

**Grade 11 Learners' Speaking Skills in Sepedi Home Language classroom at
Bogwasha Circuit, in Sekhukhune East District, Limpopo Province, South
Africa**

By

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DISSERTATION

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Matlebjane Mmalahla Rebecca; my wife, Matlebjane Tshegofatso and my learners through whom I managed to complete the study.

SIGNATURE

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation titled: “**Grade 11 Learners’ speaking skills in Sepedi Home Language classroom at Bogwasha Circuit, in Sekhukhune East District, Limpopo Province, South Africa**” submitted to the University of Limpopo, for the degree of Master of Education in Language Education has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this institution or any other university; that it is my work and all the sources that I have used have been acknowledged.

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I would like to give thanks to the Almighty God for having blessed me with the wisdom, knowledge, skills and strength to persevere in my studies.

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ABSTRACT

South African schools under the Department of Basic Education (DBE) have language education as part of the curriculum. The DBE introduced the study of home languages as a measure to preserve culture, traditions and values of indigenous languages and drive transformation agenda. Sepedi Home Language (SEPHL) is a subject that is taught in most Bapedi communities in the Limpopo Province and partly in some provinces such as Gauteng and Mpumalanga. The subject is concerned with language education of the SEPHL. It is predominantly taught as a home language in schools. According to Education (2019), home languages refer to a learners' mother tongue or a home language that is spoken in a particular setting and promotes abstract reasoning. The aim of this study is to investigate the speaking skills of learners in learning to speak fluently in Sepedi Home Language. The study draws from the theory of phenomenology. The framework is concerned with traditions of philosophy which aims to reflect on human experience (Irene & Albine, 2018). The approach attempts to explain language experiential meanings as they occur and are shaped by language, cognitive sensibilities, social, personal, and cultural preunderstandings (Van Manen and Adams, 2018). The study employed the qualitative research methodology as the founding foundation. The study constitutes a population of 32 schools from which 2 were sampled. This study investigated the speaking skills of learners in learning to speak fluent SEPHL in Bogwasha Circuit Sekhukhune East District in Limpopo, South Africa.

Learners are expected to perform exceptionally well in-home languages as they are mainly the languages, they speak at their homes regularly. However, with the dominance of English as a prestigious and global language predominantly used as a medium of instruction, learners often struggle with their home languages when it comes to acquiring vital language skills such as speaking, reading and writing. The study found that Sepedi Home Language speaking skills are adversely influenced by various factors such as technology, dialect, influence of other languages, Language use and code-switching in the classroom.

Key words: Code-switching, Home Languages, Indigenous languages, Influence, Language learning, Language use, Mother tongue, Phenomenology, Sepedi Home Language.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

SEPHL	Sepedi Home Language
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DBELP	Department of Basic Education Language Policy
LOLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
SASA	South African School Acts
NS	Northern Sotho
DBE	Department of Education

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is a summary of what the study set out to uncover. It introduces the study by outlining all its aspects and the objectives it sought to establish. The chapter provides an overview of the research study and the background. It introduces the research topic, context, significance and clearly states the research problem, purpose, and objectives. In a nutshell, the chapter is a brief outline of the study undertaken.

1.2 BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

Background and motivation are often the first aspects of research, which outline the introduction of the topic and set out the intentions of the study in a brief pattern (Insight, 2020). According to Robins, Robert and Crystal (2021), language learning is a process of indulging in the study of a language for educational purpose, interactional, and social. This study intended to explore issues of oral proficiency in Sepedi Home Language (SEPHL), also known as Sepedi *Leleme La Gae*. In SEPHL subject, there are unique issues that influence language learning and teaching. SEPHL is a language predominantly taught in rural communities of the Limpopo Province and some parts of the country such as (Gauteng and Mpumalanga) as a home language. Although the language is homely spoken in the communities as a mother tongue, it is becoming unpopular amongst learners. Consequently, learners use English, which is learnt as a second language more often than their home language. They communicate and use English in every activity they participate in.

The frequent use of the English language in rural communities and classrooms amongst learners is resulting in poor oral proficiency of SEPHL as a subject taught in schools. Learners learn a language when they use it and interact through it in their daily activities (Stephany, Dunstan & Audrey, 2015). This means that learners are unable to learn SEPHL effectively because they seldom use it to interact and

communicate. This study intended to explore speaking skills of Grade 11 SEPHL learners.

It is expected that learners would perform outstandingly in their home languages. Contrary to this, most learners have not been performing satisfyingly in SEPHL as they are unable to speak the language fluently despite it being their home language. This study will be beneficial to educators who are teaching Sepedi. It will enhance the performance of learners in the home language by providing viable solutions to the problem and assist the Department of Education in coordinating an improvement plan on the subject.

1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM

The Grade 11 learners in the Sekhukhune East Bogwasha Circuit struggle to express themselves fluently and eloquently in their home language of SEPHL, which is taught in schools as a designated subject. They cannot speak fluently through their home language because they seldom use it to communicate and interact with each other both in schools and at their homes.

According to the Language in education policy, Sepedi is classified as a home language. In this context, it is the language used at home. However, there are communities that learn Sepedi Home Language in schools although, it is a second language to them. This reality is confined in the ethnical identity of groups that identify themselves as Bapulana, Balovedu, and Bahananwa. This can be attributed to the controversy of learners not performing well in their home language, as it may be a home language on the basis of policy prescripts.

Learners are using English for communication and in every activity, they participate in promoting its popularity and its status as a gate-keeping language in the world. This has made the learning of SEPHL unpopular amongst learners and teachers. This is a problem that is prevalent in South African schools. Learners find it difficult to learn home language in the classrooms because they are used to speaking in the English language, which is a predominantly used language in the world.

As a result, this dents the performance of learners in their home language results. The problem poses an educational need that should alarm language teachers, curriculum

advisors and districts at large in the education fraternity. In most cases, learners read, write, and speak fluently in a language that they use frequently. It is commonly known that English has become a dominant language in communities. Consequently, learners struggle to construct meaningful sentences in the SEPHL without inducing words and phrases from the English language.

1.4 LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature review is an integral part of writing an academic dissertation. It is a summary of the work that has been done in relation to the field of study that a researcher is working on. A literature review is a depiction of the researcher's knowledge about the field in which the study is being carried out, which includes paradigms, frameworks and phenomena (Randolph, 2020). This explanation implies that every dissertation should have a review of literature to follow the correct route. In a nutshell, literature review is a legitimate and publishable scholarly document (LeeCompte and Colleagues, 2017).

The literature review was conducted based on the definitions provided above as a foundation. The research investigated articles, book sections, journals and literature that have been conducted in relation to the topic of this research. This study followed the phenomenological research approach because it is qualitative research. The study was concerned with the inability of learners to speak fluently using SEPHL in classrooms because of not using the language to interact in their lives as they heavily rely of English as a medium for communication.

1.4.1 THE EFFECT OF DOMINANT LANGUAGES LIKE ENGLISH ON THE ACADEMIC JOURNEY OF LEARNERS IN HOME LANGUAGES

This study focused on how dominant languages such as English impact on the academic journey of learners in home language studies. The study presented its findings on the speech patterns of learners and examined how their speech varied from how they write due to poor language proficiency. The study found that learners tend to write according to how they speak (Stephany, Dunstan & Audrey, 2019). This study intended to look at how English contributes to the inability of Grade 11 learners to write and speak fluently in SEPHL in the classroom.

1.4.2 THE INFLUENCE OF DOMINANT LANGUAGES ON AFRICAN LANGUAGES

This research focused on the influence of other languages on African languages. It has been noted in research that language dialects and dominant languages such as English have a major impact on languages in the world. Dominant languages are more likely to influence how other languages are spoken and used (Aijmer & Melchers, 2017). They state that dialects have a special position in the world as a way of expressing a variety of origins of people speaking the same language. People can speak the same language differently. This is called a language dialect.

Aijmer and Melchers (2017) regard the foregoing as a reason for the development of new dialects in most languages. According to their study, an important aspect of the increasing dominance of language dialects in the expanding circle of communication is a great threat to the standard languages. This statement is substantiated by Whiteman (2019) who proffers that dialects and influential languages impact on writing, speaking, and reading. The article examined the concern among educators with learners' inability to produce what is referred to as an acceptable written standard language in classrooms. The phenomenon of poor oral proficiency is also prevalent amongst the Grade 11 SEPHL learners.

