 48 as below average (2001:260). The Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale was administered in three group settings to the learners. According to the results of this study, the group of learners assessed as below average on classroom grades, tended to have significant lower levels of self-concept than their higher achieving peers thus having a negative influence on the different dimensions of their self-concept (Haynes et al., 2001:262). The observation of the participating teachers regarding learners with low self-concept and associating emotional problems further underscore the influence of learners' literacy abilities and arising academic success on their self-concept and future success.

2.6.1.5 Lack of time to support individual learners

A big challenge to teaching ESL learners, according to the participating teachers, is the nearly insurmountable problem of providing individual support to learners who need it. Apart from the fact that it is almost impossible to provide any individual attention to learners in classes of 40+, the curriculum does not allow extra time for activities which are crucial to learners with literacy problems. These activities include exposing learners to a print-rich environment, reading and listening to stories and informal discussions, to name a few. Another challenge caused by big classes is the lack of physical space. The learners and their desks occupy the whole classroom, leaving no space for informal activities on the carpet, reading corners and space for extra enrichment teaching aids like computers, word games, and musical activities. Joubert (2016) suggest the importance of creating opportunities for the learners to be involved in activities which require conversation (2016:291) and to have access to a functional reading corner with books which will encourage the young reader to explore (2016:283). These scenarios are nearly impossible in an overcrowded classroom. A study conducted by Van Staden and Griessel (2011:82) records that overcrowded classrooms, as well as limited or no financial resources, are the main courses for limited and poor language stimulation. It is evident that large class groups lead inter alia to fewer opportunities for the learners to receive individual support from the teacher.

2.7 Suggested interventions from teacher participants

The teachers made useful contributions when they were asked which interventions they found to be of value in addressing the literacy problems of ESL learners. Repetition and application of vocabulary, especially during the first quarter of the year, were seen as essential. The learning of vocabulary forms an essential part of the mastery of a language (Nel & Nel, 2016:204; Van Staden, 2011:14). For the second language learner, it is important to learn the words in context and not only as single concepts. Exposure to the printed word, reading and cultivating a love for reading, as well as the use of technological aids to stimulate and maintain the learners' attention and curiosity, were among the interventions that proved to be successful. A study conducted by Van Staden (2016:32) confirms a strong correlation between reading comprehension and vocabulary.

In the group of five schools, school 4 stood out as the school which is most successful in terms of their support, teaching, and learning of ESL learners. They report minimum problems with disciplinary and cultural problems. As mentioned previously, school 4 follows a whole-school approach to teaching and learning. Inter alia, this entails strengthening the reciprocal

relationships between teachers and learners at the school – and also includes the successful management of disciplinary problems. According to them, the involvement of the parents in school-related issues is beneficial because the teachers and parents can usually work as a team in the support of a learner with scholastic difficulties. There are indeed many benefits of following a whole-school approach to teaching and learning. Davidoff and Lazarus (2002) laid the foundation of the whole-school approach in South Africa when they suggested that schools be seen as organizations. They describe schools as a particular kind of organization with specific goals, characteristics, and relationships between the participating parties in the educational environment (2002:17). A whole-school approach, therefore, includes the holistic interaction of all shareholders (learners, parents, staff, and community) within a safe, healthy and stimulating educational environment. This approach corresponds with Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory, one of the theories in which this study is grounded. The theory illustrates the way in which the different systems wherein one functions interact and influence a person's life (cf. Article 1, 1.5.1: p 9). It is important to mention that this school is situated within a radius of four kilometres of three of the four other schools and therefore the circumstances of the learners and their families of these schools are more or less the same.

As observed by the teachers participating in this study, the environment from which the learners come, as well as the fact that they do not receive mother-tongue education, contributes to a variety of scholastic and other problems experienced by the learners. This is supported by numerous other South African researchers who have highlighted the detrimental effects of learners' not receiving adequate and quality mother-tongue instruction (Nel & Nel, 2016:199; Van den Berg & Louw, 2006:7; Van Staden et al., 2016:4). In addition, researchers have emphasized the influence of functional versus non-functional schools on the lives of South African learners (Spaul, 2015:39, Taylor, 2008:22, Van den Berg & Louw, 2006:7). This is further supported by the theory of Bronfenbrenner, which underscores the complex interaction between the different systems of the environment on the development and functioning of the individual. For example, growing up in a poor family (microsystem) would have a certain effect on the development of the learner. If the services like health, education and social support (mesosystem) in this learner's community are inadequate or malfunction, the negative impact of it all would eventually only worsen the situation of the learner. It is a heart-breaking fact that quality education in South Africa is only available to those who can afford it. Poverty, with its ever-increasing downgrading influence on all aspects and systems of people's lives, eliminates the only hope of escape from this treadmill, namely quality education. Prinsloo (2016:52) describes the effect of poverty as a never-ending circle of inadequate education, low wages, and unemployment, leaving poor South Africans vulnerable,

powerless and isolated. A study by Hartas (2011:910) proves that the literacy abilities of children living in poverty, as well as the aptitude of children whose mothers are uneducated are inferior to those of their peers from more educated and wealthier families. Another contributing factor to this gloomy picture is that many of the schools in lower socio-economic areas which offer mother tongue education are non-functional – thus cancelling the benefit the learners might have received from mother tongue education. This situation contributes to the tendency of parents to choose ESL education at well-functioning schools for their children instead of mother tongue education. Without a proper foundation in one's mother tongue, mastering a second language and quality literacy skills are unattainable and lead to problems in mastering the scholastic prerequisites one needs to ensure a proper qualification and future job.

2.8 Conclusion

While only one in ten South African learners' mother tongue is English, most of them are taught in English. The teachers in this situation are often not English mother-tongue speakers either (Hugo, A.J., 2008:65). Another topic for concern is the poor quality of education which too many schools in South Africa still offer to its learners (2.6.1.1, p 36). If one adds to this situation the unemployment level of South Africa at approximately 27 % (more than a quarter of the population) and the desperate circumstances in which many people are trying to make a daily living, the future of many learners is bleak. As discussed in Article 1, the above-mentioned facts combined with the impact of the Bioecological Systems Theory of Bronfenbrenner and Cummins's Linguistic Interdependence Theory create a negative picture for the South African learner. It also leads to the fact that learners fail to acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills because they do not study in their mother tongue and have limited proficiency in the language of teaching and learning (Le Cordeur, 2012:1).

In the midst of this situation is the teacher who has to teach the ESL learner. The aim of this article was to determine the challenges that ESL teachers experience in their quest to create responsive literacy environments for ESL learners. Through this phenomenological study the researcher attempts to capture the essence of the teachers' views and experiences educating ESL learners (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:346). In the qualitative research design, ten teachers from five different schools (two per school) participated in semi-structured interviews to explore their views and experiences concerning the literacy problems experienced by ESL learners. The effect thereof on the quality of this learners' literacy, their functioning, and their self-concept was also discussed. The phenomenological angle of incidence enabled the researcher to obtain the multiple meanings of the experiences of every participating educator

(McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:356). Five overall themes surfaced clearly from the obtained data: the LOLT which is not the mother tongue of the learners, the gap between the curriculum of the language of learning and teaching in grade three and grade four; disciplinary problems; self-concept and emotional problems as well as the lack of time and structure to provide essential individual support to learners.

Confirmed by the qualitative research in this study and supported by the discussion and reference to different academic research sources, English as the LOLT for learners with another mother tongue, as it is currently applied, spells calamity for the future of many South African learners. The participating teachers indicated that the LOLT, which is not the mother tongue of the learners, is the major obstacle preventing the ESL learners from optimal academic progression. As long as parents choose English as the language of learning and teaching instead of mother tongue education, the regressive cycle of poor literacy skills, the effect thereof on the learners' academic success, his or her self-concept and eventually his or her quality of life will continue. Reasons provided by parents for choosing ESL learning instead of mother-tongue education are motivated, as discussed, by political, economic and qualitative concerns. To further complicate the matter, many schools which provide mother-tongue education make up 80 % of the dysfunctional schools in South Africa (Spaull, 2015:39). From the research examined, it became clear that a large part of South African state schools is dysfunctional. As stated by Van den Berg and Louw (2006:7), the great variation in the efficiency of South African schools leads to the trend of parents' sending their children to functioning schools which deliver good quality education rather than to a dysfunctional school nearer to home. Unfortunately, it also includes sacrificing mother tongue education for education in a second language, most often in English. In addition, the unfortunate situation exists that quality education is mostly only available to people who can afford it.

On assessing the nature and quality of the ESL learners' literacy skills, three of the five schools' teachers estimated that 50% of their ESL learners are up to or above standard with the other 50 % which fluctuates between being below standard to experiencing serious literacy problems (it is important to again refer to the fact that all five of the schools function well). The teachers at the remaining two schools estimate that the literacy skills of most of their ESL learners are below standard. The negative effect of the fact that the LOLT is not the mother tongue of the learner on the quality of the learner's literacy is clearly visible through this data.

A gap between the curricula of the language of learning and teaching in the foundation phase and grade four was also identified by the teachers as an obstacle to the teaching and learning of ESL learners. Research by Clegg and Simpson (2016:362) who accentuate the large gap

between the English language ability of the learner and the demands of the English language curriculum supports their concern. Clegg and Simpson claim that the curricula, designed for mother tongue speakers, often do not accommodate the ESL learning barrier of most of the South African learners. They further state (2016:363) that the teachers' education does not include substantial training in a pedagogy that is appropriate to learners who are ESL students. The argument is supported by Milligan et al. (2016:330) who state that the readability and understanding of textbooks used in classrooms where English is the LOLT are difficult for learners with a low level of English mastery and are therefore not accessible to them.

Disciplinary problems are also identified as a challenge in the teaching of ESL learners. Of the five schools, three reported serious disciplinary problems. The teachers ascribed it to linguistic and cultural differences between the learners themselves and also between the learners and the teachers. The dynamics of family life seems to be a major contributing factor, also in influencing the self-concept of the learner. In Article 1 (p 26) of this study self-concept is described as the overall image that one has of oneself and one's strengths and weaknesses. The self-concept can be influenced by one's own beliefs, one's circumstances, the reactions of other people, as well as the misfortunes and successes in one's life. Therefore, the relationships in families as well as the circumstances at home can also have a big impact on the self-concept of the learner and his or her behaviour. Single-parent families, dysfunctional families and parents' lack of involvement in their children's school life worsen the disciplinary problems. Large classrooms, as well as the unavailability of assistants and other resources, further complicate the matter.

The participating teachers were in agreement that the scholastic difficulties some of the learners experienced have had an adverse effect on the self-concept and emotions of the learners. They usually observed it when the particular learners have to individually engage in scholastic activities. The learner usually became shy, passive or even sullen.

The participating teachers identified another challenging problem: to provide individual support to the individual learners who need it. The classes are simply too big (40+ learners). The learners and their desks occupy the whole classroom, leaving no space for informal activities on the carpet, reading corners and space for extra enrichment and teaching (Marais, 2016:1; Pretorius, 2015:58).

In this qualitative study, the challenges that ESL teachers experience in their quest to create responsive literacy environments for ESL learners were identified. English, as the LOLT for learners with another mother tongue, proved to be not only a big challenge for teachers

teaching ESL learners, but it also seems to be the underlying cause for the poor literacy quality of many of South Africa's ESL learners. It is further exacerbated by problems emanating from the language problem, like discipline, limited teaching time and a gap between the English language demands of the curriculum and the English language abilities of the ESL learners.

It was verified by the qualitative data in the study and supported by the discussion and reference to different academic research sources that English as the LOLT for learners with a different mother tongue as it is currently applied implies a future of struggling with the adversaries of poor literacy for many South African learners. The literacy problems which have developed over years will take even longer – if ever – to rectify. The reaction of the participating teachers to Question 6, concerning the impact of literacy barriers on the emotional experiences and the self-concept of learners, emphasizes the effect of the unique literacy problems of South Africa's ESL learners. The teachers unanimously agreed that difficulties with literacy have a degrading and lasting effect on the self-concept and emotions of ESL learners. The future of nearly illiterate individuals with resultant problematic self-concepts and emotions of incompetence requires urgent and immediate intervention from all responsible parties.

2.9 Recommendations and future research

Forthcoming from the data and the recommendations from the participating teachers and supported by recent research, the researcher is of the opinion that there is great potential for language-supportive learning and translanguaging to address the literacy crisis of ESL learners in South Africa successfully.

2.9.1 Language Supportive Learning and Translanguaging – a Possible Solution?

During the execution of the research of this study, the participating teachers were asked to recommend interventions that they have applied to address ESL learners' literacy problems. They were also asked for any other recommendations they might have to address the literacy problems of the ESL learners. One of the ten teachers of the five participating schools speaks Tswana fluently. She uses this ability to help the learners struggling with English by explaining solutions to the difficulties they experience in their mother tongue, Tswana. Her ability to address the learners in their mother tongue and also to connect to them in a more informal way, leads to closer relationships and, according to her, a calm and disciplined learning climate in the classroom. From the discussions with the teachers of the different schools, it became clear that it is a general practice to ask a learner to explain something that another learner does not understand in ESL to him or her in his or her mother tongue. The creative recommendation of teacher one of group three on the provision of a booklet containing general,

everyday phrases in the language of the representative indigenous group in the area also apply. Basic information about the norms and values of the different culture groups in the school could also be included and might help in the positive building of relationships and overall Ubuntu in the school family.

According to research, teachers with the same mother tongue as ESL learners often use code switching in their attempts to help the learners understand concepts in English (Clegg & Afitska, 2011:61). They describe code switching as the use of more than one language or dialect in the same conversation (2011:62). The above-mentioned methods may help one to understand certain concepts better but may also eventually lead to improved literacy skills that will improve the learners' ability to achieve full Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) in his or her language of learning. According to the Linguistic Interdependence Theory of Cummins (1979:233) (as discussed in the first article of this thesis), the ESL competence which a bilingual learner acquired is depended in the competence he or she has developed in the mother tongue. While mastering his or her mother tongue, a person acquires Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) which provides the basis for the development of both the first and second languages. Without a strong CUP, progress in achieving ESL literacy will also be hampered. It also includes the fact that, while a person is exposed to a second language, exposure to and strengthening of L1 skills should not be sacrificed. Unfortunately, this is not the case with thousands of ESL learners in South Africa. As discussed in article one, the best way to handle the situation where the language of learning is not the mother tongue of the learners is by immersion, where the first language (L1) continues to be developed while the second language is added. In submersion, the second language (ESL) is added at the expense of the first language. And this happens when a child is fully immersed in the second language environment before he or she becomes proficient in the basics of the mother tongue (Cummins, 1979: 224-225). In taking all the discussed facts, suggestions and practices in the ESL classroom into account, it may be advantageous to examine ways to make use of the learners' mother tongue in the process of acquiring proficient literacy in the LOLT.

Various recent researchers hypothesize about the applicability of translanguaging or language-supportive pedagogy in addressing the literacy problems in schools where the LOLT is not the mother tongue of the learners (Clegg & Simpson, 2016:364; Heugh, 2015:281; Mulligan, Clegg & Tikly, 2016:331; Kerfoot & Simon-Vandenberg, 2015:179; Probyn, 2015:221). Translanguaging is, according to Clegg and Simpson (2016:364), Krause and Prinsloo (2016:348) and Probyn (2014:220), the process that teachers and learners use to make optimal sense of a learning process by using all the languages brought to the learning situation. Different researchers emphasize the applicability of translanguaging as an answer to the

scholastic plight of the ESL learner (Musanti & Rodrigues, 2017:40; Clegg & Simpson, 2016:364, Probyn: 2014:221). Cummins, the father of the Linguistic Interdependence Theory, also supports the fact that language skills and abilities learned in preferably the learner's home language can be transferred across languages (Probyn, 2014:221, Clegg & Simpson, 2016:364).

The success of this approach was demonstrated by different studies within the context of Africa South of the Sahara (Clegg & Afitska, 2011:62; Milligan, Clegg & Tigly, 2016:333). The success of translanguaging was proven by Krause and Prinsloo, (2016:355) who implemented it at a primary school in the township, Khayelitsha. Likewise, after observing the practice of translanguaging in different science classrooms at the rural as well as at township schools, Probyn (2015:233) supports the pedagogical advantages. She concludes that effective and planned translanguaging offers a pedagogic bridge for ESL learners. To illustrate the use of translanguaging in circumstances that are unique to the African continent, a study undertaken by Clegg and co-researchers will be discussed briefly (Clegg & Afitska, 2011:62; Milligan et al., 2016:333). In conjunction with publishers, they have developed an intervention concerning the development of language-supportive material as well as the associated training for teachers in the use of the material. The training forms an essential part of the intervention as the teachers are required to alter their pedagogical practices. The participating schools are situated in different districts in Rwanda which serve the most disadvantaged communities.

Like South Africa, Rwanda forms part of sub-Saharan Africa. In October 2008, English became the medium of instruction across all levels of the education system in Rwanda. It was modified in 2011 so that the first three years of schooling takes place in the language, Kinyarwanda, with English as a compulsory subject. For many teachers in Rwanda, English is their third language because for many years they were trained and taught in French. Like in South Africa, many learners are exposed to English for the first time when entering school (Milligan et al., 2016:333). This state of affairs had the same negative influence on the literacy ability of the Rwandan learners, as the recent situation with English as the LOLT for a large percentage of learners in South Africa who are not English mother-tongue learners. Eight Rwandan schools were included in the study. The data collection for the research of Clegg et al. (2016) was undertaken in three stages, including classroom observations, interviews with mathematics, science and social studies teachers as well as testing learners' pre-vocabulary and comprehension. The textbooks designed for intervention include language supportive techniques in the form of textual characteristics, a range of activity types, the use of vocabulary and visuals as well as the inclusion of bilingual practices. Milligan et al. (2016:332) used the following description of the contents of the intervention textbooks:

The books for learners at low levels of language ability have the following characteristics:

- The reading passages are short;
- Sentences are short and grammatically simple;
- Texts are clearly signposted;
- The number of academic words and subject-specific words is limited to the minimum needed while still conveying key topic messages;
- Vocabulary is accessible because of contextualization and the low density of new words, and learners are supported in their use of new subject concepts by L1 or bilingual glossaries and visuals;
- A range of activity types is designed to support speaking, reading and writing about subject concepts in ESL;
- A large number of different visuals are used to convey textual meanings.

Teachers are encouraged to use code-switching in specifically defined ways; learners use their L1 to discuss subject concepts in small groups and pairs, and in particular before and after reading and writing. By drawing on these 'language accessible' techniques, the textbook can be used by learners to learn the content of a particular topic while recognizing their low language ability.

Transport is very important in our district. It helps people in many ways.

1. People can take their goods to the market.
2. People can travel to get services.
3. People can travel to work.

New words	
Kinyarwanda	English
servisi / imirimo	service
akazi/ umurimo	work
isoko	market

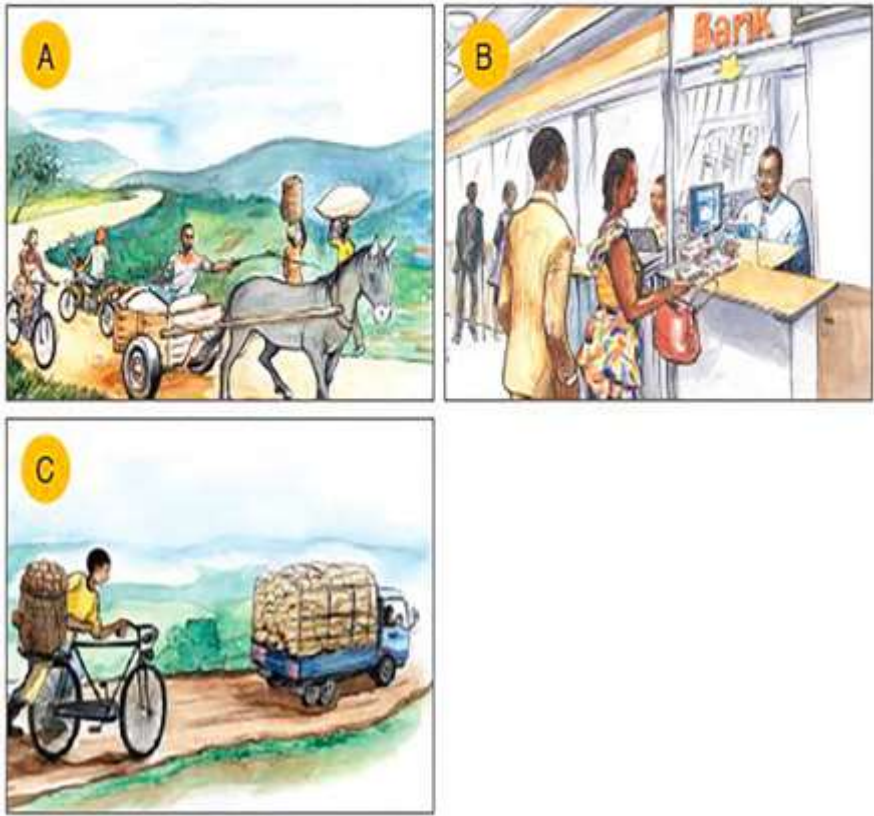


Figure 2-9: Introducing transport in the Primary 4 Social Sciences textbook used in the intervention phase of the research by Clegg *et al.* (Milligan, Clegg & Tikly, 2016:331)



Activity 25: Talking in Kinyarwanda about uses of soil

Work in groups. Look at the pictures on page 10 and talk in Kinyarwanda about types of soil: how many types do you know? What do we use them for?



Activity 26: Reading about uses of soil

Look at the pictures on pages 10. Read the text and match the types of soil with the pictures.

Figure 2-10: An example talking activity in the Primary 4 science textbook used in the intervention phase of the research by Clegg *et al.* (Milligan, Clegg & Tikly, 2016:332)

The methodology used in the intervention in the study by Milligan *et al.* (2016) is in agreement with the Linguistic Interdependence theory of Cummins who theorizes that academic ability transfers across languages. The learner who has developed proper literacy skills in his or her first language will be able to make greater progress in the acquisition of literacy in a second language (Cummins, 2000:173). Cummins also differentiates between additive (immersion) and subtractive (submersion) bilingualism (1979:224-225). In additive bilingualism, the first language (L1) continues to be developed while the second language is added. In subtractive bilingualism, the second language (ESL) is added at the expense of the first language when a child is fully immersed in the second language environment before he or she becomes proficient in the basics of the mother tongue.

Although the language policy of South Africa is pro-mother tongue for the first three years in the foundation phase, a large part of South African learners goes to schools where the LOLT is English and where a submersion programme (in English) is followed. The reasons for this practice are mainly the choice of the parents due to the poor quality of education provided by 80 % of South African Schools. In the intervention used by Milligan et al. (2016), the learners were not submerged in the LOLT but the L1 was used in a supportive way to help the learners master the LOLT as well as achieve the learning outcomes of the curriculum.

The quantitative data in the research findings of the study by Milligan et al. (2016) indicate that the intervention has had a significant effect on improving learning outcomes across the eight project schools and thus on the outcomes of learning. The learners' feedback on the language-supportive textbooks, as well as the pedagogy in the classroom, was overwhelmingly positive. The researchers conclude that the most significant finding from the study is the impact of the use of language-supportive learning on learners' outcomes. Results indicate an average improvement of up to 16.09 % of the learners exposed to the language-supportive textbooks and as a result of the pedagogy of the teachers (Milligan et al. 2016:337).

Taking into account the feedback of the teachers participating in this study, as well as the outcomes of the study by Milligan et al. (2016), the implementation of language-supportive learning in the classroom may provide a solution to the problems of the literacy development of learners whose self-concept and future are currently hampered by the language of instruction in South African schools.

By applying language-supportive learning in SA schools, all the learners in SA may have equal educational prospects because this will provide equal opportunities for learners to obtain quality literacy skills. The impact of quality education on the total functioning of the individual within the different systems described in Bronfenbrenner's Ecosystemic Theory will have an overall positive effect – not only on the functioning of the individual but also on his of his self-concept and overall quality of life.

2.10 Pedagogical Implications

Until the issues concerning mother tongue education as well as non-functional schools are addressed and solved, there will always be a large portion of the people of South Africa who do not get the quality of education that they deserve. This simple fact contributes to an unending circle of unemployment, poverty, and related problems. For families who can afford school fees and who live in the vicinity of functioning schools, quality education is available, but in most instances the education available is not in the mother tongue of the learner. Due

to this fact, as well as the tendency of parents to choose English as the LOLT above their mother tongue, a large part of our population does not receive education in their mother tongue (Hugo, 2008:65; Nel & Swanepoel, 2010:55). This is the main cause of a variety of literacy problems among learners – research clearly implicates mother tongue education for optimum scholastic progress.

The ability of schools to supply quality education to all its learners is under stress due to, among others, the shortage of teachers and other resources. The 1:40 ratio described by the Department of Education for learners who do not receive mother-tongue education, often by a teacher who is also not a mother-tongue speaker of English, is not attainable. Resulting from this problem, other issues like disciplinary problems, cultural and communication-related problems presented themselves, adding to the negative scenario. If these problems are not addressed properly, it may and does have a devastating impact on the quality of life, self-concept and optimal functioning of too many learners in South Africa.

This study makes an important contribution to the well-known but still problematic issue of ESL teaching and learning. The experiences and challenges of ESL teachers were investigated at the grassroots' level and common issues were identified. A strong link was discovered between the identified problems and the possibility of addressing them by means of language-supportive learning and translanguaging. Further research into this matter is strongly recommended.

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ADDENDUM A: CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

First language (L1)

It refers to the very first language a child learns. Also referred to as 'first language' or 'native language' (Van der Walt, Evans & Kilfoil, 2009:3).

English Second Language (ESL) learners

Learners whose mother tongue is not English, but who are learning through the medium of English as the language of learning and teaching (Nel & Nel. 2016:128).

Mother tongue

Refers to the language that a learner has acquired in his/her early years and which has normally become his/her natural instrument of thought and communication (DoE, 2010:3)

Language of learning and teaching (LOLT)

Refers to the language medium in which learning and teaching, including assessment, takes place (DoE, 2010:3)

Literacy

The ability to read and write, as well as the ability to use language proficiently (Collins Dictionary, 2016).

Experiences

The past events, knowledge, and feelings that make up someone's life or character (Collins Dictionary, 2016).

Challenges

A challenge is something new and difficult which requires great effort and determination (Collins Dictionary, 2016).

Educators

An educator is someone who is specialized in the theories and methods of education (Collins Dictionary, 2016).

Discipline

Discipline is the quality of being able to behave and work in a controlled way which involves obeying particular rules or standards (Collins Dictionary, 2016).

Language supportive learning

The process that teachers and learners use to make optimal sense of a learning process by using all the languages brought to the learning situation. Krause and Prinsloo (2016:348) and Probyn (2014:220).

Whole-school approach

A whole-school approach, includes the holistic interaction of all shareholders (learners, parents, staff, and community) within a safe, healthy and stimulating educational environment (Davidoff & Lazarus, 2002:17)

Code switching

The use of more than one language or dialect in the same conversation (Clegg & Afitska, 2011:62).

Translanguaging

The process that teachers and learners use to make optimal sense of a learning process by using all the languages brought to the learning situation (Clegg & Simpson, 2016:364; Krause & Prinsloo, 2016:348; Probyn, 2014:220).

ADDENDUM B: SET OF QUESTIONS USED DURING THE INTERVIEWS

SET OF QUESTIONS USED DURING THE INTERVIEWS WITH THE TEACHERS

- What extrinsic and intrinsic factors influence literacy development in your classroom?
- How do these factors impact on the ESL learners' literacy development?
- What challenges do you experience in creating responsive literacy environments for ESL learners?
- What challenges – overall do you experience in teaching ESL learners?
- What is the nature and quality of the literacy skills of ESL learners' in your classroom?
- What is the impact of literacy barriers on the emotional experiences and the self-concept of ESL learners?
- Can you recommend any successful interventions you have applied in addressing ESL learners' problems with reading, writing and spelling?

ARTICLE 3

IMPLEMENTING AN INTERACTIVE STORYBOOK READING INTERVENTION TO SUPPORT ESL LITERACY DEVELOPMENT: A SOCIAL CULTURAL LEARNING THEORY PERSPECTIVE

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ARTICLE 3

IMPLEMENTING AN INTERACTIVE STORYBOOK READING INTERVENTION TO SUPPORT ESL LITERACY DEVELOPMENT: A SOCIAL CULTURAL LEARNING THEORY PERSPECTIVE

ABSTRACT

Literacy is one of the most important factors contributing to the independence, well-being and positive self-concept of an individual. National and international reports and surveys rank the literacy levels of South African learners as far below the level needed for future academic success. Complex socio-economic factors, a troubled educational system and non-functional schools cause parents to send their children to schools where the LOLT is not their mother tongue. Drawing on the theoretical perspectives proposed by Cummins, it is argued that a learner's achievement in a second language (L2) is dependent on the type of competence he or she has developed in a first language (L1). The absence of a strong home language or L1, or the development of an L2 at the expense of the mother tongue is one of the main causes of literacy and scholastic problems for English Second Language (ESL) learners. The problem is further exacerbated by the interaction of the different systems wherein the individual functions, according to the Bioecological Systems Theory of Bronfenbrenner. Following a quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test research design, ESL learners ($N=42$) were purposively drawn from five primary schools in in the Tshwane West Region to take part in this study. The researcher utilised quantitative data-gathering methods in the form of diagnostic and standardised measures to determine the challenges Grade 4 ESL learners experienced with literacy development prior to the intervention. Based on the viewpoints of psycholinguistic theorists, this study developed a literacy intervention that inter alia incorporated a whole-language approach and storybook reading to support the literacy development of Grade 4 ESL learners. In addition to storybook reading, literacy exercises to improve vocabulary, phonology, syntax and morphology of ESL learners were implemented for a period of six months. The study entailed a quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test research design. With regard to the intervention study, learners were randomly assigned to an experimental group ($N=42$) and a control group ($N=43$). To measure the impact of the reading intervention on the literacy skills of the learners, both groups were assessed by using diagnostic and standardised instruments to determine the quality of their reading fluency, word reading, vocabulary, comprehension and spelling abilities. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data. The results of the experimental design are promising and show a significant improvement in the mean scores of the learners in the experimental group. Moreover, the results show the value

of interactive storybook reading in creating responsive literacy environments to develop the literacy skills of ESL learners. Thus, the concept of story reading can be considered as a permanent feature in the curriculum of specifically the Intermediate Phase. Further research and planning regarding age-appropriate, culturally applicable and creative story hours as part of the curriculum for intermediate ESL learners are recommended.

Keywords: Socio-cultural learning theories, Psycho-linguistic principles, ESL learners, literacy intervention, story reading.

ABSTRAK

Geletterdheid is een van die belangrikste bydraende faktore tot die onafhanklikheid, welstand en positiewe selfkonsep van 'n individu. Nasionale en internasionale verslae en opnames gradeer die geletterdheidsvlakke van Suid-Afrikaanse leerders ver benede die vlak benodig vir toekomstige akademiese sukses. Komplekse sosio-ekonomiese faktore, 'n ontoereikende onderwysstelsel en nie-funksionele skole veroorsaak dat ouers hul kinders na skole toe stuur waar die TVOL nie hulle moedertaal is nie. Deur te steun op die teoretiese perspektiewe soos deur Cummins voorgestel, word geargumenteer dat 'n leerder se tweedetaalprestasie (L2) afhanklik is van die tipe bevoegdheid wat hy of sy in 'n eerste taal (L1) ontwikkel het. Die afwesigheid van 'n sterk huistaal of L1, of die ontwikkeling van 'n L2 ten koste van die moedertaal is een van die hooforsake van geletterdheid- en skolastiese probleme by ESL-leerders. Volgens die Bio-ekologiese Sisteemteorie van Bronfenbrenner word die probleem verder vererger deur die wisselwerking tussen die verskillende sisteme waarbinne die individu funksioneer. Deur 'n kwasi-eksperimentele voor-/natoetsontwerp te volg, is ESL-leerders (N=42) van vyf primêre skole in die Gauteng-Wes Streek doelgerig gekies om aan hierdie studie deel te neem. Die navorser het kwantitatiewe data-insamelingsmetodes in die vorm van diagnostiese en gestandaardiseerde meetinstrumente gebruik om die uitdagings te bepaal wat graad 4 ESL-leerders voor die intervensie met geletterdheidsontwikkeling ervaar het. Gebaseer op die standpunte van psigolinguistiese teoretici het hierdie studie 'n geletterdheidsintervensie ontwikkel wat onder andere 'n heeltaalbenadering en storieboeklees geïnkorporeer het om die geletterdheidsontwikkeling van graad 4 ESL-leerders te ondersteun. Behalwe storieboeklees, is geletterdheidsoefeninge vir 'n periode van ses maande geïmplementeer om woordeskat, fonologie, sintaksis en morfologie te verbeter. Die studie het 'n kwasi-eksperimentele voor-/natoets-navorsingsontwerp behels. Wat die intervensiestudie betref, is leerders lukraak toegewys aan 'n eksperimentele groep (N=42) en 'n kontrolegroep (N=43). Om die impak van die lees-intervensie op die geletterdheidsvaardighede van die

leerders te bepaal, is beide groepe geassesseer deur gebruik te maak van diagnostiese en gestandaardiseerde instrumente om die gehalte van hulle leesvlotheid, woordeskat, begrip en spelvermoë te bepaal. Deskriptiewe en inferensiële statistiek is gebruik om die data te analiseer. Die resultate van die eksperimentele ontwerp is belowend en toon 'n betekenisvolle verbetering op die gemiddelde tellings van die leerders in die eksperimentele groep. Verder toon die resultate die waarde van interaktiewe storieboeklees in die skep van responsiewe geletterdheidsomgewings ten einde die geletterdheidsvaardighede van ESL-leerders te ontwikkel. Gevolglik kan die konsep van storielees beskou word as 'n permanente kenmerk in die kurrikulum van spesifiek die intermediêre fase. Verdere navorsing en beplanning insake ouderdomsgeskikte, kultureeltoepaslike en kreatiewe storiesessies as deel van die kurrikulum vir ESL-leerders word aanbeveel.

Sleutelwoorde: Sosiokulturele leerteorieë, Psigolinguistiese beginsels, ESL-leerders, geletterdheidsintervensie, storielees.

3.1 Introduction

The word 'literacy' refers to a person's ability to read and write. However, during recent years, the connotations of literacy have grown and it has developed a far wider meaning: it now encompasses the degree of access someone has to his or her world and to the knowledge required to function successfully and at an optimal level in this world (Joubert, 2016:19). Boucher and Dednam (2016:172) postulate that literacy entails the understanding and use of an ever-expanding range of symbols. Although a young child may have rather advanced technological skills before being able to read or write, it is the ability to read and write which often leads to a successful and fulfilling life. Thus the core of literacy is an individual's ability to read and write successfully.

Moreover, in line with the above, researchers agree that literacy is one of the most important factors contributing to the overall well-being and positive self-concept of an individual (Hosogi, Okada, Fujii, Noguchi & Watanabe, 2012:1). Literacy skills are essential for daily functioning (Archambault, Eccles & Vida, 2010:804) and are associated with better employment rates, higher socio-economic status and an improved quality of life. With South Africa being a developing country, issues like unemployment, poverty, the unavailability of proper health and social services, and a troubled education system, seem to undermine the potential of the people of South Africa. The population of South Africa consists of various cultures, each of which forms part of the eleven official language groups in South Africa. The people of South Africa are often affectionately referred to as 'the rainbow nation'. Ironically this multilingual feature of South Africa also contributes to one of the biggest challenges – the illiteracy of thousands of her citizens. Together with complex socio-economic factors and a troubled educational system, too many schools in South Africa do not contribute positively to the literacy levels of the learners (Lessing & De Witt, 2005:243; Massaro, 2017:65). Along with the current Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) Policy (DoE, 2010:9), non-functional schools further contribute to the education and literacy dilemma of the South African learner.

The high variation in efficiency of South African schools leads, according to Van den Berg and Louw (2006:7), to the trend of parents' sending their children to a school which functions effectively and which delivers good quality education rather than to a dysfunctional school nearer to home. However, this choice comes at a price, as it often includes sacrificing mother-tongue education for education in a second language, most often in English. Other South African parents want to have their children educated in English, arguing that proficiency in English will open the future for their children, provide job opportunities and ensure a successful life. In contrast to their good intentions, national and international reports ranked the literacy

levels, especially the reading abilities of grade 3 and 4 learners of South Africa, far below the required performance level (Department of Education, 2013:48; Vally, 2012:617).

The rationale for this study conducted amongst grade 4 ESL learners is that second language (L2) literacy problems often only surface during grade 4. Grade 4 is also seen as an important time in the schooling of a learner. In grade 4 the learners move from one teacher in all learning areas to different learning areas with different teachers. They are also expected to work more independently (Theron & Nel, 2005:224). When these factors are considered together with the challenges presented by their LOLT, it is clear that the low literacy competence of many of the ESL learners needs to be prioritized very urgently. It is a well-known fact that the ability to read goes hand in hand with self-confidence and the learner's own perception of future academic successes (Bornman & Rose, 2011:138; Nel & Nel, 2016:117). According to Hosogi, Okada, Fujii, Noguchi, and Watanabe (2012:1), literacy is one of the major factors contributing to the overall well-being and positive self-concept of a person. The poor quality or absence of literacy abilities may complicate the individual's chance of becoming self-sufficient and successful and it eventually leads to a reduced self-concept.

As discussed in article 1 of this doctoral study, learners who experience barriers to learning, are exposed to constant failure which may have an adverse effect on the learner's self-concept (Snowman & McCown, 2012:387; Woolfolk, 2014:96). High-quality literacy abilities are essential for academic success. The experience of scholastic difficulties from an early age and a low self-concept deriving from academic failure eventually may lead to early school leaving and a future of hardship.

3.2 Theoretical framework

Researchers agree that literacy, or cognition of any kind, is influenced by the context in which it develops (Heine, Lehman, Markus & Kitayama, 1999:766; Nisbett, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978). Thus learning in general and reading and writing in particular, are similar to other complex cognitive skills – namely they are influenced by the contexts in which learning occurs and the activities that take place (see Vygotsky, 1978). When one focuses on the ESL learner within the South African educational context in practice, the above implies that their reading and writing skills depend on the literacy environment and the practices they have engaged in or have been exposed to, as well as the support provided or scaffolded by the educator and the quality of the literacy environment at home – i.e. the demand and value attached to particular forms of literacy and the literacy practices in families, communities and the broader society (Vygotsky, 1978). With regard to the current study, the literature review has underscored the pressing need for empirical research to explore and support the literacy development of ESL

learners, both internationally, as well as in South Africa (Van Staden, 2016). This includes theoretical investigations as well as empirical research exploring different theoretical perspectives on ESL literacy development, as well as the experimental research investigating this phenomenon. In exploring the challenges and support influencing ESL learners in South Africa, in this article the researcher considered three theoretical perspectives in order to ground this research.

Firstly, the researcher will draw on Cummins's Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis and explain how this theory applies to ESL learners in the current study. Since this study also developed a literacy intervention programme to support the literacy and reading development of ESL learners specifically, the researcher also considered the following two theories, namely the Sociocultural Learning Theory (i.e. the social practice of literacy development) proposed by Vygotsky (1978), as well as the psycholinguistic principles to literacy development identified by key researchers in the related field (Joubert et al., 2015:104; Woolfolk, 2013:55).

From the theoretical stance of Cummins, it is argued that the competence that a learner achieves in L2 depends on the type of competence he or she has developed in his or her mother tongue. Cummins emphasizes that the mother tongue (L1) of the learner must continue to be developed when the second language is added. The two languages are supported by shared concepts and knowledge derived from learning and other experiences according to Chuang, Joshi and Dixon (2011:98). Effective literacy in the L2 can only be reached by mastering the Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) of the L2. BICS include the skills that allow learners to use L2 in everyday life in the form of informal listening and speaking skills, which are acquired quickly by most learners (Cummins, 2008:487- 488). In spite of language competence at the BICS-level, the learner is not equipped with the ability to engage in cognitively demanding and problem-solving tasks in the L2 (Nel & Nel, 2016:129; Joubert, 2016:281). This fact forms the basis of the literacy crisis of a large percentage of South African L2 learners.

