

**TEACHING STRATEGIES EMPLOYED TO DEVELOP LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY
OF GRADE 4 LEARNERS: THE CASE OF TORONTO PRIMARY SCHOOL**

by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my beloved mother **Rebecca Thabiso Malatji** and my father **Edward Malatji**.

DECLARATION

I **Molatelo Mary Malatji** declare that TEACHING STRATEGIES EMPLOYED TO DEVELOP LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY OF GRADE 4 LEARNERS: THE CASE OF TORONTO PRIMARY SCHOOL is my own work and that all the sources that I have used have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete reference and that this work has not been submitted before for any degree at any other institution.

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Full names

.....

Date

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore strategies employed by teachers to develop language proficiency of Grade 4 learners. Qualitative case study was adopted to identify and describe the effectiveness of strategies employed by teachers. Data collection was done using semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations and document analysis. Four (4) Grade 4 teachers who teach EFAL at Toronto Primary School participated in the study. The findings indicated that learner-centred strategies such as group work, peer teaching, scaffolding and discussion were effective in engaging learners in the learning and teaching process. Teachers also employed code switching and individual instruction as remedial strategies to further facilitate better understanding of the content. The findings also showed that sometimes the strategies were not effective due to disruptive behaviour. CAPS training, teaching experience and collaboration of teachers enabled teachers to execute the strategies successfully in regardless of scarcity of resources and overcrowded classrooms. The findings also revealed that teachers experienced challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, lack of resources, lack of teaching aids, time allocated to teach EFAL and lack of support from the parents to teach EFAL effectively and these challenges still need to be addressed to allow smooth learning and teaching of EFAL. Recommendations from the study were made on how teachers can overcome problems they experience in the teaching of EFAL.

Key terms: EFAL, Learner-centred approach, Grade 4.

ABBREVIATIONS

ACE	Advanced Certificate in Education
BEd	Bachelor of Education
BICS	Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills
CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DoE	Department of Education
EFAL	English First Additional Language
ESL	English Second Language
LIEP	Language in Education Policy
LOLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
L1	Home language
L2	Second Language
MEd	Master of Education
NEEDU	National Education Evaluation and Development Unit
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PTD	Primary Teachers Diploma
SGB	School Governing Body
SACMEQ	Southern and East Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality
TREC	Turfloop Research and Ethics Committee
ULWASA	University of Limpopo Women's Academic Solidarity Association

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION OF THE STUDY

English is regarded as a language of learning and teaching (LoLT) in most countries including South Africa (Alidou, Brock-Utne, Heugh and Wolff, 2006 cited in Hugo and Horn, 2013). The current South African Language in Education Policy (LiEP) states that in Grade R to 3, learners must be taught in their home language (L1). As from Grade 4 upwards English becomes LoLT) across all subjects except L1. It has been assumed that by the end of Grade 3, English Second Language (ESL) learners have fully developed language proficiency to function effectively in the second language (L2) (Van Staden, 2011; Pretorius, 2012).

LiEP has unfavourable consequences on the transition to English as LoLT in Grade 4 because these learners are required to be proficient in reading, writing, speaking and listening across the curriculum, yet they have not developed these language skills in their own L1 to make the transition successful (Van Staden, 2011; Pretorius, 2012).

Previous studies have found that majority of learners in South Africa experience problems in using English effectively, their reading and writing skills are lower than anticipated (Schlebusch and Motsamai, 2004; Jordaan, 2011; Seligmann, 2011; Pretorius, 2012 cited in Mohlabi-Tlaka & Engelbrecht, 2017). Overall, these studies advocate that lack of language proficiency becomes a problem that affects academic performance of learners leading to poor results (McCabe, 2013).

In addition, Howie, Combrinck, Roux, Tshele, Mokoena and McLeod Palane (2017:72) report on Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) (2016) where Grade 4 ESL learners were tested in all the eleven official languages of South Africa failed to read in their own home languages. This confirms the argument made by Myburg and Van Rensburg (2004:14) who assert that Grade 4 ESL learners will even obtain poor results if they are assessed in English.

So far in South Africa, little attention has been paid to how teachers can develop English proficiency of Grade 4 learners (Soares De Sousa, Greenop & Fry, 2009; Van

Staden, 2011 cited in Makina, 2015). Therefore, the transition to English as LoLT is left to teachers who must come up with various ways to develop the English proficiency of learners.

English language proficiency can be attained if teachers employ strategies that are suitable for all types of learners because the strategies will help learners to gain proficiency in the language they are learning. Kasambira (2004:45) states that teaching strategies are styles and skills which the teacher employs to ensure that learners understand what is presented to them in the classroom. According to Wahl (2017: 60), teaching strategy refers to a broad plan of action whereby the teacher selects teaching activities with the aim of achieving desired learning outcomes. In this study, teaching strategies refer to types of activities that teachers employ for the purposes of making learning easier and to enable learners to express themselves in various language skills.

Grade 4 is a transitional state where six content subjects are introduced as specified by the government (Phatudi, 2014). For the purpose of this study, the researcher will look into strategies that are in line with communicative approach such as group work, peer teaching, demonstration, discussions, debate, dialogues, language games and case studies.

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

ESL learners experience a number of language difficulties in terms of using a language effectively including the early or abrupt switch of mother tongue to English as LoLT. The other factor is the lack of English language proficiency on the part of the teachers themselves (Nel & Theron, 2008). On one hand, teachers experience a number of problems with regards to the application of strategies in the classroom context. Problems such as little time to fulfill curriculum requirements, large classrooms, lack of support from Department of Education (DoE), inadequately trained teachers and scarcity of resources to facilitate a meaningful learning (Wilderman & Nomdo, 2007). The above argument is supported by Kotze, Van der Westhuizen and Barnard (2017:61) who provided qualitative evidence on challenges experienced by teachers supporting isiXhosa learners who receive education in L2. The findings indicated that

teachers' lack formal support from DBE, little parental involvement, large classrooms, limited time available and scarcity of resources that play an important role in helping learners' attain their potential in learning and teaching. These problems impede effective learning and teaching to take place and they can only be addressed differently by means of suitable and appropriate strategies which will lead to meaningful learning.

1.3 LITERATURE REVIEW

1.3.1 Teaching strategies employed to develop English proficiency of learners

The study conducted by Nhongo, Cekiso, Tshotsho and Zhou (2017: 8623) highlighted various strategies that are in line with communicative approach that develop English proficiency of ESL learners. The first strategy employed by participating teachers is drama, second strategy is role play, third strategy is language games, fourth strategy is simplification of texts and the fifth strategy is peer teaching. All the five strategies are discussed in detail below.

1.3.1.1 Drama

Drama plays an important role in the development of language skills. When learners read a comprehension text, they can dramatise it to demonstrate that they understand the passage they are reading (Ntelioglou, 2012). Barret (2014:23) studied how learners develop language proficiency through use of educational drama, the findings indicate that learners' participation and motivation are increased through drama (Taskin, 2013).

1.3.1.2 Role-play

Role-play is a strategy where learners are required to act a specific role in a story (Kao & O'Neil, 2009). The strategy develops learners' self-confidence and stimulates their critical thinking (Kao & O'Neil, 2009). The study conducted by Bertrand and Stice (2000) cited in Maja (2019:45) indicate that role-playing gives learners an opportunity to rehearse and interpret the story the way they understand; and that this can facilitate classroom interaction as learners demonstrate their understanding of these stories.

1.3.1.3 Language games

Kao and O'Neil (2009:45) hold the view that the use language games improve learners' motivation and confidence as a result they function effectively across L2. In addition, DBE prescribed strategies such as spelling bee, reading clubs, moot court and INkosi Albert Lithuli Oral History that seek to improve learners' performance in languages, especially English language.

1.3.1.4 Simplification of comprehension texts

Simplification of texts makes it easier for ESL learners to understand what it is contained in the texts (Gass, 1997). Simplifying a text needs some skill as it may be more complicated in the process of making it easier (Gass, 1997). Even though it is a good strategy, the main concern is whether the meaning of the original text will be maintained or compromised.

1.3.1.5 Peer teaching

Peer teaching is a strategy that allows learners to take control of their learning process by giving them an opportunity to find additional meanings in a new perspective (Zebrack, 2005). Therefore, learners understand better when they are taught by their peers. However, in the study conducted by Nhongo *et al.* (2017: 8826), the findings revealed that strategies employed by rural school teachers differed from the strategies employed by teachers in urban schools due to scarcity of resources.

1.3.2 Approaches in language teaching

Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) prescribed text-based approach and communicative approach to teach English First Additional Language (EFAL) in the intermediate phase.

1.3.2.1 Text-based approach

The DBE (2011:08) EFAL curriculum indicated that the main aim of text-based approach is to enable learners to have ability to analyse, interpret and evaluate texts. Through engagement of texts, learners acquire skills to interpret and evaluate textual

information. This approach requires teachers to employ strategies such as modelling and scaffolding so that learners can understand how texts are produced. Richards (2005:41) indicates that the “limitation of employing text-based approach is that it concentrates mostly on the product of learning rather than the process of learning”. Learners are denied opportunity to demonstrate their creativity during the learning process and the approach is considered to be uninteresting and repetitive. However, in most cases CAPS does not prescribe the types of texts to engage learners with (DBE, 2011). Therefore, teachers should be creative and choose their own texts.

1.3.2.2 Communicative approach

Communicative approach concentrates on enabling learners to be competent in their communication skills and that is acquiring skills to apply language principles in order to produce grammatical sentences and understand the context in which the sentences are used (Irmawati, 2012). Communicative approach is learner-orientated because it considers learners’ needs and interests (Irmawati, 2012). Within this approach, the use of various resources play important role as they will enable learners to become proficient in the language they are learning. The DBE (2011:13) also mentions that a communicative approach suggests that when learning a language, learners should be provided with many opportunities that exposes them to L2. In addition, CAPS prescribed strategies such discussions, storytelling, role play, reading aloud and debate to enhance communicative competence of learners.

The two approaches specified by CAPS curriculum are in line with the teaching strategies proposed in this study as they improve language proficiency of learners by engaging in texts and communication skills. It can be said that in order for approaches to be executed successfully, there should be strategies that enable learners to experience academic success.

1.4 RESEARCH PURPOSE

1.4.1 Aim of the study

- The aim of the study is to explore strategies employed by teachers to develop English proficiency of Grade 4 learners.

1.4.2 Research objectives

- To identify strategies that teachers employ in Grade 4 to teach English First Additional language (EFAL).
- To examine strategies teachers' use in their classrooms for effective learning of EFAL.
- To investigate teachers' perspectives on strategies they employ in the classrooms.

1.5 ROLE OF THE THEORY

Teaching strategies play important role as learning theories in achieving desired outcomes in the classroom context (Rapetsoa, 2011). Therefore, this study was underpinned by post-method pedagogy framework. The theory takes account into teachers' role in the classroom settings. It puts the teacher at the centre of language learning process and acknowledges his or her experience to facilitate better understanding of the content (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Therefore, teachers must orchestrate their own approaches and methods as they gain experience based on their classroom contexts (Kumaradivelu, 2006).

Kumaravadivelu (2005:539) asserts that the framework operates on three principles that are appropriate to utilisation of strategies in the classroom namely, particularity, practicality and possibility. Particularity requires teachers to select appropriate resources relevant to the learners. Practicality requires teachers to practice what they theorise and possibility regard teacher as someone who should actively participates in the classroom activities. These principles provide teachers with opportunity to overcome problems within their classroom contexts. Kumaradivelevu (1994:98) asserts that teachers may need operational framework to teach L2 effectively. The following micro-strategies were recommended, namely maximising of learning opportunities, facilitating

negotiated interaction, contextualising linguistic input, promoting learner-autonomy, combining of language skills, minimising perceptual mismatches, fostering of language awareness, activating of intuitive heuristics, raising cultural consciousness and ensuring of social relevance. The theory is applicable in this study because it provides teachers with important principle on which to base their teaching. Post-method pedagogy is important for teacher's development since it involves teachers to employ their own classroom-oriented strategies based on their teaching experience.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted qualitative research approach. According to Bryman (2012:45), it is the type of research that gathers data in the form of words and expressions. Qualitative research approach is usually used to gather people's actions and behaviours (Kennedy, 2019). Therefore, the approach is effective in capturing personal experiences, feelings and opinions of people (Kierean, 2019). The approach is preferred in this study because the researcher wanted to explore strategies that teachers employ to develop English proficiency of Grade 4 learners by noting what strategies teachers employ to teach EFAL and by also allowing teachers to express their views and thoughts regarding strategies of their choice.