1.4.3 LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT

A study on how learners learn a language was conducted by (Frederic, 2021). According to the study, language learning is an ongoing activity that commences at the early stages of development and continues all through the development journey of a child. This study examined how learners learn language. The study posits that learners learn language through interactions to establish relationships with family members and friends (Frederic, 2021). The study emphasises the significance of using the child's knowledge and experience of the first language to build knowledge of the second language. The knowledge of the first language is crucial for learning other languages.

The study correlates with the current study, which aimed to establish why learners struggle to express themselves fluently in SEPHL, which is their home language in accordance with language in education policy. The article was reviewed because it contains vital aspects of language learning such as how learners learn language in

schools. The study therefore suggested that Grade 11 learners need to have a solid base of their home language to develop knowledge.

1.4.4 THE INFLUENCE OF DIALECTS ON STANDARD LANGUAGES WITHIN SOUTH (AFRICAN) SOCIETIES

An article by Gough (2020) examined the influence of language dialects in South African societies. It argues that dialects are dominant in South African societies, amongst people from different linguistic and ethnic backgrounds, especially in black communities. The article explains that language dialects give rise to new language structures and forms. As a result, learners often disregard the official language because they eventually become at ease with using their dialects.

With language dialects being dominant in our communities, it means learners will be at ease with using the language than the latter, SEPHL. According to Lanham (2018), dialects also have a strong influence on South African languages, and enormous stock of dialects have been adopted into our communities. This is indicated by the pervasiveness of people who speak the same language differently from the same communities. The Grade11 learners doing SEPHL tend to rely heavily on their dialect to communicate. This inhibits their ability to communicate in the formal language.

1.4.5 THE EFFECTS OF HOME LANGUAGE LEARNING ISSUES ON STANDARDISED LANGUAGE LEARNING

Language learning is a crucial factor in the academic journey of learners. It is usually clouded by difficulties which learners and teachers encounter in the classroom when learning either a home language or second language (Craig, 2020). The study explained that teachers are puzzled by the problems many of their learners have in mastering home languages in classrooms. The study also revealed that learners struggle to learn home languages due to lack of motivation, anxiety; inefficient language learning strategies, and learning style differences. The research explains that learners do not learn home language effectively because of not having enough information on the purpose of language learning.

1.4.6 IDENTIFICATION OF THE KNOWLEDGE GAP

A thorough literature review has been done on various studies related to the topic. Although the topic has been studied extensively, numerous studies based their findings mainly on other foreign languages such as English and other international

languages. As a practitioner in the learning of African languages, the researcher deemed it necessary that an extensive study be conducted on why grade 11 learners struggle to speak fluently in SEPHL. This is to ensure that this study becomes centralised to the challenges prevalent in teaching and learning of SEPHL amid the dominance of the English and the prevalence of dialects in communities.

1.4.7 ROLE OF THEORY IN THE STUDY

Theory forms a critical part of this research. It formed the foundation of how the arguments in this paper were constructed.

Theories serve as frameworks from which researchers can pin down the understanding of complex issues. They act as perspectives that can be used to create and give meaning to complex phenomenon. A theory serves as lenses from which definitions are drawn and predictions about a phenomenon are formulated (Neves, 2019).

This research paper was founded on the theory of phenomenology. Phenomenology is an approach to a qualitative paradigm that is based on certain traditions of philosophy which aims to reflect on human experience. Van Manen and Adams (2018) state that this approach attempts to explain language experiential meanings as they occur and are shaped by language, cognitive sensibilities, social, personal, and cultural pre-understandings. This approach can be used to examine the unique nature of any educational experience or lived phenomenon (Irene & Albine, 2018). Through the lenses of this theory, the issue of learners not being able to express themselves fluently in SEPHL can be traced to their social and cultural surrounding where learners come from communities that are inclined to using English as a preferred language than the latter.

This approach emphasises the importance of experience as observed by Clark (2020). It means a researcher using this approach will look at a phenomenon as an integral part of research. This approach is practical in qualitative research.

This research was based on the experiences of the researcher and social factors that were observed throughout the study. Phenomenological methods of research include observations and interviews (Corben, 2020). The researcher developed

phenomenological research questions to establish the facts of the study and drew conclusions from the answers and experiences that were observed concerning the problem. The theory was applied in all aspects of the study. This include how information was gathered, analysed, and interpreted. All the aspects of research were looked upon through the lenses of the selected theory.

The desired theory was used to pin down the phenomenon. It was used to predict and define concepts that were experienced in the study in its natural setting, which in this case was a classroom. The experiences observed were used to draw conclusions and interpret the phenomenon of why learners are unable to speak fluently in SEPHL during oral presentations and in the classrooms.

1.5 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The research purpose is a statement of “why” the study is being conducted or the intention of the study (Clark, 2020). The intention of the research paper might be to identify or to explain a concept or to elaborate or predict a phenomenon.

The study intended to examine Grade 11 learners speaking skills in SEPHL classroom at Bogwasha Circuit, Sekhukhune East District of Limpopo Province.

1.5.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Why are learners unable to speak fluently in SEPHL in classrooms?

What is the influence of spoken language on standard language?

What is the effect of language in education policy on SEPEDI?

What are the challenges of speaking fluent SEPEDI?

1.5.2 SUB-RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How can teachers improve teaching and learning of SEPHL?

How can learners improve writing and speaking fluency in SEPHL?

What is the purpose of learning SEPHL?

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.6.1 RESEARCH APPROACH

This research was based on the qualitative case study approach. A qualitative approach involves gathering and analysing non-statistical data to understand

concepts, opinions, or experiences, which can be utilised to collect insights into a phenomenon and create new ideas for research (Bhandari, 2022). This is a relevant approach to this study because it deals with human beings. This research paradigm is concerned with the experience of participants in their own setting (Clark, 2020). This means that this study deeply considered the views of participants to derive primary information that shaped the findings of this research. This research combined all the qualitative research data collection methods to establish accurate and reliable information about the study.

1.6.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

This research design is usually adopted by researchers that are interested in studying of human experiences and their surroundings (Cohen, 2018). This study followed the case study research design by formulating research questions that were addressed through the cases, which the researcher went through when collecting and analysing data. The design was preferred because of its nature that allowed the researcher to deal with the phenomenon in its social context and through lived experiences. It allowed the researcher to study the phenomenon in its natural setting. In this case, the study was conducted in the classrooms of SEPHL, which was the natural setting of the phenomenon.

1.6.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM

A research paradigm is based on the belief of the researcher pertaining what constitutes reality and how knowledge can be understood. This study was vested in constructivism. This research paradigm states that reality is subjective, and that this reality can only be partially understood because it is constructed in the minds of individual people (Pretorius, 2024). Based on this paradigm, reality is individually constructed through social, cultural, and historical contexts. Constructivists embrace the value-laden nature of research, emphasising reflexivity and ethical responsibility, and valuing the co-construction of knowledge with participants (Pretorius, 2024). Constructivists encourage the co-construction of knowledge with participants and embrace the value-laden aspect of research, emphasising ethical responsibility and reflexivity. The constructivist paradigm is elected for its nature that allows the researcher to follow qualitative research approach.

1.6.4 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

1.6.4.1 POPULATION

Population means a group of people the research will be conducted on. It is primarily the people who were the focus of the study. A research population is also known as a group of individuals that have similar characteristics or trait. Another study substantiates the above definition of population as a set or group of people and units on which the findings of the research are to be applied (Alex & Nancy, 2021).

This study was conducted in Sekhukhune East Bogwasha Circuit. The Bogwasha Circuit is situated at Ga Sekhukhune in the East District. It constitutes a total number of 32 schools. The study focused on two sampled schools from the Circuit. The two schools were referred to as **School A** and **School B** to protect their identity in line with ethical consideration procedures. The process of selecting the schools was mainly influenced by accessibility.

The first school was preferred because it is a place of work for the researcher and the second school is proximal to the location where the researcher lives. This study focused on Grade 11 learners doing SEPHL from the sampled schools. School A has a total of 105 Grade11 learners while school B has a total of 60 learners in the same grade. The study also included one educator for SEPHL from each sampled school and one curriculum advisor from the Circuit. Therefore, the total population of the study was 163 individuals.

