

**BILITERACY DEVELOPMENT IN A RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOL OF LIMPOPO  
PROVINCE: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY.**

By

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to my son Ditebogo Masedi Lazarous Lebese.

## DECLARATION

I; **Molatelo Prudence Lebese** hereby declare that the dissertation; **BILITERACY DEVELOPMENT IN A RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOL IN THE LIMPOPO PROVINCE: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been duly acknowledged and indicated by means of complete references. This mini-dissertation has not been previously submitted in part or in full for any other degree to any other university.

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**Signature**

[Redacted Signature]

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**Date**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

It was not easy...I would like to:

Give thanks to Almighty God for giving me strength, wisdom, knowledge and skills to make this study possible.

To thank my family, my parents, Jabulani Josia Lebese (Dad) and Rosina Motala Lebese (Mom), who never gave up on me through my studies with their courage and support, my son Masedi Ditebogo Lebese, my inspiration to never give up on what I wanted to achieve, grandmother Elizabeth Koloane who always wanted the best for me, Robert Mamabolo for his encouragement, support, guidance and dedication he has shown throughout the process, Marota Aphané and Jerry Matlala for their support.

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## ABSTRACT

The research reported in this mini-dissertation is an ethnographic case study which sought to investigate the development of biliteracy in one of the rural primary schools in the Limpopo province. Its focus is on how Grade 3 learners engage with texts and the strategies that teachers use to promote biliteracy (in English and Sepedi). Data collection methods included classroom observation, semi-structured teacher interviews and analysis of teaching and learning materials and the print environment. A brief analysis of the school's language policy was also completed.

The research revealed that the learners are hardly being taught to read and write whether in Sepedi, (their home language) or in English. While the school language policy states that English should be introduced in Grade 2, it is actually taught only in Grade 3. Additionally, as the learners do not understand English, the teachers frequently code-switch into Sepedi and therefore the learners hardly get any exposure to English. Many other negative aspects were uncovered. Out of the 28 lessons scheduled to be observed only 20 lessons actually took place. The learners are therefore not actually spending the allocated time on literacy development. The teaching is highly routinised with teachers, by and large, using an approach that emphasises repetition and rote-learning. The learners hardly ever get a chance to engage with texts independently. Even the textbooks available are not used but are stored away in the cupboards. Teachers painstakingly copy material from the textbooks on to the chalkboard and learners then copy this into their exercise books. The classroom environment is uninspiring, as there are hardly any learning materials on display.

The interviews showed that the teachers had not been adequately trained to teach literacy and were in fact unaware of more effective ways of getting learners to engage with texts. They saw themselves as victims of frequent policy and curricular changes and blamed Government for poor training and lack of resources. The study in fact confirms findings of earlier research that the acquisition of literacy is simply not taking

place in the poor, rural schools of South Africa and there is indeed a crisis in education in these schools.

## ABBREVIATIONS

ABET	Adult Basic Education Training
ANA	Annual National Assessments
DoBE	Department of Basic Education
DoE	Department of Education
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ERO	Education Review Office
ESL	English as a Second Language
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
L1	Language1 (Mother tongue) Sepedi
L2	Language 2 (Second language) English
MLDS	Multilingual Demonstration School
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PRAESA	Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers Union
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

Literacy and numeracy are regarded as the key competencies to be acquired by primary school learners. Educational achievement and progress are crucially dependent on these competencies. Yet many scholars (Hayward 1998; Taylor & Vinjevold 1999c; Pretorius & Ntuli 2005; Fleisch 2007) have asserted that primary school children in South Africa are not acquiring these competencies. An important assessment that has been carried out on the literacy achievements of learners world-wide is the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS 2006). PIRLS's summary report of South African children's reading literacy achievement shows that the reading achievement of South African Grade 4 and 5 learners is the lowest in the world, when compared to 44 other countries.

In their summary report, Van Staden & Howie (2007) state that more than 30 000 Grade 4 and 5 learners were assessed using instruments translated into 11 official languages to cater for South African language populations. The South African Grade 4 and 5 learners achieved the lowest mean performance scores in comparison with Grade 4 learners from 44 other participating countries: mean performances which were also well below the fixed international mean of 500 points. Although the Grade 5 learners had a higher mean performance than the Grade 4 learners, this average mean score was still approximately 200 points below the fixed international mean for Grade 4 learners.

The PIRLS focused on three aspects of learners' reading literacy, which were: processes of comprehension that involve being able to focus on and retrieve explicitly stated information, make straightforward inferences, examine and evaluate language and textual elements. The purposes for reading that include the



examination of literary experience and the ability to acquire and use information as well as reading behaviours and attitudes towards reading were also tested.

The results of PIRLS 2006 show that learners are struggling to develop the reading and literacy competencies needed to make the transition to reading to learn in the Intermediate Phase in South African schools.

The PIRLS 2006 international report indicates that on average, internationally; teachers allocate 30% of instructional time to language instruction and 20% to reading instruction (Mullis, Martin, Kennedy & Foy 2007). On average, internationally, Grade 4 learners are taught explicit reading instruction for more than 6 hours a week. Teachers' reports in the South African study reveal that only 10% of Grade 4 learners receive reading instruction for more than 6 hours per week, 18% for between 3 and 6 hours and 72% for less than 3 hours per week (Mullis et al 2007). From these data, it becomes clear that South African reports fall far below the international averages in terms of time spent on reading instruction.

This is not in tune with the Revised National Curriculum Statement, which states that the most important task of the Foundation Phase teacher is to ensure that all learners learn to read. Forty per cent of teaching time in the Foundation Phase therefore, is allocated to literacy (DoE 2002: 23). However, as shown above, in practice, this is not the case.

Van Staden & Howie (2007) state that the teachers' data presented in PIRLS (2006) indicate the need for Intermediate Phase teachers' continuous professional development, as Grade 4 learners' low overall achievement scores, in relation to teacher qualifications, perhaps suggests that these teachers have not been adequately prepared to teach literacy. Of concern is the high incidence of low achievement among learners who are taught by teachers aged between 30 and 59 years.

According to Trok (2005:59), “Bantu Education of apartheid South Africa has left countless black families with few reading and writing skills, particularly in rural and poor households. For them not much has changed. The school curriculum of yesteryear is still used in some schools in rural areas. Teachers who are products of Bantu Education pass their teaching on to this generation and so continue the cycle.” As is well-known, during the apartheid era blacks were denied access to quality education. Teachers who are products of Bantu education are still using the methods that were used to teach them. Obviously it would be difficult for them to adapt to new curricula and unfamiliar methods of teaching and assessment. Trok (2005:59) goes on further to elaborate,

“Children are not introduced to libraries and reading early enough. In schools where there are libraries, the only books available are textbooks and children and teachers only go to the library to study or to complete a certain task. They have no story books for children or any lessons for stimulating reading for fun. For parents ... a library is a no-go area and sharing books as a family is unheard of.”

Pretorius & Ntuli (2005) state that pre-school children whose parents read storybooks to them have a linguistic and literacy head start over other children when they start school. It is well-known that success at school depends heavily on language and literacy skills. However a culture of family reading is not part of the experience of the majority of black learners.

Recent assessments further confirm that indeed South African primary schools are not enabling their learners to become literate and numerate. The National Department of Basic Education’s Annual National Assessment (2011) found that in Grade 3, the national average performance in Literacy stands at 35%, while the national average in Numeracy was 28%. In terms of different levels of performance, only 47% of Grade 3 learners achieved above 35% in Literacy and only 34% of those assessed achieved above 35% in Numeracy.

In Grade 6, the national average performance in languages is 28% while the mathematics performance is 30%. Limpopo's Grade 6 learners scored 21% in languages and 25% in mathematics. The numeracy percentages of Grade 6 learners show however, that 74% of learners struggling with numeracy and 54% struggling with maths are in quintile 1 schools, the poorest schools. In quintile 5, which comprises affluent schools, the percentage of learners struggling with numeracy and literacy is zero. The ANA margin of error is around 2% at national level.

The Minister of Basic Education has said that the results showed that there had been an under-emphasis on the development of the basic skills of reading, writing and numeracy at foundation levels and, of which this is where the focus should be. (DoBE 2011)

Again according to the Children's Institute (2009) which is part of the University of Cape Town, "Poor national averages for language and mathematics in Grades 3 and 6 show that most learners do not acquire the skills and understanding that give substance to the right to education." It also found that only 36% of Grade 3 pupils passed literacy and 35% numeracy. Grade 6 pupils also performed badly as only 38% passed literacy and 27% mathematics. The study further asserts that

"Access to education was not enough. Children also required adequate textbooks, competent and prepared teachers, a curriculum that built a strong foundation, better teaching facilities and laboratories, and a safe environment" (The Children's Institute 2009:01).

It is clear from these various studies that primary school education in the poor schools of South Africa is indeed not enabling their learners to acquire the foundational competencies needed to succeed at school.

## **1.2 AIM OF THE STUDY**

In the light of this crisis in primary school education in South Africa, the aim of the proposed study was to investigate the development of literacy among Foundation phase learners in a rural primary school in the Limpopo Province. More specifically, the study sought to find out if literacy in two languages (i.e. biliteracy in Sesotho sa Leboa (Sepedi) and English) is being developed.

## **1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The objectives of the study were to find out:

- i. Whether two languages (the home language, Sepedi and English) are being used to develop biliteracy among the learners.
- ii. The kinds of teaching and learning materials used to promote reading and writing in the two languages.
- iii. The kind of training that the teachers had received to enable them to develop biliteracy skills amongst their learners.
- iv. Whether the teaching and learning occurs in a print-rich or print-impooverished environment.

For all the reasons discussed earlier, it is clear that reading and writing abilities are poorly developed among the majority of South African school children, and there is a need to examine more closely the teaching and learning processes in classrooms especially in a rural school. The research therefore took the form of an in-depth ethnographic case study of lessons in one rural primary school in Limpopo.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, the scholarly literature in three areas, namely biliteracy, ethnography, and case study as a research method, will be reviewed. The focus of the research is biliteracy development, and both ethnography and the case study approach constitute the research design.

#### **2. 2 BILITERACY**

Several definitions of biliteracy are found in the scholarly literature. Reyes (2001:98) defines biliteracy as “mastery of two languages”, but she extends the concept to mean mastery of the fundamentals of speaking, reading, and writing (knowing sound/ symbol connections, conventions of print, accessing and conveying meaning through oral or print mode, etc.) in two linguistic systems. Biliteracy also includes making relevant cultural and linguistic connections between print and the learners’ own lived experiences as well as the interaction of the two linguistic systems to make meaning.

Biliteracy refers to written language development in two or more languages to some degree, either simultaneously or successively (Garcia 2000; Shin 2005). Taking a broader view, Romaine (1995) observes that biliteracy development reflects both the cognitive procedures of individuals and that of the involved family, community, and society, using two written language systems. Language proficiency in two languages refers to bilinguals’ functional and communicative competence in any context in both languages (Bialystok 2001; Grosjean 1982).

Proposing a model of continuity between two languages, Hornberger (2004:155) says that the “continua model of biliteracy offers a framework of interrelationships

between bilingualism and literacy and the importance of the contexts in which to situate research, teaching, and language planning in linguistically diverse settings.” The continua model of biliteracy uses the notion of intersecting and nested continua to demonstrate the multiple and complex media and content through which biliteracy develops. Biliteracy, in this model, refers to ‘any and all instances in which communication occurs in two (or more) languages in or around writing’ (Hornberger 1990:213).

She asserts that the purpose of using the continuum as the basic building block of the model is to break down the binary oppositions so characteristic of the fields of bilingualism and literacy. The model instead draws attention to the continuity of experiences, skills, practices, and knowledge stretching from one end of any particular continuum to the other. “In order to understand any particular instance of biliteracy, be it at the level of individual actor, interaction, event, practice, activity, programme, site, situation, society, or world, we need to take account of all dimensions represented by the continua. At the same time, the advantage of the model is that it allows us to focus for analytical purposes on one or selected continua and their dimensions without ignoring the importance of the others” (Hornberger 2004:156).

Beyond nonstandard and mixed uses of language, the continua model also urges educators to make space for the multiple communicative media available in today’s world. The New London Group (Cope & Kalantzis 2000) uses the term ‘multiliteracies’ to refer to the multiplicity of communications channels and media in our changing world (and secondarily to the increasing saliency of cultural and linguistic diversity); the concept of multiliteracies in this sense extends literacy beyond reading and writing to other communicative modes, such as the visual, audio, spatial, and behavioural (Hornberger 2004:163).

The reason for quoting so extensively from Hornberger is that she offers the most highly developed model to both analyse and train teachers to promote biliteracy.

Researchers indicate that being bilingual and participating in quality bilingual education programmes that include effective reading and writing instruction have positive effects on children's academic, functional, social, and linguistic development (Baker 2006; Cheatham, Santos & Ro 2007). Especially notable is the transfer of literacy skills from one language to another (Garcia 2000).

However, Tabors and Snow (2001) suggest that some parents attend to English literacy to such an extent that the child has little oral or literacy support in the home language at home. They also indicate that in elementary school programs in which teachers and children only speak English, the child will likely develop spoken English language and literacy with little to no home language maintenance.