1.6.1 Research design

Research design is a way of addressing the research problem (Leedy & Omrod, 2013). The study used a qualitative case study approach to explore strategies teachers use to teach EFAL in Grade 4. Qualitative case-studies offer effective way of gaining insights and make an in-depth analysis of what it is happening in the classroom context (Creswell, 2013). One advantage of using case study approach is that it allows the issue to be explored in different ways and multiple situations to unfold and understood (Babbie & Mouton, 2009). Case study enabled classroom dynamics such as language usage of the teacher, content taught, interaction with learners, resources utilised and teaching strategies employed to be better understood and explored.

1.6.2 Sampling

1.6.2.1 Population

Population refers to the total number of people that the researcher is interested in obtaining information from (Van Rensburg, 2010). The population of the study comprised of all Grade 4 teachers who teach at Toronto Primary School.

1.6.2.2 Sample

Sample is a group of people the researcher recruits from the targeted population (Maree & Pieterse, 2010). In this case, Grade 4 teachers who teach EFAL at Toronto Primary School were the sample of this study. Toronto Primary School was chosen because it comprised of majority of ESL learners and they offer EFAL as from Grade 4 to 7 as stipulated by LiEP.

1.6.2.3 Sampling

Four Grade 4 teachers who met the selection criteria were chosen using non-probability in the form of purposive sampling. Purposive sampling involves identifying and choosing participants who share same characteristics and qualities that will help the researcher address research objectives (Farrugia, 2019). Therefore, four Grade 4 teachers were chosen because they all teach EFAL. Moreover, the researcher gained access into the research settings by firstly obtaining ethical approval from Turfloop Research and Ethics Committee (TREC) and also by writing a letter to the school principal requesting permission to collect data at Toronto Primary School. In addition, teachers were also asked to sign consent forms.

1.6.3 Data collection

Data collection refers to a systematic process of collecting data in a meaningful way (Matthews & Ross, 2010). The study made use of interviews, observations and documents analysis to collect data. Triangulation of methods was employed to strengthen research findings.

1.6.3.1 Interviews

Interviews may be structured, semi-structured or unstructured (Robson, 2011). The study adopted face to face semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are type of interviews that mainly consists of open-ended questions to enable the researcher to cover as much ground on the topic (Bleiker, Morgan-Trimmer, Knapp & Hokins, 2019). Semi-structured interviews were chosen because they enabled the researcher to gain insights on the topic explored by encouraging four Grade 4 teachers who teach EFAL to express their opinions, thoughts and ideas in their own words on the application of strategies. In this way, issues that were problematic were better understood.

Audio-recording and interview schedule was used to document the interview with the permission of the participants. Interview schedule was used to guide and direct the conversation between the participants and researcher. The main disadvantage of interviews is that they may be deceptive, this implies that the interviewee may only provide information that the researcher needs to hear (Creswell, 2012). The researcher curbed this by visiting the school prior day of the data collection to build positive rapport with participants.

1.6.3.2 Observations

According to Creswell (2012:213), "observations are systematic way of viewing peoples' actions and behaviour in their natural settings". The study adopted non-participant observations. Non-participant observations are techniques that provide the researcher with opportunity to see and record what is happening in the research setting without participation (MacFarlan, 2017). Non-participant observations were chosen to identify strategies teachers employed to teach EFAL. The researcher sat at the back of the classroom and observed the lessons thoroughly without being interrupted by anything thereby gathering rich information on the application of strategies (Cohen, 2011). Non-participant observations were accomplished by means of observation checklist and field notes.

However, one of the major disadvantages of observations is that the presence of the researcher in the context may influence how participants behave on their day to day basis (Patton, 2014). This implies that if participants are aware that they are being observed, they could change their normal behaviour. The researcher curbed this by visiting the school prior day of data collection to establish a positive rapport with the participants.

1.6.3.3 Documents analysis

Document analysis is a process in which relevant materials to the study are interpreted and assessed (Bowen, 2009). Documents targeted for this study were teachers' lesson plans, learners' activity books, DBE workbook for EFAL and CAPS for teaching EFAL. The teachers' lesson plans were used to address the research objective concerning strategies that teachers employ to teach EFAL. Learners' activity books were used to correlate the strategies provided by teachers. CAPS document and DBE workbook for EFAL were used to determine what might be influencing teachers' practice and also their role in assisting teachers to teach EFAL in Grade 4.

Document analysis confers data to which the participants have provided as written evidence (Bowen, 2009). In other words, the document analysis was also used to confirm the data gathered from observations and interviews relating to strategies. However, the main disadvantage of analysing documents such as CAPS is that the researcher cannot interview the people who wrote them as they are written by government officials. The researcher curbed this by accessing the document through the internet.

1.6.3.4 Pilot study

According to Fouche and Delport (2011:73), pilot study is a way of testing methods of data collection before a major study can commence. The pilot study was conducted with one Grade 5 teacher in Toronto Primary School to confirm whether the questions asked were understandable and that participants will be able to answer them.

1.6.4 Data analysis

Data analysis refers to the organisation of data to derive meaning (Creswell, 2009). Interviews, data from field notes and document analysis were analysed using thematic analysis to identify common themes across the data and build thick description on strategies teachers employ to teach EFAL in Grade 4.

Thematic analysis is proposed by Braun and Clarke. According to Braun and Clarke (2006:79), thematic analysis is a “method used to identify, analyse, and report patterns across the dataset”. They provided guidelines to follow when analysing data using thematic analysis, namely: familiarising oneself with the data, generating codes, searching of themes, reviewing themes, defining themes and writing up.

- The first step of familiarising oneself with the data involves re-reading the data number of times to gain familiarity with the data and allow the researcher to transcribe the data accurately.
- The second step is generating of codes which entails searching of captivating patterns within the data.
- The third step is searching of themes which entails gathering of codes into appropriate and relevant themes.
- The fourth step is reviewing of themes which involve demonstrating relationship between themes and codes across the data.
- The fifth step is defining of themes which emphasise giving names for each theme.
- The last step is writing the report which entails discussing each theme thoroughly to report the findings.

In this study, the researcher read the data a number of times to gain familiarity with the data and transcribe the data accurately. During the coding of data, the researcher searched for interesting features across the data and assembled them into categories. Similar responses and categories were placed together under themes which were defined. Each theme was discussed thoroughly to report the findings with the support of quotes from field notes and document analysis.

1.6.5 Quality criteria

Since the study is qualitative in nature, it is important to address the following aspects, credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability to establish trustworthiness of the study (Lincoln & Cuba, 1985).

1.6.5.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to how truthful and believable the findings of the study are (Hadi & Closs, 2016). It was achieved by using triangulation of methods namely, interviews, observations and document analysis to strengthen and confirm the findings from different perspective to avoid bias, visiting the school before the day of data collection to establish relationship of trust with the participants and prolonged engagement.

1.6.5.2 Transferability

Transferability means the findings of the study can be transferred in and outside the current study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In this study, transferability was achieved by providing rich information on research settings, research participants, research sampling and correlating the findings with literature.

1. 6.5.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to demonstrating that the findings are stable and replicable (Welch & Piekkar, 2017). In this study, dependability was achieved by analysing data all over again to inform further data collection and collecting data until no further themes emerge.

1.6.5.4 Confirmability

Confirmability is concerned with demonstrating that findings and interpretation of the study are not influenced by the researcher's beliefs (Petty & Thomson, 2012). In this study, confirmability was achieved by continually searching the data that disconfirms the findings.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROPOSED STUDY

Little has been done to develop English proficiency of learners in the intermediate phase especially in Grade 4. Therefore, the present study will contribute to the filling of the gap in the existing literature on the topic of English proficiency in the intermediate phase, Grade 4 in the case of the study. The findings will shed the light on various ways that teachers can develop and improve the English proficiency of learners – Grade 4 learners in this case. The study will also make a major contribution by making department officials, teachers and curriculum advisors to be aware of the strategies that are effective in the learning and teaching of EFAL in rural schools, especially in Grade 4.

1.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical principles play essential role in any research (Turner & Fozdar, 2010). In this study, ethical principles were maintained by asking of permission to conduct the study; informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity and voluntary participation were all provided and made clear prior to the collection of data by the researcher.

1.8.1 Permission to conduct research

The researcher must obtain relevant permission before the study can commence (Robson, 2003). Permission was obtained by the researcher of the current study from REC which enabled the researcher to proceed with the study. The researcher also wrote a letter to school principal requesting permission to conduct the study at Toronto Primary School.

1.8.2 Informed consent

Informed consent is a way to make the participants know what it entails to take part in the study so they may have an option on whether to participate or not (Drew, 2007). In this study, the participants were provided with clear explanations regarding the study and they were formally asked for permission to take part in the study.

1.8.3 Confidentiality and Anonymity

The personal information and participants' contribution should not be disclosed in a study (Hennink, Hutter & Balley, 2020). The researcher ensured confidentiality and anonymity by assuring the participants that the information they contribute will only be used for the purpose of this study and their identities will not be revealed during the presentation of the research findings.

1.8.4 Voluntary participation

The participants must take part in the study based on being informed on the nature and risks concerning the study (Babbie, 2007). The researcher ensured voluntary participation by informing the participants that they are not forced to take part in the study and they have the right to withdraw their participation at any time.

1.9 CONCLUSION

The chapter discussed the background to the study by outlining language education in the South African context. The problem statement that motivated the study was discussed in this chapter. The aim, research objectives and theoretical framework suitable for the study were outlined. The research methodology and significance of the study were also stated. Quality criteria that are in line with qualitative research approaches were also stated and the chapter further elaborated on ethical considerations. The next chapter reports on literature review.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The chapter concerns itself with conceptual framework of teaching strategies, relationship between language proficiency and teaching strategies, theoretical framework related to the study, challenges faced by teachers in the application of strategies and further report on the status quo of reading in South Africa.

2.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF TEACHING STRATEGIES

According to Van der Wal and Jojo (2014:1107), teaching strategies refer to the “methods and techniques that teachers employ to teach content knowledge in the classroom and transfer the necessary knowledge to the learners”. This implies that teaching strategies are types of activities that are used to deliver content in the classroom. Since learning is a process of acquiring new information, the teacher must have an ability to choose appropriate and relevant teaching strategies that will facilitate meaningful learning (Mafa & Chaminuka, 2012). The choice of teaching strategies is determined by learners’ learning abilities, language needs, motivation and the objective of the lesson that the teacher wants to achieve (Reece & Walker, 1998 cited in Mafa & Chaminuka, 2012). Therefore, teaching strategies are classified into two categories namely, traditional teaching strategies and modern teaching strategies.

2.2.1 Traditional teaching strategies

Traditional teaching strategies refer to teaching that is teacher-centred that concentrates on transmitting essential information and knowledge to the learners. This teaching strategy holds a traditional view of education where the teacher takes control of the whole teaching and learning process (Kuzu, 2007). In light of this, learners are taught exactly what they are expected to know in order to achieve lesson objectives (Polly, Magrieson & Piel, 2014). Within this strategy, acquiring information is crucial than the process of acquiring knowledge (Polly *et al.*, 2014). The teacher’s role in this classroom is to prepare materials and teach content rather than concentrating on the learner individual needs and interest (Chikuni, 2003). This implies that learners are left with little or no choice but to understand the content presented to them.