Though research indicates clear advantages for bilinguals in the cognitive and conceptual areas (Babson, 2014:6, Cummins, 1979:228; Heugh, 2002:179, Lebesi & Mtapuri, 2014:74, Yazki, Genc & Glover, 2010:261), these benefits would not exist if the second language acquirement happened at the expense of the mother tongue. Focusing on ESL learners in South Africa, researchers postulate that in most cases ESL learners are fully immersed in the L2 when they start formal schooling (Nel & Nel, 2016:128). Many ESL learners became competent in the communication (BICS) part of English relatively easily. However, this leads to the misconception that they will be academically successful with English as LOLT (Cummins, 2014:146) while, most of the time they are only able to adhere to the basic

outcomes of grade 1 and grade 2. From grade 3 onwards it may become evident that learning in the second language results in a barrier to learning for some ESL learners (Nel & Nel, 2016:129). They started to struggle, due to the absence of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CAPS) in English (L2). According to Nel and Nel (2016:129), the CALP in L2 takes four to seven years longer to develop as in the mother tongue. Cummins also emphasizes that the level of L2 competence a learner achieves is partly dependent on the competence he or she has developed in the mother tongue (Eva & Reka, 2013:177). The socio-economic status of a family may influence the quality of the home learning environment (Hartas, 2011:910). Socio-economic problems like poverty and unemployment deprive the child of exposure to a stimulating environment which is essential for successful literacy acquisition. These socio-economic challenges may also contribute to the fact that learners' home languages (i.e. their L1's) are not well established when they start their formal schooling – consequently their L1's do not provide a strong and stable foundation for the successful acquisition of English. In the current study, the home language of the participants was representative of various indigenous African languages, for example: Setswana (35.7%), IsiZulu (16%), Sesotho (14.3%), Sepedi (16%), Tsivenda (7.1%), IsiXhosa (2%), Xitsonga (5%), IsiNdebele (2%) and Shona (2%). Drawing on Cummins's Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis, the researcher will assess the Grade 4 learners in English since all of them receive instruction in English from Grade 4. If their pre-test results show significant delays in measures of English literacy, one can then argue that their home languages were most probably not well established when they changed to English LOLT in Grade 4 – thus supporting Cummins's hypothesis.

Secondly, since this study also developed a literacy intervention programme for ESL learners, in the development of the programme the researcher embraced the social practice's view of literacy development which, as mentioned previously, is connected to sociocultural learning theorists' perspectives (Vygotsky, 1978). The sociocultural view emphasizes the role of the community in providing the basis for literacy through interaction with others. The symbols used to communicate within a cultural context form the language which enables the individual to think, communicate and eventually read and write (Slavin, 2012:41). Vygotsky, a sociocultural theorist, singles out the fact that interactions with others do more than just influence cognitive development but that they are actively involved in the creation of our cognitive structures and thinking processes (Woolfolk, 2013:55). Social interaction with adults and capable peers is advocated by this theory as is the exposure to language-rich activities like the reading or telling of stories, rhymes, games and informal discussions. The intervention programme in the form of joyful and dramatized reading of stories is grounded in the sociocultural theory. The stories were selected by keeping the cultural contexts of the learners in mind.

In addition to the sociocultural view of literacy development, in the development of the literacy programme, the researcher also acknowledges that both literacy development and reading per se, are psycholinguistic processes that involve component sub-processes such as letter recognition, phoneme-grapheme mapping, also known as phonological encoding, decoding of grapheme strings, word recognition, lexical access, computation of sentence meaning, and that all of these processes are interrelated and contribute to successful reading comprehension development (Van Staden, 2016; Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 1997:54). Thus, in the current study, the researcher's viewpoint concurs with other leading psycholinguistic theorists, namely that a literacy intervention programme should also include strategies to develop these sub-processes via explicit instruction, for example the researcher included specific strategies to develop ESL learners' phonological awareness, word decoding abilities, word reading, reading fluency, vocabulary and reading comprehension.

3.3 Problem statement and research questions

Currently most of the research and interventions that aim to address the literacy challenges experienced by South African learners are concentrated on pre-school and foundation phase learners. A large group of learners in the intermediate phase (grades 4–6) lack proper and age-appropriate literacy skills (Pretorius, 2015:50, 69-70; Van Wyk, 2014:206). Theron and Nel (2005:224) confirm that, although ESL learners in different grades in the primary school experience language problems, the impact of these problems on the Grade 4 learner is major. Apart from the fact that the learners have to adjust to additional learning areas, they also have to get used to different teachers for the different learning areas. From grade 4 onwards the learners are also expected to work more independently. The problems L2 learners experience due to the fact that the language of Education and Learning (LOLT) is not their mother tongue were highlighted by the results of the pre-PIRLS 2011 test (Van Staden, Bosker, & Bergbauer, 2016:4). The results show a disadvantage of 28.94 points on the reading literacy achievement for the learners who took the test in a language other than their home language (Van Staden et al. 2016:8). The need for intervention regarding the poor literacy skills of ESL learners is demonstrated by research which confirms how disadvantaged ESL learners are and how they struggle to reach their full potential due to, among others, the absence of education in their mother tongue (Bouwer & Dednam, 2016:198; DoE, 2013:41, Heugh, 2002:172; Le Cordeur, 2010:105; Van Staden, 2016:23; Van Staden et al. 2016:4). The effect of poor literacy skills on the future life of the individual is profound. It is of utmost importance to address this literacy crisis to prevent forthcoming scholastic, socio-economic and personal problems in the future of these learners.

Emanating from the above, two primary research questions guided this research, namely:

- How do the literacy skills of an individual develop?
- Can the literacy skills of Grade 4, ESL learners significantly improve after the application of a literacy intervention programme which uses, inter alia, interactive storybook reading as a foundation to develop their literacy skills?

In addressing the two main or primary research questions, above, the sub-questions, listed below, will be explored (i.e. via a theoretical discussion as well as an empirical investigation):

- What role do emergent literacy skills play in ESL literacy development?
- What are the main components of the language system and how do they influence ESL literacy development?
- How do cognitive linguistic skills, such as phonological awareness, word decoding, reading fluency and vocabulary interplay with and contribute to reading comprehension ability amongst ESL learners?

3.4 Aims of the investigation

A large percentage of South African learners do not receive mother-tongue education due to a variety of factors. National and international data indicate that the literacy skills of ESL learners in South Africa are far below the acceptable standard (Department of Education, 2013:48; Vally, 2012:617). To address the quality of the literacy skills of grade 4, ESL learners, the first aim of the study is to determine the way in which the literacy skills of an individual develop. Secondly, based on the results of the first aim, the researcher aims to develop a literacy intervention programme to improve the literacy skills of ESL learners. In the quest to successfully address the aims of this study, the following aspects will be examined:

- The developmental process involved in the development of an individual's' literacy skills will be scrutinized by establishing the role of emergent literacy skills on ESL literacy development;
- The main components of the language system will be identified and their influence on ESL literacy development will be determined;
- The interaction with and contribution to ESL learners' reading comprehension ability by cognitive linguistic skills such as phonological awareness, word decoding, reading fluency and vocabulary, will be examined.

3.5 Ethical considerations

This study forms part of a National Research Foundation (NRF) project of the Faculty of Education at the University of the Free State. The title of the project is: Cognitive linguistic processing of L1 and L2 learners with typical and atypical patterns of development. This study was approved and granted ethical clearance for the research by the Ethics Board of the Faculty of Education (Ethical Clearance Number: UFS-EDU-2013-0074). The NRF grant number is 87728.

3.5.1 Informed consent

The Gauteng Department of Education (GDE), principals, teachers and parents of participating schools were informed about the purpose and importance of the study and when it would be conducted (Addendums B, C and D, p 70-83). As the participants were too young to give consent, written consent was obtained from their parents or guardians (Addendum D, p 79).

3.5.2 Privacy, confidentiality and anonymity

Participants' anonymity is protected by de-identifying them or by the use of pseudonyms. All data collected will be seen as strictly confidential and will be stored for a minimum of three years. All records of collected data will be kept in a safe and secure place at the University of the Free State.

3.6 Literature review

The quality of the literacy of especially ESL South African learners is a major matter of concern. The problem is further complicated by the fact that a large part of South African learners receives their education in a language other than their mother tongue (Nel & Swanepoel, 2010:55). Proper literacy skills are essential for daily functioning and a successful future (Archambault, Eccles, & Vida, 2010:804).

Despite this, scholastic success is possible, even if the LOLT is not the learner's mother tongue. However, this can only be achieved on condition that the learner's mother tongue has been soundly established and that its development is ongoing alongside the L2. Cummins's research, based on his Linguistic Interdependence Theory, has demonstrated that a well-developed and embedded mother tongue provides a solid basis for the acquirement of a second language (Cummins, 1979:233; Eva & Reka, 2013:177). According to Cummins, a learner's mother tongue (L1) must continue to be developed when the second language is added and the two languages must develop along each other. In other words, the L2 must not be added at the expense of the L1. However, the mother tongue proficiency of many young

South African learners is deficient due to socio-economic issues, poverty, and deprivation and the absence of a strong language base in the mother tongue (Prinsloo, 2016:53). When they start with formal schooling in a LOLT other than their mother tongue, many learners are fully immersed in the second language at the expense of their mother tongues (Nel & Nel, 2016:129). This practice contributes to the literacy dilemma of many ESL learners.

3.6.1 The development of literacy

From a theoretical stance, the researcher has explained the relevance of Cummins's linguistic interdependence theory to the plight of ESL learners in South Africa, and has also provided sufficient theoretical grounding for considering socio-cultural learning theories (i.e. the social practice of literacy development), as well as the psycholinguistic principles that are important prerequisites for reading development, in the development of a literacy intervention programme for ESL learners in the current study (Theoretical Orientation, 3.2, p 5). In answering the first research question, the succeeding discussion will address the secondary research questions as they contribute to answering the primary research question, namely: how does literacy develop? In addition, the secondary aim of this study is to develop a literacy intervention programme for ESL learners. To achieve these aims, the literature review, presented next, will focus on and discuss key aspects of literacy development, such as emergent literacy, the components of a language system, and the components of reading also known as the cognitive-linguistic processes involved in literacy or reading development.

3.6.1.1 Emergent literacy

Although literacy includes the ability to read and write, the concept encompasses a wealth of skills. Bouwer and Dednam (2016:172) refer to literacy as the understanding and use of an ever-expanding range of symbols. Literacy is defined by Joubert (2016:19) as the degree of access one has to his or her world and to the knowledge required for optimal functionality in this world (see 3.1, p 4). Literacy must be seen as an overall communicative competence and is, therefore, an integrated process of language as well as cognitive development and not only the ability to read and write (Bouwer & Dednam, 2016:172). However, reading and writing form the basis of literacy. To be able to engage in optimal learning, the individual must be able to read and write properly. In order to address the literacy problems of the participating ESL learners through an intervention programme, the role of emergent literacy in the development of literacy skills must be examined.

Several human functions like communication and socialization happened through language (Lerner, 2006:325). In addition, important issues like culture and history are transmitted from

one generation to the other by language. Equally important is that language is the vehicle of thought (Lerner, 2006:325). Language appears in different forms which are linked through an integrated language system (Lerner, 2006:325). It includes: oral language (listening and speaking), and reading as well as writing. Together they form the core of the language system. Children are born with the fundamental abilities to make sense of the world they are exposed to. Bouwer and Dednam (2016:172) aptly describe it as follows:

The emergence of literacy is, therefore, a gradual, continuous, constructivist and nonlinear process that draws on the child's exposure and uniquely personal responses to particular experiences in terms of a virtual stream of perceptual, conceptual and linguistic information from the environment.

Emergent literacy is described as the skills, knowledge and attitudes that develop prior to conventional forms of reading (Lenyai, 2011:89). Although emergent literacy may be seen as an automatic and effortless process, Bouwer and Dednam (2016:172) caution against thinking about it as just incidental learning. Literacy develops from essential pre-requisites, including well developed oral language abilities; exposure to written language to understand how text works; cognitive maturation and good quality instruction. Early experiences in listening, talking and learning about the environment wherein one functions provide the basis for reading and writing. In order to comply with the first research question of this study: How do an individual's literacy skills develop, it is important to analyse the different concepts contributing to effective literacy. It is equally important in order to determine the best way to support the literacy development of ESL learners (the second research question).

Socio-cultural theorists as well as psycholinguistic orientated researchers agree that children coming from print-rich environments who were regularly exposed to literacy-related practices such as storybook reading are most likely to become successful readers (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 1997:55). Opportunities for children to participate in literacy-related practices help to develop specific knowledge regarding letters, symbolic systems and language provides. This knowledge is a prerequisite to full literacy (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council 1997:55). Lanyai and De Witt (2008:81) state that a bilingual child's literacy development depends on how language was presented at home. They support the well-established fact that poor environments often do not provide the stimulation necessary to foster language development. Concepts which play an important role in the discussion concerning emergent literacy are: book knowledge and appreciation, phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge and print awareness (Lenyai, 2011:90). Book knowledge and appreciation include the interest shown by the child in viewing pictures and listening to stories. Retelling stories, making predictions about what follows in a story, creating their own stories and getting

involved in book-related activities are important skills developing during the emergent literacy stadium (Lenyai, 2011:90).

Another skill which has to develop during emergent literacy is phonemic awareness which is the ability to notice, think about and work with the individual sounds in spoken words. The learner must be able to hear, identify and manipulate the different sounds into spoken words. The correlation between the sound and the printed symbol must be translated into sounds which must be blended to form words (Nel & Nel, 2016: 106-113). Alphabet knowledge refers to the learner's ability to identify letters and to understand that letters are written symbols that can be named and learned separately (Lenyai, 2011:90). Print awareness includes the learner's ability to recognise that print and not pictures mainly carries the meaning of the story (Lenyai, 2011:91). Print awareness further includes the insight that spoken words can be written down and read, that reading is done from left to right, top to bottom and that a book is read from the front to the back.

In the light of the important role of emergent literacy in the development of literacy, the implication of the results of research by De Witt (2009:619), that only 35% of Grade R learners in South Africa meet the minimum criteria required for early literacy development, underscores the importance of urgent intervention to improve the early literacy skills of many South African learners. This is also supported by research of Van Staden and Griessel (2011:59) which has shown that in most cases the quality of early literacy development in Grade R classes, especially in rural areas, raises major concerns. For example, the poor literacy skills of many South African pre-schoolers are further exacerbated by socio-economic and financial constraints. Consequently, many children do not have access to libraries, books, class readers and other literacy support material – all of which contribute to the weak teaching and learning experiences of learners. From a bio-ecological perspective, many South African learners thus start their formal schooling in Grade 1, with literacy backlogs in their home language. This is further aggravated by the interplay of various other factors, for example, many ESL learners receive their education in English as the LOLT and not in their mother tongue, parents do not have sufficient literacy skills to support their children with homework and by reading stories and teachers do not provide other enriching activities in the classrooms. As mentioned above, there are not enough books and readers, and the teacher-learner-ratio is very high (Van Staden & Griessel, 2011:59).

Moreover, to further illustrate the importance of the emergent literacy stage during literacy development, the discussion above has demonstrated that high quality early literacy experiences are critical to prevent reading failure during more advanced years of schooling and may be the key to achieving higher levels of literacy amongst South African learners

(especially ESL learners). This is further supported by research which shows that early intervention of reading difficulties can prevent young readers from experiencing later reading failure (Bouwer & Dednam, 2016:177; Lessing & De Witt, 2005:243). Therefore, it is imperative to identify developmentally appropriate reading skills that children should acquire at different ages and grades and to address the challenges that early readers may experience accordingly. Moreover, as discussed in Article 1, one has to acknowledge the various extrinsic and intrinsic factors that interplay and may influence the literacy development of ESL learners in South Africa.

In the next section, the different forms of language which develop in stages will be discussed.

3.6.1.2 The forms of the language system

In answering the first research question of this study regarding the development of the literacy skills of an individual, one also have to differentiate between the different forms of the language system: listening, speaking, reading and writing. The gradual development of language usually occurs in stages, which universally corresponds to a particular age, if there are no developmental barriers present (Joubert et al., 2016:11-12; Nel & Nel, 2016: 99-101). Research by the Institute of Medicine and National Research Council (1997:61) emphasizes that there are different challenges at different stages for a child who is learning to read. Whether the child is learning about print versus non-print in the preschool years, or whether he or she is learning to recognize and write letters, or is reading simple text fluently, each stage requires novel skills. The author cautions that the task of learning to read in a second language is quite different from the different stages of first-language reading skills. The level of the individual's first language reading and the level and content of second language reading material are important factors that need to take into account (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 1997:61). It has serious implications for the ESL learner as most of them are not able to read in their mother tongue when they are immersed in a LOLT that is not their mother tongue in grade R or grade 1.

Lerner (2006:326) indicates that the language system consists of the forms of listening, speaking, reading and writing. The acquisition of each form of language follows the mentioned sequence of development. Underlying the four forms is the language core or base that integrates the different language forms. Speaking and writing are expressive skills which have the ability to use gestures and speech to communicate meaning (Lerner, 2006:328; Nel & Nel, 2016; 95). Listening and reading are regarded as receptive skills that are responsible for feeding information into the central nervous system (Joubert et al., 2016; Lerner, 2006:328;

Nel & Nel, 2016; 95). Lerner (2006:328) affirms the importance of sufficient input (listening and reading) before output skills (speaking and writing) can effectively be executed:

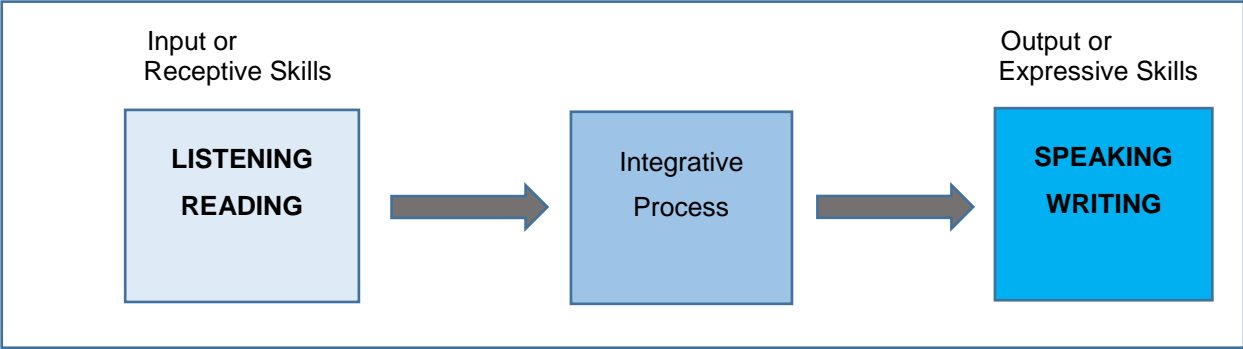


Figure 3-1: Integrative Process of Language (Lerner, 2006:328).

Fundamental literacy skills are grouped into two categories: constrained and unconstrained skills (Pretorius, 2015:55; Snow & Matthews 2016:57). Constrained skills are, in most cases, easily obtained by young children because they are fixed and have a ceiling, for example, the 26 letters of the alphabet or a set of spelling rules. Unconstrained skills, however, consist of large domains of skills which grow through experience. They include vocabulary as well as background knowledge, which must constantly be integrated with new knowledge, to build comprehension. The socio-economic circumstances, as well as the parents' education, may influence the quality of the unconstrained skills of learners (Snow & Matthews, 2016:57). Researchers declare that successful comprehension beyond the third grade requires the understanding of words rarely spoken, as well as the integration of new information with relevant background information (Snow & Matthews, 2016:59). The lack of these skills may have a serious impact on the vocabulary as well as the comprehension skills of the learner. The fact that ESL learners do not receive their education in their mother tongue puts them in a disadvantaged position from the start. They have no or very limited exposure to English, especially concerning their unconstrained skills as they have been unable to experience English as a language beforehand and thereby build up their vocabulary and develop comprehension in English. In connection with Cummins's Linguistic Interdependence Theory, the constrained skills link with the BICS Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), while the unconstrained skills and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) associate. Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) are skills – like informal listening and speaking, – that allow learners to use L2 in their everyday lives and which are, like constrained skills, typically quickly acquired by most learners. Cognitive Academic Language

Proficiency (CALP) forms the basis of a learner's ability to cope with academic demands and, like unconstrained skills, refers to cognitively demanding skills which can only be obtained and grown through thorough exposure to the language and experience with it. BICS and unconstrained skills enable the individual to engage in cognitively demanding and problem-solving tasks. Vocabulary and comprehension skills form part of the CALP and the unconstrained skills which determine the crucial transition of learning to read, to, reading to learn. Article 1 of this study highlights the lack of a proper mother-tongue foundation as a stumbling block for a large part of the ESL learners. The ESL learner mostly will find it easy to master the constrained skills but mastering the unconstrained skills, including vocabulary and comprehension which are closely associated with CALP, may cause literacy obstacles because these skills are open-ended and their development can take a lifetime (Pretorius, 2015:31, Matthews & Snow, 2016:57). As one of the aims of this study is to improve the literacy efficacy of ESL learners in grade 4, it is important to include activities to expand the vocabulary and comprehension skills of the participating learners in the intervention programme. Equally important is the differentiation between the components of the language system in order to develop an effective and successful intervention plan.

3.6.1.3 Components of language and reading development

At the core of literacy – and more specifically of reading development – is the individual's capacity or ability to acquire a language. In this regard linguists have identified five basic language components, namely phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics. These components are applicable to all languages (Van Staden, 2017). Thus, from a linguistic point of view, all languages are equal – i.e. they all have sound and sound systems, words and word meanings and grammar (Bouwer & Dednam, 2016:158).

Moreover, as language acquisition progresses across the language components mentioned above, its usage gradually increases and becomes more refined over time. This is applicable to the knowledge and usage of sounds, words and sentences (i.e. sentence length), and the understanding and usage of more complex language processes over time (Fromkin & Rodman, 1974). With reference to the Vygotskian perspective and the social practice of literacy development, and the implication thereof for ESL learners in the current study, the role of the educator as a facilitator of language in the ESL classroom is crucial, not only with regard to the effective facilitation of social interactions amongst learners, but also in creating a responsive language environment to ensure academic and literacy attainment in the language of teaching and learning (Van Staden, 2017). Thus it is imperative that numerous opportunities should be created and/or scaffolded to listen to, speak, read and write in the target language, for example in English. This viewpoint also informed the development of a literacy intervention programme

for ESL learners in the current study. In other words, it incorporated both theoretical principles of socio-cultural learning theories (i.e. via book reading and by creating authentic reading experiences), in combination with direct instructional activities to promote phonological awareness, word decoding, word identification (i.e. word reading), vocabulary and reading comprehension amongst ESL learners. From the discussion above, it is evident that one of the ultimate goals of language acquisition is the ability to effectively communicate with others through spoken and written language.

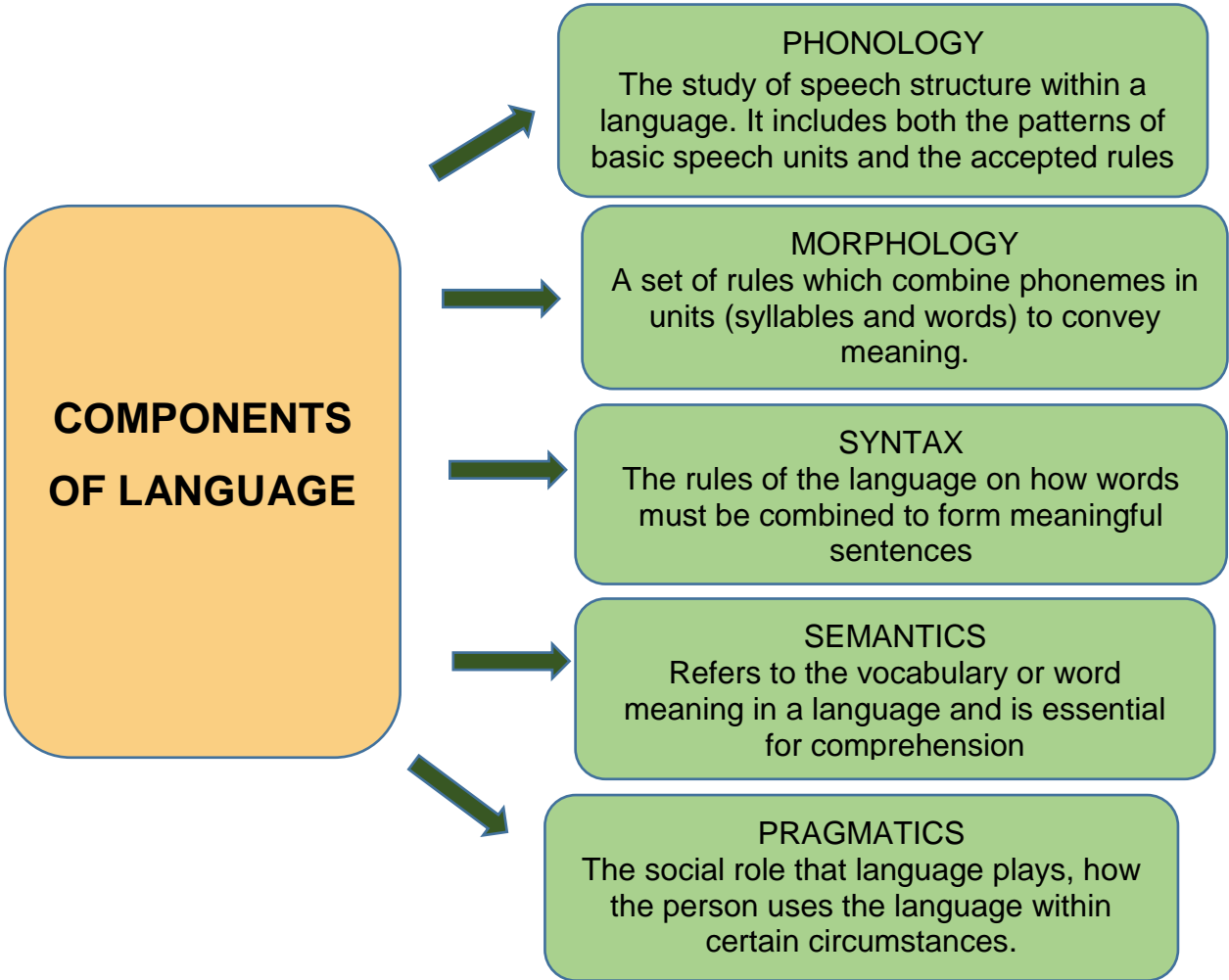


Figure 3-2: The components of language

a. Phonology

In the literature a distinction is made between phonology and phonetics. Phonetics deals with the production of speech sounds by humans, often without prior knowledge of the language being spoken (Lass, 1984). In contrast, phonology is concerned with the patterns of sounds

and speech structure, especially different patterns of sounds in individual languages, different patterns of sounds in different positions in words, and the accepted rules of pronunciation (Anderson, 2001, Van Staden, 2017). More specifically it studies the way that distinctions in sound are used to differentiate between various linguistic items and the ways in which the sound structure of the same element varies as a function of the other sounds in its context (Anderson, 2001). The above suggests that phonology is an overarching term which is concerned with the abstract, grammatical characterization of systems of sounds or signs in a language. A very important aspect of phonology is that it analyses the speech sounds into phonemes (i.e. the smallest units of sound), including how to pronounce the sounds in the words which are included in the grammar of the language (Anderson, 2001:11386; Van Staden, 2017). Although phonemes do not have meaning on their own, different speech sounds can be combined or organized in a specific way and the way in which they are presented together can change the meaning of a word (Idsardi & Monahan, 2016:141; Van Staden, 2017). In this regard phonology attempts to understand how different speech sounds are combined, organized, and how they convey meaning in a particular language. In practice this implies that the same letter or combination of letters can be pronounced differently in different words (e.g. hat and hate). The difference between phonology and phonetics is that phonetics is more concerned with the production, perception, and physical properties of speech sounds (Isardi & Monohan, 2016:141; Van Staden, 2017).

It is argued that the study of phonemes is one of the most important aspects of phonology. It entails the knowledge or awareness that a word represents specific sounds, for example the word 'that' contains three phonemes: the 'th' represents one phoneme /th/, the "a" maps to the short a sound /ă/, and the "t" to its basic sound /t/ (Cohen & Horowitz, 2002:29). With regard to ESL learners and the importance of phonology in becoming proficient in the English language, for many L2 English speakers/users, different English vowels tend to sound the same – the qualities in 'bit' and 'beat', 'bid' and 'bead', and groups like 'bad', 'bud' and 'barred', and "ship and sheep" are notoriously problematic, because in many cases they (i.e. ESL children) pronounce them in the same way (Cohen & Horowitz, 2002:29). This does not only have a severe effect on the learners' reading, but also affects their spelling production (or the spelling of words, which in most cases is very phonetic due to the fact that they are L2 learners) (Van Staden, 2017). In the ESL classroom the study and practice of phonology is very important, for both the ESL teacher and the ESL learner. Therefore, it is imperative that the learners familiarise themselves with the English sound systems, especially by practising the correct pronunciation of English words daily. In doing so they will boost their confidence in using English correctly and they will also improve their reading and spelling. Most importantly, when one focuses on South African teachers teaching in English, in many cases they are

English second or third language users as well. It is evident that it is equally important for them to model the correct pronunciation of English words and set the correct example for ESL learners to follow (Van Staden, 2017; Nel & Nel, 2016: 106-113).

Thus, from the above one can concur that the disciplines of phonology and phonetics are closely related, and that an understanding of phonology without a comprehensive knowledge of phonetics, is hardly impossible. Vice versa, it can also be argued that phonetics, “feeds” phonology, which is then used to explore the sound patterns of words (Idsardi & Monahan, 2016:141; Van Staden, 2017). Focusing on practical ways to expand the phonology of ESL learners, researchers propose the following suggestions for ESL learners to teach the correct pronunciation of words (Van Staden, 2017):

- Syllable stress via drilling exercises: For example, a learner says: I don't like fruit and **vegetables** (X). The teacher can model the correct syllable stress in the word vegetable, for example: I don't like fruit and **veg**'tables (√).
- Tongue twisters: For example: The thirty-three thieves thought that they thrilled the throne throughout Thursday; If Stu chews shoes, should Stu choose the shoes he chews?
- Sounds comparison: For example: ship, cheap, sheep and chip.
- Observation: She is very intelligent, isn't she? (asking for confirmation, I know she is intelligent).

As mentioned earlier, many of the components of language are also closely related to reading and spelling. However, it is important to note that both reading and spelling goes beyond the ordinary abilities required for speaking and listening – success in reading and writing is related to an individual's awareness of the underlying phonological structure of words. Struggling readers are often unable to segment words into their phonological constituents, and may experience specific problems related to awareness abilities within the phonological domain, such as phonological awareness (Van Staden, 2016). The importance of phonics, phonological awareness and other related skills such as phonemic awareness will be discussed later in this article (see p 24).

b. Morphology

Morphology refers to a set of rules which combine phonemes in units (syllables and words) to convey meaning. The smallest unit conveying meaning is called a morpheme (Nel & Nel, 2016:98). A word like *birds* contains two morphemes: *bird* plus *s*, where the *-s* indicates plurality. Four different types of morphemes are distinguished:

- Free morphemes: Single root words which have meaning and can stand by themselves such as *tree*, *car* and *water* (Bouwer & Dednam, 2016:159; Nel & Nel, 2016:98).
- Bound morphemes: These morphemes have meaning but cannot function independently. They are used as prefixes or suffixes: *re-* plus *write*: *rewrite*, and, *home* plus *-less*: *homeless* (Bouwer & Dednam, 2016:159; Nel & Nel, 2016:98).
- Derivational morphemes change the class of words, e.g. the noun *friend* becomes a verb, *befriend* and the adjective *happy* becomes an adverb, *happily* (Bouwer & Dednam, 2016:159).
- Inflectional morphemes are only in the form of suffixes which indicate tense, *help* plus *-ed* become *helped*, the plural (*flower* plus *-s* become *flowers*) and third person singular present tense verb (*he works*).

Morphological rules are used to organise words. They are important because they help learners work out the meaning of new words (Jordaan, 2015:3). The morphology of a language like English can be problematic for ESL learner as each language has a specific phonological system with its own set of rules which can be confusing for ESL learners (Bouwer & Dednam, 2016:159). However, the cross-linguistic contribution of morphological awareness must not be underestimated. Research by Bae and Joshi (2017:21) underlines the cross-language contribution of morphological awareness to the vocabulary and reading comprehension skills of ESL learners who are learning to read two typologically different orthographies at the same time. In the study fifty Korean ESL learners in grades five and six received extra support in both their mother tongue (Korean) and in English. Both English and Korean share certain similar morphological structure, including formation rules in derivational and compounding words and morphological productivity (Bae & Joshi: 2017:23). The support included morphological awareness skills, vocabulary and reading comprehension as well as phonological and orthographic awareness. Path analysis of the data shows that morphological awareness is the most significant contributor to the development of English reading comprehension and vocabulary of the participating learners (Bae & Joshi: 2017:30).

c. Syntax

The syntax is the grammatical system of a language. It includes the rules of the language on how words should be combined to form meaningful sentences (Bouwer & Dednam, 2016:159; Lerner, 2006:335; Nel & Nel, 2016:98). In a language like English, a sentence contains different elements in interrelationship within its structure. These elements are combined according to fixed rules: for example, a sentence must contain a noun as well as a verb. By changing the

combination of these elements (words), a sentence can be transformed into another type of sentence: a declarative sentence (John is running) can be changed into a question (Is John running?) (Bouwer & Dednam, 2016:159-160). Sentences are thus organised according to their function and can be either statements, commands or questions (Jordaan, 2015:4). As different languages have different syntactic rules (Jordaan, 2015:4), learners learning in a second language will have to learn the syntax of the second language as well as the phonology and morphology of a language. The results of an intervention study based on the “simple view of reading” by Van Staden (2016:33) indicate a moderate but significant relationship between the grade 4, ESL learners in the experimental group’s syntactical skills and reading comprehension. The syntactical skills contribute to the reading comprehension and thus the quality of the literacy skills of an ESL learner. Story reading, as an intervention in addressing various literacy skills, including the syntactic skills of the ESL learner, is supported by various studies (Ntuli & Pretorius, 2005:96; Soderman, Clevenger & Kent, 2013:37; Van Staden: 2016:21-40; Wightman & Roney 2013:45).

d. Semantics

Semantics refers to the vocabulary or word meaning in a language and is essential for comprehension (Lerner, 2006:335; Nel & Nel, 2016:98). The development of vocabulary is a lifelong activity. Semantics includes word meanings from different perspectives such as synonyms (big/large), antonyms (hot/cold) and homonyms (nail: fingernail/nail: a tack) (Bouwer & Dednam, 2016:160). Semantic structures need to be processed with understanding otherwise they will be meaningless for the user. For the ESL learner semantics forms part of the CALP and the unconstrained skills which cannot be acquired in a short time, but which need longer, quality exposure to the language in order to master it. Elgie and Roessingh (2009:24) conducted an intervention study in the form of storytelling with an experimental group of 65 ESL learners, in comparison with a group of 25 English mother-tongue learners. The study was aimed at gaining insights into the noticeable variables in early language and literacy development of ESL learners. The findings suggest that, although reading and vocabulary are closely interrelated in the stages of early literacy development, over time ESL learners face the greatest learning challenges in the area of vocabulary development. It is therefore important to pay close attention to the expansion of ESL learners’ vocabularies in the quest to expand their literacy skills and academic success. Research by Collins (2010:84) underlines the effect of rich explanation, baseline vocabulary and home reading practices on ESL preschool learners’ sophisticated vocabulary learning from storybook reading. In a pre-test/post-test intervention, a group of 80 ESL learners were divided into an experimental and a control group. Both groups’ receptive vocabulary was pre-tested before the experimental

group was exposed to eight different books, each read three times over a three-week period, including rich explanations of the target vocabulary. The control group also heard the same stories, the same number of times but without the explanation of the vocabulary. The learners in the control group showed a gain of 33% in vocabulary by only listening to the stories read to them. However, the experimental group, exposed to the story reading accompanied by rich explanations of new words, showed a gain of 50% in new vocabulary (Collins, 2010:93). The important link between vocabulary as a prerequisite for reading comprehension is highlighted by various studies (Collins, 2010:84; Dickenson, Griffith, Golinkoff, & Hirsch-Pasek, 2012:6; Pretorius & Mchet, 2004:143; Snow & Matthews, 2016:59). The continuous expansion of semantic skills goes hand in hand with the individual's development of comprehension in the quest to become fully literate.

e. Pragmatics

Pragmatics pertains to the different ways in which people express themselves in a specific situation (Bouwer & Dednam, 2016:160). It entails the social role that language plays; in other words, how the person uses the language within certain circumstances. Body language and facial expressions are also included in pragmatics (Lerner, 2006:335; Nel & Nel, 2016:98). The literal (concrete) and figurative (abstract) aspects of language are also included by pragmatics. The literal meaning is the primary meaning of a sentence: The labourers worked hard. The figurative meaning includes an abstract, secondary meaning by saying one thing but meaning another e.g.: Her head was spinning with all the new information – meaning that all the new information is a bit overwhelming. Figurative speech also includes similes, idioms, metaphors, satire, irony, puns, and riddles. Pragmatics is also dependent on culture as different cultures communicate in different ways. Learning a second language thus also means that you have to learn about different ways of communicating (Jordaan, 2015:4). A study by Beck, Kumschick, Eid, and Klann-Delius (2012:503) examines relations between multiple components of language competence (LC) and emotional competence (EC) in a sample of 210 school-age children. As pragmatics included the social role of language, the pragmatic role of communication cues through body language, facial expression, tone of voice as well as literal and figurative use of language, the expression of the cues is closely associated with the age and emotional competence of the person. To be able to interpret the pragmatics of a certain language, the individual's vocabulary and comprehension skills must be sufficient. In the study by Beck et al., (2012:503), five measures were used to represent LC: receptive vocabulary, verbal fluency, literacy, narrative structure, and the narrative use of evaluative devices. EC was represented by the following measures: expressive emotional vocabulary, declarative emotional knowledge, awareness of mixed emotions, and facial emotion recognition. Results

showed strong positive correlations between language competence and emotional competence, where receptive vocabulary and literacy (LC) were closely related to emotional knowledge and an awareness of mixed emotions (EC). According to Beck et al. (2012:511), emotional knowledge, as well as linguistic meaning, is grounded in experience and needs to be conceptualized in the course of development. The development of both EC and LC is contingent on learning and categorizing through one's experience. There thus exists a reciprocal relationship between LC and EC. The researchers conclude that literacy is associated with EC via a mutually influencing relationship with lexical-semantic knowledge (Beck et al., 2012:511). The pragmatic skills in any language cannot be developed in a short period of time; rather, they involve a long process of exposure to and use of the language. To master the pragmatics of a language is not a quick process which can be achieved in one school year and this explains why the CALP skills of ESL learners contribute to the literacy and other academic problems many ESL learners experience.

3.6.1.3.1 Components that are critical for development of reading skills

When one focuses on literacy development and on reading ability per se, it must be stressed that reading is highly valued and important for social and economic advancement. This is clear from various studies that highlight the importance of the components identified by experts as being critical to developing reading skills. The components include: phonological awareness (including phonemic awareness and sound knowledge); word decoding and word reading; reading fluency, vocabulary and reading comprehension (Bouwer & Dednam, 2016:174-175; Lerner 2006:385-388; Nel & Nel, 2016: 106-113; Van Staden, 2016). A study by Jongejan, Verhoeven and Siegel (2007:835) examines the basic literacy skills and related processes of learners speaking English as a first language as well as those of ESL learners. The results of this study suggest that the main processes underlying L1 learners' basic reading ability are of equal importance to the ESL learner. These results are supported by the results of a study by Van Staden (2016:8952) investigating whether the reading and spelling skills of Grade 4 ESL learners would improve significantly following direct instruction and reading scaffolding techniques. The results of the study demonstrate that the same cognitive linguistic processes and related factors which form the basis of reading and spelling acquisition are involved in L2 reading and spelling acquisition (Van Staden, 2016:8952). Figure 3.3 on page 24 illustrates the components that are critical for the development of reading skills.