Researchers emphasize the importance of social environments for bilingual children's oral language and literacy skills development (Bauer 2000; Jimenez, Garcia & Pearson 1995; Tabors & Snow 2001). Parents can purposely construct an environment to foster biliteracy and bilingualism for their children. Parent-child interactions are critical to spoken language and literacy learning. For example, parent-child conversations during meals may help develop children's language skills (Purcell-Gates 1996; Ro 2008) and can facilitate the development of literacy skills.

Additionally, parents can generate and foster children's literacy activities at home as the continuum of learning at school (Purcell-Gates 1996), as well as increase children's motivation to read (Klesius & Griffith 1996). This encouragement may happen through such activities as interactive storybook reading, which may also support children's receptive spoken language and print concepts (Snow, Burns & Griffin 1998).

One important addition to the understanding of biliteracy is the introductory text *Learning in Two Worlds: An Integrated Spanish/ English Biliteracy Approach* (Pérez & Torres-Guzmán 1996). They provide a clear explanation of the most important concepts in biliteracy and also give extensive examples of the types of practical teaching techniques that can be used to enhance bilingual learners' development of

emergent biliteracy, advanced proficiency in reading and writing, content area literacy, and assessment of bilingual proficiency.

Research on the development of English-Spanish biliteracy found that strategies which incorporate the everyday use of language, such as letter writing, analysing the use of Spanish and English in stories and in the newspaper are effective strategies for developing biliteracy in a culturally-relevant manner (Jiminez 2002).

Moving on studies dealing with literacy, according to the Education Review Office in New Zealand (ERO 2011) and other international research, particular literacy practices may help children in early childhood services strengthen their literacy competence so they can make a successful transition to formal schooling. These practices can be found in the range of literacy activities children engage in throughout the day. The literacy knowledge and abilities include alphabet knowledge, letter-sound knowledge, concepts about print, concepts about books, phonological awareness, vocabulary knowledge, unusual words, and narrative competence, using decontextualized language, discourse skills, phonemic awareness and emergent writing. When children “can understand, enjoy, engage with and use oral, visual and written language and symbols they are better able to express their individual identity and become active participants in a literate society” (Hamer & Adams 2003:13).

The following were identified as the literacy activities by the ERO (2011): rich oral language experiences such as rhyming, language play, informal phonemic awareness activities, storybook reading, sings songs and nursery rhymes; extended conversations including taking turns talking and scribble making, letters, numbers, letter-like forms to represent things.

This research evidence suggests that children’s early phonological awareness and familiarity with books links to their later reading and writing skills (Nicholson 1999; Hamer & Adams 2003). If these literacy and other practices are poorly developed or these skills are missing prior to schooling, then this is an indicator of later reading difficulties (McLachlan 2006; Tayler 2006). Tayler (2006) has further asserted that



children begin early childhood education with a wide range of emerging literacy skills. Educators therefore need to be knowledgeable about socio-cultural processes involved in listening, reading, speaking, writing and viewing, as well as about the pathways children take in developing these early literacy skills.

Martello (2007) says that emergent or early literacy is very much a social practice that develops in social contexts rather than through formal instruction. Early childhood educators therefore need to consider and incorporate home and community literacy practices into their teaching and learning programme. When home literacy practices greatly differ from primary school literacy practices, children can experience difficulties. Effective literacy practices in early childhood services can help build a bridge between early literacy practices in the home and literacy practices at school.

Interactive storybook reading appears to be helpful, especially for bilingual learners who are exposed to two languages (Snow, Burns & Griffin 1998; Tompkins 2006). Children may enjoy the storyline of books either in their first language or English; additionally, bilingual children are often curious when comparing two languages in a safe atmosphere (Gregory & Williams 2000; Ro 2008).

Interactions with siblings can affect spoken bilingual and biliteracy proficiency. For instance, older siblings may facilitate the transfer of literacy skills that are acquired in their mainstream English school, or in the heritage language community classes, to younger siblings (Gregory & Williams 2000). As these older children increasingly participate in visible home biliteracy experiences, both older and younger children can connect with a broad range of literacy resources at home (Obied 2008).

Goodman (1980) asserted more than thirty years ago that the roots of children's literacy development stem from their experience as well as the attitudes, beliefs and views they encounter as they interact within their family environment and community. She maintains that children begin from an early age to cultivate a conscious knowledge about the forms and functions of written language.

It has been shown by researchers (Doake 1981; Haussler 1982) that children realize that written stories represented in books usually follow a distinct format. They will often repeat a story verbatim that has been read to them indicating that they are aware of the story format and form.

Clearly the home environment affects children's bilingualism. Morrow & Weinstein (1986) suggest that creating a visible, accessible, and attractive library corner can benefit bilingual children. Similarly, parents in bilingual families could put out books written in the child's first language. Parents' education, efforts, goals, and home environment are critical to improving children's oral bilingual and biliteracy skills.

In addition to the major theoretical contributions that have added to the understanding of biliteracy, contributions have also been made in creating an integrated approach to the teaching of biliteracy in bilingual classrooms (Ro, Yeonsun, Cheatham & Gregory 2009).

The use of children's literature in whole language classrooms and balanced literacy programs has created an increased desire to explore how learning to respond to literature in two languages can be an important part of the development of biliteracy in the classroom context (Ro et al 2009).

Moving to South African scholarship in literacy, Bloch (1997) explored the way in which children develop their understanding about literacy and how they spontaneously engage with written language before entering formal schooling. Though her study was conducted in a monolingual context, her findings are relevant to all literacy development, including biliteracy development. She studied her daughter Chloe's writing development in the print-rich environment of her home. She found that in a home that values and welcomes written language in different forms and usage, a child begins to model and experiment with written symbols and scribbles. Bloch (1997:5) states "parents are their children's first teachers". She also maintains that becoming literate is a process, which emerges as children learn and experience reading and writing practices in a personally meaningful way. Young children become literate by weaving reading and writing into the social and cultural

practices of their homes. Bloch believes that literacy practices of children are built on the social background and daily language they experience in their home environment.

In this case the Project in Literacy (2010) which was established in 1973 have asserted that many children start school without effective pre-literacy skills, i.e. the reading, writing and cognitive behaviours that develop into conventional literacy later. Education experts say that the absence of these skills impairs children's cognitive development and their formal learning abilities.

Bloch (2002) describe all the ways that learners can develop their biliteracy skills, which include families reading, children writing, interactive writing, letters and journals. Children start reading books at home only if they are exposed to reading while they are still young.

As far back as 1995, Bloch, along with colleagues at the Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa (PRAESA) put forward the concept of a "Multilingual Demonstration School (MLDS) programme as a necessary step towards developing workable models for multilingual education in South Africa. The idea was that one or more demonstration schools should be set up in state schools to develop mother tongue and bilingual education models for teaching and learning in the various multilingual contexts of South Africa." (Bloch 2002:65)

Bloch and colleagues used team teaching as one of the strategies where both teachers (Teacher 1 and Teacher 2) work together with the whole class. Teacher 1 introduces the lesson in English or Xhosa; Teacher 2 summarises in the other language. The reverse process is followed the next time. All children are exposed to content in both languages, thus promoting literacy in both languages.

When children start writing and reading in two languages, they employ much the same strategies regardless of which language they are using (Gort 2004). There are instances of creative spelling in L2 and transfer of grammar rules from L1 to L2.

Otherwise, the process of writing, reading and interpreting text remains quite the same (Gort 2004).

It is also important to note the extensive study in South Africa which was funded by Irish AID and conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in association with the University of Limpopo for the Limpopo Department of Education. An evaluation of literacy teaching in 20 Grade 1-4 primary schools and five district offices in Limpopo resulted in a clear pattern of the ills plaguing the foundation phase of schooling (Prinsloo 2008). The study evaluated literacy teaching in primary schools with the aim of improving the overall quality of literacy teaching by expanding existing policies and strategies.

According to Prinsloo (2008) the report of nearly 300 pages demonstrated that the quality of literacy instruction and literacy opportunities of most Grades R - 4 learners is limiting literacy development. It also showed that a delayed introduction to English as a first additional language to mother-tongue or home-language instruction, usually in Grade 3, followed by a switch to English medium as a language of teaching and instruction in Grade 4, means that most learners are faced with an impossible transitional hurdle. When this is accompanied by mother-tongue instruction that is too shallow and an all too abrupt and early termination of solid mother-tongue teaching and learning, more warning lights start to flash. Under such circumstances, the study showed, learners can be expected to perform very poorly and are unlikely to successfully engage with the rest of the curriculum from Grade 4 onwards.

Moving on to the role of culture in biliteracy development, Aronstam (2005:24) affirms that “culture makes two sorts of contribution to a child’s literacy development. Firstly, through culture children acquire much of their knowledge and content of thinking and secondly, the surrounding culture provides children with the processes or means of their thinking.” Vygotsky called this “the tool of intellectual adaptation” and states that culture teaches children both what to think and how to think (in Aronstam 2005:24).

This review of biliteracy shows that much research and many pedagogic initiatives have been carried out in many parts of the world, and if the findings of such work can be adapted to the South African context, and if the work of Bloch and her colleagues can be extended, perhaps there will be progress in the development of biliteracy in the Foundation phase.

### **2. 3 ETHNOGRAPHY**

Since this study adopts an ethnographic approach to the investigation of biliteracy development, a brief review of this area is in order. One of the early definitions of ethnography is provided by Spradley (1980: 3) who described it as 'the work of describing a culture.' Ethnography describes the behaviours, values, beliefs and practices of the participants in a given culture. Ethnographers take a detailed look at what is going on in given settings. To summarise the definition of Davis (1999), ethnography may be seen as a research process that is based on fieldwork using a variety of research techniques but including engagement in the lives of those being studied over a period of time. The need to spend time in the community or culture being studied is an important requirement of ethnography. The eventual written product of ethnography draws its data primarily from this fieldwork experience and usually emphasises descriptive detail as a result.

Coast (2003:3) says that ethnography is an account of the observation and interpretation of the activities of a cultural group and is generally associated with social or cultural anthropology (Atkinson & Hammersley 1998). Harris & Johnson (2000:4) say that ethnography literally means 'a portrait of a people.' It is a written description of a particular culture - the customs, beliefs, and behaviour - based on information collected through fieldwork.

According to Hall (2006) ethnography is both the fundamental research method of cultural anthropology and the written text produced to report ethnographic research results. Ethnography as method seeks to answer central anthropological questions concerning the ways of life of living human beings. Ethnographic questions generally

concern the link between culture and behaviour and/or how cultural processes develop over time. The data base for ethnographies is usually extensive description of the details of social life or cultural phenomena in a small number of cases.

Byrne (2001) says that ethnographic research is similar to other qualitative research methods because the researcher becomes part of the cultural scene and therefore, is deemed an instrument of research, whose knowledge and perceptions may influence the course and outcome of the research. It is a research approach that enables the researcher to understand a culture through the interpretations, experiences, perceptions and meanings given by those living within that specific cultural context. To sum up "Ethnographic research provides interpretive and descriptive analyses of the symbolic and contextual meanings that inform the routine practices of everyday life" (Wortham & Chernoff 2010: 675).

One of the most common methods for collecting data in an ethnographic study is direct, first-hand observation of daily events in the lives of participants in a given culture. This can include participant observation, in which the researcher becomes one of the participants in the events being studied.

Van Maanen (1996) says that when used as a method, ethnography typically refers to fieldwork (alternatively, participant-observation) conducted by a single investigator who 'lives with and lives like' those who are studied, usually for a year or more.

In order to answer their research questions and gather research material, ethnographers (sometimes called fieldworkers) often live among the people they are studying, or at least spend a considerable amount of time with them. While there, ethnographers engage in "participant observation", which means that they participate as much as possible in local daily life (everything from important ceremonies and rituals to ordinary things like meal preparation and consumption) while also carefully observing everything they can about it.

Another common method used in ethnographic research is interviewing, which may range from an informal conversation to highly structured formats in which questions are pre-determined and involve different levels of complexity. To summarise Orcher (2005), interviewing is an effective method to learn from people what they believe, how they think, and how that affects their life. Questionnaires can be used to aid the discovery of local beliefs and perceptions and in the case of longitudinal research, where there is continuous long-term study of an area or site, they can act as valid instruments for measuring changes in the individuals or groups studied.

To summarise, Hall (2006) mentions that insights develop over time and through repeated analysis of many aspects of the field sites observed. To facilitate this process, ethnographers must learn how to take useful and reliable notes regarding the details of life in their research contexts. These field notes will constitute a major part of the data on which later conclusions will be based.

According to Bernard (2002) ethnography yields insights into peoples' lives and customs that they would not be able to state if just asked. The researcher lives within a certain context, maintains relationships with people, may participate in community activities, and takes extensive and elaborate notes on the experience. It enables researchers to see the culture without imposing their own social reality on that culture. Years or months of research lead to months of analysis of the journals and field notes to convey the research findings within a theoretical context.

Since ethnographic research takes place among real human beings, there are a number of special ethical concerns to be aware of before beginning. In a nutshell, researchers must make their research goals clear to the members of the community where they undertake their research and gain the informed consent of their research subjects beforehand. It is also important to learn whether the group would prefer to be named in the written report of the research or given a pseudonym and to offer the results of the research if informants would like to read it. Most of all, researchers must be sure that the research does not harm or exploit those among whom the research is done.