Traditional teaching strategies include telling and lecturing where more closed-ended questions are probed by the teacher (Chikuni, 2003). In this regard, language skills of learners are not developed since learners are denied opportunity to express themselves (Schweisfurth, 2011). The argument is supported by a recent study conducted by Nyamayedenga (2017:125) who found that teachers relied mostly on traditional teaching strategies such as question and answer, drilling and rote learning and fluency and accuracy activities which did not allow interaction to take place amongst learners leading to poor communicative competence. This may result in lack of creativity and exploration of the information as the classrooms remain rigid and well-structured. However, one main advantage of employing traditional strategies is that the classroom remains orderly as the teacher takes ownership of all activities that take place in the classroom (Chikuni, 2003).

2.2.2 Modern teaching strategies

Kemp (2013:23) defines modern teaching strategies as being more learner-centred classroom instruction. Within this strategy the focus is on providing learners with opportunities to construct their own knowledge in the learning process, rather than expecting the teacher to transmit necessary information (Kemp, 2013). The strategy enables learners to take ownership of their own learning while the teacher only guides and facilitates the learning and teaching process (Polly *et al.*, 2014). Chikuni (2003:76) views these strategies as being more effective in enhancing language skills of learners because of their capacity to enable learners to interact and be engaged in the process of learning. The application of this strategy requires learners to work in groups or pairs, ask questions and explore the information presented to them (Kemp, 2013). Strategies such as discussions, problem solving, indirect instruction, role play, case study and performance activities are also regarded as modern strategies (Killen, 2006). Therefore, when learners engage in such strategies, they do not only learn the rules of the English language, but they are given opportunity to express themselves in English in the classroom context. In addition, Noyes (2012:281) found that learner's motivation increased significantly towards learning when learner-centred teaching strategies were employed.

2.3 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND STRATEGIES

Arua and Magocha (2002:65) define language proficiency as the use of fluent speech in such a way that it successfully sends the desired meaning to the recipients. Ravitsch (2007:131) define language proficiency as the ability of an individual to function effectively in the L2, while DBE (2010:03) define language proficiency as “level of competence at which the individual is able to use it for basic communication tasks and academic tasks.” In other words, it is the ability of an individual to use language effectively in its spoken and written form.

In light of this, Cummins (2009:32) proposed two dimensions of language proficiency namely, Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) and Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS). He explains CALP as the dimension of language proficiency that enable learners to cope with academic demands placed upon them and these skills are developed in formal settings such as schools, while BICS refers to informal language that people use for interaction. Furthermore, Cummins (2000:60) asserts that it takes approximately two years to master BICS while it takes seven years to be proficient in CALP. Cummins (2000:60) indicates that BICS and CALP should be integrated for learners to achieve desired learning outcomes in the school settings.

However, Monyai (2010:02) asserts that primary school learners who have little exposure to English language experience problems in coping with academic demands placed upon them. Therefore, they fail to execute learning activities presented in the medium of English. Bitenelkome (2015:37) investigated the level of English proficiency of Grade 4 learners. In her analysis, it is found that the level of language proficiency of learners did not allow teachers to follow the curriculum layout. Teachers sought to code-switching as a strategy to transmit necessary information to learners which resulted in a slow development of English language.

The most important factor in helping learners become proficient in the language they are learning lies in the teacher’s expertise (Lenyai, 2011). It is critical that teachers have adequate knowledge of theories, approaches, methods and strategies that will enhance language development of learners (Hall Haley & Austin, 2004).

When teachers plan their lessons, they have to keep in mind the activities which make learning process interesting and effective (Mohammed & Hamzeh, 2014). In addition, Choshi (2015:38) asserts that one way to make ESL lesson understandable is to employ various strategies, the teacher may switch from one strategy to another for as long as learners could understand the content and achieve lesson objectives.

A recent study conducted by Malebese (2019:18) suggested a socially inclusive strategy for teaching EFAL. The main purpose of the strategy is to bring the learners L1 knowledge and expertise into the learning and teaching process to develop their English language proficiency. The findings revealed that language skills of ESL learners improved through the application of the social inclusive strategy.

It is important for ESL learners to attain sufficient CALP level of English in order to experience academic success. Strategies play important role in the language development of learners and limited language proficiency of learners is a result of poor choice of teaching strategies (Littlewood, 1984). Therefore, suitable and appropriate strategies have great influence in achieving English mastery.

2.4 CHALLENGES FACED BY TEACHERS IN THE APPLICATION OF STRATEGIES

Factors such as overcrowded classroom, lack of parental involvement, limited time available and lack of resources has been identified as factors that prevents teachers to teach English language effectively.

2.4.1 Overcrowded classrooms

In the South African context, overcrowded classrooms are a problem in many public schools (Matsepe, Maluleke & Cross, 2019). The large number of learners in the classroom does not permit teachers to pay attention to learners' individual needs (Srivastava, 2010). In this regard, teachers are unable to employ various strategies because they might feel stressed and frustrated as more time will be spend on managing classroom organisation and disciplining learners rather than delivering lesson content. The argument is supported by Muthusamy (2015:65) who provided qualitative evidence on teachers' experiences with overcrowded classrooms. The findings reveal that large number of learners in the classroom restricts teachers to move around the

classroom and employ strategies which could make lesson content understandable like it would be in a fairly manageable classroom in terms of the number of learners.

In addition, Letompa (2014:32) asserts that large classes may affect learners' academic performance in the classroom and also makes it difficult for teachers to give immediate feedback to learners as they are faced with overload of work and the teacher may be unable to keep track of each learner's progress.

Phatudi and Motila (2014:29) suggested strategies that teachers can employ to manage overcrowded classrooms. The teacher can utilise outside space and rearrange furniture in the classroom to manage large number of learners in the classroom (Phatudi & Motila 2014). In addition, learners can also be grouped to encourage interaction in the classroom (Abbot, 2017).

Learners can also be provided with extra lessons after school hours. This strategy can be used to help learners who struggle to understand the content in the overcrowded classrooms. This will help in addressing some of the problems they may experience (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2010). During extra lessons, individual instruction can be given to learners who find it difficult to comprehend what it is being taught.

2.4.2 Lack of parental involvement

Parental involvement plays an important role in enhancing learner's academic performance. Children who have more educated parents stand a better chance to attain academic success as their parents are able to assist them in their learning. Such children can master the fundamentals of literacy at the school settings better than those who do not receive assistance from their parents due to the poor socio-economic status of the parents (Driessen, 2002).

A recent study conducted by Motseke (2018:34) provided a qualitative evidence on the extent at which parents are involved in the learning and teaching of EFAL among Grade 4-6 learners at a rural school. It was found that the involvement of the parents in the learning of EFAL was very poor, mainly due to the concrete possibility that the parents are uneducated or lack adequate knowledge of the English language.

Friend and Cook (2009:23) suggested collaboration between teacher and parent can be used as a strategy that would afford parents with an opportunity to take part in their children's education. They indicate that when parents and teachers work as a team in the learner's education, the more the learner stands a better chance to master language skills to execute learning activities. They further assert that when teachers and parents collaborate, they can identify learner's language needs and come up with potential ways to address the problems. In light of this, homework activities can be used as a strategy that would enable parents to help their children improve academically and keep track of their children's progress (Friend & Cook, 2009).

Homework activities provide a learner with a platform to master content presented to them and develop their language proficiency through the content being taught (Callahan, Rademacher & Hidreth 1998 cited in Ntombela, Mhlongo & Pillay, 2019). Therefore, homework activities need to be clear and well designed so that the parents can be able to help their children obtain good results.

Furthermore, home visits can also be used as a strategy to ensure that learners' individual needs are met (Landsberg, Kruger & Swart, 2011). Chinedu (2014:76) explains that home visits have a great potential to establish positive home-school relationship as they afford both parents and teachers the opportunity to work together to improve academic performance of the learner. When teachers have sufficient background knowledge of the learner, it puts them in a better position to support the learner's parents on how they can assist their children with homework activities. IWyse and Jones (2008:12) contend that more emphasise should be placed on encouraging the learners to use English in informal settings to improve their language proficiency.

DBE has introduced School Governing Body (SGB) at schools in attempt to get parents to be actively involved in their children's education (DBE, 2014). One of the main role of the SGB is related to language policy of the school, specifically on deciding on the LoLT (DBE, 2014). This implies that parents can decide through the SGB on the LoLT. Therefore, this is a way to give parents opportunity to be actively involved in supporting the language development of learners. Tsebe and Scherman (2020: 08) confirm that

parents play important role in the development of language proficiency of learners and they need guidance on how to support their children.

For parental involvement to be effective, the school must provide parents with platforms to engage in various school activities such as the attending of meetings and constantly writing newsletters to the parents. In most cases parents are only called in for general meetings that mainly concentrate on addressing discipline and financial issues (Leepo, 2015). Hence, little or no attention is given on how both teachers and parents can work together to improve academic performance of learners.

2.4.3 Lack of resources

Scarcity of resources impedes the application of strategies in the classroom context to achieve desired learning and teaching (O'Connor & Geiger, 2009). This may result in teachers being unable to employ various strategies that could be beneficial to learners and make learning experience interesting and enjoyable.

Previous studies in African countries revealed a great scarcity of resources in schools. The statement is supported by Mwanamukubi (2013:55) who investigated challenges faced by teachers when teaching reading skills to learners with reading difficulties. In her analysis, it is found that teachers were faced with lack of learning and teaching materials. Mtsi and Maphosa (2016:65) also found that the scarcity of resources such as libraries and infrastructure negatively affected meaningful teaching and learning to take place. This among other negative outcomes leads to limited English proficiency of learners and low literacy in schools.

Furthermore, Hoadley (2015:13) asserts that teachers should make use of resources provided by DBE to help learners become proficient in LoLT. DBE developed workbooks in all subjects taught in schools to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The main aim of providing schools with DBE workbooks is to reinforce literacy development of learners (DBE, 2015). The White Paper 6 (2001:07) stipulated that it is DBE's responsibility to ensure that schools are provided with adequate resources to support the language development of learners. However, Donohue and Borman (2014:12) assert that DBE has not provided schools with adequate funding to enable

them to buy necessary resources that enable to make learning interesting and get learners understand the content delivered to them.

In light of this, there is a need for schools to be provided with a wide range of educational resources in order to meet curriculum needs (Evans, 2014). Therefore, schools should be equipped with resources such as libraries and information sources including print, visual and internet sources that will facilitate the development of literacy. The above argument is supported by a study conducted by Makeleni and Sethusha (2014:64) who confirm that language proficiency of learners improved significantly in countries such as Brazil, Ghana, Guinea and Phillipines due to sufficient supply of resources such as textbooks.

2.4.4 Lack of teacher training

Teacher training is an area of concern in many South African schools. Hugo (2010:136) indicates that teaching is a very challenging task in the South African context due to learners who come from different backgrounds and have different learning abilities. This is an area which requires teachers to be well trained and prepared to deliver effective and meaningful content. Previous studies highlighted that teachers lack knowledge, skills and training that are essential in the application of strategies and methods that are said to be beneficial in helping learners to understand content (Engelbrencht, 2006; Klapwijk, 2012; De Jager, 2013).

Specifically, Naaido, Reddy and Dorosamy (2014:164) found that majority of teachers did not receive training in the teaching of reading in the intermediate phase. Teachers stated that they do not feel that they are well-prepared for teaching reading in the intermediate; rather they feel incompetent due to lack of knowledge regarding strategies to teach reading. Therefore, the findings impact negatively in the teaching of reading.

Majority of teachers lack skills to deal with the problems they experience in the teaching of the content subject matter and address these problems. In addition, they lack knowledge of strategies to ensure that learners are engaged in the learning and teaching process to meet curriculum requirements (DBE, 2015).

Taylor (2012:06) submits that teachers' knowledge of the subjects they teach has been questioned. The short courses offered by DBE are not assisting teachers to teach effectively across the curriculum (Taylor, 2008). This argument is supported by Skinner, Gareeton and Schultz (2011:09) who state that shortage of qualified teachers exists in schools where teachers are often allocated subjects for which they did not receive any formal training for. This implies that teachers will not be able to know what to do when they experience problems in the teaching of particular subject matter for which they have no formal training.

Mokhele (2014:30) indicates that high quality professional development of teachers play important role in improving the standard of education in South African context. In light of this, if all learners are to experience academic success, they must have teachers who are well trained, knowledgeable and competent to teach effectively. However, many teachers in the developing countries do not have necessary skills to teach effectively across the curriculum (Mokhele, 2014).