1.6.4.2 SAMPLING

Sampling is a process of narrowing down the desired group or items that a research will be conducted on to make it possible for the researcher to obtain information easily (Alicia, 2020). The research adopted the purposive sampling method. The purposive sampling method implies that the researcher will choose a specific group of people as the population of the study based on the desired outcome.

According to Tarhedoost (2016), "in order to answer a research question it is impossible for researchers to be able to collect information from all existing cases". This means that it is necessary for a researcher to identify a case upon which the study will be based. A purposive sampling was selected for this study to ensure that the researcher accessed credible information from the selected case as it would have

been impossible to study all the cases, as stated by Tarhedoost (2016). A sample is a group of units of analysis in the study about whom data are provided (Alex, 2021).

Seven learners were selected from each of the two schools as participants. The selection criterion was based on the purposive sampling method. In this case, sampling was based on the academic performance of learners. The researcher administered a pre-assessment task in the form of unprepared speech (Oral) in which learners were graded using the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) rubric.

Based on the outcome of the assessment, the researcher selected three exceptional learners, three moderate and four inadequate learners to participate in the study. Consequently, the study comprised seven learners who were purposively sampled, two educators teaching SEPHL and one subject advisor, which led to a population of (10) individuals.

TABLE 1

The sample of participants

Targeted number of participants	Number of learners	Number of teachers	Number of subject advisors
Stats	7	2	1
Number of schools	2		

1.6.5 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection is a process of collecting important data pertaining to a phenomenon. It follows various steps and processes that are relevant to the research approach (Eric, 2015). In qualitative research, data are collected through interviews, case studies, focus groups, observation and open-ended surveys and questionnaires (Korstjens, 2018). This research combined two methods of collecting data, namely; semi-structured interviews, and non-participant-observations.

1.6.5.1 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

This study adopted semi-structured interviews as a data collection method. Semi-structured interviews involve asking the participants open-ended questions about a phenomenon under study (Bandari, 2019). The responses of the participants may compel the researcher to pose a follow-up-question to ensure that the relevant data is attained. Interviews were conducted as a primary means of collecting data. The data attained from the interviews were used to draw conclusions using the observed data, which were gathered through observations. Interview questions were developed and given to the participants. Semi-structured interviews are based on subjective questions, which are not conclusive. The researcher may use the responses to draw new conclusions (Daniel, 2018).

1.6.5.2 NON-PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

There are two types of observational techniques: direct observation, where the researcher is an unbiased, passive outside observer who is not involved in the phenomenon of interest (as in case research), and participant observation, where the researcher is an active participant in the phenomenon and their inputs or mere presence affects the phenomenon being studied (as in action research) (Edexcel, 2021). During the oral activities, the researcher observed how learners use language to present their ideas in the classroom. Moreover, observation involves directly and systematically observing and capturing measurable behaviour, actions, and responses in natural or contrived settings without attempting to interfere or manipulate what is being observed (McLeod, 2024). The researcher focused mainly on the choice of words to determine whether learners pay attention to their language usage in terms of speaking the standardised language rather than using their dialects, which are inherent in their language.

1.6.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Data were analysed through the lens of the qualitative research approach. The analytical method used was thematic analysis. This paradigm has three methods of data analysis. They are data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing. Data reduction is an analytical method of reducing the collected data into crucial aspects that can be used to draw the conclusion of a research.

Data display is the second step which goes beyond data reduction by providing a compressed picture of the information that leads to conclusion drawing. The data are commonly displayed in themes. In the third step, which is conclusion drawing, conclusions are finalised once the analysis is complete by taking a step back to assess what the analysed data mean and the implications on the research question (Bhandari, 2022). This study combined the above three steps to analyse the data collected accurately.

1.6.7 INTERPRETIVE ANALYSIS

It is necessary to interpret observations through the lenses of the participants who are a part of the social situation. Two degrees of interpretation must take place. Seeing or experiencing the phenomenon at the first level entails using the subjective viewpoints of the social participants. The second level entails comprehending the significance of the participants' experiences to present a "thick description" or a rich narrative account of the phenomenon of interest that can explain why participants behaved in a particular way.

1.7 QUALITY CRITERIA

This study fell within the qualitative research paradigm. It addressed the quality criteria of the study through the following aspects:

1.7.1 CREDIBILITY

Interpretive research should be credible and believable to readers. The content of the research should be believable (Daniel, 2018). This can be enhanced by providing evidence of further engagement in the specific field of research. The recordings from interviews were used to establish the facts of the research to enhance credibility. Another method that can be used to ensure credibility is triangulation. This is using many sources to merge information from individual studies into one cohesively.

1.7.2 TRANSFERABILITY

A study should be able to resonate in the same way with people from different educational settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The work of this study will be transferable to other educational settings such as circuits and classrooms from other home language lessons because it deals with issues that are commonly experienced.

1.7.3 DEPENDABILITY

This is the state of being trustworthy and reliable (Longman, 2017). Interpretive research can be dependable when it is authentic and reliable (Lorde, 2018). Other researchers can use a different set of data and research methods to arrive at the same conclusion as this study because it followed all the relevant research approaches.

1.7.4 CONFIRMABILITY

This is the aspect in which the findings of a research can be independently confirmed by those that took part (participants) in a study (Irene & Albine, 2018). The findings of this research were based on the data derived from the participants. The researcher ensured that all the data from the participants was considered, including the data from the participants who disagreed with the researcher.

1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study will be beneficial to Limpopo Department of Education, teachers, and stakeholders in the quest to improve learners' fluency in speaking SEPHL.

It will benefit curriculum advisors in supporting SEPHL teachers on how they can teach language skills such as speaking.

The study will encourage the improvement of curriculum implementation, in such a way that the curriculum will provide enough time for oral presentation to help learners in developing proficient oral skills.

Most importantly, it will also increase the confidence of learners during oral presentations.

This study will also clarify some misconceptions and inaccurate analysis of the sociolinguistic realities which somehow misinformed the policy prescripts in classifying Sepedi as a home language.

1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical consideration in research means abiding by the research ethics and principles when conducting a study (Roth, 2019). Ethics are guidelines meant to guard the conduct of researchers in their study (Akarangana, 2016). It is vital that researchers consider all the ethical principles when conducting research to ensure that it is done within the confines of the ethics.

1.9.1 PERMISSION TO CONDUCT THE STUDY

The researcher ensured that permission was obtained from the University of Limpopo Turfloop Research Ethics Committee before conducting the research. The participants were protected, respected, and valued. The ethical clearance to conduct the research was sought from the University of Limpopo before undertaking the research. All the participants of this study were asked for permission to participate in the study by the researcher through letters, emails, and other communication platforms.

1.9.2 INFORMED CONSENT

Participants need to be informed on the nature of the study which they will participate in as part of ethical principles (Akarangana, 2016). The researcher informed the participants about the nature of the study through a consent form, which was intended to protect them from any form of exploitation in the study. The participants were made aware that they would not be held liable for any loss or penalty that might have occurred during the study. Participants could withdraw their participation in the study any time they wanted.

1.9.3 RESPECT, DIGNITY AND STANDARD OF CARE

Participants were treated with respect, dignity and care. The researcher ensured that the well-being of participants was protected throughout the study. The researcher disclosed all the information pertaining to the study as part of respecting participants and explained the voluntary nature of their participation. The principle of dignity dictates that a researcher must work to protect research participants' autonomy while ensuring the disclosure of all the fundamental aspects of the study (Jennifer, Grace & Paras, 2022).

1.9.4 PRIVACY, ANONYMITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Data that are obtained through anonymity must be protected to ensure that there is never a link between the information and the participants (Lancaster, 2017). The identity of the participants was not revealed. Participants were assigned pseudonyms to protect their identity. Confidentiality relates to a condition in which a researcher knows the identity of a research subject but takes an initiative to guard against revealing that identity to others. Confidential documents such as interview responses and communications with the participants were kept confidential. This is because people participating in any study have a view that their information will be treated in a

confidential manner (Lancaster, 2017). The information obtained from this study was encrypted to protect names and identities when discussing the findings.

1.9.5 BENEFITS AND RISKS/HARM

This is the most crucial aspect of ethical considerations. It ensures that participants are protected from any form of harm throughout the study. Participants need to be assured that the study they are participating in will not bring them any harm or put them at risk (Creswell, 2014). Participants were assured that they would be protected from any form of harm. Their safety was guaranteed.

