

**Exploring the reading and writing proficiency challenges of English language
Intermediate Phase learners in selected public schools in the Gauteng
Province**

by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this research study to my late son, Ikaneng Kgooho. I will forever carry you in my heart, and may your beautiful soul continue to rest in peace.

DECLARATION

I, Mphela Karabo Kgooho, hereby declare that this research study titled 'Exploring the reading and writing proficiency challenges of English language Intermediate Phase learners in selected public schools in the Gauteng Province', submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for a Master of Arts in English Studies degree at the University of Limpopo is my original work and has not previously been submitted to any other institution of higher learning. Sources cited, quoted, and used in this research paper are indicated and acknowledged through a comprehensive list of references.

Mphela Karabo Kgooho

April 2023

Full names

Date

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AD	Additive Bilingualism
ATP	Annual Teaching Plan
BICS	Basic Interpersonal Language Proficiency
CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
DBE	Department of Basic Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EFAL	English First Additional Language
ESL	English Second Language
FET	Further Education and Training.
FP	Foundation Phase
IP	Intermediate Phase
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
LiEP	Language in Education Policy
LoLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
PA	Phonological Awareness
SAECD	South African Early Childhood Development
SASA	South African Schools Act
SLA	Second Language Acquisition

ABSTRACT

The South African Language in Education Policy (LiEP) states that, in the Intermediate Phase (IP), English First Additional Language (EFAL) should be the preferred Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT). The purpose of this qualitative study was to better understand the challenges that IP EFAL learners face, as well as teachers' perceptions of EFAL reading and writing in IP. To fit the purpose of the study, purposive sampling was adopted on the basis of EFAL learning in the selected schools, which included nine IP EFAL teachers and ten written activities from learners' workbooks. Interviews and document analysis were used to collect data.

The study found that introducing English LoLT in the IP hinders profound EFAL acquisition and learning, as well as learners' reading and writing proficiencies. Poor EFAL reading and writing skills among school learners have emerged as a major concern, overshadowing the good intentions of the learning outcomes initiated by the LiEP and the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.

The key findings presented, and suggestions put forward can inform policy decision making and best practices that underlie writing proficiency challenges of English language among IP learners in public schools and mostly second language classrooms. It will further contribute to the growing body of knowledge concerning the various impacts of EFAL learning in South African schools.

KEY TERMS: Acquisition, FAL, Exposure, Home Language, LoLT, Proficiency, Second Language

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CHAPTER 1

1. BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

In South African public schools, English as Second Language (ESL) is the most commonly used Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT). According to the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) (2011: 11), the language is commonly referred to as English First Additional Language (EFAL). In the Intermediate Phase (IP), Senior Phase (SP), and Further Education and Training (FET), EFAL is learnt and used as LoLT (Khuluma Education, 2012: 6; CAPS, 2011: 11). According to CAPS (2011: 8), learners in the IP, which includes Grades four (4) through six (6), must achieve a prominent level of proficiency in the English LoLT. Despite the fact that the majority of EFAL IP learners are not native speakers or proficient in the English language, they are expected to learn all subjects through this medium. This is because English is seen as a key to a better education, a belief that became entrenched in South Africa after the apartheid regime was demolished (Mbhele, 2021: 1).

According to Sebetoa (2016: 1), the Department of Education (DoE) should recognise how switching from Foundation Phase (FP) to IP from First Language (L1) to English as LoLT creates learning difficulties for IP learners. According to CAPS (2011:8), EFAL learners may not always understand English when they first begin school. As a result, the first few years of school should be devoted to improving learners' ability to communicate and comprehend in English. However, because many learners begin their literacy development at the FP in their L1, also referred to Home Language (HL), using English in IP may be difficult.

The IP EFAL proficiencies are contradictory to the suggested proficiencies in CAPS as it is postulated that a learner begins school with partial understanding of the EFAL and that learners in IP develop, maintain, and improve their reading and writing skills. According to CAPS (2011: 9), learning EFAL in IP allows learners to develop the cognitive academic skills required to pursue other subjects while also broadening their intellectual knowledge and skills. Thus, except for English L1, learners must learn all school subjects, engage in content, and strengthen their imaginative skills in EFAL (CAPS, 2011: 9). According to Jones (2014: 4), skills such as reading and writing in EFAL pose a challenge for many IP learners who, at this stage, are attempting not

only to learn but also to master the skills. According to Milligan, Desai, and Benson (2020: 118), decades of research show that switching from using L1 as LoLT in the FP to using English as LoLT in the IP has a negative impact on learners' ability to acquire and be proficient in that language.

As a result of the numerous factors affecting IP learners, reading, and writing in English becomes difficult. Thus, it is essential that research be conducted to investigate the factors that contribute to the reading and writing challenges of EFAL learners in IP, a problem that this study aimed to address.

2. RESEARCH PROBLEM

In South Africa, most EFAL learners currently display low proficiency levels in the English language (Howie et al., 2017: 11; Webb et al., 2010: 274). The first three years of schooling in FP are devoted to learning to read and write and, in this phase, learners develop the skills needed to navigate learning and make sense of the texts they read and encode their ideas and responses to questions in their writing (CAPS, 2011: 6). However, these skills can initially be learnt and developed by learners in their L1 and not in English, which is predominantly used as LoLT in the Intermediate Phase (IP).

Le Roux et al. (2017: 1) assert that this is a disadvantage for EFAL learners as there are differences between learners' abilities in reading and writing in their L1s and EFAL reading and writing in a second language (L2). Consequently, learners lack adequate proficiency in reading and writing in the LoLT (Howie et al., 2017: 11). Thus, IP learners are linguistically unprepared to be proficient in reading and writing in English as there is no necessary support in literacy development, especially in the LoLT—the situation most IP EFAL learners are exposed to (Maswanganye, 2010: 15; Rohde, 2015: 5). The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996: 12) states that all South African learners are entitled to be taught and learn in any official language. Similarly, the Language in Education Policy (LiEP) (1997: 1) emphasises the intellectual advantages of L1 learning and the objective of multilingualism in South African schools, suggesting that if learners are multilingual, they would learn better (Guzula, McKinney & Tyler, 2016). Despite this, CAPS (2011) stipulate that from IP onwards, learning should take place in English LoLT. This is enforced by the Department of Education's (DoE)

provision of learning materials, from the IP onwards, predominantly in the English language. Thus, IP learners are compelled to learn all subjects in English, and this creates reading and writing challenges, which this study aims to explore.

3. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

3.1 Research aim

The study explored the EFAL reading and writing skills proficiency of learners in the IP in selected schools in Tshwane South District primary schools in Gauteng Province.

3.2 Objectives

The research objectives were:

- to determine learners' proficiencies in reading and writing as observed in written activities by learners in the selected schools; and
- to identify the causes of learners' reading and writing limitations in the EFAL classroom in the selected schools;
- to establish the teachers' role in developing learners' reading and writing skills in the selected schools.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology refers to a comprehensive strategy that includes everything from identifying the problem to final plans for data collection and analysis (Nayak & Singh, 2021: 1).

4.1 Research Design

A research design is a broad approach to conduct and explain the purpose of a qualitative study, the role of the researcher, the stages of study, and the data processing methods used to generate answers to research questions (Kumatongo & Muzata, 2021: 20). An exploratory study was conducted to gain insights, ideas, and varying knowledge on the reading and writing challenges faced by IP EFAL learners in the selected schools (Swedberg, 2020: 17).

The study used a qualitative research approach, which allowed the researcher to explore and comprehend the study's problem (Nayak & Singh, 2021: 1).

4.2 Sampling and Population

The study's sample was drawn from a population of EFAL teachers in IP, in Tshwane South District, Gauteng Province. The population is the source of information from which a sample can be drawn (van Rijnsoever, 2017: 4).

Sampling is the process or technique of selecting a subset of a large population to participate in a research study. These individuals were chosen as representatives of the larger group from which they were drawn (Chivanga & Monyai, 2021: 13). Purposive sampling was used for participants, and random sampling was used for document analysis. The study's sample consisted of three schools selected based on EFAL learning in the school and learners' performance in literacy and numeracy as measured by National Department of Education results. Through interviews, nine EFAL IP teachers' perceptions of the reading and writing challenges confronting IP EFAL learners were investigated. In addition, ten learners' written activities were selected at random and analysed.

4.3 Data Collection

Data collection is the process of gathering relevant information using various instruments guided by the study's aim and objectives to collect data or manipulate and extract meaning thereof (Moyo, 2017: 285). Data was collected by employing the following research instruments: interviews and document analysis.

4.3.1 Interviews

According to Adhabi and Anozie (2017: 3), an interview in qualitative research can be described as a sort of conversation in which the researcher strives to learn more about a topic as expressed by the person being interviewed. In research, this type of interaction is guided by a reputable aim. In qualitative studies, interviews are used to investigate the subject under discussion and what participants are thinking about (Rahman, 2020: 104). Semi-structured interviews were used in the study, which were guided by a list of open-ended questions (cf. Appendix D).

4.3.2 Document Analysis

Rapley (2018: 4) asserts that data collection methods include the examination of public and private documents to explore specific realities and their implications. As content, the primary activities of ten learners were obtained from the three schools and analysed for proficiency in English writing skills (cf. Appendix E).

4.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis focuses on processes, methods for interpreting findings, and strategies for planning the collection of essential data to ensure that the collected analysis is manageable, accurate, and truthful (Creswell & Clark, 2011). To analyse the data, Thematic Analysis (TA) was used, which is the process of identifying and analysing the meanings of patterns and themes in a dataset (Kiger & Varpio, 2020: 847). TA was successfully employed across the two types of data collected.

4.5 Quality Criteria

The researcher used four quality criteria: credibility, transferability, reliability, and confirmability. Patias and Hohendorff (2019: 6) define credibility as the researcher's truthfulness in interpreting the data presented by the research participants. The quality of research, particularly the suitable methodologies used and how such methodologies are effectively applied and implemented, is referred to as reliability (Rose & Johnson, 2020: 4). The collected data was re-analysed and re-examined until no new themes emerged. Confirmability denotes how the collected data supports the researcher's findings and interpretation; it also denotes how the research findings correspond to the collected data (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014: 258).

5. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Before beginning research, the researcher obtained a clearance certificate from the Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) at the University of Limpopo (UL). The researcher also sought permission from the schools selected for the study. The researcher obtained consent from the research participants to participate in the study, and consent forms were distributed. As ethical considerations, informed consent, voluntary participation in the study, anonymity, respect for privacy, confidentiality, and beneficence were all observed. According to Arifin (2018: 30), confidentiality is the

safeguarding of confidential information. The researcher assured the participants that the information gathered during the interviews and in the workbooks of learners would be treated confidentially. Similarly, the researcher assured the participants that their identities would be treated confidentially and would not be revealed to anyone. Anonymity, according to du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis, and Bezuidenhout (2014: 58), is the process of protecting participants' identities by not recording their names at any stage of research and not matching their identities to their research responses in any way.

Throughout the study, the researcher significantly protected participants from harm and did not compel them to reveal their identities; instead, the researcher informed the participants about the study's benefits.

6. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The findings of the study will add to the growing body of knowledge about the various effects of EFAL learning in South African schools. Furthermore, the study will inform the Department of Education and the Gauteng Provincial Government about the difficulties that IP learners face when transitioning from L1 as LoLT in the FP to English (L2) in the IP in reading and writing. The study will also guide policymakers on the development and implementation of improved and more appropriate language policies, such as English language immersion programmes, to improve learners' reading and writing proficiencies. Finally, it will show how this endeavour may influence the development of learners' ability and capability to acquire and learn the English language used as a medium of instruction later in the learners' educational journey.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This section explores English First Additional Language (EFAL) reading and writing proficiency in South African schools in the Intermediate Phase (IP). The primary goal of this study is to explore and present an overview of South Africa's IP EFAL educational quality through a selective narrative literature analysis. This chapter expands on the critical formal facts about South Africa's education system, focusing on the causes of learners' reading and writing difficulties in EFAL learning. It also investigates the role of teachers in the development of learners' reading and writing skills. It outlines the direct implications before highlighting potential policy solutions.

2.2 LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION AND NATIONAL POLICY

With an apparent association between skills in the global language and economic progress, the use of English as a Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) has expanded substantially in many parts of the world in recent years (Casale & Posel, 2011: 386). There is a need for a focused curriculum to promote EFAL in South African classrooms. This is until learners are exposed to specific teaching strategies to eliminate reading and writing challenges. A recent study found that missed learning periods and insufficient EFAL learning opportunities pose a disadvantage, and lead to the limitations in South Africa's second language (L2) education system (Hayakawa et al., 2020: 3).