Therefore, as a fitting remedy, the DBE should provide teachers with professional and continuous in-service training so that they can be equipped with skills and be updated on strategies that will help achieve desired learning and teaching; this in-service training is needed especially for language teaching. This will enable teachers to be experts in the field they are teaching to achieve the desired teaching and learning outcomes (Pillay, 2012).

2.4.5 Limited time available

Time allocation has a major impact on learning and teaching conditions. The South African curriculum set out 6 hours per week to teach EFAL in the intermediate phase (DBE, 2011). The amount of time set out to teach L2 determines the amount of exposure learners receive to L2 in school settings.

The study conducted by Kotze *et al.* (2017: 64) found that little time available was one of the problems experienced by teachers in the application of strategies. The findings revealed that teachers forced learners to learn L2 due to the little time rather employing

different strategies. The teachers attributed this aspect to the fact that they already have little time to accomplish curriculum requirements (Hoedley, 2015; Wyze & Jones, 2008).

Tiba (2012:10) suggested strategies that can help in maximising instructional time such as teachers implementing classroom rules, providing learners with many opportunities to answer questions appropriately, employing various activities during the first two weeks of the school to capture learners' attention and monitoring each learner's progress.

There is a positive relationship between the increased time and learner's academic achievement (Lavy, 2010; Lesnick, Hart & Spielberger, 2011). Therefore, more teaching time should be allocated to the lower grades (Department of Basic Education Curriculum Action Plan, 2010). Increasing instructional time to meet curriculum requirements may improve learners understanding of the content especially learners coming from homes with limited resources.

Previous studies have failed to demonstrate that employing these strategies to overcome problems experienced by teachers in the application of strategies will improve learners' academic performance especially in South Africa. Most studies only offered recommendations on how to improve writing, speaking, listening and reading skills of ESL learners.

2.5 THE STATUS QUO OF READING IN SA

One of the major problems faced by South African education is low level of literacy (Jordan, 2011; Van Dyk & Cortzee-Van Rooy, 2012). This is clear from various tests such as PIRLS and National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU). PIRLS is an international comparison study which aims to assess reading performance of Grade 4 and Grade 8 learners. However, only Grade 4 and Grade 5 learners took part in the PIRLS survey in 2006, 2011 and 2016.

In 2006, 40 countries took part in PIRLS survey. South African Grade 4 ESL learners obtained the lowest score out of all 40 different countries (Mullis, Kennedy & Foy, 2007).

In 2011, prePIRLS was translated into all 11 official languages of South Africa. In prePIRLS, the passages composed of simpler vocabulary to assess the basic reading skills of learners (Mullis, Martin, Foy & Ducker, 2012). South African Grade 4 ESL learners obtained poor results out of the participating countries. The findings highlight that South African ESL Grade 4 learners experience reading problems despite of language of testing since they were assessed in their own L1.

More recently, PIRLS 2016 revealed same results to that one of prePIRLS 2011, as once again PIRLS found that South African Grade 4 ESL learners failed to read at a basic level and in their own L1. Those learners who were tested in English and used English as their own L1 achieved better results than ESL learners (Howie *et al.*, 2017).

PIRLS did not prescribe strategies but made recommendations on how teachers can help learners attain their reading competence. However, teachers are still experiencing problems in improving the reading skills of learners. This is evident from a recent study conducted by Makiwane-Mazinyo and Pillay (2017:10478) who found that Grade 4 teachers were not trained to teach reading. They were not receiving support from DBE and parents were also not involved in their children's education. This lead to poor quality of education that is visible in many South African public schools (NEEDU, 2012; Spaul, 2013). In addition, NEEDU also tested oral reading fluency of Grade 5 ESL learners from rural schools (NEEDU, 2014). The findings revealed that the reading level of Grade 5 rural school learners were lower than anticipated.

Both PIRLS and NEEDU highlighted factors that led to the poor reading skills of ESL Grade 4 and Grade 5 which include large classes, scarcity of resources, poorly qualified teachers and English as LoLT (Hoadley, 2012). Therefore, it is through appropriate and suitable strategies that will improve the reading skills of learners. These strategies include providing schools with sufficient resources, involving parents in their children's education, increasing time spent on reading and teachers receiving training on how to teach reading.

The South African Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, has raised the need to enhance literacy skills of learners to achieve desired learning outcomes in South African education (DBE, 2014). In light of this, DoE has recommended strategies that

can strengthen reading skills of learners in the intermediate phase which include read aloud, shared reading and guided reading (DoE, 2002). However, guided reading forms important element of the reading process in the intermediate phase.

2.6 THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

The study adopted post-method pedagogy framework. The theory takes account into teacher's role in the classroom context (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). It puts the teacher at the centre of language learning and teaching process and values the teacher's experiences and knowledge to deliver meaningful content. Therefore, the teachers must develop and create their own methods as they gain experiences based on their classroom contexts, knowledge of other methods and approaches for improved learning and teaching. Kumardivelu (1994:203) conceptualise "post-method pedagogy framework as the development of a unique set of classroom practices by teachers themselves, tailored to their own identities, beliefs and teaching styles and most importantly to suit the specific context in which they teach".

According to Kumaravadivelu (2005:539), the framework operates on three principles which are all relevant to the use of teaching strategies in the classroom, namely: particularity, practicality and possibility. Particularity implies that teachers are mediators of the language and teaching process, the teacher is expected to make use of resources relevant to the learners. The teacher should find solutions to problems identified, try them out and evaluate results to inform further plans. Such an on-going process of observation and reflection plays an important role in achieving desired learning outcomes.

The second principle, practicality, requires teachers to be researchers who practice what they theorise, continually finding various ways to improve their teaching through critical evaluation. Finally, the third principle, possibility, relates to the teacher's role as a participant in the classroom environment. Kumaradivelu (1994:98) proposed what he calls a micro-strategic framework which can assist teachers to teach L2 effectively, namely the maximising of learning opportunities, facilitating negotiated interaction, contextualizing linguistic input, promoting learner-autonomy and integrating language

skills, minimising perceptual mismatches, fostering of language awareness, activating of intuitive heuristics, raising cultural consciousness and ensuring of social relevance.

- The first micro-strategy is maximising of learning opportunities which involve the creating many learning opportunities in the classroom as much as possible. For example, when a learner seeks an explanation of a particular word, the teacher can allow other learners to provide that particular explanation.
- The second micro-strategy is minimising perceptual mismatches which involves recognising perceptual mismatches between teacher and learner interpretation. In other words, learners can learn other things that are different from what the teacher has planned.
- The third micro-strategy is facilitating negotiated interaction which involves providing learners with opportunities to initiate classroom talk.
- The fourth micro-strategy is promoting learner autonomy which focuses on finding various ways to help learners understand the content presented to them.
- The fifth micro-strategy is fostering of language awareness which emphasises on exposing learners' to the formal aspects of L2 to develop their language proficiency.
- The sixth micro-strategy is activating intuitive heuristics which highlights the importance of providing learners with rich textual information to infer the underlying rules of L2 through direct learning.
- The seventh micro-strategy is contextualising linguistic input which involves the integrating of language principles to deliver meaningful learning.
- The eighth strategy is combining of language skills which emphasise that it is essential that teachers conduct their lessons in such a way that learners gets opportunity to use language for all language skills.
- The last strategy is ensuring social relevance which involves the need for teachers to be sensitive to the economic, social, political and educational where L2 learning and teaching is taking place.

It can be said that post-method pedagogy framework allows teachers to look at L2 language learning and teaching from a new perspective and helps them to teach L2 effectively by employing micro-strategies recommended by Kumaradivelu.

2.7 CONCLUSION

The present chapter has discussed conceptual framework of teaching strategies which explored the following concepts: traditional strategies and modern strategies that are essential in the classroom contexts. The chapter majorly presented a review of literature on related to the topic of the current study, and the literature show that there is a relationship between strategies and language proficiency. Factors such as lack of resources, overcrowded classrooms, lack of training and lack of parental involvement affect the quality of learning and teaching of EFAL were reviewed in this chapter as some of the challenges faced by both teachers and learners; and it is highlighted in the literature reviewed that there is a need for teachers to possess a repertoire of strategies to address such challenges. The literature further reported on the status quo of reading in South Africa which highlighted that South African Grade 4 and Grade 5 ESL learners still experience reading problems. Furthermore, the chapter presented a discussion of the theoretical framework that is in line with L2 learning and teaching. The next chapter reports on research methodology used to explore strategies that teachers employ to develop language proficiency of Grade 4 learners.

CHAPTER 3: THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The chapter provides detailed and in-depth information regarding the research methodology, research design, methods of collecting data, sampling techniques and data analysis technique; and the chapter further elaborates on ethical issues related to the study.

3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

Qualitative research approach was adopted in this study. According to Bryman (2012:45), qualitative research approach emphasises words rather than numerical data. This means that it does not concern itself with the quantity of information but the quality and the deepening of understanding of a given problem. The ways in which Grade 4 teachers employ strategies provided the researcher with rich information which made it possible to make thick descriptions of the data and gain more insights on the topic explored. The approach also provides a whole understanding about a particular topic at hand (Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

Qualitative research approach represents the views and perspectives of participants which highlight the importance of the participants' experience and voices in the study (Yin, 2016). According to Matthews and Ross (2010:141), the approach is normally used to explore peoples' opinions, behaviours and actions on a particular phenomenon. The use of interviews and observations enabled the researcher to understand the participants' perspectives and actions regarding the application of teaching strategies by interacting and observing participants in their natural settings. In addition, Gay (2014:23) states that data gathering in qualitative research approach is mainly obtained from various methods such as interviews, focus groups, observations. In light of this, the study employed interviews, observations and document analysis for purpose of triangulation.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design is a plan that describes the most suitable way to conduct a study (Terrell, 2012). The current study took the form of a case study. Best and Khan (2014:265) define case study as a “method of studying a social phenomenon by thoroughly analysing an individual case, which may be a person, a group, a process, community or any unit of social life”. The statement is supported by Clark (2011:178) who asserts that in a case study, the researcher select one or few individuals and observe them within their natural settings over a specific time frame. The current study focused on teaching strategies to teach EFAL at one particular primary school which is Toronto Primary School.

A case study offers the researcher opportunity to explore a particular situation through using various methods of data collection (Creswell, 2013). In this study, interviews, observations and document analysis were used as methods of gathering data to explore strategies that teachers employ to teach EFAL. The approach is particularly useful in understanding the case in-depth and in its natural setting (Punch, 2013). In light of this, case study was used to gain in-depth and detailed information on the application of strategies to teach EFAL in Grade 4.

The main disadvantage of a case study is that a small size of the dataset means it is not possible to generalise the findings unto a wider research population as it takes time to gather the data compared to quantitative research approach. However, the main aim of choosing a case study for this current study was not to generalise the research findings but to gain more insights of what is happening in the classroom settings.

3.4 SAMPLING

3.4.1 Population

Population refers to a group of people from whom the researcher seeks to gather information necessary to address research objectives (Flick, 2018). A research population is also known as a well-defined collection of individuals who have the same qualities (Mills & Gay, 2016). The population of the study comprised of all Grade 4 teachers who teach at Toronto Primary School.

3.4.2 Sample

Sample is a group of people the researcher recruits from the population (Maree & Peterson, 2010). In the case of the current study, four Grade 4 teachers who teach EFAL at Toronto Primary School were the sample of this study. Toronto Primary School was chosen because it consists of majority of ESL learners and they offer EFAL as from Grade 4 to 7.

3.4.3 Sampling

Sampling is a procedure whereby the researcher recruits research participants from the population (Sigh & Masuku, 2012). Sampling can either be probability or non-probability (Patton, 2014). Four Grade 4 teachers who met the selection criteria were selected using non-probability in the form of purposive sampling. Purposive sampling involves selecting participants who have same characteristics and qualities that will help in addressing research objectives (Farrugia, 2019). Therefore, four Grade 4 teachers were selected on the basis that they all teach EFAL.

