

**The impact of the use of English as the Medium of Instruction to grade four
learners in the Mankweng Circuit**

by

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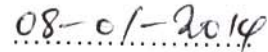
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DECLARATION

I declare that: **The impact of the use of English as the Medium of Instruction to grade four learners in the Mankweng Circuit** (mini-dissertation) hereby submitted to the University of Limpopo, for the degree of Masters of Arts in Translation studies and Linguistics (Sociolinguistics) has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other university; that is my work in design and in execution, and that all material contained herein has been acknowledged.



Dikgale SJ (Mr)



Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to

my late sister,

Ledile Priscilla Dikgale

&

my mother,

Mokgadi Ruth Dikgale,

for the support they gave me.

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- Lastly, but most importantly, the omnipotent God, who has endowed me with the ability, motivation and perseverance to press on for the completion of the study.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of the use of English as MoI to Grade 4 learners in the Mankweng Circuit. The study employed qualitative methodology and descriptive design. The data were collected by means of structured questionnaires, interview and test. Teachers (for English and content subjects), learners, parents and circuit officials were the respondents.

The findings revealed that Grade four learners in the Mankweng Circuit do possess the basic knowledge of English but they are still experiencing serious difficulties in writing and expressing ideas through English. They lack enough knowledge to deal with cognitively demanding tasks. The learners were found to be using L1 whenever they fail to speak or write in English. They fail to achieve outstanding results in content subjects. The study also revealed that illiteracy amongst some parents is a contributing factor for learners' low English proficiency as the former is unable to help the latter.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the background and the rationale for the study, which form the basis of understanding of the research, are outlined. The statement of the problem together with the aim and objectives of the study are also outlined. Literature review in this chapter outlines literature related to the topic area, the same literature review is dedicated to Chapter 2, where it is combined with the theoretical and conceptual framework to form one chapter. The research methodology, research design, sampling, data collection and data analysis are outlined to indicate ways in which the data were collected and analysed. There are also remarks on how the researcher ensured the reliability, validity, objectivity in the research and also how bias was dealt with in the entire study. The significance of the study is included to emphasize on the contribution that the research will make in society. It ends up by drawing the general conclusion of the entire chapter.

Schools in South Africa are still battling with the problem of the language of teaching and learning. When discussing educational problems, there is, more often than not, reference to the language that is used to teach other subjects. The researcher investigated the impact of the use of English as a Medium of Instruction (Mol) in Grade 4 classes of some selected primary schools in the Mankweng Circuit of the Department of Basic Education. The Mankweng Circuit is found in the Limpopo Province. The province is divided into five districts, namely, the Capricorn, Waterberg, Vhembe, Mopani, and Sekhukhune Districts. The Mankweng Circuit of Education is based in the Capricorn District at Mankweng, operating under the Polokwane Municipality. It is one of the five Mankweng Circuit clusters. It consists of 20 primary schools and 11 secondary schools. The offices are located at Mankweng, about 30 kilometres east of the Polokwane City.

Mol is deemed the main medium through which ideas and opinions are communicated from one person to another. As such, Mol in schools therefore plays a paramount role on the acquisition of knowledge and skills that are appropriate for the development of learners. English is counted amongst the 11 official languages of South Africa and is used as Mol after Grade 2. Katamba (1994) avers that English is heavily entrenched in the education system, and has a huge literature in almost every discipline, which makes it an international language of education and communication. In the same vein, Herman (2010) remarks that English is the dominating language in both public and professional life, within and outside the country. The economic potential possessed by English makes it a major linguistic force and most desired language internationally.

According to the South African Language-in-Education policy of 1997, read in conjunction with The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA), Act 108 of 1996 section 29 (2), it is the right of an individual to choose the language of learning. It therefore implies that learners have the right to choose the language through which they wish to be taught. However, Saunders (2009) explains this section when he points out that it does not specifically imply that the L1 must be used as the Mol, it refers to the language of their choice. He mentions further that children may not be able to choose the Mol for themselves. The choice lies in the hands of their parents or guardians who are represented on School Governing Bodies. In South Africa, most learners are taught in English from Grade 3 upwards, despite the fact that neither the teachers nor the learners who use it to any degree regard it as their mother tongue. For the majority of people, it is their second or even third language.

Sepedi is one of the 11 official languages of South Africa. This language is taught as a subject in schools and is used to teach other subjects from Grades 1 and 2 only. It is also used in some newspapers and magazines, as well as in broadcasting. Hence it also possesses a formal status.

1.2 Research Problem

In South Africa, the foreign language of instruction is introduced in Grade 3 and thus, in most schools, learners are taught in English from Grade 3 upwards. This makes English the main language of learning and teaching. However, information regarding the English proficiency amongst black learners shows that, for many, English is not an effective instrument of knowledge acquisition and skills development as they do not speak it as their first language. This negatively affects the performance of learners in other subjects (Banda, 2000). Furthermore, Banda (2000) states that the preference of English as the Mol is thought to impede learning. This implies that most learners find it difficult to grasp their subjects as a result of learning through English.

The low scholarly results in other subjects may be attributed to the use of English as Mol. Heugh (2010) points out that South Africa is blamed by language experts for producing poor educational results and poor display in international tests on the reading and mathematics ability, as a result of lack of L1 instruction, particularly in primary schools. In agreement with Heugh (2010), the former MEC for education in Limpopo Province, Dr A Motsoaledi, pointed out that French and Portuguese speaking countries, and their English-speaking counterparts, have proven beyond any doubt that the use of a colonial language as a language of teaching in the early life of a child benefits only 10% of the school population (Review, 2006:5). Seeing that the majority of learners in South Africa speak African languages as their first or home languages, Motsoaledi's observation implies that very few learners benefit from the use of English as the Mol in primary schools.

This study, therefore, sought to investigate the impact of teaching Grade 4 learners who use the language that is not their home language or first language as Mol.

1. 3. Literature Review

For Tuckman (1978:38), reference to relevant studies helps to uncover the following:

- Ideas about variables that have proven important and unimportant in a given field of study; and

- Meanings of and relationships between variables that interest the researcher and which he intends to explore.

Hence, the researcher chose a literature survey so that the variables in this study can be explored. These variables are English Second Language (ESL) proficiency, scholarly performance, the introduction of L2 to learners and primary schools in the Mankweng Circuit of Education.

Yalden (1987)

According to Yalden (1987), language is one of the most important tools for learning and teaching. It is through language that people are able to understand each other in their day-to-day interaction. In other words, language in education performs a communicative function. This communicative function makes the language a key to educational development because knowledge and information are transmitted through language.

Wolff (2006) also expresses the power that language has in education when he states that language is not the only thing that plays an important role in education, but everything is nothing in education without language. He emphasizes the paramount role that language plays in education. It is important to note that for one to be taught a given subject, it has to be in a particular language, meaning that, education can hardly occur without language. It is for this reason that language is such a valuable asset in education. One needs to have adequate command of a language in order to learn through that language.

Deborah and Spanos (1989)

Deborah and Spanos (1989) argue that language educators consider lack of proficiency in the language of instruction to have a harmful effect on a student's ability to deal with content-area texts, word problems and lessons. Proficiency in the language of instruction assists learners to grasp the subject in class. On the other hand, Heugh (1999) points out that the English language proficiency of teachers who are themselves

not English mother-tongue speakers may not be sufficient for effective teaching and learning to occur through English. Proficiency in the language of instruction is necessary for both learners and educators for better understanding in the classroom. This information sheds light on learning barriers as a result of low proficiency in the language of instruction. The English proficiency of learners as well as the language background of teachers is assessed as this might affect learner's learning.

Cocking and Mestre (1988)

Cocking and Mestre (1988) note that language is a means by which concepts are communicated between a teacher and a learner, either through oral or written materials. Language, thus, plays a central role in the teaching process. In this regard, Cooney et al., (1975:90) state that "communication breaks down when people do not have certain concepts or when they do not comprehend them". When pupils do not understand what the teacher is trying to say, then s/he is not communicating because the message does not make sense to the recipient. Because concepts enable children to construct knowledge and communicate with others, not understanding them nullifies the learning process. This information is confirmed by assessing the linguistic competence of learners in Chapter 3.

Fleisch (2008:105-112)

Fleisch (2008:105-112) argues that the transition from L1 instruction in reading, writing and numeracy in the early years of schooling to L2 in Grade 4, where the learner is expected to be proficient in reading across the curriculum, causes problems. The implication of the above point is that the introduction of L2 in the early years as the language of instruction gives learners problems in learning generally. Chiwome and Tondlana (1992:248) concur with Fleisch's viewpoint when they postulate that it takes longer to learn in the L2 than L1. This information is useful as it shows the challenges of second language instructions in the early years of schooling. The research comments about the general learning problems occasioned by early introduction and use of English as Mol in the Mankweng Circuit, in Chapter 4.

The Association for the Development of Education in Africa (2006)

The Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) is an international institute for educational planning. ADEA (2006) reveals that the use of language that learners do not fully comprehend in education for teaching forces teachers to use traditional teaching methods. Teachers spend most of the time talking while children take notes and remain silent or passive participants during most of the classroom interactions. The use of unfamiliar language force teachers to use traditional teaching method like chorus teaching; repetition, memorisation and recall; code-switching; and safe talk. Using such techniques disturb learning from taking place effectively. School end up becoming ineffective and in turn lead to low scholarly achievement. The researcher assessed how the use of English as Mol impacts on learning.

Benson (2002)

Benson (2002) postulates that worldwide, children's First Language (L1) has been regarded as the most efficient language for early literacy and content area instruction. He states that late transition to education in L2 is more effective than early transition. Benson's work reveals to the researcher the importance of using L1 instruction in primary school education.

Ball (2010)

According to Ball (2010), children who begin school in an L2 or the language that they do not understand face the dual challenges of acquiring another language while learning the content subjects in that new language. The children will concentrate more on language than the content of the curriculum. It implies that L2 instruction does not facilitate learning properly. Learners were assessed with regard to the challenges they come across when the instruction is done through L2.

Patrick-Andre (2010)

Patrick-Andre and Winzeler (2010) mention that children clearly benefit from being taught in their L1, particularly in their early years of literacy. When they are forced to study in a second language from Grade 1, they are often alienated and fail dismally and

show slower development than children whose L1 is used in schools as the Mol. This information indicates that second language instruction may not be the preferred choice, but this research found out in Chapter 4 what the real situation is regarding the use of English as Mol in the Mankweng Circuit.

1.3.1 Elucidation of Concepts

English Second Language (ESL) Learners

ESL learners are those learners whose primary language or home language is other than English and who may therefore require additional assistance in order to develop the required linguistic skills. In this regard, Marland (1997:14) points out that such type of learners require more sophisticated literacy skills as opposed to those achieved by the native speakers of a language. Generally, second language refers to a language that is not used as a means of communication at home, and yet may be the language of wider communication (Marland, 1997:14).

Impact.

According to *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (2009) the word 'impact' means the force of one object hitting the other. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (2009) maintains that an impact is the effect or influence. Impact in this research will be taken to mean the effect or influence and the force that English as Mol has on scholarly performance.

Proficiency in English

Marland, (1997) maintains that a fully English proficient learner is able to use English to ask questions, to understand teachers and to read materials, to test ideas, to listen, write and speak. All these seven language skills contribute to proficiency. This research adopted Marland's (1997) view on proficiency.

Medium of Instruction (Mol)

Ball (2010) defines Medium of Instruction (Mol) as the language used for teaching the basic curriculum of the educational system. The concept Mol in this research means the

language through which subjects are taught to the learners in schools or the language through which learners receive formal education.

1.4. Purpose of the Study

The aim of the study is to investigate the impact of the use of English as Mol to Grade 4 learners in the Mankweng Circuit and to assess how Mol affects learning.

1.4.1 Objectives

- To identify challenges experienced by teachers and learners with regard to the use of English as a Mol.
- To determine the English proficiency of Grade 4 learners in the circuit.
- To investigate the language background of teachers in selected schools.
- To recommend appropriate time for the introduction of English as Mol.
- To suggest policy implications with regard to mother tongue instruction.