1.10 SUMMARY

This chapter introduced the research topic and outlined the background of the study as well as the research problem in context. Moreover, it provided the research layout focusing on aspects of methodology, data collection and analysis methods and ethical considerations pertaining to the research. In a nutshell, the chapter served as an overview of the study, which was used as the basis for all the subsequent chapters. All methodological and data analysis aspects were discussed in this chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter introduced the study. This chapter focused on the work of other researchers in the same school of thought. It outlined all the resources that the researcher read pertaining to the topic. The literature review entailed a scrutiny of book sections, articles, journals, and other related materials. This chapter dealt precisely with materials that were consulted on the topic of the research. The chapter also illustrated the relationship between the consulted literature and the topic of the research by drawing patterns that are similar and outlining the shortcomings which the researcher sought to cover. In this chapter, the literature review was presented in themes.

The approach allowed the researcher to establish a relationship between the findings of this study and the existing knowledge. In short, the theoretical framework was incorporated in the literature review, depicting the significance of electing the role of theory in the literature review and how it enhanced the study.

2.2 THE DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION POLICY ON EDUCATION

The researcher reviewed the Department of Basic Education's Language Policy in the context of the research to establish the origins of home languages in South African schools and to also indicate the position of the policy on home languages. This was significant in drawing the purpose and the significance of teaching home languages in the said schools.

The language policy in South African schools is informed by the principles of the South African Constitution and the South African School Act (SASA). The South African Constitution in collaboration with the South African School Act state that all official languages have the same status in education and society (Constitution, 1996). As such, they should enjoy equal rights, respect, and opportunities. This is applicable to all the official languages in the country. This means that no language is superior to the

other. In relation to the study, the Grade 11 Sepedi Home Language (SEPHL) learners have the constitutional mandate to learn in their home language.

2.3 CONSTITUTIONAL IMPERATIVES

The founding principles of the Constitution acknowledge the following languages as the official languages in the Republic of South Africa: Sepedi, Setswana, Sesotho, Tshivenda, Siswati, Afrikaans, Xitsonga, English, IsiXhosa, IsiNdebele, and Isizulu (Constitution, 1996). Noteworthy, South African Sign Language is also recognised as an official language in South Africa.

The Constitution affirms the need to use African languages as a form of addressing injustices of the past by promoting the use of the languages across the curriculum in schools. To meet this provision, learners are taught in their mother tongue at an early age of their educational journey (Education, 2019). This is implemented because studies have established that mother-tongue instruction and academic achievement point to a sterling correlation between the two (Myburgh, Poggenpoel & Van Rensburg, 2017). The Constitution thus states that all languages must enjoy equal status and must be treated with parity. This has significant implications for the determination of language policy in South African schools.

2.4 THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOL ACT ON LANGUAGE POLICY IN EDUCATION

Section 6 of the South African Schools Act (SASA) in collaboration with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA) (1996b) provides prerogatives in relation to the determination of language policy in public schools. Most importantly, it confers the powers to determine the language policy on the school governing body (SGB). The SGB has the prerogative to elect the schools' language policy albeit subject to the Constitution, South African School Act, and any applicable law. This means that the determination of the language policy in schools is limited to all the twelve official languages in accordance to the Constitution.

With reference to the both the Constitution and the SASA, it can be concluded that the Department of Basic Education policy on language is totally based upon the two principles as the cornerstones. The Constitution further prescribes that those

indigenous languages be used as tools for redress in the country. Hence, it affords them equal rights with other languages which had superiority prior 1994. In this regard, that is why learners are introduced to the study of home languages. Home languages refer to the language that is used frequently in communities where a learner resides (Education, 2019).

This research used the section of the Department of Basic Education Language Policy to explain some of the crucial factors involved in teaching of SEPHL as one of the twelve official languages according to the Constitution.

2.5 SEPEDI ON HEGEMONY

A study was conducted pertaining the influence of Sepedi on English. The study states that Sepedi has a significance influence on how home people speak English, which contributes to what is called black South African English (Abram, 2015). The researcher states that the superimposition of Sepedi speech sounds on South African English speech sounds plays a greater role in creation of the variety called Black South African English.

The study in question was selected mainly because it looked at issues of oral proficiency. It examined the challenges of proficiency between two distinct languages and the relationship which exist in terms of how one language impacts the other when it comes to oral proficiency. The study explored the difficulties encountered by learners in their articulation of English words because learners usually get exposed to English speaking in the formal learning context only.

The study found that the influence is caused by the inability of black learners who speak Sepedi to pronounce English speech sounds. Home speakers of Sepedi have difficulties in the pronunciation of English consonant cluster forms (Abram, 2015). Furthermore, the study found that Sepedi speakers are faced with the difficulty of mother-tongue influence, which has a significant impact on every language they speak. In a nutshell, this study established how Sepedi influences how learners speak English. The study put more emphasis on vowels, morphemes, and pronunciation of words.

In a nutshell, according to Abram (2015), speakers of the Sepedi language usually face difficulties in expressing English words. This is caused by the difference in language structures and proponents such as vowels, morphemes, and pronunciation of words. The study attempted to address issues of oral proficiency in the context of English as the target language.

This study focused on the oral proficiency towards English as a first additional language. However, it did not acknowledge the difficulties encountered in mother-tongue languages in the context of South Africa, which are called home/African Languages. It can be argued that the study is more aligned to English as the only language. Despite that, it drew a significant relationship between two languages, which are Sepedi and English. The proponents can be used in the current study.

The relationship that can be drawn between this study and the topic of this research is that they both focus on oral proficiency. The study under review examined how learners struggle to speak fluent English because of the superimposition of Sepedi speech sounds. The current study also attempted to explore why grade 11 learners struggled to speak fluently in SEPHL, which is known as Sepedi in social and academic contexts.

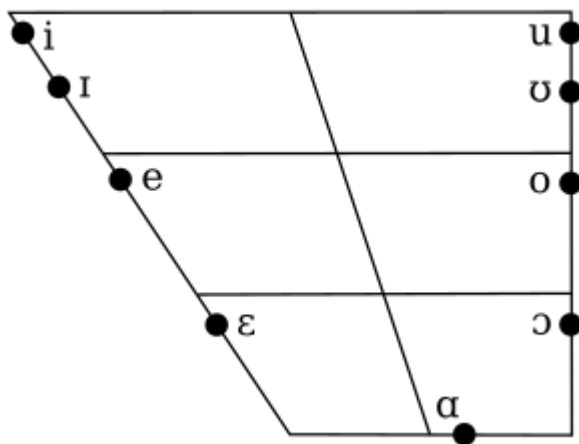
2.6 SEPEDI VOWEL CHART (KOTZE', 2018)

Vowels are a significant part of language. Without vowels, humans cannot speak, sing, or learn to read (Yang, 2022). They form the basic knowledge of every language. This means that it is crucial to note that to have a clear understanding of every language, it is also important to know about its vowels. Kotze' (2018) used the study of vowels to understand speech patterns in languages, precisely Sepedi.

The study insinuates that vowels are an integral part of understanding and speaking every language. This assertion is corroborated by the Department of Basic Education's release letter, which states the importance of vowels. It states that vowels form part of the nuclei of syllables, which provide clues for learners to have a better understanding of other speakers and further posits that vowels help learners to speak fluently (Education, 2019)

Sepedi has seven basic vowels. In addition, there are four other raised vowels, which totals to eleven vowels in Sepedi (Kotze', 2018). This study explains how vowels contribute to speech patterns. It states that vowels are at the centre of language speaking and writing. It means that learners use vowels in every aspect of language use. This can be either when speaking or writing. Vowels are central to using every language. In this case, having little knowledge of a language's vowel system can deter the understanding of its words, messages and ultimately difficulties of speaking it. According to Kotze' (2018), raised vowels in Sepedi are a result of vowel assimilation.

The diagram below shows the seven basic Sepedi vowels:



Assimilation takes place because vowels pronounced at a raised tongue position are pronounced at a lower tongue position. In this study, Kotze' (2018) found that learners struggle to speak fluently because they do not have the full knowledge of the vowel system in the language they are learning or speaking. In this case, learners usually make a mistake of using vowels that are basic even when the sentence or speech requires the additional vowels, which are referred as 'raised' vowels. This process is called assimilation. The misappropriation of vowels can lead to poor oral proficiency.