In addition, the researcher gained access to participants and research settings by firstly obtaining ethical approval from TREC and also by writing a letter to the school principal requesting permission to collect data at Toronto Primary School. The principal was used as a gatekeeper so that the researcher can have access into the teachers' classrooms to conduct observations. The participants were also asked to sign informed consent form (annexure 3) so they can decide on whether they would participate in the study or not.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection refers to process of collecting data in a systematic manner (Matthews & Ross, 2010). This study employed interviews, observations and documents analysis to collect data. Triangulation of methods was employed for the purpose of confirming and strengthening research findings from different perspectives and also to enhance trustworthiness of the study.

3.5.1 Interviews

There are different types of interviews, namely structured, semi-structured or unstructured (Robson, 2011). The study adopted semi-structured interviews. These are types of interviews that mainly consist of open-ended questions that give participants an opportunity to elaborate on the topic (Dahlia & Gregg, 2011). In order to determine participants' beliefs and pedagogies they should be encouraged to speak freely (Borg, 2013). Semi-structured interviews were chosen to allow four Grade 4 teachers who teach EFAL at Toronto Primary School to share their perspectives regarding strategies by expressing their views, ideas, opinions and thoughts. This allowed the researcher to give the participants space to answer interview questions without giving them any clues.

One of the advantages of using semi-structured interviews is that they provide the researcher with opportunity to collect data that could not be gathered from observations alone (Silver, 2013). In addition, they also provide rich information and give the researcher the freedom to ask additional questions, probe further into responses, justify previous responses and clarify answers (Almeidia. 2017).

The interviews were conducted using interview schedule (annexure 4). Interview schedule assisted the researcher to direct the conversation on the topic being explored (Patton, 2014). In addition, the responses of the participants were also recorded by means of audio recording, after seeking permission from the participants. Audio recording enabled the researcher to report actual and accurate findings.

In addition, interviews took place in the teachers' classrooms after school hours. This allowed interviews to be conducted without any disturbance. The participants were told that the interviews would be carried out in the English language and they are allowed to give responses in the language of their choice, in this case Sepedi. Each interview took approximately 25 minutes to 30 minutes. Only three interviews were recorded and one participant preferred not be recorded stating that they are uncomfortable with the arrangement.

The main disadvantage of interviews is that participants may only produce information that the researcher needs to hear (Creswell, 2012). Another disadvantaged is that the

presence of the researcher may affect how the participants respond to the interview questions. The researcher curbed this by visiting the school before the day of data collection to establish positive rapport with the participants so that they may feel relaxed and provide truthful answers.

3.5.2 Observations

According to Creswell (2012: 213) “observations are systematic way of viewing peoples’ actions and behaviour in their natural settings”. Observations can either be participant or non-participant (Gray, 2014). In this study, non-participant observations were chosen as the researcher did not want to take part in the classroom activities (Salkind, 2011). The researcher sat at the back of the classroom and observed the lessons thoroughly without being occupied by anything (Cohen, 2011). Non-participant observations enabled the researcher to identify strategies that teachers employed to teach EFAL. They also allowed language teaching process to take place without any disturbance (Salkind, 2011). The participants gave their permission before the observations could take place. In addition, the researcher observed a total number of two classes of EFAL over a period of two weeks. Each lesson took approximately 30 minutes.

The researcher used observation checklist (annexure 5) and field notes to capture the actual behaviour and interaction between the teacher and learners as much as possible (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Since the researcher cannot recall everything that was observed, there is a need to aid memory by jotting down notes of essential things observed in relation to the topic explored (Best & Khan, 2014). Observation checklist also enabled the researcher to maintain consistency during observations (Walsh, 2011).

One of the limitations of observations is that the presence of the researcher in the classroom could have a major impact on participants’ behaviour and classroom activities (Patton, 2014). This means that if the participants know that they are being observed, they might change how they normally behave on their day to day basis. The researcher curbed this by visiting the school before the day of collecting the data to establish a positive rapport with the participants. Teachers were given opportunity to introduce the researcher to the learners. The researcher also avoided close contact and interaction with the learners as much as possible.

3.5.3 Documents analysis

Document analysis is a process in which relevant materials to the study are interpreted and assessed (Bowen, 2009). Documents targeted in this study were teachers' lesson plans, learners' activity books, DBE workbook for EFAL and CAPS for teaching EFAL. The lesson plans of teachers addressed research objective concerning strategies teachers employ to teach EFAL. Learners' books were used in relation to strategies of teachers and CAPS document assisted the researcher to understand and see what might be influencing teachers' practice and their role in helping teaching EFAL. In this study, document analysis was also used to corroborate research findings found during observations and interviews (Bowen, 2009).

The research went through the relevant documents immediately after observations took place. This was accomplished by asking teachers permission to go through materials such as learners' activity books and DBE workbook for EFAL. The research findings obtained from the documents were integrated in the coding of data. However, the disadvantage of analysing documents such as CAPS is that the researcher cannot interview the authors of the documents because they are written by government officials. The researcher curbed this by accessing them through the internet.

3.5.4 Pilot study

According to Fouche and Delport (2011:73), pilot study is a way of testing methods of data collection before a major study can commence. Bless, Higgson- Smith and Kaygee (2008:12) added that pilot study can be used to enhance methodological approach of the study. In this study, pilot study was conducted with one Grade 5 teacher in Toronto Primary School to confirm whether the questions asked, the participants will be able to respond and discuss them thoroughly. However, the research findings generated from pilot study were not used in the actual study.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis refers to the way in which the data is manipulated to derive meaning (Creswell, 2009). Johnson and Christensen (2019:76) refer to data analysis as a process of making sense out of the raw data. Data from interviews, field notes and

document analysis was transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis to discover common themes across dataset and build thick description on strategies teachers employ to teach EFAL.

Thematic analysis is proposed by (Braun & Clarke, 2006). According to Braun and Clarke (2006:79), thematic analysis is a “method used to identify, analyse, and report patterns across the dataset”. They provided steps to follow when analysing data using thematic analysis, and the steps are: familiarising oneself with the data, generating codes, searching of themes, reviewing themes, defining themes and writing up.

The first step is familiarising oneself with the data by re-reading data number of times to gain familiarity with it and transcribe in an authentic manner.

The second step is the generating of initial codes which emphasise highlighting and identifying interesting features that are relevant to address research objectives.

The third step is searching of themes which involve grouping codes, identifying themes and subthemes relevant to the grouped codes.

The fourth step is the reviewing of themes to ensure that they correlate with other themes to address research objectives.

The fifth step is the defining of themes, where names that captures the content of theme are selected.

The last step is writing up, which involves providing proof that supports the identified themes.

In this study, the researcher read the data a number of times to gain familiarity with the data and transcribed accurately. During the coding of data, the researcher searched for captivating patterns across the data and assembled them into categories. Some categories and responses were placed together under themes which were defined. Each theme was discussed thoroughly to report the findings with the support of quotes from the field notes and document analysis.

3.7 QUALITY CRITERIA

Since the study is qualitative in nature, it is important to address trustworthiness of the study. Lincoln and Guba (1985:200) define trustworthiness as the quality of the study that marks it noteworthy to the readers. This implies that it is imperative that the researcher is to be honest about every single aspect related to the study. The following dimensions enhance trustworthiness within qualitative research approach, namely: credibility, dependability, transferability and conformability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3.7.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to how truthful and believable the findings of the study are (Hadi & Closs, 2016). Credibility in the current study was achieved by using the triangulation of methods, namely: interviews, observations and document analysis to strengthen and confirm findings from different perspectives and to avoid bias (refer chapter 3 page 31). The researcher also visited the selected school to establish a relationship of trust with the participants before the day of collecting data. The argument is supported by Lincoln and Guba (1985:301) who assert that investing of sufficient time into the research settings gives the researcher platform to build relationship of trust with the participants.

3.7.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree in which the research findings can be transferred to another setting or group (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). It was achieved by providing detailed information on research settings (refer chapter 4 page 39), research participants (refer chapter 4 page 40), research sampling (refer chapter 3 page 31) and correlating the findings with literature (refer chapter 4 page 45).

3.7.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to illustrating that the same results can be found if the same study is repeated with a group of people that have the same qualities as the participants of the current study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Dependability simply means the consistency of research findings. In this study, it was achieved by providing detailed information on research design suitable for the study (refer chapter 3 page 30). The researcher also

provided minute details on how interviews, observations and document analysis took place (refer chapter 3 page 32, 33 and 34).

3.7.4 Confirmability

Confirmability is concerned with establishing that the research findings reflect participants and the context explored not beliefs and judgement of the researcher (Petty & Thomson, 2012). It was achieved by continually searching the data that disconfirms the findings (refer to chapter 4 page 43).

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical principles play important role in any research (Turner & Fozdar, 2010). In this study, ethical considerations were maintained by the means of asking for permission to conduct the study. In addition, informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity and voluntary participation were thoroughly considered.

3.8.1 Permission to conduct research

The researcher must obtain relevant permission before the study can commence (Robson, 2003). The researcher sought ethical clearance from TREC (annexure 1) and wrote a letter to the school principal requesting permission to conduct the study at Toronto Primary School (annexure 2).

3.8.2 Informed consent

Informed consent is a way to make the participants know what it entails to take part in the study so they may have an option on whether to participate or not (Drew, 2007). The participants were asked to sign informed consent letter (annexure 3) declaring their voluntary participation in the study. The participants were given clear and adequate explanations regarding the study. They were told of the purpose and possible risks concerning the study, this enabled the participants to decide whether or not they can take part in the study. In addition, the participants were not pressurised into taking part in the study instead they were told that they have the right to pull out their participation at any time.

3.8.3 Confidentiality and Anonymity

Confidentiality refers to not disclosing the personal information and contribution of the participants in the study (Hennink, Hutter & Balley, 2020). The researcher ensured confidentiality by assuring the participants that their names will not be revealed in the study and the information they provide will only be used for purpose of this study. The researcher curbed this by giving participants pseudonyms during the presentation of research findings.

Strydom (2011:119) states that confidentiality and anonymity are used interchangeably in research. Therefore, there should be agreement between the researcher and the participants that assure the participants that only authorised persons will have access to the information provided. The researcher curbed this by assuring the participants that no one will listen to the audio-recordings and they will be stored in a protected location, in this case, the data was stored in a laptop that require a password only known by the researcher.

3.9 CONCLUSION

The chapter concentrated on defining and explaining research approach suitable for the study, namely: qualitative approach in the form of a case study. The target population, sample and sampling were identified and thoroughly explained. The methods of collecting data employed in the study, namely: interviews, observations and document analysis were explained. Limitations of each method were identified. The data analysis technique adopted thematic analysis. The chapter further addressed quality criteria that are in line with a qualitative research approach and ethical considerations that are essential in any research. The next chapter reports on data analysis and research findings.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of data management and analysis, the research findings obtained from interviews, observations and document analysis. Thematic analysis is employed to identify common themes that emerged from the data collected and build thick descriptions on strategies. Research findings generated from the methods of data collection are classified into categories, subthemes and themes that reflect strategies that teachers employ to teach EFAL in Grade 4. The responses of the participants are written in italic. Furthermore, the data collected is analysed according to the following research objectives of the study:

- To identify strategies teachers employ to teach EFAL.
- To examine strategies teachers use in their classrooms for effective learning of EFAL.
- To investigate teachers' perspectives on strategies they employ in the classrooms.

The school profile and demographic information of the participants are explained before outlining themes that derived from interviews, observations and document analysis.

4.2 PROFILE OF THE SCHOOL

Toronto Primary School is a public school located in semi-rural areas of Mankweng. It encompasses of Grade R to Grade 7 with majority of learners being ESL learners, and as from Grade 4 upwards LoLT is English as stipulated by LiEP. The school is classified as quintile two. This implies that the learners attending this school are not paying their school fees as they may come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Learners were served with daily school meals during lunch breaks. The school had scarcity of resources such as a functional library. The classrooms were overcrowded with 60 to 70 of learners and seating arrangements were not suitably organised because majority of learners were not facing the teacher.