1.5. Research Methodology

The qualitative method was employed to collect data. This method helps to develop a focus of enquiry that guides the discovery of what is to be known about a particular phenomenon (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). The use of this method is more concerned with investigating and responding to exploratory and descriptive questions in a given subject. The researcher collected data by means of questionnaires and in-depth interviews with teachers, learners, parents and education officials.

1.5.1 Research Design

A descriptive study was used in the present research as it allows the researcher to assess the situation by polls and surveys as data collecting mechanism. This also involved the use of cross-sectional data as it eliminates the time dimension by quickly collecting data. A cross-sectional research does not delay the publishing of results.

1.5.2 Sampling

The study used stratified sampling. The population was divided into different groups. Teachers were grouped according to their subject combinations: language teachers were grouped together and so were content subject teachers. Education officials were grouped according to their subjects, positions or roles. Learners in Grade 4 were selected to write English proficiency test. Parents were selected from the School Governing Body (SGB) and the general public.

The selection process proceeded in this manner; one English teacher and one content subject teacher in Grade 4 were selected randomly from each school. One English curriculum advisor and two Curriculum advisors for other subjects were selected randomly in the Mankweng circuit. One parent from each School Governing Body (SGB) and one non-SGB member was selected randomly for interviews. The interviews with parents were conducted in Sepedi as they did not all speak English. The learners were selected through the random sampling method. Ten learners in Grade 4 per school were selected randomly in 10 schools to write an English proficiency test. Grade 4 was chosen because that is where English is introduced as a Mol in most schools around Mankweng. The schools were selected according to their area of location for the purpose of representivity, namely, deep rural schools, rural schools and semi-urban schools. The deep rural schools are those that are far from semi-urban area, rural schools are those that are found close to the semi-urban area whereas the semi-urban schools are found in semi-urban areas.

The following are populations of the study.

- 10 primary schools.
- 100 learners.
- 20 teachers.
- 20 parents (SGB).
- 3 curriculum advisors.

1.5.3. Data Collection

The following techniques were used to collect data:

- Structured interviews were conducted with parents. They were interviewed in Sepedi as they might not have been able to speak English. Interviews allow the interviewer to pursue in-depth information around the topic, and may be useful as follow-up to certain respondents to questionnaires and to further investigate their responses (McNamara, 1999).
- Questionnaire: Ackroyd and Hughes (1981) point out that questionnaire can collect large amounts of information from a large number of people in a short period of time in a cost effective way. The teachers and education officials were given a questionnaire to complete within a given period of time.

The researcher administered an English proficiency test to the learners in Grade 4. The test that was used was written by Bobakova in 2007 - a specialist in communicative language teaching at the University of South Carolina. The test was used as an aptitude test for international primary school learners. The test served a good purpose as it was meant for international primary school learners, but it has been adjusted to suit the learners in Limpopo Province to reflect their term of reference. The test was administered by a researcher in each school.

The summative results for 2011 and the formative results for June 2012 in Numeracy and Life Skills were used to assess the impact of the use of English on scholarly performance as is explained in Chapter 3.

1.5.4. Data Analysis

The researcher used the descriptive method to analyse data. The information gathered through different research techniques was described or analysed individually. The questions were categorized into themes to allow the researcher to make a thematic conclusion. The ideas, theories and recommendations by different authors were compared with the collected data to make the analysis in Chapter 5.

1.5.5. Reliability, Validity and Objectivity

The researcher made use of retest method to the selected group of learners after a week to determine the empirical measurements. The English proficiency test written by Bobakova in 2007, which was used in the present study, is valid as it has been used before to test the English proficiency amongst the international students. The neutrality in as far as questioning is concerned was key to maintain objectivity.

1.5.6. Bias

The researcher remained as neutral as possible in as far as questions and body language are concerned. No opinion was given by the researcher while moderating. The researcher avoided questions that suggested answer for the respondents.

1.5.7. Scope and Delimitation of the Research

The study was conducted in selected schools under the Mankweng Circuit. The main area of focus is on the use of English as a Mol and its impact on learning other subjects.

1. 6. Ethical Considerations

The research participants as the main sources of data were requested permission in the form of signing a consent form. The study aim was explained to them as to show them the need for them to provide such data to the researcher; however, they had an option of signing or not signing the consent form. They were also informed of anonymity in case the researcher chooses to publish the results of the research.

1.7. Significance of the Study

- Students and researchers in language study, specifically on Mol will benefit from this research as it explains the impact of language of instruction on learning.

- Teachers will benefit as it will show them the advantages and disadvantages of using certain languages as Medium of Instruction.
- Education departments will benefit from this research as it might be an eye opener with regard to the choice of medium of instruction.
- Parents will also have a helping document to guide them towards the choice of Medium of instruction for their children.

8. Chapters outline

Chapter 1: Introduction and general orientation

The chapter outlines the background and the rationale for the study, which forms the basis of understanding of the research. Statement of the problem is outlined together with the aim, objectives of the study, literature review, methods of data gathering and analysis.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter presents a brief review of the existing literature that represents the relevant authoritative scholarship on the research problems that were identified as important for the research topic.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

This chapter outlines research design and methodology that were followed in the research process in order to investigate the problems identified in Chapter one. The chapter also identifies the population, sampling methods, size of the population and the research techniques.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis.

The chapter fully explains how the collected data were analysed. The collected data were calculated and filtered so that only that data which are critical to the research remain. The qualitative analysis is used for the purpose of the data.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations.

This is a summary of all the discussions in the previous chapters, linking the aims and objectives of the study, data collected and reviewed literature. The main conclusions of the study are drawn and the recommendations are made against issues raised.

1. 9. Conclusion

The chapter established a discussion about the background of the study and problem statement as a way of introducing the topic area. It also highlighted the main areas on which the research is based. The next chapter looks at the literature that was reviewed.

CHAPTER 2

LANGUAGES AS SUBJECTS AND MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION

2.1 Language as Subject

Language in school may be taught as a subject in different forms. It may be taught as L1, L2 or L3. In South Africa, the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) was introduced in 2011 and took effect from January 2012. The languages as subjects are allocated different instructional times in different grades. In Grades R-2, ten hours are allocated for the teaching of languages and in Grade 3 eleven hours are allocated. Grades R-2 are allocated the maximum of 8 hours and a minimum of 7 hours for Home Language, the minimum of 2 hours and a maximum of 3 hours is for Additional Language. In Grade 3, a maximum of 8 hours and a minimum of 7 hours are allocated for Home Language. The First Additional Language is allocated the minimum of 3 hours and a maximum of 4 hours per week (Department of Basic Education, 2012). The time allocation for each subject of learning has a great impact on the learning of each subject.

Learners go to school with the ability to speak and understand their home languages (L1). They usually learn to read, write and do critical literacy at school. The home language is generally an African language or the mother tongue (L1). They are also expected to comprehend and develop literacy in first and second additional language.

In most rural areas, children rarely get English exposure until they go to school. According to the South Africa Department of Education (2002), most English Second Language Learners (ESL) only gets English exposure in Grade 1 and do not have formal pre-school or home exposure to it. The learner will be helped by the curriculum to start learning to read, write and speak the language. At this point, learners transfer the literacy skills they have acquired in their home language into their first additional

language. They need to have a good command of First additional language as swift as possible.

The learners are expected to develop language skills in their first additional Language from Grades 1-2 for the purpose of learning other content subject through it in Grade 4. The amount of knowledge they possess in First additional Language will help them to comprehend the content subjects.

The above information presents the approach of the Department of Education on the teaching of languages. It shows how much time do learners spend on learning Home language, First additional language and Second additional language from Grades 1-3 as informed by CAPS.

2.2 Medium of Instruction (Mol)

Mol as defined by Ball (2010) refers to the language used for teaching the basic curriculum of the educational system. That is the language learners receive education through. It is also the case in the definition made by Ellis (1985:15), viz., "Mol refers to the language through which teaching and learning is conducted in a given educational institution". In the view of Kyeyune (2003), the Mol is deemed to be a tool in teaching and learning. It assists in the learning of the subject matter. He further states that it is through the Mol that pupils reflect on different facts in order to construct new views of the world.

The guideline for the development of language education policy in Europe 2003, in Devardhi and Biftu (2012), considers Mol as "the language in which the teaching of other subjects is carried out in schools and universities". The language to be chosen is deemed to require the due consideration when designing as it might handicap the learning process.

The South African Language-in-Education policy of 1997, read in conjunction with The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA), Act 108 of 1996 section 29(2), the

right to choose the Mol is in the hands of an individual. Since the Grade 4 learners may not be able to choose the Mol on their own the choice lies in the hands of their parents or guardians who are represented on school-governing body. The choice of a particular language as the Mol for many African parents may be informed by quite a number of things.

Prah (2007:10) explains:

African school children and their parents have developed the impression that English was the language of advancement and, whereas they had rejected Afrikaans, this disavowal was done in favour of English but not the indigenous languages. This impression has more or less persisted to the present period.

This may also imply that the SGB's choice of Mol may not favour or benefit the learners. What informs the choices they make remains anonymous. The Ministerial Committee Appointed by the Ministry of Education (MCAME)(2003:16) comment that the SGBs may not take into consideration the interests of the learner, in terms of the choice of Mol, for quite a number of reasons they may decide on other priorities. Furthermore, MCAME (2003) avers that: "One may think that the power to decide the language policy is vested too much in a single body, especially when the decision is not only about multilingualism but is also a human rights issue". The right to choose the Mol appears to be vague.

MCAME (2003) points out that, the fact that the right to be taught in the learner's language of choice can only be accessed if it is "reasonably practicable", is a limitation in some ways because it leaves the door open to abuse. Makalela (2005) provides the following as a list of some of the myths that are attributed to the non-use of African languages as Mol:

- Many of the African languages are not developed, so they cannot be used in education;
- It is very expensive to develop African languages; and

- The exclusive use of African languages will block the window to the world and result in exclusion from participating in the international community.

Jansen (2002) asserts that the LiEP appears to be a symbolic activity as it does not have the implementation plan in place. There is no policy that guides on what is to be done about the shortage of materials for learning. The teachers and parents seem to be unaware of the existence of LiEP. This negatively affects the choice of Mol.

In line with the myths mentioned by Makalela, Kadgedge (2003) stresses that English should always be kept as a Mol in Tanzania on the ground that the move to a native language in some ways becomes a barrier for growth in economy and their own growth. The main cause for English to be the Mol from Grade3 upwards remains questionable for many.

The use of English as a Mol in South Africa was greatly influenced by the fact that it is the language of the colonial power. English has been common L2 (or L3 for the elites in countries with a multitude of indigenous tongues since the 19th century). In recent years, with the establishment of global economy centred on advances in information and communications technology, this has enhanced the use of English by making it the lingua franca of the new economic world (Prah& Brock-Utne, 2009).

The colonial languages in the post-colonial states are considered prestigious whereas the African languages continue to be devalued. This has also made the speakers of African languages to value colonial languages more than their own languages (Makalela, 2005).

As stated by Kamwangamulu (2000), the apartheid government of 1948, under the then National Party has used the language as a tool to build inequality between people of different races. English and Afrikaans were the only languages used mainly in official settings like schools and work places. The Black students of 1976 became conscious and protested against the policy that promoted the use of Afrikaans as a Mol.

Prah (2007) maintains that English in the South African society became very powerful to an extent that it replaced Afrikaans. English received a boost at the end of the Soweto uprising whereas African languages received a stigma. The rejection of Afrikaans as Mol was not based on the preference of the use of their own languages as Mol. Kamwangamulu (2000) further remarks that the Soweto riot brought about the following consequences on Language Policy in Education: the English status was enhanced and it was deemed to be the language of freedom to the Blacks, as a result Afrikaans was no longer the Mol for Black learners. African languages continued to carry the stigma. English became the preferred Mol by African language speakers.

Ndamba (2008) states that, the success of a mother-tongue instruction policy depends on a people's attitude towards both the First Language (L1) and Second Language (L2). This attitude of denigration towards one's own language and the exaltation of European languages have not been easy to remove in Africa. Its scars are still very visible today, particularly in the education system.