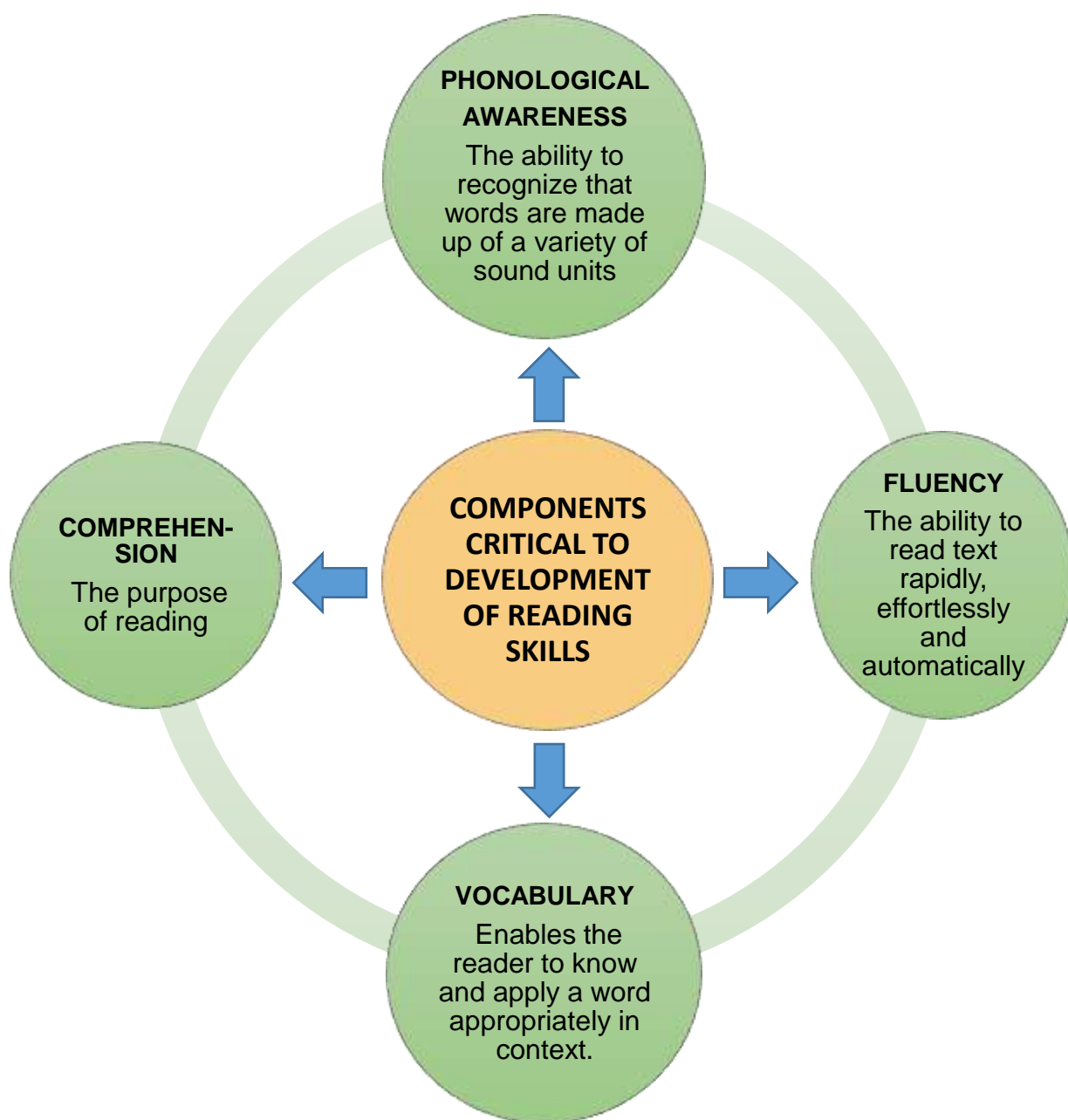


Figure 3-3: Components that are critical for the development of reading skills

a. Phonological awareness, phonics and phonemic awareness

Phonological awareness is the ability to recognize that words are made up of a variety of sound units. The term encompasses a number of sound-related skills necessary for a person to develop as a reader, for example knowledge of phonics, phonemic awareness, syllabification,

rhyiming, blending etc. Proficient readers and spellers are able to differentiate between the different sound units (also known as phonemes) that make up or represent words (Van Staden, 2016:35).

Nel and Nel (2016:97) describe phonological awareness as follows: it entails the awareness that spoken words are the combination of sounds as well as an understanding of the different ways in which sounds function in words; phonemic awareness is a sub-skill of phonological awareness and has an auditory function that enables a person to differentiate between phonemes (sounds) in words. In contrast, phonics is the ability to relate individual sounds in spoken words with unique letters in the alphabet. Considering the above, one can conclude that the broader term, namely phonological awareness encompasses a child's ability to recognize the many ways in which sounds function in words, and that phonemic awareness (as a sub-skill of phonological awareness) refers to a child's understanding of the most minute sound units in words (Van Staden, 2016). What is more, it plays a very important role in reading and spelling (Nel & Nel, 2016:97). Phonemic awareness entails the ability to hear, identify and manipulate the different sounds into spoken words. A reader with strong phonemic awareness will demonstrate the ability to hear rhyme and alliteration (the repetition of the same consonant's sound at the beginning of several different words used in a sentence or paragraph), find the different sound in a set of words (e.g. cat, car, bag) and blend and segment phonemes. The association between the sound and the printed symbol must be translated into sounds, which must be blended to form words (Lerner, 2006:337). Phonemic awareness is a pre-requisite for reading and spelling (Nel & Nel, 2016:97).

From the above, one can deduce that both phonological and phonemic awareness focus on speech without print, whilst phonics is the recognition, analysis and synthesis of phonemes in written words (Lerner, 2006:334; Lenyai, 2011:90; Nel & Nel, 2016:95). As phonics brings speech sounds and print together, a child's knowledge of the alphabetic principle and how letters are combined to represent the sounds of our speech is an important pre-requisite for word recognition (Van Staden, 2017) as it enables a learner to decode printed language and translate print into sounds (Lerner, 2006:378).

When one reflects on the possible value of including activities that enhance both phonological awareness and phonics to improve ESL reading, it becomes clear that both aspects are considered to be important components that should be included in reading instruction. Moreover, phonological awareness in general and phonemic awareness in particular depend on language-rich environments. Thus it is imperative that the ESL teacher create numerous opportunities especially for ESL learners from rural and socio-economically challenged environments, who in most cases are less likely to be exposed to the kinds of language play

that nurture the development of these very important foundational skills of reading development (Van Staden, 2017). Research has demonstrated repeatedly that phonological awareness is one of the best predictors of later reading outcomes, both amongst L1 and L2 learners (Yeung, Siegel & Chan, 2013). This is further supported by the research of Jongejan, Verhoeven and Siegel (2007:835) who concur that that the main processes underlying L1 children's basic reading ability in Grades 1 and 2 are phonological awareness and lexical access and that they are of equal importance for L1 and ESL learners. As phonological awareness is an auditory skill, it may be difficult for second language learners if the second language includes sounds that do not occur in their first language. The learners will need to be taught to hear and say the relevant sounds before they can read in the second language (Jordaan, 2015:3).

b. Fluency

Fluency is the ability to read text rapidly, effortlessly and automatically. Fluent reading happens when phrasing and pronunciation are correct and no omissions, repetitions, insertions, word guessing, lip movement, finger pointing and/or head movements are present. Fluency forms the bridge between word recognition and reading comprehension (Lerner, 2006:382). Automation of basic skills, like word recognition, is necessary for fluency. A reading intervention study by Van Staden (2016:21), used the "simple view of reading" as the basis for the intervention strategies. It included effective language exposure, building a rich vocabulary, improving reading fluency and word recognition abilities, and creating socio-linguistic opportunities to develop vocabulary and enhance reading comprehension. ESL learners in Lesotho experiencing significant delays in L2 reading abilities and comprehension were included in the study. Results from this quantitative study demonstrate that Grade 4 ESL learners in the experimental group ($N = 36$) significantly outperformed those in the control group ($N = 36$) with regard to sight word fluency, word recognition, syntactic awareness, vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. In line with previous research regarding the influence of rapid and efficient word recognition skills on fluency of reading and ultimately on reading comprehension, Van Staden and her team included activities in the intervention programme aimed at addressing both higher- and lower-order reading skills. They included multi-sensory coding activities to enhance word decoding and recognition, as well as fluency exercises to support ESL learners to read at an automatic response level (Van Staden, 2016:31). Results from the investigation have shown moderate correlations between reading fluency, word recognition, and reading comprehension therefore supporting previous research on the inter-relatedness of sight-word automaticity, reading fluency, and reading comprehension (Van Staden, 2016:31).

c. Vocabulary

Vocabulary knowledge enables the reader to know and apply a word appropriately in context and forms the key to reading (Joubert et al., 2016:266). According to Wissing and Phetwe (2016:97), vocabulary is regarded as a core component of general language proficiency. Vocabulary is therefore also closely related to reading comprehension. Nel, Nel and Hugo (2016:11) distinguish between listening, spoken, reading and written vocabulary. Listening vocabulary is acquired first, followed by spoken vocabulary. Reading and writing vocabulary need to develop simultaneously. For a person to be able to express him- or herself, as well as to read and write proficiently, it is necessary to possess adequate vocabulary in the language. Also, knowing a word implies the ability to use the specific word in effectively in relevant contexts (Wissing & Phetwe, 2016:97). A learner's vocabulary has a significant effect on his or her oral expression as well as reading achievement. Because vocabulary is also strongly related to comprehension (Lerner, 2006:386), it can cause problems for the young ESL learner whose exposure to English during pre-school was limited. When starting formal school with English as LOLT, such learners usually have a very small English vocabulary. Storybook reading is indicated by Nel and Nel (2016:112) as being effective for building vocabulary. By providing a context within which words can be explained, it enables learners to learn new vocabulary.

d. Comprehension

Comprehension is the purpose of reading. It accommodates the interaction between the reader and the text. Dednam (2005:127) and Choate (2004:92) as cited by Nel and Nel (2016:112-113) divided reading comprehension into the following categories:

- literal meaning and comprehension: taking words in their usual or most basic sense;
- inference: the identification of information not explicitly stated in the text;
- evaluation: establishing the correctness, usefulness, application, and value of information in the text; and
- appreciation: experiencing emotional responses.

It is noteworthy that the participating ESL learners were identified by their teachers as having literacy backlogs, and significant that reading comprehension is considered to be one of the main contributing factors to their poor academic development. It is widely accepted that, although decoding is an essential reading skill, it is not sufficient on its own. It is only with comprehension that reading becomes a significant activity and attributes meaning to the

context (Pretorius & Machet, 2004:47). The role of comprehension in reading is aptly described by Pretorius (2002:92) as follows:

Through decoding, we 'learn to read' while comprehension enables us to 'read to learn'.

Ntuli and Pretorius (2005:92) further draw attention to the importance of comprehension, with their explanation of the value of context in the two kinds of language proficiency according to Cummins's Linguistic Interdependence Theory. As already discussed (see p 5 and Article 1 of this study), BICS refer to oral skills and CALP refers to the written modes of language. Because BICS are more context-embedded, meaning and comprehension can be derived from more than only the words. Body language, the tone of the voice, gestures as well as facial expressions can add a wealth of comprehension to the context of the communication. CALP proficiency involves the use of more context-reduced language: the written language and the more formal circumstances for example in a classroom. Although no language use can be context-free, the 'locus of meaning' must be largely derived from the text (Ntuli & Pretorius, 2005:92). To withdraw the correct and optimal meaning from the text, the comprehension skills of the reader must thus be well developed. To enable the ESL learners in this regard, the researcher deemed it appropriate to make use of story reading in the intervention programme. Lerner (2006:390) recommends the following strategies to be implemented to promote reading comprehension:

- answering questions: different kinds of questions are posed by the teacher; after answering them, the learners receive immediate feedback;
- generating questions: the learners ask themselves questions about various aspects of the story;
- identifying the structure of the story: teaches the learners how to use the structure of the story to recall story content in order to answer questions about what they have read; and
- making summaries: learners are learning to integrate ideas and to derive information from the text.

In the process of developing the intervention programme, the effect of emergent literacy and the forms as well as the components of the language system as formerly discussed will be taken into account.

In line with the prior discussion, it is clear that the acquisition of literacy is a complex and integrated process. It starts during the first years when exposure to language-nurturing environments provides the basis for reading and writing skills (Joubert et al., 2016:9). This

exposure leads to the establishment of phonemic awareness and word recognition, contributing to fluent reading. Vocabulary and comprehension skills determine the crucial transition of learning to read, to reading to learn. Language development usually occurs in age-corresponding stages. The language system consists of four forms: listening, speaking, reading and writing (Lerner, 2006:326), integrated into the language core. Expressive and receptive skills form part of the language scenario. Expressive skills include speaking and writing which enables the individual to communicate with others. Listening and reading are receptive skills, responsible for the feeding of information into the central nervous system (Joubert et al., 2016; Lerner, 2006:328; Nel & Nel, 2016:95). Literacy skills are further categorized as constrained and unconstrained skills (Pretorius, 2015:55; Snow & Matthews 2016:57). Constrained skills, for example, letter-sound relationships, are fixed and limited and are usually easily obtained by young children. However, their unconstrained skills, consisting of large domains of skills and knowledge which can only be obtained through experience, are insufficient – as confirmed by the literacy backlogs they experience. Unconstrained skills include a continuous expansion of vocabulary which, in combination with sufficient background and new information, are the building blocks for comprehension (Snow & Matthews, 2016:57). In order to address the literacy problems, the ESL learners experience, it is imperative to include the expansion of the constrained and unconstrained language skills in the intervention programme.

3.6.1.4 Story reading as part of the intervention

A contributing factor to the learners' literacy difficulties is often their lack of motivation to read and to learn. As English is their LOLT, but not their mother tongue, they have academic backlogs which can directly be contributed to their limited competence of the LOLT. As the learners participating in this study are already in grade four, the constant battle to succeed academically often leads to a low self-concept concerning their academic abilities. It is a known fact that learners struggling with literacy and experiencing academic difficulties tend to avoid extra-scholastic exposure, especially to reading. They become demotivated and avoid reading opportunities, with a negative effect on their already basic literacy skills (Boakye & Southey, 2008:8). This situation is also known as the Matthew effect (Pretorius, 2002:96, Van Staden, 2016: 22-23). It displays a negative cycle. For the learner with reading difficulties, reading is a difficult and frustrating process which they try to avoid. Without essential practice in reading, the necessary skills are not strengthened, leading to more reading problems. The good reader wants to read more and more and therefore benefits from the exercise. Pretorius (2002:96) argues that the parents and teachers of learners with reading barriers tend to have lower expectations of the learners. It adds to the negative cycle of lowered motivation, lowered

expectations, lowered levels of practice, exacerbating the reading problem. The participating learners in this study came from indigenous cultures which have a largely oral tradition and which do not view reading and books as a high priority (Pretorius, 2002:93). Therefore, the availability of books and other printed matter in their households cannot be taken for granted. The socio-economic difficulties experienced by many households also prevent the availability of printed matter, as it is seen as a luxury and not an essential commodity. Buckingham, Beaman, and Wheldall (2013: 431) confirm the known fact that the lack of exposure to the printed word, or limited experience of printed material during the pre-school years will have a negative impact on the literacy skills of the learner.

The socio-cultural theory, one of the principles in which this research is grounded, advocates exposure to language-rich activities, inter alia exposing the children to books by reading aloud, providing classroom libraries and promoting authentic reading experiences (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 1997:54). According to this theory, socio-cultural factors give meaning and value to the act of reading and to the context in which the reading occurs (Pretorius, 2002:170). Books with stories and pictures form an important part of the development of every child. Dickenson et al. (2012:6) summarize the ways in which reading books influences language learning: because books written for kids consist of relatively short sentences which are rich in diverse vocabulary, they provide the children with the opportunity to hear new vocabulary embedded in a rich grammatical context. Book reading also promotes joint attention and interest. The page of a book offers a focal point and remains more or less stationary, unlike moving toys. It is thus useful to hold the attention and concentration of more than one learner at a time. When using the story for communication about the course of the story, the activity becomes language-based, includes more vocabulary as well as different sentence structures. All in all, the experience of listening to stories may not only be a joyful experience for the learner but it will also help improve his or her vocabulary and comprehension skills.

By using story reading as part of the intervention, the researcher used a psycholinguistic top-down approach to acquiring literacy. The top-down approach centres on deriving meaning from the text. According to the psycholinguistic view, reading is a process that goes from the whole to the parts (Joubert et al., 2016:104) and that all the learner's skills are implemented simultaneously to make sense of the written text. Evidence from a study by Elley (1989:184) attests to the fact that children can learn new vocabulary incidentally by having storybooks read to them. He further finds that children who start out with a smaller vocabulary gain at least as much permanent vocabulary from the readings as the rest of the children in the group. The study by Elley (1989:185) also indicates that additional explanation of some of the words, as

they are read, can more than double the vocabulary gains of the learners. In a study by Massaro (2017:64-66) to determine what a child gains from reading aloud that is not present in other engagements with the language, he concludes that the vocabulary in books differs dramatically from that in spoken language. Where spoken language is usually spontaneous, written language is more deliberate and exposed to modification in various forms, before the product is finalized. Massaro (2017:64) finds that children listening to a storybook being read are three times more likely to encounter a new word that is not among the most frequent words in his or her language.

Research by Pretorius and Machet (2004:143) provides further evidence that the reading comprehension of learners develops significantly through exposure to storybook reading by an adult. As it became clear during the semi-structured interviews with the participating teachers in this research, the learners' experience serious problems with comprehension (cf. Article 2, p 22). For many of the ESL learners the LOLT is their second or even third language. They are not able to read with comprehension in the LOLT. Some of them even sometimes do not understand what the teacher is saying.

In their research Pretorius and Machet (2004:143) examine the effects of an out-of-school literacy enrichment programme on the literacy skills of Grades 1 and 4 learners at five disadvantaged schools in rural KwaZulu-Natal. Part of the enrichment programme was that the learners were expected to take a storybook home each week; the younger children had the story read to them by a family member, while the older children were expected to read the book themselves to a caregiver or older sibling. The learners' literacy performance was compared with those of learners who were not on the programme. Results of the data indicate that the learners on the enrichment programme tended to have stronger literacy skills than the learners who were not in the programme. Their experiences of reading also improved their motivation and their will to start reading on their own (Pretorius & Machet, 2004:142). In a longitudinal study conducted by Elley, Cutting, Mangubhai and Hugo (1996) in various parts of the world, including Fiji, Sri-Lanka and South Africa, it was confirmed that the daily exposure to, and interaction with high-interest storybooks with high-quality illustrations, have a strong impact on the overall improvement of the learner's language skills, including vocabulary and comprehension. During the semi-structured interviews with the participating teachers in this PhD study, some of the teachers recommend that a print-rich environment is essential in nurturing in the learners a love for reading and books and that it must be a conscious effort on the part of the teacher as well as the parents (Article 2, p 23).

Learner (2006:392) distinguishes between the comprehension of narrative materials (stories) and informational materials (subject matter materials). According to this research,

comprehension develops firstly through narrative texts. In narrative texts the learner also learns to identify:

- important characters;
- setting, time and place;
- the sequence of major events; and
- the problems that characters have to solve and how they do so.

Soderman, Clevenger, and Kent (2013:37) aver that the power of stories is a resource for the improvement of the literacy skills of ESL learners. Through stories the learners are not only exposed to different aspects of language, but they also learn about story elements. Extra effects contributed by the teacher, like exaggerated facial expressions, vocal intonation as well as colourful illustrations, intensify the language experience for the learner. Ntuli and Pretorius (2005:96) postulate that listening to story reading, not only boosts the literacy skills of the learners but it also increases their confidence and ability to narrate stories. They also gain skills and confidence to engage in discourses on topics forthcoming from the stories (2005:105). The value of story reading as an intervention to improve the literacy skills of ESL learners is further validated by research by Wightman and Roney (2013:45) revealing the significant effect that the teacher's reading aloud or telling stories has on the students' comprehension of narrative text. In a study to determine the impact of an adult's storytelling and reading on fifth-grade students' ($N=126$) comprehension of narrative texts, a selection of twenty-eight stories was either told or read to the learners by an adult, or the learners were required to read the stories themselves, over a period of seven weeks. After each reading (aloud or silent), or telling of a story, each learner was asked explicit questions requiring them to recall factual information from the text as well as implicit questions requiring them to make inferences from clues in the passage. Both the explicit as well as the implicit questions' responses to the questions were combined to formulate a total comprehension score. Following statistical analysis, the study reveals that both the reading and telling of stories by an adult to learners have a significant better effect on the learners' comprehension of narrative text than having them read the stories silently (Wightman & Roney, 2013:45). In further support of the possible value that storybook reading may have for ESL learners, Soderman et al. (2005:107) stress that, in addition to improving learners' literacy skills, storybook reading also helps to improve the confidence and self-esteem of the learners. In the light of the theme of this study regarding the influence of the literacy skills of the learner on his or her self-concept, the researcher argues that story reading will be a suitable as well as preferred choice for the intervention.

In line with the above, it is clear that the development of literacy is a complicated process which is influenced by a large variety of factors stemming from the various systems wherein the individual functions (see Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model, Article 1). Emphasized by the literature study in Article 1 of this thesis, combined with the challenges ESL learners experience according to their teachers (Article 2), the literacy problems that ESL learners experience can be summed up as being twofold: the language of learning and teaching (LOLT) which is not their mother tongue, and a shaky language grounding in the mother tongue. In the next part, the design and application of an intervention to address the literacy problems of ESL learners will be discussed.

3.7 The design and application of an intervention to improve the literacy efficacy of ESL learners in Grade 4

The advantage of the first-language (L1) education, in particular during the initial formal years, is highlighted by research (Cummins, 1979:223; Theron & Nel, 2005:222; Van Staden, 2011:10). Although not the ideal, successful education can occur in a language other than the mother tongue; however, this situation may result in barriers to learning.

Cummins (1979:233) proposes that well developed literacy skills in the mother tongue form a common underlying proficiency (CUP) which provides the basis for the development of both L1 and L2. Cummins (1979:224-225) also stresses the importance of additive bilingualism as an important requisite in fully mastering an L2 (1979:224-225). Many South African ESL learners are exposed to subtractive bilingualism when they are immersed in English as their LOLT, at the expense of their mother tongue (Nel & Nel, 2016:129), thus contributing to the literacy problems many ESL learners experience. An intervention to address the literacy problems of ESL learners will be developed.

The intervention will be approached from the sociocultural perspective of Vygotsky, according to whom all human activities must be understood in the context of a culture wherein the individual functions. The tools of the culture, especially the tool of language, play a key role in the development of the individual. Hugo (2016:15) describes second language learning from a socio-cultural view, as a process of construction between experts who know the second language (the teachers) and novices (the learners) who are learning the second language. The teacher has to provide scaffolding to the learners to help them acquire a new second language. It involves a social process with lots of interaction between the teacher and the learners. The individual's mental structures and processes can be traced to his or her interactions with others (Woolfolk, 2014:65). Vygotsky claims that the development of appropriate language competencies, especially of academic language competency are a prerequisite for successful

learning (Ntuli & Pretorius, 2005:106). From a socio-cultural viewpoint, book reading with young children is seen as a social interaction in which the adult and the child construct the text together through a combination of reading and discussion of the story (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council. 1997:55).

Cummins (2011:144) emphasizes the need for ESL learners to be given ample opportunity to read, to improve their vocabulary and their reading comprehension. The planning of the intervention is also done with the motive of attempting to spark a positive attitude towards reading. The well-known words of Doctor Seuss in "I Can Read with My Eyes Shut" are used by various sources (Dickinson, Griffith, Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2012:1) as a description of the rich effect of reading on the human being:

The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more you learn, the more places you'll go.

By making the reading of stories part of the intervention, the researcher aims to encourage the learners to see reading as a pleasurable activity and motivate them to explore the wonderful world of the written word, thus building on the social practice or literacy development. Learning and thinking develop from social processes. Participation in an activity like story reading consists of far more than just reading. Through the reading, psycholinguistic processes may be activated which may lead to the stimulation, development and growth of the literacy skills of the participating learners (Woolfolk, 2014:55).

Storybook reading is advocated by various researchers as an effective method to support the development of vocabulary and reading comprehension (Cummins, 2011:145; Dickinson et al. 2012:6; Nel & Nel, 2016:205; Pretorius, 2002:98). Dickinson et al. (2012:6) maintains that the positive effect of storybook reading is good for the expansion of the learner's vocabulary because they hear new words embedded in a variation of grammatical sentences; storybooks are created with the intention of holding the attention of the young reader. The plot of the story, the illustrations, the tone of the voice, and facial expressions usually catch the attention of the learner; lastly, reading helps the learner to learn the language, not only from the story but also from their responsive interaction with the story and the meaning of words. Pretorius and Machet (2004:143) confirm the value of storybook reading by adding that it gives the learners access to world knowledge, as well as to vocabulary and syntactic structures which are not often encountered in their everyday functioning. There is an abundance of nice and colourful storybooks on the market but the researcher wanted stories that deal with different aspects of the indigenous groups' cultures. Stories and books in this category were few and hard to find. Suitable stories were eventually found on the Internet via groups like Nal'ibali. It is a national

reading-for-enjoyment campaign to spark children's potential through storytelling and reading. Nal'ibali is isiXhosa for 'here's the story'.

With reference to the formulated goal, this study developed and implemented a literacy intervention programme by utilising interactive storybook reading to develop ESL learners' reading fluency, word reading, vocabulary, reading comprehension and spelling amongst Grade 4 ESL learners. To achieve this goal, the measuring instruments discussed later (in par. 3.8.4) were administered as pre- and post-test measures. Story reading as part of the intervention was chosen in compliance with research emphasizing the value of story reading in promoting the literacy skills of learners (Cummins, 2011:145; Dickenson et al., 2012:6; Elley, 1989:184–185; Nel & Nel, 2016:205; Pretorius, 2002:98). The researcher's goal also includes unlocking the joy the written word brings to the reader. The reader dramatized the stories and accompanied them by suitable sound effects while the unknown vocabulary was explained. A study by Mira and Schwanenflugel (2013:190) attests to the fact that expressiveness in reading maximizes the reading comprehension of the learner.

Sanacore (2012:188-190) urges teachers and adults working with children never to underestimate the effect of a supportive and caring attitude in the process for learners to become literate. The involvement of the teacher or grownup in the story – through the use of body language, the use of the voice for mimicry and the teacher's enthusiasm for the reading process – contributes to learners' developing a positive approach towards reading. The researcher experienced the involvement and enthusiasm of the learners first hand during the intervention. For the duration of the six-month intervention period, the researcher met the learners once a week for a 50-minute session. Each time a new story was read. Each session also included the completion of an enjoyable activity by each individual learner after the reading of the story. The activities were connected to the theme of the story read during the session. Although the activities were meant to expand the fun element of the story reading, they also aim to improve cognitive linguistic skills associated with reading development. The teacher involved the learners in the story reading by asking them questions, eliciting their comments and allowing them to predict what would happen in the story. The researcher put effort into the interpretation of the story through the use of her voice, body language and facial expressions. The participating learners were always very enthusiastic to start with the session. Feedback received from their teachers was that the sessions were a highlight of the learners' week.

With reference to socio-cultural learning theories and the social practice of literacy development, the first aim of the literacy intervention programme was to expand ESL learners' vocabulary development and support their reading comprehension in a joyful manner via storybook reading and dramatization. Secondly, from a psycholinguistic viewpoint, the

researcher also included additional activities to support the development of cognitive-linguistic skills such as phonological awareness, phonemic/grapheme mapping, word decoding, word reading, reading fluency, morphology and activities to support the structural analysis of words.

The development of the vocabulary and comprehension skills of the learners in the experimental group was addressed in a more structured way. A guided reading approach was followed. Each learner received his or her own copy of the story. The paragraphs of the stories were numbered to make reference easier. The researcher started by reading the title of the story and showing the pictures to the group. From the title and the picture, the learners were led to make assumptions concerning the story. Usually, a brief discussion followed. The discussion was succeeded by the reading of the story, with the researcher in the role of the reader, with the necessary dramatization, body language, and facial expressions. The learners were encouraged to follow the text on their own copies as it assists them with the strengthening of visual and auditory processing skills.

To illustrate the process followed during the different sessions an example of one of the stories, "Peace among the Animals" (Steward, 2004:47-50), is included, followed by a diagrammatic presentation of the structure of the intervention programme.

PEACE AMONG THE ANIMALS

1. *The sun rose in a clear sky and **shed** its morning light on the peaks of the mountains, highlighting their rocky ridges. As the sun rose higher, its brightness crept lower until it illuminated fields of wheat that flourished at the base of the hills that form the mountainous kingdom of Lesotho.*
2. *It was the end of the **harvest** season and Hen, one of the first awake that morning, **surveyed** the scene from her position on top of one of the wheat sheaves.*
3. *Suddenly she heard a yapping sound in the distance near the foothill that **captured** her attention and interest. When she saw the sunlight dance on the black-and-white back of the figure that lumbered towards her, Hen recognized him as Black-backed Jackal and she was immediately on her guard.*
4. *As Jackal approached her throne of wheat, he threw her a greeting, "Good morning, Hen."*
5. *"The same to you, Jackal," she replied.*
6. *As they exchanged greetings, Jackal examined the young Hen and his mouth salivated at the thought of her succulent young body. He had been out **scavenging** and it had been a lean night.*
7. *But Hen was out of his grasp in her elevated position and cunning, sly Jackal began to devise a way of getting her back onto the ground where the playing field was level.*
8. *Looking up at her with his short, sharp tan snout and pointy ears like those of a fox, Jackal said persuasively, "Hen, do you know that peace has been declared in the animal kingdom. Imagine that!"*
9. *"There is peace among the animals?" said Hen surprised. Keeping her eyes fixed on both Jackal below and on the surrounding areas, she questioned his statement.*
10. *"You say that no animal may kill another animal?"*
11. *"Yes," said Jackal, suddenly side-tracked by the sight of a rat that **scuttled** under a nearby sheaf.*
12. *"The chiefs met and made this declaration."*
13. *"I see," said Hen. But she knew of Jackal's cunning ways and so she doubted him and his word.*
14. *Strutting up and down the pile of wheat, Hen repeated herself, "Peace has been declared in the animal kingdom," as if **repetition** of the words would convince her of the fact.*
15. *Growing impatient and increasingly more **famished**, Jackal said to Hen, "Why don't you come down from the top and we can discuss the matter of peace further. I am straining my neck".*
16. *Hen looked down at Jackal with disbelieving eyes.*
17. *"Perhaps we can even enjoy a little snuff together," he suggested, trying to entice Hen down.*
18. *But Hen was full of doubt and was very suspicious of Jackal's conniving ways. She strutted anxiously on top of the wheat, pondering what Jackal had told her. Every now and then she scanned the horizon, watching for impending danger.*
19. *"Hen, you seem **distracted**," observed Jackal. "What is of such interest to you up there? Why you don't come down?"*
20. *"Why should you be worried, Jackal? There is a peace pact now among all the animals so no lives are in danger anymore."*
21. *"That is true," said Jackal, feigning **interest** in a passing beetle.*
22. *"Well, I'm sure it isn't of any interest to you to know that I see a group of dogs approaching," said Hen nonchalantly.*
23. *"Dogs?"*
24. *Jackal was almost **immobilized** by fear. But then the thought of the dogs chasing him, caused him to start moving in the opposite direction.*
25. *"I must take my leave of you, Hen," he said.*
26. *"But why are you departing?" Asked Hen surprised. What about the peace pact among all animals?"*
27. *As Hen cackled to herself, Jackal replied in haste, "Oh! I think the dogs must have missed the meeting."*
28. *Sly Jackal's plan had backfired on him. When Hen next looked, Black-backed Jackal was far down the dusty track. For once she had not been **deceived** by cunning Jackal. She had ensnared him with her own tall story.*

Figure 3-4: "Peace among the Animals" (Steward, 2004:47-50)

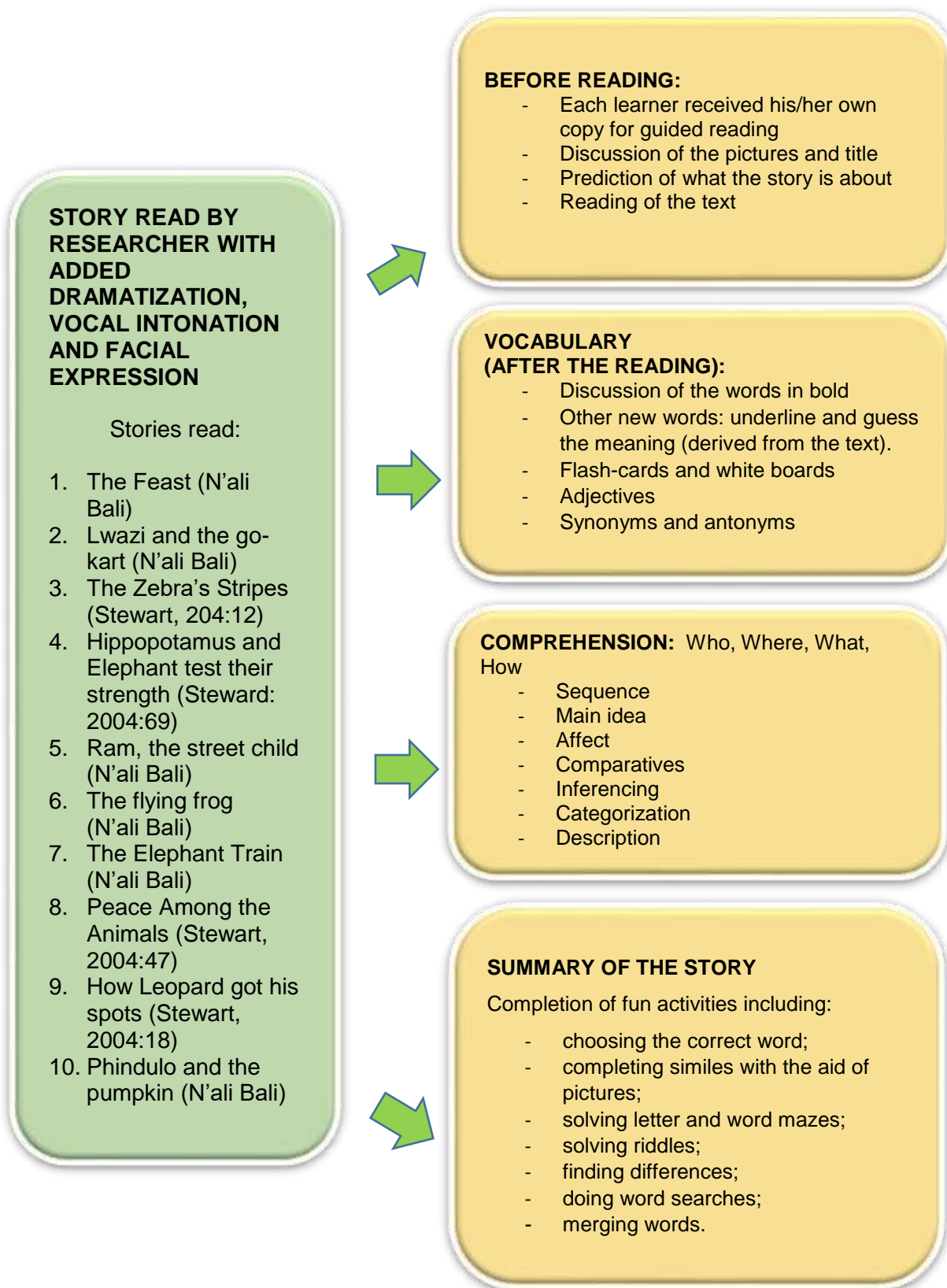


Figure 3-5: Diagrammatic presentation of the structure of the intervention programme

3.7.1 Vocabulary

To develop the vocabulary of the learners, care was taken to choose stories with content and context which the learners can relate to (Bouwer & Dednam, 2016:182). After a story had been read, new vocabulary was discussed. Learners were assisted to derive the meaning of new vocabulary from the context. New words were underlined. Activities to help the learners master new vocabulary were completed. Care was always taken to ensure that the learning of new vocabulary was embedded in a context with which the learners can associate (Nel & Nel, 2016:204). Figure 3.6 depicts a diagrammatic presentation of strategies that were utilised to improve ESL learners' vocabulary:

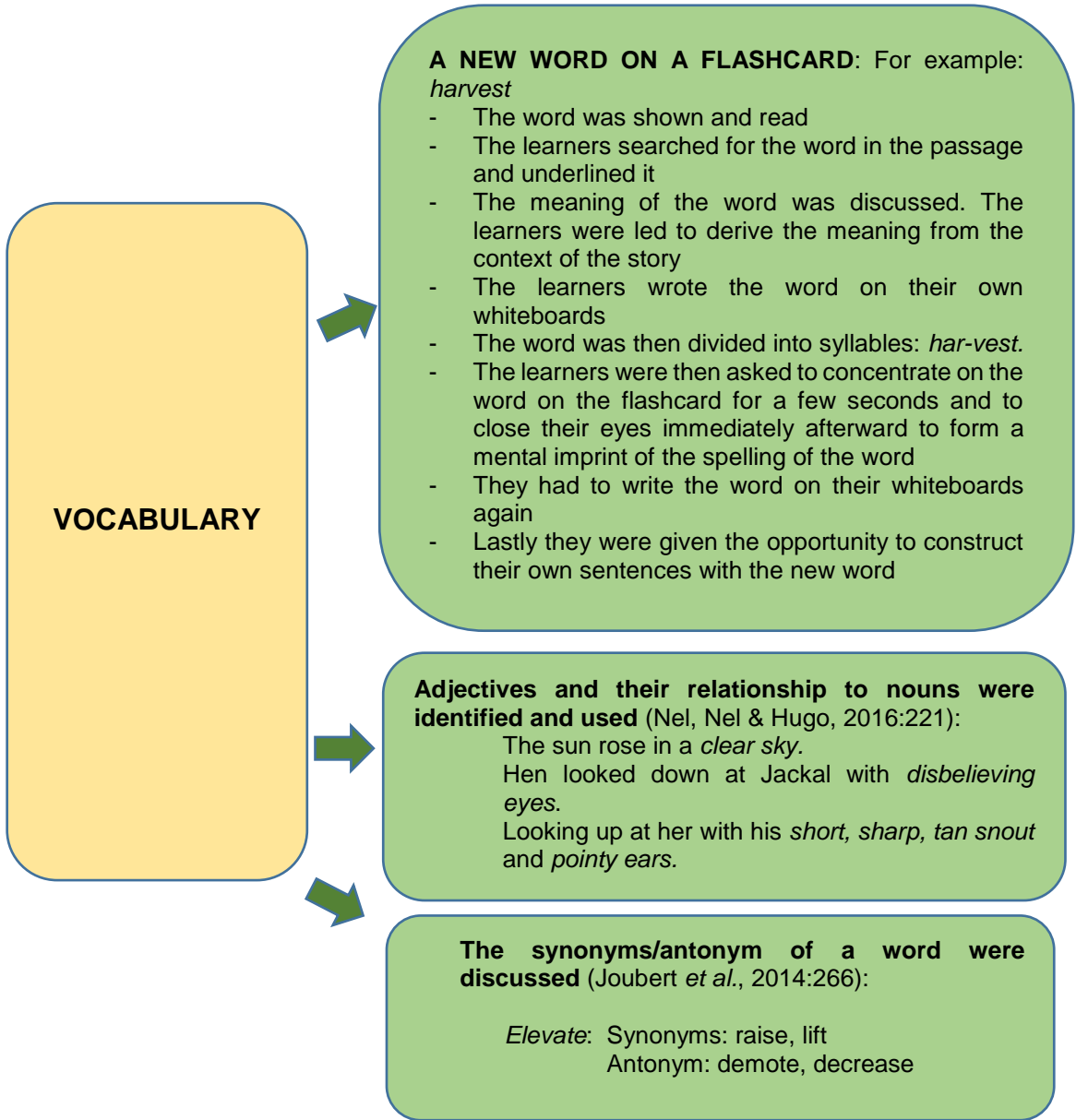


Figure 3-6: Activities included in the expansion of the English vocabulary of the ESL learners

McKenna, as cited by Lerner (2006:387), stresses the importance of the fact that the acquisition of new vocabulary is a gradual process. To have an adequate grasp of the meaning of a word, up to twenty times of context-embedded exposures to the word are required. Care was taken to repeat the new vocabulary learned in a session, in the follow-up activities of the next sessions.