Kotze's study acknowledges the importance of vowels in acquiring language competency. However, the study does not go into lengths to explain why learners may struggle to become competent in their home language. This is a gap that the current study sought to cover, that is, to bring an understanding of why learners struggle to speak fluently in Sepedi Home Language.

Kotze' (2018) wanted to show how having little knowledge of the vowel system of a certain language can deter the language proficiency of a person. This study was relevant to the present study as it provides insight into the deep underlying reasons why learners struggle with oral proficiency, particularly in Sepedi. The findings of this study might be used to support and draw more findings on why learners struggle to attain oral proficiency in their home language, which in the context of this research was SEPHL.

2.7 SPELLING AND ORTHOGRAPHY CHALLENGES (HAAS, 2022)

This study explains that there are problems of orthography in languages because of the distinctive nature of spoken language and written language. It explains that issues arise when learners are confronted with the difference between spoken utterances and their written counterparts (Haas, 2022). Haas explains that written and spoken languages complement one another, hence, he explains orthography as:

A kind of bridge leading from the spoken norm to the written, or more specifically a set of rules allowing a person of a certain language group to transpose their spoken language into corresponding written ones. This indicates that there is a solid relationship between spoken and written language. Learners will be able to understand the written language if it corresponds with the spoken language.

This study further states that issues arise between phonetic transcription and what is termed “unphonetic spelling” in words such as “right”, “rite” “write” “wright” in the written language while in phonetic transcription their optical structure is identical (Haas, 2022). This indicates that phonetic transcription is aimed to show the acoustic qualities of spoken utterances, while written language refers more to meaning of those written utterances. In a nutshell, Haas (2022) states the reasons why learners struggle with oral proficiency by drawing a relationship between spoken and written language. The study asserts that learners usually struggle with oral proficiency when there exists a difference between the spoken and written language. In contrast, this study posits that learners will struggle to speak a language when there is no difference between the spoken and the written language.

This is not a novel phenomenon as it is evident in the Sepedi language where some words are not written according to how they are spoken or pronounced, which could cause speech deficiencies for speakers. This was also revealed by Aguikar and Barr (2020) who state that the difference between written and spoken language also serves as a barrier to proficiency in both home and foreign languages. This is a worthwhile study as it enriched the study under discussion. The study has proponents that can be used to explain why learners struggle to speak fluently in SEPHL.

2.8 THE DEVELOPMENT OF SEPEDI/SEPHL AS WRITTEN LANGUAGE (ESTERHUYSE, 2017)

This study examined the development of Sepedi as a written language. The study draws the difference between the period before 1929 and the period thereafter. According to Esterhuyse (2017), the orthography of Sepedi was standardised in 1929. The study examines the development of language systems that share a similar pattern with those of similar speech sounds.

The development of Sepedi over ages has resulted in its evolution. This has led to the formation of distinct language patterns, which are spoken by different people in communities (Lenkiu, 2017). As a result, the language becomes distinctive and varied across regions. Formations of new language patterns may result in people speaking the same language differently. This is observable in schools where SEPHL is taught as a first language. Learners from different communities speak and write the language differently. This can be attributed to a phenomenon called a dialect. Karien and Melchers (2017) state that dialects have a special position in the world as way of expressing a variety of origins of people speaking the same language. People can speak the same language differently. This is called a language dialect.

The relationship that can be drawn between the above study and the research topic under discussion is that they both sought to understand trivialities of language speaking. The study under review states that people speak and use the same language differently across regions because of dialect formation. This can be used to explain why learners struggle to express themselves in SEPHL, which is taught as the first language. Learners end up learning the subject through their dialects rather than using the standardised language.

This part of the study was vital in the current study, as it depicted the history of Sepedi. It further highlighted how the language evolved over ages and thus giving rise to the formation of different language dialects, which are dominant in communities. The limitation of the study is that it did not explain how the evolution of the language throughout its history affected how learners learnt and understood the language. This gap created a need for the study under discussion to uncover how the phenomenon impacts language learning, particularly SEPHL.

2.9 THE BABYTALK THEORY (TODD, 1974)

Todd based his study on the Babytalk theory. According to the study, pidgin speakers and children often only approximate the standard pronunciation in that they both rely on a high proportion of content words while a few function word classes are less rigid and that pronominal contrasts are often decreased (Todd, 1974). This study sought to depict how people draw words from other languages and fuse them with their language to form what is called a dialect. Consequently, the formal language loses popularity, which then leads to it being less spoken.

This study shows how languages become infused with new words over time. Todd (1974) indicates that people adopt words from other languages and use them interchangeably with their home language to communicate. This results in the main language changing patterns. According to this theory, as people talk, they develop novel words which then become infused into their language.

The theory does not explain how the process of infusing new words into the home language affects oral proficiency in any specific language. It only depicts how language patterns evolve over time because of the process. This creates a gap which needs to be explored and filled, which is to understand the issues encountered in language speaking. The current study intended to uncover the challenges related to oral proficiency. Though the theory has its own limitations, its proponents certainly added to the framework from which the researcher understood the phenomenon under study.

This study is relevant as it explains the theory that illustrates how people obtain words from various languages to form dialects, which they then use as standard language in their respective communities. This can be used to explain why learners cannot speak

fluently in SEPHL, as they frequently fuse words from other foreign languages in their speeches. In this study, the foreign language was English as it is the second language learners learn in schools different from their home language.

2.10 CODE-SWITCHING IN LANGUAGE SPEAKING

Auer (2023) studied code-switching in languages when people converse. Code-switching refers to alternating from one language of instruction to a different language of instruction the classroom (Education, 2010). The research was based on the codes of code-switching, conversation and beyond. In his thesis, he defines code-switching as speaking one language and momentarily alternating to another language (Auer, 2023). This means code-switching is when a speaker mixes languages in a single sentence. It is when a speaker begins a sentence in Sepedi and infuse English words at the end of the sentence.

The research established that code-switching hinders learners' language proficiency. In this case, it is not only learners who code-switch, teachers also find it convenient to code-switch when teaching. Auer attributes this to the dominance of the English language in society and most people often lack vocabulary in home/African languages.

Code-switching is a problem which is prevalent in multilingual contexts and evident in the Sepedi language, where speakers switch from Sepedi to English. This phenomenon is viewed as the change in discourse from one language to another. It could be regarded as a method to make up for poor language proficiency, which reflects a lack of vocabulary (Lenkiu, 2017). Since Sepedi-speaking people switch to English, it implies that they are not fluent in their home language; hence, they use the strategy of code-switching to compensate for their language inadequacy.

The study under review explains how code-switching emanates in languages. The tenets of the study can be applicable to various African languages. However, the study did not contextualise the phenomenon into the classroom context of language learning and teaching. This phenomenon was studied extensively to establish how it impacts the teaching and learning of SEPHL regarding oral proficiency.

This study was relevant to the research because it explains how code-switching contributes to learners and teachers not being able to speak fluently in home

languages. The findings of this study were used to draw findings and justify the patterns discovered in the study.

2.11 LEARNERS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE USE OF SEPEDI (LANGA, 2015)

This study investigated the attitude of learners towards the use of Sepedi, which is known as Sepedi *Leleme La Gae* in schools. It focused on how learners perceived their mother-tongue as compared to English, which is a language of learning and teaching. The study focused on learners' use of Sepedi in the classroom during learning and when communicating.

The researcher discovered that learners believed that their language is inferior compared to English and as such, they believed that they would learn more and gain knowledge when using English over their home language (Langa, 2015). The findings were that learners found it convenient to speak in English over Sepedi. The study recommended that efforts should be made to give African languages recognition and elevate them to the status of superior languages such as English (Langa, 2015).

The study uncovered that an attitude towards language contributes to a person's fluency in it. Langa (2005) found that learners would rather learn English over African languages. They hold a position that English is a superior language globally and thus view it as a benchmark of wisdom. On the contrary, they find their home languages as worthless and carrying little or no meaning at all. Subsequently, learners tend to look down on their languages and develop no willingness to learn them.

The assertions made by Langa's study are evident in classrooms and across communities. When children communicate among each other on various platforms, they use English over their home languages. This is not limited to children alone but also leaders in different institutions. They use English even when they are addressing people who speak their home language. This is due to the growing attitude of inferiority towards African languages.