2.3 First Language (L1)

Ball (2010) defines L1 as the language learned from birth. This language is spoken by the child as a result of learning it at home from primary caregivers. Ball further states that the first language is known to be the language one identifies with or is identified as a native speaker of such language by others, the language that one knows best and uses most. Benson (2004) also concurs when he defines L1 as "native language". L1, as explained by Kosonen (2009), is the mother tongue, home language and the community language.

First language is also known as mother tongue, native language and L1. It is defined by UNESCO (1953:46) as "the language which a person acquires in early years and which normally becomes their natural instrument of thought and communication". L1 is defined by Skutnabb-Kangas (1984) as the language that one learned first, identifies with, known best, uses most and is identified as a native speaker of by others. In contrary,

the Kenya Institute of Education (2002:117) views L1 as “the first language a child is expected to know best or the language of the schools’ catchment area”.

Importantly, as Ball (2010) mentions, a child’s earliest experiences with a language may not conform to the ‘standardized’ or ‘formal school version of the language, but may instead be a variety of a main language. In other words, the learner’s L1 may not be a standardized version of a language. Thus, the variety used in formal education may differ slightly or substantially from the variety of the same language that a child learned at home. Mankweng is quite a broad area that has non-standard varieties that are a variant from the standard version. L1 in this study is restricted to the standard form (viz, Sepedi).

2.4 L1 Language Acquisition theories

2.4.1 Behaviourist theory

The Behaviourist theory of stimulus-response learning considers language learning to be the establishment of habits which emanates from reinforcement and reward (Wilga & Rivers, 1968). The main assumption of this theory is that the child does not contribute actively in language acquisition process. The child responds verbally to the environment. Learning is deemed an observable behaviour which is acquired automatically through stimulus and response in the form of repetition (Skinner, 1957).

The native language is obtained from babblings which is the resemblance of the words repeated by a person that is found close to a baby. Whenever a baby is rewarded for the sounds produced, that becomes the reinforcement for further articulations of the same manner. Children learn the language by imitating people next to them (Bloom, 1974). They are mostly rewarded when they make proper articulation, and get punished for wrong articulation. For instance, a child learning Sepedi may say **mama** for **mma** (mummy). The mother will frown at the child as a way of punishment. However, when the word is properly articulated the mother will reward the child in the form of smile which becomes reinforcement. In this way, the child keeps on imitating sounds, groups of sounds, and end up combining words to form sentences through generalisations

when he grows up. By the age of five or six, their utterances will not differ greatly from the adults.

In a nutshell, as stated by Bloom, the basic strategies of language learning within the scope of Behaviourist theory are imitation, reinforcement, and rewarding.

2.4.2 The Mentalist theory

In contrast to Behaviourist theory, the Mentalist theory does not consider the environment as pivotal in child language acquisition. The theory maintains that language is innately determined, i.e., human beings are born with the ability to acquire the language. There are innate properties of language that enable children to master their native language in a very short period of time despite the highly abstract nature of rules found in the language. All these are embodied in the Language Acquisition Device (LAD) (Chomsky, 1965). In the same vein, Wilkins (1972:168) concurs when he avers that “everybody learns a language, not because they are subjected to a similar conditioning process, but because they possess an inborn capacity which permits them to acquire a language as a normal maturational process.”

Brown (1973) avers that children are born with a built-in device of some kind that predisposes human to language acquisition. The LAD is deemed to be very important for language acquisition than the environment as mentioned in the Behaviourist theory. Children language learning is triggered by hearing a speech and the child's brain is able to interpret what is heard according to the structure it already contains.

Chomsky did not suggest that an English born child was born knowing anything in English. However, he believed that human languages share common principles, for instance they have words for things and actions, nouns and verbs. It is the child's task to establish how the specific language he or she hears express these underlying principles; for instance, the LAD contains concepts for verb tense.

At each learning level, the children subconsciously form up hypotheses, and test them in their linguistic formations and thus they form rules from such data. Whenever they discover that the hypotheses fall short for their utterances they recheck them and make necessary modification and induce new rule. When they grow up more and more their hypotheses gradually become complex, and by applying them to their performance they become competent speakers of the languages they are born into. By 18 months of age, they form two word or the word sentences that are known as telegraphic utterances that signal their competence over the language. In this way, right from their birth up to their childhood they build up an internal adult grammar of their language though these hypotheses.

According to Chomsky (1993), the LAD enables children to understand utterances that they have heard before. They acquire their first language without formal or direct instruction yet they get to a point of proficiency. Chomsky suggests that the LAD also predisposes all people to the acquisition of a second language in basically the same manner. Many people will find it hard to remember how they learned L1; it may appear to have happened automatically.

2.5 Second language (L2)

L2 refers to non-native language and foreign language, it mainly refers to contexts where the language is used or spoken outside the home, but often used to refer even to situations where there is little contact with the language except through the school or official contexts (Benson, 2004). In the same manner, Mitchel and Florance (1998), also define second language as the language other than the learner's native or mother tongue. That is the language spoken outside the home.

The online Collins English Dictionary (2012) defines L2 as the language other than the mother tongue that a person or community uses for public communication, mostly is used in trade, higher education, and administration. Most learners in Mankweng do not use English for public communication or as a language of trade. This is due to the fact that Mankweng is predominantly made up of Sepedi speaking population. They speak

their L1 even outside home and are exposed to languages other than English. Prah (2009) attests to this when he mentions that students in the so-called Anglophone Africa are asked to deem English as L2, which is based on its legal status. However, effectively English is a L3 for many, because they are more multilingual, but in African languages. They are exposed to English at school, particularly in rural areas.

This is also the case in South Africa; English is generally accepted as the L2 to non-native speakers despite that they learn languages other than English after their L1. This may be suitable for the Afrikaans speaking group, who speak Afrikaans at home and speak English outside their home. However, speakers of languages such as Tshivenda and other official indigenous languages of South Africa may have learned another language before English, which implies that English will be their L3.

2.6 L2 acquisition

Krashen (1976) distinguishes between two systems of second language performance, the acquired system and the learned system. The subconscious process, which is analogous to the process that children undergo when they acquire their L1, is deemed the acquired system or acquisition. The learned system has to do with the real situation whereby L2 learners interact with others through L2 native speakers in which speakers pay more attention in the communicative act. The learned system has to do with formal instruction or teaching of the language and it results in conscious knowledge of grammar rules and sentence construction. In Krashen's own view, acquisition is more superior to the learning process.

Ellis (1986) avers that the second language acquisition process is somehow complex, non-linear, and dynamic and learners progress from one level of proficiency to another with varying degrees. Since it is impossible to view the rules and structures learners have internalized, learners' performance and production errors in speech and writing are used as a basis for assessing their level of proficiency. However, Klein (1986) contends that this method of assessment may not provide a full picture of learners' mastery of the language. Learners may produce grammatically well-formed utterances

and still assign different meanings to semantic categories such, space, motion, and causality.

Bialystok and Hakuta (1994) reveal that the way different cultures expose their children to language vary, the outcome of first-language acquisition is clear. Almost all children become fluent in their first language. This kind of guarantee is not automatic with the acquisition of a second language. Second-language acquisition is as complex as the acquisition of the first language but with a wide variety of variables added in. How well they may be able to learn other languages (after the first) depends on many variables. The same strategies used for first-language acquisition are used for subsequent language learning. This kind of view proclaims that children are mostly fluent in their L1 and there is no clear way to determine how best L2 can be acquired as opposed to the guarantee which is found in L1 acquisition.

McLaughlin (1984) states that in both L1 and L2 acquisition a stimulating and rich linguistic environment will enhance language development by way of parents communicating with their children. This will be a strong predictor of how rapidly children expand their language learning. It takes parents to encourage their children to express their needs, ideas, and feelings whether in one language or two, such will enrich children linguistically and cognitively. Engaging the children and encouraging them to express themselves interactively while building on their prior knowledge in real-life situations is an effective way to build language experience.

Children do not have many opportunities to use language and have not been provided with a rich experiential base, they may not learn to function well in their second language. Language learning is not linear, and formal teaching does not speed up the learning process. Language learning is dynamic. Language must be meaningful and used (McLaughlin, 1984). This clearly exposes the fact that for one to build proficiency in L2, exposure is quite important. This supports the environmental-oriented theory of Schumman (1978) which also focused on L2 acquisition and environment.

His theory considers the environment as the central part of L2 acquisition. In one of the studies, he conducted on L2 acquisition, he found out that the person who acquired the least amount of L2 was the one who was the most socially and psychologically distant from the L2 group. It, therefore, suffices to say that it is useful for one to be in a place where the language is spoken in order to be proficient in that language.

Lado (1957) avers on the link between L1 proficiency and L2 acquisition when he mentions that individuals tend to transfer the forms and meanings, and the distribution of forms and meanings of their native language and culture to the foreign language and culture. It then becomes imperative to mention that, if children are not proficient enough in their L1, their use of L2 might suffer because they will not have much to transfer from. In the same manner, this was stated by Collier (1992) to say that if children do not fully acquire their first language before they are exposed to L2, they may have difficulty later in becoming fully literate and academically proficient in the second language. Collier and Thomas (1995) also mention that the interactive relationship between language and cognitive growth is important. Preserving and strengthening the home language supports the continuity of cognitive growth. Cognitive development will not be interrupted when children and parents use the language they know best. Experience and ideas must be familiar and meaningful to the child for them to be learned. Bialystok and Hakuta (1994) state that for children who may appear to be learning a second language very quickly at a very young age (before the age of 5 years), chances are very good that they might lose their first language. They can really replace the first language with the second language. Contrary to Bialystok and Hakuta, McLaughlin (1984) explains that:

There is little benefit and potential harm in introducing a L2 at a very young age unless caregivers are careful to maintain both languages as equally important and valuable. In other words early introduction of L2 might even become a barrier to the full acquisition of L1 which might even lead a child to be less proficient in any of the two languages.

Collier and Thomas (1995) emphasize that second-language acquisition needs to be looked at as the very complex interdependent learning. They have figured out an enormous difference between the time it takes for a second-language learner to obtain

oral fluency or social language and academic language. It may take only a short time for oral fluency, but it may take from seven to ten years to become academically proficient. Collier and Thomas (1989) proclaim that developing proficiency in academic language therefore means catching up and keeping up with native speakers, for eventual successful academic performance. It clearly tells that pupils receiving education in languages other than their L1 have more challenges as opposed to those whose instructions are through L1. If it really takes seven to ten years to develop academic performance, it therefore implies that it is not a good time to introduce L2 instruction in Grade 3.

Cummins (1986) mentions that there is a need for higher level of language competence that enables a person to read and write in a language at a context-reduced level of abstraction, which enables them to perform cognitive operations in that language. Thomas and Collier (1995) advocate the need for the length of time needed for students attending school where instruction is provided in L2 to reach enough levels of proficiency in the L2 to compete on an equal footing with native speakers of that language.

2.7 Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)

Cummins (1999) draws a distinction between Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). BICS refers to everyday speech patterns and skills that are used in casual or social ways of communication. These has to do with information obtained from radio, music and TV programs, movies, newspapers and magazines or relating to conversation between friends, whereas CALP is deemed as the academic language skills and abilities which are necessary to discuss the unique aspects of content area subjects.

Cummins (1982) declares the language needed for communication and the language necessary for achievement in school: The context-reduced language (BICS) and

context-embedded (CALP). He says that the Context-embedded language provides non-linguistic supports; it has more to do with non-academic verbal interaction in the classroom. Context-reduced language, which is mostly found in textbooks, has a limited contextual information or extra linguistic support.

Heugh (1995) makes an estimation about the period it takes for a learner to achieve CALP in L2. In his estimation, the learner takes about six to eight years of learning under optimal conditions in order to be proficient in an L2, however, numerous studies show that it can take the period between four and seven years to attain CALP (Cummins, 1981; Collier, 1987; and Collier & Thomas, 1989). This means that the Sepedi speaking learners will take about six to eight years to attain CALP.

According to Cummins (1999), BICS can take two years for an English language learner. He further mentions that being able to interact or communicate well with native speakers of your L2 on social level, on equal footing does not imply that it will be the case at academic level. It is the distinction that we must pay attention to. Cummins likens it to telling jokes. Whether we are good at telling jokes has no relationship to our ability to articulate on an academic level.