4.2.1 Demographic information of the participants

Table 4.1: Demographic information of participants

Participants	Gender	Age	Teaching experience	Qualifications
P1	Female	50-59	13	PTD
P2	Female	45-49	12	ACE
P3	Female	35-40	10	Med
P4	Male	45-49	14	BEd

P1 was a female between 50-59 years of age. She was proficient in English language and she had 13 years teaching experience. She held Primary Teachers Diploma (PTD). P2 was a female between 45-49 years of age. She had been teaching EFAL in Grade 4 for 12 years and was well-experienced. She understood that classrooms consist of learners who have different language needs. She held Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE). P3 was a female between 35-40 years of age. She was well-experienced with 10 years in teaching EFAL in Grade 4. She held a Master degree in Education (MEd) and indicated that she had adequate knowledge on the application of strategies. Lastly, P4 was a male between 45-49 years of age. He was an experienced EFAL teacher with 14 years of teaching experience. He had degree in Education and is pursuing further studies.

The demographic information of the participants is important because it critical for the researcher to know the nature of participants participating in the study. The demographic information of participants compromised of gender, age, years of teaching experience and qualifications. The researcher wanted to know the perspectives of both genders regarding the application of strategies to teach EFAL in Grade 4. The age of the participants was essential in the study because the researcher wanted to be sure of the kinds of teachers who were taking part in the study. The researcher was also keen to know the educational qualifications of the participants. This was essential because professional training influences the choice of strategies and determines the academic performance of learners in the classrooms. Teaching experience played essential part in the study. The more years spent in the actual field of teaching the more teachers are likely to have more knowledge of strategies and approaches that can help learners attain their potential (O'Connor *et.al.* cited in Makiwane- Mazinyo & Pillay, 2017). From

the table above, it is clear that the teachers had sufficient teaching experience because all of them have above ten years of teaching experience. Therefore, it could be said that they would be able to employ various strategies that can develop the English proficiency of learners and also have abilities to deal with problems that might arise in the teaching of EFAL in Grade 4.

4.3 RESEARCH RESULTS

First research objective: To identify teaching strategies employed by teachers to teach EFAL

4.3.1 Remedial strategies

4.3.1.1 Individual instruction

The extra classes were used as a remedial strategy to assist learners who encounter problems in understanding content presented during lessons. The participants highlighted that extra lessons accommodate learners who are on different levels of language proficiency and develop their English language skills. The statement is confirmed by following responses:

P3 said:

“I give learners who struggle to understand the content extra lessons three times per week. In this case, i get to explain and repeat concepts several times to accommodate them”.

P4 indicated:

“After school hours, we do have extra lessons, we get to re-teach activities that were taught during the lesson”.

P2 said:

“I usually provide learners who do not understand English language with extra classes after normal school hours”.

P1 also stated:

“During the afternoon classes each learner comes back to me read the story and if the child is still struggling, i help them again. Individual instruction helps me to identify learners who need more attention”.

During the observations, the researcher noticed the participants having extra classes after school hours re-teaching learners concepts that they struggled to understand during the lessons. Learners developed comprehensive understanding of the activity and grasped new concepts. According to Engelbrecht (2013:46) and Roy (2013:1189), individual support should be designed according to learners’ individual needs and progress must be monitored when suitable and appropriate strategies have been selected.

4.3.1.2 Code switching

Having to use DBE workbook for teaching EFAL that is neither in the L1 of the teachers and learners resulted in some learners having difficulties in understanding some of the concepts presented in the medium of English language in the workbook. The participants indicated that they had to explain some of the concepts in L1 first and then resort to code switching for further explanation and clarity.

P2 said:

“I code switch to clarify certain concepts in English. Learners sometimes just keep quiet and i take this as a sign that they did not understand what I have taught”.

P3 also stated:

“The main purpose is to give better clarity that will enable learners to understand the concepts and code-switching is the best solution”.

P1 said:

“Sometimes learners do not understand concepts presented in English as a result code switching is an effective strategy that could enable learners understand what it is taught”.

P4 stated:

“I try to use English as much as possible in the classroom, tell them grass, trees and pollution in English language and then switch to Sepedi and immediately they would know what I am talking about”.

It was observed that during story-telling the participants explained difficult concepts in Sepedi. Code-switching enabled learners to understand the content presented because they were able to answer questions asked by the teacher. Code-switching has been regarded as an effective strategy for teaching L2 especially in contexts where both the teacher and learners speak the same language (Alenezi, 2010). However, Pollard, 2002; Onyemoni, 2006 cited in Evans and Nthulana (2018:07) view code-switching as a strategy that it is ineffective as it result in the slow development of both languages which leads to learners not being able to interact effectively in L2. They further indicate that the strategy denies learners opportunity to be exposed to English language especially rural school learners.

4.3.2 Learner-centred approach

4.3.2.1 Peer teaching

Peer teaching is a strategy whereby a learner becomes a teacher in the learning and teaching process (Enojerena & Eromosele, 2018). The participants highlighted that learners understand the content better when they are taught by their peers. The statement is supported by following responses:

P4 said:

“Learners’ sometimes learn and understand easier through another learner and they enjoy lessons when they dominate in the learning and teaching process”.

P3 said:

“Some learners’ are shy to participate actively in the learning process so peer teaching gives them opportunity to be engaged in the learning process”.

It was observed that the participants employed the strategy by giving learners a task to read out loud the story, retell the story and also ask peers oral-based questions. Majority of learners were able to understand and interpret a text in the story, express their opinions and respond to questions through appropriate use of English language. In addition, the teachers planned their lessons in advanced and in such a way that it enabled learners to exchange information. Learners’ activity books and DBE EFAL workbook revealed that learners are not struggling in English language because their sample work did not display any grammatical and spelling errors.

4.3.2.2 Group work

Group work is an activity that gives the learners opportunity to work on groups of three or more (Sekiziyivu & Mugimu, 2017). All the participants of the current study perceived group work as an effective strategy because the strategy allows communication to take place amongst the learners and develops their language proficiency. The statement is supported by the following responses:

P3 stated:

“Most often because learners cannot read on their own or do task given to them, I use group work”.

P1 said:

“Group work activities are essential because learners get to help each other.”

P4 felt strongly about:

“Group work is the most effective strategy because learners are given the opportunity to share or to discuss the information that they have with other learners”.

P2 said:

“Yes, group work is another way of developing language proficiency of learners’. It is a very effective strategy because when learners are in groups, they express themselves freely and they can interact with each other and share ideas”.

During the observations, it was observed that P2 and P4 explained and introduced topic areas to the learners and therefore learners’ were given activity to do in groups. Learners were sitting in groups of five to seven and were grouped according to their cognitive abilities. This implies that placing learners who were fluent in English language together with those who were struggling with the language. The use of this strategy is in line with CAPS requirements where the focus is on improving language proficiency of learners through interaction. The literature reviewed in chapter two of this study also highlighted that learner-centred strategies enhance communication skills of the learners.

4.3.2.3 Scaffolding

Scaffolding is a process whereby the teacher provides learners with support where it is needed. The support provided by the teacher is temporary and slowly decreases and eventually removed as learners comprehend with the content (Donald *et al.*, 2010). The participants indicated that they employ scaffolding to enable learners to grasp and understand concepts that they would not be able to understand on their own but through the help of a teacher.

P2 stated:

“When learners’ find difficulties in spelling words, i usually help them spell the words thereafter i ask them to spell the words on their own”.

P3 stated:

“I employ scaffolding by asking learners questions based on previous lessons”.

P4 stated:

“Some learners do not understand English language and they have poor articulation of the language as result scaffolding is an effective strategy that could allow them master the concepts”.

It was observed that participants employed the strategy during the lessons. The researcher witnessed this when some learners failed to perform the exercise on their own and the teacher had to help learners tackle difficult concepts by defining the concepts and giving examples related to the activity, although they had been taught previously. Each learner was asked to provide one example of any concept verbally to the whole class before performing the activity. In addition, the appropriate use of English during the lesson was a good sign that there was positive relationship between the teacher and the learners and communication took place at the learners' level.

4.3.2.4 Discussions

Discussion is a strategy whereby there is an exchange of meanings between learners (Alkhandari, 2012). The participants stated that discussions were effective as learners might understand their peers better than the teacher. The statement is supported by the following responses:

P4 stated:

“I realised that discussions are very helpful. They are very important because learners assist each other in the learning process. For example, if a learner does not understand what i have taught, they will understand more better from their peers”.

P1 also said:

“I think it is very important because when learners are given opportunity to state things, you can correct them because you will be hearing discussions”.

Even though participants perceived discussions as an effective strategy to enable learners understand the content. During the observations, the researcher witnessed that

the strategy was not employed. This finding is similar to Parvin (2016:68) who also found that discussions were not employed by most of the participants.

Second research objective: To examine the effectiveness of strategies

4.3.3 Learner participation

The main purpose of teaching EFAL is to improve language development of learners by exposing them to L2 as much as possible (Thornhill & Le Cordeur, 2016). Therefore, the key role of the teachers is to ensure that learners are actively engaged in the learning and teaching process. The learners' participation leads to effective learning as there is an exchange of information during the interaction. The participants indicated that during group work and peer teaching activities, they encourage active participation by probing questions to draw learners' attention into the task and check their understanding. The statement is supported by the following responses:

P1 stated:

“All learners must be afforded with opportunity to provide answers so that they are engaged in the learning and teaching process”.

P3 stated:

“Engaging learners in the learning and teaching process for me, it is in two ways. It is either i give them instruction or they interact with me”.

The researcher observed that during group work activities, P1 encouraged participation by randomly choosing learners to answer questions and flashed new words to draw their attention towards the task. In this case, learners were assessed on concepts that were in the participant lesson plans. The researcher also witnessed that learners who were reluctant to participate during the lesson participated actively, since during group work each learner had a role to fulfill. The statement is supported by Donald *et al.* (2010:18) who assert that effective strategies engage learners with subject matter through active learner participation, self-expression and develop their language proficiency.

4.3.3.1 Disruptive behaviour

Despite learner-centred approach being effective in the teaching of EFAL sometimes the approach was ineffective for achieving desired learning objectives. Learner-centred approach require the teacher to only guide and facilitate the learning and teaching process and allow learners to take control of the whole learning and teaching process. This makes it difficult to maintain discipline during the tasks. The participants indicated that disruptive behaviour hindered the application of the learner-centred approach. The statement is supported by the following responses:

P1 stated:

“Sometimes learner-centred approach does not draw learners’ attention in the classroom instead learners become all noisy and disruptive”.

P4 said:

“During group work or peer teaching, when learners do not understand the questions you are asking them, they talk about it amongst themselves. Hence, the approach has a major impact on their behaviour and i struggle to get them concentrate in the language teaching process”.

P2 stated:

“Even though i regard group work as an effective strategy, when learners are together it becomes difficult to control them at all times during the lesson. It is impossible to control seven or eight learners compared to one learner. Sometimes you get learners making lot of noise, they make jokes and laugh and others they do not take you serious. These are the problems i usually experience during the application of learner-centred approach”.

P3 also said:

“You may find that in group work there is a lot of movement and noise, if the teacher cannot control the learners to ensure discipline in that particular lesson or task, the teacher will not be able achieve the desired lesson objective because of disruptive behaviour in the classroom”.

During the observations, the researcher observed that some learners were not paying attention during peer teaching instead they were talking to one another. The researcher also noticed that when disruptive behaviour took place, P1 reverted to teacher-centred strategies such as repetition and chorusing to draw learners' attention into the learning and teaching process. This implies that teachers' have limited knowledge on how to deal with disruptive behaviours when employing learner-centred approach (De Jager, 2013). Therefore, it is of importance that teachers possess a great deal of knowledge on how to discipline learners when employing the approach.

Third research objective: To investigate teachers' perspectives on strategies they employ in the classrooms

4.3.4 Teacher's beliefs on strategies

In order to address the third research objective, the participants who were interviewed were asked to share their thoughts, opinions and ideas on the application of strategies. The following sub-themes emerged.