The consideration of transitional challenges helps determine the extent to which theory, policies, and practices at the intersections of Grades 3 and 4 empower or hinder the eventual academic performance of the EFAL learners in the IP (Sibanda 2017: 2). Language in Education Policy (LiEP) promotes multilingualism in language education as South Africa is a multilingual country. South Africa's language policy emphasises the need for teaching African languages and the value of multilingualism as a whole, attempting to increase home language (HL) uses in schools and ensure that learners acquire communication competency in L2 (Nqoma, Abongdia, & Foncha 2017: 8834). Under the LiEP, learners in Grades 1-3 are required to learn at least one

Additional Language (AL) as a subject in addition to their Home Language (HL). All learners must be offered learning in an English LoLT and at least one other recognised language as a subject beginning in Grade 4 (LiEP, 1997: 1).

Wills and Hofmeyr (2019: 192) investigated academically resilient learners in three provinces, in townships and rural primary schools. The review examined how English LoLT-resistant learners are allocated throughout schools of differing levels of excellence and how they perform. The study analysed learners from similar socioeconomic backgrounds to discover learners and schools with above-average literacy proficiency. According to the study's findings, perseverance is a significant predictor of L2 language learning endurance. Sibanda (2017: 8), highlights the need to strengthen a variety of variables related to language issues, such as exposure to a target language outside the school premises, language proficiency, learner motivation, instructional methods used, and time allocated to EFAL language learning.

Wills and Hofmeyr (2019: 193) postulate that South Africa is a fascinating environment for learning L2 language learning resilience. South Africa has one of the most vital connections between learners' home backgrounds and educational success compared to other countries. Aldosemani, Raddaoui, and Shepherd (2016: 30) note that differences in home background account for about 60% of the learning gap between public school learners, especially those not exposed to English-native language speakers. It is believed that the strong correlation is the result of the former apartheid system in schools, which included numerous racially stratified educational departments. Nevertheless, low quality remains in mono-racial public schools (Pretorius & Spaull, 2016: 1450). Thus, according to Winberg, Dippenaar and de Lange (2020: 2), policymakers must review policy implementation challenges and conduct regular analyses of implementation outcomes. How EFAL learners are supposed to achieve the competencies expected after three or four years of schooling is an issue that LiEP developers have not adequately addressed (Sibanda, 2017: 2).

A recent South African School Survey report from Milton, du Plessis, and van der Heever (2020: 2) states that over 60% of South African learners prefer English as their LoLT, while only 7% speak English as their FAL. A review of research conducted on L2 acquisition and learning has shown that efficient Second Language Acquisition (SLA) requires six to eight years of well-managed and resourced instruction before

being used effectively as a LoLT (Sibanda, 2017: 2). Therefore, most South African IP learners do not have enough time or exposure to develop the English language skills they need to learn and master before entering primary school. Even though L2 reading and writing skills are critical for learners' educational advancement, there is no guarantee that IP EFAL teachers, particularly those in monolingual schools, have the skills to facilitate EFAL acquisition and learning (Sibanda, 2017: 2). In the South African Early Childhood Development (SAECD) sector, there is a scarcity of studies on EFAL acquisition, nevertheless, many young learners are placed in English Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres despite their lack of English proficiency (Milton, du Plessis and van der Heever, 2020: 2). Consequently, LoLT should be viewed as an indiscriminative policy decision as it poses linguistic disadvantages to L2 learners.

Learner proficiency in both the HL and the EFAL, on the other hand, should be required to allow for cross-language transfer abilities and to reap the benefits of the EFAL's use as LoLT (Sibanda, 2017: 7). As a result, Omidire et al. (2018: 278) conclude that teaching English in the FP does not effectively prepare all learners to shift from learning English L2 as a subject to English as LoLT in Grade 4. Low language skills and the inability to think critically in English have been attributed to learners' deficient performance (DBE, 2015). Policies should show a logical relationship between the goal and values of a policy, the instructions it provides, and the expectations it places on language learning policy implementers. How realistic, for example, are the CAPS document's evaluation requirements (and anticipated adjustments) in terms of enhancing IP learners' EFAL writing and reading comprehension? Milton, du Plessis, and van der Heever (Milton, du Plessis, & van der Heever, 2020: 6). Regarding language learning difficulties, a research study conducted by Nel and Müller (2010: 635) discovered that teachers' inadequate proficiency in English might be the cause of learners' EFAL reading and writing challenges. The majority of the participants in the study (teachers) reported being fluent and proficient in English. On the other hand, the portfolio evaluations showed inconsistent results, such as an insufficient level of EFAL proficiency and a transfer of linguistic mistakes from a teacher to a learner.

On the other hand, learners cannot predict and recall clearly stated information or draw simple conclusions about occurrences and reasons for events in a text. As a result,

"despite being promoted to the next learning phase, the learners will never be able to access learning in English LoLT" (Hayakawa et al., 2020: 2). According to Malebese, Tlali and Mahlomaholo (2019: 1), Grade 4 learners cannot adjust to EFAL. As indicated by their comparatively high failure rates, the adjustment has a negative effect on learners' performance in learning other subjects. As a result, most learners are promoted to the next grade based on their age or the number of years they have spent in a grade rather than their fundamental competencies in the various subjects (Malebese, Mahlomaholo, & Tlali, 2019: 2). Bruwer, Hartell and Steyn (2014: 20) argue that the extent to which language regulations actively encourage substandard learner performance in South Africa is controversial, given that language learning challenges are significantly linked to other variables such as historical disadvantage, social class, geography, the urban-rural divide, and discrepancies in educational quality. Thus, IP learners in South Africa perform among the lowest in the world.

A report by Hayakawa et al. (2020: 2) looks into the CAPS criteria for grading reading comprehension to provide the foundation for a better policy framework, examining reading comprehension evaluation in the CAPS document. The researchers discovered a lack of a systematic technique for testing Phonological Awareness (PA), which had consequences across the CAPS document, leading to ignorant yet unreasonably rigorous standards. Similarly, Govender and Hugo (2018: 22) assert that CAPS is a significant determinant of how reading comprehension is taught simultaneously, and it should be congruent with learning objectives. According to the study's findings, CAPS does not provide enough improvement in reading comprehension. Makoe (2014b: 34), assert that learners' formative reading comprehension, linguistic proficiency, and capacity to detect micro and macro text structures should all be evaluated.

Manten et al., (2020: 143) state that if stakeholders were aware that English L2 learners frequently lack the reading and writing proficiency for IP standards, learners would receive more attention and be afforded more opportunities to gain experience and learn the target language in the FP. Despite these admirable goals, the primary challenges confronting the national EFAL policy statement and its execution plan include an absence of democratic engagement and involvement and a shortage of resources that are readily accessible for efficient policy implementation (Malebese,

Mahlomaholo, & Tlali, 2019: 3). One reason for this disjuncture between policy and effective implementation is that several English teachers do not have an excellent command of the language (Nqoma, Abongdia, & Foncha, 2017: 8836). For struggling L2 learners to strengthen their primary EFAL language and literacy skills, they should access advanced primary language environments.

2.3 ENGLISH AS A LANGUAGE OF LEARNING AND TEACHING (LOLT)

The South African Schools Act (SASA) and the Republic of South Africa's Constitution (RSA) (1996a) govern and promote the LiEP (1996b). According to LiEP (1997: 1) and CAPS (2011: 6), English is prescribed as a LoLT from the IP (Grade 4-6) and extends to the Further Education and Training (FET) phase. The provisions of law indicate that it should be taught as an additional subject (CAPS, 2011: 8; DBE, 2010: 12). According to Graven and Sibanda (2018: 2), Grade 4 is a critical stage in learners' language development in South Africa. As they progress from FP to IP, learners must make substantial adjustments in their reading and writing. The learners' continuing low proficiency in meaningful reading and writing is closely related to the transition from L1 to L2 instruction (Malebese, Tlali & Mahlomaholo, 2019: 1). This problem can be traced back to the learners' reading and writing proficiency, learning patterns, and cultural roots. Learners' inability to read and respond to text meaningfully impairs their overall learning.

According to Wildsmith-Cromarty and Balfour (2019), the multilingual character of South African culture challenges the language policies and, notably, in teaching and learning where the use of English is still highly valued. This is especially so in cases of code-switching from one language to another and relying on multiple languages at the same time to communicate in a given scenario properly—a more regular occurrence in South African circumstances. As Heugh (2015: 281) points out, there are "mismatches" between Northern-inherited policy and practice and the multilingual realities of Southern contexts. Languages in northern cultures, meaning Europe and Northern America, are seen as 'bounded entities,' which contrasts with African linguistic communities' more flexible and adaptable use of languages (Makoe & McKinney, 2014). The term "Additional Language" is preferred over "Second Language" for South Africans because most of them are exposed to multiple languages in their homes and communities before learning English (Wildsmith-

Cromarty & Balfour, 2019: 296). Furthermore, following Grade 4, the FAL is typically replaced with the English Language as LoLT.

Milligan, Desai, and Benson (2020: 123), state that schools, via their School Governing Body (SGB), can designate an official language as LoLT within practical restrictions. Despite the variety of languages available in IP, most schools use English as the only LoLT. Although English as a LoLT is still frequently utilised across many South African primary schools, learners face the challenge of meeting English as a LoLT reading and writing proficiency levels (Milligan, Desai, & Benson, 2020: 123). As a result, learning is complex for EFAL IP learners, and their reading and writing skills remain unimproved and challenged.

According to Phindane (2020: 384), learners do not possess the English proficiency required to learn, understand, and apply the various concepts, principles, and procedures necessary to learn EFAL and other subjects. It may be challenging for them to learn if they cannot read and write in English by third grade. English language learners' are being disadvantaged due to a lack of access to the required physical, social, cultural, and human resources. As a result, instructional language is essential in learning because it helps learners form ideas or thoughts about the world around them. In addition to assisting learners in making sense of the information they obtain from instructors and written texts, it facilitates learners' communication of what they have learnt (Phindane, 2020: 382).

Evans and Nthulana (2018: 2) did extensive research demonstrating the common criticism aimed at teachers in monolingual rural areas where EFAL teaching, and learning becomes difficult when learners approach Grade 4. After three years of mother-tongue instruction, learners must adjust to English education as they progress to the next academic level, thus increasing their cognitive demands. Evans and Nthulana (2018: 2) contend that rapid transition with changes in LoLT impact academic achievement and the inconsistency and restructuring of inner feelings and emotions for those who experience it. According to Krashen (1992), exposure to intelligible content increases learners' proficiency in the language. Krashen asserts that comprehensible input must be accompanied by effective traits such as high motivation and self-confidence for language learning to occur.

Policymakers should advocate for a gradual transition to English-only education and that learning of the LoLT should be explicitly implemented during the early years of schooling (Evans & Nthulana, 2018: 1). The South African curriculum designers should reconsider the methods, content, and possibilities of teaching English in the FP, focusing on the main objectives being vocabulary development and culturally relevant EFAL phonics introduction. The amount of time allocated to learning English is severely limited.

2.4 INTERMEDIATE PHASE LEARNERS' READING AND WRITING PROFICIENCY

According to Le Michael and Tshuma (2019: 106), 90% of learners in the South African public schools use English as their official LoLT. The capability to read and write requires more than just being able to recognise letters; decoding words requires drawing information from the articulated and written text as well as being familiar with a variety of written materials' forms and functions. According to the University of California report, reading literacy is highly appreciated and necessary for personal, social, and economic well-being. Unfortunately, according to Cilliers and Bloch (2018: 1) in a study completed in the Eastern Cape, one of the causes of low literacy in the transition grade, that is, IP Grade 4, is that 32% of the learners were illiterate. As a result, 60% of the learners could not read for comprehension, as learners in the IP are not exposed to developing formal reading and writing skills in EFAL before Grade 4. Subsequently, these skills must be adequately developed in the curriculum since they serve as the foundation for all subsequent educational accomplishments.

2.4.1 Barriers to Second Language learners' primary years of education

According to van Staden (2017: 22), South African L2 learners fail to meet primary L1 and L2 reading and writing skills in FAL, of which may subsequently pose linguistic challenges and transfer of linguistic knowledge in comprehension of other subjects. According to the Threshold Project, which was launched in South Africa in 2016, South African learners struggled to transfer from L1 to the English medium of instruction in IP. Accordingly, learners struggle with English as LoLT and the learners' inadequate English competence overshadows the exemplary, well-intended implementation of the teaching curriculum (Sibanda, 2019: 3). The study also reveals that language skills in a native language influence proficiency in an L2. According to Sibanda (2019: 1), it takes more than three years for EFAL learners to fully gain L2 language proficiency.

Learning in L2 in the IP thus becomes a barrier to learners' primary years of education because the necessary abilities for learning are learnt in learners' L1 rather than the English LoLT. Thus, justice is a holistic realisation of rights that goes beyond merely improving access to education as well as how learners experience education and the achievements they can attain.

The International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) report suggested that more than 78% of Grade 5 IP learners in South Africa do not demonstrate proficiency in literacy skills at the end of the school year. Similarly, CAPS (2011: 5) recount that learner backgrounds and other factors can contribute to delays and challenges in EFAL classrooms, particularly in the IP, where learners are expected to learn and engage with content in English. Furthermore, several recent large-scale research studies in South Africa show that the majority of IP learners have extremely low literacy and numeracy levels (Mtshali & Smillie, 2011: 207).