In this research, the classroom studied is treated as small-scale community in which certain ways of doing things has evolved over time. The classroom may be seen as a small-scale local culture with its own practices and beliefs. Teachers carry certain beliefs about teaching and learning, as do learners. It is the task of the ethnographer to uncover these beliefs if possible and describe them in detail. Though the research conducted in the Limpopo classrooms was not a full-fledged ethnography, it was based on ethnographic principles, and used some of the tools of ethnography, namely observation and interviews, and is therefore an ethnographically-oriented study.

However, the researcher was only an observer, rather than a participant, as getting involved in the classroom events may have altered the nature of the interaction. The researcher was aware that her very presence may affect the interaction but she tried to minimize this by being unobtrusive and not calling attention to herself in any way.

## **2. 4 CASE STUDY**

Since the research described in this dissertation was based on one school and a limited number of classrooms, the design is that of a case study. As a case study approach is often used in the social sciences, it is important to present its unique value as a research approach. According to Bromley (1990:302), a case study is a systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events which aims to describe and explain the phenomenon of interest. Yin (1994:22) says that the term 'case study' refers to "an event, an entity, an individual or even a unit of analysis. It is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context using multiple sources of evidence." Data come largely from documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observation and physical artifacts (Yin 1994).

Anderson (1993:152) sees case studies as "being concerned with how and why things happen, allowing the investigation of contextual realities and the differences between what was planned and what actually occurred." The intention of a case



study is to focus on a particular issue, feature or unit of analysis. It enables the researcher to understand the complex, real-life activities in which multiple sources of evidence are used. Case studies become particularly useful where one needs to understand some particular problem or situation in great depth.

Thomas (2011:120) offers the following definition of case study: "Case studies are analyses of persons, events, decisions, periods, projects, policies, institutions, or other systems that are studied holistically by one or more methods. The case that is the *subject* of the inquiry will be an instance of a class of phenomena that provides an analytical frame, an *object* within which the study is conducted and which the case illuminates and explicates."

Another suggestion is that a case study should be defined as a research strategy, an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context. Case study research can mean single and multiple case studies can include quantitative evidence, can rely on multiple sources of evidence, and benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions. Case studies should not be confused with qualitative research and they can be based on any mix of quantitative and qualitative evidence. Single-subject research provides the statistical framework for making inferences from quantitative case-study data. This is also supported and well-formulated in Lamnek (2005) who says that case study is a research approach, situated between concrete data-taking techniques and methodological paradigms.

Stake (1995) says that the popularity of case studies in testing hypotheses has developed only in recent decades. One of the areas in which case studies have been gaining popularity is education and in particular educational evaluation. Case studies have also been used as a teaching method and as part of professional development, especially in business and legal education. When used in education and professional development, case studies are often referred to as critical incidents.

Neale, Thapa & Boyce (2006) state that the primary advantage of a case study is that it provides much more detailed information than what is available through other

methods, such as surveys. Case studies also allow one to present data collected from multiple methods (i.e. surveys, interviews, document review, and observation) to provide the complete story.

However they state that there are a few limitations and pitfalls regarding the case study approach: The first one that they have identified is that case studies can be lengthy: Because they provide detailed information about the case in narrative form, it may be difficult to hold a reader's interest if too lengthy. In writing the case study, care should be taken to provide the rich information in an absorbing manner.

The second shortcoming is that case studies are often seen to lack rigor. Case studies have been viewed in the evaluation and research fields as less rigorous than surveys or other methods. Reasons for this include the fact that qualitative research in general is still considered unscientific by some and in many cases, case- study researchers have not been systematic in their data collection or have allowed bias in their findings. In conducting and writing case studies, the researcher should use care in their data collection and take steps to ensure validity and reliability in the study.

The last critique is that case studies are not generalizable. A common complaint about case studies is that it is difficult to generalize from one case to another. But case studies have also been prone to overgeneralization, which comes from selecting a few examples and assuming without evidence that they are typical or representative of the population. This point has been made by Noor (2008) who has highlighted that case studies have been criticised by some for their lack of scientific rigour and reliability and that they do not address the issues of generalizability.

However, there are some strengths of a case study approach. It enables the researcher to gain a holistic view of a certain phenomenon or series of events and can provide a rounded picture since many sources of evidence are used.

Another advantage is that a case study can be useful in capturing the emergent and immanent properties of life in organizations and the ebb and flow of organizational

activity, especially where it is changing very fast (Noor 2008). Case studies can also generate hypotheses, which can be tested on a large number of similar cases, thus allowing for some generalizations. "Case studies are flexible in that they can be presented in a number of ways; there is no specific format to follow. However, like all evaluation results, justification and methodology of the study should be provided, as well as any supporting information (i.e. copies of instruments and guides used in the study). Case studies may stand alone or be included in a larger evaluation report." (Neale et al 2006:10).

This literature review has sought to address various views on the nature of biliteracy and how it can be promoted. It has also tried to explain the use of ethnography as an approach to the study of a culture and finally has dealt with the salient features of a case-study approach. Thus, the review provides a summary of the scholarly work needed to conduct an ethnographically-oriented, case-study approach to the investigation of biliteracy development in one rural Limpopo school.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will spell out the research design that underpins this investigation. The focus will be on the nature of the research and aspects of the research design. The research site (where the research was conducted), the main research subjects or participants, the data collection procedures used and the approach to data analysis will be explained in this chapter.

#### **3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN**

The research is broadly qualitative in nature and, as indicated earlier, it takes the form of an ethnographic case study. Shuttleworth (2008) defines a case study as an in-depth study of a particular situation. He recommends it as a method to be used to narrow down a very broad field of research into one researchable topic, in this case, the investigation of biliteracy development in a Foundation class.

Yin (1994) offers a very straightforward protocol approach for case study emphasizing field procedures, case study questions, and a guide for the final write up. This “tool” is intended to assist the researcher carry out the case study and increase reliability of the research. Similarly Stake (1995) has proposed a series of necessary steps for completing the case method, including posing research questions, gathering data, data analysis and interpretation.

According to Soy (1997), the first step in case study research is to establish a firm research focus to which the researcher can refer over the course of study of a complex phenomenon or object. He states that the researcher needs to establish the focus of the study by formulating questions about the situation or problem to be studied and determining a purpose for the study. The research object in a case study

is often a program, an entity, a person, or a group of people. The researcher needs to investigate the object of the case study in depth using a variety of data gathering methods to produce evidence that leads to understanding of the case and which answers the research questions.

This study is ethnographic in the sense that it is based on several close observations of a Foundation phase classroom and on the perceptions of the teachers. Case studies enable rich and complex descriptions of a particular area of interest (here, the teaching and learning of biliteracy) and this is what the study has aimed to do.

### **3.3 RESEARCH SITE**

The research was conducted at one of the rural primary schools in the Limpopo province. Rural primary schools are known to be disadvantaged at many levels and the research sought to investigate the strategies that are used to develop biliteracy skills in such schools. The site was visited several times to enable the researcher to build a trusting relation with the Grade 3 teachers and the learners, to understand the conditions under which teaching and learning occur and to obtain authentic data. The research site will be described in terms of the socioeconomic factors that affect the families whose children attend the selected school.

### **3.4 RESEARCH SUBJECTS**

The subjects of the proposed research are Grade 3 learners from the Foundation phase and the teachers who teach all the learning areas in Grade 3. The learning areas for Grade 3 include Literacy, Numeracy and Life Skills, but as literacy development takes place in all these learning areas, all three are the focus of this research. Some demographic data relating to the age, gender, socioeconomic

status, level of education of parents and qualifications of teachers were also collected during the course of the research.

### **3.5 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES**

Three methods of collecting data were used, namely: observation of classroom lessons; interviews with the teachers and study of the teaching/ learning environment and the materials used. All of these methods will be described in greater detail in the following sections.

#### **3.5.1 Observation of lessons**

The data collection using observation involved the researcher sitting in on lessons and observing the activities that were taking place in the classroom. Detailed field notes as a way of recording whether two languages (the home language, Sesotho sa Leboa/ Sepedi and English) are being used to develop biliteracy among the learners were also taken. The researcher focussed mainly on the interaction between the teacher and the learners to see what strategies are being used by teachers and learners, which languages are being used. An observation protocol consisting of aspects to study and comment on was used during the observation to guide the note-taking **Appendix 2**.

Hancock (2002:12) suggests that observation “is a technique that can be used when data collected through other means can be of limited value or is difficult to validate. For example, in interviews, participants may be asked about how they behave in certain situations but there is no guarantee that they actually do what they say they do. Observing them in those situations is more reliable: it is possible to see how they actually behave. Observation can also serve as a technique for verifying or nullifying information provided in face to face encounters.” Hancock’s argument captures well the main reasons why classroom observation was selected as the primary data collection method.

The researcher's observation frame consists of two sections. The first section is for recording general information (name of the teacher and school, Grade, date of observation, learning area, period number, start time, end time and the number of the learners who were present during the observation). All these provided information would help the researcher during the analysis of data which will be provided in chapter 5. Such information was important for record keeping.

The second section focused on the teaching and learning. Here the researcher sought to observe the actual teaching and learning processes in the lessons. What methods are the teachers using to teach literacy? Do the teachers make sure that learners understand the lesson? Does s/he ensure that learners understand instructions and carry them out? Do learners attend to what teachers are teaching? Or do they tend to be distracted when they are in class? Does the teacher respond to the learners that are not paying attention in class? Does the teacher give special attention to learners who are struggling? Does the teacher give additional tasks to those who have finished their work? Are the learners given any homework after the daily lesson? Is the homework corrected in class the following day? Do learners read on their own during the lessons? And finally, are learners allowed to choose their own books to read in the classroom?

It was also important to investigate if the lessons are always teacher-fronted or if the learners are grouped for learning (one on one with their teachers, small groups, pairs, whole group or are they doing activities independently). It was also crucial to examine the role of the teacher during the lesson; whether the teacher is doing most of the talking by lecturing the learners, or was the teacher guiding the learners? Did the teacher ask questions? How did the teacher handle learner responses? Does the teacher carry out activities that promote literacy development? Are the learners doing sufficient reading and writing in class? How is feedback given?

All these aspects of teaching and learning needed to be closely observed and detailed notes taken.

### 3.5.2 Interviews

The second method of data collection that was used was the semi-structured interview. The reason for choosing a semi-structured rather than a fully-structured interview is provided by Kvale & Brinkmann (2008) who say that structured interviews are a means of collecting data for a statistical survey. "In this case, the data is collected by an interviewer rather than through a self-administered questionnaire. Interviewers read the questions exactly as they appear on the survey questionnaire. The choice of answers to the questions is often fixed (close-ended) in advance, though open-ended questions can also be included within a structured interview" (p.102). To avoid highly-structured interview questions, the semi-structured interview was used.

Hancock (2002:9) says that semi-structured interviews involve a series of open-ended questions based on the topic areas the researcher wants to cover. The open-ended nature of the question defines the topic under investigation but provides opportunities for both interviewer and interviewee to discuss some topics in more detail. If the interviewee has difficulty answering a question or provides only a brief response, the interviewer can use cues or prompts to encourage the interviewee to consider the question further. In a semi-structured interview the interviewer also has the freedom to probe the interviewee to elaborate on the original response or to follow a line of inquiry introduced by the interviewee.

Lindlof & Taylor (2002) recommend that the specific topic or topics that the interviewer wants to explore during the interview should usually be thought about well in advance (especially during interviews for research projects). It is generally beneficial for interviewers to have an interview guide prepared, which is an informal "grouping of topics and questions that the interviewer can ask in different ways for different participants" (p.195). Interview guides help researchers to focus an interview on the topics at hand without constraining them to a particular format. This freedom can help interviewers to tailor their questions to the interview context/situation, and to the people they are interviewing.



For all the reasons given above, the semi-structured interview was chosen. The interviews were conducted soon after classroom observations were completed. As mentioned earlier, the classroom observation started on 11 October 2010 and concluded on 02 November 2010, and then the actual interviews were done on the 12 November 2010 only. The researcher used the interviews to gather more information on the lessons observed, and to further explore the views of the teachers on literacy development in two languages.

The further aim of the interviews was to obtain the teachers' perceptions of what is effective or not in developing biliteracy among the learners. A copy of the interview framework is provided in **Appendix 3**.

As can be seen, the interview questions also sought to find out about the kind of training the teachers had received, when did they obtained that qualification and the learning areas that they are responsible for. The researcher wanted to find out whether the teachers had received training that would enable them to develop biliteracy skills among the learners.

Another interesting question that the researcher used addressed the teachers' views on the performance of the South African learners, as presented in the PIRLS study of 2006. They were also asked as rural school teachers what they thought would be the most appropriate way of improving literacy development in South Africa in the Foundation phase.

The researcher conducted one-on-one interviews with the three teachers because one of the teachers insisted on responding to the questions privately to the researcher. The interviews were conducted in an informal way since they were conducted in the classroom while children were given a task. Each interview lasted for about 30 to 45 minutes. The researcher took notes during the interviews.