4.3.4.1 The use of different strategies within learner-centred approach

Different teaching strategies are simply various means of helping learners understand the content (Killen, 2000). There is no specific strategy that is suitable for all type of learners in all contexts (Killen, 2000). The participants indicated that since they plan their lesson within learner-centred approach, it is critical that they must think of different ways to motivate learner's interest in English learning. The statement is supported by the following responses:

P1 strongly felt:

“As i employ strategies that are in line with learner-centred approach, it is quite clear that i have to make use of use various strategies such as gestures, combination of explanation, demonstration, the questioning and answering and spelling of words”.

P3 asserted:

“It is essential to make use of a number of English strategies when reading to the learners such as the use of gestures, spelling of words and questions and answering method hence i try to adhere with CAPS requirements”.

P4 pointed out:

“Since reading is still a challenge hence learners are at transitional state. To overcome that i make sure that every time i read a story to the learners, dramatise it and act it out for them to follow the same sequence. I also encourage them to use dictionaries to search for unfamiliar words and i also try to build up their confidence by rectifying them patiently when reading”.

P2 stated:

“Sometimes because we employ various strategies, it depends entirely on the lesson objectives that i want to achieve, Sometimes you feel you want to be informative then probe questions at a later stage of the lesson, Sometimes i use question and answer technique and after present my lesson and also ask questions based on what i have taught them then give them activity to perform in groups”.

The above responses from the participants correspond with what the researcher has observed in the classrooms in a sense that participants employed various strategies such as flashing new words, probing questions, explaining new words, writing words on the chalkboard, spelling of words, helping learners tackle new concepts while employing group work and peer teaching strategy. The above responses indicate that participants are aware that the use of various strategies within the learner-centred approach facilitate meaningful learning and seemed to be willing to address the language needs of the learners.

4.3.4.2 Curriculum training

According to Magadzi (2013:21), 43,914 teachers have received CAPS training in Limpopo Province. This was done to improve their ability to teach effectively across the

curriculum. CAPS training provides teachers with various forms of training that enable them to develop language proficiency of learners. The participants highlighted that sufficient training and understanding of the curriculum enabled them to know how EFAL was supposed to be executed. The statement is supported by the following responses:

P4 also said:

“Yes i was trained to implement CAPS so it helped me a lot and made teaching and learning easier and it encourage learners to take part in their learning process rather than the teacher participation only”.

P1 asserted:

“I received sufficient training of CAPS hence i know what i am expected to do in the classroom and the hours were sufficient for a thorough training in new skills”.

P4 stated:

“I was so fortunate to have received CAPS training though it was short but it was very effective and fruitful because now i am able to employ various strategies within learner-centred approach that enable learners master their language skills”.

During the observations, it was observed that participants followed CAPS curriculum to teach EFAL effectively. They seemed to employ various strategies that are in line with learner-centred approach which is communicative approach. This demonstrated that the participants possessed adequate knowledge of the relevant and appropriate strategies that CAPS curriculum requires, especially when working with overcrowded classrooms with scarcity of resources. The argument is supported by Thompson, Andrease, Bell and Robins (2013:01) who state that the key element in the mastery of language skills depends on well-trained teachers to adhere to the curriculum requirements. In light of this, the researcher compared the learners’ activity books and DBE EFAL workbook. It was clear that learners have mastered language skills such as writing and these are essential aspects in CAPS curriculum.

4.3.4.3 Teaching experience

Teachers experience refers to the total number of years that teachers have been teaching and the knowledge they have possessed through this experience to teach effectively. Teaching experience is a critical factor in achieving the desired learning outcomes and it is related to the teacher's development as it involves all the challenges and opportunities that teachers encounter in the classroom (Baleni, 2017). The participants highlighted that knowledge and experience they have about their learners' played important role in facilitating meaningful learning. The statement is supported by the following responses:

P4 stated:

"With all my years of teaching experience, i learned to employ various strategies and come up with various ways and methods to help learners understand English language"

P3 stated:

"Because every year you come across with new learners, i learn plenty of things and interacting with various learners has assisted me to employ various strategies that would enhance in language development".

P1 also said:

"I realised that learners do not learn the same way i encounter problems in learners each year and i always manage to find various ways to correct them and improve their language proficiency".

P2 indicated:

"When I started teaching, i was not teaching like I do right now because i did not have enough experience i did not know how to teach structure and conventions. But because of the experience i acquired, it helped to improve my teaching and employ different teaching strategies".

The above responses indicate that participants used their previous experience to orchestrate new strategies to develop language proficiency of learners. Teaching experience made it easy for them to teach EFAL effectively. However, during the time of observations, the researcher noticed that participants had no potential ways to address problems experienced during the application of learner-centred approach in regardless of sufficient teaching experience. This finding it is in contrast to what Chuunga (2013:66) found because it was discovered that teachers who possessed sufficient teaching experience seemed to have adequate knowledge on how to deal with problems in the classroom context.

4.3.4.4 Collaboration of teachers

According to Swart and Pettipher (2011:16), collaboration of teachers takes place when teachers share resources and knowledge about different strategies that can deliver better understanding of the content. The participants highlighted that collaboration with colleagues enabled them to employ various strategies that enhance learners' language development. The statement is supported by the following responses:

P4 stated:

“When i encounter challenges in the teaching of EFAL, i seek advice from other teachers and this helps to teach EFAL effectively”.

P2 stated:

“Our school is good in team-work, we improvise and help each other to teach EFAL effectively and working with colleagues has helped me with to maintain learner-centred strategies that develop language proficiency of learners”.

P3 also said:

“The HOD of languages, usually come to my classroom and check me. They render support when it is necessary hence in this manner i am able to help learners' attain their language proficiency”.

The above responses demonstrate participant's efforts in improving the teaching of English language by working as a team. At the time of observations, the researcher

observed that participants held meetings after school hours to discuss what content to be taught and when should it be taught. These discussions also highlighted problems participants encounter in their classrooms and strategies they can employ to address such problems. The findings are in line with a study conducted by Ainscow and Miles (2008:24) who found that effective teaching took place when teachers shared their experiences with colleagues as a means of helping one another.

4.3.4.5 Challenges in the application of strategies

Despite that the participants possessed sufficient knowledge on the application of strategies to facilitate meaningful learning and teaching, sometimes they experienced problems that hindered the application of strategies. This aspect was described by means of five subthemes, namely: overcrowded classroom, lack of resources, lack of teaching aids, lack of parental involvement and limited time available.

4.3.4.5.1 Overcrowded classrooms

According to the Southern and East Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) (2011:03), the large number of learners in a classroom has a negative impact on the learning and teaching process. The official class size for public schools in South Africa is 30:1 learner-teacher ratio which is forty learners per classroom (SACMEQ, 2011). However, class size remains a factor that affect the development of English language proficiency of learners (Mothudi & Bosman, 2015). The participants stated that large number of learners in the classrooms is a major problem that hinders the smooth teaching and learning of EFAL.

P1 stated:

“I have 69 learners in my classroom which means it actually two classes in one classroom”.

P3 stated:

“I cannot move around in my classroom because i have 55 learners in my classroom”.

P4 also stated:

“There are many learners in my classroom and it becomes a problem when i have to move from one area to another. Sometimes some learners can be disturbing at one end of the classroom while i will be trying to assist other learners on the other hand”.

P2 also said:

“I am unable to give all learners attention they require. All those who are behind will always be behind”.

The above findings were also supported by the data obtained from observations. The researcher noticed that classrooms were very large and compromised of more than 60 learners. Participants were struggling to reach every learner. Hence, attention level slowly decreased as the classroom became noisy. In light of this, the participants highlighted that they had to employ some unfavourable strategies such as verbal and physical means to deal with large number of learners in the classroom. The statement is supported by the following responses:

P4 stated:

“I shout at learners to discipline them”.

P2 also said:

“I usually employ corporal punishment when they do not finish their work and give me discipline problems”.

P1 stated:

“One strategy that it is effective for me is corporal punishment to discipline learners and get them to give me answers immediately”.

P3 stated:

“I told my learners if they laugh at someone while answering the question wrongly it goes with punishment”.

Although the participants highlighted that they employ corporal punishment to address problems in the overcrowded classrooms, the strategy was not employed by participants during the time of observations. From the above responses, it is evident that large classrooms depress participants as they employ strategies that were banned by DBE. These findings are similar with the study conducted by Mweru (2010:429) who found that teachers in Kenya perceived corporal punishment as effective strategy to manage large number of learners in the classroom.

4.3.4.5.2 Lack of resources

Scarcity of resources is a major problem that affects the quality of teaching and learning in schools. The participants highlighted that when the school has limited resources, it becomes difficult for them to facilitate meaningful teaching and learning and most importantly, employ some strategies to teach EFAL effectively. The statement is supported by the following responses:

P3 asserted:

“Learners do not have sufficient English textbooks and learners sometimes they have to share them”.

P1 stated:

“Lack of resources is a major problem in our school. Sometimes we are unable to make learning interesting”.

P4 also said:

“There is great need for resources to uplift the standard of reading and learning. For example, video games to strengthen the learners’ listening and speaking skills”.

P2 also stated:

“Our school does not receive sufficient stationeries and textbooks from the government which negatively impact the quality of teaching and learning that we give our learners. The only resources we have access to is DBE workbook EFAL.”

CAPS curriculum prescribed variety of teaching materials such as books, dictionaries, reading materials containing stories, drama, poetry as well as media materials which include radio and television programmes to make learning experience interesting (DBE, 2011). During the observations, the researcher observed that participants and learners did not have access to some of the above mentioned materials. The only resources that all learners and participants had in their possession were learner's activity books and DBE workbook for EFAL and other materials such as dictionaries, learners had to share them since the school did not receive sufficient textbooks and stationery from the government. The researcher also noticed that the school relied mostly on the government for resources as the learners were not paying school fee. Schools should be supplied with adequate resource for meaningful learning and teaching to take place.

4.3.4.5.3 Lack of teaching aids

Lack of teaching aids also impedes the teaching and learning of EFAL. The participants stated that mostly they would have to provide explanation of various concepts without teaching aids as a result some learners struggle to comprehend with the content taught and they must repeat the lessons which affect the instructional time. The statement is supported by the following responses:

P1 indicated:

"If I am talking about a ball and not showing the picture, then the learners do not know what it is and it takes a very long time to fulfill lesson objectives".

P3 stated:

"Some learners do not understand English language, they do not even have strong foundation of their home language, so you have to have concrete objects to enable them understand the content".

During the observations, the researcher witnessed that the participants did not use variety of pictures and concrete objects to teach EFAL. The classroom did not have pictures on the walls to help learners construct their own understanding in the learning process. Schools need to be equipped with adequate teaching aids so that every

learner can be able to see what teachers are talking about (Mubanga, Musenge & Mubanga, 2020). The use of different concrete and visual aids such as pictures develop learners' language skills and broaden their knowledge (Maja, 2019).

4.3.4.5.4 Lack of parental involvement

There are various reasons that contribute to parents not taking part in their children's education. According to Horvatin (2011:317), some parents could be experiencing problems in interacting effectively with schools because of limited knowledge of English language. One main reason mentioned by participants was that some learners stay with their grandparents and siblings, this impact negatively on the parental involvement aspect of the learner's academic performance and language learning. The grandparents and siblings are unable to help the children with school related activities. The statement is supported by the following responses:

P2 stated:

“Some learners stay with their grandparents and they are unable to help learners with homework activities”.

P3 stated:

“Some learners stay with only their siblings as their parents are working outside of the community and this creates problems because there is no homework supervision at home”.

P1 stated:

“Many parents usually fail to realise the importance of helping their children with their homework activities at home. Unfortunately majority of the parents shift this responsibility onto the siblings”.

P4 stated:

“Unfortunately, there are still parents who do not help their children, possibly because they do not know how to interact effectively in English language. Hence, parents' are unable to attend parent meetings which create communication

barrier between the school and the parents and they are expected to support their learners by attending these meetings”.

It is evident from the above responses that there is no collaboration between parents and participants which can allow parents to be involved in their children’s education. The responses also highlight that participants do not see any other means that will enable parents to contribute in their children’s education. Parents need to be supported to take part in their children’s education and school related activities. The argument is supported by Adamski, Fraser and Peiro (2013:63) who indicate that a positive relationship between parents and teachers enhances learner performance, school attendance and increases learner motivation.