Sibanda (2019: 1) argues that another factor that affects learners' EFAL reading and writing proficiencies is apartheid laws that drove native African people to relocate to remote villages and townships that were purposefully left underdeveloped by the separatist government. These neglected communities were subjected to extreme poverty, unemployment, and a lack of access to high-quality education. Similarly, Saneka and de Witt (2019: 2) state that learners from lower socioeconomic communities have parents who face a variety of challenges, including a lack of formal education, poor financial standing in society, and marginalisation of their mother tongues. The above challenge is further compounded by insufficient time to address learners' education, especially in circumstances where parents live and work away from the challenged learner. Poor reading and writing skills persist because of poor support from the learners' parents. Consequently, learners' EFAL proficiency scores in these communities do not improve, and learners' education is compromised.

According to Milton, du Plessis, and van der Heever (2020: 6), inadequate English proficiency skills can impact the learning situation by hindering conversational exchanges between a teacher and a learner in the classroom. The quality of English exposure is critical for enhancing learners' proficiency since the teachers' ability to communicate in English considerably influences the learners' use of EFAL (Benson &

Dekeyser, 2019: 703). Consequently, the decision to allow a somewhat English model may hinder their EFAL acquisition and learning.

Additionally, Draper and Spaul (2015: 35) note that poor reading and writing habits affect South African schools, with 41% of 4667 Grade 5 learners achieving less than 30% on a test of competence as a result of their inability to read and write in English. Low reading and writing proficiency are notably prevalent in public schools. Mainly, the poorest 60% of schools face inadequate English language acquisition due to less exposure to the language and in the surrounding area (Wills & Hofmeyer, 2019: 194). According to Saneka and de Witt (2019: 1), there is bias towards learners whose L1 is not English as they experience the persistent struggle for EFAL learning continues to be one of unfairness, compromised accessibility, and the reinstatement of restrictive language rules and regulations.

According to Benson and Dekeyser (2019: 703), three questions regarding the use of language in classrooms must be answered to address educational fairness. Firstly, are learners taught and assessed in a language they understand and speak fluently? Secondly, does schooling use the learner's early experiences and sources to build new knowledge and consciousness? Third, what are the means to address and lessen LoLT challenges? These are the questions that will guide critical examination of LoLT options, impacts, and educational justice. Similarly, LoLT can be either a central enabler or a barrier to educational equity. Through the LoLT, a learner can access quality education, sustain critical reflection, and cooperate with teachers and other learners about the content suggested by the curriculum (Milligan, Desai, & Benson 2020: 116).

Wills and Hofmeyer (2019: 194) claim that despite the language constraints affecting IP learners, the correlations between socio-emotional skills resilience and learning through English LoLT are not exclusively motivated by variances in learners' unnoticed incapability to acquire and learn through the LoLT. In this regard, a research study conducted by Wills and Hofmeyer (2019: 195) finds an essential first step towards realising the associates of the resistance to learning in English LoLT being socio-emotional characteristics like persistence and aspiration. Furthermore, the research findings imply that socio-emotional abilities are critical in challenging EFAL educational environments when learners face numerous challenges to their overall learning.

2.5 FIRST LANGUAGE INTERFERENCE IN EFAL ACQUISITION AND LEARNING

Learners worldwide must be fluent in English to access education (Taylor & von Fintel, 2016: 75). Despite this claim, South Africa is one of the most diverse nations with a multiplicity of functional languages. The multicultural nature and character of South Africa is a constant concern surrounding Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and English Language Learning (ELL) that is frequently raised by local and foreign researchers.

Cummins' threshold theory (Cummins, 2000) states that language understanding is required for reading and writing tasks. As a result, to read a language, one must possess a particular degree of proficiency in the target language. The language threshold hypothesis is crucial since most IP learners are allegedly bilingual, if not multilingual. Cummins' (2000) hypothesis acknowledges the significance of researching both learning languages and their impact on the quality of L2 acquisition. This hypothesis best reflects Gauteng Province, South Africa, because IP learners must manage the transition from L1 LoLT at the FP level to English LoLT in IP level.

Robertson and Graven (2020: 78) argue that the percentage of learners in South Africa who use English as LoLT is steadily increasing as they progress through the learning grades. By Grade 4, the first year of the IP, more than 80% of learners use English as a LoLT, a considerable increase from the 28% who did so in Grade 3. For Saneka and Witt (2019: 1), the social and economic aspirations of parents can suggest a desire for their children to learn English as a second or additional language. As indicated by Graven and Sibanda (2018: 2) argue that progressing from the L1 as the LoLT to the new LoLT in Grade 4 lifts mental requests on learners since they should dominate both the new LoLT and more dynamic ideas in that LoLT.

Reading and writing in L2 is a cross-linguistic skill, and it involves language interactions, more complicated than the primary language reading and writing (Manten et al., 2020: 144). The age at which the L2 is first introduced, exposure to the L2, and the likenesses and variations between the two languages may negatively influence EFAL literacy development (Hoff et al., 2012: 4). Galali and Cinkara (2017: 60) postulate that L1 is essential for L2 learning in the classroom as learners' linguistic awareness in L1 may help in L2 learning. According to Seftiawan (2018; 6), cross-

linguistic translation can help six-year-old learners acquire L2 and comprehend everyday terminology. According to Hanáková and Metruk (2017: 382), L1 can be used to convey and teach learners specific vocabulary, grammar, directives, organisational goals, and test learners' knowledge. For Phindane (2020: 381) using L1 in the EFAL classroom promotes positive engagement with learners. However, dissimilarities in language phonetic repertoires are a risk for EFAL learners attempting to attain Phonological Awareness (PA) (Le Roux et al., 2017: 3). As a result, EFAL learning for young learners provides many difficult classroom experiences (Evans & Nthulana 2018: 1; Manten et al., 2020: 143).

Le Roux et al. (2017: 4) claim that African dialects, for example, contain just five to eleven monophthongs, no diphthongs, and long vowels. Standard South African English, on the other hand, has 20 vowels (seven brief monophthongs, around six monophthongs, and seven diphthongs). Differences like vowels in L1 and L2 indicate that EFAL learners do not always understand English vowels correctly. Perhaps this incorrect impression impacts their PA of English vowels, compromising their EFAL reading and writing skills (Manten et al., 2014: 143). As a result, EFAL learners may perform PA assessments in English to a lesser extent and positively than their English First language (EL1) peers due to a lack of linguistic awareness (Phindane, 2020: 381).

According to Sibanda (2017: 3), unlike Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), which take two to three years to develop, CALP takes five to seven years to develop, implying that time constraints for FAL contexts may be more severe. Sibanda (2017: 2) asserts that these time constraints mean that towards the end of FP, learners are only beginning to acquire the essential BICS proficiency in the EFAL. CALP competency in the language will take three to four years for IP EFAL learners. Even though learners must have a few specific levels of proficiency in the FAL CALP to meet the IP dialect standards, they are presented to an English as LoLT setting in Grade 4. Furthermore, it is unlikely that most African language-speaking learners would have developed BICS in the EFAL by the time they reach Grade 4. When EFAL learners lack basic grammatical structures and oral language of the FAL as tacit knowledge, they demonstrate a higher level of linguistic skill (Sibanda, 2017: 3). When learners show great confusion, the teacher often resorts to code-switching. Despite the

numerous benefits of utilising L1 in the EFAL classroom, Phindane (2020: 381) states that there are downsides to over utilising L1 in the classroom, which may hinder learners' EFAL acquisition, competency, and capacity to think, reason, read, and write in the language. The more learners are exposed to English, the faster they learn. They should be strongly encouraged to use the language to stimulate the target language acquisition. According to Phindane (2020; 382), the L2 learning process is similar to the L1 learning process, but the L1 and L2 acquisition processes are fundamentally different, indicating that learners must be exposed to the language outside the classroom. In addition, the educational foundation should be implemented in English.

Sibanda (2017: 2) argues that the lack of English language exposure and exercise outside the classroom worsens learners' linguistic deprivation in language acquisition, particularly in Grade 4. Another issue for biliterate learners is translating certain concepts into two different languages. EFAL learners must have dual labels for objects and concepts that they cannot produce in both languages simultaneously. Since references to concepts are shared between two languages, vocabulary is used infrequently, resulting in linguistic insufficiency (Nqoma, Abongdia & Foncha 2017: 8831). In a scenario where it gets more excellent benefits than the FAL, the HL is the most strengthened. It is debatable whether Additive Bilingualism (AB) among learners is a reality in practice (which would prevent the verbal loss due to the combined vocabulary learnt in both languages).

The CAPS is hypothetically based on 'additive bilingualism,' in which dialect and educational abilities are exchanged from the HL to the FAL. A satisfactory dialect establishment is additionally required for getting the FAL, but this requires a fitting introduction to the dialect as well as significant assets (Robertson & Graven, 2020). Of course, this requires learners to be exposed to the FAL in their surroundings, which is not often the case, particularly in isolated, rural places. As a result, within the preliminary stages, the accentuation is on tactile capacities and understanding, basically through stories and classroom headings, where exercises are tied to language improvement. Reading is taught as a topic in the FAL beginning in Grade 2. Instructors were encouraged to continue teaching the reading strategies that learners were undoubtedly taught in their HL. CAPS suggested that the HL's word recognition precision be between 90% and 95%. (DBE, 2011a: 56).

Dampier (2014: 37) criticises the CAPS document for failing to provide a clearly defined theory of how language is acquired, claiming that "the pedagogic process of introducing the FAL has not been thoroughly interrogated at a theoretical level." With serious expectations placed on learners and teachers to achieve proficiency in the FAL by building on their "already developed skills" in the HL, feels that frail HL improvement obstructs the accomplishment of instructive value and epistemic gain. As a result, teachers may resort to code-switching to help learners understand taught and read content. When the subject is troublesome and ideas are not immediately available to English learners, code-switching is used for classroom administration and clarification (Guzula, McKinney & Tyler, 2016). Concerns raised by the use of code-switching include the exclusion of learners in differing multilingual classrooms who do not share those dialects and the claim that code-switching does not serve to construct either the L1 or the L2 dialect (Le Roux et al., 2017: 1). Teachers and learners do not all speak the same language, and in many situations, neither do they.

Language is the fundamental medium of learners' knowledge absorption, retention, and comprehension skills, as well as psychological and social development. According to Vanhove (2013), failure to express, read, and comprehend the LoLT is troublesome. These learners can transfer their reading skills from L1 to EFAL in IP. According to Makoe (2014a: 34), a young learner learns a target language more efficiently outside of the classroom than within, and this is generally true for most South African EFAL learners, especially in the IP (Proctor, August & Snow, 2010: 6). IP learners experience significant challenges when adopting and learning the English language. For most learners, the language is only available in the IP classrooms.

Conversely, EFAL in IP is taught for 5 hours each week (DBE, 2011: 6). This period is insufficient for language acquisition and subject learning, as stipulated by the CAPS (2011). As a result, learners are promoted from the FP to the IP with inadequate English skills, even though they are subjected to learning through English LoLT. Learners must develop more curricular-orientated literacy abilities to deal with the IP's persistent and rising EFAL reading and writing problems simultaneously (Pretorius, 2014: 52).

Furthermore, IP learners struggle to distinguish linguistic variations between their L1s and English. Consequently, L1 interference remains a challenge in EFAL classrooms.

Writing, unlike speaking, does not come naturally to youngsters; they must be taught to write correctly (Initial Teacher Education (ITE), 2013).

2.6 READING AND WRITING CHALLENGES OF INTERMEDIATE PHASE LEARNERS

South African IP learners' EFAL reading and writing skills are challenged, particularly in environments where numerous languages are used, owing to learners not using the prescribed LoLT outside of learning. Manten et al. (2020: 143) state that researchers agree with the notion that Early Literacy Competency (ELC) is related to reading and writing proficiencies (De Witt & Lessing, 2018: 1843).

Grade 4 is especially difficult for South African IP learners and L2 English speakers. To address the IP's growing literacy issues, they must gain acceptable oral communication skills in English and more book-oriented academic literacy abilities in the LoLT. The difficulty of being unfamiliar with EFAL may encourage the challenging task of acquiring several unfamiliar words in a short amount of time. It also applies to IP learners in South African public schools. Learners show persistent low reading and writing proficiency in the said LoLT. A research study conducted by Nqoma, Abongdia, and Foncha (2017: 8823) found that learners encountered various challenges when using the newly adopted LoLT in their school activities in IP. The primary issues are understanding lessons, taking notes, participating in classroom discussions, and acquiring knowledge. According to the study, learners had difficulty understanding English lessons. The issue was primarily attributable to the teachers' pace and pronunciation and restricted domain-specific vocabulary.