### **3.5.3 Analysis of teaching and learning materials and the learning environment**

The teaching and learning materials, and also the environment that the lessons took place in were other important aspects that the researcher focussed on. The researcher sought to find out if the lessons took place in a print-rich or print-impooverished environment. The materials actually used in lessons to teach literacy during lessons were closely examined. The protocol used to analyse the materials is found in **Appendix 2**.

Moving on to the environment for learning, Kadlic & Lesiak (2003) point out that a print- rich classroom is one in which children interact with many forms of print including signs, labelled centres, wall stories, word displays, labelled murals, bulletin boards, charts, poems and other printed materials.

Children's books and other reading materials are an essential part of children's early literacy experience and lay the foundation for the love of reading. The teacher's role in a print-rich environment is to provide time and opportunity for multiple literacy activities during the day, to model reading and writing and to introduce learners to a wide variety of texts. In addition, teachers listen to learners reading, work with learners during writing time and make sure that children fully engage with print displays, which should be placed at learners' eye level.

Kadlic & Lesiak (2003) also mention that an exciting and inviting literate classroom encourages learners to take part in the many learning experiences provided at school. The moment one steps foot inside a classroom one can usually tell what is important to the teacher in terms of the type of working literacy environment he or she sets up for the learners. In a classroom that encourages literacy learning, one may find examples of displayed print on the walls, a classroom library, grouped tables and chairs to promote classroom conversations, independent use of classroom resources on labelled shelves, and places for learners to work independently or in small and large groups. The question teachers need to ask themselves is, "Does my classroom environment promote literacy learning?"

In the light of these recommendations from literacy scholars, it would be important to find out if the teaching and learning materials as well as the classroom environment promote an engagement with print and promote reading and writing in two languages.

### **3.6 DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES**

In this section, the procedures used to analyse the data will be explained in detail. Different procedures will be used to analyse the different kinds of data.

#### **3.6.1 Observation data**

The field notes taken during lesson observations will be scanned carefully for evidence of any teacher and learner routines that emerge. Routines may be described as the steps that the teacher follows in teaching a lesson. These routines get established over a period of time and both teachers and learners adhere to these routines, as they become the shared ways in which things are done. These routines will indicate the literacy practices found in the Grade 3B lessons. Such routines may also reveal what the teacher considers to be the best approach in her/his view to develop and promote literacy.

#### **3.6.2 Interview data**

For the data collected during the interviews, a content-analysis approach will be used. According to Hancock (2002:17), “content analysis is a procedure for the categorisation of verbal or behavioural data, for purposes of classification, summarisation and tabulation.” The content analysis will focus on the common themes that emerge in the responses of the teachers and the differences between them. The responses from all the teachers on each of the interview questions will be closely examined to establish these similarities and differences.

Since this is an ethnographic case study and qualitative in nature, the analysis of data will be presented in a descriptive and narrative form.

### **3.6.3 Print environment data**

The print environment will be studied by carefully observing all the printed material that is on display or in use in the classroom. The researcher is interested in finding out if there are pictures, texts, and other materials on the walls, in the corridors and in other places in the school. Is there a book corner or reading corner? Does the school have a library? Is there any evidence that reading for pleasure is encouraged in the school? Photographs will be taken of the walls and corners of the classroom to provide visual evidence of the print environment of the classroom.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DATA COLLECTION**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will describe the actual process of collecting data for this study. As mentioned in Chapter 3, three kinds of data were collected, using three different procedures. They are classroom observation, semi-structured teacher interviews and a framework for studying the teaching/ learning environment and materials used in lessons.

#### **4.2 RESEARCH SITE**

Data were collected on the location of the school, the socioeconomic status of the community and the resources of the school. All the demographic data was collected through an interview with the principal of the school.

The school is not far from the University of Limpopo and is therefore easily accessible. Access to the research site was obtained through personal negotiations with the Principal, which were then followed by a letter to the parents (**Appendix 1A**) translated into the first language of the community, Sepedi (**Appendix 1B**).

##### **4.2.1 Location of the school**

The school observed is a rural primary school situated in Boyne, about thirty-five kilometres north of Polokwane, the capital city of the Limpopo Province. There are five schools in the Boyne area comprising four primary schools and one secondary school. There are no health facilities (i.e. clinic or hospital) in this area and the community has to travel for about three kilometres north to get medical help. The hospital is fifteen kilometres southwest of Boyne. The location where the school is

situated has got four spaza shops (kiosks) where people purchase their daily basics, and the nearest shopping complex is about ten kilometres southwest of Boyne.

#### **4.2.2 Socioeconomic and demographic status of the community**

This section presents information collected from the principal of the school on the socioeconomic status and demographic details of the learners who attend the school.

The principal highlighted that most of the families that the learners come from are unemployed and they depend on social grants. Learners from families who attend the school speak different languages that include 75% Sepedi, 10% Selobedu (dialect of Sepedi), 6% Xitsonga and 4% Tshivenda but when they enter the premises of the school the predominant language which is used is Sepedi. Most of the learners seem to know Sepedi.

Eighty per cent of the families that the learners come from have no formal schooling; therefore there is a low level of schooled literacy amongst the inhabitants of the area around the school. Most parents of the learners are unable to help their children to read and write at home. Resources such as story books are unlikely to be available at their homes.

The principal further highlighted the fact that the school has a quintile 3 classification, which means that learners do not pay school fees. The school has a feeding scheme and learners are also provided with stationery. Learners do not pay for any school material as the government provides for them.

One disturbing aspect mentioned by the principal is the high rate of crime in this area. The school is seen as a target for burglars, and school resources are sometimes stolen.

### **4.2.3 Resources in the school**

Although the school is in a rural area, it is equipped with water facilities, electricity, sanitary utilities and two computer rooms where learners get an opportunity to acquire computer skills. The school has seven blocks of buildings within its yard. Of these, five are used as learners' classrooms, one block is reserved as a staff-room for teachers including the principal's office and the remaining block is utilized as a storeroom.

The school has a total of twenty-eight classrooms of which twenty six are used as conventional classrooms, and the remaining two classrooms are used for computer literacy. The school offers primary education starting from Grade R up to Grade 7; each Grade is allocated three classrooms.

Even though the school has three classrooms for each Grade within the premises, the school still faces the challenge of overcrowding especially in the Grade 3B class (which is the research site). The two computer classrooms also do not cater for the whole of Grade 3b because three learners have to share one computer. Though there are fourteen computers in one of the computer rooms, and twenty in the other, the learners are unable to have individual use of the computers and have to share with others. This means that the learners do not get time to practise their computer literacy skills.

The school has one gardener whose responsibilities entail taking care of the garden and looking after the cleanliness of the school yard. Learners are responsible for the tidiness of their classrooms and clean the classrooms at the end of each day in preparation for the following day.

The school governing body has selected women who are responsible for implementing the school feeding scheme; they cook and serve meals to the learners during lunch time. Each learner brings his or her own plate from home.

### **4.3 RESEARCH SUBJECTS**

The subjects of this research are the learners in the Grade 3B cohort in the selected school and their teachers. There are four teachers (three females and one male) who are responsible for all the learning areas of Grade 3. The learning areas for Grade 3 are Literacy (in Sepedi and English), Numeracy and Life Skills, but as literacy development is likely to take place in all these four learning areas, lessons in all learning areas were observed.

#### **4.3.1 The learners**

The school has three Grade 3 cohorts which are referred to as Grade 3A, Grade 3B and Grade 3C. Out of the three Grade 3s the study focused only on Grade 3B (the research subjects). Grade 3 has four learning areas (subjects) all of which were observed i.e. Numeracy, Sepedi, English and Life Skills. Three separate classrooms were allocated to the different learning areas. One classroom (Grade 3b) was meant for Sepedi, another one (Grade 3a) was meant for Numeracy and the last one (Grade 3c) was used for Life Skills and English.

The learners in most cases attend three learning areas per day. All lessons in all the learning areas for 3B were observed each day during the observation period. Grade 3B consisted of 45 learners of whom 20 were boys and 25 were girls with ages ranging from 8 to 9 years.

#### **4.3.2 Teachers**

As mentioned earlier, there were four teachers for Grade 3, one male and three females. The two female teachers for Numeracy and Sepedi had their own classrooms allocated only for their learning areas. The teacher who is in charge of Grade 3B is the Sepedi teacher for all the Grade 3 learners. The third teacher, who is female, teaches Life Skills and the fourth teacher, who is male, teaches English.



The Life Skills and English teachers use the same classroom to teach their learning areas, unlike their colleagues who each have their own classroom.

The teachers will be referred to by four letters of the alphabets, teachers W, X, Y and Z. The male teacher W is responsible for English, teacher X for Sepedi, teacher Y conducts the Life Skills lessons and teacher Z is responsible for Numeracy.

#### **4.4 THREE KINDS OF DATA COLLECTED**

##### **4.4.1 Classroom observation**

This method of collecting data involved sitting in on lessons and taking detailed field notes of whatever occurred in the classroom. An observation protocol was prepared to enable the accurate recording of classroom events (**Appendix 2**). Teaching and learning in the four learning areas in the Foundation phase i.e. Sepedi, English, Numeracy and Life Skills were observed. The observations were done in as unobtrusive way as is possible so as not to hamper the normal flow of classroom events. The observation protocol included aspects such as the kind of reading and writing activities conducted, the language in which the activities take place and the language that the teacher uses to interact with learners.

The classroom observation began on 11 October 2010 and ended on 02 November 2010. Each learning area was observed from the beginning of the lesson till the end. The duration of the lessons did not always adhere to the timetable. Sometimes the duration of a certain lesson would take longer than the usual time and some would take less time (**Appendix 5**). The classroom observation protocol reflects the dates that the lessons were observed, the name of learning area; the start time and the end time of that specific lesson and the numbers of the learners who were present during the lesson.

Some of the teachers did not actually conduct their lessons as scheduled during the observation period. The researcher was supposed to observe seven classes for each learning area on the different days when she did site visits. One of the teachers (for Life Skills) conducted only three lessons out of the seven lessons that the researcher was intending to observe. The Numeracy teacher was absent on the second day of the observation; therefore the lesson did not take place. Even though Sepedi and English (Literacy lessons) are supposed to take place every day, on some days, these lessons were not held. For English learning area two lessons did not take place, because on one of those days learners were set the task of copying material from the chalkboard and the lesson did not take place. **(Appendix 5)**

#### **4.4.2 Teacher interviews**

As mentioned earlier, the teachers and learners were observed during lessons and extensive field notes were taken on various classroom events and the literacy practices that were used. Teachers were interviewed to acquire more understanding of the training they had received, their own beliefs about literacy development and specifically the use of two languages to develop literacy in their classrooms.

Interviews with teachers followed after all the lessons were observed (the last day of the observation period was allocated for teacher's interviews) but the researcher also asked questions when the teachers were not conducting lessons in order to build trust and a strong relationship with the teachers and to find more about what the researcher observed.

As has been mentioned earlier, semi-structured interview questions were used. The researcher used these questions in the form of a questionnaire to obtain answers from the teachers and the researcher probed where there was a need and wrote the points down as part of data collection. The researcher conducted the interviews at different times individually with each teacher. They were all interviewed in different venues. As mentioned earlier, the principal was also interviewed to attain more

information of the area that the school is situated, the language policy of the school (**Appendix 4**), the demographic information of the school and the surrounding areas and the family backgrounds of the learners.

Another purpose of the teacher interviews was to find out to what extent the teachers had been trained to take an additive bilingual approach to developing literacy, what strategies they use and their own assessment of learners' progress. They were also asked about the factors which in their view promote or hinder the development of biliteracy and asked to comment on aspects of their work that might be improved with better resources.

#### **4.4.3 Classroom environment**

In this method of data collection, a close scrutiny of the teaching and learning materials where lessons took place was made. While examining teaching and learning materials for their (teaching and learning materials) ability to interest the learners, difficulty levels and other such factors, a special focus was on the print environment. The languages that the materials are written in were also noted.

Teachers were hardly using any materials with learners. They were in most cases writing the activities that they do with the learners on the chalk board. When the lesson starts, the researcher would find the activity on the chalkboard. It was only once, during the observation period in Sepedi and English where the learners were given pamphlets (Sepedi lesson) and also used a portfolio (English lesson). The only book that the learners were in most cases in contact with was the exercise book (learners' work book). Detailed field notes were taken on the materials that were displayed on the walls to establish whether teaching and learning takes place in a print-rich or print-impooverished environment. Photographs were taken during the observation period to provide visual evidence of the classroom environment (see Chapter 5).

## 4.5 ETHICAL ISSUES

In any research involving human subjects, as in this one, the consideration of ethical issues is crucial. Though there are many ethical dimensions, only three aspects will be briefly discussed in this section: getting informed consent, maintaining anonymity and the use of the research findings.

Gaining access to the research site is intimately connected with getting informed consent. The principal of the selected school was approached and permission was requested to carry out research in the school. The principal was informed about the purpose of the research, what exactly the research entailed and was assured that the findings of the study would be used only for academic purposes.