4.3.4.5.5 Limited time available

CAPS document for teaching EFAL in Grade 4 has set out time to teach language skills such as reading, speaking, listening, viewing, writing, presenting and language conventions and structures (DBE, 2011). The participants highlighted that time allocated in CAPS document is not adequate as many activities have to be accomplished within limited time. The statement is supported by following responses:

P3 stated:

“There is lot of work to be done within a short period of time”.

P2 also said:

“Time frame is a major challenge”.

P1 pointed:

“Time for developing language skills of learners is limited”.

P4 stated:

“Time set out by department for us to teach EFAL is very little because we must do many tasks at once”.

During the observations, the researcher noticed that 30 minutes was not sufficient for participants to achieve desired lesson objectives. During group work activities, learners

did not manage to complete the task due to limited time. It is evident that teaching takes a lot of time and when strategies such as group work and peer teaching are employed, more time will be needed to make the strategies effective. Teachers require sufficient time to develop language skills of the learners as expected by DBE and meet curriculum demands in order to be considered successful to the departmental officials despite various challenges they experience (DeMeester, 2013).

4.4 OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

Non-participant observations and document analysis revealed similar evidence based on responses of the interview data. Most lessons were characterised by learner-centred approach which afforded learners with opportunity to engage and participate actively in the learning and teaching process. In such situations, peer teaching, group work and scaffolding were effectively employed. It was also evident that lessons were well-planned as different teaching strategies were employed to execute the learner-centred approach to teach and learning of EFAL. Thus, the strategies yield positive results as they led to constructive discussion in which the teacher probed questions and the learners responded with appropriate answers. Based on these brief findings, evidence shows that participant strictly adhered to CAPS curriculum which is learner-centred approach. Teachers perceived collaboration of colleagues, teaching experience and curriculum knowledge as important indicators that enabled them to employ strategies that facilitate the language development of learners.

4.5 CONCLUSION

The chapter analysed and interpreted the findings of the study. Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the data. Themes were generated in light of similar responses provided by the participants to address the research objectives of the study. The next chapter presents summary, conclusion and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The chapter presents and discusses the summary of the findings, presents the conclusion to the study and presents recommendations of the study based on the research findings that emerged from the method used to collect data namely, interviews, observations and document analysis.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

5.2.1 Observations

The application of teaching strategies varied from each lesson to another to ensure that learners understand the content. From the observations, it was observed that most of the lessons focused mainly on oral work. In this regard, participants employed strategies such as peer teaching, group work and scaffolding to enhance English language skills (CALP) of the learners. This was because participants possessed sufficient knowledge of strategies for teaching EFAL, especially when working with a large number of learners in a classroom. It was also observed that participants employed remedial strategies such as individual instruction and code-switching to facilitate better understanding of EFAL. However, the use of learner-centred strategies enabled learners with limited English proficiency to improve their communication skills. The approach was effective as learners participated actively in the learning process. This supports the findings in line with Fushino (2010:64) and Coskum (2011:721) who found that teachers knew the benefits of employing learner-centred approach. The findings also revealed that the approach was not always the most effective due to disruptive behaviour.

5.2.2 Interviews

Interviews revealed that participants perceived the use of various strategies as mandatory process to enhance language development of learners. From the findings, it was evident that participants used different strategies when employing learner-centred approach. Most of these involved making learning easier either by helping learners

tackle difficult concepts, flashing new words, explaining new words, looking for definition of words in the dictionaries. The findings are in line with Motlitswe (2011:70) who also found that teachers employed various strategies in their teaching such as multi-teaching, storytelling, individual work and cooperative learning to enhance language proficiency of learners. The participants perceived CAPS training, teaching experience and collaboration with colleagues as indicators that assisted them to improve their methodological skills and also helped them to know how learner-centred approach was supposed to be practically executed. The CAPS training played important role as it simplified their teaching and made things easier for them (Hamid & Baldauf, 2008). However, the participants also reported that they experience problems such as overcrowded classrooms; lack of teaching aids; lack of parental involvement; scarcity of resources; and little time allocated to teach EFAL in the teaching of EFAL. Therefore, they suggested that these issues still need to be addressed to enable smooth learning and teaching of EFAL.

5.2.3 Documents analysis

From the document analysis, it was evident that participants taught and planned their lessons according CAPS curriculum. The curriculum provided participants with clear recommendations and guidelines on how to teach the four linguistic skills and how to assess them. The proper planning of lesson plans was done well in advance to enable participants to execute learner-centred approach. It was evident that participants planned their lesson in such a way that it allowed learners to exchange information through interaction. Analysis of learners' activity books indicated their ability to understand and interpret text in a story which displayed that learners have grasped sufficient vocabulary. This implies that learners have acquired adequate linguistic skills to become competent in the LoLT and to express themselves. Therefore, learners' chances of mastering the language skills are very high. The argument is supported by Richards and Rodgers (2014:34) who indicate that adequate approaches and strategies enable learners to master language skills in L2. From document analysis, it was also clear that scarcity of resource, overcrowded classrooms, lack of parental involvement,

limited time allocated to teach EFAL and lack of teaching aids did not seem to influence the academic performance of learners' as it was higher than anticipated.

5.3 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The sample size of this study only concentrated on four Intermediate phases EFAL teachers. Therefore, it makes it impossible to project the research findings unto a wider population. In addition, the researcher had expected to record four participants during interviews, one participant felt uncomfortable to be recorded due to lack of establishing a positive rapport. The study only provided qualitative view, if mixed method approach had been employed, more data could have been generated.

5.4 CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the use of learner-centred approach in the classroom enables meaningful learning to take place. Within learner-centred approach, teachers do not employ a single strategy but various types of strategies that shift their role as givers of the information but facilitators of the learning and teaching process (Ahmed, 2013). The use of different strategies improves the language acquisition of learners (Dhillion & (Wanjirun, 2013). Given that the school was deprived of adequate resources and teaching aids to afford learners with quality education, teachers showed their effort to ensure that learners are actively engaged in the learning and teaching process. The statement is supported by Kawaishe (2015:13) who confirms that learner-centred approach can be attained in the classroom that compromises of large number of learners and scarcity of resources if teachers are well-prepared to teach effectively.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

- Even though strategies employed by the teachers were effective in getting learners to understand the content, the researcher suggests that strategies such as using video planned lessons, involving parents in their children's education by regularly giving parents newsletters to keep up with events of the school can reduce problems the teachers face in teaching of EFAL.

- Teachers should not only receive support from their colleagues, but DBE should provide teachers with sufficient support and skills that will enable them to deal with the challenges they face in the teaching of EFAL.
- Building of more schools is required to reduce the large number of learners in one classroom.
- Teachers should employ strategies such as debates and language games to further strengthen and reinforce language proficiency of learners.
- Disadvantaged schools with scarcity of resources should encourage teachers to utilise handmade teaching resources such as charts and any visual aids they can get hold of as this would assist learners to construct their own understanding of the content being taught – this will enhance the quality of teaching and learning.
- DBE should ensure that appropriate and adequate resources are supplied at schools for quality learning and teaching to take place.
- Teachers should be equipped with behavioural management skills to address disruptive behaviours that takes place in overcrowded classrooms.
- Time allocated to teach EFAL should be increased to enable learners to be exposed more and adequately to the English language.
- Further research should be conducted on what other strategies can be employed to help teachers improve language proficiency of learners.

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ANNEXURES

Annexure 1: Ethical clearance



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TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

MEETING: 05 November 2019

PROJECT NUMBER: TREC/519/2019: PG

PROJECT:

Title: Teaching Strategies Employed to Develop English Proficiency of Grade 4 Learners: A Case of Toronto Primary School
Researcher: MM Malatji
Supervisor: Dr MR Emsley
Co-Supervisor/s: N/A
School: Languages and Communication Studies
Degree: Master of Arts in English Studies

PROF P MASOKO
CHAIRPERSON: TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

The Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) is registered with the National Health Research Ethics Council, Registration Number: REC-0310111-031

Note:

- i) This Ethics Clearance Certificate will be valid for one (1) year, as from the abovementioned date. Application for annual renewal (or annual review) need to be received by TREC one month before lapse of this period.
- ii) Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved, the researcher(s) must re-submit the protocol to the committee, together with the Application for Amendment form.
- iii) PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES.

Annexure 2: Letter to request permission to the school principal

Stand no.634

Moletjie Makgodu, 0779

Contact no: 0725160399

THE PRINCIPAL OF TORONTO PRIMARY SCHOOL

Private Bag X1106

Sovenga

0727

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT TORONTO PRIMARY SCHOOL

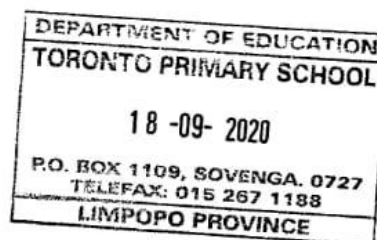
I am a registered Master of Art student at University of Limpopo in the academic year 2019 by mini-dissertation under the supervision of Dr Ruth Emsley. The title of my dissertation is "Teaching Strategies Employed to Develop English Proficiency of Grade 4 Learners: The Case of Toronto Primary School".

I hereby request permission to conduct a research in your school with your Grade 4 teachers who teach English First Additional language (EFAL). During data collection, I will not interfere with the teaching time. As a researcher, I will adhere to University's ethical principle such as confidentiality and anonymity.

Hoping for your positive response

Yours Faithfully

M.M Malatji



Annexure 3: Informed consent

Dear participant

You are invited to participate in a research project which is aimed at exploring teaching strategies employed by teachers to develop English proficiency of Grade 4 learners. Your participation in this study is voluntarily and you are free to decline to participate. Your responses will only serve the purpose of this study. In addition, you have the right to not answer the questions you do not want.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign this letter as a declaration of your consent.

Participant signature

Meghan
.....

Date

09-03-2020
.....

Annexure 4: Interview schedule

Section A

Demographic information

Please tick in the appropriate box

1. Gender

Female	Male
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Years of teaching experience

0-5 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
6-10 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
11-15 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
Over 20 years	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Qualifications

Diploma	<input type="checkbox"/>
Degree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Honours	<input type="checkbox"/>
Masters	<input type="checkbox"/>
Phd	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Age

20-29	<input type="checkbox"/>
30-39	<input type="checkbox"/>
40-49	<input type="checkbox"/>
50-59	<input type="checkbox"/>
60-69	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other	
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Section B

- How many English Second Language learners do you have in your classroom?
- Do you encounter problems in teaching English First Additional Language (EFAL) If yes how do you overcome such problems?
- What strategies do you employ when teaching EFAL to enable learners understand the content?
- Are the strategies effective to ensure that your teaching goals are achieved?
If yes how so?
- Based on your teaching experience, what teaching strategies do you think work best?
- What kind of resources do you have access to in order to employ strategies?
- Is there any kind of support you receive regarding problems you encounter in the classroom?

If yes, please describe this support and its effectiveness?

If no, what would you suggest can be done to help Grade 4 learners on the language development?

Annexure 5: Observation checklist

- Classroom setting: the use of pictures, charts on the wall and classroom seating arrangement.
- Teacher's use of language.
- Teacher instruction to the learner.
- Learner interaction with the teacher.
- Teaching strategies used during the lesson.
- How the teacher deals with the language problems in the classroom for example, incorrect use of language.
- Observe degree to which the teacher helps the learner tackle the meaning of new language, concepts and words.

Annexure 6: Editorial letter

UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO TURFLOOP CAMPUS

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25 August 2020

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This letter serves to certify that I have edited the research proposal titled: **TEACHING STRATEGIES EMPLOYED TO DEVELOP LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY OF GRADE 4 LEARNERS: A CASE OF TORONTO PRIMARY SCHOOL**, by Ms M.M Malatji (201314425). To my knowledge, the work has been thoroughly edited. Unless tampered with prior to your reception of the edited work, I trust you will find the editing quality in order.

Regards



MR NS RATAU (EDITOR)