In terms of not understanding the LoLT, it is reasonable to conclude that EFAL learners who are not exposed to the LoLT outside of the classroom receive little academic assistance because their parents and caregivers do not speak the target language. Stoffelsma (2019) points out that a lack of informal contact with the second language causes learners to detach from the language. Learners link it with the classroom setting. In the absence of sufficient EFAL support outside the classroom, learners may become overly reliant on the EFAL instructor. As a result, critical aspects of language development, such as PA, phonics, and advanced and academic-related vocabulary knowledge, such as print-sound matching and abstract concept understanding, are

delayed. According to Schütze (2017: 2), the efficacy of learning another language is reliant on how much cognitive load the human brain can manage at one time.

2.6.1 Phonological Awareness

Early literacy skills like rhyming and syllable awareness, phonological awareness (PA), and knowledge of print-related vocabularies such as print-sound matching begin to develop before formal reading instruction (Schütze, 2017: 4). PA is defined as detecting and changing phonological portions of spoken words by Landerl, Freudenthaler, Heene, De Jong, Desrochers, Manolitsis, Parrila, and Georgiou (2019: 220). According to Corriveau et al. (2010), PA is the ability to assess and alter the sound structure of oral language, which connects with reading and writing learning and competency. According to Landerl et al. (2019: 220), citing Suggate (2016), a learner with limited access to the relevant phonological units would struggle to thoroughly understand the mappings between a specific spoken language and its orthography. PA instruction appears to improve reading outcomes. To summarise, PA comprises two unique vocal abilities that assist youngsters in comprehending and automating the mappings between their spoken language and the writing system they acquire.

Words in English are not always spoken in the same manner they are spelt, making decoding, and reading acquisition more complex (Le Roux, 2016). Because English has a large number of irregular words, teaching sight words is essential for proficient reading and comprehension (Department of Basic Education, 2014a). Learners who have difficulty recognising familiar words or decoding new ones have a decreased likelihood of grasping their meanings. As a result, the learners will struggle to understand and read information, which will then negatively affect overall learning (Pretorius & Spaul, 2016).

Mantel et al. (2018: 142), argue that essential reading, writing, and numeracy skills must be acquired and developed in the first six years of a child's life, for optimal educational development (i.e., before entering Grade 1). Makiwane-Mazinyo and Pillay (2017), for example, conducted a descriptive study on the issues teachers face when teaching EFAL reading in the uThungulu District schools in the KwaZulu Natal state. According to the research, teachers face a variety of challenges, including

learners who are unable to read, first language interference, and a lack of support for teachers from both the Department of Education and parents, among others. The study stressed a great concern about the learners who pass Grade 3 but are still incompetent in reading and lack PA in EFAL.

2.6.2 Vocabulary Development

The decline in writing skills among EFAL learners, as with reading skills, is cause for concern (Blease & Condy, 2015). Learners' poor writing abilities have been linked primarily to teachers' lack of awareness of proficient writing methods to constructively promote the growth of writing, particularly among L2 learners (Blease & Condy, 2015).

Makiwane-Mazinyo and Pillay (2017) believe that writing helps learners develop important skills such as originality, creativity, and self-expression, all of which are required for academic success. According to Castro, Páez, Dickinson and Frede, (2011) for successful writing, the learner's grasp of contextual evidence should be encouraged. Faraj (2015) emphasises the importance of self-reflection in the writing process because it enables learners to combat writing errors and improve their critical thinking skills. This would improve learners' grasp of the content and, as a result, their ability to engage in tasks in terms of academic literacy. When learners enter Grade 4, it is assumed that they have a strong command of their L2.

As a result, learners in Grade 4 are expected to progress through their second language without intensive scaffolding or supplementary language courses. The L2 is only used in school. Learners do not use the language outside of the classroom, especially in low-income communities.

Current research and statistics on the reading and writing competency levels of IP learners show that they perform significantly below the projected phase levels (DBE 2011b: 15). The prospect of acquiring, retaining, and applying vocabulary in an EFAL classroom while interacting and reasoning in a language in which they lack PA is concerning. According to the claims made above, a persistent lack of PA is a major reason why learners are unable to read and write.

2.7 THE PHONEME-GRAPHEME DIFFERENCES IN L1 AND L2

In South Africa, 90% of EFAL learners are not native English speakers (Le Michael & Tshuma, 2019: 108). Most learners learn and access content in a language they do not speak fluently. Learners whose first language is unrelated to English may find it challenging to learn EFAL. For example, English and isiXhosa are different languages that do not share a linguistic family (Graven & Sibanda 2018: 3). Subsequently, English shares little cultural register with Indigenous South African languages. As a result, learning English opaque orthographies takes longer than learning African orthographies (Alcock, Ngorosho & Jukes, 2018: 464). Given the number of irregular words in English, it is vital to teach sight words in English (DBE, 2014). The phoneme-grapheme link is less obvious in opaque orthographies since one grapheme might represent phoneme variabilities such as / (cat), /:/ (ask), /:/ (all), / (about). English and African languages have different spellings. The latter has a one-to-one relationship between graphemes (the smallest meaningful contrastive unit in a writing system) and phonemes. Consequently, the shift in LoLT from the Foundation Phase (FP), which is often in L1, to the IP, where LoLT is L2, as well as an increase in the number of subjects, implies learners have to acquire, learn, and use the L2 as LoLT (National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU), 2013). This study emphasises the shift mostly in LoLT as one of the most substantial of the various alterations in learning EFAL proficiency.

The phase and LoLT transitions involve shifting from 'learning to read' to 'reading to learn,' transitioning from reading narrative materials and learning how to write to writing to express concepts (DBE 2008). Sibanda (2017: 1) asserts that the IP challenges refer evidently throughout learners' educational journey, particularly in their essential reading and writing skills scores. The challenges demonstrate the fragility of persistent transitions between FP and IP.

The difficulties are visible in learners' communicative, written, and reading abilities. As a result, Grade 4 learners in the LoLT must gain information, become critical readers and creative thinkers, interpret unknown words, and visualise and comprehend abstract concepts. According to Le Michael and Tshuma (2019: 106), trouble speaking fluently in the LoLT leads to delayed learning. The image depicts English as the

dominant language in education, with African languages gradually marginalised, contrary to the LiEP's advocacy of additive multilingualism.

Taylor and von Fintel (2016) evaluated the impact of English versus HL training in Grades 1–3 on English proficiency in Grades 4–6. The researchers investigated longitudinal data from several data sets for the entire population of South African schools between 2007 and 2012. The researchers developed a "fixed effects" model to exploit within-school variance in the language of teaching in these grades, produced by variations in instruction at specific schools. The research included 827,745 learners from 9,180 primary schools. Their findings revealed that three years of English instruction, as opposed to HL instruction in the first three grades, was associated with a 'negative effect on English performance in Grades 4, 5, and 6 of approximately 17% of a standard deviation in test scores' (Taylor & von Fintel, 2016: 777), which could be interpreted causally.

According to Manten et al. (2020: 144), it is difficult for English L2 learners to acquire Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) and simultaneously attempt to learn content as their English native counterparts. Learners who begin formal schooling in their L2 may experience reduced vocabulary expansion and challenges with delayed literacy learning (Janssen et al., 2015: 358). According to CAPS (2011: 5), learner backgrounds and other characteristics can lead to delays and obstacles in EFAL classrooms (DBE, 2011), particularly in the IP, where learners learn and engage with content in English. According to Tshabalala (2012: 22), most instructors in South Africa are not EL1 speakers, which may provide a barrier in South African EFAL classrooms.

2.7.1 Language skill transfer

According to Manten et al., (2020: 144) many English First Additional Language (EFAL) learners, particularly in South Africa, begin school without learning to read in their L1. There is no linguistic skill transfer while learning to read in an L2 or the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) (Heugh, Prinsloo & Makgamatha 2017: 198). Language skill transfer is the transfer of mastered linguistic constructions in L1 to the target language. This is the transfer of knowledge and skills or abilities from learners' respective L1 to L2 which is LoLT. According to Xiashi and Lin (2020: 35),

when there are differences between the L1 and the target language, a negative transfer can occur, preventing adequate EFAL learning. For example, EFAL learners may transfer mastered linguistic constructions from their HLs to EFAL.

Furthermore, Skill Acquisition Theory (SAT) suggests that L2 knowledge and skills grow through deliberate, systematic, and prolonged practice (Ellis & Shintani, 2014; Li & DeKeyser, 2017: 594). Unfortunately, South African IP EFAL learners lack EFAL reading and writing competencies. In a study to determine whether L1 interfere in L2 learning affects the learner's performance in four language skills, and which still has the most significant effect, Denizer (2017: 42) found that English Second Language (ESL) learners' English L2 proficiency is affected by learners' unfavourable linguistic translations from L1 into L2, with learners lacking proficiency skills in their respective L1s. So, learners do not have adequate skills in their L1 that they could transfer into L2 learning.

There is a link between learners' access to schooling in their L1 and academic success (Phindane, 2020: 382). Countries with the lowest literacy and educational performance levels in the world are those that do not provide education in native languages. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) stipulated in the 2014 L2 learning diagnostic study that after Grade 4, over 250 million learners lack essential reading and writing skills in L1 and L2.

Many South African youngsters are not exposed to critical early learning initiatives before beginning FP. Before formal schooling, EFAL learners were rarely exposed to the critical English exposure required to develop reading and writing skills (Atmore, 2013: 153). Early identification of learners at risk of having reading and writing challenges, particularly EL2 learners, and subsequent early remediation are critical (Goodrich et al., 2017: 4). Regardless of how high the competence level can be raised, most EFAL learners' fluency and performance skills fall far short of meeting the criteria for balanced bilingualism. As a result, referring to these learners as pseudo-bilinguals is permissible because English is not present in a reachable, conversational context (Kural, 2020: 64).

Language transfer and interference are unavoidable in the SLA process, divided into positive and negative transfers (Li & DeKeyser, 2017: 595). The positive transfer will promote Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and EFAL learning. In contrast, negative

transfer of L1 may significantly affect and delay the SLA and EFAL learning processes. Learning is more complex and crucial during the EFAL reading and writing process. During the process of SLA, especially the reading and writing production, learners' L1 plays a crucial role. However, due to the detrimental impact of the native language, the majority of EFAL learners have relatively low reading and writing skills (Xiashi & Lin, 2020: 33). As a result of the unfavourable effect of their mother language on EFAL reading and writing proficiency, IP EFAL learners exhibit continuing less proficient EFAL learning.

Xiashi and Lin (2020: 36), Li and DeKeyser (2017: 595), point out that negative transfer and positive transfer allow teachers and learners to recognise and comprehend negative language transfer profoundly and clearly understand how L1 affects learners' SLA and learning and how quality EFAL learning can be improved. According to Xiashi and Lin (2020: 37), EFAL learners' reading and writing challenges result from negative transfer distributed in English L2 pragmatics, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. Reading and writing competencies are frequently disadvantaged when learners with inadequate L2 proficiency attempt to make sense of text without knowing what the decoded words mean and respond in writing when they are not phonologically aware and advanced in EFAL (Pretorius & Spaul, 2016: 1450). EFAL learners face linguistic disadvantages as stipulated by the South African education policies. According to Nqoma, Abongdia and Foncha (2017: 8836), EFAL learners are 1.5 times more likely than learners who are native speakers of the LoLT to have less access to education through the English LoLT. According to Nqoma, Abongdia and Foncha (2017: 8831), the specific problem immediately apparent in classrooms during content topics is when learners' primary language is different from the LoLT.

Learners' first exposure to EFAL also influences learners' engagement in classroom discussions. Learners' participation remained low, resulting in only a few learners participating due to insufficient language skills, shyness to participate, and fear of making mistakes. As a result, various learning opportunities were wasted, such as asking and answering questions, seeking, and providing clarification, or following up on any classroom discussion topics. According to Milligan, Desai, and Benson (2020: 116), learners are pushed to fail or succeed entirely in educational institutions that rely on a single dominant language as the medium of instruction in many parts of the world.

Milligan, Desai, and Benson (2020: 116) suggest that learners in educational institutions that recognise the dominant English language as a LoLT fail to obtain acceptable reading and writing abilities. According to Manten et al. (2020: 143), PA allows the learner to decode random and unfamiliar words in early reading. Decoding is a crucial part of learning to read. As a result, words may always not be spoken as written, making decoding, and reading more difficult (Manten et al., 2020: 142). Learners who have difficulty recognising familiar words or decoding new ones have a decreased likelihood of grasping their meanings. As a result, the learners will struggle to understand the text that was read, thereby impacting their academic performance negatively (Pretorius & Spaul, 2016: 1450). As a result, the LoLT can either be a critical aid or a detriment to enabling EFAL learning (DBE 2011b: 4; Milligan, Desai, Z. & Benson, 2020: 116).

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the research methodology and design, population and sampling, data collection and analysis, quality criteria, and the study's significance. According to Nayak and Singh (2021), research methodology is a comprehensive strategy that includes everything from problem identification to final data collection and analysis plans.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is a broad approach to conducting and explaining the purpose of a qualitative study, the role of the researcher, the stages of study, and the data processing methods used to generate answers to research questions (Kumatongo & Muzata, 2021: 20). The approach was qualitative, and the research design was exploratory.