2.8 Cognition

The concept cognition is applicable in many disciplines, before it can be discussed in the context of linguistics it will make more sense to have it defined in isolation. According to Neisser (1967), it refers to the process which has to do with the human mind by which external or internal input is transformed, reduced, elaborated, stored, recovered, and used. As such, it performs a number of functions, namely, perception; attention; memory coding; retention and recall; decision making; reasoning; problem-solving; imaging; planning; and executing actions. Such psychological processes include the generating and using internal representations to varying degrees.

Similarly, Bostrom and Sandberg (2009) consider cognition as a means or the processes by which organism uses to organize information. That is to acquire, select,

represent, retain information, and also use it to guide behaviour. In the light of the definitions provided above, it can be deduced that cognition has to do with the manner in which the mind organises the information that comes in and gets out of the mind. It includes things such as perception, comprehension and internalising information.

2.8.1 Language and cognition

There are various scholars who implicitly advocate that language plays a huge role in human cognitive development, however, there are also those who dispute such views. This following discussion presents such views.

Fodor (1975) pictures natural language as an input, output system for central thinking process and reasoning. He further states that as human beings we would never have entertained many thoughts (both tokens and types) in the absence of language. Language, as Fodor states, is used to deliver a thought; in other word without the language it will be difficult to make sense of the world. That is why Wittgenstein (1922/1961) avers that the limits of one's language imply the limits of one's world.

Language, in Wittgenstein's view, has got a drive to human cognition. The limited knowledge of a particular language limits how one can make sense of certain things through such language. Sapir (1921:115) attests to this when he states that: "We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation".

However, some scholars like James (1891:255) argued that there are still a number of thoughts that surpass words. Great thinkers have vast premonitory glimpses of schemes of relations between terms, which hardly even as verbal images enter the mind, so rapid is the whole process.

According to Einstein, in Schlipp (1949:228), in agreement with James, thoughts do not come in any verbal formulation. He even states that he rarely thinks in words at all. It implies that the thought come and words are used to express it.

In contrast to James' view, Lindfors (1991) contends that language is inseparably entwined with our mental life. He further states that the way children perceive, remember, comprehend, and make sense of their world is all tied up in language. The language plays a paramount role in human day to day life, it is therefore necessary to attain a certain level of proficiency in a particular language to make sense of the world through such language. Furthermore, he explains that the command of the language of instruction can be associated with the cognitive development and has implications for the acquisition of information. If learners do not possess enough academic proficiency in the Mol they may experience problems in learning, not that they do not comprehend concepts or ideas, but due to the fact that they are unable grasp their linguistic representation.

Whorf (1956) declares that the categories and relations used by people or human beings to make sense of the world, come from languages, so that speakers of different languages conceptualize the world differently. Language learning would be deemed learning to think, not only learning to talk. In the light of Whorf's view, language helps human beings to make sense of the world. The question will be: What happens when one possesses a limited proficiency of a particular language? It is likely that the intention of making sense of the world through such language will be limited too. Benson (2004:2) explores on the use of L1 in the early years of the child's education. Bilingual programs that support the use of the learner's L1, to teach beginning reading and writing together with academic content. The L2 will then be taught systematically as a way to transfer skills little by little from the L1 to L2.

In concurrence with Benson, Devardhi and Biftu (2012) state that mother tongue is instrumental as it gives psychological motivation to the learners, preserve cultural values and also keep self-identity. Learners are considered confident to express ideas in a familiar language. This helps the learner to have an opportunity of progressing in content subjects.

A child requires about 12 years to develop a high level of competence in their L1. This involves cognitive and language skills. Children are said to gain such skills by engaging in regular interaction with others. The more they interact with the elderly who are deemed highly knowledgeable in the language, the greater the chances of enhancing their competency (Dutcher, 1995).

Benson (2008) states that as a fact that children enter school more years before the age of 12 they need to study L1 as a subject and also learn through L1 because they, as it will be difficult for them to have L2 instruction. Learning through L1 builds fluency and confidence therefore this is said to be helpful to learn to speak and understand the L2 as well as reading and writing. It is quite important to note that children need a specific period of time in learning a second language in order to use it as a Mol.

A period of 5 to 7 years of L2 learning and exposure is necessary before the learners can be taught content subjects through it. The main reason is that the acquisition of L2 takes long and if L2 instruction is done without due considerations it may hamper learning and may result in poor production of results. The L1 is also deemed to be difficult in most cases because the academic language is more abstract and decontextualized, in Grade 3 most in particular (Cummins, 1999).

Ball (2010) states that most researches have shown that a child's ability to learn L2 is driven by the level of proficiency in L1. This implies that a child does not experience difficulties when their L1 is used as the Mol throughout primary school, it becomes easy for them to convert their knowledge into the other language. This makes L2 acquisition easy and quick. The usefulness of the use of L1 as the Mol in primary school education has been emphasized by Winzeler (2010). He avers that children clearly learn better when they are taught in their L1, particularly in the early years of literacy. They perform poorly when they are compelled to use L2 as the Mol from Grade 1; as such they produce bad results as compared to those who used L1 as the Mol.

The L2 MoI has a vast impact on high rate of failure amongst the learners, as stated by (Winzeler, 2010). The L2 is expected to help learners to acquire knowledge but it becomes a hindrance to learning the content subjects. In the same vein, the UNESCO's 1953 document advocates the use of Mother tongue instructions in education for the purpose of first language competence, achievement in other subject areas, and also the cognitive development for L2 acquisition.

Nkabinde, (1997) declares that the language that the teacher and the learner command well ought to be the one for instruction. His contention is that most African teachers and learners who are L2 speakers of English are not proficient enough in English to use it as medium of teaching and learning, as a result this becomes a barrier for communication. He therefore considers mother tongue as the only language which is accessible to the teacher and the learner, and has to be used as the MoI. The Kenya Institute of Education (2003) avows the need for L1 instruction in primary schools as it is close to the learner's thinking. The pupils must be helped to think for themselves by using their own language. The culture of a people is expressed in mother tongue.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines research design and methodology that were followed in the research process in order to investigate the problems identified in Chapter one. The chapter also identifies the population, sampling methods, size of the population, and discuss the research methodology and techniques to ensure their reliability in collecting the data. The other pertinent issues that the researcher has observed as the data were collected are mentioned in this chapter.

3.2 Research Methodology

The qualitative methodology has been employed in the study for collecting data. This methodology was very effective as it helped the researcher to collect qualitative data rather than the quantitative type. De Vos (1998) avers that in qualitative research the interaction between the researcher and the informant generates data in the form of words, rather than numbers, for the purpose of analysis. He further states that the qualitative approach to research produces descriptive data that has been expressed by the respondent's written or spoken words.

Little was known about how medium of instruction is chosen in primary schools and also the impact of using English as the Mol in the Mankweng Circuit. The qualitative approach has been employed to collect the narrative data from teachers, parents and circuit officials. The narrative data were collected through the use of questionnaires and interviews.

3.3 Targeted groups

The targeted groups are, namely, Grade 4 learners; Grade 4 English and content subject teachers; SGB members; parents and Curriculum Advisors.

3.4 Sampling.

For this research, ten Grade four learners were selected randomly from each of the ten schools in the Mankweng Circuit to write English proficiency test, but only 96 learners wrote the test because there was one school that only consisted of 6 learners. The schools were selected through the stratified random sampling as they were grouped according to their location and selected randomly from each stratum. The categories were as follows, deep rural schools, rural schools and semi-urban schools.

Teachers were also selected through stratified sampling; one English language teacher and one content subject teacher in Grade 4 were selected in each school. One English Curriculum Advisor and two Curriculum advisors for other subjects were selected randomly in the Mankweng Circuit. One parent from each School Governing Body (SGB) and one non-SGB member from the family of one of the learners who wrote the test was selected according to their closeness to the school yard. The interviews with parents were conducted in Sepedi as they did not all speak English.

3.5 Research techniques for data collection

The techniques used for data collection are test, questionnaires and interviews. The data collection process took place in this manner:

The researcher started off by making arrangements with the principals of the schools as to agree on the day and time and place where the test will be written. The ten schools were visited during school hours as per appointment made with the school principal. In most cases, principals preferred to have the learners writing in the morning than in the afternoon because learners would still be energetic, however, some preferred to use the last period towards lunch time, contending that the test would exhaust time for the learning process. The learners who had to write the test were taken to a special classroom to write a test. It took ten working days to administer the test in all the schools. In most schools, learners managed to finish five to ten minutes before the

scheduled time with the exception of three schools wherein few learners could not finish on time.

The questionnaires were given to the respective teachers ten minutes before the learners commenced writing the test, as the researcher had always visited the schools 30 minutes before time scheduled for the test, to make venue arrangements. In some schools, the questionnaires were completed and returned to the researcher the same day, however, some teachers chose to take them home and promised to return them after two or three days. In some cases, the relevant teachers were not found in schools as they had gone to attend workshops; the questionnaires were then given to colleagues to deliver them to the respective respondents. In some cases, the researcher had to redistribute the questionnaires because some claimed that they did not get them from colleagues and others claimed they misplaced them. The researcher had to exchange phone numbers with the respondents for purposes of checking out the progress and arranging for the day of collection. All the remaining questionnaires were collected through phone arrangements.

Circuit officials were visited at the Mankweng Circuit for the distribution of questionnaires. The Curriculum Advisers for the selected content subjects were not found in the first day, the questionnaires were left on their tables as requested by their colleagues. The researcher had to call each of them to inform them of the questionnaire and arrange for the day of collecting them. The questionnaires were collected after two weeks because some were no longer working from their offices; they were visiting schools directly from their homes. The Curriculum Advisers for content subjects filled the questionnaire, except the English curriculum advisor because the Mankweng Circuit does not have one for primary schools, the researcher was advised by other curriculum advisors to hand the questionnaire to the Senior Phase Curriculum Advisor. The questionnaire was given to the Senior Phase Curriculum Advisor and was filled and collected the same day.

The interview arrangements with non-SGB members were done by the researcher, by requesting the direction to the nearest home of any learner who partook in the English proficiency test. In some schools, it was possible to get the closest home next to the school, yet in other places the researcher was given the contact number of the parents by the learner in class with the help of the teacher. The researcher called the parents and made appointments for interview in cases where the home was too remote from the school and the interviews were mostly made at home but only one that was made at the workplace around Mankweng. The interview arrangements with the SGB members were made with the school principals, members of staff who were SGB members within each school were called by the principal for interview arrangements with the researcher. The respondents were visited on specified dates for interviews. All the interviews were recorded through a voice recorder and later transcribed.

The data were collected through the use of questionnaires, interviews and test. The study depended mainly on the three methods to collect data. The tools managed to bring about the desired information which is in line with the aim and objectives of the study.

3.6 Observation

The researcher has observed the following during the data collection process:

- There were teachers in one school who complained amongst themselves about the issue of reading and explaining questions for the learners during tests and examinations. In the same school, other teachers were concerned about the curriculum that keeps on changing and also the amount of time they spent on workshops that deal with the curriculum changes than the content or methodology of their subjects.
- Teachers in another school were complaining about learners who pass through the system of “age cohort” (the system that allows the learner to be promoted to the upper grade because of age, even if the learner did not do well in the current

grade). In the same school, Grade four classes were categorised according to the level of performance of the learners.

- The learners were requesting the researcher to clarify some questions as they were writing. They used Sepedi to ask for clarification. The researcher responded in English by pointing at the instruction which they were supposed to read in order to know what the question was expecting them to do.
- In all the Grade 4 classes that the researcher visited, the walls were pasted with learning materials like named pictures, days of the week, months in English.

3.7 Summary

This chapter has outlined how the data were collected through the use of specified methodology and tools. The qualitative design was the most appropriate approach to investigate the research problem. The stratified random sampling was used to select the schools, learners, teachers, parents, SGB members and curriculum advisors.

The interviews were conducted through consultation with the respondents after the appointment was made. The questionnaire was distributed and collected at the agreed time with the respondents. The researcher used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program to analyse the data in the form of tables and bar chart. The thematic approach to analysis was also used. Ethical guidelines which have to do with informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and privacy were taken into account in this study.