As mentioned earlier, letters seeking permission from the parents whose children were participating in the study were also sent out with the agreement of the principal of the school. These letters were translated into Sepedi (**Appendices 1A & 1B**) for the parents. The teachers were asked about any issues that concern them about the research. They were assured that anonymity would be maintained and the privacy of the participants would be respected and protected. Neither the school, the principal, teachers nor learners would be referred to by their real names in the dissertation. Only pseudonyms will be used. All the data collected will be used only for enhancing understanding of the educational issues being studied.

Finally, the school and the teachers will be offered a summary of the findings to use in any way they wish. The researcher will offer to make an oral presentation of the research to the teachers in the school, if the principal and teachers wish it.

This chapter has described the processes of data collection that the researcher used and has given some information on the socioeconomic and demographic features of the school. The resources found in the school have also been presented.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will focus on the analysis of the data that was collected during the observation period and also highlight the findings of this research. As explained earlier, this research is an example of a qualitative ethnographic case study. The focus is mainly on the interaction between the teacher and the learners. This involves analysing the activities that were taking place in the classroom, the materials that were used (and in which language/s), how much the teacher and the learners use each language, the classroom environment and the print materials that were available in the Grade 3 classrooms.

In an ethnographic case study, huge amounts of data can be generated. This was the case in the conducted research as well. A way of managing the data was to organise them in a retrievable form for analysis and synthesis. In their raw form, the data consisted of written records of classroom activities, extensive field notes, completed questionnaires and notes on the print environment and materials used in the classrooms: **Appendix 2**). Each data source was analysed separately, and then integrated to provide a rounded picture of the findings. However, since the teaching and learning taking place in the school are based on the language policy of the school; the language policy will be discussed first.

#### **5.2 THE LANGUAGE POLICY OF THE SCHOOL**

One of the research questions sought to be investigated was whether the school is developing biliteracy in two languages (Sepedi and English). It was therefore important to analyse the language policy of the school. The language policy was obtained from the school principal and is found in **Appendix 4**. The School

Governing Body (SGB) which is guided by the school community was consulted before the policy was formulated. The policy was formulated in 2010.

The policy was developed within the framework provided by the National Department of Education and the Limpopo Education Department as informed by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. The language policy of the school (2010) states that all languages are accorded equal status, with the understanding that some languages will be used as languages of instruction while some are treated as primary languages and additional languages.

As can be seen the language of instruction in the Foundation Phase is Sepedi and this was indeed the case. However, the policy states that English would be introduced as a second language in Grade 1 but this was not the case; the school introduces English only in Grade 2. Also Afrikaans is not taught in the school at all, even though the policy states that it will be introduced in Grade 3. So there are some serious gaps in the way the policy is implemented. The failure especially to introduce English in Grade 2 as an additional language means that the learners have little or no exposure to English till they reach Grade 3. This partly accounts for the inadequate levels of English proficiency found among the learners; this will be discussed later in this chapter.

Sepedi is used in the school assembly. School communications to the parents and guardians are in Sepedi and it is the language that the teachers use to communicate with each other. As will be shown later, Sepedi is used even in the English lessons, where all instructions are given in Sepedi, and at times the teacher would translate the English questions into Sepedi. The dominant language in the classroom is Sepedi. This is in line with the language policy of the school that the first language should be used as a medium of instruction in the Foundation Phase.

## **5.3 ANALYSIS OF THE OBSERVATION DATA**

### **5.3.1 Mismatch between scheduled lessons and actual lessons**

In this section, the mismatches between the scheduled observation and the actual observations will be explained.

The observations started on October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2010 and ended on the 02<sup>nd</sup> of November 2010. Only 20 lessons were observed. This was mainly due to teachers' absences from school on certain days. For instance in the Numeracy learning area, only six lessons were observed instead of the seven that were planned; for the Sepedi learning area, only six lessons were observed; for English five lessons and three lessons for the Life Skills. It was planned that 28 lessons (seven for each of the four learning areas) would be observed. However, as mentioned earlier, only 20 lessons were observed. It is a matter of concern that more than 25% of the lessons did not take place. **(Appendix 5)**

### **5.3.2 Spontaneous changes in the timetable**

Equally of concern was the fact that the teachers did not adhere to the timetables. The lesson would start at 07h30 or immediately after assembly (which is always at 07h00). A few minutes after 07h00 learners would move to their respective classrooms up until 10h00 when it is lunch time. Learners were supposed to have ten periods per day from 07h30 to 13h30 with one hour lunch break. Each lesson was 30 minutes long and double periods would last for one hour. Some of the lessons like Numeracy, Sepedi and English would sometimes take more than an hour. This was due to the fact that the teachers continued with the lesson if learners did not grasp what she was teaching.

Some lessons strictly took 30 minutes but in some cases when the classes took longer than scheduled, most of the learners displayed symptoms of loss of concentration; they would look outside through the windows during the lesson or nod

off to sleep. Teachers did not seem to be aware of this, or if they were, they ignored it and continued teaching nevertheless. Teachers did not give special attention to those who were distracted in class because there were too many learners for him/her to monitor. Overcrowding also denies struggling learners adequate attention from the teacher during lessons.

Occasionally when learners completed their class tasks faster than the others, the teacher encouraged them to read their work books (exercise books). However, no guidance was provided and the children simply stared at the exercise books and there was no way of judging if they were revising their work. During the period under observation, it did not seem that learners were given any home work; in other words, they did not seem to be given the opportunity to review what they learnt at school. There seemed to be no reinforcement of learning.

## **5.4 FINDINGS FROM THE OBSERVATION DATA**

### **5.4.1 Teaching and learning of Sepedi literacy**

Seven lessons of Sepedi were supposed to be observed but only six of them were observed. They were held on the 11<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, October and 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2010. The attendance varied between 43 and 45 (out of a total of 45). The actual lessons observed are in **Appendix 5**.

All the Sepedi lessons followed a particular routine. The teacher wrote up material on the chalkboard that she was planning to teach. Learners repeated the material aloud after the teacher modelled it for them. The repetitions were the most common way in which the teacher dealt with the lesson. Learners were never ever required to read independently; they always repeated words and sentences after the teacher.

During the observation of Sepedi lessons, some learners paid attention when the teacher was teaching while others kept looking outside or whispering to each other.



The teacher often failed to notice those who were not paying attention or those who were whispering and were distracted. Struggling learners, who were clearly not able to cope even when repeating after the teacher, were not given any attention. Those who finished their work before the others were sometimes told to read their exercise books. It is notable that the learners were not given any home work during the observation period.

On October 20, 2010 the teacher wrote a passage/ story on the chalkboard that she got from a previous examination question paper. When the learners entered the classroom, she read the passage aloud and instructed them to read the story. They read aloud as a whole group over and over, till it was like a memorised song. The teacher gave them tasks based on the passage and explained that they should answer the questions as she was preparing them for the upcoming examinations that they were going to write during November.

The learners had been given a test on one of the days prior to the observation but on October 28, 2012, the teacher gave the learners their scripts back and recorded their marks. Therefore the focus of the day for the lesson was on the scripts. The teacher did corrections with the learners; she also mentioned that she was preparing them for the upcoming examinations. They did their reading from their test scripts and the chalkboard where their teacher had written the correct answers for the test. She asked them questions and learners answered individually by raising their hands. The teacher wrote their answers on the chalkboard and asked the learners to write the corrections in their exercise books. The teachers checked the corrections by going around the class and looking at individual learners' exercise books.

On the final day of observation, the teacher used a poster which was written in English, but the teacher conducted the lesson in Sepedi. The teacher pasted the poster on the chalkboard where all learners could see it. The focus was on different kinds of transportation. The names were written in English on the poster but learners gave the names in Sepedi. They were asked to name the kind of transportation and learners answered individually. The teacher also got the learners to write the names

of the different kinds of vehicles on the chalkboard. This was one of the few instances where the learners did some individual work. All of the learners who went to write the names on the chalkboard got them right. After the activity the teacher instructed them to cut out pictures that they came across from the magazines that they were instructed to bring to next lesson of the following day and paste them in their exercise books. They were also required to name each form of transport that they pasted in their books.

#### **5.4.2 Teaching and learning of English literacy**

English lessons were observed on the 11<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup> October and 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2010. The number of learners who were present during the observation days varied between 43 and 45. The duration of the English lessons varied a lot. On some days it went on for one hour and on others it could go on for two and a half hours. The duration of the lesson was quite arbitrary and depended entirely on the teacher. Sometimes the lessons were so long that the learners were bored and tired but the teacher continued with the lesson nevertheless.

What was striking about the English lessons was that the learners seemed to have learnt all the stories and passages by heart. Due to the great deal of repetition that they did they were able to recite entire texts without even looking at their books. As with the Sepedi lessons, the English teacher spent a lot of time writing things up on the chalk board which the children read aloud and copied into their exercise books. Learners mostly read straight off from the chalkboard. No reading books were used. The teacher used both English and Sepedi when he was interacting with the learners, but sometimes, 90% of the English lesson was conducted in Sepedi, obviously because the learners did not have enough competence in English to understand him.

The topics chosen for individual English lessons were quite ad hoc. For example, on October 13, 2010; the teacher wrote words that contained “ea.” on the chalkboard (such as *teach*, *reach*, etc.) and instructed the learners to read them aloud, over and

over. He then wiped the chalkboard and instructed the learners to remember the words that were written on the chalkboard. The learners raised their hands and called out the words one by one. He then gave them a task in which they were required to write ten of the words that were originally written on the chalkboard. This seemed to be a test of memory. He then went through the words checking if they had got them right.

On 28 October 2010, the teacher's focus was on *is* and *was*. Sentences containing *is* and *was*, were written on the chalkboard and the teacher read out these sentences several times and instructed learners to repeat after him. There was no indication that the learners were learning when to use *is* (present tense) and *was* (past tense).

On one occasion, when the teacher was marking learners' work, he noticed that some learners were making a noise. He called out the names of these learners and ordered them to stand in front of the class with their portfolios. In their portfolios, there were stories that they were given by the teacher during the previous English lessons. Some of the stories were not read in the classroom, but there was one story that they had read many times during lessons. The teacher ordered the noise makers to read the stories one by one. Learners could only read the story that they had read several times during English lessons. None of them could read even a single line of the stories that they had not earlier done in class. It was clear that they could not read any texts that were new to them.

On one of the days scheduled for observation, 2<sup>nd</sup> of November 2010, the actual lesson did not take place because when the learners entered the classroom the teacher gave them a task. It was a kind of grammar task in which they were instructed to fill in blanks in a passage with *am*, *is* or *are* that was written on the chalkboard into their exercise books. The school usually closes at 13h30 but on this day, the learners were asked to leave at 13h00, because the Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) learners, who also used the same school facilities, were coming to write their exams in the classrooms used by the regular learners at the school.

### **5.4.3 Teaching and learning of Numeracy**

Six out of seven scheduled numeracy lessons were observed, as the teacher was absent on one day and the lesson was cancelled. The lessons observed took place on the 11<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> October and the 02<sup>nd</sup> November 2010.

In most of the Numeracy lessons that were observed not all learners would pay attention to the teacher. Some learners were paying attention while some seemed distracted as they were not looking at the teacher but would keep glancing out of the window. The teacher was not responding to the learners who were not paying attention and ignored even those who were struggling. Additional tasks were not given to any learners who would finish his or her work first. No Numeracy homework was given to the learners during the observation period. The teacher did not use the Numeracy textbook and instead wrote all the questions and problems on the chalkboard.

The teacher came ahead of the learners to class and wrote all the material on the board. When the learners entered the classroom they would find Numeracy tasks on the chalkboard. The learners did the tasks in their exercise books. They always began by reading out the Numeracy problems written on the board aloud as a group but when they start working on the tasks the learners did them individually. Sepedi was used in all the lessons except for the names of the numerals, which were in English. It would be accurate to say that 95% of the time Sepedi was used in every Numeracy lesson that was observed. The teacher used a lot of questions to get the learners to think about the task and the steps involved in solving numeracy problems.

The focus of the Numeracy lessons was on all the mathematical operations, namely, addition subtraction, multiplication and division. After setting a maths problem, the teachers invited learners solve the problem. A learner was nominated from among those who raised their hands to come to the chalkboard and work out the answers

on the board. As the learner wrote on the board, the learners read the answer aloud as a whole group. The teacher would then indicate if the answer is right or not.

On October 19, 2010 the teacher did a missing numbers task with the learners. She would write a sequence of numbers with some numbers missing. For example, she would write 91, 92, ..., 94, 95, ..., 97, etc. and the learners would have to fill in the missing numbers. The teacher always worked out an example on the board before the learners did the task individually in their exercise books. Not all of the learners were able to get the missing numbers task right.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2010 the teacher revised multiplication, subtraction and addition with the learners. The same routine of doing examples with the learners and then setting them tasks was used. On all the days that Numeracy lessons were observed the same teaching method was used. The teacher dealt with multiplication, subtraction, addition and division in every lesson; mostly as a form of revision.

#### **5.4.4 Teaching and learning of Life Skills**

Seven Life skills lessons were supposed to be observed but only three lessons took place during the observation period and so only these three lessons were observed. The dates that the lessons took place was on October the 13<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup>; 2010. Details of the lessons may be found in **Appendix 5**.