An exploratory study was conducted to gain insights, ideas, and varying knowledge on the reading and writing challenges faced by Intermediate Phase (IP) learners in the selected schools (Swedberg, 2020: 17).

A qualitative research approach was used in the study. A qualitative approach allows the researcher to investigate and comprehend the study's problem (Nayak & Singh, 2021: 1). The qualitative approach enabled the researcher to collect primary data in order to gain in-depth knowledge about the reading and writing challenges that English First Additional Language (EFAL) learners face in IP, as well as to confirm and understand the significant aspects and steps that contribute to the EFAL learners' challenges that the study aims to address.

3.3 SAMPLING AND POPULATION

In research, sampling refers to the selection of research participants who are representative of the desired population (Andrade, 2020: 102). Purposive sampling was used for interviews, and random selection was used for document analysis.

Purposive sampling is a strategy for identifying research participants and data sources that will efficiently generate relevant and useful data that can help answer research objectives. A population of EFAL IP teachers and learners in Tshwane South District, Gauteng Province, was used to select a sample of research participants. The study's sample consisted of three schools that were purposively chosen based on their LoLT, which is EFAL, and nine IP EFAL teachers were sampled to fit the purpose of the study.

Nine IP EFAL teachers were selected for interviews from a population of EFAL teachers from the three schools chosen; this sample was selected to allow for manageable data analysis. Participants in the research interviews were selected based on their role as an EFAL teacher in the IP. Nine EFAL IP teachers were selected from the three schools because, unlike other subject teachers, EFAL teachers have a better understanding of the reading and writing challenges that learners face.

Random sampling was also used in the study to select documents on written activities from the IP classes. Ten learners' workbooks were randomly selected across the three schools, and ten written activities were also randomly sampled from the ten selected books to expose the researcher to a possible variety of writing challenges faced by the learners in the schools. Four Grade 4 workbooks, three Grade 5 workbooks, and three Grade 6 workbooks were selected.

The study's population consisted of Tshwane South District learners and teachers from government-funded primary schools that offer English as an EFAL at the IP level. A population of EFAL learners at the IP level in Tshwane South District was also included in the study. The population is the source of information from which a sample can be drawn (van Rijnsoever, 2017: 4).

The study included EFAL IP teachers and learners from Tshwane South District, Olievenhoutbosch, Gauteng Province. To fit the purpose of the study, the population of the study consisted of five primary schools in Olievenhoutbosch, based on the schools' LoLT, which is EFAL. Three schools were selected from among the five in Olievenhoutbosch. Ten learners' workbooks were selected at random from a population of approximately 270 workbooks across the three schools for document analysis.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection is the process of gathering relevant information using various instruments guided by the study's aim and objectives to collect data or manipulate and extract meaning thereof (Moyo, 2017: 285). The researcher employed semi-structured interviews and document analysis to collect the research data.

3.4.1 Interviews

An interview in qualitative research, according to Adhabi and Anozie (2017: 3), is a type of conversation in which the researcher attempts to learn more about a topic as expressed by the person being interviewed. This type of interaction is guided by a credible aim in research. Interviews are used in qualitative studies to investigate the topic under discussion and what participants are thinking about (Rahman, 2020: 104). The study used semi-structured interviews that were guided by a list of open-ended questions that allowed the research participants to thoroughly explore and explain the writing proficiency challenges that the learners faced. The interviews were physically conducted, face-to-face. Social distance of 2 metres was maintained throughout the interview process.

3.4.2 Document analysis

Rapley (2018: 4) asserts that data collection methods include the examination of public and private documents to explore specific realities and their implications. Ten primary activities were obtained from the workbooks of learners taught by the interviewed teachers the three selected schools and analysed for proficiency in English writing skills using a document analysis guide (cf. Appendix E).

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis focuses on processes, methods for interpreting findings, and strategies for planning essential data collection to ensure that the collected analysis is manageable, accurate, and truthful (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Thematic Analysis (TA) was used to analyse the data, which is the process of identifying and analysing the meanings of patterns and themes in a dataset (Kiger & Varpioa, 2020: 847). TA was used to collect the two types of data. The raw data gathered from interviews and document analyses were analysed using themes that emerged from the data obtained

from interviews with teachers as well as analysis of the learners' written activities from their workbooks (cf. Appendix F). Chapter 4 discusses the themes.

3.6 QUALITY CRITERIA

In qualitative research, quality criteria refer to the study of phenomena within the subject/topic and the narrative of the participants to develop a theory (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher employed four quality criteria: credibility, transferability, reliability, and confirmability.

3.6.1 Credibility

Patias and Hohendorff (2019: 6) define credibility as the researcher's truthfulness in interpreting the research participants' data. Teachers were asked questions about the challenges that learners faced, how they dealt with the consistent and persistent English reading and writing proficiency challenges, and what strategies teachers and learners used in EFAL learning to ensure credibility. The researcher did not fabricate or falsify data, and conclusions were drawn based on participant responses.

3.6.2 Transferability

The ability of research findings to be applied to a similar study and generate comparable results is referred to as transferability (du Plooy-cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014: 258). Transferability was ensured by making the study's findings available to other researchers such as through presentation and publication, allowing other researchers conducting a similar study to apply, use them as a reference, and discover similar findings.

3.6.3 Reliability

Reliability refers to the quality of research, specifically the appropriate methodologies used and how such methodologies are effectively applied and implemented (Rose & Johnson, 2020: 4).

To ensure reliability, the researcher used the research questions (cf. Appendices D and E), along with follow-up questions, which enabled the researcher to generate more

themes that aided in the analysis of the primary data and, ultimately, in answering the research questions.

3.6.4 Confirmability

Confirmability, as defined by du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2014: 258), refers to how the collected data supports the researcher's findings and interpretation; it also refers to how the research findings correspond to the collected data.

The TA process guided the classification of the collected data into themes. The researcher transcribed the responses and writing challenges observed by the research participants in learners' written activities and divided them into requiring themes.

3.7 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The findings of the study will contribute to the growing body of knowledge about the various effects of EFAL learning in South African schools. Furthermore, the study will inform the Department of Education and the Gauteng Provincial Government about the difficulties that IP learners face in reading and writing when transitioning from Home Language (L1) as LoLT in the FP to English (L2) in the IP.

The study will also guide policymakers on the development and implementation of better and more appropriate language policies, such as English language immersion programmes, to improve learners' reading and writing skills. Finally, it will show how this endeavour may affect the development of learners' ability and capability to acquire and learn the English language used as a medium of instruction later in the learners' educational journey.

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

3.8.1 Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC)

Before the research participants could be required to participate in the study, a clearance certificate from the University of Limpopo (UL) Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) was obtained and presented to them. The researcher also sought permission from the schools selected for the study. Similarly, teachers' permission to read and make copies of learners' written activities was obtained.

3.8.2 Voluntary participation

The researcher consent from the research participants to participate in the study, and consent forms were distributed. As ethical considerations, informed consent, voluntary participation in the study, anonymity, respect for privacy, confidentiality, and beneficence were all observed and explained to the research participants.

3.8.3 Confidentiality

According to Arifin (2018: 30), confidentiality is the protection of entrusted information as well as the participants' identities by not recording their names at any stage of the research and the researcher being unable to match their identity to their research responses in any way. The researcher assured the participants that the information gathered during interviews, as well as the learners' workbooks, would be kept confidential, and that if the findings were published, the research participants' names and locations would be withheld.

3.8.4 Anonymity

Throughout the study, the researcher respected and protected the anonymity of the participants. During the participation period, the researcher did not put any pressure on the participants to reveal their identities, and pseudonyms and general nouns were created to refer to the research participants.

3.8.5 Trustworthiness

Pratt, Kaplan, and Whittington (2020: 2), defines trustworthiness as the extent to which the reader is able to evaluate if the researcher gathered research data honestly and reached practical and sustainable findings. The findings of the study were saturated from the research participants' personal experiences and suggestions. The researcher was unbiased in the presentation of the study findings.

3.8.6 Protection from harm

The researcher followed the Covid-19 health protocols during the interviews. Both the researcher and the research participants wore masks and kept a social distance of two metres. The interviews were limited to thirty minutes in order to avoid prolonged

close contact between the participants and the researcher. Before and after reading the learners' written activities, a hand sanitizer was used.

The next chapter presents the analysis of the study.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents findings from data collected through interviews with Intermediate Phase (IP) and English First Additional Language (EFAL) teachers, as well as an analysis of learners' documents. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six steps of Thematic Analysis (TA) were used to analyse the data.

4.2. DATA MANAGEMENT AND ANALYSIS

For the management and analysis of the presented data for the study, the researcher employed six steps of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006).

4.2.1 Step 1: Familiarisation and engagement of data

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), when employing TA, firstly, the researcher has to engage in and become familiarised with the data. Semi-structured interviews and document analysis were conducted by the researcher, who then transcribed all nine interviews and the data gathered from learners' written activities. Interview transcriptions were recorded on a voice recorder and then transcribed into a Word document. The transcribed draughts were reviewed and re-read alongside the recordings to ensure that no information was missed or added during the process of transcription.

4.2.2 Step 2: Coding

The second phase of Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach is code generation. This includes identifying points and categorising the data into codes. During the transcription process, the researcher discovered patterns related to the research questions that emerged in the data.

4.2.3 Step 3: Generating themes

The third phase of thematic analysis involves filtering the codes and combining those that are similar to form possible themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The themes for this

study were selected based on their ability to address the research questions. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), a theme is information that commonly emerges within and across data sets. The researcher selected the topics to enlighten and assist in answering the study's question.

4.2.4 Step 4: Reviewing of themes

After refining the original topics developed, the researcher concluded that there were too many themes generated for the current study's area of discussion. As a consequence, themes with insufficient evidence were eliminated, and those that were similar were grouped into a single probable theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

4.2.5 Step 5: Defining and naming themes

The researcher was able to accurately identify each theme and clarify what each theme is and is not. Throughout this process, the researcher and saturated similar findings and prepared each theme for the presentation of the study (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

4.2.6 Step 6: Discussion of themes

Braun and Clarke (2006) outline that the sixth phase of the theme analysis was to draft a detailed report that included examples to back up the main thesis.

Strong occurrences of research participants' statements were used to participate in an analytical narrative addressing the issues, rather than simply summarising the analyses' conclusions. The findings and significant themes identified in answering the research question will be discussed in Chapter 5.

4.3 RESEARCH RESULTS

4.3.1 Interviews

Interview data were analysed according to the following themes:

4.3.1.1 Biodata

Table 4.1: Participants' biodata

The table shows the profiles of the research participants in terms of years and grades taught.

School	Teacher		Gender	Grade taught	Teaching experience (years)
A	1		M	5	13
A	2		F	6	9
A	3		F	4	4
B	4		M	N/A	N/A
B	5		M	4-7	10
B	6		F	4-5	5
C	7		F	6-7	8
C	8		M	4	5
C	9		F	5	4

Three IP EFAL teachers were selected for School A: one male teacher, Teacher 1, and two female teachers, Teacher 2, and Teacher 3. The EFAL teaching experience of the teachers ranged from four to thirteen years.

In School B, three IP EFAL teachers were selected, as in School A. The sampled teachers included two male teachers, Teachers 4 and 5, and one female teacher, Teacher 6, with two teachers, Teachers 5 and 6, having five to ten years of teaching experience. Teacher 4 did not disclose the grade he taught or the number of years of teaching experience.

School C, like Schools A and B, had only three IP EFAL teachers chosen to participate in the research study. The teachers selected for the study were two females, Teachers 7 and 9, and one male, Teacher 8. The experience years of the IP EFAL teachers ranged from four to eight years.

4.3.1.2 Low comprehension proficiencies among learners

All research participants outlined that learners face challenge when given instructions in English, especially in learners in Grades 4 and 5. Teachers have also indicated that they usually resort to extensive efforts to break down information or codeswitch, which also posed challenges because some of the teachers did not speak the same home language as their respective learners, as asserted by (Howie et al. 2017: 11).

According to Teachers 1 and 3 in School A, 4 in School B, and 8 in School C, Grade 4 and 5 learners struggled to understand when taught in English and struggled to

answer questions posed by the teachers. Teacher 8 in School C, on the other hand, stated that the Grade 6 learners, as opposed to the Grade 4 and 5 learners, were usually confident in answering questions and participating in large numbers.

Three Grade 4 teachers, Teacher 3 from School A, Teacher 5 from School B, and Teacher 8 from School C outlined the difficulties of filling up the linguistic gap, and teach learners in a language they comprehend, also suggested that learners should be taught in English beginning in Grade R because by Grade 4, they would have demonstrated improved language comprehension and ability to follow simple instructions, which may encourage improved and profound learning as argued in (Le Roux et al., 2017: 1).