The study does not explain where this attitude can be traced from. It only ascertains it as the reason why learners struggle in home languages, particularly African languages. Nonetheless, it made a significant contribution to uncovering why learners

struggle in their home languages, which added to the knowledge of the current research. The researcher used the findings when analysing the collected data.

This study was relevant because it portrays patterns that the researcher observed as part of the reasons that contribute to learners struggling to express themselves fluently in Sepedi *Leleme La Gae*, which is their home language.

2.12 WITGENSTEIN LANGUAGE USE THEORY (MORELL, 2020)

In his Language Use Theory, Wittgenstein states that languages represent our realities. Wittgenstein believed that language is an elastic, social, and ambiguous being that defies other definitions because of its complexity (Morell, 2020). The study posits that language is defined by how it is used in the daily lives of the people that speak it rather than the logical structures of it. The propositions of this study were that language competency and development relied heavily on its usage. People must use language to develop in it and thus become competent (Morell, 2020).

In a nutshell, the theory states that learners need to use language to learn it. Simply put, learners learn a language as they use it. Language learning does not only entail knowing and understanding language structures and its logic but also being able to use it to interact with people is another way to learning it (Aguikar & Barr, 2020). Hence, the theory is termed “language use”. Wittgenstein’s theory advocates interaction in a language (Morell, 2020). As people interact, they develop language competency.

The shortcomings identified in this theory include the observation that it does not explain why learners may struggle with their home language which they use every day in their lives. The theory does not account for the reality experienced in home language classrooms where learners do not perform well in their home language, which they use to interact in their daily lives. However, the framework it uses to explain why learners do not develop language competency explains why learners are unable to use language, alluding to examples such as the fear of making mistakes, which in turn makes them become less confident in using the language. This is evident in classrooms where learners usually become shy to partake in oral activities due to the discomfort in speaking a language. As a result, this results in their poor vocabulary, which in turn affects their language fluency. This study was used to defend and support

the current research, which focused on why learners are unable to express themselves fluently in SEPHL. This phenomenon can be attributed to learners not using the said language frequently.

2.13 THE IMPACT OF TASK FORMATS ON ORAL PROFICIENCY AND LEARNER INVOLVEMENT

Several assignments are created in task-based language learning from varied contexts in everyday communication. Learners of home languages may be subjected to varying levels of information-processing pressure depending on the type of work they are given (Qiu & Cheng, 2022). Consequently, it is important to take the kinds of roles and characteristics of the task formats into account while developing them. The study states that while the impacts of task formats on learner oral production have been studied in recent research, the engagement of pupils in various task types has received comparatively less attention.

The study states that it is crucial that attention be paid to learner involvement in task-based research because it can facilitate learning when learners are involved in task performance (Qiu & Cheng, 2022). In the study, the effects of interactive tasks and narrative tasks on oral production were examined. The study revealed that oral tasks boost learners' oral production. It also states that it is vital that language teachers design tasks that are orally orientated to boost the proficiency of learners. The assertion of this study is that learners struggle with oral production due to the absence of oral tasks in their learning processes (Qiu & Cheng, 2022). Therefore, it is significant that more oral-based tasks are introduced in language learning. The study recommended that oral-based tasks be at the center of language learning. Teachers need to develop oral-orientated tasks to engage learners into interactive learning, which would bolster their language skills as they complete tasks.

The study went to great lengths in explaining the importance of oral task-based teaching and learning in languages. However, it did not state which activities could be adopted to foster the initiative. It also did not indicate how this could be applied to different languages. Nonetheless, it makes a significant contribution in terms of bringing an understanding of why learners hardly attain oral proficiency.

The correlation of this study with the current one is that they were both concerned with oral production in learning home languages. As such, the reviewed study contributed significantly as it helped the researcher to answer why Grade 11 SEPHL learners struggle to express themselves fluently in their home languages in the classroom.

2.14 THE ADOPTION OF TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING TO BOLSTER LEARNERS' ORAL FLUENCY IN SCHOOL CONTEXT

A study by Rozaliya and Aprianti (2022) analysed the use of task-based language training in increasing students' oral proficiency in schools. In particular, the students were given four varied tasks: a sequencing assignment, a visual narration job, a question-and-answer learning activities, and a problem-solving activity. The participants were 28 pupils in the eleventh grade from a certain school. Six students were picked as the representatives from a total of twenty-eight pupils, and their speaking performance was evaluated in terms of segmental mistakes, speech level, and grammatical competency.

The results of the study showed that task-based language instruction helps learners become more fluent speakers. Students' speech production, particularly in terms of rhythm, segmentation, and speech pace, improved, along with responding favourably to the manifestation of task-orientated language (Eline & Fitri, 2022). The study found that task-based language teaching produces numerous facets of English pronunciation knowledge. Additionally, the results of their study showed that the students' engagement in speaking English was improved. According to this study, students should be exposed to and instructed in the various facets of pronunciation to improve their speaking abilities.

The above study was conducted to explore how oral proficiency could be enhanced through tasks. It found that tasks are crucial at the development of learner-oral proficiency in language learning. The study was relevant to the current study as it was concerned with speaking and fluency (Rozaliya & Aprianti, 2022).

The findings of this study could be contextualised into the research topic on why learners struggle to speak fluently in SEPHL. This could be attributed to lack of task-based activities.

2.15 HOME LANGUAGE AND EDUCATION (JEROEN SMITH, JANINE HUISMAN, KARINE KRUIJFF, 2019)

A study conducted by the “Education for All by 2015, will we make it?” showcased that effective teaching and learning is related with issues of language learning (Jeroen, Janine & Karine, 2019).

The report states that in most countries, more languages are spoken than are used as languages of teaching and learning. Consequently, learners are usually taught in foreign languages in schools instead of their mother tongue. The report further stated that learners acquired language and cognitive skills more readily in their home language and were then able to incorporate these to a commonly used national or formal language (Jeroen et al., 2019).

It is widely known that educational outcomes may be negatively affected if there exist a difference between the languages which learners speak at home and the languages used in the educational setting as a medium of instruction (Lufuno, Shumani, Madima & Makananise, 2022). This position is substantiated by numerous calls to decolonise education through introducing teaching and learning of designated subjects using home languages. Learners usually encounter difficulties in understanding the subject matter due to language barriers.

Empirical research indicates that learners who speak a different language from the language of instruction experience high dropout rates (Jeroen et al., 2019). This is a clear indication that learners struggle with their studies, not because they have curricula difficulties, but because the language of instruction can be attributed to their struggles. According to this report, although there seems to be a long way to travel, great progress is being made and there is increasingly a great deal of acceptance of multilingualism and mother-tongue instruction in schools/education (Jeroen et al., 2019). This would mean teaching the subject matter in home languages, which will require overhauling the curriculum to accommodate home languages.

This report was relevant to the current study, as it assessed the strands made by global communities in ensuring that mother-tongue languages are speedily shifted into formal languages of teaching and learning. In the context of SEPHL, it means attempting to introduce a curriculum, which will be learned and assessed in the language of the learners who speak it as their home language.

2.16 FUNCTIONAL THEORY OF LANGUAGE (HILLIDAY, 2020)

The functional theory of language views language as a necessary tool for establishing the meaning of our experiences and constructing our experiences into meaning. This assumption implies that language development depends on two intertwined views: Historically in human society and over a lifespan of individual users. In this regard, language has changed to primary human needs, which are called meta-functions (Hilliday, 2020). The ideational need to reflect on experience, the interpersonal aspect to act based on it and relate with others, and the textual to organise these meanings in a coherent and comprehensible way.

The functional nature of language is expressed not only in the sense that language is utilised as a tool to reach certain goals, but also in its very system in which lexicogrammatically, resources aid to understand meta-functions (Hilliday, Christie, Derewianka & Painter, 2018). The theory states that among learners, language learning occurs within uniform pressure as it does phylogenetically: different lexicogrammatically systems are learned not as a foundation of knowledge (Vinh-To, 2015). Instead, this develops as a process under the requirement for constructing experience into knowledge and responding to the environment from which one originates.

Based on the theory of language, learners learn language as a tool for survival. This is substantiated by the proposition that, language has changed to fulfil human needs, known as meta-functions (Hilliday, 2020). Consequently, this means that learners are more likely to learn a language which they believe is a tool they need for their survival.