Inkgale, Senaba Joshua.
The impact of the use of
English as the medium of
instruction to grade four
learners in the Mankweng
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CHAPTER 4

DATAANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

The chapter focuses on analysing the data. The thematic analysis was adopted on the data that were collected through interviews, questionnaires and test. The chapter reflects the situation that is taking place in the Mankweng Circuit primary schools.

The following are the aspects which will be taken into consideration during the discussion:

- How Mol affects learning of other content subjects;
- How the teachers' English knowledge affect the learners; and
- How stakeholders contribute to the English proficiency of the learners and the choice of Mol.

A proficiency test was administered by the researcher in classes that were allocated by the schools. The learners were allocated 40 minutes to complete the assessment.

4.2. The English Proficiency of Learners

The English proficiency test has been used to test ESL in Grade four. The following themes have been adopted for the assessment of learner's English proficiency: ability to test ideas, asking questions, and writing (which include spelling words correctly and observing the grammar).

4.2.1 Testing ideas

The learners were expected to tick the correct option that represent the colour, name and the action on the picture. Most learners have shown understanding by ticking the correct options particularly for colours; however, some do experience some difficulties in telling time and the days of the week. Some of the results are as follows:

Table 4.1 How individual learners from all schools responded to question 10

Schools	Which day of the week comes after Thursday?				Total
	No choice	Saturday	Monday	Friday	
Diopong	0	2	5	3	10
Makanye	4	1	4	1	10
Dikolobe	0	2	3	5	10
Badimong	2	0	2	6	10
Megoring	3	0	4	3	10
Toronto	1	1	4	4	10
Mmapotla	0	0	6	3	9
Sekwala	0	0	8	2	10
Motholo	2	1	5	2	10
Kgokong	0	0	5	1	6
Total	12	7	46	30	95

Looking at the table above it shows that 68% of 95 learners did not know the correct answer for the question. The Grade four learners are expected to know the days of the week and their chronological order.

4.2.2 Writing (which includes spelling words correctly)

Learners were asked to name different pictures as shown. However, most learners found it challenging to get the correct spelling of words such as bicycle, lion and cat.

The following is a table of spelling mistakes of the words they were expected to write:

Table 4.2 How individual learners from all schools responded to question 8:

bicycle	Barasekel	Bascill	baeskel	polesekale	pasekel	pasile	bicircle	Bascle
cat	Khete	ket	Kote	cet	keta	coat	kaše	Kete
lion	luyn	tao	tau	lona	lino	line	cats	

The spelling mistakes shown above indicate that the learners new what they saw on different pictures but it was difficult for them to spell out or write that in English. The most challenging word was 'bicycle'.

Table 4.4 Individual learners' responses to question 18 (1), viz., Choose the right word in brackets

Schoolsoften do you play tennis?				Total
	No choice	Who	How	Why	
Diopong	0	6	0	4	10
Makanye	3	1	1	5	10
Dikolobe	0	1	3	6	10
Badimong	2	1	3	4	10
Megoring	3	3	2	2	10
Toronto	0	4	3	3	10
Mmapotla	2	2	3	3	10
Sekwala	1	2	2	5	10
Motholo	1	0	2	7	10
Kgokong	0	3	2	1	6
Total	12	23	21	40	96

Table 4.5 How individual learners from all schools responded to question 18 (2)

Schoolsis the best student in this class?				Total
	No choice	Who	How	What	
Diopong	0	2	4	4	10
Makanye	3	1	1	5	10
Dikolobe	0	5	2	3	10
Badimong	2	3	0	5	10
Megoring	3	3	2	2	10
Toronto	0	2	2	6	10
Mmapotla	2	2	1	5	10
Sekwala	1	2	3	4	10
Motholo	1	3	2	4	10
Kgokong	0	1	0	5	6
Total	12	24	17	43	96

Table 4.6 How individual learners from all schools responded to question 18 (3).

Schoolsdo you get up?				Total
	No choice	what	Who	When	
Diopong	0	4	4	2	10
Makanye	3	2	1	4	10
Dikolobe	0	7	1	2	10
Badimong	3	6	1	0	10
Megoring	3	2	3	2	10
Toronto	0	6	1	3	10
Mmapotla	2	5	0	3	10
Sekwala	1	4	2	3	10
Motholo	1	8	0	1	10
Kgokong	0	2	2	2	6
Total	13	46	15	22	96

The results show that 78% of the learners did not show the understanding of using the word “how” to ask questions, whereas 78% did not know the use of “who”. On the other hand, the use of ‘when’ was not understood by 78%. The overall results from Tables 4.4 to 4.6 imply that the use of ‘how’, ‘who’ and ‘when’ was only understood by 22% of the learners.

4.2.4 Third Person Agreement (singular or plural verb agreement)

Table 4.7 How individual learners from all schools responded to question 18 (1)

Schools	Marry to school at 7:30 every day				Total
	No choice	goes	go	Gos	
Diopong	0	2	7	1	10
Makanye	4	1	5	0	10
Dikolobe	2	2	5	1	10
Badimong	2	3	5	0	10
Megoring	3	3	3	1	10
Toronto	3	2	5	0	10
Mmapotla	2	0	7	1	10
Sekwala	4	0	5	1	10
Motholo	3	1	6	0	10
Kgokong	0	2	3	1	6
Total	23	16	51	6	96

Table 4.8 How individual learners from all schools responded to question 18 (2).

Schools	We..... swim in a swimming pool on Sundays				Total
	No choice	doesn't	not	don't	
Diopong	0	3	6	1	10
Makanye	4	2	2	2	10
Dikolobe	2	2	3	3	10
Badimong	5	0	2	3	10
Megoring	6	2	1	1	10
Toronto	3	5	0	2	10
Mmapotla	3	1	2	3	9
Sekwala	4	2	1	3	10
Motholo	4	4	1	1	10
Kgokong	0	2	4	0	6
Total	31	23	22	19	95

Table 4.9 How individual learners from all schools responded to question 18 (3).

Schools	I football very often				Total
	No choice	plays	playing	Play	
Diopong	0	3	5	2	10
Makanye	4	2	1	3	10
Dikolobe	2	1	1	6	10
Badimong	4	0	2	4	10
Megoring	6	0	0	4	10
Toronto	3	1	3	3	10
Mmapotla	3	0	3	4	10
Sekwala	4	0	0	6	10
Motholo	4	1	1	4	10
Kgokong	0	2	0	4	6
Total	30	10	16	40	96

The learners were asked to choose the correct verb in brackets to demonstrate their understanding of Third Person agreement (singular or plural verb agreement) (singular or plural verb agreement). Some learners did not choose the correct verb in brackets as instructed, they instead inserted their own words. The sentences were as follows.

1. Marryto school at 7: 30 every day. (**goes, go, gos**)
2. We swim in a swimming pool on Sundays (**doesn't, not, don't**)

3. Ifootball very often. (**plays, playing, play**)

Due to lack of understanding 'Third person verb agreement', the learners did not choose the proper verbs. In the first sentence, the word '**go**' has been chosen by 51 learners who make 53% of the learners participated. The verb '**don't**' was chosen by 19 learners in the second sentence, they make 20% of the learners who partook in the study. The use of the verb '**play**' in the third sentence was correctly used by 40 learners, which makes 41% of learners who participated.

4.2.5 Singular and plural

Table 4.10 The responses to question 13 (1) from all schools

Schools	What is the plural form of apple?				Total
	No choice	applie	appless	apples	
Diopong	0	4	1	5	10
Makanye	5	0	0	4	9
Dikolobe	3	1	1	5	10
Badimong	2	3	1	4	10
Megoring	4	2	1	3	10
Toronto	2	2	1	5	10
Mmapotla	1	1	1	7	10
Sekwala	4	2	2	2	10
Motholo	3	2	1	4	10
Kgokong	0	3	2	1	6
Total	24	20	11	40	95

Table 4.11 How individual learners from all schools responded to question 13 (2)

Schools	What is the plural form of mum?				Total
	No choice	mums	mummies	mumys	
Diopong	0	6	2	2	10
Makanye	7	3	0	0	10
Dikolobe	5	3	0	2	10
Badimong	3	3	1	3	10
Megoring	6	2	1	1	10
Toronto	0	7	2	1	10
Mmapotla	2	5	2	1	10
Sekwala	2	6	1	1	10
Motholo	6	2	0	2	10
Kgokong	0	3	1	2	6
Total	31	40	10	15	96

Table 4.12 How individual learners from all schools responded to question 13 (3)

Schools	What is the plural form of bus?				Total
	No choice	busys	buses	buss	
Diopong	0	5	3	2	10
Makanye	7	0	1	2	10
Dikolobe	6	0	1	3	10
Badimong	2	2	4	2	10
Megoring	6	1	1	2	10
Toronto	1	1	4	4	10
Mmapotla	3	1	3	3	10
Sekwala	4	4	2	0	10
Motholo	6	0	3	1	10
Kgokong	0	2	1	3	6
Total	35	16	23	22	96

Tables 4.10 to 4.12 reveal that learners are having difficulty in choosing the plural form of words in English. They were asked to give the plural forms of words such as 'apple', 'mum' and 'bus' by choosing from the three options provided. The tables show that only 25% of learners understood plurals for the three words given.

4.2.6 Opposites of the adjectives

The type of answers which were given under the question that asked for opposites tells that very few learners knew what was expected. The question was phrased in the following instruction: Write an opposite to each adjective. The following table presents some of the opposites provided by the learners.

Table 4.13 How individual learners from all schools responded to question 23

Adjective					
1. good	Sad	Love	good	rabesh	Stupid
2. happy	Birdy	Happy	boy	sad	Tidy
3. tall	Untall	Tall	tell	small	Shot
4. cheap	Grand	Ceap	shop	big	Shop
5. big	Tall	Big	small	cheap	Small

It is quite evident that many learners were hearing about opposites for the first time because during the test moderation learners requested for clarification on the questions. The learner would stand up and say “maneer,nna tše ga ke di kwišiši” (Sir, I do not understand these). The moderator requested them to read the question and do as asked. Some learners skipped the question. A few number of learners demonstrated an understanding of what was expected in the question but they lacked the proper English words, and decided to give answers like ‘not happy’ instead of ‘sad’, ‘not tall’ for ‘short’, and ‘not cheap’ for ‘expensive’.

4.2.8 Summary of English proficiency amongst the learners

Learners have shown an understanding of certain words, since they were able to follow instructions correctly in some cases. However, they are unable to spell words correctly and have limited grammatical competence. Their failure to construct grammatically correct sentences implies that they will not formulate coherent paragraphs as they write essays or texts. Those are some of the things that will affect their performance in other content subjects. These kinds of challenges will make teacher to spend more time trying to figure out what the learner is try to express than reading ideas due to poor grammar and wrong spelling.

They will find it challenging to write more technical terms if they are failing to write words like cat and lion. The use of English as a Mol requires the learners to use it to ask questions, respond to questions and also explain, discuss and understand. Learners do not have enough knowledge of the English language that can help them to understand better as it is used as the Mol. They have shown their understanding of the basics in English but this does not mean that they can understand most ideas expressed in English.

English Mol for learners who are not proficient enough in it appears to be the barrier for learning other subjects. If learners do not understand the Mol, they fail to grasp the subject content, which results in learners achieving poor results. Learners end up memorising words and concepts and reproducing them in the tests, without making sense of what they are writing. Obviously, they will find learning convenient when they

understand the Mol better. This is more important for the tasks that are cognitively demanding. If learners are asking for clarification using mother tongue, how will they fairly express the ideas through the instructions in English. The English test results in general are satisfactory in the sense that, in each school, there are no more than three learners who have failed the test, but those who passed the test have failed to score marks on aspects that are critical for language use.