3.7.2 Comprehension

The comprehension skills of the learners were addressed according to the factors suggested by Lerner (2006:392). They are regarded as being essential for the successful reading and comprehension of narrative material (p 27). The learners must be able to identify important characters; the setting, the time and place; the major events in sequence and the problems that the characters have to solve and how they do it. This process is summarized in the four words: Who? Where? What? and How? Comprehension strategies during different stages of the reading process of a story were used to guide the approach (Bouwer & Dednam, 2016:176; Lerner, 2006:391):

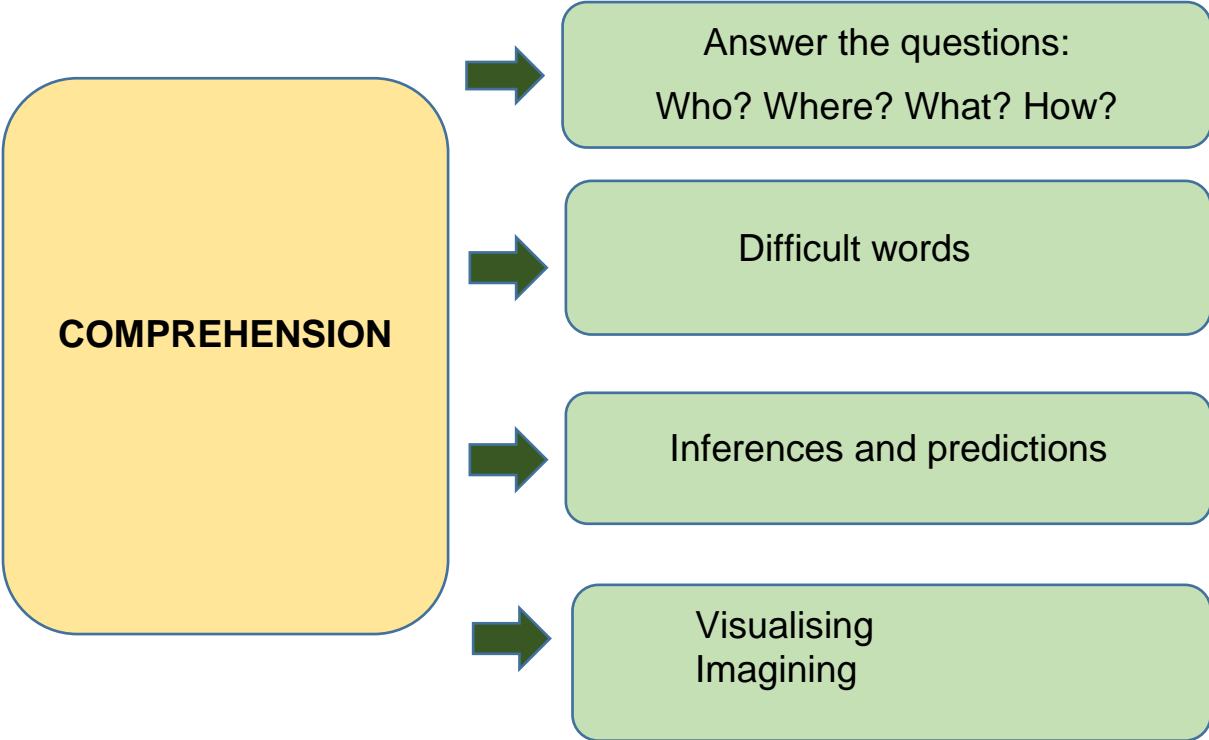


Figure 3-7: Strategies followed to improve comprehension during the intervention programme

A preliminary discussion before the reading of the story, involves looking at the picture, reading the title and discussing any information. The learners were encouraged to predict what the story was about. Any recurrence of vocabulary learned in previous sessions in the new story was pointed out. In addition, any possible connection between the context of the story and that of the learners was established. During the reading of the story the learners' attention was drawn to difficult words. They were guided to answer the "who, where, what and how questions", namely:

- Who are the main characters?
- Where are they?
- What are they doing? What is happening? What is the/their problem?
- How do they solve the problem/address the situation?

During the first three sessions, the learners were encouraged to try and monitor their understanding of the story, sentence by sentence. The reading of the story happened at a slow pace, with frequent stops to control whether they were keeping track of the development of the story (Bouwer & Dednam, 2016:182). The learners were guided to make inferences from the text and to predict what would happen next. They were encouraged to elaborate on certain aspects of the plot e.g. "What will you do if...?" They were encouraged to visualize and imagine certain elements of the content of the story (Bouwer & Dednam, 2016:176). Apart from stimulating the development of their imagination, this encouraged them to think about and discuss certain concepts and ideas. It also added to their metacognitive abilities concerning the regulation of their own processing of the text, checking whether they understood what they were reading and enabled them to correct things that they misread (Bornman & Rose, 2017:186; Bouwer & Dednam, 2016:176).

3.7.3 The use of questions

After the story had been read, a few content-based questions were asked to make sure the learners had understood the content of the story. They were asked to retell or summarize the story. The following questions were applied during the different sessions to build and improve the learners' literacy skills (Moonsamy & Durbach, 2017:240-241):

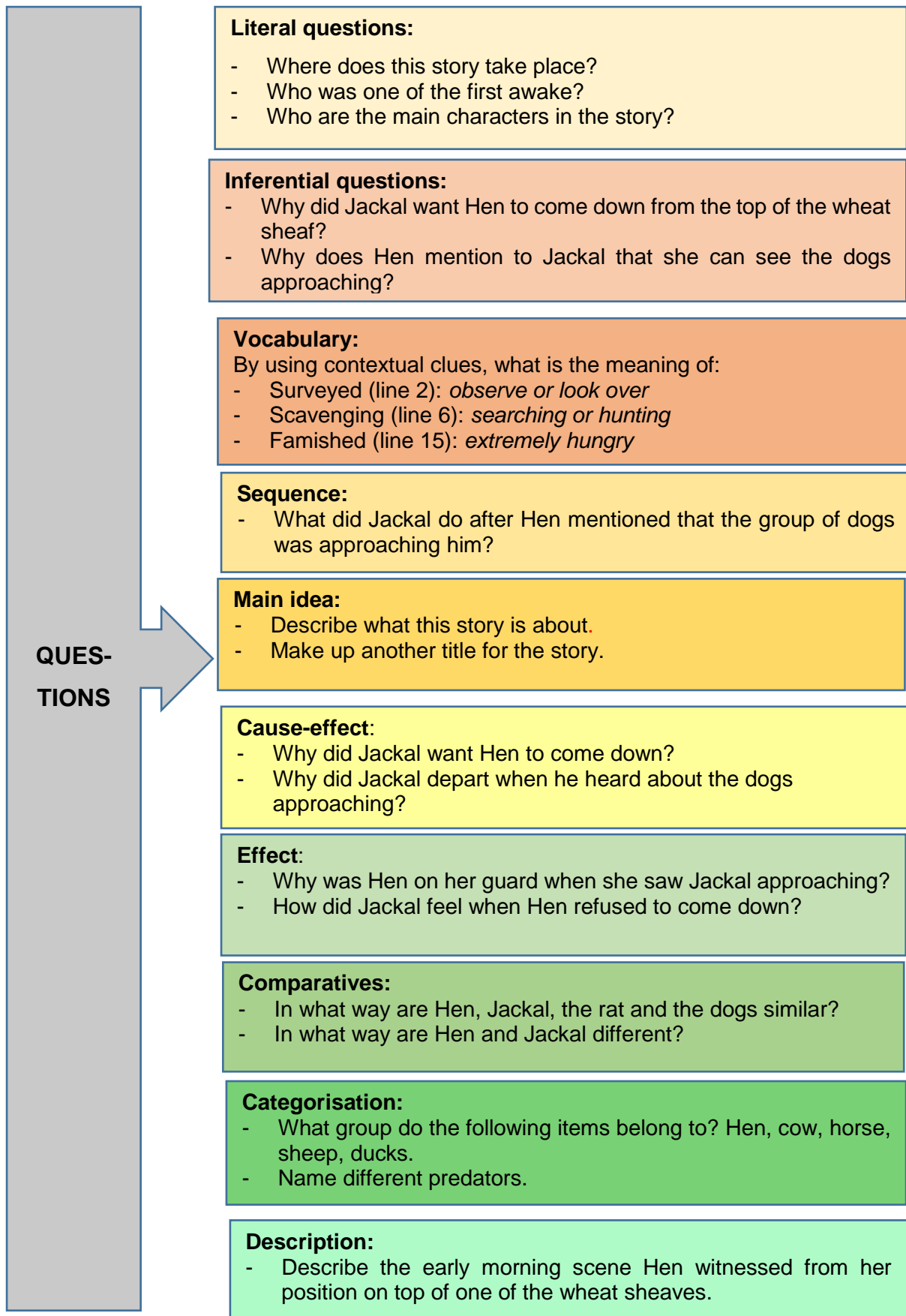


Figure 3-8: A graphic presentation of the different types of questions asked to improve the literacy skills of the ESL learner

In order to reinforce the learners' positive experience of the sessions, as well as to spread the joy to other siblings, each learner in the experimental group received a copy of a book compiled by the researcher, including some of the stories as well as new stories and activities.

3.8 Research design and methodology

This study comprises both a theoretical paper and also reports the results of an empirical investigation. With regard to the theoretical discussions, the researcher gathered relevant information from articles, books, government documents and other sources like the Internet. In executing the empirical research, the researcher utilized quantitative methods in the form of diagnostic and standardized measures. A quantitative research design was chosen because it emphasizes objectivity in measuring and describing phenomena (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:21). A quasi-experimental design was chosen in order to measure the effect of the intervention programme on the literacy abilities of grade 4 ESL learners (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:22). With a quasi-experimental design, there is no random assignment of subjects. This study involved grade 4 ESL learners with backlogs in literacy, from five different schools. The participating learners of three of the five schools were exposed to the intervention, while the learners from the other two schools formed the control group.

For the quantitative data analysis, descriptive and inferential statistics were utilized. These included Mann Whitney *U*-test analyses to investigate whether the participants' progress was statistically significant after the intervention period. All tests and scores were validated by an independent marker.

3.8.1 Sampling design and participants

The researcher used purposive sampling whereby five schools in the Tshwane West Region were invited to participate in the research. The five schools were selected because they were experiencing similar socio-economic challenges and cater for L1 and L2-learners in parallel medium classes. Concerning the socio-economic challenges, the learners came from the middle to the lower income groups. Many parents held positions within the public services and were in the police, nurses in hospitals as well as teachers. One-parent families, without the financial help of the other parent, are a general occurrence. Often other family members like an older, unemployed sibling, granny or aunt also forms part of the family without being able to contribute financially to the living expenses.

With the assistance of the chairpersons of the different site-based support teams (at the respective schools), at least ten (per school) grade 4, intermediate phase learners with literacy backlogs were identified to participate in the project. The ages of the learners ranged between

nine and 11 years. The majority of the sample (52.4%) was ten years old, followed by 45.2% of the sample who were nine years old. The majority of the sample (64.3%) was male, and 35.7% of the sample was female.

These learners were involved in the execution and the administration of standardized and diagnostic instruments to investigate the impact of an intervention programme targeted at improving their literacy. The experimental group participating in the intervention included 42 learners ($N=42$) from three schools. The control group constituted 43 learners ($N = 43$), drawn from the other two schools.

3.8.2 Variables

The variables in this study are the basic literacy skills of grade 4 learners: vocabulary, word reading, speed reading (i.e. fluency), reading comprehension and spelling. To ensure the similarity of both the experimental and the control groups, the learners were selected following the same characteristics:

- they were all grade 4, ESL learners;
- all of them had been identified by their language teachers as having backlogs in their literacy skills and academic progress;
- all of the participating learners attended parallel-medium schools (in South Africa these are schools where two languages, e.g. Afrikaans and English, are offered as the LOLT, in separate classes); and
- the learners came from more or less similar socio-economic backgrounds as described in 3.8.1.

3.8.3 Data collection measures

Written permission was granted from: The Gauteng Department of Education (clearance number: D2015/267), principals, teachers and the parents of the participating schools after they had been informed of the purpose and importance of the study and when it would be conducted. The participants were too young to give informed consent; therefore, written consent was obtained from their parents or guardians (Addendums B, C and D, p 70-83).

Before the intervention period the participating learners were assessed with standardized and diagnostic measuring instruments, as described in the next section. It was done according to the procedures outlined in the manuals of the different instruments. An intervention programme

was presented to the experimental group in 50-minute sessions, once a week, over a period of six months. Afterwards both the experimental as well as the control groups were assessed with the same measuring instruments used at the pre-assessment.

3.8.4 Measuring instruments

Pertaining to the quantitative data-gathering techniques, the following standardized and diagnostic measuring instruments were administered as pre-and post-tests prior to, and after the intervention period:

Progressive Achievement Tests in Reading (PAT-R): comprehension, vocabulary, and spelling:

- Comprehension: Booklet 2 – Year levels 1, 2 and 3 (Addendum E, p 84)
 - The booklets contain passages accompanied by comprehension questions. All items are intended to measure literal and inferential comprehension of the accompanying texts (Stephanou, Anderson & Urbach, 2010:2).
 - The test was administered to groups of four to six learners at a time.
 - The assessment was stopped after every participating learner was satisfied that they had answered all the questions.
- Vocabulary: Booklet 2 – Year levels 4, 5 and 6 (Addendum E, p 84)

The vocabulary booklets contain 36 different items. Each of the items consists of a short sentence in which a focus word is used in context. The learner has to select an appropriate synonym for this word from a set of alternatives in a multiple-choice format (Stephanou et al., 2010:2). Vocabulary was assessed as follows:

- The test was administered to four to six learners at a time.
- After leading the learners through the practice questions to make sure they understood the instructions, they were allowed to start.
- They were given enough time to answer all the questions.

For the experimental group, the test results of both the comprehension and the vocabulary tests were used to determine the learner's ability regarding his or her comprehension and vocabulary. After the intervention, both tests were again administered to monitor improvement

(if any) in both the fields. For the control group, the tests were used to determine their comprehension and vocabulary abilities. The participating learners all received their formal language education in compliance with the outcomes of the CAPS document, including the assistance and, where needed, extra help from their class teachers. For the purpose of this study, the learners in the experimental group were exposed to an intervention programme while the learners in the control group were supported by their language teachers.

UCT reading tests: the tests are standardized for South African samples. They are currently used by the Gauteng district-based support teams (Addendum F, p 101).

- The test was individually administered.
- Each learner completed the same test.
- The test was discontinued after five successive mistakes had been made.
- The correct responses were calculated as raw scores.

UCT reading fluency tests: the tests are standardized for South African samples. They are currently used by the Gauteng district-based support teams (Addendum G, p 103).

- The test was individually administered.
- Each learner completed the same test.
- Each learner has had one minute to read the list of words out loud. Reading errors were marked on the scoring paper.
- The test was discontinued after one minute.
- The correct responses were calculated as raw scores.

UCT test for spelling, reading fluency and word recognition (Addendum H, p 105).

- The test was individually administered.
- Each learner completed the same test.
- Each word was pronounced separately by the researcher and the learner had to write the word next to its number on the answer sheet.
- The test was discontinued after five successive mistakes had been made; the correct responses were calculated as raw scores.

3.9 Results and discussion

An experimental intervention research design with matched pre-test, post-test groups was used in this study. Grade 4 ESL readers in the experimental group were exposed to a structured story-reading programme with fun activities, related to the theme of each story. The reading intervention programme comprised, inter alia, the expansion of the learners' ESL

vocabulary and the improvement of their ESL comprehension skills. The learners in the control group were also pre- and post-tested at the same time as the learners in the experimental group. The learners in the control group received the necessary help and support concerning their language backlogs from their teachers in the classes at school. However, they were not exposed to the story reading intervention.

Descriptive and inferential analyses were conducted using SPSS 22.0 (IBM Corporation, 2013). The means and standard deviations for ESL learners in the experimental and control groups with regard to all measurements included in this study are presented in Table 3.1:

Table 3-1: Results: Pre- and post-test, experimental and control groups

Scores	Skills	Group			
		Experimental (n=42)		Control (n=43)	
		M	(SD)	M	(SD)
Pre-test	Vocabulary	12.54	(3.62)	12.74	(4.02)
	Comprehension	9.61	(2.45)	9.93	(2.87)
	Reading	29.52	(7.40)	29.19	(7.30)
	Speed reading	56.57	(13.58)	56.67	(19.66)
	Spelling	17.33	(6.57)	17.19	(8.10)
Post-test	Vocabulary	17.19	(3.74)	14.60	(6.85)
	Comprehension	13.23	(1.36)	10.76	(1.86)
	Reading	41.80	(14.42)	33.10	(11.72)
	Speed reading	74.71	(18.21)	58.83	(19.34)
	Spelling	23.90	(7.59)	18.79	(7.61)

The results clearly depict that the two groups were very similar prior to the intervention. To determine whether there were any statistically significant differences between the two groups, Mann Whitney *U*-test analyses were conducted. From the results presented in Table 3.1, it is clear that there were no statistically significant differences between the experimental and control groups prior to the intervention with regard to the reading and spelling-outcome variables included in this study. For example: vocabulary ($p = 0.92$; $U = 871$); word reading ($p = 0.51$; $U = 808.5$); speed reading ($p = 0.83$; $U = 857.5$); reading comprehension ($p = 0.69$; $U = 837.5$) and spelling ($p = 0.89$; $U = 866.5$).

When one scrutinises Table 3.1 (p 47), it is clear that the average reading and other scores of both the experimental and control groups were very low (i.e. pre-test scores) prior to the intervention. Learners had significant delays with regard to all the reading and spelling measures that were administered as pre-test measures. After the intervention period of six months, the learners in both groups were re-assessed. It is apparent from the post-test scores in Table 3.1 that the mean scores for ESL learners in the experimental group showed a significant improvement. For example, the average scores for vocabulary improved from 12.54 to 17.19, whilst for word reading they improved from 29.52 to 41.80. For speed reading the average score improved from 56.57 to 74.71 (i.e. the number of words read correctly in one minute).

Further analyses revealed that the experimental group's reading comprehension and spelling performances also significantly improved: for example, the average reading comprehension score improved from 9.61 to 13.23 whilst their spelling scores improved from 17.33 to 23.90. After the intervention period, ESL learners in the control group also revealed a slight improvement in terms of the variables measured, but clearly, these improvements were not as significant as those of the ESL learners in the experimental group.

In order to determine whether the results of this study are statistically significant, Mann-Whitney *U*-test analyses were conducted. These analyses showed that the experimental group significantly outperformed ESL learners in the control group with regard to the following reading and spelling variables: vocabulary ($p = 0.00$; $U = 474.5$); word reading ($p = 0.00$; $U = 530$); speed reading ($p = 0.00$; $U = 475.5$); reading comprehension ($p = 0.00$; $U = 255.5$) and spelling ($p = 0.00$; $U = 579$) (Table 3.1, p 47).

It is evident that the intervention in the form of story reading had a profoundly positive effect on the reading and spelling abilities of the learners in the experimental group. Proven by the results of the pre- and the post-tests of the experimental group, in comparison with the control group, the intervention not only led to a vast enhancement of the vocabulary and comprehension skills of the learners but their reading skills show even more extensive progress. Proper reading skills form the core of literacy and learning. As vocabulary and comprehension are important elements in effective reading (Lerner, 2006:385-388; Nel & Nel, 2016:106-113), an improvement in the vocabulary and comprehension skills must, therefore, have a positive effect on the reading skills of the individual.

3.10 Discussion of results

This empirical investigation aimed to determine the possible value of a literacy intervention programme that used, *inter alia*, storybook reading to support ESL learners' word reading, vocabulary, reading fluency, reading comprehension and spelling. Through the reading of the stories, the learners in the experimental group were exposed to a rich variety of vocabulary which they were not usually exposed to in their daily second language communication. The use of illustrations, voice tone, and facial expressions to illustrate the plot of a story claimed the attention and stimulated the imagination of the learners and thereby contributed to a positive learning atmosphere. The results of the intervention confirmed the opinion of various researchers regarding the positive influence of story reading on the vocabulary and comprehension skills of learners (Cummins, 2011:145; Dickinson et al., 2012:6; Nel & Nel, 2016:205; Pretorius, 2002:98).

To be an effective reader, competence in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension is essential (Bouwer & Dednam, 2016:174–175; Lerner, 2006:385-388; Nel & Nel, 2016: 106–113). The gradual and continuous process of emergent literacy leads to the development of literacy skills. It is, however, not an automatic process. Frequent and integrative facilitation and not only formal but informal interaction with print are essential to becoming fully literate (Bouwer & Dednam, 2016:173). Eventually the quality of every individual's literacy skills is likewise significantly influenced by the holistic experiences the individual has with the printed word. They include the experiences in all the different areas or systems of the functioning of the individual (cf. The Bioecological Systems Theory of Bronfenbrenner, Article 1: p 9). According to this theory, the different systems in an individual's life have an interactive effect on each other. The learners in this study represent a large group of ESL learners from challenging socio-economic backgrounds and different areas of functioning which were not always up to par. They neither study in their mother tongue nor was their mother tongue fully established before formal learning in ESL started. The Linguistic Interdependence Theory of Cummins proposes the need of a well-developed mother tongue as a basis for the successful acquisition of further languages (see p 6-7). Derived from the low pre-test scores of the participating learners, it can be assumed that, without intervention, the lack of sound literacy skills due to the discussed factors, will have life-long negative implications for ESL learners.

An intervention in the form of storybook reading was chosen based on the interpretation of research (see p 29). The intervention aims, *inter alia*, to address the ESL learners' lack of CALP skills which, according to Cummins's Linguistic Interdependence Theory, are essential for academic success when learning in a LOLT other than the mother tongue. The intervention

is also rooted in the socio-cultural perspective of Vygotsky who posits that the cultural tool of language plays an important role in the total development and functioning of the individual (Woolfolk, 2014:65). The twofold function of the intervention included not only the improvement of the literacy skills of the experimental group but also the ignition of a spark of interest in the role of reading as an enjoyable and fulfilling activity by the learners. Story reading is a social activity that usually involves a grownup or capable peer; thus it is in line with the social cultural theory in which this study is grounded. The socio-cultural theory considers interaction with other, more capable individuals, as contributing to the creation of cognitive structures and thinking processes. Literacy development and, in this instance, reading are psycholinguistic processes that involve sub-processes essential for reading. By using storybook reading as an intervention, the combination of Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Theory, the socio-cultural theory and the psycholinguistic theory forms a firm basis for the intervention.

The pre-test results displayed in Figure 3.9 reflect the scores of both the experimental and the control group prior to the intervention. As can be depicted from this table, the pre-test scores of both the experimental and control group learners were very low prior to the intervention.

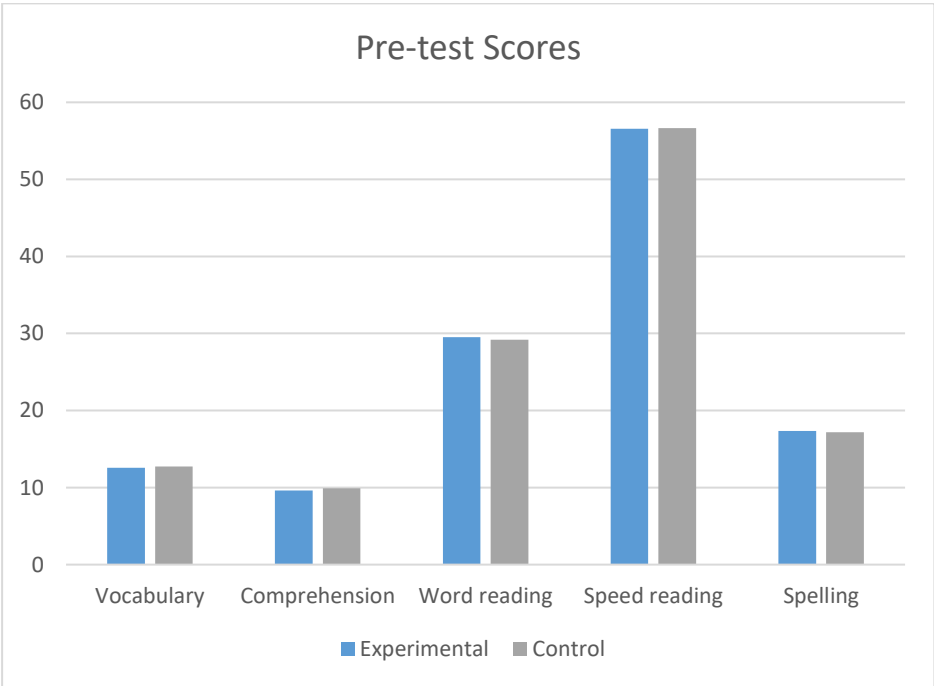


Figure 3-9: Comparison of pre-test scores of the experimental and control groups with regard to all test variables

The re-assessment, after the experimental group had been exposed to the story-reading intervention, showed a significant improvement for the learners in the experimental group. Although the scores of the learners in the control group also showed a slight improvement, it

is not significant when compared to those of the learners in the experimental group who were exposed to the intervention programme.



Figure 3-10: Comparison of post-test scores for the experimental and control groups with regard to all test variables

Research emphasizes the role of vocabulary and comprehension in the process of expressing oneself, whether through speaking, writing or reading (Lerner, 2006:386; Nel & Nel, 2016:204; Ntuli & Pretorius, 2005: 92; Pretorius & Machet, 2004:47). After the experimental group's exposure to the intervention programme, the average scores for vocabulary for the experimental group improved from 12.54 to 17.19. For comprehension, they improved from 9.61 to 13.23. The scores of the control group (who only received classroom instruction and followed the prescribed literacy curriculum of the respective school(s) also showed a slight improvement but compared to the scores of the experimental group, they are not significant.

The significant improvement in the vocabulary scores of the experimental group through story reading as an intervention is supported by the results of various researchers over a period of time. Their research also supports the extension of a learner's vocabulary after exposure to story reading (Collins, 2005:408; Dickenson et al., 2012:6; Maynard, Pullen & Coyne, 2010:209; Ntuli & Pretorius, 2005:96, Snow & Matthews, 2016:69). Research conducted by Elley (1989:174) underscores the importance of oral storybook reading to develop a learner's vocabulary knowledge. The research by Elley included two studies. In the first study, seven classes of seven-year-old learners listened to a story without any explanation by the teacher.

The results of this study indicated a gain of 15% of vocabulary from the one story. In the second study, three classes of eight-year-old learners also showed gains of 15% in vocabulary. This is in comparison with three other classes who listened to the same story – but the story reading was accompanied by a further explanation from the teacher. This group of three classes showed a vocabulary gain of 40%. It is noteworthy from this studies that, even without any explanation by the teacher, the learners' vocabulary improved considerably. The significant improvement in the vocabulary scores of the experimental group in the research of this paper, is further supported by the research of Massaro (2017:64), which upholds the conclusion that, although reading aloud to children does not necessarily contribute to the mechanics of reading, the child is exposed to new words, not frequently found in spoken language, thus adding to their vocabulary.

Vocabulary and comprehension are closely related. Comprehension is the purpose of reading and reflects the success of the gathering of meaning from a printed text (Lerner, 2006:387). The scope of a reader's vocabulary, along with syntactical knowledge, is intertwined with comprehension (Pretorius, 2015:55). It is therefore noticeable that the mean scores of both the vocabulary and the comprehension of the experimental group indicated a significant improvement of 4.65 for vocabulary and 3.62 or comprehension. This improvement is in line with research stating the importance and benefits of story reading with among others, the vocabulary and comprehension skills of the ESL learner (Hickman, Pollard-Durodola & Vaughn, 2004:721; Nel & Nel, 2016:205; Snow & Matthews, 2004:68). The significant improvement of the comprehension scores through the intervention of story reading is further supported by a study conducted by Wightman and Roney (2013:20) to determine the impact of storytelling and story reading on fifth-grade learners' comprehension of narrative texts. Over a period of seven weeks, a total of 28 stories were either told or read to the group of learners. The results of the data collected by Wightman and Roney (2013), indicate a significant improvement of the comprehension skills of the fifth-grade learners.

In comparison with the improvement of the vocabulary and comprehension skills, the scores of the reading and spelling skills of the experimental group showed an even better improvement. The score for word reading improved from 29.52 to 41.80, an improvement of 12.28. The average score for speed reading improved from 56.57 to 74.71, an improvement of 18.14. The spelling skills of the learners in the experimental group improved from 17.33 to 23.90, an improvement of 6,57. The significantly bigger improvement in the reading skills in comparison to the improvement in the spelling, vocabulary and comprehension skills, can be explained by the difference in constrained and unconstrained skills as discussed on p 15 of this article. As mentioned before, these results are supported by research by Van Staden

(2017:31) (see Syntax, p 20 and Fluency, p 26), which includes grade 4 ESL learners and the results confirm the positive correlations between reading fluency, word recognition, and reading comprehension. Pretorius (2015:55) and Snow and Matthews (2016:57) identify the skills required for fluent reading as constrained skills. In their research Snow and Matthews (2016:57-74) review literacy programmes used for enhancing constrained and unconstrained skills. They conclude that constrained skills like knowledge of letter-sound relationships and word recognition are directly teachable and usually easily acquired and captured fast. This thus explains the bigger improvement in the word reading scores (12.28) and the speed reading scores (18.14) of the experimental group. In comparison, skills like spelling, vocabulary and comprehension are unconstrained skills, consisting of large areas of knowledge, gained through experience. Unconstrained skills are not easily teachable and require more exposure to the written word as well as a wide range of experiences to develop. The improvement of unconstrained skills will, therefore, be much slower than the improvement of constrained skills (Snow & Mathews, 2016:59). The smaller improvement in the spelling (6.57), vocabulary (4.65) and comprehension (3.62) skills of the experimental group in comparison with the more significant improvement of the constrained skills is thus supported by their work.

The sheer enthusiasm and enjoyment that the researcher observed in the learners participating in the intervention indicate that the reading of stories was a positive experience, adding to the significant improvement of their literacy skills. The observation is supported by Joubert et al. (2016:61) who stated that the enjoyment of stories leads to a positive orientation towards language experiences. The enjoyment of listening to a story nurtures a love for reading.

The overall improvement in the literacy skills of the learners in the experimental group is connected to and supported by the theories wherein this research project is grounded. The Bioecological Systems Theory of Bronfenbrenner demonstrates the interactive role of various extrinsic and intrinsic factors within the different systems on the total functioning of the individual. The learners participating in this quantitative, pre-test, post-test study are proof of the mutual influence of the different systems wherein the individual functions. The fact that the learners came from a background with socio-cultural difficulties, deprived of a literacy-rich pre-school environment, set the scene for academic problems. The impact on the scholastic progression and academic development of individuals in a situation where a strong mother-tongue base is absent and where they receive formal education in a LOLT other than their mother tongue, is vast. This outcome is clarified by the Linguistic Interdependence Theory of Cummins which emphasizes the interaction between the language of instruction and the type of competence the child has developed in his or her L1 prior to the beginning of his or her

school career. While mastering his or her mother tongue, a person acquires a set of linguistic skills or the so-called Common Underlying Proficiency which serves as the foundation for consolidation of a second or more language. As a result of the influence of Bioecological Systems Theory of Bronfenbrenner in relation with the Linguistic Interdependence Theory of Cummins, the average pre-test scores of both the experimental and control groups were very low. After the experimental group had been exposed to an intervention programme to promote their literacy skills, the post-test scores of this group indicated a significant improvement (Table 3.1, p 47). The intervention programme in the form of storybook reading is rooted in the socio-cultural theory which promotes interactions with adults and older peers as essential for literacy development. In comparison with the experimental group, the post-test scores of the control group only show a slight improvement. The assumption can, therefore, be made that the intervention, in the form of story reading, was effective. The aim of this study (to examine and discuss the development and implementation of an intervention programme, targeted at the improvement of the literacy skills of the participating grade 4, ESL learners) clearly demonstrates the success of story reading in improving the literacy skills of grade 4, ESL learners.

3.11 Conclusion

A large percentage of the ESL learners in South Africa do not receive their education in their mother tongue. The reasons vary from ineffective schooling and teachers to the fact that parents choose English as the LOLT for their children, believing it is essential for future job opportunities and success. However, the literacy abilities of ESL learners in South Africa are, according to National and International reports, far below the required performance levels (DoE, 2013:48). Poor literacy skills have an impact not only on the individual's scholastic progress but also on his or her future chances of employment, economic independence, and quality of life.

In order to develop an appropriate and effective intervention to improve the literacy efficacy of ESL learners in grade 4, the first aim of this study was to determine the way in which an individual's literacy skills develop. It became clear that literacy is not an effortless and automatic happening. Essential and sufficient exposure to language-nurturing environments provides the basis for reading and writing. This exposure is essential for the establishment of phonemic awareness and word recognition which ultimately results in fluent reading. The quality of socio-cultural language exposure on the emergent literacy has an important influence on the future literacy skills of the individual and was the first a sub-aim of this study. In the quest to determine the way in which the literacy skills of an individual develop, it is important to determine the role of emergent literacy skills in ESL literacy development. Emergent literacy

includes, according to Lenyai (2011:89), the skills, knowledge and attitudes that develop prior to conventional forms of reading. The Institute of Medicine and National Research Council (1997:55) highlights opportunities for children to participate in literacy-related practices which help to develop specific knowledge regarding letters, symbolic systems and language, as prerequisites to full literacy. Other emergent literacy skills include phonemic awareness, which is the ability to hear and manipulate the individual sounds in a word (Nel & Nel, 2016:106-108); alphabet knowledge – the ability to identify letters and to understand that letters are written symbols that can be named and learned separately (Lenyai, 2011:90); and print awareness which includes the insight that print carries the meaning of the story and that spoken words can be written down and read (Lenyai, 2011:90-91).

Preliminary to the discussion of the second sub-aim of this study (which was to determine the main components of the language system and define their influence on ESL literacy development) the different forms of the language system were identified.

The language system consists of four forms: listening, speaking, reading and writing (Lerner, 2006:326). The different forms are integrated into the language core. The development of language occurs in stages which usually correspond with the learner's age. Speaking and writing are expressive skills which enable the individual to communicate with others. Listening and reading are receptive skills, responsible for the feeding of information into the central nervous system (Joubert et al., 2016; Lerner, 2006:328; Nel & Nel, 2016; 95). Literacy skills are also categorized as being either constrained or unconstrained skills (Pretorius, 2015:55; Snow & Matthews 2016:57). Constrained skills, e.g. learning the 26 letters of the alphabet, are fixed and limited and are usually easily obtained by young children. The unconstrained skills of the participating learners, are insufficient, as confirmed by the literacy backlogs they experience. Unconstrained skills, consisting of skills and knowledge which can only be obtained through experience, include an incessant expansion of vocabulary, which in combination with sufficient background and new information, are the building blocks for comprehension (Snow & Matthews, 2016:57). Vocabulary and comprehension skills determine the crucial transition of learning to read, to reading to learn. Thus the intervention programme was developed to focus on the expansion of the unconstrained language skills of the participating ESL learners. In order to have a complete picture of the development of literacy skills, it is also important to examine the different components of language and reading development. The components applicable to any language are phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics. They are defined as follows:

- Phonology refers to the speech sound in a language.

- Morphology is a set of rules which combine phonemes in syllables and words to convey meaning.
- Syntax pertains to the rules of the language which prescribe how words must be combined to form meaningful sentences.
- Semantics refers to the vocabulary in a language and is essential for comprehension.
- Pragmatics refers to the social role of the language, how it is used in certain circumstances.

Closely related to the components of a language are the core elements of reading instruction. To become a skilled reader, the following components must be developed and rehearsed:

- phonemic awareness which is the ability to notice, think about and work with the individual sounds in spoken words;
- fluency, the ability to read text rapidly, effortlessly and automatically;
- vocabulary enables the reader to know and apply a word appropriately in context and the important product of the reading process; and
- comprehension is the purpose of reading.

Whether the LOLT is the mother tongue of the learners or, as in the case of this study the second or even third language of the learner, the components of the language as well as the core elements of reading must be established to enable the learner to be academically successful.

Resulting from the previous research concerning the development of literacy skills, the second aim of the research was to establish an effective intervention with the aim of improving the literacy of the participating ESL learners. The development of the intervention was approached from the sociocultural perspective of Vygotsky, who posits that all human activities must be understood in the context of the culture wherein the individual functions. Language, as one of the important tools of culture, plays an important role in the development of the individual's mental structures and processes (Woolfolk, 2014:65). Vygotsky emphasizes the importance of well-developed language competencies as being essential for successful learning (Ntuli & Pretorius, 2005:106). The participating ESL learners came from a variety of indigenous cultures. In some of the households, two languages or a mix thereof are used. This contributes to the lack of a solid mother-tongue development for the ESL learners.

In determining how the literacy skills of an individual develop, it became clear that vocabulary and comprehension, which are unconstrained skills, determine the success of the reading-to-learn process. The intervention concentrated on the extension of the vocabulary and comprehension skills of the learners which would improve their reading ability and eventually their academic success. Learners who experience reading and literacy problems tend to avoid opportunities to read and to practice their literacy skills, thus creating a negative pattern, also

known as the Matthew effect (Van Staden, 2016:22-23) where the literacy skills, due to the lack of practice, only lead to bigger problems. A good reader, on the other hand, wants to read more and more – with huge benefits to his or her literacy skills. Growing up in a digital period where electronic screens and technology compete with books, the outcome is often not in favour of books and reading. With these facts in mind, the researcher recognized the possibility that the intervention may have a two-fold aim: the improvement of the literacy skills of the participating learners as well as an attempt to spark the learner's interest in reading as a pleasurable activity.

Building the learners' vocabulary and developing their comprehension skills are, according to the research, the main areas on which the intervention had to concentrate. Research by Elley (1989:184-185) states that story reading leads to a considerable gain in vocabulary. These results are supported by research by Massaro (2017:64) which found that children who listen to stories being read are three times more likely to encounter a new word that is not amongst the most frequent words in his or her language. The value of story reading in promoting the literacy skills of learners is promoted by various researchers (Cummins, 2011:145; Dickenson et al., 2012:6; Nel & Nel, 2016:205; Pretorius, 2002:98). In order to address the second aim of this study, an intervention in the form of story reading was implemented. The researcher met with the participating learners in the experimental group, once a week over a period of six months, for 50 minutes at a time. Each time a different story was read and an enjoyable activity was completed by each individual learner. During the sessions, specific literacy skills were addressed.

The third sub-aim of this study was to determine the effect of the intervention programme on the literacy skills of the ESL learners in the experimental group. To this purpose an empirical study was conducted in the form of a pre-test and post-test analysis. The same standardized and diagnostic instruments were administered before and after the intervention. The areas assessed were comprehension, vocabulary, word reading, reading fluency and spelling. The results showed that the average scores of both the experimental and the control groups were very low prior to the intervention. It can, therefore, be assumed that the nature and quality of the basic literacy skills of the grade four ESL learners were far below average before the intervention. After the experimental group had been exposed to the intervention programme, both the experimental group and the control group were assessed again with the same instruments used in the pre-assessment. It became apparent that the mean score for the learners in the experimental group showed a significant improvement. Mann Whitney *U* analyses of the data showed that the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group with regard to the different variables. It can be concluded that the nature and quality of

the basic literacy skills of the experimental group showed significant improvement following the intervention.

The results of this study underline the importance and urgency of rethinking the role of reading in the development of the literacy skills of an individual. If the impact of a reading intervention, consisting of only one hour per week, significantly improves the literacy skills of grade 4 learners, further research and the expansion of such a programme can be to the benefit of not only the ESL learners but all the learners in South Africa.