For Grade 4, Teacher 3 explained:

It is not an easy task to teach Grade 4 learners in the sense that the LiEP policy encourages the active participation of learners during the learning process which is still a dream. I was demotivated at first because I could make the kids understand and use English as easy as I thought it would be. Teaching EFAL needs a lot of dedication, uhhh... effort and what else? Uhhh... You just have to love the kinds and know that that they need you more than anyone else. It is not an easy role to teach English. It is a dream in the sense that Grade 4 learners are unable to express themselves in English. Such a situation is frustrating; it forced to switch to several languages most the kids speak, like Sepedi, Setswana le IsiZulu to at least try and make them understand, as an alternative to enable my learners to know the key ideas of the learning and what I will be teaching.

4.3.1.3 EFAL Reading incompetency

Teachers 1 and 3 from School A, as well as Teacher 6 from School B, stated that the IP learners demonstrated little proficiency in reading as expected by the Language in Education Policy (LiEP, 1997) that requires learners to demonstrate active and proficient reading and writing in a language they barely know and cannot even communicate in.

According to Teacher 1 from School A, the Grade 4 learners could not read properly or quickly enough because they were still being introduced to English sounds and meanings, both orally and in writing. Teacher 2 explained that English language is not a barrier, but only sentence construction and language use in formal school settings that is, in written activities, as reported by (Milton, du Plessis, & van der Heever, 2020: 6).

Learners are usually given topics or pictures to construct short summaries and texts. Therefore, the learners are then corrected by the teacher and ask the learners to rewrite the corrected version and compare them with their written works, Teacher 2 explained:

Learners are not the same, we have different learners. Some, especially those that receive help from home, sometimes see their mistakes and eventually do better in written tasks. And of course, to others is a different challenge. Teachers have to show them the mistakes and make sure they understand.

4.3.1.4 Writing and communicative incompetency

Teacher 1 from School A, Teacher 3 from School A, and Teacher 8 from School C also stated that learners' low reading and writing proficiency impacted learning and that learners struggled to learn using English as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT), a challenge strongly argued for by (Malebese, Tlali & Mahlomaholo, 2019: 1).

For Grade 6, Teacher 8 explained.

It is actually impossible for or how things will get better. I can say, we have learners who show effort, their performance, and show more interest in speaking in English. When it comes to writing, they do try shame, but it is very difficult for them to really say what want to say. The learners show more interest and lots of energy when answering in their own languages than English. I think English limits them.

4.3.1.5 Exposure to EFAL Language of Learning and Teaching

All of the interviewed EFAL teachers emphasised that it was clear that learners were not exposed to EFAL as LoLT during the Foundation Phase (FP), and as a result, they struggled to read and write in English during the IP because they were strictly taught in their native languages during the FP. Five teachers out of nine, two from School A, Teacher 1, and 3, and three from School C, Teacher 6, 8, and 9, stated that when learners were asked to provide written responses in English, they would appear confused or as if they did not understand what the teachers asked of them. However, teachers 2 and 7 have outlined that learners attempt reading out loud especially texts that have been read before or that are fun to read, or write down responses on their own, before asking for assistance.

4.3.1.6 EFAL teaching and learning

Teachers 1 and 3 from School A stated that most learners learn at a slow pace, forcing teachers to teach reading and writing without having in-depth discussions, and learners were forced to absorb content on their own.

Teachers 2 and 5 from School A both stated that there were difficulties in teaching writing due to learners' inability to read for meaning and write creatively. The two mentioned teachers also indicated that the learners would face difficulties in continuing with written exercises, particularly the Grade 6 learners who demonstrated inadequate writing proficiency.

According to Teachers 1 and 3 from School A, adequate teaching was frequently jeopardised by teachers only selecting content prescribed by the Annual Teaching Plan (ATP), content that appeared simple for learners to understand. Due to learners' limited understanding of EFAL content, the mentioned teachers stated that in order to accommodate learners' low proficiency in the English language, they had to be explained repeatedly until the learners understood it. Similar research findings were reported by (Bruwer, Hartell & Steyn, 2014: 20).

4.3.1.7 Improvement of reading and writing proficiencies

The Grade 6 teacher, Teacher 2 from School A, and Teacher 7 from School C explained that the EFAL teachers in the selected schools believed that EFAL learning would improve over time. Teacher 7 reported that the Grade 6 learners had fewer difficulties with the medium of instruction because they were already familiar with the English language because it was not their first exposure to it.

Teacher 6 pointed out that exposing learners to EFAL as a subject rather than as LoLT in the FP was insufficient to prepare them to learn in English. Reading and writing, according to the three teachers from School B, are the most important aspects of learning a language, particularly in the IP a view strongly argued for by (Manten et al., 2020: 143).

4.3.1.8 Peer-learning

Teacher 4 from School B explained that when a teacher did not supervise learners, they were less anxious to attempt responses, whether verbal or written. Similarly, Teacher 5 from School B stated that less proficient learners would occasionally wait for learners who were proficient in EFAL reading and writing to begin writing before copying from them. Teacher 7 from School C stated that learners became angry or frustrated during peer learning because others were unable to read and write.

The Grade 4 teachers, Teacher 3 from School A, Teacher 5 from School B, and Teacher 8 from School C explained that learners were extremely competitive, and if they saw that they were struggling, they would cry, become moody, and refuse to participate in reading or writing lessons. Teacher 4 explained:

We can also say that maybe some English teachers have failed to address the issues, we can't point at teachers and blame them. On the other hand, the area that we are in is also a challenge. Our children don't practice English because mostly because they don't have anyone to practise with. They only use English when they are taking to us teachers because the HOD encourages us to try and push them to speak in English, even though they are struggling.

4.3.1.9 EFAL learning support

Another challenge for EFAL learners, according to Teachers 2 from School A, 4 from School B, and 7 from School C, was a lack of parental support due to parents' limited knowledge of the English language. Teacher 5 from School B added that if parents could assist, the learners would have a better chance of acquiring and learning the language.

Teacher 1 from School A, Teacher 4 from School B, and Teacher 7 from School C explained that in order to implement adequate writing learning, the selected teachers from all three schools who participated in the study assigned learners written exercises so that parents could assist them.

All teachers stated that the EFAL teachers attempted to encourage parents to support learners' EFAL learning and learn the LoLT outside of the school grounds in order to promote adequate exposure to the target language, but only a few parents responded. It can thus be reasoned that parents' contribution in learners EFAL learning poses a challenge as learners remain only to rely on respective teachers for EFAL acquisition and learning.

4.3.1.10 Gap between theory and practice

Regarding EFAL learning policies, Teacher 1 from School A stated that the ATP as well as the required outcomes guided EFAL teachers in the school. Teacher 8 from School C stated that the learners faced persistent reading and writing challenges because reading and writing required a lot of effort, time, and support, which was not the reality of EFAL classrooms, as asserted in (Makoe, 2014b: 34).

Language learning policies in FP were affecting profound EFAL learning, according to Teachers 1 and 3 from School A and Teacher 8 from School C, because the IP language policies gave the impression that formal schooling, using English as LoLT, began at Grade 4 or Grade 5. The mentioned teachers also stated that when Grade 4 learners were taught English, they did not understand anything the EFAL teachers taught them.

Teacher 8 from School C suggested that the LoLT policy be revised because it was the primary source of learners' poor reading and writing skills. The teacher stated that learners demonstrated competencies in their HLs but not in English, and that learners should be taught English beginning in the lower grades. Since the learners were disadvantaged by the delayed English instruction, they should not be expected to perform better than they did. For Grade 6, Teacher 2 explained:

Using English as a medium of instruction is a challenge sometimes hence, I, using the languages learners speak at home is not allowed and I do not share a language with all the learners. I think these learners only learn English here at school, and it's a problem. Most learners are familiar with the English language as the school is situated in a multiracial community consisting of coloureds, MaPedi, Zulus, Indians, Zimbabweans, Xhosa Nigerians, and we are many. And so, there is nothing much the school can do, we just try our best to teach what the learners can understand, explain over and over again until they learn some of the things that are really hard to explain. We encourage our kids to share their favourites moments in English and when they struggle, we tell them to use their language because they are struggling, so we want them to have fun. ... The kids' parents don't speak the English language. So, I can say teaching in English is very difficult.

4.3.1.11 EFAL teaching and learning strategies

Teachers 1, 2, and 3 in School A explained that the IP EFAL teachers met weekly to try to produce fun activities because it was pointless to teach if the learners did not understand the content. Teacher 1 from School A stated that the EFAL teachers in the school used the following strategies to facilitate EFAL learning.

4.3.1.12 Repetition, singing and chanting

Teacher 1 from School A explained how making rhymes or learning words in songs created rhythm and helped learners remember the content and words they had learned. Teacher 5 from School B claimed that repeating words or phrases lyrically helped learners learn faster. Teacher 5 explained that the ATP encouraged the use of songs and famous folktales that the learners may have heard at home, but that most

of the time, the teachers sang and chanted with the learners to help them learn the words, strategies that are challenged by (Bruwer, Hartell & Steyn, 2014: 20).

Teacher 9 from School C revealed that during reading lessons, IP EFAL teachers in School C typically taught learners by demonstrating how to write and pronounce words. Teacher 7 in School C explained that when teaching reading or writing, the IP EFAL teachers modelled and instructed learners to read or rewrite the word or sentence that the teacher had written.

Teachers 4, 5 and 6 in School B, IP EFAL teachers, mentioned using dictation to improve learners' EFAL vocabulary. Teachers 4 and 6 from School B explained that learners in Grades 5 and 6 were given dictation tests on Mondays to help them improve and expand their vocabulary. Teacher 4 asserted that, for example, if learners were taught how to write a letter, they would be given a dictation test on words commonly used in letter writing, such as letter or address.

4.3.2 Document analysis

This section presents data derived from an examination of written EFAL activities in all schools sampled. Ten written primary activities were selected at random to expose the researcher to the wide range of writing challenges that learners face in school.

The randomly selected written activities included four Grade 4 activities, three Grade 5 activities, and three Grade 6 activities. The aforementioned activities were examined and discussed under the following themes.

4.3.2.1 Sentence construction

It was discovered that learners committed sentence fragment error, for example, there were with a lot of missing words in seven of the ten sampled activities, which were two Grade 4 activities from School A, two Grade 5 activities from School B, and two class activities of Grade 6 learners from School C. Poor literacy in learners' EFAL written activities was identified as a significant challenge, similarly asserted by (Manten et al. 2020: 143).

4.3.2.2 Punctuation marks and use of capitals

There were no punctuation marks in two activities of Grade 4 learners from School A, three activities of Grade 5 learners from School B, and two activities of Grade 6 learners from School C. The absence of punctuation marks resulted in run-on sentences, which are long sentences that lack punctuation marks.

The researcher observed that the EFAL learners across all three selected schools did not use simple punctuation marks such as capital letters, commas, and periods in eight written activities consisting of two activities of Grade 4 learners from School A, three activities of Grade 5 learners from School B, and three activities of Grade 6 learners from School C.

The researcher found that five out of six activities of Grade 5 and 6 learners from School B demonstrated no evidence of knowing when to capitalise words. The researcher discovered an absence of capitalisation at the beginning of sentences, when writing proper nouns, and even when writing their names in four of the activities of Grade 4 learners from School A, a challenge largely asserted in (Draper & Spaul, 2015: 35).

The researcher discovered haphazard use of capital letters in the middle of sentences or words in three activities of Grade 5 learners from School B.

4.3.2.3 Grammar proficiency

Three activities of School B learners revealed that they did not know how to use or apply grammar rules such as using commas to separate two or more ideas. The researcher discovered incorrect use of the suffix -ed for some past tense words in two activities of Grade 6 learners from School C. The researcher also noticed a lack of appropriate use of word form, tense, use, and meaning in the written activities of two Grade 6 learners from School C, similar findings were reported in (Cilliers & Bloch 2018: 1).

4.3.2.4 Spelling

The researcher discovered that learners in Grade 4 at School A and Grade 5 at School B struggled with spelling. Even when learners were copying down notes from teachers,

their written exercises contained spelling errors. The researcher also discovered that in three activities involving Grade 5 learners from School B, learners used their native languages to spell English words. Four activities of Grade 4 learners from School A revealed that they could not write or spell their names correctly.

4.3.2.5 Coherence

In terms of coherence, the researcher only examined the activities of Grade 6 learners' as guided writing is less common as opposed to Grade 4, and 5 learners, implying that learners wrote independently without immediate guidance from a teacher. Three independently written activities of Grade 6 learners from School C revealed no coherence. The sentences were poorly constructed and lacked logic and consistency in the ideas that the learners attempted to present.

The conclusion and recommendations of the study are presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The chapter concludes the research findings, makes cautious recommendations for additional research, and discusses the study's potential value. The chapter concludes with a look back at the research process, including lessons learned and study limitations.

5.2 INTERPRETATION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

This section summarises the findings of the research reported in Chapter 4, which were based on data gathered through interviews and document analysis.