4.3 The Responses of Teachers on How Learners Understand English

Table 4.14 Teachers language background information and experience

Leaning areas	Home Language	Qualifications	Years of teaching	Gender	Language of communication
1. English(Eng)	Sepedi	Degree (Eng)	Over 1 year	Female	English &Sepedi
2. English	Sepedi	Degree (Eng)	Over 1 year	Female	English
3. English	Sepedi	Degree (Eng)	Over 1 year	Female	Sepedi
4. English	Sepedi	Degree (Eng)	Over 1year	Female	English
5. English	Sepedi	Degree (Eng)	Over 5 years	Male	English &Sepedi
6. English	Sepedi	Diploma (Eng)	Over 10 years	Female	Sepedi
7. English	Sepedi	Diploma(Eng)	Over 15 years	Male	Sepedi
8. English	Sepedi	Diploma (Eng)	Over 20 years	Female	English &Sepedi
9. English	Sepedi	Diploma (Eng)	Over 25 years	Female	English &Sepedi
10. English	Sepedi	Diploma(Eng)	Over 25 years	Female	English &Sepedi
11.Other subjects	isiNdebele	Degree(Eng as elective)	Over 5 years	Female	English &Sepedi
12.Other subjects	Sepedi	Degree (Eng as elective)	Over 5 years	Female	Sepedi
13.Other subjects	Sepedi	Degree (Eng as elective)	Over 5 years	Female	English &Sepedi
14Other subjects	Sepedi	Diploma(Eng as elective)	Over 10 years	Female	English &Sepedi
15Other subjects	Sepedi	Diploma (Eng as elective)	Over 10 years	Female	English &Sepedi
16.Other subjects	Sepedi	Diploma (Eng as elective)	Over 10 years	Female	English &Sepedi
17.Other subjects	Sepedi	Degree (Eng as elective)	Over 10 years	Female	English &Sepedi
18.Other subjects	Sepedi	Degree (Eng as elective)	Over 15 years	Female	Sepedi
19.Other subjects	Sepedi	Diploma (Eng as elective)	Over 15 years	Female	Sepedi

20.Other subjects	Sepedi	Diploma Eng as elective)	Over 20 years	Female	Sepedi
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4.4 Teachers English Background

All the English teachers in all the schools are native speakers of Sepedi. This is also the case with the content subject teachers except one who speaks isiNdebele. The table indicates that all the ten English teachers have studied English as a major subject at tertiary level, and English was studied as an elective subject by the content subject teachers. Most teachers use both Sepedi and English as a medium of communication in school with other teachers, they form 55% of twenty teachers who participated. Thirty-five per cent (35%) is for teachers who use Sepedi only, and 10% is for those who use English.

All English teachers have been teaching it for over 10 years and content subject teachers have all studied English as an elective course at tertiary level. There is no single teacher who is an English mother tongue speaker. The use of Sepedi as a means of communication in school amongst teachers dominates the use of English, despite that the two languages are used interchangeably at some point.

4.5 The Content Subject and English Teachers' Response on Learners Understanding of English

70% of the twenty teachers have stated that learners do not clearly understand the instructions in English all contexts. The teachers gave reasons why they think learners do not clearly understand when they are taught in English. The teachers are expected to interpret what was said in English into L1 for the learners to understand clearly. Learners respond to questions in L1 while asked in English. On the other hand, one teacher stated that learners only respond when questions are being explained in Sepedi. There are teachers who believe that at times learners partially and fully understand when they are taught in English.

Thirty per cent (30%) of the teachers who say learners do clearly understand and sometimes partially, have responded in this manner. "Most learners respond in English

even if they are not fluent". The other teacher said, "Partially, sometimes they remain silent to show that they do not understand". "Some do understand even though they cannot answer or use the language correctly and to others it's a disaster". The other teacher stated that a simple language is used to make learners understand.

The English and content subject teachers pointed out that learners are able to read English but they are unable to understand everything they are reading. They also fail to spell words correctly. Teachers stated that the fact that English is used as the Mol in Grade 4 impedes learning because learners are still used to mother tongue Instruction. Learners are unable to construct sentences correctly, therefore, they find it difficult to express ideas in English and they fail to understand the questions in all contexts. Learners with low English proficiency perform poorly simply because they cannot follow instruction given in English. This has been proven by learners who failed to score even a single mark in the proficiency test that they wrote.

4.6 Spoken Language Proficiency of the Learners from the Perspective of the English Teachers

Seventy per cent (70%) of the ten English teachers has agreed that it conducts orals in their schools, whereas 30% did not conduct orals. Five teachers out of seven teachers, who make 71%, have indicated that learners experience serious difficulties when they have to speak in English. Two teachers (29%) have stated that learners try their best and they perform better. It is said that some learners communicate well whereas others experience some difficulties. Some have poor sentence construction, at some point learners just say one sentence and keep quiet. In most cases, some learners are shy to speak because they fear that others will laugh at them if they make mistakes. Learners experience difficulties in pronouncing some words correctly, particularly when given some texts to read.

4.7 The Language that Learners Use to Ask and Respond to Questions

Fifty per cent (50%) of twenty teachers says learners use both English and Sepedi to ask questions whereas the other 50% say learners use Sepedi only. On the other hand,

40% of the teachers say English and Sepedi are used to respond to questions and 60% says learners respond to questions in Sepedi only.

4.8 The Choice of Mol through the Perspective of Content Subject Teachers and English Teachers

Fifty per cent (50%) of the twenty participants says the Department of Education is the one that chooses the Mol, whereas 30% says it does not know and 20% says it is explained in the curriculum.

4.9 The Challenges Experienced by Both English and Content Subject Teachers When They Teach through English

Teachers states that for them to teach effectively in English they need enough resources (books and other learning supporting material). One English teacher responded in this manner: "The teachers are not well empowered to teach English". They also indicated that, at times, they do not use tenses correctly as they speak in English. It is also challenging for them to translate ideas from English into the L1 because they do not possess the necessary skills to deal with zero equivalence, particularly for technical terms. Teachers are complaining about the amount of time they spend on workshops that deal with curriculum change than the content of the subjects that they are teaching.

Teachers are also used to speaking their home language and, as such, they run out of vocabulary when they speak or teach in English. Their schools are located in areas that are predominantly made up of L1 speaking people. This makes the use of English to be something they do not do often; as a result, they find themselves lacking L1 vocabulary as they give instructions in English.

4.9.1 How parents help their children to learn English

The parents were asked about what they do for their children to learn English. A number of 12 parents, who make 60% of the participants, said they only encourage them to read and speak in English. However, 40% of the parents has indicated that it is involved in

helping their children. The other parent responded in this manner: "I let my child read English books and also train him on the use of words". Others say they speak to them in English. This shows that some parents do help their children. One parent has indicated that the support she gives to her child is to write homework. She further stated that her child does tell that the answers for the homework are correct, and sometimes not.

This type of situation negatively affects the performance of learners. Some parents support children by encouraging them to read English books, whereas others say they request them to name different things like body parts in English, but they do such activities only when they have time. They also encourage them to watch educational programs on TV as a way of learning English.

4.9.2 The choice of Mol from the perspective of the parents

Parents have shown different views on who choose the Mol, 35% out of 20 participants says the Department of Education, 25% says the teachers, 20% says the SGB and 20% says that it is not sure. One respondent, from the category of people who are not sure, has responded in this manner: "It is supposed to be the parents but in our school I am not sure, but I may say the teachers through the instruction from the Department of Education".

4.9.3 Do learners have personal English dictionary?

The purpose of this question is to check the availability of the basic learning material for ESL learners. The respondents were requested to tell if learners have their own dictionaries or not. The highest number out of twenty parents that said that children do not have dictionaries is 14, which makes it 70% of the participants, and the remaining 30% agreed that their children have their own dictionaries. Some of the parents whose children do not have the dictionary stated that school dictionaries are used, in some cases, they borrow from neighbours.'

4.10 Summary of Parents' Response

Parents are willing to help their children in their school work but they are unable to do that on regular basis due to the unavailability of time and for other lack of knowledge regarding the work given. Most learners do not have a dictionary in as far as the parents are concern.

On the issue of the choice of Mol, most parents are not sure of who should choose. They have contradicting answers: some say the SGB; for some, the principal; whereas others say the Department of Education; and others do not know.

4.11 The Response of Curriculum Advisors

The overall performance of Grade 4 learners in the Social Sciences, as stated by the Curriculum Advisor, is between 45% and 55 %, which means that only few learners do well in such subject. The other Curriculum Advisor for technology sated that the overall mid-year results are not available.

The three (100%) Curriculum Advisors have stated that the use of English as the Mol has got nothing to do with the choice of individuals at the school level. One of the Curriculum Advisors responded thus: "The decision is taken by the national office for circuits to implement". It was further stated that, all over the country, English is used as a Mol from Grade 4 upwards.

Table 4.15 Learners results in Technology, Natural Science & English proficiency test

	Technology	Natural Science	English proficiency test
1. Dikolobe primary school			
	47	31	46
	64	52	58
	62	17	33
	44	39	44
	42	42	21
	42	40	60
	54	47	83
	42	36	65
	50	41	54

	54	41	52
2.	Diopong primary school		
	66	65	67
	40	59	62
	27	52	27
	14	45	38
	33	29	46
	22	60	44
	6	18	29
	55	68	58
	18	56	46
	23	35	50
3.	Motholo School primary school		
	74	61	57
	84	67	52
	71	46	56
	48	50	31
	20	35	10
	64	49	56
	76	71	46
	68	25	52
	66	41	56
	71	46	54
4.	Toronto primary school		
	64	54	48
	25	42	27
	13	43	27
	83	81	79
	79	64	60
	52	51	69
	64	55	58
	73	59	56
	47	61	54
	52	62	56
5.	Makanye primary school		
	88	44	63
	66	29	48
	80	37	44
	12	06	0
	76	46	41
	62	25	42
	10	06	0
	86	51	40
	44	41	19
	32	37	02
6.	Mmaphotla primary school		
	14	9	46
	48	40	58
	22	35	65
	52	39	65
	40	36	88
	46	21	58
	58	61	75

	26	41	46
	18	14	50
	16	22	35
7. Megoring primary school			
	47	51	52
	63	32	04
	19	26	37
	27	66	52
	15	44	48
	63	86	75
	66	72	56
	65	64	52
	22	23	50
	33	42	33
8. Sekwala primary school			
	32	42	54
	52	69	48
	54	41	65
	52	64	37
	82	81	48
	82	54	60
	35	56	60
	52	69	42
	45	67	38
	40	43	58
9. Badimong primary school			
	30	50	65
	08	26	63
	12	07	0
	66	13	58
	20	09	50
	40	45	73
	64	21	73
	38	06	10
	48	47	65
	36	11	60
10. Kgokong primary school			
	70	40	56
	82	82	46
	40	26	56
	52	42	42
	22	11	35
	24	21	15

Figure 4.15.1 Learners results in Technology, Natural Science & English proficiency test in the form of percentages