From the pre-test and post-test data of both the experimental and the control groups, the effectiveness of story reading in improving the literacy skills of grade 4 ESL learners is thus confirmed. Against the background of the poor literacy skills of the learners in South Africa, there is still great concern regarding the poor levels of literacy as well as the throughput figures of learners from grade 1 to grade 12. Along with the changes in policies (CAPS), research, congresses, and meetings, positive results on the base level are not evident. After 2001 had been declared the year of the reader, Pretorius (2002:91) surveyed the state of reading research in the South African context, concluding that despite a wealth of educational research, little has been done regarding the important role of reading in the learning process. As far back as 2002, 'the reading crisis within our educational system' (Pretorius, 2002:96) was acknowledged. As far as 15 years ago, the role of reading in the literacy crisis of South African learners was described by Pretorius (2002:100):

Reading is not an additional tool that students need to master in the learning context – it constitutes the very process whereby all learning occurs.

Pretorius's (2002:93) explanation of learners' poor reading skills includes an overemphasis on decoding skills and too little attention to the development of comprehension skills. Although the role and importance of reading has become a well-researched area in recent years, too many learners in South Africa still lack essential literacy skills. Research by various researchers in the years from 2002 until 2016 confirms the success of the improvement of literacy skills through a reading intervention (Cummins, 2011:145; Dickenson et al., 2012:6; Elley, 1989:184–185; Nel & Nel, 2016:205; Pretorius, 2002:98; Van Staden, 2011, 2016; Van Staden & Purcell, 2016).

When one considers the successful intervention in this study, which resulted in the improvement of the literacy skills of grade 4 ESL learners in the experimental group through story reading, the answer to addressing the literacy crisis may not be as complicated as it seems.

3.12 Pedagogical implications

The concept of story reading may be considered as a permanent feature in the curriculum of specifically the intermediate phase. During the foundation phase, stories form part of the everyday activities but this is not the case in the intermediate phase. To address problematic literacy skills as well as to establish a love of reading, continuous exposure to story reading may be the answer.

For the intervention to address the literacy crisis of ESL learners successfully, it is important for the relevant education authorities to take full ownership of the creation and establishment of the programme as well as the training and support needed. Although story reading shows excellent results in improving the literacy skills of ESL learners in particular, careful research and planning are essential to ensure that the stories chosen for reading are age appropriate, culturally applicable and utterly enjoyable. The stories must also target the grade-associated reading skills. Although supervision is needed, the programme must leave enough space for creative adjustments according to the unique qualities of the different communities. The idea of volunteers in control of the 'story hour' may also be considered to relieve the burden of the teachers and to add a more informal touch to the session.

The author acknowledges the fact that the study only includes grade 4 ESL learners who have literacy backlogs. However, the element of reading enjoyment, which emerged strongly in this intervention is applicable to any ESL learner. As described in the introduction of this article (p 3), a large number of ESL learners in South Africa have English as their LOLT, without the benefit of a strong grounding in the mother tongue. As reading is an unconstrained skill (Snow & Matthews 2016:57), the reading experience continuously improves, therefore, making story reading appropriate for any group of learners.

The effects of the poor socio-economic circumstances on many South African learners must be taken into account. Apart from the lack of education in their mother tongue, many learners do not grow up in literacy-rich environments or have access to printed material. Special attention must be given to help schools in these environments to develop literacy-rich learning contexts.

Now, more than ever, the refrain of Pretorius's words in 2002 must urge every parent, teacher, stake-holder and government official to do everything in their power to ensure education which guarantee full literacy outcomes for every South African learner:

Reading is not an additional tool that students need to master in the learning context – it constitutes the very process whereby all learning occurs...

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ADDENDUM A: CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

Emergent literacy

The skills, knowledge and attitudes that develop prior to conventional forms of reading (Lenyai: 2011:89).

Expressive skills

The ability to use gestures and speech to communicate meaning. Speaking and writing are expressive skills (Lerner, 2006:328; Nel & Nel, 2016; 95).

Social cultural learning theories

The socio-cultural theory considers interaction with other, more capable individuals, as contributing to the creation of cognitive structures and thinking processes (Woolfolk, 2013:55).

Psycho-linguistic principles (of reading)

Reading is seen as a process that progresses from the whole to the different parts (top down). To be able to read, all skills are implemented simultaneously to make sense of the written text. Read is comprehension driven. Meaning forms, the foundation of reading (Joubert, 2016:104)

Reading comprehension

Comprehension is the purpose of reading. It accommodates the interaction between the reader and the text and the include the following: literal meaning and comprehension inference evaluation of the text and appreciation (Nel & Nel, 2016:112-113)

Literacy intervention

Literacy is the ability to read and write, as well as the ability to use language proficiently and a intervention is the act of intervening in a situation (Collins Dictionary, 2016). In this study a literacy intervention in the form of story reading was implemented to improve the literacy skills of grade 4 ESL learners.

Story reading

A story is a description of imaginary people, things and events which is written or told in order to entertain (Collins Dictionary, 2016). Story reading is done by an individual for him- or herself, or by an individual for another person or group of persons. Storytelling and storybook reading are regarded as an important strategy in the development and acquisition of a language (Nel, 2015:30).

English Second Language (ESL) learners

Learners whose mother tongue is not English, but who are learning through the medium of English as the language of learning and teaching (Nel & Nel, 2016:128).

Bilingualism

Refers to the ability to communicate effectively in two languages, with more or less the same degree of proficiency in both languages (DoE, 2010a:3).

First language (L1)

It refers to the very first language a child learns. Also referred to as 'mother-tongue' or 'native language' (Van der Walt, Evans & Kilfoil, 2009:3).

Second language (L2)

An additional language learnt after the first language (Van der Walt, Evans & Kilfoil, 2009:6).

Receptive skills

Receptive skills like listening and reading are responsible for feeding information into the central nervous system (Joubert et al, 2016; Lerner, 2006:328; Nel & Nel, 2016; 95).

Constrained skills

Constrained skills are fixed skills which have a ceiling for example, the 26 alphabet letters or a set of spelling rules. In most cases it is easy to obtain (Pretorius, 2015:55; Snow & Matthews 2016:57).

Unconstrained skills

It consists of large domains of skills which can only grow through experience. It includes vocabulary as well as background knowledge which must constantly be integrated with new knowledge, to build comprehension (Pretorius, 2015:55; Snow & Matthews 2016:57).

Morphology

Morphology is a set of rules which combine phonemes in units (syllables and words) to convey meaning. The smallest unit conveying meaning is called a morpheme (Nel & Nel, 2016:98)

Phonology

Phonology studies the way distinctions in sound are used to differentiate linguistic items and the ways in which the sound structure of the 'same' element varies as a function of the other sounds in its context (Anderson, 2001).

Syntax

The syntax is the grammar system of a language. It includes the rules of the language on how words must be combined to form meaningful sentences (Bouwer & Dednam, 2016:159; Lerner, 2006:335; Nel & Nel, 2016:98).

Semantics

Semantics refers to the vocabulary or word meaning in a language and is essential for comprehension (Lerner, 2006:335; Nel & Nel, 2016:98).

Pragmatics

Pragmatics entails the social role that language plays, how the person uses the language within certain circumstances. Body language and facial expressions are also included in pragmatics (Lerner, 2006:335; Nel & Nel, 2016:98).

Phonological awareness

The ability to recognize that words are made up of a variety of sound units (Van Staden, 2016:35).

Fluency

The ability to read text rapidly, effortlessly and automatically. Fluent reading happens when phrasing and pronunciation are correct, no omissions, repetitions, insertions, word guessing, lip movement, finger pointing and/or head movements are present (Lerner, 2006:382).

Vocabulary knowledge

The ability to know and apply a word appropriately in context and forms the key to reading (Joubert et al, 2016:266).

ADDENDUM B

GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER (Reference: D2015/267)



GAUTENG PROVINCE

Department: Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

For administrative use:
Reference no: D2015 / 267

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	20 August 2014
Validity of Research Approval:	20 August 2014 to 3 October 2014
Name of Researcher:	Van Rhyn A.A.
Address of Researcher:	P.O. Box 16115
	Pretoria North
	0116
Telephone Number:	083 277 6234
Email address:	alet.vanrhyn@aros.ac.za
Research Topic:	Literacy development, scholastic progress and self-concept of L2 learners. An intervention
Number and type of schools:	FIVE Primary Schools
District/s/HO	Gauteng West

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

1. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s concerned must be presented with a copy of this letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.

*Delivered
2014/08/20*

1

Making education a societal priority

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ADDENDUM C

INFORMED CONSENT: GOVERNING BODY AND PRINCIPAL



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PhD. Student Researcher: Me. Alet van Rhyn

14 October 2014

INFORMED CONSENT: PRINCIPALS OF SCHOOLS

RE: Project Information Statement/Letter of Invitation to School Principals

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Annalene van Staden, and I am the principal investigator of a DOE-approved literacy project, entitled “Literacy development and cognitive-linguistic processing of L1 and L2 learners with typical and atypical patterns of development: an exploratory study”. I coordinate this literacy project in collaboration with my research team (co-investigators) who have expertise in Educational Psychology (i.e. registered educational and developmental psychologists; experts in the field of cognitive and applied linguistics and psychology; a postdoctoral applicant who is an expert in literacy and language disorders); and a team of young emerging scholars who either hold Honours or Master’s degrees in Educational Psychology and Special Needs Education. Against the background of the tremendous literacy challenges facing South Africa learners, this project aims to explore the quality of literacy and language input and specific cognitive-linguistic and reading- and spelling-related challenges (e.g. phonological awareness, lexical access, semantic awareness, decoding, letter knowledge, word identification, fluency, vocabulary and reading comprehension) of first- and second language learners in South Africa.

- During the first phase of this literacy project, we (the team) firstly want to investigate the nature and quality of early language experiences and input at home and in preschool classrooms, including emergent literacy skills development. This will be done through individual and focus-group discussions with educator participants at sample schools. The

valuable information gathered in this way will answer questions directly related to the language and pre-literacy skills that can serve as reliable indicators of future reading and spelling development in L1 and L2 learners. This information can be used as a basis for preventing reading and spelling difficulties in future populations (including L1, L2, and learners who have specifically been identified as learners with special educational needs – i.e. learners with specific learning impairments).

- During the second phase of this project, our team will investigate whether L1 learners from linguistically diverse groups, emergent bilingual learners and L2 learners (in the foundation and intermediate phases: Grades 1 to Grade 6) show similar growth in reading- and spelling-related skills (e.g. phonological awareness, lexical access, semantic awareness, decoding, letter knowledge, word identification, fluency, vocabulary and reading comprehension). Thus, building on the connectionist framework, we would like to investigate whether L1 reading and spelling skills developed in the foundation phase can transfer (i.e. cross-linguistic transfer) to L2 reading and spelling skills. Furthermore, we want to ascertain whether the same cognitive-linguistic and literacy-related skills predict reading and spelling outcomes for learners with atypical development, for example, learners with specific reading and spelling impairments.
- Finally, during the third phase of this project, we wish to determine whether the literacy outcomes of South African learners can improve significantly after exposure to literacy intervention programmes. We shall develop these programmes based on the information obtained from the research findings during the first two phases of this literacy project.

Significance of the Research Project: Potential Outcomes

One of the crucial changes and challenges that the post-apartheid South African democracy faces is to reconstruct a society and an education system that will create excellent conditions for teaching and learning. These challenges are clearly delineated in White Paper 6 on inclusive education, a policy document that underlines the imperative role of all educationists within the educational cadre to reconstruct and develop a culture of teaching and lifelong learning within the South African context. As members of institutions of higher learning, it is we, in particular, who are challenged to make more contributions that are significant to addressing the diverse learning barriers that still exist in many communities. Thus, potential outcomes from this community-based research project may include the following: firstly, it will make a significant contribution to addressing a very under-researched topic in South Africa, whilst simultaneously making a significant contribution to the body of scholarly knowledge within this often-neglected field of special education, both in South Africa and internationally. Secondly, this project has numerous possibilities for networking. It can be extended to other provinces and countries, working collaboratively with researchers at other institutions of higher learning, including involving scholars from other SADEC countries who experience problems similar to those of South Africa and who do not always have the research connections and/or funding to conduct similar projects. Moreover, through research outputs, such as presenting papers, both nationally and internationally, on the findings and publishing those in accredited and peer-reviewed national journals, educators and other scholars will have access to this information. They can also make contact with the principal investigator to further their scholarly knowledge and expertise on this topic. Fourthly, since the empirical findings on this project will be communicated to the Gauteng and Free State

Departments of Education and the Inclusive Education section and the various District Support Team personnel, it is envisaged that these findings will assist the DOE personnel involved in the identification, assessment and the development of learner support programmes, as well as educator support through site visits, workshops and in-service training. Fifthly, with regard to supporting educators who teach learners in their classrooms on a daily basis. Since this project addresses very important issues regarding the role and importance of emergent literacy skills, cognitive processing skills and language-related skills in literacy development, these findings will not only strengthen our theoretical explanations for reading and literacy development, but they will also make significant empirically validated recommendations on how to design effective prevention and early intervention programmes for learners who have literacy barriers to learning. Finally, the findings/results of this project will also be shared with teacher unions, the local media (familiar newspapers in various provinces), and broadcasting stations, in order to enhance the exploitability of the findings/research outputs further. Education is vital to consolidating the advances made in political and social reform, and all available resources should be put into researching and developing programmes that have as wide an impact as possible, in improving the teaching and learning environment in South Africa.

Research Plan and Method

The project/study will employ a mixed-method research methodology, of which Phase 1 will be a qualitative research design where teacher participants will be interviewed. In addition, trained postgraduate students will accompany the core research team in administering language and literacy observational scales/measuring instruments at selected sample schools to determine the quality of language and literacy instruction (or programmes) currently offered at schools in the Free State and Gauteng Provinces. In Phase 2, a combination of measuring instruments will be administered on two occasions during the school academic year. Information and assessment manuals of all tests to be administered are available for approval by the principal, the support teacher at the sample school, as well as the Free State and Gauteng Department of Education; including being available on parental requests. Permission will be sought from the learners and their parents prior to their participation in the research. Only those who consent and whose parents consent will participate. All information collected will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Neither the school nor individual learners will be identifiable in any reports that are written, or in research that will be published after the completion of this project. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. The role of the school is voluntary and the School Principal may decide to withdraw the school's participation at any time without penalty.

School Involvement/consent

I invite you to consider taking part in this research. This study will meet the requirements of the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education, the University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa, including obtaining permission from the Gauteng and Free State Departments of Education.

Once I have received your consent to approach the parents/guardians of the learners who will be identified (with the assistance of classroom educators and support teachers at the sample schools), the research team make arrangements with the full collaboration and consultation with the school and principal, namely:

- informed consent to be obtained from participants' parents/guardians;
- arrange a time with your school for data collection to take place (interviews with educators; administration of measuring instruments; and the implementation of the intervention programme (if applicable to your school);
- obtain informed consent (assent) from participants (minors)

Additional information

The Provincial Department of Education has given approval to us to approach schools for our team's research. A copy of their approval accompanies this letter. I invite you to consider taking part in this research. This study will meet the requirements of the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa. If you would like your school to participate in this research and would like to obtain additional information, including examples of the informed consent forms for parents/guardians, including a detailed work plan of this literacy project, this is available for your consideration and will be provided. If you are interested in taking part in this literacy project, please complete and return the attached form.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information.

Yours sincerely



Dr. Annalene van Staden

Principal Investigator

Psychology of Education

University of the Free State

Please fill in and return this page. Keep the above letter for future reference

**Study: LITERACY DEVELOPMENT AND SELF-CONCEPT OF ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS:
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY**

Researcher: Me. Alet van Rhyn

School Principal: Name and Surname: _____

Name of School: _____

Contact number: _____

School Principal Consent Form

I give consent for you to approach the educators and learners [Grades R to 6] to participate in this project, entitled "Literacy development and cognitive-linguistic processing of L1 and L2 learners with typical and atypical patterns of development: an exploratory study".

I have read the attached letter of consent, addressed to the principal (i.e. the invitation to become part of this literacy project, explaining the purpose of the research project and potential outcomes and value of this research).

I herewith give my informed consent on the following grounds, namely:

- The role of the school is voluntary and that I may withdraw the school's participation at any time without penalty;
- That no educator or learner will be involved in this project/study without written permission being sought (i.e. before informed written consent has been obtained from all educators and parents/guardians of learners involved in this study);
- Only learners who consent and whose parents consent will participate in the project – and it will be communicated to learners that they have the right to withdraw from the study, assessments, etc. without being penalized.

- All information, including results, tests, and data obtained will be treated in the strictest confidence and will be locked in a secure location, under the direct supervision of the principal investigator.
- The educators and learners' names, including the name of the school, will not be identifiable and used in any written reports about the study.
- Participants may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.
- A report of the findings will be made available to the school and the Free State Department of Education, and parents on request via the school.
- I may seek further information on the project from the principal investigator, Dr van Staden (051-4012954/083 453 5741).

Principal

Signature

Date

ADDENDUM D

INFORMED CONSENT: PARENTS OR GUARDIANS



Principal Researcher:

Prof Annalene van Staden

Psychology of Education

School of Education Studies
Faculty of Education
University of the Free State
Bloemfontein

T: +27(0)51 4012954

Co -Researchers:

Prof Estelle Swart (University of Stellenbosch)

Prof Theo du Plessis (University of the Free State)

Prof Francisca Serrano (University of Granada, Spain)

Dr Ansa Tolmie (Post-doc UFS)

PhD.Student Researcher: Me. Alet van Rhyn

14 October 2014

INFORMED CONSENT: PARENTS/GUARDIANS OF MINORS PARTICIPATING IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

Name of child: _____

Name of Ph.D. student: Me. Alet van Rhyn (PhD. in Psychology of Education, UFS)

Dear Parent or Guardian

We would like to ask your permission to include your child in the following project, aimed at improving his/her literacy performance. This specific research forms part of a broader literacy project entitled "Literacy development and cognitive-linguistic processing of L1 and L2 learners with typical and atypical patterns of development: an exploratory study" which aims to identify both L1 and L2 learners with literacy impairments/delays and to support them accordingly. This project has been approved by both the Gauteng and Free State Departments of Education as well as the Ethics committee of the Faculty of Education, University of the Free State, and the National Research Foundation of South Africa (NRF).

Background information

The rationale behind this project is recent statistics highlighting our country's poor performance with regard to literacy (compared to other countries abroad). Through this project, we aim to identify the main challenges educators encounter in supporting first- and second language learners with/without additional literacy barriers to learning. In addition, the core South African research team will work in close collaboration with international scholars in Spain and Australia to identify which prior skills may contribute to later reading and spelling skills development as learners learn a first and second language. In doing so, we are confident that this research will

make a significant contribution to addressing the paucity of research currently available in South Africa to assist educators in developing (and improving) the literacy skills of South African learners. The research team will also make valuable recommendations to the Free State and National Departments of Education with regard to the necessary foundational skills learners need to develop literacy skills in both their home language and additional languages, as well as to improve the standard of literacy in South Africa in general.

My specific research will investigate the literacy development and the effect thereof on the self-concept of English second language learners.

The literacy project will entail the following activities:

1. Firstly, we ask your permission (informed consent) for your child to be assessed by Me. Alet van Rhyn, currently a senior lecturer at Aros. Aros provides private accredited education for education students. The assessment, as well as intervention, will take place from November 2014 until the end of the third term 2015.
2. The assessment tasks/ will include: the administration of standardized and diagnostic tests currently used by the district-based support teams in the Free State Province (for example UCT reading and spelling tests; diagnostic measures to assess learners' cognitive-linguistic processing, for example, phonological awareness, syntax and working memory). The Piers-Harris children's Self-concept Scale will be used to assess the overall self-concept of each participating learner.
3. After the completion of the tests, the learners will be invited to be part of the intervention study, mentioned earlier. The intervention programme will be implemented by Me Van Rhyn. Occasionally your child will be observed by Me. Van Rhyn while he or she takes part in literacy activities at the school (in the classroom) – this is with regard to the implementation of the intervention or support programme after the conclusion of the test administration.
4. The project will be explained in terms that your child can understand, and your child will participate only if he or she is willing to do so.
5. Only the principal researcher and co-researchers will have access to your child's information. At the conclusion of the study, children's responses will be reported as group results only. No names of any learner(s) or school will be revealed and all learner particulars will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.

6. Participation will be on a voluntary basis and all participants have the right to withdraw or choose not to respond at any time during the administration of the measuring instruments.
7. Your decision whether or not to allow your child to participate will not affect the services normally provided to your child by the school or district-based support team and your child will not forfeit any any benefits to which he or she is otherwise entitled. Even if you give your permission for your child to participate, your child is free to refuse to participate. If your child agrees to participate, he or she is free to end participation at any time.
8. Only learners whose parents have signed the informed consent forms will take part in the research project.
9. At the conclusion of the study, a summary of group results will be made available to all interested parents (and schools). Please indicate at the end of this consent form whether you wish to have these results. If so, please provide your mailing address. Results should be available in approximately twelve months.

Should you have any questions or desire further information, please feel free to contact Me. Alet van Rhyn (083 277 6234 / alet.vanrhyn@aros.ac.za) or the grant holder of this literacy project, Dr. Annalene van Staden (051-4012954)

Yours sincerely

Me. A. van Rhyn (PhD.Student / Senior Lecturer at Aros)



Dr. Annalene van Staden

Principal Investigator

Psychology of Education

University of the Free State

vanstadena@ufs.ac.za

Please fill in and return this page. Keep the letter above for future reference.

Study: Literacy Development and Self-concept of English Second Language Learners: An Exploratory Study

Researcher: Me. Alet van Rhyn

Project manager and supervisor: Dr Annalene van Staden

Parent's Name and Surname: _____

Name and surname of the learner: _____

Contact number: _____

I give informed consent on the following grounds:

1. My child's participation in this research project is voluntary. I understand that neither my child nor I will receive any compensation for participating in this research project.
2. My child may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.
3. I understand that the researcher(s) will not identify my or my child's name (or the name of the school) in any reports using information obtained from this project and that all tests, observational notes, and videotapes will be kept in a secure and locked location, with only the core research team having access to this information.
4. I understand that this research study has been reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education (University of the Free State), the Free State Department of Education and the National Research Foundation of South Africa.
5. I have read and understood the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree that my child may participate in this study.
6. I give the principal researcher permission to make use of the data gathered from my child's participation, subject to the stipulations he/she has indicated in the above letter.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

ADDENDUM E

- **Progressive Achievement Tests in Reading (PAT-R): Comprehension, Vocabulary, and Spelling:**
 - Comprehension: Booklet 2 – Year levels 1, 2 and 3
- **Progressive Achievement Tests in Reading (PAT-R): Comprehension, Vocabulary, and Spelling:**
 - Vocabulary: Booklet 2 – Year levels 4, 5 and 6

TEST
BOOKLET | 2

PAT-R

Progressive Achievement Tests in Reading:

COMPREHENSION

FOURTH EDITION

K 0417

Australian Council for Educational Research

ACER

DIRECTIONS

This is a test of how well you understand what you read. Carefully read each passage and then answer the questions about it before you go on to the next passage. There are four choices for every question. You choose the one answer that you think is best.

ABOUT MARK

My cousin, Mark, is twelve years old.
Last Saturday I watched him play football.
The pitch was muddy, but he stayed clean.
At the end of the match he ate two juicy oranges.
Then he was not clean anymore.

P1 How old is Mark?

- A** 10
- B** 11
- C** 12
- D** 13

P2 After the match on Saturday, Mark ate some

- A** fruit.
- B** cake.
- C** meat.
- D** chips.

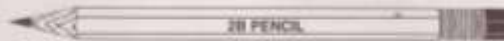
The correct answer to **P1** is C.

The correct answer to **P2** is A.

- You will have 40 minutes to complete the test.
- You may re-read a passage as many times as you need to.
- Remember that you mark only the one best answer for each question.
- If you want to change your answer, rub out your first mark completely, then fill in another bubble to show your new answer.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE ANSWER SHEET

- Use pencil only, preferably 2B.
- Do **not** use a red pen or felt-tip pen.



Start by filling in the information at the top of the Answer Sheet. Your teacher will help you with this.

Please MARK LIKE THIS ONLY:

Example: Mark the bubble corresponding to your answer.

1	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
3	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Try each question as you come to it. Work as quickly and carefully as you can. Do not spend too long on one question, even if it is hard. Follow the question numbers down the columns on your Answer Sheet.

If you want to write something to help you find an answer to a question, use some spare paper – do not write on the question booklet.

University Free State



3430004643767

Universiteit Vrystaat

DO NOT TURN THE PAGE UNTIL YOU ARE TOLD TO DO SO.

TEACHER
MANUAL

b 160 617 57
v.1

PAT-R

Progressive Achievement Tests in Reading:

Comprehension, Vocabulary and Spelling

FOURTH EDITION

Andrew Stephanou

Prue Anderson

Daniel Urbach

Australian Council for Educational Research



University Free State

3430004643833

Universiteit Vrystaat

ACER

The *ACER Progressive Achievement Tests in Reading Fourth Edition (PAT Reading Fourth Edition)* is a major revision of this Australian best-selling test of achievement in reading. The *PAT Reading Fourth Edition* is a thoroughly researched and normed test for measuring student achievement in reading comprehension, word knowledge and spelling. It is designed to help teachers assess the pre-reading, reading comprehension, vocabulary knowledge and spelling skills of students from the first year of school to Year 10; and it provides teachers with objective information for setting realistic learning goals and planning effective programs.

The *PAT Reading Fourth Edition* contains eleven normed and graded comprehension tests for the first year of school to Year 10; five normed and graded vocabulary tests for Years 3 to 10; and nine normed spelling lists for Years 2 to 10.

The content of the tests has been updated to reflect the variety of text and format types that students encounter, current language use, technological advances and the use of testing for in-depth diagnosis and intervention.

KEY FEATURES OF THE PAT READING FOURTH EDITION

- common comprehension, vocabulary and spelling scales, giving teachers the opportunity to select the most appropriate tests, to make a range of valid and helpful comparisons and to measure growth over time;
- nationally normed spelling lists;
- test forms that target a specific year level and cover a wide range of year levels;
- comprehensive norm, diagnostic and descriptive reports;
- comprehension and vocabulary scales that are similar to previous editions of *PAT Reading*, allowing for easy conversion of scores from the third to fourth edition;
- a CD containing copy masters of administration instructions, score keys and reports.

PAT Reading Fourth Edition is an ideal assessment for measuring student achievement in reading, monitoring students' performance over time, and planning effective and targeted work programs.



1 INTRODUCTION

What is PAT-R?

The *Progressive Achievement Tests in Reading*, commonly known as PAT-R, are tests designed to assist teachers in their assessment of students' reading comprehension skills, vocabulary knowledge and spelling. The three main components—PAT-R Comprehension, PAT-R Vocabulary and PAT-R Spelling—are each structured so that skills across a wide range of year levels can be assessed validly. The tests have been developed especially, but not exclusively, for use in Australian schools.

The newly revised PAT-R builds on the popular features of the original test format, while introducing a greatly increased number of Comprehension test booklets, new, harder Vocabulary tests and a new set of Spelling lists. (A note explaining how to convert scores from the Third Edition to the Fourth Edition can be found on page 52.)

PAT-R Comprehension

PAT-R Comprehension now consists of eleven reading test booklets, from year levels Prep to 10, ordered according to difficulty but with considerable overlap. Test Booklet P and Test Booklet 1 are designed for beginning readers. They have a different format to the other booklets. Test Booklet P is administered one-to-one and Test Booklet 1 requires teachers to support students as they do the assessment. Test Booklets 2 to 10 all consist of passages with multiple-choice questions, referred to as items, which students can work through independently. There are 41 new passages across Test Booklets 2 to 10, along with 21 passages from the previous edition. Each of these test booklets contains between five and eight passages accompanied by comprehension items. All items are intended to measure literal and inferential comprehension of texts, and reflect contemporary understanding of the reading process.

The test materials are designed to be of interest to students. They feature a range of different text types and include texts from mainly

Australian sources. The material is culturally varied and there is a balanced representation of positive male and female characters.

Each test requires up to 40 minutes of testing time, plus time for administration (approximately 55 minutes in total). To ensure valid results, the specified timing and administration instructions should be followed. An Optical Mark Readable (OMR) Answer Sheet, suitable either for hand scoring or for computer scoring by the ACER Test Scoring Services (see page 33), is provided for each test booklet.

PAT-R Vocabulary

PAT-R Vocabulary consists of five word knowledge test booklets, ordered according to difficulty. Each test contains between 35 and 40 items. Each item is a short sentence in which a focus word is used in context. Students select an appropriate synonym for this word from a set of alternatives in a multiple-choice format.

The vocabulary items for Test Booklets 1 to 3 are the same as in the previous edition. The new Test Booklets 4 and 5 include items from the old Test Booklet 4 as well as new items.

Each test requires up to 25 minutes of testing time, plus time for administration. To ensure valid results, the specified timing and administration instructions should be followed. An Optical Mark Readable (OMR) Answer Sheet, suitable either for hand scoring or for machine scoring by the ACER Test Scoring Services (see page 33), is provided for each test booklet.

PAT-R Spelling

PAT-R Spelling consists of nine lists of spelling words, ordered according to difficulty but with considerable overlap. There are between 20 and 25 words in each list. The spelling is administered orally by the teacher. Each word is given in a sentence and the student then writes the word.

The spelling words can be hand scored by the teacher or by ACER Test Scoring Services.

4 ADMINISTERING PAT-R

Introduction

Study of the test materials

Before using any of the tests it is advisable for teachers to become familiar with the purpose of the tests, the test materials (including the Answer Sheet), and the detailed administration instructions. It is also useful to work through the test before administering it so that any difficulties students may have with the administration procedures can be more easily identified and rectified.

Method of scoring

Answer Sheets are provided for each of the PAT-R test booklets (except Comprehension Test Booklets P and 1) and spelling lists. The OMR Answer Sheets have been customised to match each test for ease of use. In most cases, students completing Comprehension Test Booklets 3 to 10 will be able to show their responses on the OMR Answer Sheets independently, once they have worked through the practice examples. Note that the teacher will need to complete the student details on page 2 for PAT-R Comprehension Test Booklets P and 1. Some students completing Comprehension Test Booklets 2 and 3 may also require teacher support to ensure that they use the Answer Sheet correctly.

The instructions that follow assume that the test is to be computer scored by ACER Test Scoring Services. If the tests are to be scored by hand, it will not be necessary for students to bubble in the machine-readable fields (name, date of birth and gender) at the top of the OMR Answer Sheet, and the instructions below should be modified to suit. There are separate instructions for Comprehension Test Booklets P and 1, and these are provided below.

When to test

It is usually best to test in the morning. For valid results, tests should *not* be given just before or after an exciting school event. If the Comprehension and the Vocabulary tests are to be used, the testing sessions should be separated

by a substantial break. If preferred, the Spelling test can be administered before or after either the Comprehension or the Vocabulary test.

Table 4 shows a timetable for a testing session. Students who are unfamiliar with the machine-readable OMR Answer Sheet format may need more time to fill in the student details. This could be done as a separate activity before the testing session.

Most of the times in Table 4 are approximate and are provided as guidelines only. The time periods for the actual tests are upper limits. If all students have reached the end of the Comprehension test before 40 minutes have passed, or the Vocabulary test before 25 minutes have passed, the session may be stopped, especially if the teacher judges that the students would not benefit from having more time to review their answers. If only a few students have not finished after these times have passed, this might be an indication that those students would benefit from doing a lower form of the test at another time.

Where to test

Testing should be conducted in a room that is large enough to seat all students comfortably, has good lighting and ventilation, and is free from outside interruption. A notice, 'TESTING IN PROGRESS. PLEASE DO NOT DISTURB', hung outside the classroom may help to prevent accidental interruption.

The seating arrangements should not tempt students to look at other students' answers, and should enable the teacher to move freely about the room without disturbing the students.

All dictionaries, charts, lists and materials that might help students to answer test items should be removed, erased or covered.

Additional test administrators

If the test is to be given to a large group, or if the students are inexperienced in taking tests, it may be useful for the teacher to have the assistance of a colleague to help distribute and collect test

Table 4 PAT-R tests: time allocated for test administration

Step	Comprehension	Vocabulary	Spelling
Distribution of materials	3 minutes	3 minutes	3 minutes
Filling in student and test details	4 minutes	4 minutes	4 minutes
Practice items and directions	5 minutes	5 minutes	Not required
Test time	40 minutes	25 minutes	10 minutes
Collection of materials	3 minutes	3 minutes	3 minutes
Total time	55 minutes	40 minutes	20 minutes

materials, and to ensure that students are using the Test Booklets and Answer Sheets correctly. This may be particularly important with younger students.

Assembling the test materials

Before the test session begins, the teacher should check that the following materials are available:

- enough Test Booklets for each student to have a personal copy
- enough Answer Sheets for each student
- a copy of the administration instructions (available on pages 12–30 or on the CD)
- a supply of spare 2B pencils and erasers
- a watch or clock for timing the test.

In this Manual, all instructions that are read by the teacher to students are shown like this:

Stop work. Put your pencils down.

It is intended that all instructions be read verbatim to the students, but when younger students are being tested it may be necessary to rephrase or repeat parts of the instructions to ensure that everyone has understood.

Adhere to the detailed instructions and time limits but avoid causing any feeling of strain for the students. Treat the testing as a normal school activity and not as a special event. Establish a friendly atmosphere and avoid tension.

When the students are seated comfortably in the desired arrangement, they should remove all

materials from their desks with the exception of pencils and an eraser.

Check that each student has a pencil and eraser. For computer-scored tests, students must use 2B pencils.

Students **must not** use dictionaries during these tests.

Instructions for PAT-R Comprehension

Test Booklet P

This assessment is designed to test emergent reading skills.

Group size

The test should be administered to individual students, one-on-one.

Timing

Although there is no time limit for the test, the test should take about 30 minutes to administer. Most of the test is administered orally by the teacher, and the duration of the test will be affected by the pace of the teacher's delivery. Students should be given time to consider their answers. However, if the teacher is aware that students have answered to the best of their ability, move students to the next question.

Preparation

All students should have a copy of the Test Booklet P and writing materials (2B pencil and

eraser). Teachers should write the student's name and details on page 2 of each booklet.

Teachers will need a copy of the Test Booklet to administer the test.

Test conditions

It is important that the students complete their answers without discussion or collaboration. Teachers may assist students if they do not recognise pictures in the assessment and if they are unsure of how to show their answers.

Methods of answering

Answers are made by underlining a choice. Answers may be altered by erasing and then underlining the correct answer.

Special conditions

During administration of the test, students with learning difficulties may require conditions that are unique in order to complete the test. For example, students may require more time, more frequent breaks or a scribe.

Giving the test

Some questions in this test are presented orally by the teacher, while other questions are more like conventional test items. Students record all

their answers in their Test Booklets. For the more conventional reading sections of the test, it is sufficient to explain the way the questions are answered. Detailed question-by-question instructions are given in this Manual for those that are presented orally by the teacher.

Words following the instruction 'Say' should be read exactly as they are written. This will ensure that all students receive the same instructions. Some instructions are enclosed in brackets. These instructions are for the teacher and should not be read aloud. Where a student is not sure of how to show the answer to a question, the teacher should explain, in their usual classroom language, how to show the answers. Where there are spoken target words or sounds, these should be repeated once more if requested.

Each student's details should be correct on page 2 of Test Booklet P. If this is not the case, correct the student's details.

Distribute the Test Booklet to the student.

After the assessment

- Collect the Test Booklet.
- Ensure the correct student details are entered in the front of each student's Test Booklet.

Say:

Today you will do some work to show how well you read.

LITERACY CONCEPTS

Say:

Look at page three. You will need to follow my instructions as we go through the test.

(Point to box number 1 at the top of page 3.)

1. Look at number one. Draw a line under the word.

(Point to number 2.)

2. Look at number two. Draw a line under the letter.

(Point to number 3.)

3. Look at number three. Draw a line under the question mark.

Test Booklets 2–10

It is recommended that for younger students the step of completing the personal details be omitted during the testing session, and that either the teacher completes the fields after the testing session or the students complete them the previous day. This step can be omitted if the tests are to be hand marked.

Say:

I am going to give you a Test Booklet and an Answer Sheet. I want to see how well you understand what you read. Please keep the booklet closed now. Do not write anything until you are told.

Distribute a PAT-R Comprehension Test Booklet and a PAT-R Comprehension OMR Answer Sheet to each student.

Completing the details on the OMR Answer Sheet

Direct students to enter their full name, the name of their class and school and the date on the lines provided at the top left of the OMR Answer Sheet. Check that this has been done clearly and correctly.

Check that all booklets are open at the correct page. Record the time at which students start individual work on the test.

During the test

Move around the room unobtrusively and check that the students are marking their answers in

the correct way. Do not answer questions, though, about the content of the passages or the questions, and the meaning or pronunciation of words. Encourage students to do their best, even if they do not understand some parts of the test.

A small number of students may have difficulty in understanding the instructions or in reading the material and/or answering many of the questions. The test may be unsuitable for them. If the teacher judges that these students are under undue stress, they should be stopped and an explanatory note put on their OMR Answer Sheet.

After 35 minutes, say:

You have five minutes more to work on the questions.

At the end of this time, say:

Put down your pencils and close your booklets.

After the assessment

Collect all the Test Booklets and OMR Answer Sheets. Check to see that the OMR Answer Sheets have been filled in as asked. If the tests are to be computer scored, it is essential that the machine-readable fields are completed correctly.

Store the Test Booklets for future use. It may be advisable to check the reusable booklets for pencil markings.

Say:

Now we will learn how to fill in information on this form so that a computer can read it.

From the list of instructions and the example, we see that we need to use a pencil to fill in bubbles. In the example, a family name has been written in letters and the bubbles below have been filled in. In the example, first the letter E is written and the bubble below it that is labelled with the letter E is filled in. The next letters are filled in the same way. See how the letters A, D and E have been filled in.

Ensure that students understand the method of filling in the bubbles.

Say:

Now we will fill in your details. It is important to fill them in properly so that the computer can read them.

Fill in the bubble without going over the edge. If you make a mistake, use an eraser to rub out your first mark completely and then fill in the correct bubble.

Hold up an Answer Sheet and point to the SURNAME/FIRST NAME section.

Say:

I am pointing to the part of the Answer Sheet where you can see the words 'SURNAME'. There is a row of boxes across the top of this section. Please print your surname by putting one letter in each box. Start in the first box. Put your first name and middle initial in the last two sets of boxes.

Write your surname, first name and middle initial in the boxes now, but do not write anywhere else.

Allow time for students to do this, and help them as necessary.

Say:

Under each letter you have written is a column of bubbles with letters in them. We are going to fill them in like the example.

Allow time for students to do this, and help them as necessary.

Say:

I am pointing to the next part to do. This time you fill in bubbles with a number in them.

In the section labelled DATE OF BIRTH, fill in the bubbles to show when you were born. Do this now.

Allow time for students to do this, and help them as necessary.

In the same way, work through the sections labelled GENDER and YEAR LEVEL. Give the students an opportunity to ask questions about the preparation of the Answer Sheets, and answer them. Do not answer questions about the content of the test.

Now open your Test Booklets to page one. Follow the directions silently while I read them aloud.

This is a test of how well you understand what you read. Carefully read each passage and then answer the questions about it before you go on to the next passage. There are four choices for every question. You choose the one answer that you think is best.

For Test Booklets 2 and 3, say:

Now look at the practice questions. These will help you understand how to show your answers. First we will read the passage 'About Mark' together. I will read it aloud while you follow silently.

My cousin, Mark, is twelve years old. Last Saturday I watched him play football. The pitch was muddy, but he stayed clean. At the end of the match he ate two juicy oranges. Then he was not clean anymore.

Look at the first practice question. It says, 'How old is Mark?: A 10; B 11; C 12; D 13'. The passage tells us that Mark is twelve years old, so 'twelve' is the best answer. You will see that 'twelve' has the letter C in front of it. Now look at your Answer Sheet. Find the box labelled PRACTICE QUESTIONS.

For Test Booklets 4–10, say:

Now look at the practice questions. These will help you understand how to show your answers. First we will read the passage about the Little Penguin together. I will read it aloud while you follow silently.

'The Little Penguin is an interesting animal. It's a bird, but it doesn't fly. It spends most of its time in the sea looking for food. The Little Penguin is well suited to swimming in the sea because it has a waterproof layer of feathers to keep its body dry.'

Look at the first practice question. It says, 'The Little Penguin is a bird, but it doesn't: A fly; B swim; C eat fish; D lay eggs.' The passage tells us that the Little Penguin does not fly, so 'fly' is the best answer. The Little Penguin is a bird, but it doesn't fly. You will see that 'fly' has the letter A in front of it. Now look at your Answer Sheet. Find the box labelled PRACTICE QUESTIONS.