5.2.1 Interviews

5.2.1.1 Biodata

The study consisted of 9 English First Additional Language (EFAL) teachers who are non-native English speakers. Four male teachers and five female teachers were present. The EFAL teachers chosen taught grades 4 through 7. The research participants had four to thirteen years of EFAL teaching experience in the Intermediate Phase (IP). The chosen teachers have prior experience teaching EFAL in the IP and have in-depth knowledge of the common and unavoidable challenges that EFAL learners face in the IP.

5.2.1.2 Codeswitching

As EFAL teachers frequently switched between English and learners' home languages, low English linguistic ability proved to be a major issue for EFAL learners in the IP (HLs). The study concludes that using codeswitching may further delay learners' chances of acquiring and learning EFAL.

5.2.1.3 Low English comprehension among learners

According to teachers' responses in the IP about reading and writing challenges, learners' low proficiency in reading for understanding and meaningful writing limits their creativity and effective reading and writing, particularly for comprehension.

5.2.1.4 EFAL communicative competency

Apart from the difficulties with English comprehension that EFAL learners face, communication remains a persistent issue for them because they are unable to respond verbally to questions or instructions from teachers. Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) teaching is ineffective in overcoming language learning barriers.

5.2.1.5 Exposure to EFAL LoLT

The researcher identified writing abilities improvement of the different learners' in upper Grades. For example, there was considerable lack of writing competency in a Grade 4 learners' written activities as opposed to learners in Grade 5 and 6, there was progression and improvement in written activities. Consequently, the researcher suggests that learning English at an early age could be influential and beneficial in EFAL acquisition, as it is later crucial for learning in the IP. If learners are exposed to the LoLT, there could be improvement in abilities to proficiently read and write proficiently.

5.2.1.6 EFAL teaching and learning

According to the perspectives of EFAL teachers, low reading and writing skills have a negative impact on EFAL learners' education. The study discovered that EFAL teachers in schools tried to implement various strategies to support and improve learners' reading and writing abilities, but there was no positive response from the majority of the IP EFAL teachers in schools.

5.2.1.7 L1 interference

When learners used HLs to participate in lessons rather than giving written responses in English, they demonstrated superior proficiency. Furthermore, learners attempted to write in English using their native languages or linguistic transfer.

5.2.1.8 Improvement with grade progression

Despite the fact that EFAL learners learned passively by relying on teacher modelling, the study concludes that learners' reading and writing abilities improved as they progressed through the IP grades. According to the perceptions of the interviewed teachers and the written activities of Grade 5 and 6 learners, their abilities are superior to those of Grade 4 learners.

5.2.1.9 Reading and writing incompetency

The findings revealed that EFAL learners in Grades 4 and 5 in all three schools lacked the necessary reading and writing skills to transfer to English LoLT. This was evident during the interviews, particularly during the analysis of the learners' written work.

5.2.1.10 Teacher-centred learning

According to the findings, individual learning needs of learners in EFAL classrooms in the selected schools were not considered because teachers face numerous challenges when teaching EFAL content. For example, all the research participants have outlined that there is limited time for intervention outside school hours, especially for reading, learners. Since the EFAL teachers only facilitate guided writing in class, did not have enough time to address each learner's challenges, they resorted to teacher-centred learning to complete the syllabus in the assigned time frame.

Teacher 1:

5.2.1.11 Peer-learning

Due to learners' lack of English comprehension, it was discovered that learners imitated or copied their counterparts in an attempt to respond to questions or instructions by EFAL teachers. Since EFAL learners are not as proficient and experienced as teachers, their peer-learning strategy may be disadvantageous in EFAL classrooms. As a result, profound learning is compromised.

5.2.1.12 EFAL learning support

Teachers from the targeted schools noted that in order to reduce low levels of reading and writing proficiency, teachers should develop other strategies, such as parental

involvement and compensatory teaching, to motivate learners to put effort into learning how to read and write in English.

5.2.1.13 Gap between theory and practice

It can be concluded that the foundation phase curriculum and language policies fail to address learning's inability to read and write. As a result, IP learners in this study faced the challenge of improving their reading and writing English skills, as assumed by educational policies. Policymakers enact policies that are incompatible with the EFAL learning process.

5.2.1.14 EFAL teaching and learning strategies

Teachers attempted a variety of strategies to address learners' reading and writing challenges and to make EFAL learning bearable and interesting for learners. One of the findings was that teachers' perspectives on how to improve writing learning were limited. As a result, teachers were unable to provide comprehensive assistance to learners facing writing challenges.

5.2.2 Document analysis

5.2.2.1 Sentence construction

It was evident from the written work of the learners that they struggle with sentence construction.

5.2.2.2 Punctuation marks

The IP learners lack the writing skills required to navigate learning and encode ideas in their writing. This was observed due to their lack of proficiency or knowledge of the need to use commas, periods, and proper noun capitalisation.

5.2.2.3 Grammar proficiency

Learners generally struggled with general sentence construction, the use of punctuation marks, and the application of simple and general English grammar rules as required by the IP.

5.2.2.4 Spelling

The spelling findings indicate that IP learners lack EFAL writing proficiency level in IP, and thus fail to meet the writing expectations outlined in the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS).

5.2.2.5 Coherence

The researcher observed a lack of logic and meaning in the written activities of the learners. The written sentences of the learners lacked logic, and the ideas lacked a solid meaning.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

- The researcher recommends that teachers encourage and promote learners' language learning by providing meaningful language learning support, such as allowing questioning feedback and demonstrating initiative tasks.
- EFAL reading and writing proficiencies development and growth could be prompted by the teacher's encouragement and support of the learner's education journey.
- The study recommends that EFAL teachers find a way to familiarise learners with their social background and linguistic needs.
- Adopting a learner's linguistic and educational needs is also beneficial to learners' education and may encourage them to read and write in English.
- EFAL exercises could be implemented in the FP, and the concept of effective English teaching and learning could be incorporated into FP and IP workshops.

5.4 CAUTIOUS SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Based on the study's findings, the researcher suggests that teachers and policymakers take note of the issues that need to be addressed in order to improve EFAL learners' reading and writing skills, particularly in IP classrooms.

The LoLT policies in FP and FP could be evaluated and revised to reflect the realities of South African language education. EFAL learning and teaching methods and practices such as code-switching, for example, could be revised. New policies could promote deep English acquisition and learning. Finally, the researcher suggests

further research and possible improvements to the reading and writing challenges faced by IP learners in South African schools.

5.5 STUDY LIMITATIONS

This was a small-scale study. Therefore, the findings of this study do not necessarily apply to all government-funded schools in Gauteng, South Africa. The number of participants was small and cannot represent the whole country in terms of reading and writing challenges facing IP learners, learning English as FAL. Similarly, practices implemented by the interviewed teachers to ensure adequate EFAL acquisition and learning cannot be generalized to apply to all EFAL teachers in Gauteng. Similar, true reflection of learners' writing abilities was compromised as primary activities are completed in class, guided by the teacher.

Looking at the scope of the study, time was limited due to Covid-19 restrictions, affecting trust between the researcher and the participants, and how interviews were conducted, and a deadline was to be met for the submission of the study. However, research participants were co-operative, and I therefore managed to cover the work within the scheduled time.

5.6 CONCLUSION

An overview of the research findings was presented, and an attempt was made to explore reading and writing challenges facing IP learners. Learners' ESL acquisition and poor English language proficiency among learners from selected schools that utilize English as LoLT came out strongly as a major concern which overshadows the good intentions of the learning outcomes initiated by the LiEP and the RSA Constitution. Suggestions for further research and possible improvements are also presented. The potential value of the study was discussed in the light of the research questions.

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7. APPENDICES

7.1 Appendix A: Approval from the university



University of Limpopo
Department of Research Administration and Development
Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa
Tel: (015) 268 3935, Fax: (015) 268 2306, Email: anastasia.ngobe@ul.ac.za

TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

MEETING: 23 February 2022

PROJECT NUMBER: TREC/36/2021: PG

PROJECT:

Title: Exploring Reading and Writing Proficiency Challenges of English Language Intermediate Phase Learners in Selected Public Schools in Gauteng Province
Researcher: MK Kgooho
Supervisor: Mrs MV Mashiane
Co-Supervisor/s: N/A
School: Language and Communication Studies
Degree: Masters 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.

7.2 Appendix B: Letter to the school principal

35 Prelude Crescent Ext 21

Olievenhoutbosch Ext 21

Centurion

0187

30 November 2021

The School Principal

Dear Sir/Madam

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

My name is Mphela Karabo Kgooho. I am a Master of Arts research student in the School of Languages and Communication Studies at the University of Limpopo. I hereby request permission to conduct research at your school for my research study.

The proposed title for my research is: Reading and writing proficiency challenges facing English Second Language Intermediate Phase learners in selected schools in Tshwane South District, Gauteng Province: An exploration.

The proposed research intends to explore English First Additional Language (EFAL) reading and writing proficiency in the Intermediate Phase (IP) in selected schools in Tshwane South District, District 4 Primary schools in Gauteng province. It seeks to interrogate the potential causes and the Grade 4 language proficiency challenges in these phases in government funded schools. The research also aims to interrogate the educational policies regarding the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) in the IP.

I confirm that all participants will be treated with utmost respect and their confidentiality strictly maintained. I also confirm that participation will be voluntary, and, while there are no direct material benefits to the school, findings from the research data may be presented at conferences and be published in research journals.

Data will be collected through interviews of the Intermediate English First Additional Language teachers and well as through an analysis of the learners' written activities (tests scripts, class, and home activities). My research supervisor is Ms. M.V. Mashiane and she can be contacted on 015 268 2502, or through her email valery.mashiane@ul.ac.za

Kindly let me know if any further information is required.

Yours Faithfully

M.K. Kgooho (Ms.)

0727151745

7.3 Appendix C: Research Participants' Consent forms

I _____ hereby confirm that:

I have been briefed on the research that Mphela Karabo Kgooho is doing at the School of Languages and Communication Studies at the University of Limpopo on the research project: Reading and writing proficiency challenges facing English Second Language Intermediate Phase learners in selected schools in Tshwane South District, Gauteng Province: An exploration.

I thoroughly understand:

- What my participation in the research study means and all the procedures which be followed
- That my participation is voluntary
- I give my consent to have the interview audios recorded
- I may withdraw from the study at any time without penalties and interrogations
- The recordings will be transcribed, and my identity will not be disclosed
- Any information I share will be held in the strictest manner by the researcher and the copy of the interview transcript will be used in the submission of the research and may be used for future research
- My responses may be used in writing up the research project and may also be used in conferences and any academic publication

Participant's signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's signature _____ Date: _____

7.4 Appendix D: Interviews with IP teachers

Biodata:

Gender: _____

Position: _____

Qualification _____

Grade: _____

Experience in years _____

1. What is the chosen LoLT in the IP of the school?
2. What are the reasons for the chosen LoLT?
3. Do learners show reading proficiency in the LoLT?
4. Are there any challenges facing learners in learning in the LoLT. Please elaborate.
5. What is your view on the writing challenges facing the Intermediate learners?
6. As a teacher, how do you best assist the learners to learn through writing in the LoLT?
7. Does the use of English as LoLT have an impact for learning other subjects?
8. If your answer to number 6 above is 'No', do you think the use of the English as LoLT has an impact on learners in learning other subjects?
9. Do you think that English as LoLT enhances learners' ESL acquisition? Please elaborate

Reading skills

1. What are your views on the present reading challenges experienced by Intermediate Phase learners?
2. Do learners participate in reading activities in the classroom when using English as LoLT?
3. As a teacher, how do you best assist the learners to learn through reading in the LoLT?

Writing skills

1. Do learners show writing proficiency in the LoLT?
2. Do learners participate in the classroom when using English as LoLT in written activities?
3. As a teacher, how do you best assist the learners to learn through reading in the LoLT?

7.5 Appendix E: Analysis of IP learners' written activities

7.5.1 Table 7.1: Document Analysis Guide

Aspects of analysis	Comments
1. Evidence in participant learners' ability to independently write for meaning, that is, meaningful sentence construction.	
2. Awareness of EFAL alphabets and correct spellings.	
3. L1 interference in learners' written activities.	
4. Assessment of learners' grammar proficiency.	
5. Assessment of learners' punctuation proficiency.	
6. Assessment of vocabulary, coherence, and fluency in learners' written work.	

7.6 Appendix F: Themes emerged during data analysis

1. Interviews

1.1 Biodata

1.2 Learners' portrayal of low proficiencies in EFAL comprehension

1.3 EFAL Reading, writing and communicative incompetency

1.4 Exposure to EFAL Language of Learning and Teaching

1.5 EFAL teaching and learning

1.6 Improvement of grades

1.7 Peer-learning

1.8 EFAL learning support

1.9 Gap between theory and practice

1.10 EFAL teaching and learning strategies

1.11 Repetition, singing, and chanting

2. Document analysis

2.1 Sentence construction

2.2 Punctuation marks

2.3 Grammar proficiency

2.4 Spelling

2.5 Coherence

8. TECHNICAL EDITING AND LANGUAGE EDITING



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TO: WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

SUBJECT: Language Editing

DATE: Wednesday, 06 July 2022

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF LANGUAGE EDITING

We hereby confirm the language editing of the following research project using the Windows 'tracking' system to reflect our comments and suggested corrections for the writer to action.