In the modern era, the English language has evolved as a gatekeeping mechanism. This has made the language popular across the globe and has thus surpassed other languages to an extent that it went as far as overpowering people's home languages in their respective nations. This means that learners are inclined to learning and using English over their home languages as it is a tool for their needs. This can be used as a framework to understand why learners struggle to speak fluently in their home language (SEPHL) in the context of this research, which could be that learners do not develop this language as they do not perceive it as a tool they require.

2.17 ACADEMIC LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

Academic language proficiency refers to the acceptable level of communication and use of a certain language for teaching and learning. This is supported by Cummins (2018) who states that academic language proficiency means conversational proficiency and it is the formal language that people utilise to converse. Cummins further states that it is the standard language that is used for teaching and learning. It is the language a pupil requires to master content and to succeed in school (Aguikar & Barr, 2020). In a broader sense, language proficiency entails the ability to communicate, read, write and speak a certain language without any degree of difficulties.

It is important to have a common understanding of the meaning of the concept of academic language proficiency. This is central to understanding what is dealt with when researching issues related to oral proficiency. The provided definitions by the foregoing scholars provide a clear sense of the meaning of the skill to utilise language for teaching and learning.

In this regard, the above study gave a clear reference of what constitutes language proficiency. This study used the above definition to explain proficiency in the study, as one of the major proponents of this research was to investigate issues of language proficiency in a home language. To establish why learners struggle with language proficiency in a home language (SEPHL), it was vital that the concept proficiency be understood from an academic context. This made this study relevant to the research under discussion.

2.18 EFFECTS OF LIMITED VOCABULARY

It is crucial for pupils to attain a significant range of vocabulary as it is vital for communication. According to Adul and Remia (2013), learners will be confident in speaking and writing language if they have a significant range of the vocabulary needed. The inability to express themselves fluently in the language may ultimately result in them being demotivated to use the language. Hence, an improved vocabulary contributes to a learners' confidence in language speaking. Although SEPHL is a mother tongue, it is proven that most learners do not have vocabulary in the language. This can be attributed to the fact that English is a dominant language in schools, as it

is the language of teaching and learning. In South Africa, English is the most popular academic language that is utilised throughout lower grades to the university level, although it is not a home language for most students (Schleppgrell, 2012).

Misbah, Mohammed, Yunus and Ya'acob (2017) agree with Mohammed, Mazlan and Rajab (2015) that vocabulary deficiency can lead the learner to encounter trivialities in learning language skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing, including non-verbal means of representations and expressions that are used to communicate. This means that having a vocabulary deficiency result in badly written literacy, as students encounter difficulties in maintaining a cohesion of ideas due to the meaning being hardly communicated because of inaccurate language use in written tasks. As such, language teachers should teach vocabulary to equip learners with language skills required for academic success (Adul & Remia, 2013).

The recommendation of this study is that teachers should teach vocabulary as a foundation for teaching language skills. Vocabulary is at the centre of language learning. Without vocabulary, learners cannot speak, read, and listen with the acceptable standards (Mohammed et al., 2015).

The limitations of the foregoing studies are that their presumptions do not explain the context within which learners struggle to use their home languages, which are taught as home languages. This is the gap that the current study sought to cover. The study will not exist in isolation. It incorporated the findings and recommendations of other studies to give meaning to the research questions formulated for this study.

2.19 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

2.19.1 LANGUAGE

The Department of Basic Education (2010) defines language as “a means by which a person learns to organise experiences and thoughts”. Additionally, it suggests a synergistic interaction among the intellectual, affective, and social factors that influence school learning. The study of language transitioning's impacts, particularly on the teaching and learning of home/mother tongue languages, is crucial.

2.19.2 MOTHER TONGUE

A learner's mother tongue is a home language that is spoken in a particular setting and promotes abstract reasoning (Department of Education, 2010). Wepukhulu, Girma and Lee (2019) assert that children who are proficient in the fundamentals of their home tongue do better when learning other languages, especially those that are widely spoken, like English, which is the language of instruction in South African schools. The language may only be used among close friends and be limited to a small area.

However, it is how language is learned and how concrete and abstract thoughts are produced (Inge-Marie, 2017). There are twelve official languages in South Africa. Sepedi is one of the top five most widely used languages in communities (Stats, 2018). Mother tongue (home language) in schools is learned as a home language. It forms part of the curriculum. Although the languages are accorded an official status, they do not have the same status as their counterpart English. This is because schools use English as the language of teaching and learning. SEPHL is not popular among learners in schools. Learners tend to use English as their preferred mode of communication because of its popularity.

The status of a language contributes to how often it is used and spoken. With English being used as a language of teaching and learning, it gains the privilege to be used and spoken often by both teachers and learners in a classroom. Consequently, this has led to the development of an attitude of inferiority towards the speakers of home languages (Langa, 2015). This can be attributed to the reason why learners struggle speaks fluently in SEPHL, which is their home language.

2.19.3 FIRST LANGUAGE

According Karize, (2024) first language constitutes the language a person is most familiar with and most accustomed to speaking. Moreover, it is the language a person hears and eventually learns along their development. to First language refers to a compulsory language subject that learners have to study at that level (Education, 2020). In essence, a first language is mainly different from a home language. In the context of the study, the second language for participants in the study is English. They learn it as a first additional language at school level.

2.19.4 SECOND LANGUAGE

This refers to a non-compulsory language subject that may be studied by choice by learners at that level (Education, 2020). According to Research gate, (2020) second language refers to any other language that is learnt once the mother-tongue has been established. In a nutshell, is a language that is learned in addition to the language a person first learned as a young child.

2.19.5 DIALECT

A dialect is a regional language variety. It is a form of a language that is spoken in a particular part of the country or by a particular group of people (Cambridge dictionary,2019). In the context of the study, the dialect prevalent is Sekone. This is a regional variety of Sepedi. It is spoken in the Sekhukhune region and thus it has an effect towards the learning of Sepedi as a standard language in schools.

2.19.6 STANDARD LANGUAGE

A standard language is a form of a language that is primarily accepted as the norm or most prestigious variant, often used in formal settings such as education, media, and government. This language is typically characterized by its adherence to specific grammatical rules, vocabulary, and pronunciation that distinguish it from regional dialects or non-standard forms. The standardization of a language plays a crucial role in communication across diverse groups, ensuring mutual understanding and fostering a sense of national identity. Standard languages arise when a certain dialect begins to be used in written form, normally throughout a broader area than that of the dialect itself (Pavle,2024). In this study, the standard language is Sepedi.

2.19.7 OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

An official language refers to a formally accepted language by the government through the language board as the medium of communication for a certain group of people. An official language is a language given a special legal status in a particular country, state, or other jurisdiction, typically used for government administration, court proceedings, and official communications (Lenkiu, 2017). This designation often reflects historical, cultural, or political significance and can help unify diverse communities under a common linguistic framework (Education, 2019).

2.19.8 TRANSLANGUAGING

Translanguaging is the ability to move fluidly between languages and a pedagogical approach to teaching in which teachers support this ability. In translanguaging, students are able to think in multiple languages simultaneously and use their home language as a vehicle to learn academic language (Najjaro,2023).

2.19.9 LANGUAGE TRANSITION

Language transition is a transformation from using one language, which in most cases is the mother tongue, to a different language used for teaching and learning (Lenkiu, 2017). This means that language transitioning is a process in which learners change from one language to another during teaching and learning. All languages may be used concurrently, which is called trans-languaging (Education, 2019). Trans-languaging, as stated by Serbian, (2019), can be used interchangeably with transitioning. This idea is consistent with the UNESCO goal of gradually shifting to second language acquisition during the teaching and learning process, with an emphasis on the early stages of mother tongue acquisition. The strategy is backed by promoting inclusivity in educational practices for the overarching goal and objective of the Framework for Action 2030 and the United Nations (UN), as well as the language in schools' policy, in the context of South Africa (Education, 2019).

In South African schools, learners always transition from one language to another. This is mainly because South African schools have more than one language as part of curriculum where the first is commonly the home language, and the second language is referred as an additional language. In most cases, English is used as an additional language because it is dominantly the language of teaching and learning. Consequently, learners transition from the two languages in the school context and from their respective homes. This transition could be the reason why learners struggle to speak SEPHL fluently. Transitioning between two languages may alter the development of proficiency in the other language (Lufuno, Madima & Makananise, 2022). This process may result in learners mixing the languages that they use in transition. Lenkiu (2017) concurs that language transitioning which occurs as a need to adapt into a new language and culture can lead to language manipulation.