Pause and check that everyone has found the right section.

For Test Booklets 2 and 3, say:

P1 is the part for practice question one. There are four bubbles for this question. The third one, the bubble labelled C, has been filled in to show that answer C is the best one.

That is how you will show your answers.

For Test Booklets 4–10, say:

P1 is the part for Practice Question One. There are four bubbles for this question. The first one, the bubble labelled A, has been filled in to show that answer A is the best one.

That is how you will show your answers.

Ensure that the students understand how to interpret the question and answers, and how to show their answers on the Answer Sheet.

Say:

Now go back to the Test Booklet and look at the next practice question.

Pause while students find the place.

For Test Booklets 2 and 3, say:

This question is also about the passage 'About Mark'. The question asks, 'After the match on Saturday, Mark ate some?'

There are four answers: **A** fruit; **B** cake; **C** meat; **D** chips. Choose the answer that you think is right, and mark the bubble for it where it says P2 on the Answer Sheet. Do not mark your Test Booklet.

For Test Booklets 4–10, say:

This question is also about the passage 'Little Penguin'. The question asks, 'What keeps the Little Penguin's body dry when it is in the water?'

There are four answers: **A** a layer of fat; **B** a pair of wings; **C** a layer of feathers; **D** a pair of webbed feet. Choose the answer that you think is right, and mark the bubble for it where it says P2 on the Answer Sheet. Do not mark your Test Booklet.

Pause and move around the class to ensure that students are recording their answers correctly. Give help as necessary.

For Test Booklets 2 and 3, say:

The best answer is 'fruit'. If you marked the bubble labelled **A**, you are right. If you need to change your answer, rub it out completely and mark the right one.

For Test Booklets 4–10, say:

The best answer is 'a layer of feathers'. If you marked the bubble labelled **C**, you are right. If you need to change your answer, rub it out completely and mark the right bubble.

Check that students have understood what to do. Demonstrate on the board and explain further if necessary.

Say:

Put your pencils down now.

Now look at page two of your Test Booklet and follow silently as I read the instructions about the test to you.

You will have 40 minutes to complete the test. You may re-read a passage as many times as you need to. Remember that you mark only the one best answer



for each question. If you want to change your answer, rub out your first mark completely, then fill in another bubble to show your new answer.

Try each question as you come to it. Work as quickly and carefully as you can. Do not spend too long on one question, even if it is hard. Follow the question numbers down the columns on your Answer Sheet. If you want to write something to help you find an answer to a question, use some spare paper – do not write on the question booklet.

Do not turn the page until you are told to do so.

Check that these instructions have been understood. Answer questions about them, but not about the content of the test. Make sure that the students understand the ordering of the question numbers on the Answer Sheet.

Say:

Now turn to pages three and four of your Test Booklet. When marking your answer, make sure that you have the right question number. The names of the passages have been included on the Answer Sheet to help you.

Start NOW.

● Instructions for PAT-R Vocabulary

In this Manual, instructions to students are shown like this:

Stop work. Put your pencils down.

It is intended that all instructions be read verbatim to the students, but when younger students are being tested it may be necessary to rephrase or repeat parts of the instructions to ensure that everyone has understood.

Adhere to the detailed instructions and time limits, but avoid causing any feeling of strain for the students. Treat the testing as a normal school activity and not as a special event. Establish a friendly atmosphere and avoid tension.

When the students are seated comfortably in the desired arrangement, they should remove all materials from their desks with the exception of pencils and an eraser.

Check that each student has a pencil and eraser. For computer-scored tests, students **must** use 2B pencils.

Students **must not** use dictionaries during these tests.

It is recommended that for younger students, the step of completing the personal details be omitted during the testing session, and that either the teacher completes the fields after the testing session or the students complete them the previous day. This step can be omitted if the tests are to be hand-marked.

Say:

I am going to give you a Test Booklet and an Answer Sheet. I want to see how well you understand what you read. Please keep the booklet closed now. Do not write anything until you are told.

Distribute a PAT-R Vocabulary Test Booklet and PAT-R Vocabulary OMR Answer Sheet to each student.

Completing the details on the OMR Answer Sheet

Direct students to enter their full name, the name of their class and school and the date on

the lines provided at the top left of the OMR Answer Sheet. Check that this has been done clearly and correctly.

Check that all booklets are open at the correct page. Record the time at which students start individual work on the test.

During the test

Move around the room unobtrusively and check that the students are marking their answers in the correct way. Do not answer questions, though, about the content of the passages or the questions, and the meaning or pronunciation of words. Encourage students to do their best, even if they do not understand some parts of the test.

A small number of students may have difficulty in understanding the instructions or in reading the material and/or answering many of the questions. The test may be unsuitable for them. If the

teacher judges that these students are under undue stress, they should be stopped and an explanatory note put on their OMR Answer Sheet.

After 25 minutes, say:

Stop work. Put your pencils down now.

After the assessment

Collect all Test Booklets. Check to see that the OMR Answer Sheets have been filled in as asked. If the tests are to be computer scored, it is essential that the machine-readable fields are completed correctly.

Store the Test Booklets for future use. It may be advisable to check the reusable booklets for pencil markings.

Say:

Now we will learn how to fill in information on this form so that a computer can read it.

From the list of instructions and the example, we see that we need to use a pencil to fill in bubbles. In the example, a family name has been written in letters and the bubbles below have been filled in. In the example, first the letter **E** is written and the bubble below it that is labelled with the letter **E** is filled in. The next letters are filled in the same way. See how the letters **A**, **D** and **E** have been filled in.

Ensure that students understand the method of filling in the bubbles.

Say:

Now we will fill in your details. It is important to fill them in properly so that the computer can read them.

Fill in the bubble without going over the edge. If you make a mistake, use an eraser to rub out your first mark completely and then fill in the correct bubble.

Hold up an Answer Sheet and point to the SURNAME/FIRST NAME section.

Say:

I am pointing to the part of the Answer Sheet where you can see the words 'SURNAME'. There is a row of boxes across the top of this section. Please print your surname by putting one letter in each box. Start in the first box. Put your first name and middle initial in the last two sets of boxes.

Write your surname, first name and middle initial in the boxes now, but do not write anywhere else.

Allow time for students to do this, and help them as necessary.

Say:

Under each letter you have written is a column of bubbles with letters in them. We are going to fill them in like the example.

Allow time for students to do this, and help them as necessary.

Say:

I am pointing to the next part to do. This time you fill in bubbles with a number in them.

In the section labelled DATE OF BIRTH, fill in the bubbles to show when you were born. Do this now.

Allow time for students to do this, and help them as necessary.

In the same way, work through the sections labelled GENDER and YEAR LEVEL. Give the students an opportunity to ask questions about the preparation of the Answer Sheets, and answer them. Do not answer questions about the content of the test.

Say:

Now open your Test Booklets to page one. Follow the directions silently while I read them aloud.

This is a test of words and their meanings. The test is made up of short sentences. In each sentence, one word is underlined. Below each sentence are four or five word choices. You are to choose the one that has the same or nearly the same meaning as the underlined word.

Now look at the practice questions. These will help you understand how to show your answers.

Look at the first practice question. It says, 'Touch the grass to find out if it is wet.' You will see that the word 'touch' is underlined. Then you have five words to choose from. You have to choose the one that means the same, or nearly the same as 'touch' in this sentence. The right answer is 'feel'. You will see that 'feel' has the letter C in front of it. Now look at your Answer Sheet. Find the box labelled PRACTICE QUESTIONS.

Pause and check that everyone has found the right section.

Say:

P1 is the part for Practice Question One. There are five bubbles for this question. The third one, the bubble labelled C, has been filled in to show that answer C is the best one. That is how you will show your answers.

Ensure that the students understand how to interpret the question and answers, and how to show their answers on the Answer Sheet.

Say:

Now go back to the Test Booklet and look at the next practice question.

ADDENDUM F

UCT Reading tests: these are standardized for South African samples, currently being used by the Gauteng district-based support teams

UCT GRADED READING TEST - MARKSHEET

Name: _____ Gr _____
 Date: _____ Raw Score _____ GRA: _____ : _____

to	is	of	at	he
my	up	or	no	an
his	for	sun	big	day
sad	pot	wet	one	now
that	girl	went	boys	some
just	told	love	water	things
carry	village	nurse	quickly	return
known	journey	terror	obtain	tongue
shelves	scramble	twisted	beware	commenced
scarcely	belief	steadiness	labourers	serious
projecting	fringe	luncheon	nourishment	overwhelmed
urge	explorer	trudging	events	motionless
economy	formulate	exhausted	contemptuous	renown
universal	circumstances	destiny	glycerine	atmosphere
perpetual	emergency	humanity	perambulating	ultimate
apprehend	excessively	domineer	theory	reputation
physician	fatigue	philosopher	melodrama	autobiography
constitutionally	champagne	encyclopedia	hypocritical	efficiency
melancholy	exorbitant	influential	terminology	palpable
mercenary	contagion	fallacious	binocular	microscopical
atrocious	phlegmatic	refrigerator	unique	alienate
eccentricity	ingratiating	subtlety	poignancy	physis

ADDENDUM G

UCT Reading Fluency tests – these are standardized for South African samples, currently being used by the Gauteng district-based support teams

UCT SPEED READING TEST

1

go	is	at	so	cat
to	on	the	we	it
he	in	of	my	an
up	by	be	and	me
do	if	too	dog	as
us	you	for	see	am
no	or	man	Tom	but
ran	ox	not	can	she
mat	sun	has	boy	pen
box	bat	bad	his	did
hat	pig	say	had	wet
sat	day	ten	rat	bee
run	fox	jam	was	get
sit	hot	big	hen	her
out	all	men	top	red
two	pot	bed	let	pat
Sam	fed	fat	leg	got
Ned	pin	are	net	one
cup	pet	pan	fun	may
old	now	who	bit	six

ADDENDUM H

UCT test for spelling: these are standardized for South African samples, currently being used by the Gauteng district-based support teams

VASTUK SPELLING

Say: "This is a spelling test. Listen carefully and write each word next to its number. The first words are easier. Do your best. Write the first word 'a' next to number one" (show where). Each word has to be pronounced separately. The pronunciation should be quite distinct and moderately slow, without dislocation of the syllables. The words may be repeated, if necessary, but they are not to be enshrined in an illustrated context. There is no time limit. Begin with the first word, and read each word in succession until the subject breaks down completely. Stop after five successive mistakes.

Scoring: One mark per correct word. Alternative homophones are accepted and so are reversals of letters. After Gr 3, February must have a capital F.

1 a	31 money	46 touch	61 decide	76 responsible	91 virtuous
2 it	32 sugar	47 feel	62 business	77 agriculture	92 memoranda
3 cat	33 number	48 answer	63 carriage	78 intelligent	93 glazier
4 to	34 ticket	49 several	64 rogue	79 artificial	94 circuit
5 and	35 bright	50 towel	65 receive	80 peculiar	95 precision
6 the	36 speak	51 surface	66 usually	81 luxurious	96 mosquito
7 on	37 yellow	52 pleasant	67 pigeon	82 conceited	97 promiscuous
8 up	38 doctor	53 saucer	68 practical	83 leopard	98 assassinate
9 if	39 sometimes	54 whistle	69 quality	84 barbarian	99 embarrassing
10 box	40 already	55 razor	70 knuckle	85 occasion	100 tyrannous
11 run	41 rough	56 vegetable	71 distinguish	86 disappoint	
12 bad	42 raise	57 improvement	72 experience	87 necessary	
13 but	43 scrape	58 succeed	73 disease	88 treacherous	
14 this	44 manner	59 beginning	74 sympathy	89 descendent	
15 will	45 publish	60 accident	75 illegal	90 precipice	

Gr 1	starts at no 1
Gr 2	starts at no 8
Gr 3	starts at no 9
Gr 4	starts at no 18
Gr 5	starts at no 18
Gr 6	starts at no 24
Gr 7	starts at no 24

ARTICLE 4

EXPLORING THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN SELF-CONCEPT AND LITERACY ACHIEVEMENT: A CASE STUDY AMONGST GRADE 4 ESL LEARNERS

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ARTICLE 4

EXPLORING THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN SELF-CONCEPT AND LITERACY ACHIEVEMENT: A CASE STUDY AMONGST GRADE 4 ESL LEARNERS

ABSTRACT

Self-concept is an individual's perception of his or her own abilities, strengths and weaknesses. Own beliefs and circumstances, the reactions of other people, the outcomes of daily ventures, as well as successes and failures influence the self-concept of an individual. Shavelson's model of self-concept identifies academic self-concept and non-academic self-concept as the main domains of self-concept (Marsh & Martin, 2011). A person's literacy abilities play an important role in his or her academic success and future quality of life. A large percentage of the learners in South Africa are taught in English for a variety of reasons. This means that they are exposed to English before they have established a solid foundation in their mother tongue. Thus, their acquisition of English also occurs at the expense of their mother tongue and starts before a solid foundation in the mother tongue has been established. This practice has a considerably negative effect on the literacy skills of ESL learners, as shown by national and international statistic surveys. This study utilised a quantitative research design and purposively sampled 38 ESL learners with literacy difficulties in the Intermediate Phase to participate in this study. Three main aims informed this research. First, it investigated the impact of a literacy intervention programme on the development of Grade 4 ESL learners' self-concept. Secondly, it established any possible correlation between global self-concept and the following self-concept dimensions: Behavioural Adjustment (BEH), Intellectual and School Status (INT), Physical Appearance and Attributes (PHY), Freedom from Anxiety (FRE), Popularity (POP), and Happiness and Satisfaction (HAP). Thirdly, it explored the possible relationship between literacy abilities and the self-concept of these learners. Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale was administered prior to and after the literacy intervention programme to establish the relationship between ESL learners' literacy abilities and the development of their self-concept. With regard to the first aim, pre-test/post-test results yielded small but significant improvements in the total self-concept score ($p = 0.000$), as well as in four of the six domains as measured with the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale, namely for: BEH ($p = 0.007$), PHY ($p = 0.000$), POP ($p = 0.000$) and HAP ($p = 0.03$). Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Analyses were run to investigate the second and third aims. With regard to the second aim, the results showed a significantly positive correlation between the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale's Total (TOT) scale and self-concept before and after the intervention ($r = 0.61$) and also yielded significantly positive correlations between global self-

concept and all six self-concept domains. The results further indicate that the correlation coefficients show an increase from the pre-test to the post-test results. The following significant correlations were yielded, namely for BEH ($r = 0.84$), INT ($r = 0.81$), PHY ($r = 0.71$), FRE ($r = 0.82$), POP ($r = 0.77$) and for HAP ($r = 0.75$). Results pertaining to the third aim demonstrated significant positive correlations between self-concept and the following literacy measures: reading comprehension ($r = 0.67$); vocabulary ($r = 0.58$); word reading ($r = 0.55$); reading fluency ($r = 0.55$); and spelling ($r = 0.50$).

When one focuses on the two variables of this study, namely self-concept and literacy, the results clearly show that many ESL learners still experience exclusion and that the circumstances contributing to their poor literacy skills and self-concept require urgent attention. The article concludes with recommendations by the responsible parties, such as the expansion of research into best practices, especially for ESL learners in South African schools. Furthermore, it underscores that the need to address the crisis and to get proper and essential infrastructure in place to support ESL literacy and teaching and the quality of learning and teaching in general is urgent. While the policy makers and other stakeholders take care of this aspect, the researcher recommends that the individual teacher should start addressing the literacy problems in his or own classroom, as has been demonstrated by the intervention strategies employed in this research.

Keywords: Academic self-concept, ESL learners, literacy, mother tongue, Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale, self-concept.

ABSTRAK

Selfkonsep is 'n individu se persepsie van sy of haar eie vermoë, sterktes en swakhede. Eie oortuigings en omstandighede, die reaksies van ander persone, die uitkomste van daaglikse ondernemings, asook suksesse en mislukkings beïnvloed die selfkonsep van 'n individu. Shavelson se model van selfkonsep identifiseer akademiese selfkonsep en nie-akademiese selfkonsep as die vernaamste domeine van selfkonsep (Marsh & Martin, 2011). 'n Persoon se geletterdheidsvermoë speel 'n belangrike rol in sy of haar akademiese sukses en toekomstige lewensgehalte. 'n Groot persentasie Suid-Afrikaanse leerders word vir 'n verskeidenheid van redes in Engels onderrig. Dit beteken dat hulle aan Engels blootgestel word voordat hulle 'n stewige grondslag in hulle moedertaal verwerf het. Gevolglik vind hulle taalverwerwing van Engels ook plaas ten koste van hulle moedertaal en begin dit voordat 'n stewige basis in hulle moedertaal gevestig is. Hierdie praktyk het 'n aanmerklik negatiewe uitwerking op die

geletterdheidsvaardighede van ESL-leerders, soos aangetoon deur nasionale en internasionale statistiese opnames. Hierdie studie het 'n kwantitatiewe navorsingsontwerp gebruik en doelgerig 38 ESL-leerders met geletterdheidsprobleme in die intermediêre fase uitgesoek om aan hierdie studie deel te neem. Drie hoofdoelwitte het hierdie navorsing gerig. Eerstens het dit die impak van 'n geletterdheids-intervensieprogram op die ontwikkeling van graad 4 ESL-leerders se selfkonsep ondersoek. Tweedens het dit enige moontlike korrelasie tussen globale selfkonsep en die volgende dimensies van selfkonsep bepaal: Gedragsaanpassing (BEH), Intellektuele en skoolstatus (INT), Fisiese Voorkoms en Eienskappe (PHY), Vryheid van Angstigheid (FRE), Gewildheid (POP) en Geluk en Tevredenheid (HAP). Derdens is die moontlike verhouding tussen die geletterdheidsvermoë en selfkonsep van hierdie leerders ondersoek. Die Piers Harris Selfkonsepskaal is voor en na die geletterdheidsintervensieprogram toegepas om die verhouding tussen ESL-leerders se vermoëns en hulle selfkonsep-ontwikkeling te bepaal. Wat die eerste doelwit betref, het voor-/natoetsresultate klein, maar betekenisvolle verbeterings in die totale selfkonsep-telling ($p = 0.000$) opgelewer, asook in vier van die ses domeine, soos gemeet met behulp van die Piers-Harris Kinderselfkonsepskaal, naamlik vir: BEH ($p = 0.007$), PHY ($p = 0.000$), POP ($p = 0.000$) en HAP ($p = 0.03$). Pearson Produk-Moment Korrelasie-Analises is gedoen om die tweede en derde doelwitte te ondersoek. Wat die tweede oogmerk betref, toon die resultate 'n betekenisvol positiewe korrelasie tussen die Piers-Harris Kinder-Selfkonsepskaal se Totale (TOT) skaal en selfkonsep voor en na die intervensie ($r = 0.61$), sowel as betekenisvol positiewe korrelasies tussen globale selfkonsep en al ses selfkonsep-domeine. Die resultate toon verder aan dat die korrelasie-koeffisiënte 'n toename vanaf die voortoets- na die natoets-geleentheid toon. Die volgende betekenisvolle korrelasies is behaal, naamlik Gedragsaanpassing (BEH) ($r = 0.84$), Intellektuele en skool status (INT) ($r = 0.81$), Fisiese voorkoms en eienskappe (PHY) ($r = 0.71$), Vryheid van Angstigheid (FRE) ($r = 0.82$), Gewildheid (POP) ($r = 0.77$) en Geluk en Tevredenheid (HAP) ($r = 0.75$). Resultate wat betref die derde mikpunt het betekenisvol positiewe korrelasies tussen selfkonsep en die volgende geletterdheidsmetings getoon: leesbegrip ($r = 0.67$); woordeskat ($r = 0.58$); woordlees ($r = 0.55$); leesvlotheid ($r = 0.55$); en spelling ($r = 0.50$).

Wanneer gefokus word op die twee veranderlikes in hierdie studie, naamlik selfkonsep en geletterdheid, toon die resultate duidelik aan dat baie ESL-leerders nog steeds uitsluiting ervaar en dat die omstandighede wat bydra tot hulle swak geletterdheid en selfkonsep dringende aandag vereis. Die artikel sluit af met aanbevelings deur die verantwoordelike partye, soos byvoorbeeld die uitbreiding van navorsing tot beste praktyke, veral vir ESL-leerders in Suid-Afrikaanse skole. Verder onderskryf dit die behoefte daaraan om die krisis aan te spreek en 'n behoorlike en noodsaaklike infrastruktuur in plek te stel, aangesien die

algemene gehalte van onderrig en leer dringend is. Terwyl die beleidmakers en ander belanghebbers aandag aan hierdie aspek skenk, beveel die navorser aan dat die individuele onderwyser moet begin om die geletterdheidsprobleme in sy of haar eie klaskamer aan te spreek, soos gedemonstreer deur die intervensiestrategieë wat in hierdie navorsing toegepas is.

Sleutelwoorde: Akademiese selfkonsep, ESL-leerders, geletterdheid, moedertaal, Piers-Harris Kinder-Selfkonsepskaal, selfkonsep.

4.1 Introduction

The influence of the quality of a learner's literacy on his or her self-concept forms the general theme of this research. For this particular study, the researcher concentrated on the English literacy of English Second Language (ESL) learners, because English is their language of learning and teaching (LOLT).

The study is grounded in the Bioecological Systems Theory of Bronfenbrenner and Cummins's Linguistic Interdependence Theory (cf. Article 1). Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory clearly indicates the interactivity as well as the influence of the different systems within the functioning of every individual's life. The unique circumstances within the various systems, in combination with the abilities, personal circumstances and characteristics of every individual, have a determining influence on the person's development of basic skills, and eventually on his or her self-concept and quality of life. The acquisition of a language other than the mother tongue is described from the view of Cummins's Linguistic Interdependence Theory. According to this theory, there is a symbiosis between the mother tongue and the acquisition of a second language. Cummins (1979:223) states that the learner who has developed good literacy skills in his or her mother tongue will be more successful in acquiring a second or even a third language. Weaknesses in the literacy abilities of the mother tongue will conversely have a negative effect on the literacy abilities in a second language. Literacy problems are often the cause of academic barriers and may inhibit academic progress, which may also have a negative impact on the self-concept of the individual. He further argues (1979: 224-225) that, in order to gain full academic competency in a second language, the basis of the mother tongue should be strong and must continue to develop while the second language is added.

The application of the Bronfenbrenners' Bioecological Systems Theory and Cummins's Linguistic Interdependence Theory to the literacy skills of the ESL learners participating in this study, clearly involved the reasons why the literacy abilities of the ESL learners in South Africa are in a disheartened state (DoE, 2011; Vally, 2012:617). Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory identifies the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and the chronosystems as active agents in the formation and development of an individual. The interactive influences between the different systems will have a profound effect on an individual's future (Swart & Pettipher, 2016:14). In the microsystem, inadequate language stimulation, low literacy levels of parents and peers, as well as low educational expectations can severely limit the literacy levels of learners (Van der Berg, 2008:146). The mesosystem links the different contexts in the microsystem. Interrelationships between the home and the school, after-school care and the home, the home and the neighbourhood form part of the

mesosystem. Both the exosystem and the macrosystem have an indirect influence on the life of an individual child. The exosystem includes settings such as the workplaces and associated stress of the parents. The provincial management of schools and health services also form part of this system and may have an indirect influence on the development of the individual. The laws, values, traditions, and customs of a society form part of the macrosystem. The dimension of time, the chronosystem, includes the ordering of events over the lifespan of an individual (Hook, 2009:506). The interactive operation of the different systems in the life of an individual may fail to provide the person with essential exposure to relevant literacy practices, leading to literacy difficulties. Academic problems and failure can often be contributed to literacy barriers. Marsh and Martin (2011:59) emphasize the negative influence of academic difficulties on the self-concept of the individual.

Many ESL learners in South Africa start their formal schooling with a backlog in the development of their mother tongue due to the negative effects of various systems in their development. Despite the Constitution of South Africa's recognition of the individual status of the eleven official languages and the accessibility of each language as the language of teaching and learning in schools, English is the dominant language of learning and teaching in South African Schools (Department of Education, 2010:14-16). Only a small percentage of South African learners' mother tongues is English, but the majority of learners are taught in English by teachers who also have a mother tongue other than English (Du Toit & Nel, 2014:77; Prinsloo, 2016:63). As indicated by Cummins's Linguistic Interdependence Theory, a second language can neither be successfully acquired at the expense of the mother tongue nor without a solid foundation in the mother tongue.

The central theme in this PhD study is the literacy development and the self-concept of English second language learners. As described in Article 1, p 26), self-concept is the overall image that one has of oneself and one's strengths and weaknesses. This image is influenced by one's own beliefs, circumstances, the reactions of other people, as well as the misfortunes and successes in one's life. Self-concept is described by Snowman and McCown (2009:85) as a person's self-evaluation of his or her competencies in areas such as academic performance, social interaction, and personal appearance. Similarly, the development of self-concept is described by Woolfolk (2013:95) as being the result of an individual's ongoing self-evaluation in various situations. Self-concept can thus be described as the subjective image a person has of him- or herself. Self-concept develops through continuous self-evaluation and sometimes as a result of comparison with other people in different situations.

Reviewing the available literature on self-concept development of ESL learners, the researcher in accordance with leading theorists, also favours a multidimensional and hierarchical model

of self-concept, which divides general self-concept into academic and non-academic components (Marsh, Byrne & Shavelson, 1988:367, Marsh & Craven, 2006; Marsh & Martin, 2011). Academic self-concept (ASC) includes one's mental image of one's abilities in academic domains. There is a distinction between general ASC and domain-specific ASCs. General ASC reflects the learner's own evaluation of his or her academic abilities regarding the academic process (school), while domain-specific ASC reflects the learner's impression of his or her ability in a specific subject, for example in mathematics or English (Marsh, 1990:625; Marsh, Byrne & Shavelson, 1988:379). The positive effect of a healthy academic self-concept on academic achievement, educational outcomes, as well as on future employment and socio-economic status, has been well researched (Archambault, Eccles & Vida, 2010:804; Chiu & Klassen, 2009:372; Marsh & Martin, 2011:59; Snowman & McCown, 2009:85). Arising from the model of self-concept, the debate turns to which one comes first, ASC or academic achievement (Marsh & Martin, 2011:64). The Reciprocal Effects Model (REM) was a product of this debate. According to this model, ASC both affects and is affected by academic achievement. Improved ASC leads to better achievement and vice versa (Marsh & Craven, 2006:147, Marsh & Martin, 2011:64).

When one applies the REM to the destiny of ESL learners in South Africa, it is clear that a large group of learners are condemned to dreary futures. With the quality of South African learners' literacy skills being among the lowest in the world (Van Staden, Bosker & Bergbauer, 2016:4) and its effect on the self-concept of the learners, their prospects of a successful education, as well as future financial independence, seem remote. The crisis is further complicated when the implications of Bronfenbrenner Bioecological Systems Theory are taken into account (cf. Article 1, p 9). The constant interaction of extrinsic and intrinsic factors from the different systems have a determining influence on the life and future of the individual. In the light of Cummins's Linguistic Interdependence Theory (cf. Article 1, p 19), to be educated in a LOLT other than one's mother tongue, without a solid mother-tongue basis precludes under-developed literacy and scholastic barriers. Moreover, according to the Reciprocal Effects Model, academic failure may have a damaging effect on an individual's self-concept (Marsh & Martin, 2011:59). Literacy barriers resulting from shortcomings in some of the systems during development as well as difficulties due to the absence of mother tongue education may thus have a profound influence on the self-concept of the ESL learner. In this article, the interplay between ESL learners' self-concepts and their literacy abilities will be investigated.

4.2 Problem statement and research questions

Self-concept is described by Snowman and McCown (2009:85) as the evaluative judgement of an individual of his or her own competence in different areas, including his or her academic

performance. In line with this, Woolfolk (2014:95) sums it up as an individual's perception of his or her own abilities. Self-concept is divided into academic and non-academic components (Marsh & Craven, 2006; Marsh & Martin, 2011). Academic self-concept (ASC) includes the individual's mental image of his or her own abilities in different academic domains. A further distinction is made between general ASC and domain-specific ASCs, with general ASC representing the academic process (school), and domain-specific ASC reflecting the learner's impression of his or her ability in a specific subject (Marsh, 1990:625; Marsh, Byrne & Shavelson, 1988:379). A healthy self-concept leads to the development of positive feelings about one's own abilities. Research confirms the roll of a healthy academic self-concept in improved academic progress, educational successes, future employment and a decent socio-economic status (Archambault, et al., 2010:804; Chiu & Klassen, 2009:372; Marsh & Martin, 2011:59; Snowman & McCown, 2009:85).

Literacy – the ability to read, write and to use language proficiently – is a prerequisite for academic growth and improvement. Literacy is one of the key role players in the daily functioning and eventually in the socio-economic independence of every person (Archambault et al., 2010:804). However, the literacy levels of South African learners are a cause of great concern. National and international studies rank the literacy abilities of South African learners as the lowest among the participating countries (Nel & Muller, 2010:636, Vally, 2012:617). Researchers agree that literacy is one of the major contributors to the overall well-being of a person and maintain that it fosters a positive self-concept (Hosogi, Okada, Fujii, Noguchi & Watanabe, 2012:1; Schalock, Brown, Cummins, Felce, Matikka, Keith & Parmeter, 2002:457-470). A learner who fails to achieve adequate literacy skills may develop a lack of confidence in his or her ability to succeed thus contributing to a lower self-concept. As described in Article 1 (p 25) of this study, one's literacy skills will eventually have an effect on one's self-concept. Taking into account the influences of Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory and Cummins's Linguistic Interdependence Theory on the development of the literacy skills of South African ESL learners, this article aims to explore the interaction or contribution of literacy development to the self-concept of ESL learners.

The following research questions will thus guide this research:

- Will the self-concept scores of ESL learners improve significantly after a literacy intervention programme has been implemented?
- How do the different dimensions of self-concept correlate with or contribute to the global (or total self-concept) of ESL learners?
- How do literacy skills contribute to or correlate with the development of ESL learners' self-concept?

4.3 Aims

In this article, the researcher aims to explore the influence of ESL learners' literacy skills or abilities on their self-concept. Research confirms that 58% of South African children cannot read with comprehension by the end of grade 4, while 29% are reading illiterate (Van der Berg, Spaull, Wills, Gustafsson, & Kotze, 2016:5). Reading and writing form the basis of literacy. To be able to engage in optimal learning, the individual must be able to read and write properly. Poor literacy skills stand in the way of academic success and may lead to unemployment and a low quality of life. Archambault et al. (2010:804) stress the importance of proper literacy skills as being essential for successful daily functioning. Marsh and Martin (2011:59) emphasize the negative influence of academic failure and the how difficulties with literacy affect the self-concept and quality of life of an individual. As discussed in Article 1 (p 26), scholastic problems and even failure can often be caused by the language of learning and teaching (LOLT), and the scholastic struggle may even intensify for individual learners as a result. A situation in which learners experience literacy barriers from an early age without the necessary support to overcome their learning difficulties could lead to academic failure which ultimately may have an adverse impact on the learner's self-concept development (Snowman & McCown, 2012:387; Woolfolk, 2014:96). Failure to achieve literacy skills might lead to a lack of confidence in one's ability to succeed and thus contribute to a lower self-concept (Archambault et al. 2010:805). A low self-concept regarding any aspect of life may have a profound negative effect on an individual's own confidence in everyday functioning.

This study has three broad aims. First, it will determine whether the self-concept scores of ESL learners can show a significant improvement after the implementation of a literacy intervention program. Secondly, it will investigate how the various self-concept dimensions, as measured by the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale, correlate or contribute to the global (or total) self-concept of ESL learners. These dimensions include the following subscales, namely: Behavioural Adjustment (BEH), which measures admission or denial of problematic behaviour; Intellectual and School Status (INT), which indicates the child's assessment of his or her capabilities about intellectual and academic tasks; Physical Appearance and Attributes (PHY), which reflect a child's appraisal of his or her physical appearance, attributes such as leadership and ability to express ideas; Freedom from Anxiety (FRE) reflects anxiety and an unhappy mood; Popularity (POP) represents a child's own evaluation of his or her social functioning; and Happiness and Satisfaction (HAP), which includes statements about feelings of happiness and/or a person's satisfaction with life. Thirdly this research will determine how the ESL learners' literacy skills contribute or correlate with their self-concept development.

4.4 Ethical considerations

In the next section the ethical procedures will be discussed with specific reference to the procedures followed to obtain informed consent and the steps taken to ensure the privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity of the participants.

4.4.1 Informed consent

Written permission was granted from all participating parties (e.g. GDE, schools, and parents of the learners), after they had been informed of the purpose, importance and all the practical arrangements regarding this investigation (cf. Article 3, Addenda B, C and D).

4.4.2 Privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity

All data collected is seen as strictly confidential and will be stored for a minimum of three years. All records of collected data will be kept in a safe and secure place at the University of the Free State.

This study forms part of a National Research Foundation (NRF) project. The title of this project is: Cognitive linguistic processing of L1 and L2 learners with typical and atypical patterns of development. Ethical clearance was obtained from the ethics committee of the Faculty of Education (Ethical Clearance Number: UFS-EDU-2013-0074). The NRF grant number is 87728.

4.5 Research design and methodology

As the broad aim of this study is to determine the impact of literacy development on the self-concept of ESL learners, a quantitative research methodology was employed. More specifically, this investigation utilised a dual quantitative research design. First, it involved a single group pre-test/post-test research design; and secondly, a correlation design. The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale was utilised to determine the self-concept development of a group of ESL learners ($N = 38$), before and after they had been exposed to a literacy intervention programme. The literacy skills (word reading, reading fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and spelling) of the same group of ESL learners were also assessed prior to and after ESL learners had been exposed to the literacy intervention programme.

The results of both sets of pre- and post-test measures (i.e. scores from the Piers Harris self-concept scale and the literacy assessments) were used in the data analyses. First, paired sample *t*-tests were performed to determine whether the self-concept scores of ESL learners show a significant improvement from the pre-test to post-test occasion (i.e. before and after

the literacy intervention period). Secondly, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Analyses were performed to determine the possible correlation between the different dimensions of self-concept and how they contribute to the global (or total) self-concept of the ESL learners; and thirdly, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Analyses were also carried out to determine the possible correlation between ESL learners' self-concepts and their literacy performances (i.e. measures on the reading test battery: reading fluency, vocabulary, word reading, reading comprehension and spelling).

4.5.1 Sampling design and participants

Purposive sampling was utilized for the purpose of this study. The learners' profile is as follows: all are ESL learners, from five, parallel-medium schools in the Tshwane West Region. The schools have comparable socio-economic challenges and cater for L1 and L2-learners in parallel-medium schools. The learners at the five different schools came from the middle to the lower income groups. The parents, if employed, held positions in public services like the police, or were nurses or teachers. In addition, single-parent families were a common phenomenon and financial difficulties often contributed to these families' problems: in most cases one of the biological parents was not financially or emotionally involved. Family members like an older unemployed sibling, grandmother or aunt sometimes formed part of the family without being able to contribute financially to the living expenses.

Per school, 10 to 15, Grade 4 intermediate-phase learners with literacy difficulties, were identified to partake in the project. These learners were involved in the execution and the administration of standardized measuring instruments to investigate the impact of a literacy intervention programme on the self-concept of ESL learners. For the current investigation (i.e. this article), 38 learners who completed both sets of pre- and post-intervention measurements (i.e. the literacy measuring instruments, as well as the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale) were included in the investigation. All learners included in this investigation were Grade 4, ESL learners. Their ages ranged from nine to 11 years, with a mean age of 10.6 years. With regard to gender distribution, the sample comprised 24 boys and 14 girls.

4.5.2 Variables

The dependent variables in this study are the six domains of the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale, namely, Behavioural Adjustment (BEH), Intellectual and School Status (INT), Physical Appearance and Attributes (PHY), Freedom from Anxiety (FRE), Popularity (POP), and Happiness and Satisfaction (HAP), as well as the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept

Scale Total score (TOT). The independent variable is the literacy development intervention the learners were exposed to during the intervention period of six months.

4.5.3 Measuring instruments

The standardized Piers Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale, Second Edition (Piers & Herzberg, 2002), was used as the measuring instrument in this study (Addendum B, p 42). The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale is a self-report questionnaire which consists of 60 items. It is designed for learners who are at least seven up to 18 years old with a reading ability of at least grade 2 level. The scale contains 60 statements that express how people may feel about themselves. Respondents are required to indicate whether a statement applies to them by answering 'yes' or 'no' (Gans, Kenny & Ghany, 2003:289). Figure 4-1 illustrates the different dimensions of the Piers Harris self-concept scale and what it measures:

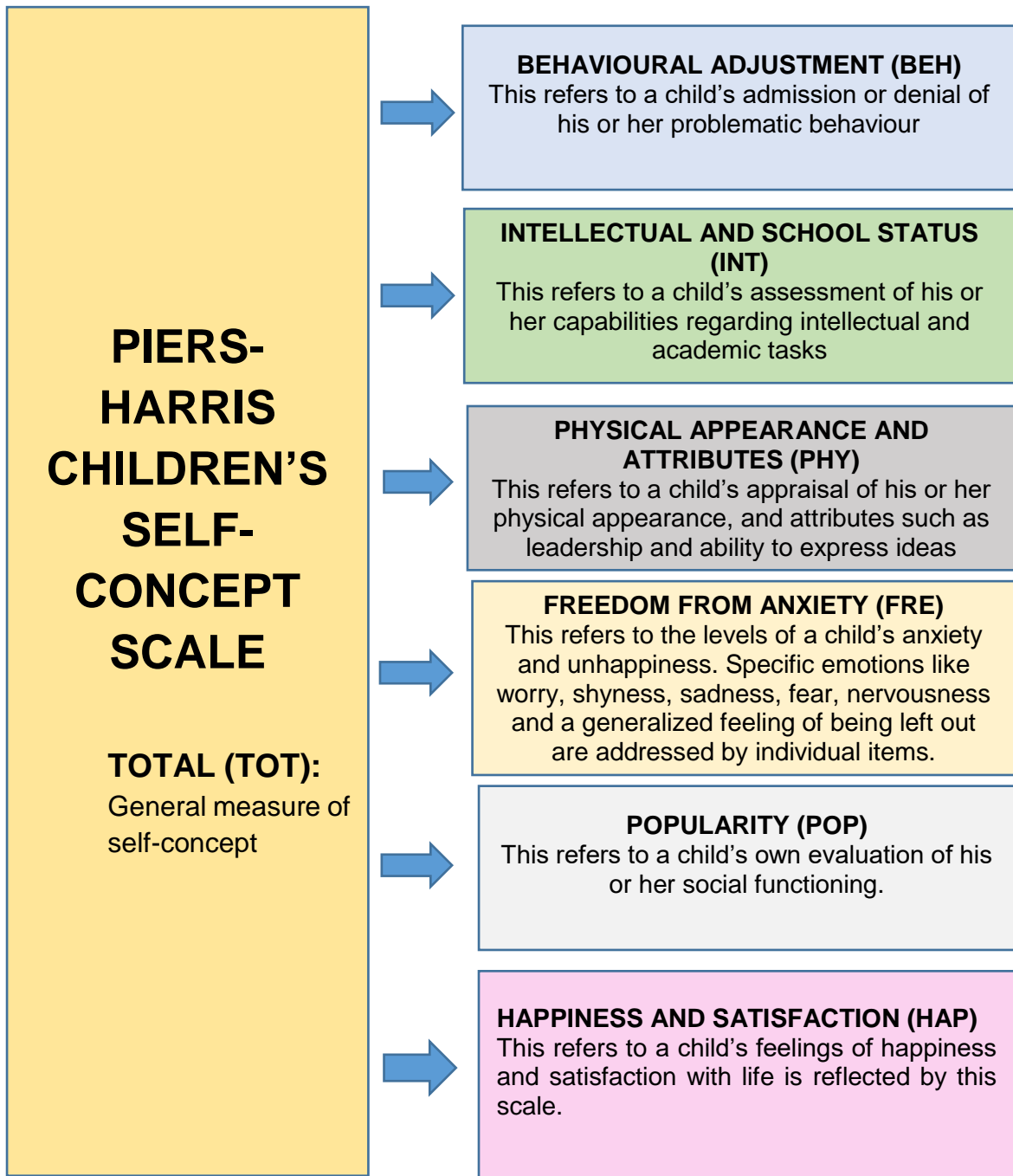


Figure 4-1: Piers Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale showing the six domain scales

As depicted in Figure 4-1, the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale comprises the following scales/subscales: The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale's Total (TOT) score, which is a general measure of the respondent's general self-concept, and the six domain scales which assess explicit components of self-concept (Piers & Herzberg, 2002:24–26), namely:

- Behavioural Adjustment (BEH): this scale measures a child's admission or denial of his or her problematic behaviour.
- Intellectual and School Status (INT): the child's assessment of his or her capabilities regarding intellectual and academic tasks is reflected by this scale.
- Physical Appearance and Attributes (PHY): a child's appraisal of his or her physical appearance, as well as his or her attributes such as leadership and the ability to express ideas is measured by this scale.
- Freedom from Anxiety (FRE): this consists of items reflecting anxiety and an unhappiness. Specific emotions like worry, shyness, sadness, fear, nervousness and a general feeling of being left out are addressed by individual items.
- Popularity (POP): this scale represents a child's own evaluation of his or her social functioning.
- Happiness and Satisfaction (HAP): feelings of happiness and satisfaction with life are reflected by this scale.