Project Title: *"Exploring the reading and writing proficiency challenges of English language Intermediate Phase learners in selected public schools in the Gauteng Province"* submitted to us by **MPHELA KARABO KGOOHO** has been duly edited for language by Flamboyant Media (Pty) Ltd. It is hoped that if all the editorial aspects suggested therein were considered, the target readers of the work would find the document decipherable.

For any enquiries relating to the above, please contact the office during working hours at editor@flamboyantmedia.co.za.

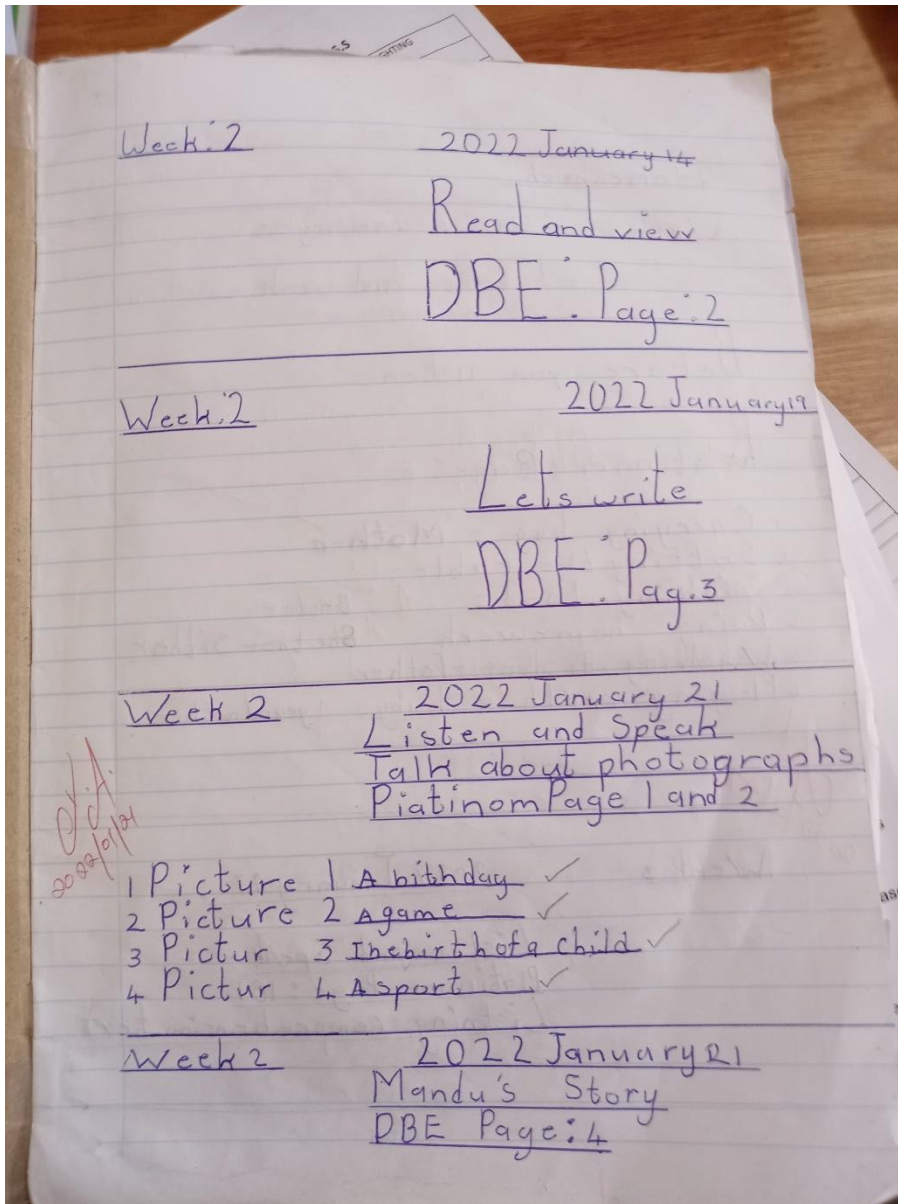
Kind Regards,

Elziera Lawrence
Language Editor

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Elziera', is written over a horizontal line.

9. ANNEXURES: Learners' written activities

9.1 Annexure A



9.2 Annexure B

story trying to teach us?)
we must not judge other
People. No one is too big or too small to help

Week: 2022 February 16
Title: The big lion and the tiny
mouse
DBE Work book Page: 44
Writing frame

a In this story ✓
One day a tiny mouse accidentally woke a sleeping lion. The
lion growled and said, "Such a tiny mouse is waking me up
I will eat it for a snack

F Primary School
17-02-2022

Week: 6 2022 February 17^{HOD}
Title: The big lion and tiny mouse
DBE: work book: Page 44
Activity: Written comprehension

1 Where did the lion get trapped? He got trapped

2 Close your eyes and visualise the lion in the trap.
What do you visualise? I visualise _____

3 When was the lion surprised? Why? The lion was
Surprised when _____ He was surprised because

4 What is one thing you like OR dislike about
about this story? I liked _____

9.3 Annexure C

Lyrics	Action
Everyone is different in so many ways	Shrug your shoulders to show you're asking a question
Wouldn't it be boring if we were all the same?	Celebrate by waving your fists in the air
Celebrate your culture your family history	Celebrate by waving your fists in the air
When we're all together, Celebrate diversity	

Theme Vocabulary

1. Arrogant
2. Diversity
3. Popular
4. Miserable
5. Unique

Week 6 2022 February 16

Title: The big lion and the tiny mouse

DBE work book Page: 44

Activity: Read

Comprehension Strategy: Visualise

1) Follow up questions

a Which character in this story
can be described as arrogant? Lion

b Which character in
this story can be descri-
bed as helpful? MOUSE

c What do you think
the message of this
story is? (What is this

9.4 Annexure D

Things I have learnt

~~I~~ Always wear ^{my} ~~your~~ mask

~~I~~ Sanitize my hands

~~I~~ Keep social distance

How my school work was affected

~~I~~ Not going ~~every~~ to school every day

~~I~~ ^{am} Sitting alone in your desk

~~I~~ ^{am} Wearing mask all the time

~~I~~ Sanitising hands most time

How families were affected

~~I~~ ^{we} Less alcohol intake

We must not share food

We are not going to work

We must not ~~or~~ visit

We lost jobs

How communities were affected

We were locked down for the first
of our life time

We were not crossing in roads
because of Police Patrol

We were not allowed in visiting

You were suppose to write in paragraph,
form not point forms

9.5 Annexure E

19 X

Activity-25 11 March 2022

Language Structure and Conventions

Abbreviations

= Are shortened words. we can use the abbreviation when write, but not when we speak.

a. Match these abbreviations with their meaning

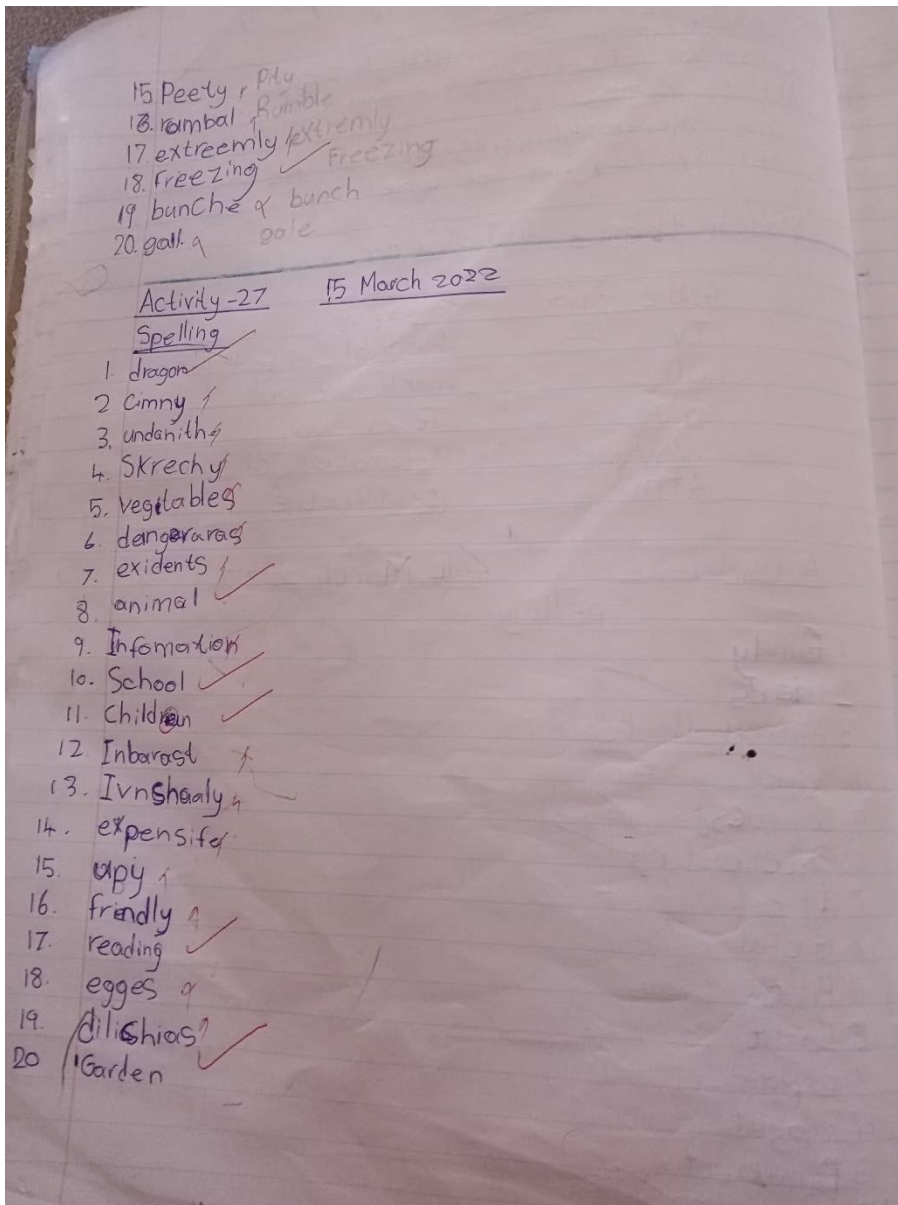
Abbreviation	meaning
TV	Republic of South Africa
cm	world wide web
RSA	Television
WWW	Automated Teller machine
ATM	centimetre

Activity-26 14 March 2022

Spelling

1. Family ✓
2. friends ✓
3. ~~bbautifull~~ beautiful ✓
4. ~~Saprice~~ ✓ surprise
5. ~~Confused~~ ✓ confused
6. Interesting ✓
7. ~~dificalt~~ ✓ difficult
8. ~~Gigled~~ ✓ goggle
9. ~~Pillous~~ ✓ pillow
10. ~~Laght~~ ✓ laughed
11. ~~explere~~ ✓ explore
12. ~~enjoyed~~ ✓ annoyed
13. ~~Permanent~~ ✓ permanent
14. ~~decoration~~ ✓ D

9.6 Annexure F



9.7 Annexure G

Milk
Hygiene

The party happened at forest ✓	The People who were at the Party Friends & Family member
The Party was Nice ✓	We did following at the Party Party ✓

Homework 22 February 2022

Writing and Presenting
 Write 3 Paragraphs about your birthday party
 Tell us what happened use the dots-maps to tell your story
Not written

Corrections 22 February 2022

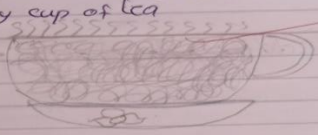
Milk
Hygiene

My birthday party
 The party happened on the 9th July 2021 at 4938 extension 12 Dierenhoutesch
 The people who were at the party were my friends Leo, Leo, Zoë, Zoë, Lina and Dave etc
 Mom and dad and my cousins Tine, So, Lefak, Khuma and Ppha
 We did the following at the party first we ate breakfast and dessert a delicious treat then we went to the party and played games that we came home and my house was decorated with balloons and it was bright and beautiful. Afterwards my friends and family sang a birthday song for me and I blew the candles
 The party was amazing because I enjoyed myself. All my friends came and they bought me presents my cousins bought me a bicycle mom and dad bought me a dog and I called it Lucy.

9.8 Annexure H

Milk
Hygiene

step 1: Add water in the kettle
 step 2: Boil the water inside the kettle
 step 3: Add teabag to the mug
 step 4: Add 2-3 teaspoons of sugar to the mug
 step 5: Once the kettle has boiled add water to the mug and leave it for 2-3 minutes
 step 6: Remove the teabag from the mug Add milk if preferred
 step 7: Enjoy cup of tea



Activity: 15 22 February 2022

Writing and presenting
 Essay: the birthday party
 The party happened Not written!