On October 13, 2010 the teacher focused on information about South Africa, the names of the provinces, the names of the President of South Africa and the ministers in his cabinet. This information had already been filled in from previous lessons on to a chart which was displayed on the notice board. But since the chart was on the back wall, the learners could not see it. However, when the teacher asked questions, the learners were able to answer her questions as they had done this lesson before and were revising it. The learners were often required to go up to the chalkboard and write their answers on the board. The teacher would then ask the whole class to say the word that has been written on the chalkboard. After this public whole-class

activity, the learners wrote all the answers down in their exercise books which the teacher marked by going around the classroom and looking at individual learner's work.

On October 15, 2010 the teacher focused on the name of the provinces and the seasons of the year with the learners. These were regarded as revision from the previous lessons she had in the classroom. She highlighted that she is preparing them for the up-coming examinations that are normally written during the end of the each year. Most learners were participating, only those who were struggling were not active but the teacher would encourage them to participate by shouting out their names and giving them warnings. On October 20, 2010 the teacher repeated the seasons of the year with the learners. The main focus was on the differences between the four seasons. She used Sepedi throughout the whole period.

#### **5.4.5 Convergence and divergence in the classroom routines of the four learning areas**

In this section some of the similarities and differences will be commented upon. One surprising fact about all the four learning areas is that although textbooks were available, they were stacked in the cupboards and learners copied their work from the chalkboard. As mentioned earlier, the teacher would come to class beforehand and write the activity of the day on the chalkboard. Learners did not have textbooks on their desks in which they could underline words or make their own notes. This practice created a real challenge for learners who were sitting furthest away from the chalkboard. When questioned on why the teachers were not using the textbooks, they said that they did not have enough textbooks for all the learners.

Teachers had the same way of teaching; they all used the same methods. They always wrote activities and other material on the chalkboard and learners were made to read aloud. Reading aloud as a whole class was the only way in which learners read. No other reading methods were used. Children hardly ever read individually or discussed their work in groups. Only on one occasion did the Sepedi teacher bring

some photocopied material to class. The English literacy teacher also showed some creativity by getting the learners to create a portfolio in which they placed their sheets on which they did their work. Except for these two instances, the teaching in all the learning areas was highly routinized, with the same approach being followed.

## **5.5 ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS FROM THE TEACHING AND LEARNING MATERIALS**

In this section, an analysis of the materials used for teaching and learning is provided.

As pointed out earlier, text books had been delivered to the school by the Department of Basic Education. But these textbooks were not used and were just stored in cupboards. Some posters too were delivered to the school but they were hardly used.

The 'material' that learners encountered everyday was the teachers' writing on the chalkboard. The actual material they used were the exercise books in which they wrote their work given to them by the teachers.

During most of Sepedi lessons readings were done from the chalkboard. On one of the observation days, the teacher brought copies of a handout for the learners. The handout is reproduced below (**Figure 5.5.1**) followed by its English translation (**Figure 5.5.2** done by the researcher).

Example of material used by the teacher with the learners during a Sepedi lesson

c) Theeletša pego ye gomme o tlatše foromo ye o e filwego.

**Go nyakega ngwana**

Maphodisa a Apele a topile ngwana wa mošemane yo a ka bago mengwaga ye 6. O apere borokgo bjo boso, hempe ye tšhweu ya maronthorontho a mahwibidu, dieta tše ntsho tša marala a mašweu. O swere paki ye talamorogo ya mankgeretla. Ge a botšišwa gore o dula kae, o re ke yena Moribala Kadiaka wa motseng wa Modinose. O re tatagwe ke Lala le mmagwe ke Lala. Ge o tseba mošemane yo letšetša Letseka Thopola, nomorong ya 015 6373012 ka dinako ka moka.



**Foromo**

**Pego ya ngwana wa go timela**

1 Leina la ngwana: Moribala Kadiaka

2 Mengwaga: 6

3 Bong: Mošemane

4 Madulo: Modinose

5 Tšhalošo ya diaparo: .....

6 Lephodisa la go swara molato: Letseka Thopola

7 Nomoro ya molato: 015 637 3012





Apel police have found a child of about 6 years. He is wearing black trousers, white shirt with red dots, black shoes with white laces. He is holding a torn green jacket. When he is asked where he lives he says he is Morbola Kadiaka from Modinose village. He says his father is Lala and his mother is also Lala. If you know this boy, call Letseka Thopola on this number 015 637 3012 anytime.

### FORM

Announcement of a missing child

The name of the child.....

Years.....

Gender.....

Place.....

Description of clothes.....

The police who is handling the case.....

Telephone number.....

Figure 5.5.2: Translated text

When questioned about the source of this material, the teacher said that the book from which she extracted the material was not prescribed for 2010 for Grade 3 but had been prescribed for 2009. She said that she liked the above text and wanted to

try it with the Grade 3 class of 2010. Since she did not have enough books for all the learners, she had made copies. However, the copies were of poor reproductions and did not look very attractive but it was the first time during the observation period that the learners received any print material.

However, the way she dealt with this new material was exactly what she had been doing in earlier Sepedi lessons. She told the learners to repeat after her as she read the text and then she required them to read the text aloud over and over again. Learners were then instructed to read aloud the questions that followed the text. She then asked them to orally respond to the questions and most of them were able to give the correct responses. She then asked them to write their answers in the space provided next to each question and marked them at the end of the period. Most of the learners understood the story because they got most the questions right and some even got all correct.

Another unusual material that the teacher used was a previous question paper but instead of giving them copies of it she wrote the whole paper on the board, Learners read the material off the chalkboard as a whole class activity and then wrote answers to the questions in their exercise books.

For the English lessons, each learner had compiled a portfolio (a flip file) that carried all the materials that they were given in class. The flip file contain some photocopied stories and all the work the learners did including their written tests. Occasionally, the teacher would ask learners to read a story from the portfolio but the learners simply recited the stories from memory. They seemed to know them by heart, as if they had been read by the teacher several times to them. Although their reading and learning materials were written in English (those that were meant for English lesson) interestingly the teacher would give instructions in Sepedi so that everyone in the classroom would understand what the teacher wanted them to do.

What as unusual was that the learners were allowed to carry these portfolios home and may have had the opportunity to read and explore its contents while at home but

this is unlikely as the teacher did not give them homework in which these materials could be used at home.

## 5.6 ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS FROM THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT DATA

In this section the classroom environment will be discussed. It was quite disappointing to note that the classrooms were not very conducive to learning. Two of the three Grade 3 classrooms were painted but the last one was still brick-faced; none of the rooms were in a good condition. The rooms were overcrowded with three learners squeezed into desks meant for two. The learners' school bags took up a lot of space and were placed between desks and along the walls. The teachers hardly had any space to move between the desks and learners therefore have no individual contact with the teachers during lessons.

Moving on to whether the learning occurred in a print-rich or a print-impooverished environment, it was disturbing to see that there were hardly any learning materials (charts, posters, and learners' own work) displayed on the walls. Two of the Grade 3 classrooms had no learning materials at all on the walls (see figures 5.5.3 to 5.5.10 and figures 5.5.11 to 5.5.18) but the third classroom had eleven examples of learning materials displayed. However, as they were displayed on the back wall of the classroom the learners could not see them. Of the eleven materials that were displayed, eight were local (they were hand made by the teacher) and the remaining three were professional charts (supplied by a publisher). Seven of the local materials were in Sepedi and one was in English. All the published charts were in English.

The English local material dealt with how the singular and plural forms of words are formed in English and the Sepedi local materials were on *Dikgwedi ke matsatši a dikgwedi* (Months and days of the week), *Melao ya phapoši* (Rules of the classroom), *Maina a diporofense* (Names of the South African provinces) and *Dihla tša ngwaga* (Seasons of the year). The English posters were entitled *Myself/ My body* (a diagram showing the human body with parts labelled), *Types of transport* and *Farm animals*. They were all placed at eye level but as mentioned earlier they

were on the back wall. Photographs were taken as evidence of the kind of environment that learners were taught in. The following figures show the different classrooms (Grades 3a, 3b, and 3c). The photos were taken from the centre of the classroom and include the four corners of the classrooms and the classroom walls.

### 5.6.1 Photographs from Grade 3a classroom (Numeracy)

The following photographs illustrate the four corners of the Numeracy classroom (3a) and the four walls.



Figures 5.5.3 to 5.5.6 show the four corners of the Grade 3a classroom. As can be seen the desks are squeezed against the walls. In figure 5.5.4 the learning materials are seen on top of the locker where the learners cannot reach them. In the corner cleaning materials such as brooms are stored. Figure 5.5.5 illustrates the second corner of the Grade 3a classroom. The cupboard at the corner is used to store the learning books and other materials like pens, chalks, register books, soaps for washing hands and dishes.



Figures 5.5.7 to 5.5.10 illustrate the four walls of the Numeracy classroom. Two of the walls (figures 5.5.8 and 5.5.9) contain windows, the front wall (figure 5.5.10) is occupied by the chalkboard and the back wall (figure 5.5.7) has a notice board on which no material is pasted. There is a clock on the top edge of the noticeboard for time-keeping but teachers do not strictly adhere to the timetable. In figure 5.5.8 one can faintly see a bucket below the windows that learners use for drinking water.

Figure 5.5.9 shows partially the teacher's table right next to the door. In figure 5.5.10 below the chalkboard may be seen a small table with a chair next to the cupboard. The teacher's dishes are washed at this table by the learners.

### 5.6.2 Photographs from Grade 3b classroom (Sepedi)

The following photographs are of the Grade 3b classroom which is used for Sepedi.

Figure 5.5.11 corner



Figure 5.5.12 corner



Figure 5.5.13 corner



Figure 5.5.14 corner



Figures 5.5.11 to 5.5.14 capture the four corners of the Grade 3b classroom. The cupboard at the corner in figure 5.5.11 is where the teacher stores all the items that are used in the classroom. Next to the cupboard just under the chalkboard there is a table with two plastic bowls used to wash dishes and a two-litre plastic bottle for the teacher's drinking water. Figure 5.5.12 shows the chalkboard at the back of the

classroom but this was hardly ever used. Figures 5.5.13 and 5.5.14 just emphasise how unattractive the walls are. The teacher's table may be partially seen in figure 5.5.14.

**Figure 5.5.15 front part**



**Figure 5.5.16 right side**



**Figure 5.5.17 back part**



**Figure 5.5.18 left side**



Figures 5.5.15 to 5.5.18 illustrate the four walls of the classroom. As can be seen from figures 5.5.17 and 5.5.18, there is hardly any space between the rows of desks for the teacher to move around and interact with individual learners. The chalkboard at the back is not made out of board but is a piece of wall painted green.

### **5.6.3 Grade 3c classroom (English and Life Skills)**

The following are the photographs taken of the Grade 3c classroom which is used for Life Skills and English.

Figure 5.5.19 corner



Figure 5.5.20 corner



Figure 5.5.21 corner



Figure 5.5.22 corner



Figures 5.5.19 to 5.5.22 show the four corners of this classroom. Unlike the other two classrooms, this room is not coated with paint. There is a dustbin at the corner behind the door (figure 5.5.19) and a fire extinguisher at the top. Figure 5.5.20 illustrates the second corner of the classroom where an electricity main switch box can be seen. However what is interesting about this photograph is that it is one of the two photographs in which some learning materials can be seen on display.

These are the published charts mentioned earlier. The steel cupboard in figure 5.5.21 is where the learning materials are stored. They are hardly ever used. On top of the cupboard are some unused charts and a plastic bowl containing a jug and drinking water glasses. On one side of the steel cupboard, a timetable has been pasted but it is too high and cannot be easily read. In figure 5.5.22, the home-made materials produced by the Life Skills teacher may be seen. These were the only examples in Grade 3 of teacher-produced posters.



**Figure 5.5.23 back part**



**Figure 5.5.24 left side**



**Figure 5.5.25 front part**



**Figure 5.5.26 right side**



Figures 5.5.23 to 5.5.26 illustrate the walls of the classroom and as can be seen the two notice boards at the back are full of charts and posters. Figure 5.5.24 shows a chart between the windows. Figure 5.5.25 illustrates the front part of the classroom with a big chalkboard in the front.

Finally, the photographs below show the cupboards in the Grade 3a and 3b classrooms where the materials are stored. These cupboards are always locked and the researcher managed to take photographs when they were unlocked on one occasion.



Figure 5.5.27



Figure 5.5.28



Figure 5.5.29



Figure 5.5.30

These figures (5.5.27- 5.5.30) show that the way in which the learning materials are stored does not allow any learner to access them. Learning materials are stored in a way that no learners can access them. Figure 5.5.29 is particularly interesting as it shows the new unused learning materials stored in the second shelf of the cupboard. The teachers' attendance registers and teacher manuals are also stored here.

There are no story books or materials to promote reading for pleasure. Figure 5.5.30 shows boxes of learner materials that have never been used.

From this analysis it may be concluded that learners in this school work in an extremely impoverished learning environment. Except for the few posters mentioned, the learners are not exposed to any stimulating material in their environment. Teachers seem to be unaware of the value of an attractive and engaging environment for Foundation Phase learners. What is particularly alarming is that even when text books and other learning materials are available, the teachers are not using them and waste precious time writing everything on the chalkboard. The only writing they interact with is the teachers' writing on the chalkboard, which is not always visible or legible. The learners do not get to handle textbooks or workbooks, even when they are available, and are not developing any familiarity with this genre which is so central to education.