The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale was administered to a group of between four and six learners at a time. It was administered in sessions that had been pre-arranged with the principal and participating teachers at each school. The sessions did not interfere with the learners' official school programme. Each school provided a suitable venue for the administration of the assessments. The purpose of the questionnaire and the manner in which the results would be used were explained to the group. They were encouraged to respond as honestly as possible and not according to other people's expectations of them. It was stressed that answers were neither correct nor incorrect and that their answers would be kept confidential.

The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale has high test-retest reliability as well as a high internal consistency. In a study by Dolgun, Savaser and Yazgan (2014:603) to determine the correlation between quality of life and self-concept in children with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, the internal consistency was found to be 0.87. In a review of the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale by the Community-University Partnership (CUP) (2011:3), an analysis of internal consistency yielded a Cronbach alpha of:

- .91 for the TOT scale;
- .81 for the BEH scale;

- .81 for the INT scale;
- .75 for the PHY scale;
- .81 for the FRE scale;
- .74 for the POP scale; and
- .77 for the HAP scale.

The literacy skills of the same group of learners ($N = 38$) were also assessed prior to and after exposure to the intervention programme (cf. Article 3). The results of these tests were used to determine the possible correlation between ESL learners' self-concept and their literacy performances. The following standardized instruments were administered:

- Progressive Achievement Tests in Reading (PAT-R): Comprehension, Vocabulary, and Spelling: Booklet 2 – Year levels 1, 2 and 3.
 - The booklets contain passages that are accompanied by comprehension questions, all of which are intended to measure literal and inferential comprehension of the accompanying texts (Stephanou, Anderson, & Urbach, 2010:2).
- Vocabulary: Booklet 2 – Year levels 4, 5 and 6.
 - The vocabulary booklets contain 36 different items. Each of the items consists of a short sentence in which a focus word is used in context. The learner has to select an appropriate synonym for this word from a set of alternatives in a multiple-choice format (Stephanou et al., 2010:2).
- UCT Reading tests: the tests are standardized for South African samples, and are currently used by the Gauteng district-based support teams.
- UCT Reading fluency tests: the tests are standardized for South African samples, currently being used by the Gauteng district-based support teams.
- UCT test for spelling.

4.6 Research hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were formulated for this study

Research hypothesis 1: The self-concept of ESL learners in the experimental group will improve significantly after exposure to a literacy intervention programme.

In statistical terms, this research hypothesis may be represented as follows:

$$H_0 : \mu_1 - \mu_2 = \delta_0$$

$$H_1 : \mu_1 - \mu_2 \neq \delta_0,$$

where: δ_0 is usually equal to 0;

Research hypothesis 2: There is a significant positive correlation between ESL learners' total self-concept score and the six dimensions of self-concept as measured by the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale (Behavioural Adjustment, Intellectual and School Status, Physical Appearance and Attributes, Freedom from Anxiety, Popularity, Happiness and Satisfaction):

This research hypothesis is represented by the following statistical terms:

$$H_0: \rho = 0$$

$$H_1: \rho \neq 0$$

where: ρ represents the correlation coefficient of the population of ESL learners.

Research hypothesis 3: There is a significant positive correlation between ESL learner's total self-concept score and their literacy scores (i.e. reading fluency, word reading, vocabulary, reading comprehension and spelling):

In statistical terms, this research hypothesis may be represented as follows:

$$H_0: \rho = 0$$

$$H_1: \rho \neq 0$$

where: ρ represents the correlation coefficient of the population of ESL learners.

With regard to the hypotheses 2 and 3 above, a non-directional alternative hypothesis was formulated since one cannot predict with certainty that there will be any correlation between the above mentioned variables.

4.7 Statistical procedures and analyses

The IBM SPSS statistical software program (22.0 version) was used to analyse the quantitative data. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the sample in terms of central tendencies, variations as well as the relation of different variables to each other (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014: 264).

In order to investigate the hypotheses (cf. 4.6), Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Analyses were utilized and coefficients were calculated for each individual interaction. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Analyses were used when determining the direction and strength of a relationship between two continuous variables (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014:271). To determine whether a relationship between two continuous variables is significant, a significance level of

0.05 (two-tailed test) is used. A significance level of 0.05 implies that there is a 5 out of 100 probability that the observed correlation was coincidental (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:300). Thus, if the correlation is significant at the 0.05 significance level, we can determine with 95% confidence that the relationship between the two continuous variables is present. In a two-tailed test, the significance level is twofold, which means that the region is divided between both ends of the distribution (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:302). Therefore 0.025 is awarded to the positive side and 0.025 to the negative side. All the hypotheses will also be tested against the significance level of 0.05. If the significance of the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Analyses is greater than the significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis will be rejected.

4.8 Descriptive statistics

The function of descriptive statistics is to summarize, organize and reduce large volumes of data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:149). It is used to summarize data and is indispensable in the interpretation of quantitative data. In this section, descriptive statistics pertaining to biographical data and the measuring instruments, will be discussed.

When one considers the biographical variables, it is clear that the majority of the sample (52.4%) was 10 years old, followed by 45.2% of the sample who were nine-years old. Only four learners were 11 years of age. The majority of the sample (63%) was male, and 37% of the sample was female.

Results pertaining to the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale show that the total self-concept score varied between 13 and 53, with an average score of 36.55 and a standard deviation of 9.26. Upon further investigation, of the pre-test scores on the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale, it is evident that the self-concept scores of the learners from the experimental group prior to the intervention falls within the low category. The results further show that the TOT-scores of 11 out of the group of 38 learners fall within the very low range (raw scores ≤ 29), whilst 13 learners' scores fall within the low category (raw scores between 30 and 39), five in the low average range (raw scores between 40 and 44), and nine in the average range group (raw scores between 45 and 55) (Piers & Herzberg, 2002:17).

Table 4-1: Interpretation of Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale T-Score Ranges

T-Score Range	Percentile Range	Interpretive Label
Total (TOT) Scale		
≤29T	≤2	Very low
30T-39T	3-14	Low
40T-44T	15-28	Low average
45T-55T	29-71	Average
56T-59T	72-83	High average
60T-69T	84-97	High
≥70T	≥72	Above average

With regard to the six dimensions measured by the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale, scores for the Behavioural Adjustment (BEH) subscale varied between 2 and 14 with an average score of 9.47 and a standard deviation of 3.21. For Intellectual and School Status (INT) the scores varied between 2 and 15; whilst the average score was 10.55 ($SD = 2.93$). Physical Appearance and Attributes (PHY) shows scores that varied between 2 and 10, with an average score of 6.76 and a standard deviation of 2.30. The minimum score for Freedom from Anxiety (FRE) scale was 1 with a maximum score of 14, whilst the average score for FRE was 7.34 ($SD = 3.36$). Popularity (POP) scale scores varied between 1 and 11, whilst the average score was 5.84 and the standard deviation was 2.34. The minimum score for the last dimension, namely the Happiness and Satisfaction (HAP) subscale was 2, whilst the maximum score was 10. The average score of HAP was 7.00, with a standard deviation of 1.91.

With regard to the literacy measures, the average scores (M) and standard deviation (SD) for the reading and spelling measures of the 38 ESL participants were as follows: Speed reading (reading fluency) ($M = 56.73$; $SD = 12.57$); Vocabulary ($M = 12.68$; $SD = 3.24$); Reading ($M = 29.92$; $SD = 7.23$); Reading comprehension ($M = 9.86$; $SD = 7.23$) and Spelling ($M = 17.36$; $SD = 6.74$). In general, the scores show significant delays with regard to all literacy measures prior to the intervention. The post-test scores also show a significant improvement in all literacy measures included in this study. For example, the post-test measures were as follows for the various literacy measures: Speed reading (reading fluency) ($M = 73.84$; $SD = 18.16$);

Vocabulary ($M = 17.34$; $SD = 3.65$); Reading ($M = 41.47$; $SD = 7.51$); Reading comprehension ($M = 13.31$; $SD = 1.27$) and Spelling ($M = 23.60$; $SD = 7.92$).

With regard to the second aim of this study, namely to determine the possible correlation between literacy scores and ESL learners' self-concept scores, both the pre-test and post-test literacy scores of ESL learners who completed both the literacy and self-concept measures ($N = 38$) were used in the analyses of self-concept coefficients.

4.9 Inferential statistics

An experimental group of 38 learners completed the questionnaire of the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale in March 2015. The learners were exposed to an intervention in the form of a literacy development programme. After the intervention, the group of learners were evaluated by the post-test assessment of the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale in October 2015. To test hypothesis 1, paired-samples t -tests were conducted to establish whether the learners' scores on the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale had improved significantly after the literacy intervention. To test hypotheses 2 and 3, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Analyses were used to calculate the correlations. Correlation is indicated by r (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:168). To determine the outcome of hypothesis 2, ESL learners' total self-concept scores on the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale were correlated with the scores obtained for the six dimensions (or six subscales of the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale self-concept scale) before and after the intervention. To test hypothesis 3, correlation coefficients were calculated between ESL learners' total self-concept score as measured by the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale and their literacy scores, both before and after the intervention. The results of the correlation coefficients before and after the intervention are presented in Table 4.3 (p 23).

4.10 Hypothesis testing and results

In the next section the results pertaining to the three stated hypotheses will be discussed.

Hypothesis 1

With regard to hypothesis 1, the following null hypothesis was formulated, namely that ESL learners' self-concept development will not show a significant increase after the implementation of a literacy intervention programme.

In order to test hypothesis 1, paired-samples t -tests were conducted to evaluate the impact of the literacy intervention on ESL learners' self-concept development (i.e. their scores on the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale). The results depicted in Table 4.2 (p 20), show

that there was a statistically significant increase in ESL learners' Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale's Total (TOT) scores from the pre-intervention administration ($M = 36.55$, $SD = 9.26$) to post-intervention administration ($M = 41.15$, $SD = 8.33$), $t(3.66)$, ($p = 0.00$, $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed)).

Table 4-2: Paired sample statistics ($N = 38$)

	Mean	Std. Deviation
TOT- PRE	36.55	9.26
TOT - POST	41.15*	8.33
BEH – PRE	9.57	3.21
BEH - POST	10.92*	2.30
INT – PRE	10.55	2.93
INT – POST	11.02	2.83
PHY - PRE	6.76	2.30
PHY - POST	7.68*	1.90
FRE – PRE	7.34	3.36
FRE - POST	8.31	3.12
POP - PRE	5.84	2.34
POP - POST	6.97*	2.27
HAP – PRE	7.00	1.91
HAP - POST	7.60*	1.92

* $p < 0.05$

Further paired-sample t -tests showed that there were also small but statistically significant increases in four of the six domains of the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale (before and after the intervention).

Behavioural Adjustment (BEH) showed a statistically significant increase, when comparing the pre-test ($M = 9.57$, $SD = 3.21$) and post test scores ($M = 10.92$, $SD = 2.30$), $t(2.846)$, ($p = 0.007$, $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed)). Although the post-test scores for Intellectual and School Status, demonstrated an increase from the pre-test ($M = 10.55$, $SD = 2.93$) to the post-test scores ($M = 11.02$, $SD = 2.83$), $t(0.984)$, ($p = 0.331$, $p > 0.05$), the results were not statistically significant. For the Physical Appearance and Attributes (PHY) scale, there was a statistically significant

increase from the pre-test ($M = 6.76$, $SD = 2.30$) to the post-test scores ($M = 7.68$, $SD = 1.90$), $t(2.723)$, ($p = 0.0009$, $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed)). Despite the increase from pre-test to post-test occasion, the test scores for Freedom from Anxiety (FRE) were not statistically significant (pre-test: $M = 7.34$, $SD = 3.36$; and post test scores: $M = 8.31$, $SD = 3.12$), $t(1.657)$, ($p = 0.10$, $p > 0.05$). The Popularity (POP) scale demonstrated a statistically significant increase from the pre-test ($M = 5.84$, $SD = 2.34$) to the post-test occasion ($M = 6.97$, $SD = 2.27$), $t(-2.170)$, ($p = 0.016$, $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed)). There was also a statistically significant increase between the pre-test ($M = 7.00$, $SD = 1.91$) and post-test scores ($M = 7.60$, $SD = 1.92$), $t(2.173)$, ($p = 0.03$, $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed)) of the Happiness and Satisfaction (HAP) scale after the literacy intervention.

Hypothesis 2

To test hypothesis 2, with the null hypothesis, there was no statistically significant correlation between the total self-concept score and the various dimensions (or subscales) of the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale. Before and after the intervention, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Analyses were performed. The hypothesis was stated with regard to the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale: the total score and the six subscales of the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale (i.e. Behavioural Adjustment, Intellectual and School Status, Physical Appearance and Attributes, Freedom from Anxiety, Popularity, Happiness and Satisfaction). In the next section, the results pertaining to hypothesis 2 will be discussed.

Pre-experiment correlations

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Analyses computed for the 38 learners in the experimental group showed that there was a significant, moderate positive correlation between the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale Total (TOT) scale and self-concept before and after the intervention ($r = 0.61$, $N = 38$, $p < 0.0005$). The coefficient is a mathematical way to express the degree to which there is a covariance between variables. In order to obtain an estimate of the proportion of the variance that the two measures share, the coefficient must be squared (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010: 234). The coefficient of determination (r^2) is equal to 0.38, indicating that self-concept helps to explain 38% of the variance in the learners' scores on the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale self-concept scale's total scale.

For the Behavioural Adjustment (BEH) scale, there was a significant positive correlation with self-concept before the intervention ($r = 0.767$, $n = 38$, $p < 0.05$). The coefficient of determination (r^2) is equal to 0.58, indicating that self-concept helps to explain 58% of the variance in the learners' scores on the Behavioural Adjustment (BEH) scale. There was also a significantly positive correlation between the Intellectual and School Status (INT) scale and self-concept before the intervention ($r = 0.78$, $N = 38$, $p < 0.05$). The coefficient of determination

(r^2) is equal to 0.61, indicating that self-concept helps to explain 61% of the variance in the learners' scores on the Intellectual and School Status (INT) scale.

For the Physical Appearance and Attributes (PHY) scale, there was a significant positive correlation with self-concept before the intervention ($r = 0.70$, $N = 38$, $p < 0.05$). The coefficient of determination (r^2) is equal to 0.49, indicating that self-concept helps to explain 49% of the variance in the learners' scores on the Physical Appearance and Attributes (PHY) scale. There was also a significant positive correlation between the Freedom from Anxiety (FRE) scale and self-concept before the intervention ($r = 0.81$, $N = 38$, $p < 0.05$). The coefficient of determination (r^2) is equal to 0.66, indicating that self-concept helps to explain 66% of the variance in the learners' scores on the Freedom from Anxiety (FRE) scale.

For the Popularity (POP) scale, there was a significant positive correlation with self-concept before the intervention ($r = 0.75$, $N = 38$, $p < 0.05$). The coefficient of determination (r^2) is equal to 0.57, indicating that self-concept helps to explain 57% of the variance in the learners' scores on the Popularity (POP) scale. There was also a significant positive correlation between the Happiness and Satisfaction (HAP) scale and self-concept before the intervention ($r = 0.60$, $N = 38$, $p < 0.05$). The coefficient of determination (r^2) is equal to 0.36, indicating that self-concept helps to explain 36% of the variance in the learners' scores on the Happiness and Satisfaction (HAP) scale.

Post-experiment correlations

For the Behavioural Adjustment (BEH) scale, there was a significant positive correlation with self-concept after the intervention ($r = 0.84$, $N = 38$, $p < 0.05$). The coefficient of determination (r^2) is equal to 0.71, indicating that self-concept helps to explain 71% of the variance in the learners' scores on the Behavioural Adjustment (BEH) scale. There was also a significant positive correlation between the Intellectual and School Status (INT) scale and self-concept after the intervention ($r = 0.81$, $N = 38$, $p < 0.05$). The coefficient of determination (r^2) is equal to 0.66, indicating that self-concept helps to explain 66% of the variance in the learners' scores on the Intellectual and School Status (INT) scale.

For the Physical Appearance and Attributes (PHY) scale, there was a significant positive correlation with self-concept after the intervention ($r = 0.71$, $N = 38$, $p < 0.05$). The coefficient of determination (r^2) is equal to 0.51, indicating that self-concept helps to explain 51% of the variance in the learners' scores on the Physical Appearance and Attributes (PHY) scale. There was also a significant positive correlation between the Freedom from Anxiety (FRE) scale and self-concept after the intervention ($r = 0.82$, $N = 38$, $p < 0.05$). The coefficient of determination

(r^2) is equal to 0.68, indicating that self-concept helps to explain 68% of the variance in the learners' scores on the Freedom from Anxiety (FRE) scale.

For the Popularity (POP) scale, there was a significant positive correlation with self-concept after the intervention ($r = 0.77$, $N = 38$, $p < 0.05$). The coefficient of determination (r^2) is equal to 0.59, indicating that self-concept helps to explain 59% of the variance in the learners' scores on the Popularity (POP) scale. There was also a significant positive correlation between the Happiness and Satisfaction (HAP) scale and self-concept after the intervention ($r = 0.75$, $N = 38$, $p < 0.05$). The coefficient of determination (r^2) is equal to 0.57, indicating that self-concept helps to explain 57% of the variance in the learners' scores on the Happiness and Satisfaction (HAP) scale.

Reflecting on the stated hypothesis, the results discussed above have demonstrated that the null hypothesis can be rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis (H_1), which confirms that there is a positive correlation between the total self-concept score of the Piers Harris Self-Concept Scale and its dimensions (i.e. the six different subscales, mentioned before), prior to and after the intervention period. Moreover, the correlation coefficients show that there is an increase in the strength of the correlations between self-concept and all the domains of the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale self-concept scale before and after the intervention.

Hypothesis 3

To test hypothesis 3, with the null hypothesis, namely that there is no statistically significant correlation between the total self-concept score, as measured by the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale, and the various literacy measures included in this study (i.e. reading fluency, word reading, vocabulary, reading comprehension and spelling), Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analyses were performed. The hypothesis was stated with regard to the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale's total score (TOT) and the literacy measures mentioned above. In the next section the results pertaining to hypothesis 3 will be discussed. The results are presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4-3: Correlations between Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale and the pre- and post-intervention literacy scores (N = 38)

		VOC - POST	COMP - POST	READING- POST	SPEED READING- POST	SPELLING- POST
Pre-test	Pearson Correlation	0.27*	0.24*	0.25*	0.28*	0.23*
Post-test	Pearson Correlation	0.58*	0.67*	0.55*	0.55*	0.50*

* $p = < 0.05$

Pre-experiment correlations

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analyses computed for the 38 learners in the experimental group show that there was a significant, but very weak, positive correlation between the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale's Total (TOT) scale and speed reading prior to the literacy intervention ($r = 0.28$, $N = 38$, $p < 0.05$). The coefficient of determination (r^2) is equal to 0.08, indicating that self-concept helps to explain 8% of the variance in the learners' scores on the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale's Total scale. For word reading, there was a significant, but very weak correlation with the total self-concept score before the intervention ($r = 0.25$, $n = 38$, $p < 0.05$). The value of r^2 , the coefficient of determination, is 0.06, which implies that self-concept helps to explain 6% of the variance in the learners' scores on the literacy measure.

Product Moment Correlation analyses further showed that the vocabulary pre-intervention scores correlated significantly, but very weakly with the total self-concept measure. It showed the value of r as 0.27, whilst the value of r^2 was 0.07. In practice this implies that vocabulary helps to explain 7% of the variance in ESL learners' self-concept scores prior to the literacy intervention. Further analyses have revealed that the following literacy measures also demonstrated positive, but very weak correlations with self-concept prior to the literacy intervention, namely: reading comprehension and spelling. For reading comprehension and self-concept, the correlation coefficient was 0.24 and the value of r^2 was 0.06, which implies that reading comprehension explains 6% of the variance in ESL learners' self-concept prior to the intervention. With regard to spelling performance, a correlation coefficient of 0.23 was calculated; with an r^2 value of 0.05 (thus contribution or explaining 5% of the variance in ESL learners' total self-concept score).

Post-experiment correlations

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analyses computed for the 38 learners in the experimental group showed that there was a significant, moderate positive correlation between the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale's Total (TOT) scale and speed reading after the literacy intervention ($r = 0.55$, $N = 38$, $p < 0.05$). The coefficient of determination (r^2) is equal to 0.30, indicating that self-concept helps to explain 30% of the variance in the learners' scores on the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale's total scale. The second measure of literacy, namely word reading, demonstrated a significant, moderate correlation with the total self-concept score after the intervention ($r = 0.55$, $N = 38$, $p < 0.05$). The value of r^2 , the coefficient of determination is 0.31, which shows that word reading explains 31% of the variance in the learners' scores on the self-concept measure.

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analyses further showed that the vocabulary post-test intervention scores correlated moderately (and significantly) with the total self-concept score. They showed the value of r as 0.58, whilst the value of r^2 was 0.33. In practice this implies that vocabulary helps to explain 33% of the variance in ESL learners' self-concept scores prior to the literacy intervention.

In addition, other post-test measures also showed moderate positive correlations with self-concept. Reading comprehension and self-concept demonstrated a correlation of 0.67, with a r^2 value of 0.461, which implies that reading comprehension explains 46% of the variance in ESL learners' self-concept after to the intervention. The final measure of literacy, namely spelling performance, showed a moderate positive correlation of 0.50, with a 0.25 r^2 value thus contributing to 25 % of the variance in ESL learners' total self-concept score.

Reflecting on the stated hypothesis, the results discussed above and displayed in Table 4.3, have demonstrated that the null hypothesis can be rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis (H_1), which confirms that there is a moderate positive correlation between the total self-concept score of the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale and the different literacy measures included in this investigation (i.e. reading fluency, word reading, vocabulary, reading comprehension and spelling). The correlation analyses further showed that the strength of the correlations between self-concept and literacy measures improved from a significant, but a weak correlation to a significant, moderate correlation after the intervention study.

4.11 Discussion of results

The primary aim of this investigation was to determine whether the self-concept scores of ESL learners would show a significant improvement after the implementation of a literacy intervention programme for six months. The standardized Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale, Second Edition (Piers & Herzberg, 2002) was utilised as pre- and post-test measure to determine the self-concept development of the group of ESL learners ($N = 38$). To determine the learners' self-concept, their raw scores were converted to T -scores (Piers & Herzberg, 2002:17). When one examines the total self-concept score (T -score) before the intervention, it varied between 13 and 53, with an average score of 36.55 and a standard deviation of 9.26. These results show that the self-concept scores of the learners prior to the intervention fall within the low category of the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale (Piers & Herzberg, 2002:17) (see Table 4-1, p 18). The low pre-scores of the self-concept of the learners who experience literacy backlogs corroborate the Reciprocal Effects Model (Marsh, Byrne & Shavelson, 1988:367, Marsh & Craven, 2006:147, Marsh & Martin, 2011:64), explaining the

reciprocal interaction of ASC and achievement. The application of this model to the situation of the participating Grade 4 ESL learners creates the expectation that the self-concept of the learners will be below average due to the literacy difficulties they experience. The results of the current study also corroborate the findings reported by several other studies which have shown that, in inclusive classrooms, learners with learning difficulties tend to have a more negative academic self-concept compared to learners without additional learning difficulties. Results of research by Kelly and Norwich (2004:411) conclude that learners with learning difficulties – especially those in mainstream schools – feel more negative about their educational abilities. The study included 101 learners with moderate learning difficulties; 50 learners from mainstream schools and 51 from special education schools. Through the use of semi-structured in-depth interviews, the results of the data indicate that most of the learners are aware of their difficulties and most of them are negative towards them. The results also indicate that the learners in the special school system are more positive about their educational abilities than their peers (who also experience learning disabilities) in mainstream schools. The research concludes that the additional positive perception of their abilities by the learners in the special school system can be attributed to their comparing themselves to others in their school who have the same educational abilities. However, their peers in mainstream schools are likely to compare themselves with peers with better academic abilities and thus perceive their scholastic abilities to be more negative (Kelly & Norwich, 2004:427). As the learners participating in this PhD study are also from inclusive, mainstream classrooms, their lower-than-average self-concept, even after the intervention, can partly be attributed to their comparing themselves with their peers without learning disabilities. In article 2 (p 29) of this study, the participating teachers all agree that difficulties with literacy have a degrading effect on the self-concept and emotions of the learners.

In this context, research thus suggests that students with learning disabilities are likely to differ from their peers who do not have learning difficulties with regard to their academic self-concepts. This, in turn, also affects the way they perceive themselves and how they are perceived by peers (i.e. intellectual and school status) – the aforementioned is an important consideration of the academic socialization process (Shajek, Lüdtke, & Stanat, 2006:126). It is clear from the review of the available literature that many researchers draw a similar conclusion, namely that learners with learning difficulties perceive that they have less academic ability than their peers who do not have learning difficulties (Zelege, 2004:145). A study by Gans et al. (2003:286) compares the self-concept of 124 students with and without learning disabilities from one public school. In the group of 124 participants, 50 learners had learning difficulties. A comparison between the results on the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale of the 50 learners with learning difficulties and the 74 learners without learning

difficulties revealed that the learners with learning difficulties scored significantly lower on the subscale of Intellectual and School Status on the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale (INT) (Gans et al., 2003:292).

After the implementation of the literacy intervention programme, for a period of six months, the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale was re-administered. The results of the pre- and post-test measures are depicted in Table 4-1 (p 18). Although the *t*-scores indicate that the average total self-concept score of the ESL learners still falls within the *low average* category on the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale, the results show a statistically significant increase in the self-concept scores of the ESL learners after the literacy intervention (i.e. pre-test scores: $M = 36.55$, $SD = 9.26$; post-test scores: $M = 41.15$, $SD = 8.33$). Figure 4.2 (p 29) depicts the Piers-Harris *t* scores for the total self-concept scale as well as the different self-concept dimensions, prior to and after the implementation of the literacy intervention programme. The results reflected in Figure 4.2 (p 29), demonstrate that, ESL learners' *t* scores show a decline in the number of learners that fall within the very low (≤ 29 T) and low (30- 39T) self-concept categories, whilst the number of ESL learners within the low average (40- 44 T)) and average self-concept categories (45-55T) show a noteworthy increase. The improvement of the self-concept of the ESL learners after the implementation of the intervention programme is consistent with research by other researchers (Guay, Marsh & Boivin, 2003:124-136). Their study collected data on three different occasions, with a period of one year between each *measurement*, from three cohorts of learners in grades 2, 3 and 4 respectively. The results from the study of Guay and colleagues (2003) confirm the positive influence of an individual's self-concept on academic achievement and vice versa. Similar to the research mentioned above, the researcher hypothesises that, with longer exposure to an intervention study (i.e. improved literacy skills over time), ESL learners' self-concept scores will probably show more significant improvement. As mentioned before, according to the *t*-scores the moderate improvement of the total self-concept indicate that the average total self-concept score of the ESL learners falls within the *low average* category on the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale (Piers & Herzberg, 2002:17), thus an improvement from the *low* category to the *low average* category. The only moderate improvement is explained by the research indicating that the learner's perceptions of their academic self-concept are predicted by the teacher's autonomy-supportive behaviour (Leflot, Onghena & Colpin, 2010:397). Individual interviews conducted with the participating teachers (cf. Article 2) indicate that, although the teachers consider professionalism and a supportive classroom as necessary elements in successful learning, they experience problems in supporting learners with learning problems appropriately. They ascribe it to the time needed to fulfil curricular requirements, the number of learners in a class as well as disciplinary problems, resulting in a learning atmosphere that

does not support and encourage the learners, especially those with learning disabilities (Article 2, p 19).

The results of a study by Leflot et al. (2010), conducted in 30 grade 2 classrooms with 570 learners and their teachers, show that the perception of a learners' academic self-concept is influenced by the teacher's autonomy-supportive behaviour (Leflot et al., 2010:396). The more respectful the teacher is towards the learner's ideas, the more encouragement as well as the better the explanation that the learner receives from the teacher about the relevance of the scholastic activities, the greater the influence on the academic self-concept of the learner. The fact the class groups were large and the teacher-learner ratio at some of the schools was 1:40+ could also have had an impact on the development of the learners' self-concept, as individual attention or support is not always achievable in such large classrooms.

On a positive note, during the six-month intervention period, the researcher had weekly sessions with the experimental group of participating learners. The smaller number of learners, their shared learning problems as well as their enjoyment of the intervention in the form of story reading, provided a warm, relaxed but supportive atmosphere wherein their literacy difficulties were addressed and supported. If it had been possible for them to continuously receive the appropriate support and encouragement, also throughout the school day, the positive impact on their self-concept could have been much higher.

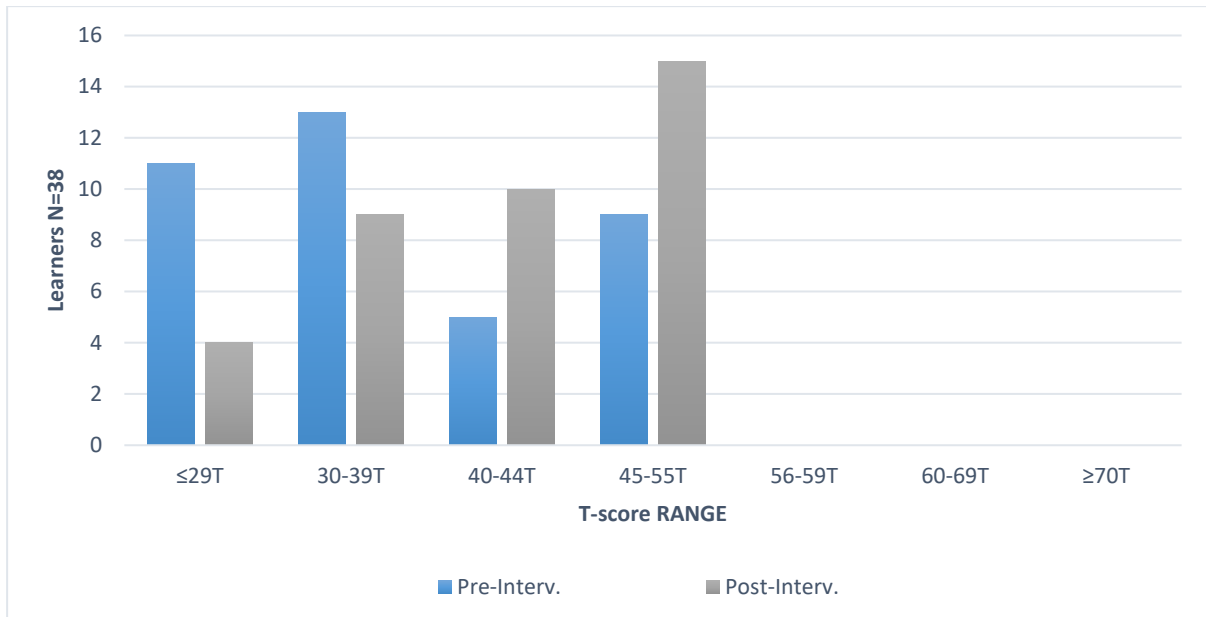


Figure 4-2: Comparison of t-scores (TOT) for the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale before and after intervention

The second aim of this research was to determine how the different self-concept dimensions correlate or contribute to the global (or total self-concept) of ESL learners. The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale comprises the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale Total (TOT) score, indicating the general measure of the respondents' overall experience of their self-concept. It also includes six domain scales which assess specific components of self-concept (Piers & Herzberg, 2002:3). The domain scales include Behavioural Adjustment; Intellectual and School status; Physical Appearance and Attributes; Freedom from Anxiety; Popularity and Happiness and Satisfaction. In order to determine how the different self-concept dimensions, correlate with the total self-concept, the ESL learners' total self-concept scores on the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale were correlated with the scores obtained for the six dimensions (or subscales of the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale) before as well as after the intervention. The results indicate that there was a positive correlation between the total self-concept score of the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale and its dimensions, prior to and after the intervention period. Furthermore, the correlation analyses showed that there is an increase in the strength of the correlations between self-concept and all the domains of the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale before and after the intervention. Thus it is clear that the different domains of self-concept contribute positively to the total self-concept. The strength of the correlation between the total self-concept and the different domains may vary according to the age of the individual and the circumstances and systems (cf. Bronfenbrenner, Article 1) wherein the individual functions. Snowman and

McCown (2009:85) aptly describe the reciprocal influence of self-concept and the different domains as an individual's inherent image which he or she has of his or her own strengths. This image is influenced by one's own beliefs, circumstances, relationships, undertakings and failures. Research by Kelly and Norwick (2004:411) to examine how learners with moderate learning difficulties in either LSEN or mainstream schools perceive themselves underscores this influence. The study included 50 learners from a LSEN school and 51 learners from a mainstream school. Although all the participating learners were aware of their learning difficulties, the learners at the special school had more positive perceptions about their difficulties. These results are attributed to the fact that the learners in the LSEN school compare themselves with peers who also have learning difficulties while the frame of reference of the learners in the mainstream school is of academically able peers without learning difficulties (2004:430) and there is possibly more positive support from the teachers in the LSEN school. In an LSEN school, teachers have to cater for learners with learning difficulties while in the mainstream schools, learners with learning difficulties are often a few individuals within a scholastically able setting. Snowman and McCown (2009:152) highlight that an individual's motivation, attitude, socio-economic circumstances and even his or her home environment and cultural background play a role in his or her self-concept.

The third aim of this research was to determine how literacy skills contribute or correlate with ESL learners' total self-concept development. The literacy measures included in this study are: reading fluency, word reading, vocabulary, reading comprehension and spelling. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analyses computed for the 38 learners, prior to the literacy intervention, showed significant, but very weak positive correlations between the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale's Total (TOT) scale and speed reading (reading fluency: $r = 0.28$), reading, ($r = 0.25$), vocabulary ($r = 0.27$), comprehension ($r = 0.24$) and spelling ($r = 0.23$). The post-intervention correlation analyses show significant, moderate positive correlations between the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale's Total (TOT) scale and the different literacy measures: speed reading (reading fluency) ($r = 0.55$), word reading ($r = 0.55$), vocabulary ($r = 0.58$), comprehension ($r = 0.67$) and spelling ($r = 0.50$). It can thus be concluded that the strength of the correlations between self-concept and literacy measures improved from a significant, but weak correlation to a significant, moderate correlation after the intervention study. A study by Chapman, Tunmer and Prochnow (2000:703) confirms the relationship between self-concept and reading performance: data from 60 school children were collected soon after school entry, towards the end of grade 1, again at the end of grade 2 and during the middle of grade 3. The results of the data provided evidence that learners with a low self-concept had considerably poorer literacy skills at the beginning of their schooling compared to learners with an average to high self-concept. By the end of their first school year,

and again in the middle of their third school year it was evident that learners with a low self-concept read simpler books and performed lower on measures of literacy compared to their peers with higher self-concepts. The reciprocal relationship between the literacy abilities and the self-concept of an individual is thus corroborated by the results from the current study. Moreover, results from this investigation among grade 4 ESL learners support the results of previous research which demonstrate that literacy is one of the major contributors to the overall well-being of a person and may help to foster a positive self-concept. A longitudinal study by Archambault et al. (2010:804) involved three different cohorts of learners ($N = 655$) from 10 public elementary schools. Data were collected over a period of eight years, starting when the learners were in grades 1, 2 and 4. The results indicate a decline over time of the self-concept of individuals with literacy difficulties (Archambault, et al. 2010:804). In another study by Marsh and Martin (2011:59), the authors review theoretical, methodological and empirical support for the reciprocal effects model (REM) that posits that academic self-concept and achievement are mutually reinforcing. The results of the review show overwhelming support for the reciprocal influence of academic achievement and self-concept. Because well-developed literacy skills are a prerequisite for academic achievement (Article 1, p 25), the role of literacy as being essential to the fostering of a positive self-concept is underscored.

4.12 Conclusion

An individual's self-concept includes the perception of his or her abilities in a certain context. In terms of the ESL learner's literacy skills, it indicates the learner's academic self-concept. Both the interplay between the different systems (as described by Bronfenbrenners' Bioecological Systems Theory) and the consequences of Cummins's Linguistic Interdependence Theory (on the literacy acquisition of the learner) will thus influence the academic self-concept of the ESL learner. The quality of an individual's literacy skills as a prerequisite for academic success and future socio-economic independence stands central to the formation of his or her academic self-concept (Hosogi et al., 2012:1; Schalock et al., 2002:457-470). The low ranking of the literacy abilities of the ESL learners of South Africa are perturbing (Nel & Muller, 2010:636, Vally, 2012:617).

As indicated above, this study identified three core aims: first, it investigated whether the self-concept of ESL learners with learning difficulties would improve significantly after the implementation of a literacy intervention programme. Paired sample *t*-tests showed a statistically significant increase in the total self-concept score of the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale, as well as in four of the six domains of the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale, namely for Behavioural Adjustment (BEH), Physical Appearance and Attributes (PHY), Popularity (POP) and Happiness and Satisfaction (HAP). The second aim

explored the possible correlations between the global (or total) self-concept of ESL learners and the six self-concept dimensions of the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale. Correlation analyses yielded weak to moderate significant correlations between the total self-concept score of the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale and all six dimensions (i.e. the six different subscales, mentioned before), prior to and after the implementation of the literacy intervention programme. Furthermore, it showed a significant positive correlation between the pre- and post-test total score measures of the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale before and after the intervention ($r = 0.61$, $N = 38$, $p < 0.0005$). The results also demonstrated an increase in the strength of the correlations between self-concept and all the domains of the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale prior to and after the intervention study. The third aim of this study investigated the correlation between ESL learners' literacy abilities and the development of their self-concept. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Analyses yielded positive and significant results between learners' self-concept and all the literacy measures included in this study. The results of this study must be considered in combination with the results reported in Article 3 of this PhD study. In Article 3 the literacy intervention in the form of an interactive story-book reading intervention programme demonstrated a significant improvement of ESL learners' literacy skills, when comparing pre-test and post-test results. Various researchers emphasise that literacy is an important contributing factor to the well-being and positive self-esteem of an individual (Hosogi et al. 2012:1; Schalock et al. 2002:457-470). Conversely, literacy barriers have a negative impact on learning and also on the self-concept development of an individual. This was further affirmed by the teachers of the ESL learners participating in this study who stated that the literacy difficulties they had experienced prior to the literacy intervention programme had had a negative impact on the self-concept and motivation of the ESL learners in this study (cf. Article 2). The results discussed in this article thus corroborate the experiences of teachers reported in Article 2, of this PhD study.