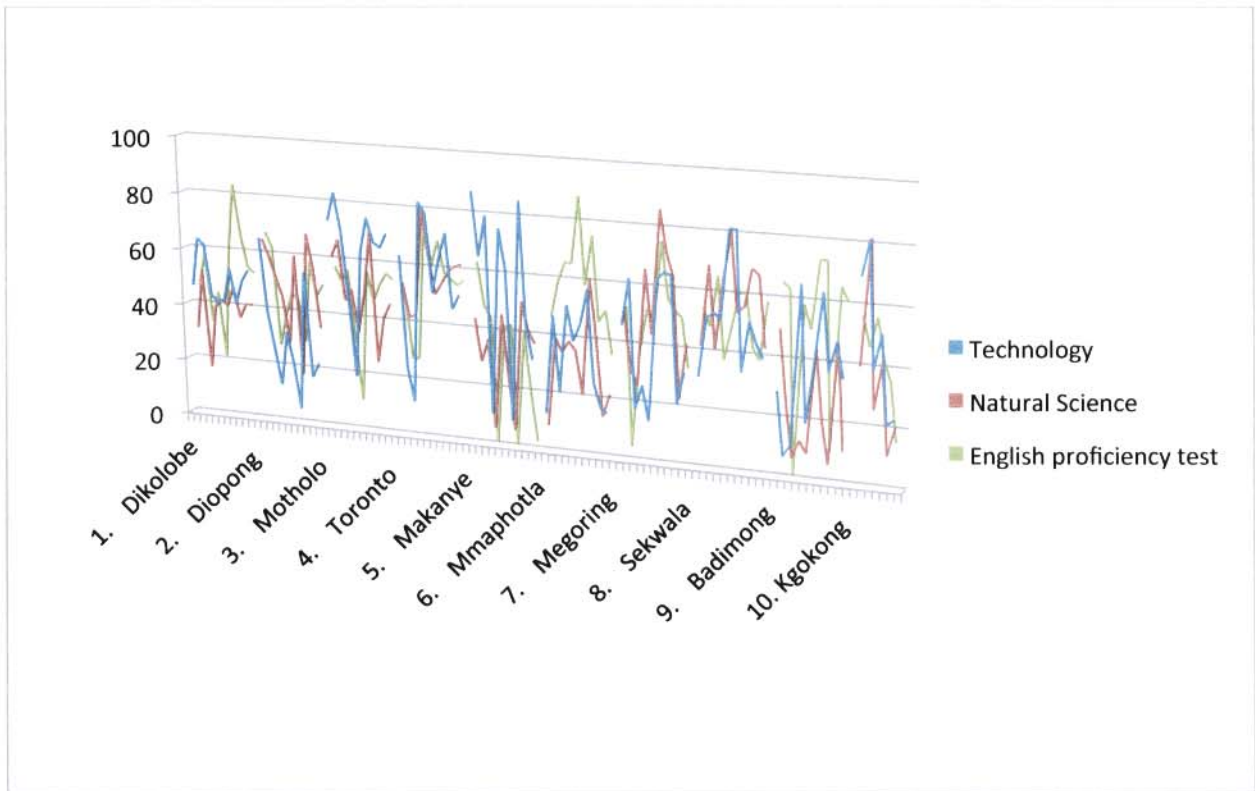


Table 4.15 and figure 4.51.1 above show the performance of the learners in English proficiency test and also in two content subjects (Technology and Natural Sciences). The pass mark for each subject is 40%. The learners were not penalized for wrong spelling because phonetically, some of the spellings are correct, and the aim was also to test their ability to test ideas. For example, the sentence ‘the boy is iting’ is understandable but it has a wrong spelling of the last word, which is supposed to be spelled as eating. The example shows that the learner has understood exactly what was taking place on the picture but the limit of the language was a challenge. In schools numbered 1,3,4,7,8,9 and 10, only two learners failed the proficiency test. Their performance in other content subject is either poor or average, depending on the mark they have achieved in English. Learners who have achieved very low marks in English have failed one or both content subject(s) with very low marks.

In the school numbered 2, only three learners have failed the English proficiency test, whereas four have failed in the school numbered 5. Their poor performance in English has led them to fail one or both content subjects terribly. However, there are exceptions whereby the English proficiency test was failed but the two content subjects were passed with average marks. In such instances, there is no huge gap between the English mark and the content subjects marks.

4.12 Summary of the English and Content Subjects Results

The results have shown how the knowledge of English as the Mol can influence the performance of a learner in other content subjects. The more learners do well in the Mol, the more they stand a good chance of understanding the content subjects; poor performance in English had the negative impact on the performance of some learners in content subjects' results. A better performance in English has helped some learners to achieve better results in content subjects. However, proficiency in the Mol does act as a guarantee of success on the content subjects, but it remains to be the starting point of understanding the content subject for a better or good performance. The results show that each school has learners who failed the English proficiency test and also those who failed content subjects.

4.13 Conclusion

Given the inadequate English proficiency in the Mankweng primary schools, learners find English as Mol as being a barrier to learning. Be that as it may, the stakeholders appear to be unaware of the situation. The findings suggest that stakeholders should be made aware of the situation so that they can take decisions that are helpful to the learners.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on summarising the findings, and also links the aim and objectives of the study with both the data collected and the reviewed literature. The main conclusions of the study are drawn and the recommendations are made against issues raised. The aim of the study was to investigate the impact of the use of English as Mol to Grade 4 learners in the Mankweng Circuit and to assess how Mol affects learning. The study mainly depended on data from the learners, teachers, parents, circuit officials and SGB members. The conclusions are drawn based on study findings.

5.2 Mol Proficiency amongst Learners

The research has discovered that the Grade 4 learners in the Mankweng Circuit do have varying English proficiency. Cummins (1986) mentions the need for a higher level of language competence that enables a person to read and write in a language at a context-reduced level of abstraction, which enables cognitive performance in that language. In the light of what Cummins avers, we looked at language proficiency in terms of BICS and CALP (Cummins, 1999). The English proficiency test results are convincing in a way that one may think learners have a high level of academic proficiency in English. The researcher has observed that learners have the basic knowledge of English wherein they are able to name and match pictures, but they lack the knowledge that will enable them to use the language on cognitively demanding tasks.

The respond made by the teachers also show that learners have low BICS and CALP. This has also compelled the teachers to switch from English to L1 while teaching, as the strategy to help learners understand the subject matter. However, in spite of the fact that teachers use such strategies, the learners are expected to write in English. Some of the answers in the English proficiency test were written in L1 because they lack the

English vocabulary to express that which was explained in L1 by the teachers. The limits of one's language imply the limits of one's world (Wittgenstein, 1922/1961).

The learners in the Mankweng Circuit spend most of their time speaking home languages with their parents and friends in the streets. The English exposure that learners get is more at school and less outside the school. The learners are able to read English and understand some words in a text or phrase but they are unable to speak well in English and they often create lots of spelling mistakes in their writing.

The factor that contributes to their low performance in other content subjects is that they are taught in a language that they are not proficient in. English is usually introduced as a subject in Grade 3 and they use it as a MoI a year later. The learners may not have mastered English language in a period of 12 months considering the limited exposure that they receive. This makes learning other subjects in English a difficult task for the learners. Cummins (1999) estimated that the learner takes about six to eight years of learning under optimal conditions in order to be proficient in L2. The learners in Mankweng do possess the basic knowledge of English but they do not have skills that can help them learn other subjects optimally through it.

The performance between semi-urban and deep rural schools is similar; learner's performance is determined by the amount of help provided by the caregivers at home. There are some learners who have obtained low marks from both semi-urban and deep rural schools.

The Mankweng Circuit does not have an English curriculum advisor; this can be attributed to the problems that are existing in learning English at the primary school level. The Mankweng Circuit Grade 4 learners do not achieve outstanding results in other subjects due to the use of L2 instruction. Most learners that have performed poorly in English proficiency test have also performed poorly in other content subjects. On the other hand, learners who performed better in English have produced better results in other subjects. This implies that the more the learners are proficient in the MoI; they will

be able to understand the content of what they are taught and stand a good chance of attaining good results in other content subjects. The use of English as the Mol has a negative impact on the performance of learners who do not have a good grasp of English in the Mankweng Circuit.

5.3 Parents 'Help to the Learners

The literacy level of some parents may not be adequate to assist the learners in doing their school work and learning English. However, there are few parents who are literate and do help their children to write homework activities, such learners do produce outstanding results but they are very few.

5.4 Challenges Faced by Teacher as They Use English as Mol

Teachers find it challenging to use English to teach learners who do not understand it in all contexts. Teachers choose to switch from English to L1 as a result of learners failing to understand instructions in English. As they use L1 to explain that which was supposed to be explained in English, they sometimes lack terminology to interpret meaning from English into Sepedi.

Nkabinde (1997) says that most African teachers and learners who are L2 speakers of English are not proficient enough in it to use it as medium of teaching and learning. Some teachers experience some difficulties with regard to the pronunciation of certain words and wrong tense because they do not use English often. Such challenges to the teachers will have negative effects on learners as they naively take everything from the teacher to be correct and perfect. Similarly, Baker (1998) declares that the learning of concepts is affected by the language. A teachers' communication plays a paramount role for the child to learn effectively, it depends upon the language and it can affect learning.

5.5 The Choice of Mol

The chief characteristic for the language adopted as Mol is that the language should be easy to understand for the teacher and the learner (Baker, 1998). The question of the

choice of Mol in the Mankweng primary schools is not well explained to the stakeholders; as a result, it remains vague to them. Mol appears to be an instruction given to schools by the Department of Education; the stakeholders have never had a meeting that addresses the issue of choosing Mol for the Grade four learners as stipulated in the LiEP.

5.6 Conclusion

Grade four learners in the Mankweng Circuit do possess basic knowledge of English; however, they are experiencing serious difficulties in writing and expressing ideas through English. Their knowledge of English grammar is inadequate. The learners alternatively use Sepedi as a result of being unable to converse or write some English words. Those types of problems negatively affect their learning of other content subjects. The majority of the learners fail to achieve outstanding results in content subjects because their knowledge of Mol is not sufficient.

The stakeholders are not well informed about the LiEP and the effects of using certain languages as Mol. This is confirmed by the fact that parents and teachers give contradicting answers and some do not know who should choose the Mol,

The study results confirm that the LiEP is not appropriately implemented in the Mankweng primary schools; hence stakeholders claim that they have never been in a meeting that addresses issues pertaining to Mol. The circuit officials have also stated that the decision is taken by the National Department of Education for the circuit to implement. The teachers and parents seem to be unaware of the LiEP.

5.7 Recommendations

Based on the findings and the literature reviewed, the following recommendations are made:

1. The study suggests that the choice of language of instruction should be informed by the level of proficiency that learners possess in that language. It does not help to use the language as the Mol if it becomes a barrier for

learning. The learners must have gained enough exposure to the language and possess necessary knowledge before it can be regarded as the Mol. The learners' proficiency must always be tested before using the specific language as Mol.

2. The use of L2 instruction should be delayed until learners are adequately proficient in the language that is chosen as the Mol.
3. Teachers need to involve learners in the actual writing process because learners have a serious spelling problem. The learners need to be exposed to grammar in all respects so that they are able to combine words correctly in order to convey ideas in sentences and paragraphs.
4. Literate parents need to be consistent in helping their children; they should make time available for assisting them. Illiterate parents should always request neighbours and relatives in case they fail to assist their children in doing school work.
5. The circuit officials must see to it that they provide English Language Subject Curriculum Advisors for the primary schools. It must also facilitate the language proficiency test in primary schools every year as a way of assessing learners' readiness in learning through such language.
6. The study has revealed that most stakeholders are not aware of the language policies; therefore, language-awareness campaigns should be regularly conducted.
7. Teachers need to be equipped with knowledge through workshops that deal with the use of English across the curriculum.

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Annexures

Annexure A: English Proficiency Test

ENGLISH PLACEMENT TEST FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL LEARNERS

45 MINUTES

Instruction: Answer all questions. Tick the correct answer on the space provided.

1. Match the picture with the colour



(a) Red

(b) Blue

(c) Brown



(a) Orange

(b) Yellow

(c) Green

2. How many objects are there in the picture- choose



(a) two

(b) one

(c) five



(a) Six

(b) two

(c) zero

3. Choose the name of the picture



(a) mother

(b) sister

(c) father



(a) mother

(b) Brother

(c) Sister

4. Choose the right option



(a) up

(b) down

(c) into

(d) out



(a) up

(b) down

(c) into



5. Choose the right option

(a) leg

(b) arm

(c) body



(a) mouth

(b) belly

(c) nose

6. Choose the right option



(a) I am wearing yellow dress and red shoes

(b) I am wearing green dress and pink shoes

(c) I am wearing green dress and red shoes



(a) I am wearing green trouser and grey t shirt

(b) I am wearing black trouser and red shirt

(c) I am wearing grey trouser and green t shirt

7. Mark the right option:



(a) Cars

(b) Car

(c) truck



- (a) Goat
- (b) Sheep
- (c) Cow



- (d) Table
- (e) sofa
- (f) chair



- (a) donkey
- (b) horse
- (c) mule

8. Write the names of the following





9. Insert a proper form of the verb (is, are, am)

- (a) She a nice girl.
- (b) We students of third grade.
- (c) I a pilot and that's really cool.

10. Choose the right option

MONDAY
TUESDAY
WEDNESDAY
THURSDAY

- (a) SATURDAY
- (b) MONDAY
- (c) FRIDAY

It is a spider



(a) No it isn't

(b) Yes it is

(a) It is a house



(a) Yes it is

(b) No it isn't

11. Choose the correct option



(a) It's one o'clock

(b) It's four o'clock

(c) It's six o'clock



(a) It's one o'clock

(b) It's five o'clock

(c) It's three o'clock

12. Match the description with a picture



(a) It's rainy

(b) It's sunny

(c) It's windy



- (a) It's a bus
- (b) It's a car
- (b) It's boat

13. Choose the right option of plural

1. Apple (a) applie (b) appless (c) apples
2. Mum (a) mums (b) mumies (c) mumys
3. Bus (a) busys (b) buses (c) buss

14. Where is the ball?



- (a) under
- (b) in
- (c) on

15. Choose the correct verb for each sentence in brackets.

1. Marryto school at 7: 30 every day. (goes, go, gos)
2. Wewe swim in a swimming pool on Sundays (doesn't, not, don't)
3. Ifootball very often. (plays, playing, play)

16. Insert a proper form of the verb. (is, are, am)

- (a) She a nice girl.
- (b) We students of third grade.
- (c) I a pilot and that's really cool.