## **5.7 ANALYSIS OF THE TEACHER INTERVIEW DATA AND FINDINGS**

This section will provide an analysis of the data that was collected during the interviews with the teachers. The aim of the interviews was to find out about the qualifications and training that the teachers had received. During the interviews the teachers expressed their views on a number of issues relating to their teaching experience and these have been captured in this section as well.

### **5.7.1 Teachers' qualifications**

Three of the four teachers have two teaching qualifications each and only Teacher Y (Life Skills) has one qualification (Junior Primary Teachers Certificate) which was obtained in 1980. Other teachers received their qualifications between the years 1995 and 2008.

Two of the teachers (W and X) claimed that they had received training that is enabling them to develop biliteracy among the learners. The training that they received was in the form of a three-day workshop on the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) organised by the teacher's union; South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) and offered by a publishing company. The training was to show them how to prepare for lessons, how to use resources, do lesson presentations, classroom management and assessments. However, in the actual teaching that these teachers did there was no evidence that they had been trained. This is very worrying as it suggests that either the training was totally ineffective or that the teachers are not using the procedures and strategies that they were trained in.

The other two teachers said that they did not receive any training. This too is unfortunate as it seems that these teachers are using their own ideas about teaching and learning and their classroom routines have become very ritualistic and meaningless.

The information provided by the four teachers about their qualifications is summarised in the table given below.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Qualification obtained</b>	<b>Year completed</b>
<i>Teacher W</i> ( <i>English</i> )	Senior Primary Teachers Diploma	1995
	Advanced Certificate in Education	2008
<i>Teacher X</i> ( <i>Sepedi</i> )	Junior Primary Teachers Diploma and	1996
	B.Tech : Educational Management	2005
<i>Teacher Y</i> ( <i>Life Skills</i> )	Junior Primary Teachers Certificate	1980
<i>Teacher Z</i> ( <i>Numeracy</i> )	Senior Primary Teachers Diploma	2000
	Advanced Certificate in Education (Mathematics)	2004

Table 5.1: Teachers' qualifications

### **5.7.2 Teachers' views on the language policy of the school and biliteracy development**

Though there was no specific question on the language policy of the school in the schedule of interview questions, all the four teachers referred to it. They blame the language policy for the poor English proficiency of the learners. Because the school language policy states that Sepedi is the medium of instruction from Grade R to Grade 3, the learners do not take English seriously. The teachers are forced to use Sepedi even in the English lessons as the learners do not understand anything if they are spoken to in English.

The English teacher said that he is scared to give the learners books written in English as the learners look confused. It seems that the teachers themselves are denying their learners opportunities to learn English by only using Sepedi but they explain this by blaming the learners' failure to understand English. It is clear that the learners are not gaining biliteracy but even more disturbing, they are not even gaining literacy in their own language, Sepedi. As for English, there is no oracy development either as the learners are hardly spoken to in English.

### **5.7.3 Language use in the classroom.**

In terms of language use in classroom, two teachers (W and Z) asserted that they use both English and Sepedi when they are teaching. The Numeracy teacher uses English only for the numerals and the rest of the lesson is conducted in Sepedi. The English teacher's response was somewhat contradictory because sometimes he said he uses English with the learners but in the same breath, he also said that learners do not understand English and he is therefore forced to use Sepedi.

The findings from the classroom observation revealed that only when the teacher reads the actual texts that he has written on the chalkboard or when the learners repeat after him, are they using English. In fact the English teacher said that he is using the learners' home language to teach the second language. All instructions

and the language of classroom management in the English lessons observed are in Sepedi.

It was surprising to hear teacher Z (Numeracy) saying that learners are able to say the numbers in English but they cannot write them down in English; they can write them in Sepedi but cannot pronounce them properly in their mother tongue (Sepedi). Teacher X (Sepedi) pointed out that the performance of the learners in her learning area is good in writing but in reading it is too low. Teacher Y and Z said that they use charts to write the things that they teach learners when they are in the classroom and put them up on the walls so that the learners can get practice in reading them. But as the findings from the materials analysis has shown, there were hardly any charts used.

#### **5.7.4 Teachers' views on factors that hinder biliteracy development**

All the four teachers mentioned that frequent changes in the curriculum was hindering the teaching and learning of literacy as teachers find it difficult to adapt to these changes. They were using Outcomes Based Education (OBE) and then as the teachers were in the process of familiarising themselves with the curriculum, it was declared by the Department of Education that the OBE is being revised and was suspended from class activities. The new National Curriculum Statement (NCS) was introduced and the teachers were instructed to use it. However, the DoE discontinued with NCS while teachers were in the process of familiarising themselves with the curriculum. A new curriculum was introduced: the Revised New Curriculum Statement (RNCS). At the time of the interviews, teachers were required to revert to the old curriculum (NCS).

The teachers also mentioned the effect of the "Pass one, pass all" policy as it allows learners who have not yet acquired Grade-appropriate literacy and numeracy skills to progress to the next Grade. As a result, the majority of learners are still at beginner's level even when they progress to Grade 4.

The teachers claimed that lack of resources, overcrowded classrooms and illiterate parents are also hindering literacy development. The teachers said that they could not give individual attention to learners as the classroom is overcrowded. The teachers complained that they could not move freely between the learners' desks. They said that if the school lacks resources like books then learners' interest in books can never be aroused. However, they did not seem to realise that they were not using the textbooks that were in fact available. They asserted that because the school lacks a library, learners cannot develop an interest in reading. They claimed that they could not give homework as the parents are illiterate and could not help their children at home with school work.

The teachers were also frustrated that they had to share their classrooms with ABET learners and this was disruptive. As sometimes lessons had to end early to accommodate the ABET learners. They also claimed that they had to remove display material from the walls of the classrooms when ABET learners wrote exams. As a result, the classrooms look empty and dull.

#### **5.7.5 Teachers' views on strategies for improving biliteracy development**

During the interview process, the teachers said that despite being in a rural school, they were eager to improve the literacy levels of their learners and highlighted the most appropriate ways in which this could be done. These are summarised below:

- Government should supply good and enough resources since parents from rural areas cannot afford some of the materials needed for use in lessons.
- Teachers should improve on strategies for teaching learners to read and should be trained for this.
- Teachers should reinforce good communication skills with learners; that learners should not be scared to approach them when there is a need. They would like to encourage a learner- centred approach.

- Teachers should try to compensate for lost lesson time by having lessons after hours.
- Teachers should consult their colleagues and learn from each other
- Learners should be required to read and write every day and also be given homework.
- Learners should be encouraged to use some of the things that are found around them, like stones, to help them to count in Numeracy classrooms.
- A good learning environment should be created for learners (print-rich environment).
- The Department of Education should arrange workshops for literacy development.
- Story books for children that are written in Sepedi should be provided because they already have a lot of English learning books.
- A library should be created as the school does not have one.
- Internet facilities where they can browse and access knowledge from different sources should be provided.

From this list, it seems that the teachers are very aware of what needs to be done to improve literacy teaching and learning in two languages. In the final chapter which follows, the findings from this chapter will be consolidated and the implications will be spelt out. Recommendations arising from this research will also be discussed.



## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

This final chapter of the study focuses on a summary of the main findings of the research, their implications for the development of biliteracy and recommendations arising from the research. This chapter will outline the answers to the main research questions: whether two languages (the home language, Sepedi and an additional language, English) are being used to develop biliteracy among the learners, the kinds of teaching and learning materials used; the kinds of training that the teachers have received and the print environment in which lessons take place.

#### **6.2 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS**

##### **6.2.1 Development of biliteracy**

The first aim of this study was to find out whether two languages (the home language, Sepedi and English) are being used to develop biliteracy among the learners.

It is very clear from this study that the learners in Grade 3 are not only not developing biliteracy, they are not developing literacy even in their home language, Sepedi. Their exposure to Sepedi is only through the writing in Sepedi that the teachers do on the chalkboard. They do not read Sepedi textbooks, let alone Sepedi story books or any other material meant to develop the learners' reading abilities in Sepedi. Even though the language policy of the school states that Sepedi is the medium of instruction in the Foundation Phase, the learners are only being exposed to the Sepedi of the teachers.

The teachers' own competence in Sepedi is good but it cannot replace the range of inputs that the learners would encounter if they were exposed to Sepedi from other sources. When it comes to reading and writing Sepedi, the learners only reproduce what the teacher requires them to repeat, mostly as a whole-class activity. The writing they do is limited to copying what the teacher has written on the board. Learners do not move beyond these very restricted ways of learning.

Moving on to English, it is not introduced in Grade 2 as the language policy states but only in Grade 3, one year before it replaces Sepedi as a medium of instruction and assessment. Additionally, as has been shown in this study, the teacher uses a lot of Sepedi in the English lesson and learners are not getting sufficient exposure to English. Learners are being denied the chance to encounter English and grapple with learning it.

The Revised National Curriculum Statement states that the most important task of the Foundation Phase teacher is to ensure that all learners learn to read. Forty per cent of teaching time in the Foundation Phase therefore, is allocated to literacy (DoE 2002: 23). However this is not the case as learners do not spend any time learning to read. Hence the first research question relating to whether learners are developing biliteracy has to be answered with a clear 'No.'

### **6.2.2 Teaching and learning materials**

The second aim of this study was to identify the kinds of teaching and learning materials used to promote reading and writing in the two languages.

It is clear from this study that the teachers of Grade 3B have a poorly-developed notion of materials for teaching and learning because even when some textbooks were available they did not use them. Instead they laboriously copied out tasks and texts on to the chalkboard and learners largely copied and reproduced this material. The learners were not given any stimulating material that developed their thinking,

reading or writing skills. No reading for pleasure was ever done during the observation period. While Trok's study (2005:59) was not specifically on Limpopo, his views are very relevant here. He states,

“Children are not introduced to libraries and reading early enough. In schools where there are libraries, the only books available are textbooks and children and teachers only go to the library to study or to complete a certain task. They have no story books for children or any lessons for stimulating reading for fun. For parents ... a library is a no-go area and sharing books as a family is unheard of.”

The picture that emerges from this study is even more dire than Trok recognised in 2005. Books of any kind are simply not used at all in this grade. Not only does the school not have a library, whatever material is readily available is not used. The learners are simply not developing print literacy or any kind of literacy.

### **6.2.3 The training and qualifications of the teachers**

The third aim of the study was to investigate the kind of training that the teachers had received to enable them to develop the biliteracy skills of their learners. The study revealed that the teachers had different qualifications, one of them obtained as far back as 1980 (30 years before this study was undertaken). Citing Trok again (2005:59), “Bantu Education of apartheid South Africa has left countless black families with few reading and writing skills, particularly in rural and poor households. For them not much has changed. The school curriculum of yesteryear is still used in some schools in rural areas. Teachers who are products of Bantu Education pass their teaching on to this generation and so continue the cycle.”

So obviously for the teacher who obtained her qualification in 1980, it would be difficult to adapt to the new curriculum and unfamiliar methods of teaching and assessment. But even the qualifications obtained recently (in 2004, 2005 and 2008)

do not seem to have equipped the teachers with more progressive ways of teaching.

It was striking to note that all the lessons were extremely teacher-centred. The same method of teaching was always followed. Learners were not organised into groups, rarely had opportunities to work independently and it was difficult for teachers to work with learners who were clearly struggling.

To conclude this section, independent of when the qualifications were obtained all the teachers seem to have evolved in the same way and are using the same ritualistic and routinised way of teaching. However, when interviewed, the teachers lay the blame for their ineffectiveness on the lack of resources, frequent changes in the curriculum, and poor training.

#### **6.2.4 The teaching and learning environment**

The final aim of this research was to find out whether the teaching and learning occurs in a print-rich or print-impooverished environment.

This study confirmed what has been uncovered by previous research that all the lessons take place in an extremely impoverished print environment. The learners have no access to books as the teachers withhold whatever is available, the walls are empty of print and there is hardly anything in the environment that could stimulate the interest of the learners.

### **6.3 IMPLICATIONS OF THIS STUDY**

#### **6.3.1 Links between home and school literacy**

All the research evidence cited in the literature review of this study suggests that children's early phonological awareness and familiarity with books links to their later reading and writing skills (Nicholson 1999; Hamer & Adams 2003). McLachlan

(2006) and Tayler (2006) show that if these literacy and other practices are poorly developed or these skills are missing prior to schooling, then this is an indicator of later reading difficulties. Many scholars have asserted that emergent literacy or early literacy is very much a social practice that develops in different social contexts rather than through formal instruction. They believe that when there is a bridge between home and school literacy practices, then children can more readily (McLachlan 2006; Tayler 2006) make the transition to schooled literacy.

For the children of Limpopo, one of the poorest provinces in South Africa, coming from homes where the parents are unemployed and dependent on social grants and where the parents themselves have no schooled literacy, there is no hope that these children can develop any meaningful literacy practices prior to schooling. These children and their parents depend on school to provide for and develop these crucial literacy skills. But as this study shows, school is failing these learners badly.

The teachers in this study seem unaware of the processes involved in listening, reading, speaking, and writing and interpret these crucial skills to be mechanistic and developed through repetition and reproduction. They are doing nothing to help the learners develop the wide range of emerging literacy skills that the learners are potentially able to engage with.