In conclusion, the findings from this study concur with previous studies investigating the possible relationship between literacy abilities and self-concept development. They show that an improvement of the literacy skills of ESL learners have a positive influence on the development of their self-concept. In addition, the positive attitude and improved self-concept scores of the participating learners in this study may also be attributed to the learning climate at their respective schools. Most of the schools participating in this study are all well managed and functional. From the individual interviews conducted with the participating teachers (cf. Article 2), it became evident that the teachers care about the learners and that it is their professional as well as their personal mission to enable the learners to be motivated and become scholastically successful. However, a theme that came to the foreground during the interviews (cf. Article 2) was their inability to properly support learners with learning

difficulties in their classes, mainly due to curricular requirements as well as the number of learners in the class and associated disciplinary problems (Article 2, p 23). As a result, the academic atmosphere in the classrooms does not always support the needs of learners with learning disabilities and encourage them. From the interviews with the participating teachers, they emphasize the impact of learners experiencing literacy problems on the overall learning atmosphere in the classroom. With many learners experiencing literacy and academic difficulties, it is not easy to maintain a positive learning atmosphere in the classroom. Research by Oroujlou and Vahedi (2011:994) emphasizes the role of motivation and attitude in the successful acquisition of a second language (L2). Educational psychologists theorise that the motivation to learn is a prerequisite for a wide spectrum of academic success (Woolfolk, 2014). Ebata (2008:1-4) indicates good relationships among learners and between a teacher and learners as one of three specific elements contributing to successful learning. The researcher's weekly contact with the learners in the experimental group during the six-month intervention period largely provided sessions wherein the group of learners with learning disabilities basked in a relaxed and supportive atmosphere which accommodated and supported their literacy difficulties. This contributed to the higher post-intervention self-concept scores.

4.13 Pedagogical implications

The impact of poor literacy skills on the self-concept of learners from the lower grades must not be underestimated. Although literacy problems seem to have a significant but small effect on the self-concept of the learners in the lower grades, the impact on the learners in the higher grades, may be more substantial. Teachers agree that the earlier a learning difficulty (including literacy problems) is identified and addressed, the better the chances for the individual to reach his or her full scholastic potential (Bouwer & Dednam, 2016:76; Lenayi & De Witt, 2009:78). To be 100% literate and schooled forms the fine line between successful self-sufficiency, and unemployment along with a life of hardship. Although the results of this study show a significant improvement in both literacy skills and self-concept of ESL learners, the fact that most of them have a low self-concept must be emphasised. Self-concept is not a static characteristic. Woolfolk (2013:95) describes it as an affective reaction, a person's perception of his or her own abilities, strengths and weaknesses. Dependent on the interacting functioning systems (cf. Article 1, Bioecological Systems Theory of Bronfenbrenner) during one's life, one's self-concept customizes accordingly. Woolfolk (2023:95) sums self-concept up as continuous self-evaluation in various situations. The fact that the literacy skills of ESL learners in South Africa are far below the acceptable standard worldwide, and the high percentage of unemployment in South Africa, are only two of superficial symptoms of a nation in deep distress. Thus, the current education crisis in South Africa needs to be addressed in a swift, effective and

accountable manner. The plight of ESL learners, as well as the circumstances contributing to their poor literacy skills and self-concept experience, needs urgent attention. Research needs to be undertaken on the acquisition of English on a CALP level, especially on how ESL learners' needs can be supported, expanded and compiled into best practices for the ESL learners in South African schools. It is our responsibility to enable the grown-ups of tomorrow to be fully literate, have healthy self-concepts and the chance to lead a successful, self-sufficient life.

It is a comprehensive and massive but completely attainable challenge. As responsible custodians of the youth, who are the future leaders of South Africa, all relevant stake-holders must set aside agendas and differences that do not contribute to a well-managed education system. While waiting for the provincial and national wheels to turn to address this crisis, a successful intervention like story reading, which was developed and successfully implemented during this study (cf. Article 3), creates an opportunity for the individual teacher to start to address the literacy problems in his or own classroom. The only pre-requisites are to allocate a slot in the learner's timetable's, preferable daily, to search for appropriate stories on the Internet or in the school or local library, and start having fun with reading. The researcher is planning to make the structure of the intervention available without cost to every educator and/or school wanting and willing to positively address the literacy skills of the learners. This will include suggestions on how to use it in different contexts regarding the LOLT of the learners, their socio-economic circumstances and any other needs. As suggested in Article 3, the idea of volunteers in control of the story hour may also be considered to relieve the burden of the teachers and to add a more informal touch to the session.

The one and only task of each individual involved in education in our country is to ensure access to high quality education for every learner in South Africa. The know-how to address the problem, is well trampled by research. The lack of the human resources needed to provide quality education, which is often indicated as a major problem, must be reversed into an asset by empowering the available teachers who are qualified and willing, to do what they do best. The planning and establishment of a responsible and accountable provincial and national education infrastructure is the second requirement. The national and international statistics of the literacy level of the learners of South Africa are overwhelming. Without the ability to read, no learning can take place.

The importance of being literate is perfectly summarized by former secretary general of the UN and Noble price winner, Kofi Annan (n.d.:1):

Literacy is a bridge from misery to hope. It is a tool for daily life in modern society. It is a bulwark against poverty, and a building block of development, an essential complement to investments in roads, dams, clinics and factories. Literacy is a platform for democratization, and a vehicle for the promotion of cultural and national identity. Especially for girls and women, it is an agent of family health and nutrition. For everyone, everywhere, literacy is, along with education in general, a basic human right... Literacy is, finally, the road to human progress and the means through which every man, woman and child can realize his or her full potential.

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ADDENDUM A: CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

Self-concept

The overall image that one has of oneself and one's strengths and weaknesses. This image is influenced by one's own beliefs, one's circumstances, the reactions of other people, as well as the misfortunes and successes in one's life (Snowman & McCown, 2009:85; Marsh & Martin, 2011:61; Woolfolk, 2014:97).

Academic self-concept (ASC)

One's mental image of one's abilities in academic domains (Marsh, 1990:625; Marsh, Byrne & Shavelson, 1988:379).

English second language learners

Learners who come from non-English-speaking homes and backgrounds, and who typically require specialised or modified instruction in both the English language and in their academic courses (Nel: 2015: XIV).

Literacy

The ability to read and write, as well as the ability to use language proficiently (Collins Dictionary, 2016).

Mother tongue

Refers to the language that a learner has acquired in his/her early years and which has normally become his/her natural instrument of thought and communication (DoE, 2010:3)

Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale

The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale is a self-report questionnaire which consists of 60 items. It is designed for learners who are at least seven up to 18 years old with a reading ability of at least grade 2 level. The scale contains 60 statements that express how people may feel about themselves. Respondents are required to indicate whether a statement applies to them by answering 'yes' or 'no' (Gans, Kenny & Ghany, 2003:289).

Behavioural Adjustment (BEH)

A dimension of the Piers Harris self-concept scale that refers to a child's admission or denial of his or her problematic behaviour (Piers & Herzberg, 2002:24)

Intellectual and school status (INT)

A dimension of the Piers Harris self-concept scale that refers to a child's assessment of his or her capabilities regarding intellectual and academic tasks (Piers & Herzberg, 2002:24)

Physical appearance and attributes (PHY)

A dimension of the Piers Harris self-concept scale that refers to a child's appraisal of his or her physical appearance, and attributes such as leadership and ability to express ideas (Piers & Herzberg, 2002:25).

Freedom from anxiety (FRE)

A dimension of the Piers Harris self-concept scale that refers to the levels of a child's anxiety and unhappiness. Specific emotions like worry, shyness, sadness, fear, nervousness and a generalized feeling of being left out are addressed by individual item (Piers & Herzberg, 2002:25).

Popularity (POP)

A dimension of the Piers Harris self-concept scale that refers to a child's own evaluation of his or her social functioning (Piers & Herzberg, 2002:26).

Happiness and satisfaction (HAP)

A dimension of the Piers Harris self-concept scale that refers to a child's feelings of happiness and satisfaction with life is reflected by this scale. (Piers & Herzberg, 2002:26).

Literacy

The ability to read and write, as well as the ability to use language proficiently (Collins Dictionary, 2016)

Learning disability

Problem with acquisition and use of language; may show up as difficulty with reading, writing, reasoning, or math (Woolfolk, 2014:136).

ADDENDUM B: PIERS-HARRIS CHILDREN'S SELF-CONCEPT SCALE

MANUAL

Piers-Harris 2

Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale,
SECOND EDITION

Ellen V. Piers, Ph.D.

David S. Herzberg, Ph.D.

W-388B

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2

ADMINISTRATION AND SCORING

This chapter describes administration of the Piers-Harris 2, which may be given to respondents via (a) one of several paper-and-pencil forms or (b) a PC program. The chapter also provides procedures for hand-scoring the AutoScore™ Form (WPS Product No. W-388A). The instructions for obtaining computer-generated scores and reports for the PC Answer Sheet (WPS Product No. W-388D), the Mail-in Answer Sheet (WPS Product No. W-388C), and the Fax-in Answer Sheet (WPS Product No. W-388Z) for the Piers-Harris 2 scale are in the "Computerized Services for the Piers-Harris 2" section at the back of the manual. Another option is the Piers-Harris 2 Spanish Answer Sheet (WPS Product No. W388E). This form consists of only the test items and directions, so you need to transfer the child's responses onto an AutoScore™ Form or one of the computer-scored forms in order to score the results.

Administration

The Piers-Harris 2 is intended for use with children and adolescents in Grades 2 through 12. The measure should be used with second graders only if they are at least 7 years old and demonstrate at least a second-grade reading ability. The measure can be used with adolescents up to 18 years of age. The scale may be administered either individually or to small groups of students.

Because the Piers-Harris 2 uses a self-report format, it is not recommended for children who are either unable or unwilling to cooperate in completing the questionnaire. Thus, the scale is not recommended for youngsters who are overtly hostile, uncooperative, uncommunicative, prone to exaggeration or other distortions, or so disorganized in their thinking that their responses do not accurately reflect their feelings and behaviors. In addition, children with poor English-language verbal ability (due to language background, neurological impairment, or moderate to severe mental retardation, among other causes) will have difficulty completing the scale. If you are assessing Spanish-speaking children or adolescents, you may want to consider using the Spanish version of the Piers-Harris 2 form.

When administering the Piers-Harris 2, it is important to develop a rapport with the children, so they will respond

in a manner that accurately reflects the way they feel. Before distributing the instrument, discuss the purpose of the scale, and, if possible, explain how the results will be used. For example, you might say,

The purpose of this form is to find out how children really feel about themselves. Often other people, especially parents and teachers, are asked to say how they think you feel. This questionnaire gives you the chance to say for yourself how you feel.

Depending on the situation, you might also say,

The results may be used to help kids feel better about themselves.

or

The results may be used to help us understand better what makes you feel the way you do about yourself.

To enhance the usefulness of the results, you should encourage children to respond as honestly as possible, rather than according to how they think others want them to be or how they ideally would like to be. For example, you might say:

When you answer the questions, think of how you really are, not how you think you should be.

You may tell children that their answers will be kept as confidential as possible. You should also stress that the questions are not part of a test and that there are no right or wrong answers. For this reason, you should avoid using the word *test* in reference to the Piers-Harris 2. Instead, choose a more neutral word, such as *survey* or *questionnaire*.

The Piers-Harris 2 should be administered in a quiet, well-lit room that is relatively free of distractions. Each respondent should be seated comfortably at a desk or table with a hard writing surface. The materials needed for Piers-Harris 2 administration depend on which method of scoring you use. If you plan to score the measure by hand, use the AutoScore™ Form. This form can be completed with a ballpoint pen or other hard-tipped writing instrument. Be sure to detach the Piers-Harris 2 Profile Sheet before giving the

AutoScore™ Form to the child. If you plan to have the Piers-Harris 2 scored by computer, use the appropriate form as described in the computerized services chapter (Mail-in, Fax-in, or PC Answer Sheets). If you administer the Spanish Answer Sheet, you need to transfer the responses onto an AutoScore™ Form or one of the computer-scored forms in order to score the results.

Instructions are provided here for group administration in school settings, but they are also applicable to individual assessment and clinical settings. After distributing the appropriate forms, ask the children to complete the identifying information at the top of the first page. Although not required, it may be helpful to have children fill in their teachers' names in the appropriate space, especially if many classrooms in a school are being tested at the same time. To help preserve the confidentiality of the results, individual identification numbers may be substituted for children's names.

Direct the children to read the instructions printed on the Piers-Harris 2 form silently while you read them aloud. If you are using the AutoScore™ Form, you will introduce the scale by reading the following:

Here are some sentences that tell how people may feel about themselves. Read each sentence and decide whether or not it describes the way you feel about yourself. If it is *true* or *mostly true* for you, circle the word *yes* next to the statement. If it is *false* or *mostly false* for you, circle the word *no*. Answer every question, even if some are hard to decide. Do not circle both *yes* and *no* for the same sentence. If you want to change your answer, cross it out with an X and circle your new answer. Remember that there are no right or wrong answers. Only you can tell us how you feel about yourself, so we hope you will mark each sentence the way you really feel inside.

If you are using one of the Mail-in or Fax-in Answer Sheets, you can modify these instructions to indicate that children should use a No. 2 pencil and fill in the circle for *yes* or *no* completely when marking their answer. If a child wants to change an answer on these forms, he or she should erase the first answer completely before filling in the other circle. In any case, it is important to ask children, especially younger ones, if they understand what is expected of them, and to answer any questions. Some children may express concern with the all-or-none answer format and may be reluctant to give a simple *yes* or *no* answer. In response to this, you might say,

Everyone feels different at different times and in different situations. You should try to answer the questions to reflect the way you *usually* feel.

With older children or adolescents, it may also be helpful to mention that Piers-Harris 2 results are based much more on the overall pattern of responses than on any individual item response.

The Piers-Harris 2 items are written for a minimum second-grade reading level. However, it is often advisable to read the items aloud for students in Grades 2 through 4, to

ensure that children understand all of the items. In addition, it is important to answer any questions that arise about individual items, especially those asked by younger children, children with reading difficulties, or children whose first language is not English.

There is no time limit on the Piers-Harris 2. Although most children are able to complete the measure in 10 to 15 minutes, respondents should be allowed to proceed at their own pace.

When children indicate they are finished, collect the questionnaires and then take a moment to inspect each to determine whether it has been completed properly. All relevant identifying information should be present, and the form should contain no invalid item responses. Invalid responses include items for which the response has been omitted, as well as items with both *yes* and *no* marked. If a child turns in a form with invalid responses, ask that child to review and complete the items properly. If necessary, use the aforementioned prompts to help the child decide on the best response for each item. It is important that the child correct all of the invalid responses, because these responses can threaten the validity of the entire Piers-Harris 2 record.

Scoring the AutoScore™ Form

Before scoring the responses, scan the AutoScore™ Form for items with invalid responses (those with no response marked or with both *yes* and *no* marked). These items are not included in the calculation of the Piers-Harris 2 raw scores, on the assumption that children may omit responses or mark both response choices because they feel embarrassed about endorsing low self-concept responses. If the invalid responses were completed in the direction of low self-concept, they would be scored "0" and would not contribute to the raw scores. Thus, excluding invalid responses from the raw scores is considered the best way to approximate what the scores would be if the child were to complete all the items properly.

Nevertheless, there is a limit to how many invalid responses there can be before the entire Piers-Harris 2 protocol becomes invalid. As a rule, you should not proceed with scoring and interpreting the protocol if it contains *seven or more* invalid responses. In addition, any domain scale that contains *three or more* invalid responses should not be scored or interpreted. Hopefully, such cases can be minimized by carefully reviewing each record for invalid responses, and, if such responses are present, helping the child to correct them.

A completed Piers-Harris 2 AutoScore™ Form is shown in Figure 1. This example will be used to demonstrate the scoring instructions. Numbers in dark circles are used to indicate relevant portions of the completed form. To prepare the AutoScore™ Form for scoring, tear off the perforate strip along the right side, and remove and discard the carbon paper insert. Note that the responses marked by the child on the outside of the form have been transferred to the Scoring

Worksheet by the carbon paper. Next, retrieve the Piers-Harris 2 Profile Sheet that you removed before giving the questionnaire to the child. Enter the child's name or identification number on the Profile Sheet, making sure that it matches the identifying information on the questionnaire. The following instructions for calculating the raw scores and completing the Piers-Harris 2 profile are also provided on the back of the Profile Sheet.

Calculating the Validity Scores

To determine the Inconsistent Responding (INC) index raw score, review the 15 INC item pairs listed in the left column of the Scoring Worksheet. Make a check mark in the box next to each pair for which the inconsistency conditions are met. For example, for the first pair listed ❶, you mark the box *only if* Item 1 is scored "0" and Item 47 is scored "1." You *do not* mark the box if Item 1 is scored "1" and Item 47 is scored "0," even though that also appears to be an inconsistent pair of responses. Count the number of check marks you make, and enter that number in the space labeled *INC* at the bottom of the Scoring Worksheet ❷. In this example, the inconsistency conditions were met for one pair: Item 5 was scored "0" and Item 43 was scored "1," so a check mark was made in the box for this pair. The INC raw score in this example was 1.

To calculate the Response Bias (RES) index raw score, count the number of circles that appear in the "yes" column. Enter this number in the space labeled *RES* at the bottom of the Scoring Worksheet ❸. In the example, 21 items were answered yes, so the RES raw score is 21.

Calculating the Self-Concept Scores

The Self-Concept raw scores include the Piers-Harris 2 Total (TOT) score and the six domain scale scores: Behavioral Adjustment (BEH), Intellectual and School Status (INT), Physical Appearance and Attributes (PHY), Freedom From Anxiety (FRE), Popularity (POP), and Happiness and Satisfaction (HAP). To obtain the raw TOT score, count the number of items for which "1" is circled on the Scoring Worksheet and enter this number in the space labeled *TOT* ❹ at the bottom of the page. In the example, 52 items are scored "1," so the TOT raw score is 52.

To determine the raw scores for the six domain scales, locate each item for which a "1" has been circled and make a check mark in the box(es) in the same row as that item. In Figure 1, "1" is circled for Item 12, so the two boxes in its row are checked ❺. Count the number of check marks you have made in the columns that correspond to each domain scale. Enter these totals in the appropriate spaces at the bottom of the Scoring Worksheet. In the example, 14 items are checked in the BEH scale column, so this total is entered in the corresponding space ❻.

Please note that you cannot calculate the TOT score by summing the raw scores from the six domain scales. Because some items appear on more than one scale, the TOT raw score is not equivalent to the sum of the domain scale raw scores.

Plotting the Profile

Transfer the Validity and Self-Concept raw scores from the Scoring Worksheet to the corresponding spaces at the bottom of the Profile Sheet ❷. Circle the value in each column that corresponds to the raw score you have entered at the bottom. Then connect the circled scores to plot the profile. The *T*-score and percentile rank for each raw score can be found along the left and right margins of the Profile Sheet, in the same row where the circled raw score appears. Enter the *T*-scores for the Validity and Self-Concept scales in the appropriate spaces at the bottom of the page. In Figure 1, the TOT raw score is 52, so this value has been circled in the TOT column ❸. The corresponding *T*-score is 56, and has been entered below the raw score for TOT at the bottom of the profile ❹.

Plotting the *T*-scores on the Profile Sheet allows you to see at a glance whether a child's scores are in the normal range, which is usually considered to be within 1 standard deviation of the mean. Because *T*-scores are standard scores with a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10, the *normal* range on the Piers-Harris 2 Profile Sheet is considered to be between 40*T* and 60*T*.

Now that you have scored the Piers-Harris 2, you are ready to interpret the results. The next chapter provides detailed guidelines for interpretation.

SCORING INSTRUCTIONS

1. Calculate the Validity Scores

To determine the Inconsistent Responding (INC) index raw score, review the 15 INC item pairs listed in the left column of the Scoring Worksheet. Make a check mark in the box next to each pair for which the inconsistency conditions are met. For example, for the first INC pair listed, you mark the box *only if* Item 1 is scored "0" and Item 47 is scored "1." Count the number of check marks in these boxes, and enter the total in the space labeled *INC* at the bottom of the Scoring Worksheet. To calculate the Response Bias (RES) index raw score, count the number of circles that appear in the "Yes" column. Enter this number in the space labeled *RES* at the bottom of the Scoring Worksheet.

2. Calculate the Self-Concept Scores

The Self-Concept raw scores include the Piers-Harris 2 Total (TOT) score and the six domain scale scores: Behavioral Adjustment (BEH), Intellectual and School Status (INT), Physical Appearance and Attributes (PHY), Freedom From Anxiety (FRE), Popularity (POP), and Happiness and Satisfaction (HAP). To obtain the raw TOT score, count the number of items for which "1" is circled on the Scoring Worksheet. Enter this number in the space labeled *TOT* at the bottom of the Scoring Worksheet. To determine the raw scores for the six domain scales, locate each item for which a "1" has been circled and make a check mark in the box(es) in the same row as that item. Then count the number of check marks you have made in the columns that correspond to each domain scale. Enter these totals in the appropriate spaces at the bottom of the Scoring Worksheet. **Note:** Do not calculate the TOT score by summing the raw scores from the six domain scales. Because some items appear on more than one scale, the TOT raw score is not equivalent to the sum of the domain scale raw scores.

3. Complete the Piers-Harris 2 Profile Sheet

Transfer the Validity and Self-Concept raw scores from the Scoring Worksheet to the corresponding spaces at the bottom of the Profile Sheet. Circle the value in each column that corresponds to the raw score you have entered at the bottom. Then connect the circled scores to plot the profile. The *T*-score and percentile rank for each raw score can be found along the left and right margins of the Profile Sheet. Enter the *T*-scores for the Validity and Self-Concept scales in the appropriate spaces at the bottom of the Profile Sheet. Please refer to chapter 3 of the *Piers-Harris 2 Manual* for complete instructions on how to interpret the scores.

Figure 1 (continued)
Completed Piers-Harris 2 AutoScore™ Form

SUMMARY

This work comprises an exploratory study concerning the literacy development of English Second Language (ESL) learners and the influence of their literacy skills on their self-concept. The present state of affairs concerning the poor quality of the literacy skills of especially the ESL learners in South Africa formed the starting point of this study. A review of theoretical perspectives underlying literacy development and self-concept provided the basis for the study. An empirical examination regarding the challenges faced by primary school ESL teachers assisted in identifying some of the important factors countering well-developed literacy skills of ESL learners. The research involved Grade 4 ESL learners in the Intermediate Phase who experience literacy backlogs. An intervention in the form of interactive storybook reading was developed and administered to an experimental group of Grade 4 ESL learners. Lastly, the interplay between self-concept and literacy achievement was examined. The summary and findings of each article are discussed in the following paragraphs:

Article 1 explored the interrelationship between the intrinsic and extrinsic barriers to the development of adequate literacy skills of ESL learners. This article explored how Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory relates to the plight of the ESL learner within the South African education context. Scholastic and socioeconomic challenges characteristic of the scenario of the average learner in South Africa were discussed. In the light of the interplay between the different systems in the individual ESL learner's life, the implications of Cummins's Interdependence Theory on the literacy development of ESL learners were considered. The effect of ESL learning without a well-developed mother-tongue basis was scrutinized. The influence of the interaction between different intrinsic and extrinsic factors in the various systems surrounding a learner was addressed, in combination with the poor literacy in L2 due to the implications of Cummins's Linguistic Interdependence Theory on the self-concept of ESL learners in South Africa. The Reciprocal Effects Model (REM) of self-concept posits that academic self-concept and achievement reinforce each other. The literature examined show strong interactions between Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory, the Linguistic Interdependence Theory proposed by Cummins and the status of a person's self-concept. The researcher thus argues that the interaction of intrinsic and extrinsic factors within the different systems wherein the ESL learner functions, in combination with the implications of Cummins's theory, is likely to have an impact on the self-concept of ESL learners in South Africa.

Article 2 determined and described the challenges that ESL teachers experience in their quest to create responsive literacy environments for ESL learners. The qualitative research design enabled the researcher to identify five overall themes posing as obstacles preventing ESL learners from optimal academic progression. It included the LOLT that is not the mother tongue of the learners, the gap between the curriculum of the language of learning and teaching in

Grade 3 and Grade 4; disciplinary problems; self-concept and emotional problems; and the lack of time and structure to provide essential individual support to learners. English, as the LOLT for learners with another mother tongue proved to be not only a major challenge for teachers teaching ESL learners, but it also seemed to be the underlying cause for the poor literacy quality of many of South Africa's ESL learners. The participating teachers agreed that literacy and associated academic problems had a negative effect on the self-concept and motivation of ESL learners. In this article, the importance of mother tongue education was emphasized by a theoretical study and verified by qualitative research. In the light of the variety of mother-tongue speakers in classrooms in South Africa, it is recommended that language supportive learning and translanguaging as teaching strategies in classrooms where the LOLT is not the mother tongue of the learners must be examined.

In exploring the challenges ESL learners in South Africa face regarding literacy skills, Article 3 sought to determine the development of the literacy skills of an individual. The importance of emergent literacy skills in literacy development was highlighted. Phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics as components of language form the underlying structure of any language. Forthcoming from this foundation are the skills essential for the development of reading skills, including phonological awareness, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. Based on the Sociocultural Learning Theory, a literacy intervention incorporating a whole-language approach in the form of storybook reading was applied to support the literacy development of the participating ESL learners. Literacy exercises accompanied the story reading to improve the word reading, reading fluency, vocabulary, reading comprehension and spelling of these learners. Utilising an experimental pre-test/post-test research design, the results emphasize the value of interactive storybook reading in creating responsive literacy environments to develop the literacy skills of ESL learners. The findings from this study indicated a significant improvement in the literacy skills of the experimental group by taking the pre-test and the post-test measures into account. The scores for speed-reading improved from 56.57(pre-test) to 74.71 (post-test); for word reading it improved from 29.5 to 41.8; spelling scores improved from 17.33 to 23.90; the average scores for vocabulary improved from 12.54 to 17.19; and reading comprehension scores improved from 9.61 to 13.23.

Article 4 explored the interplay between self-concept and literacy achievement. The self-concept of an individual includes the perception of one's abilities in a certain context. In the context of the ESL learner's literacy skills, it indicates the learner's academic self-concept. The literacy ability of a person plays an important role in academic success. The practice concerning a large part of ESL learners in South Africa learning through a LOLT that is not their mother tongue largely has a negative effect on their literacy skills.

In Article 4, the impact of a literacy intervention programme on the self-concept development of Grade 4 ESL learners was examined. Secondly, possible correlations between global self-concept and the following self-concept dimensions Behavioural Adjustment (BEH), Intellectual and School Status (INT), Physical Appearance and Attributes (PHY), Freedom from Anxiety (FRE), Popularity (POP), and Happiness and Satisfaction (HAP) were established. Thirdly, the possible relationship between literacy abilities and self-concept of these learners was explored. The Piers Harris Self-concept scale was administered prior to and after the literacy intervention programme to establish the relationship between ESL learners' literacy abilities and their self-concept development. With regard to the first aim, pre-test/post-test results yielded small, but significant improvements in the total self-concept score ($p = 0.000$), as well as four of the six domains as measured with the Piers-Harris self-concept scale, namely for BEH ($p = 0.007$), PHY ($p = 0.000$), POP ($p = 0.000$) and HAP ($p = 0.03$). Pearson Product Moment correlation analyses were performed to investigate the second and third aims. With regard to the second aim, the results have shown a significantly positive correlation between the Piers-Harris self-concept scale's Total (TOT) scale and self-concept before and after the intervention ($r = 0.61$), as well as yielded significant positive correlations between global self-concept and all six self-concept domains. The results further show that the correlation coefficients show an increase from the pre-test to the post-test occasion. Results pertaining to the third aim demonstrated significantly positive correlations between self-concept and the following literacy measures: Reading comprehension ($r = 0.67$); Vocabulary ($r = 0.58$); Word reading ($r = 0.55$); Reading fluency ($r = 0.55$) and Spelling ($r = 0.50$). The effect of the intervention on the self-concept of ESL learners thus indicated noteworthy improvement.

Concluding the interplay between the different systems - as described by Bronfenbrenner's' Bioecological Systems Theory, in combination with the consequences of Cummins's Linguistic Interdependence Theory on the literacy acquisition of a person, resulting in a negative influence on the academic self-concept of the ESL learner - was confirmed. The Reciprocal Effects Model self-concept, which proposes that academic self-concept both affects and is affected by academic achievement was considered as a contributing factor to the self-concept of the individual. The quality of an individual's literacy skills as a prerequisite for academic success and future socio-economic independence stands central in the formation of one's academic self-concept. The plight of many ESL learners, who have a LOLT other than their mother tongue, in combination with the effect of the interaction of different systems within which they function, resulting in poor literacy skills, is emphasized by the results of this mixed-method study. Emanating from the study, a literacy intervention in the form of storybook reading with accompanying literacy development exercises was developed and applied with positive results.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie werk behels 'n ondersoekende studie insake die geletterdheidsontwikkeling van Engels Tweedetaal (ESL)-leerders en die invloed van hulle geletterdheidsvaardighede op hulle selfkonsep.

Die uitgangspunt van hierdie studie is die huidige stand van sake rakende die swak gehalte van die geletterdheidsvaardighede van veral ESL-leerders in Suid-Afrika. 'n Oorsig van teoretiese perspektiewe grondliggend tot geletterdheidsontwikkeling en selfkonsep het die basis vir die studie verskaf. 'n Empiriese ondersoek rakende die uitdagings waarvoor primêre skool (ESL)-leerders te staan kom, het gehelp om sommige van die belangrike faktore te identifiseer wat goed ontwikkelde geletterdheidsvaardighede van ESL-leerders teenwerk. Die navorsing het graad 4 ESL-leerders in die intermediêre fase wat 'n agterstand in geletterdheid toon, betrek. 'n Intervensie in die vorm van interaktiewe lees van storieboeke is ontwikkel en op 'n eksperimentele groep graad 4 ESL-leerders toegepas. Laastens is die interaksie tussen selfkonsep en geletterdheidsprestasië ondersoek. Die opsomming en bevindings van elke artikel word in die volgende paragrawe bespreek:

Artikel 1 het die onderlinge verhouding tussen die intrinsieke en ekstrasieke struikelblokke in die ontwikkeling van toereikende geletterdheidsvaardighede van ESL-leerders ondersoek. Hierdie artikel het ondersoek ingestel hoe Bronfenbrenner se ekologiese sisteemteorie verband hou met die posisie van die ESL-leerder in die Suid-Afrikaanse onderwyskonteks. Skolastiese en sosio-ekonomiese uitdagings kenmerkend van die scenario van die gemiddelde Suid-Afrikaanse leerder is bespreek. In die lig van die interaksie tussen die verskillende sisteme in die individuele ESL-leerder se lewe is die implikasies van Cummins se Interafhanklikheidsteorie vir die geletterdheidsontwikkeling van ESL-leerders oorweeg. Die effek van ESL-leer sonder 'n goed ontwikkelde moedertaalbasis is van naderby beskou. Die invloed van die interaksie tussen verskillende intrinsieke en ekstrasieke faktore in die onderskeie sisteme waarbinne 'n leerder hom- of haar bevind, is aangespreek, in kombinasie met die swak geletterdheid in L2 as gevolg van die implikasies van Cummins se Linguistieke Interafhanklikheidsteorie vir die selfkonsep van ESL-leerders in Suid-Afrika. Die Resiproke-Effekte-Model (REM) van selfkonsep en prestasië het mekaar versterk. Die literatuur wat ondersoek is, toon 'n sterk verwantskap tussen Bronfenbrenner se Bio-ekologiese Sisteemteorie, die Linguistiese Interafhanklikheidsteorie soos deur Cummins voorgestel en die status van 'n persoon se selfkonsep. Die navorser redeneer daarom dat die interaksie van intrinsieke en ekstrasieke faktore binne die verskillende stelsels waarbinne die ESL-leerder funksioneer, gekombineer met die implikasies van Cummins se teorie, waarskynlik 'n impak op die selfkonsep van ESL-leerders in Suid-Afrika sal hê.

Artikel 2 bepaal en beskryf die uitdagings wat ESL-opvoeders ervaar in hulle soeke daarna om responsiewe geletterheidsomgewings vir ESL-leerders te skep. Die kwalitatiewe navorsingsontwerpe het die navorser in staat gestel om vyf oorkoepelende temas te identifiseer as struikelblokke wat ESL-leerders verhoed om optimaal akademies te vorder. Dit sluit die TVOL (LOLT) in wat nie die moedertaal van die leerders is nie, die gaping tussen die kurrikulum van die taal van onderrig en leer in graad 3 en graad 4; dissiplinêre probleme; selfkonsep en emosionele probleme en die gebrek aan tyd en struktuur om noodsaaklike individuele steun aan leerders te bied. Engels as die TVOL vir leerders met 'n ander moedertaal het geblyk nie alleen 'n reuse uitdaging vir opvoeders te wees wat ESL-leerders onderrig nie, maar dit skyn ook die onderliggende oorsaak vir die swak geletterheidsgehalte van talle Suid-Afrikaanse ESL-leerders te wees. Die deelnemende onderwysers het saamgestem dat geletterdheid en meegaande akademiese probleme 'n negatiewe uitwerking op die selfkonsep en motivering van ESL-leerders gehad het. In hierdie artikel is die belangrikheid van moedertaalonderrig deur 'n teoretiese studie beklemtoon en deur kwalitatiewe navorsing geverifieer. In die lig van die groot verskeidenheid moedertaalsprekers in klaskamers in Suid-Afrika is aanbeveel dat taal-ondersteunde leer en transtaligheid as onderrigstrategieë ondersoek moet word in klaskamers waar die TVOL nie die moedertaal van die leerders is nie.

Deur die uitdaging te ondersoek waarvoor ESL-leerders in Suid-Afrika te staan kom wat geletterdheidsvaardighede betref, het Artikel 3 gepoog om die ontwikkeling van die geletterdheidsvaardighede van 'n individu te bepaal. Die belangrikheid van opkomende geletterdheidsvaardighede in geletterdheidsontwikkeling is van naderby beskou. Fonologie, morfologie, sintaks, semantiek en pragmatiek as komponente van taal maak die onderliggende struktuur van enige taal. Voortspruitend uit hierdie basis is die vaardighede wat noodsaaklik is vir die ontwikkeling van leesvaardighede, insluitende 'n fonologiese bewustheid, vlotheid, woordeskat en begrip. Gebaseer op die Sosio-kulturele leer teorie, is 'n geletterdheidsintervensie wat 'n heeltaalbenadering inkorporeer, toegepas om die geletterdheidsontwikkeling van die deelnemende ESL-leerders te ondersteun. Geletterdheidsoefeninge is saam met die lees van stories gebruik om die woordlees, leesvlotheid, woordeskat, leesbegrip en spelvermoë van hierdie leerders te verbeter. Deur gebruik te maak van 'n eksperimentele voor-/na-toets navorsingsontwerp, beklemtoon die resultate die waarde van interaktiewe storieboeklees by die skep van responsiewe geletterdheidsomgewings om die geletterdheidsvaardighede van ESL-leerders te ontwikkel. Die bevindings van hierdie studie dui 'n betekenisvolle verbetering van die geletterdheidsvaardighede van die eksperimentele groep aan deur die voor- en na-toetsmetings in aanmerking te neem. Die tellings vir spoedlees het verbeter vanaf 56.57 (voortoets)

tot 74.71 (natoets); vir woordlees het dié van 29.5 tot 41.8 verbeter; speluitslae het van 17.33 tot 23.90 verbeter; die gemiddelde uitslae vir woordeskat het van 12.54 tot 17.19 verbeter; en leesbegripuitslae het van 9.61 tot 13.23 verbeter.

Artikel 4 het die wisselwerking tussen selfkonsep en geletterdheidsprestasie ondersoek. Die selfkonsep van 'n individu sluit die persepsie van 'n persoon se vermoë binne 'n sekere konteks in. In die konteks van die ESL-leerder se geletterdheidsvaardighede, dui dit die leerder se akademiese selfkonsep aan. Die geletterdheidsvermoë van 'n persoon speel 'n belangrike rol in akademiese sukses. Die praktyk insake 'n groot deel van ESL-leerders in Suid-Afrika wat deur 'n TVOL leer wat nie hulle moedertaal is nie, het grootliks 'n negatiewe effek op hulle geletterdheidsvaardighede.

In Artikel 4 is die impak van 'n geletterdheidsintervensieprogram op die selfkonsep-ontwikkeling van graad 4 ESL-leerders ondersoek. Tweedens is moontlike korrelasies tussen globale selfkonsep en die volgende dimensies van selfkonsep, naamlik Gedragsaanpassing (BEH), Intellektuele en skoolstatus (INT), Fisiese Voorkoms en Eienskappe (PHY), Vryheid van Angstigheid (FRE), Gewildheid (POP) en Geluk en Tevredenheid (HAP) bepaal. Derdens is die moontlike verhouding tussen die geletterdheidsvermoë en selfkonsep van hierdie leerders ondersoek. Die Piers Harris Selfkonsepskaal is voor en na die geletterdheidsintervensieprogram toegepas om die verhouding tussen ESL-leerders se vermoëns en hulle selfkonsep-ontwikkeling te bepaal. Wat betref die eerste oogmerk, het voor-/na-toetsresultate klein, maar betekenisvolle verbeterings in die totale selfkonseptelling ($p = 0.000$) opgelewer, asook vier van die ses domeine soos bepaal met die Piers-Harris selfkonsepskaal, naamlik vir BEH ($p = 0.007$), PHY ($p = 0.000$), POP ($p = 0.000$) en HAP ($p = 0.03$). Pearson Produk-Moment korrelasieanalises is uitgevoer om die tweede en derde oogmerke te ondersoek. Wat die tweede oogmerk betref, toon die resultate 'n betekenisvol positiewe korrelasie tussen die Piers-Harris selfkonsepskaal se Totale (TOT) skaal en selfkonsep voor en na die intervensie ($r = 0.61$), sowel as betekenisvol positiewe korrelasies tussen globale selfkonsep en al ses selfkonsepdomeine. Die resultate toon verder aan dat die korrelasiekoeffisiënte 'n toename vanaf die voortoets na die natoetsgeleentheid toon. Resultate wat betref die derde oogmerk toon betekenisvol positiewe korrelasies tussen selfkonsep en die volgende geletterdheidsmetings: Leesbegrip ($r = 0.67$); Woordeskat ($r = 0.58$); Woordlees ($r = 0.55$); Leesvlotheid ($r = 0.55$) en Spelling ($r = 0.50$). Die effek van die intervensie op die selfkonsep van ESL-leerders het gevolglik 'n betekenisvolle verbetering getoon.

Ter afsluiting is bevestig dat die wisselwerking tussen die verskillende sisteme, soos beskryf deur Bronfenbrenner se Bio-ekologiese Sisteemteorie, gekombineer met die gevolge van

Cummins se Linguistiese Onafhanklikheidsteorie op die geletterdheidsverwerwing van 'n persoon, lei tot 'n negatiewe invloed op die akademiese selfkonsep van die ESL-leerder. Die Resiproke Effekte-Model-selfkonsep, wat voorstel dat akademiese selfkonsep akademiese prestasie affekteer en daardeur geaffekteer word, is oorweeg as 'n bydraende faktor tot die selfkonsep van die individu. Die gehalte van 'n individu se geletterdheidsvaardighede as 'n voorvereiste vir akademiese sukses en toekomstige sosio-ekonomiese onafhanklikheid staan sentraal tot die vorming van 'n persoon se akademiese selfkonsep. Die posisie van talle ESL-leerders wat 'n ander TVOL as hulle moedertaal het, gekombineer met die effek van die interaksie van verskillende sisteme waarbinne hulle funksioneer, en wat lei tot swak geletterdheidsvaardighede, word beklemtoon deur die resultate van hierdie gemengde metode studie. Voortspruitend uit die studie is 'n geletterdheidsintervensie in die vorm van storieboeklees, gepaardgaande met oefeninge wat geletterdheidsontwikkelings-oefeninge met positiewe resultate ontwikkel en toegepas.

KEY CONCEPTS

Literacy
self-concept
scholastic abilities
scholastic problems
challenges
educators
ESL-learner
mother tongue
curriculum
discipline
theoretical perspectives
social-cultural
intrinsic factors
extrinsic factors
literacy development
intervention
story reading
intermediate phase

SLEUTELTERME

geletterdheid
self-konsep
skolastiese vermoëns
skolastiese probleme
uitdagings
onderwysers
Engels Eerste Taal leerder
moedertaal
kurrikulum
dissipline
teoretiese perspektiewe
sosio-kultureel
intrinsieke faktore
ekstrinsieke faktore
geletterdheid ontwikkeling
intervensie
lees van stories
intermediêre fase