17. Choose the right option



- (a) You can play football here.
- (b) You have to play football here.
- (c) You mustn't play football here.

18. Choose the right word in brackets.

- 1.often do you play tennis. (**Who, How, Why**)
- 2.is the best student in this class. (**Who, How, What**)
- 3.do you get up? (**What, Who, When**)

19. Insert the correct form of the verb from the brackets

- (a) Susan likes to the park with her friends (go)
- (b) They hate tests every month (write)
- (c) I love Chocolate (eat)

20. Complete the sentences telling what the people are doing



The boy



They are

21. Choose the right option in brackets

1. She changed her job recently. (has, have, having)

2. They have already breakfast. (eaten, eat, eating)

22. Choose the right option

1. She..... changed her job recently.

(a) have

(b) has

(b) having

2. They have already..... breakfast.

(a) eaten

(b) eat

(b) eating

23. Write an opposite to each adjective:

1. good

2. happy

3. Tall

4. cheap

5. big

Annexure B: Consent Form

Participant Consent Form

Title of the Study: The impact of the use of English as the Medium of Instruction to grade four learners in the Mankweng Circuit. A Case Study of Primary Schools in the Mankweng Circuit (Limpopo Province).

Name and Surname

(Leina le Sefane).....

Initial

1. I agree to participate in this research.

Ke dumela go tšea karolo mo nyakišišong ye.

.....

2. This agreement is of my own free will.

(Ke dumela ka bonna ke sa gapeletšwe) .

.....

3. I have had the opportunity to ask any question about the study

(Ke hweditše sebaka sa go botšiša potšišo efe kapa efe mabapi le nyakišišo).

.....

4. I have been given full information regarding the aim of the research, the researcher's names, contact number and address if I require further information.

(Ke hlaloseditšwe go tlala seatla mabapi le nepo ya nyakišišo, gape ka fiwa maina a monyakišiši, dinomoro tša mogala le gore o dula kae gore ge ke nyaka go tseba sesengwe ke kgone go ikgokaganya le yena).

.....

5. All personal information provided by myself will remain confidential and no information that identifies me will be made public.

(Maina aka ao kea tšweleditšego a kaseke a phatlalatšwa le gatee)

.....

Signed: Date (Tšatšikgwedi):

Motšea-karolo (*by participant*)

School (Sekolo).....

Researcher's name (Leina la Monyakišiši):.....

Date (Tšatšikgwedi):

Annexure C: Letter Seeking Consent from the Mankweng Circuit

Dikgale SJ
Department of Translation Studies and
Linguistics
University of Limpopo

28 March 2012

The Director
Department of Education (Mankweng Circuit)
Private Bag 1108
Sovenga
0727

**REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE SCHOOLS AT
THE MANKWENG CIRCUIT.**

I, Dikgale Senaba Joshua, Student No. 200307296, hereby request permission to conduct research at the Mankweng Circuit. The research is conducted for the purpose of my Masters Programme at the University of Limpopo in the Department of Translation Studies and Linguistics.

The research title for the proposed study is: The Impact of the Use of English as a Medium of Instruction (MoI) in Grade 3. A Case study of Primary Schools in the Mankweng Circuit (Limpopo Province).

For the research aim to be achieved learners, teachers, curriculum advisors, Members of the School Governing body should be available for participation in the research.

The learners will be given a test to write, teachers and curriculum advisors will have to fill in a questionnaire, whereas the SGB members will be interviewed.

The schools are as follows: Badimong, Diopong, Dikolobe, Kgokong, Makanye, Megoring, Motholo, Sekwala, Sesoi and Toronto

It would be highly appreciated if permission is granted for the research.

Yours Sincerely

Signed.....

Dikgale SJ (Student)

.....

Dr JR Rammala (Supervisor)

Annexure D: Appointment Form for Schools

This serves to confirm that Mr Dikgale SJ (Student NO 200307296) from the University of Limpopo will be granted a permission to conduct research at.....primary school on theAugust 2012, from (time).....to.....

Surname

Signature (The principal)

Date signed

Annexure E: Questionnaire

Parents' Questionnaire

Bong (Gender): Male Female

Matswalo (Age): 25 – 35 35 – 45 45 – 55
55 - 65 65 – 75 75 +

Na o fihleletše dithuto dife? (What are your qualifications?)

Na le šoma go dira eng? (What is your occupation?)

Na le šomiša leleme lefe go bolela le hlogo ya sekolo ? (Which language do you use to speak to the principal?)

English Tshivenda Sepedi Xitsonga Other

Na ke gakae moo le šomišago leleme la English? (How often do you personally use English?)

Always sometimes never

Na o tseba pholisi ya polelo ya sekolo? Do you know the language policy of the school?

Na leleme la goithuta le kgethwa ke mang sekolong sa lena? (Who chooses medium of instruction in your school?)

Teachers parents learners others

Na mošomo wa motswadi ke ofe Lekgotlataolong la sekolo? (What is the duty of a parent on the SGB?)

.....
.....

Na le dira eng gore bana ba lena ba ithute leleme la English? (What do you do for your children to learn?)

English?.....

Na bana ba lena banale go bala dikuranta goba dikanegelokopana tša leleme la English ? (Do your children read newspapers or short stories in English?).....

Na le ile la kwa ngwana wa lena a bolela ka English? (Have you ever heard your child speaking in English?).....

Ge gole bjalo, o be a bolela ale kae le mang? (If yes, where and with whom?).....

Na le lebelela bjang tšwelopele ya ngwana sekolong? (How do you check the progress of you children at school?)

Na bana ba lena banale puku-ntšu ya English? (Do your children have English dictionary?)

Circuit officials.

Age

Gender

What is your specialized area

How long have you been working in the circuit?

3. 1-5 5-10 10-15 15-20 20-25 25+

What are the home languages of learners under your circuit?

English Tshivenda Sepedi Xitsonga others

.....

What are home languages of teachers under your circuit?

English Tshivenda Sepedi Xitsonga Other

.....

What is the Medium of Instruction of schools under your circuit?

English Tshivenda Sepedi Xitsonga Other:.....

What is the overall English performance of grade 3 learners under your circuit?

35 – 45% 45 – 55% 55 – 65% 65 -75%

How do Grade 3 learners perform in other subjects?

35 – 45% 45 – 55% 55 – 65% 65 -75%

What is the role of the circuit on the choice of medium of instruction in primary schools?

.....

What informs the choice of the current Medium of Instruction?

.....

.....

Teachers (Content subject)

1. Age 25-35 35-45 45-55 55-65 65-75 75+

2. Gender: Male Female

How long have you been teaching

3. 1-5 5-10 10-15 15-20 20-25 25+

4. How far did you study English?

Matric tertiary first year tertiary second year tertiary third year
tertiary fourth year other.....

5. Which language do people in this area speak at home?

English Tshivenda Sepedi Xitsonga Other.....

6. Which languages do teachers in this area speak at home?

English Tshivenda Sepedi Xitsonga Other.....

7. What is the Medium of Instruction of your school?

English Tshivenda Sepedi Xitsonga Other.....

8. Which language do learners use to talk to you in the classroom?

English Tshivenda Sepedi Xitsonga Other.....

9. Which language do learners use to talk to you outside the classroom?

English Tshivenda Sepedi Xitsonga Other.....

10. Which language do you use to speak to other teachers?

English Tshivenda Sepedi Xitsonga Other.....

11. What are the challenges that might be experienced by learners when they are taught in English?

.....
.....

12. What are the challenges that might be experienced by teachers when they teach through English?

.....
.....

13. Which language(s) do earners use to:

(a) Ask questions?

English Tshivenda Sepedi Xitsonga Other.....

(b) Respond to your questions?

English Tshivenda Sepedi Xitsonga Other.....

14. Do you think learners clearly understand you when you use English in class?
....., please support you answer.....
.....

15. Did you ever attend any educational workshop ever since you started working
as a teacher?.....

16. Briefly explain English language skills possessed by the learners.
.....
.....

17. What informs the choice of English as a language of teaching and learning?
.....
.....

English teachers

1. Age 25-35 35-45 45-55 55-65 65-75 75+

2. Gender: Male Female

How long have you been teaching English?.....

3. 1-5 5-10 10-15 15-20 20-25 25+

4. How far did you study English?

Matric tertiary first year tertiary second year tertiary third year
tertiary fourth year other.....

5. What is the Medium of Instruction of your school?

English Tshivenda Sepedi Xitsonga Other.....

6. What is your home language?

English Tshivenda Sepedi Xitsonga Other.....

7. Which language(s) do learners use to speak to you in classroom?

English Tshivenda Sepedi Xitsonga Other.....

8. Which language(s) do learners use to talk to you outside classroom?

English Tshivenda Sepedi Xitsonga Other.....

9. Which language do you use to speak to other teachers?

English Tshivenda Sepedi Xitsonga Other.....

10. What are the challenges that might be experienced by teachers when they teach through English?

.....
.....

11. Which language(s) do earners use to:

(a) Ask questions?

English Tshivenda Sepedi Xitsonga Other.....

(b) Respond to your questions?

English Tshivenda Sepedi Xitsonga Other.....

12. Do you think learners clearly understand you when you use English in class....., please support you answer.....

.....

13. Did you ever attend any educational workshop ever since you started working as a teacher?.....

14. Briefly explain English language skills possessed by the learners.

.....
.....

15. What informs the choice of English as a language of teaching and learning?

.....
.....

16. Give two strategies that you usually use to make learners understand when you teach them in English.

.....
.....

17. Briefly explain the English reading skills possessed by learners.

.....
.....

18. What informs the choice of English as a language of teaching and learning?

.....

19. Do you conduct orals with learners?..... If yes, what are the findings?

.....
.....
.....

Annexure F: Letter of Approval from the University

**UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO
TURFLOOP CAMPUS**

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Faculty of Humanities
Translation Studies and
Linguistics

11 March 2012

To: Ms. M. W. Moreroa
PAO (Langcom)

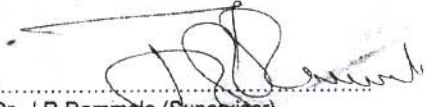
From: Dr. J R Rammala

Dear Madam

This serves to submit a research proposal towards a mini-dissertation for candidate Dikgale S J of 200307296 . Mr. Dikgale has interest is conducting research on the *The impact of the use of English as Medium of Instruction in Grade 3: A case study in the Mankweng Circuit. (Limpopo Province.*

I hope that the candidate has had enough time to study research methodology and is now ready to start with his research on the chosen topic.

Thanks in anticipation

Signed: 
Dr. J R Rammala (Supervisor)

Annexure G: Letter of Approval from the Mankweng Circuit



LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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Fax No.: 015 267 5243

MANKWENG CIRCUIT

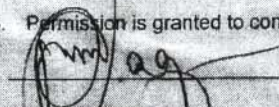
2012.5.09

Enq : Kekana M. J
Tel No: 015 267 5641

Mr S J Dikgale
Private Bag X1106
SOVENGA
0727

REQUEST OF PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN MANKWENG CIRCUIT PRIMARY SCHOOLS

1. The above matter refers.
2. We acknowledged the receipt of your letter dated 12.04.2012 to conduct a research at Badimong, Diopong, Dikolobe, Kgokong, Makanye, Megoring, Motholo, Sekwala, Sesooai and Toronto on "The Impact of the Use of English as a medium of Instruction.
3. Permission is granted to conduct the research. Wishing you good luck.


MAGAGANE M. D
(CIRCUIT MANAGER)


DATE

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
CAPRICORN DISTRICT
"We Belong, We Care, We Serve"