What is really disturbing is that learners come to school with rich oral language experiences such as rhyming, language play, informal phonemic awareness activities, and songs yet none of these activities are ever tapped and made part of the school's curriculum. Hornberger (1990) points out in her biliteracy model that there is a continuity of experiences, skills, practices, and knowledge stretching from one end of any particular continuum to the other but teachers seems to be unaware of this and do not use oral practices to develop literacy.

Bloch (2002) and her colleagues have shown how multilingualism can be maintained and promoted through the rich oral tradition that learners come from. They demonstrate that the songs and language games that are such a natural part of a

child's world can be transcribed into written texts and used creatively for literacy development.

### **6.3.2 Developing literacy in two languages**

Gort (2004) shows that when children start writing and reading in two languages, they employ much the same strategies regardless of which language they are using. Once they develop phonological awareness (sound-symbol correspondence) they apply that awareness to whichever language they are engaging with at any particular instance. They transfer creative spelling and other strategies for decoding and encoding texts from one language to another. The processes of interpreting texts remain essentially the same.

However, the teachers in this study are unaware of these relationships. The teaching of literacy in the home language is so superficial that there is no solid foundation for the learners to build on either to develop their own language further or to transfer to skills to English.

The delayed introduction to English as a first additional language (only in Grade 3, rather than in Grade 2, as stated by the school's policy) only makes matters worse. Teachers do not seem to have a clue on how to handle the introduction of a new language and adopt the same routinised approach that they use to teach Sepedi. When learners have to make the switch to English medium as a language of teaching and instruction in grade 4, they are faced with an impossible transitional hurdle, from which they never recover.

This study confirms the findings of the extensive Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) research (Prinsloo 2008) that the quality of literacy instruction and literacy opportunities of most grades R - 4 learners is limiting literacy development.

## 6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is clear that the crisis in education is nothing short of a national disaster. More training, more materials, changes in policy or changes in curriculum are not going to provide a solution to this crisis.

The current study may have given the impression that the main cause of the current crisis in education is the poor pedagogy used by the teachers. However, one needs to look at the larger picture. Teachers in South Africa, especially in the poor rural areas are completely demoralised and demotivated; for them very little has changed since the end of apartheid. Their status as a profession is threatened; they no longer command the respect of their communities. They have been subject to several changes in policy and curricula without much consultation. The training provided to them is outmoded, or too superficial to make an impact. They work in isolation and feel that they are not supported by local educational officials. It would be incorrect to place the entire responsibility for education failure on them.

Much research and many pedagogic initiatives have been carried out in many parts of the world. In South Africa itself, there are many models of biliteracy development, such as the one developed by the Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa (PRAESA). Such models have to be made available to teachers, not in the form of theories but as demonstrations. Government needs to identify innovations that have been shown to work in South Africa and make them available to local school teachers. It needs to set up demonstration schools where these innovations are implemented and teachers should be given time off to spend at these schools in groups, where they can discuss and debate what they see and experience. It is only when teachers take control of their own teaching, and make decisions about what will work or not work in their own context, that they will be motivated to explore and experiment with new ways of making their teaching more effective for their learners.

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# APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1A (Translated letter to parents)

**UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO**



[imaginepru@webmail.co.za](mailto:imaginepru@webmail.co.za), 084 622 6752

From: M. P Lebese

MA Student University of Limpopo

Thobela Batswadi

Ke le moithuti wa dithuto tsa kwa godimo (Masters) ko Yunibesithing ya Limpopo, ken ale kgahlego ka go kwišiša ka moo bana ba sekolo ba mophato wa fese ba ithutang go bala le go ngwala ka maleme a mabedi.

Hlogo ya sekolo sa Megoring Primary School o ntumeletše go dira dinyakišišo mo sekolong sa bona ebile ngwana wa lena \_\_\_\_\_ ke o mongwe wa batšea karolo mo phaphošing e e tlabego e lebeletšwe. Ke tla ba ke ithuta ka seo se diregang ka diphaphošing gomme ka ngwala pego. Leina la ngwana wa lena le ka se šomišwe mo pegong le mo mošomong. Ke tla dira fela dinyakišišo le pego.

Ke tshepa gore le tla dumelelana le nna gore ke dire dinyakišišo ka diphaphošing mo ngwana wa lena a tla bang a le gona. Ge le nyaka tsebo ka ditaba tse, nka thabela go bolela le lena nomorong e ya mogala: 084 622 6752.

Ka Ditebogo

MP Lebese

## APPENDIX 1B (English letter to parents)

### UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO



[imaginepru@webmail.co.za](mailto:imaginepru@webmail.co.za) 084 622 6752

From: M. P Lebese

MA Student University of Limpopo

Dear Parent(s)

This is to inform you that your child \_\_\_\_\_ will be one of the participants who will be take part in one of the research of Biliteracy Development that will be taking place at Megoring Primary School. Parents are assured that anonymity will be maintained and the privacy of their children will be respected and protected. Thank you in advance.

Yours Faithfully

Lebese M.P (Researcher)

MP Lebese

## APPENDIX 2

### CLASSROOM AND PRINT ENVIRONMENT OBSERVATION

#### 1. GENERAL INFORMATION

Name of School: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_ Date of Observation: \_\_\_\_\_ Learning Area: \_\_\_\_\_

Period No.: \_\_\_\_ Starting Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Ending Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Learners in Classroom (Present): \_\_\_\_\_

#### 2. TEACHING AND LEARNING

1. Do learners pay attention in class or do they seem distracted?	
2. Does the teacher respond to learners who are not paying attention?	
3. Does the teacher give special attention to learners who are struggling?	
4. Does the teacher give additional tasks to those who have finished their work?	
5. Is the class given any homework?	
6. Is the written homework corrected in class?	
7. Do learners do any reading during the period observed?	
8. Are learners allowed to choose their own books?	

**\*How are the learners grouped for reading?**

- One-on-one with the teacher
- Small groups
- pairs
- Whole group
- Individually

**\*How do they do their work?**

- Small groups
- pairs
- Whole group
- Individually

**\*About how much of the talk was in Sepedi?**

- None
- 25%
- 50%
- 75%
- 100%

**\*What was the teacher's role?**

- Telling or lecturing
- Guiding practice
- Circulating or overseeing instruction
- Questioning
- No active involvement

Notes on the lesson that was observed

Elaboration on language, materials, focus, grouping, teacher role

### 3. PRINT ENVIRONMENT

#### 1. Pictures

Pictures of the four classroom walls from the center of the classroom and one from each corner of the classroom. This is a total of eight pictures.


## 2. Inventory of print environment in the Classroom

(Detailed descriptions of quantities, variety (Public & Private; Extended & Limited), the organization (accessibility); and qualities of text (Content, Language and Design).

### Overall texts

What is the proportion of local text in English vs. Sepedi?

- All Sepedi
- Mostly Sepedi
- Almost Even Sepedi and English
- Mostly English
- All English

What is the overall quality of the local texts?

- Very low quality
- Low quality
- Average quality
- High quality
- Very high quality

## APPENDIX 3

### TEACHER'S SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

AGE: 20- 30\_\_\_      30- 40\_\_\_      40- 50 \_\_\_      50- Upwards\_\_\_

TEACHERS' QUALIFICATIONS and YEARS OBTAINED

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1. Which learning area are you responsible for?

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2. Did you receive any training that will or is enabling you to develop biliteracy skills among the learners in classroom? If "yes", what kind of training? If "no" why?

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3. How many languages do you usually use in a classroom? Which languages? And which language is dominating in most cases? Why?

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4. What strategies are you using in order to develop biliteracy in classroom?

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5. What kinds of learning materials do you use with the learners in classroom?

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6. The study of (PIRLS 2006) Progress in International Reading Literacy Study shows that South African children's reading literacy achievement is the lowest in the world when compared to 44 other countries. What's your view regarding this? What do you think is the cause of this?

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7. As a teacher of a rural school, what do you think will be the most appropriate way of improving the literacy achievement in South Africa?

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8. What is the effective way of developing biliteracy among your learners? And what is not the effective way of developing biliteracy among your learners?

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9. What is your view on the biliteracy progress of your learners?

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10. What are the factors which in your view, promote or hinder the development of biliteracy in classroom?

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11. As a rural school teacher, can you please comment on the aspects of your work that might be improved with better resources?

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# PRIMARY SCHOOL

## LANGUAGE POLICY

### 1. PREAMBLE

The language policy of the **B** Primary School has been developed within the framework provided by the National Department of Education and Limpopo Education Department as informed by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. All languages are accorded equal status, however, with the understanding that some languages will be used as language of instruction while some are treated as primary languages and additional languages.

### 2. AIMS OF THE POLICY

This policy aims at:

- ensuring that all the eleven (11) languages are developed and treated equally;
- cultivate a general practice of learning more than one language
- respect for all languages and promotion of multilingualism;
- facilitate communication across ethnic and language barriers;
- to close the gap between home language and languages of learning and teaching; and
- raise the status of formerly disadvantaged languages.

### 3. LANGUAGES OFFERED AT SCHOOL

The School Governing Body guided by the school community has decided that English be the language of instruction in the Intermediate and Senior Phases. Sepedi is the language of instruction in the Foundation Phase. The school offers the following languages: Sepedi, English, and Afrikaans as an additional language. No learner shall be refused admission at school on the basis of this language policy.

#### 4. LANGUAGE OFFERING IN GRADES R – 7

GRADE	LANGUAGE(S)	COMMENTS
R	SEPEDI	Learners shall only be exposed to their mother tongue. They learn the three learning programmes (Life Skills, Numeracy and Literacy) in Sepedi.
1	SEPEDI AND ENGLISH	Learners are only exposed to their mother tongue and English as the second language. Sepedi is their language of instruction.
2	SEPEDI AND ENGLISH	Learners are only exposed to their mother tongue and English as the second language. Sepedi is their language of instruction.
3	SEPEDI, ENGLISH AND AFRIKAANS	Learners are introduced to the third additional language (Afrikaans) Sepedi continues to be their language of instruction.
4	SEPEDI, ENGLISH AND AFRIKAANS	Learners do three languages. This time English becomes their language of instruction.
5	SEPEDI, ENGLISH AND AFRIKAANS	Learners do three languages. This time English becomes their language of instruction.
6	SEPEDI, ENGLISH AND AFRIKAANS	Learners do three languages. English is their language of instruction.
7	SEPEDI, ENGLISH AND AFRIKAANS	Learners do three languages. English is their language of instruction.

## 5. PROMOTING MULTILINGUALISM

Learners shall be encouraged to speak the languages spoken in the Province including Sign Language. Learner and educators who have a fair understanding of these languages shall be used to teach the basics, such as, how to greet and to say thank you. Educators will be encouraged to offer languages that are not offered at school, at least one afternoon a week.

## 6. APPEAL

If a learner or School Governing body is dissatisfied with a decision, they have the right to appeal to the Head of Department, and MEC with sixty (60) days of the declaration.

SGB Chairperson.....Date .....

SGB Secretary ..... Date .....

Principal ..... Date .....

**APPENDIX: 5**

**GRADE 3 LESSONS OBSERVED**

**BILITERACY DEVELOPEMENT IN A RURAL SCHOOL OF LIMPOPO PROVINCE**

Dates of observations	Educator	NO. of learners Present	Learning Area	Length of Lesson	Period number
11 Oct 2010	Teacher W	43	ENGLISH	11h00-12h30	05
13 Oct 2010		43		07h30-10h00	01
15 Oct 2010		44		09h30-10h00 11h00-12h30	05
19 Oct 2010				<b>No class</b>	
20 Oct 2010				<b>No class</b>	
28 Oct 2010		45		12h15-13h00	09
02 Nov 2010		43		12h30-13h00	10

Dates of observations	Educator	NO. of learners Present	Learning Area	Length of Lesson	Period number
11 Oct 2010	Teacher X	43	SEPEDI	12h30-13h30	09
13 Oct 2010		43		12h30-13h30	09
15 Oct 2010				<b>No class</b>	
19 Oct 2010		45		07h30-10h00	01
20 Oct 2010		44		11h00-12h15	06
28 Oct 2010		45		07h30-09h30	01
02 Nov 2010		43		07h30-10h00	01

Dates of observations	Educator	NO. of learners Present	Learning Area	Length of Lesson	Period number
11 Oct 2010	Teacher Y		LIFE SKILLS	<b>No class</b>	
13 Oct 2010		43		11h00-12h30	06
15 Oct 2010		44		07h45-09h30	01
19 Oct 2010				<b>No class</b>	
20 Oct 2010		44		07h30-09h30	01
28 Oct 2010				<b>No class</b>	
02 Nov 2010				<b>No class</b>	

Dates of observations	Educator	NO. of learners Present	Learning Area	Length of Lesson	Period number
11 Oct 2010	Teacher Z	43	NUMERACY	07h30- 10h00	01
13 Oct 2010				<b>No class</b>	
15 Oct 2010	44	12h30-13h30		09	
19 Oct 2010	45	11h00-13h30		06	
20 Oct 2010	44	12h15-13h30		08	
28 Oct 2010	45	11h00-12h15		06	
02 Nov 2010	43	11h00-12h30		06	