Although the studies mentioned above pattern the concept of language transitioning have gone to lengths in explaining how the process of language transitioning affects

the language of home speakers, they did not show how it relates to the school context or classrooms. The studies were concerned with language transitioning in the context of a cultural mix. Nonetheless, the findings and the definitions of the concepts in the studies were used to understand and explain similar patterns that arose in this research.

The researcher used the concepts of the study to pinpoint why learners struggle to speak fluently in SEPHL in schools. The study was relevant as it traced the issues of language proficiency to the concept of language transitioning, which is prevalent in South African schools where learners learn more than one language in the classroom. In the context of this study, learners learn SEPHL as the first language, and English as an additional language.

2.20 MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION (MI) OR LANGUAGE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING (LOTL)

The language that teachers use in the classroom to impart curriculum is known as the medium of teaching (Stein, 2020), whereas the language of instruction is the medium through which instruction and assessment take place (Education, 2019). These two ideas are related in their underlying principles and play a significant role in how well students succeed academically when learning any subject area, especially in multilingual society. According to Stein (2020), the language used in the classroom on a regular basis is called LOLT, or language of instruction.

This means that if the language of instruction is Sepedi, then a teacher should deliver curriculum using the language in class. However, that is not the case in South African schools as home languages are only used during their period while all other languages are delivered in either English or Afrikaans. This could be a reason for home languages losing popularity among the youth and communities.

2.21 EFFECTS OF THE USE OF ENGLISH AS A MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION ON AFRICAN LANGUAGES

English is imposed on learners in institutions of learning. They are taught the curriculum in English instead of using their mother-tongue or their home language. As a result, this deters their understanding of the content. A study conducted on this

subject found that most learners in the classroom hardly understand the lesson presentation in the classroom from their teachers and only get to have a clear comprehension when the teacher explains in their home language (Mphasha, Nkuna & Masoga, 2022). This results in code-switching in the classroom. The Department of Basic Education defines code-switching as an act of changing from one language of instruction to a different language of instruction during teaching and learning (Education, 2019).

The phenomenon of switching between languages has a great impact on African languages. With English being the dominant language, learners end up acquiring more English words into their vocabulary over their home languages. Their inadequacies in the language lead to the mixing the languages when they communicate. This is done to achieve understanding in communication. This results in learners having poor oral proficiency in the home language as they become more conversant and comfortable with code-switching (Lufuno et al., 2022).

It is clear that English has a negative impact of African languages. Its dominance across society overshadows African languages. As a result, it becomes more popular than the latter. This leads to learners developing an unwillingness to learn their home languages as they believe have low significance in their academic journey (Langa, 2015). The study researched on the impact of English on African languages. It based its findings on the general context of African languages. It was not precise in terms of showing which languages were significantly implicated. As such, it could be said that its findings are generalised.

2.22 THE EFFECTS OF ENGLISH ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF LEARNERS IN HOME LANGUAGES/~~HOME LANGUAGES~~

Dominant languages cloud the success and status of other languages. In most cases, languages which are dominant are often preferred as media of instruction and are used for communication across all sectors. Stephany, Dunstan and Audrey (2015) studied how dominant languages such as English impact on the academic journey of learners in home language studies. They based their study on the speech patterns of learners and examined how their speech varied from how they wrote due to poor language proficiency.

It is common that dominant languages such as English overpower home languages, despite the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) acknowledging and affording twelve languages the same official status. In accord, the Department of Basic Education's Policy on Language states that the South African Constitution in collaboration with South African School Act states that all the official languages have the same status in education and the society (Constitution, 1996). As such, they should enjoy equal rights, respect, and opportunities. This is applicable to all the official languages in our country. It is without a doubt that English has more advantage over its counterparts.

The study indicates that English as a dominant language impacts significantly on how learners speak and write in their home languages. Dominant languages impact on the speech patterns of home speakers. This leads to poor language proficiency in home languages (Stephany et al., 2015). They explain that learners' language proficiency depends on how often they use the language. The study states that learners seldom use their home languages due to their less popularity in the curriculum. As a result, they find themselves actively using English frequently beyond the school environment. Consequently, learners develop inadequacies in expressing themselves without using English. To make up for that, they use English words in their speech patterns when speaking in their home language (Stephany et al., 2015).

They found that learners tend to write according to how they speak. For example, learners will write English words in their home languages and use English words in their orals. This is attributed to poor oral proficiency because of the dominance of one language over the other. The focus of this study was on speech patterns of home speakers and how they were affected by the dominance of English. The study generalised its findings on African languages. The study did not look at how the phenomenon impacted a certain language precisely. Consequently, its findings are generalised across all African languages. This created a need for research on how the phenomenon impacts specific languages. The current study focused on Grade 11 learners who learn, among other aspects, speaking skills in SEPHL. The findings of the study and its explanation of oral proficiency came in handy in the current study, as the researcher use them to explain certain attributes of the research topic.

2.23 THE INFLUENCE OF DIALECTS ON SOUTH AFRICAN LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE

THE INFLUENCE OF LANGUAGE DIALECTS IN SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETIES

Gough (2020) investigated the influence of language dialects in South African societies. He argues that dialects are currently established throughout South African societies, among people from a variety of linguistic and ethnic backgrounds, precisely black communities. He explains that language dialects give rise to new language structures and forms. As a result, learners often disregard the official language because they eventually become comfortable with using their dialects. Thus, the formation of dialects in societies leads to the formation of new language patterns, which are distinct in nature and have a significant effect on the standard language. Gough (2020) links this to the use of language dialects. The study states that a dialect affects the way learners speak and write their standard language. Whiteman (2019) states that dialects are gaining more popularity among home language speakers. This means that people use dialects over their standard language. This phenomenon can be seen in communities, workplaces, schools, etc.

According to Lanham (2018), dialects have also had a strong influence on African languages and an enormous stock of dialects has been adopted into our communities. This is indicated by the pervasiveness of people speaking the same language differently in the same communities. Karien and Melchers (2017) agree with the foregoing notion on the influence of other languages on African languages. They found that language dialects and dominant languages such as English have a major impact on languages in the world. Karien et al. (2017) state that dialects have a special position in the world as a way of expressing a variety of origins of people speaking the same language. People can speak the same language differently.

The study regards that as a reason for the development of new dialects in most languages. According to the study by Karien et al. (2017), an important aspect of the increasing dominance of language dialects in the expanding circle of communication is a great threat to the standard languages. Whiteman (2019) explains how a dialect influences writing. Whiteman (2019) examined the concern among educators on

learners' inability to produce what is referred to as an acceptable, written standard language. The studies that have been reviewed comment comprehensively on dialects and African languages. They correlate in terms of how dialects impact on the standard languages in societies. However, the studies were not contextualised. This created a need to investigate this phenomenon in the context of South African schools, which was to investigate the teaching and learning of home languages or African languages in South African schools.

2.24 FORMATION OF NEW DIALECTS

Kitula and Kandagor (2018) focused on how people from different regions coming together for a long period results in the formation of new language dialects. They looked at how languages that come together socially result in loanwords or word borrowing. In their study, they argue that all languages that encounter each other for a prolonged period exchange vocabulary and thus inter-lingual borrowing is a permanent feature in human languages. Languages tend to trade words more frequently when they are geographically, economically, culturally, and politically close to one another. This largely explains the high level of lexical borrowing from other languages that occurs in many languages, especially African languages, to create new language dialects (Weinreich, 2011). African languages are taught as home languages in South African schools. Learners are obliged to learn at least one home language and a second additional language.

In explaining how communities end up with more than one language form, Thamanga (2018) states that in communities where people speak more than one language, children or learners and elders lend from or exchange lexical items with one another. This means that learners who speak different languages may end up borrowing some words from each other in their speech patterns. The borrowed lexical item may be used in its borrowed form or be manipulated to suit the language to which it is being adopted. According to Thamanga (2018), words are transferred from the original language to the borrowed language. The borrowed words are subsequently incorporated into the host language's grammatical structure. When borrowed words are used frequently, they integrate into the host language and take on its morphological traits and structural features.

With learners coming from different communities in which they speak different languages and others speaking the same language differently, lexical borrowing occurs due to cultural mix and social integration. This results in learners facing difficulties in learning home languages, as what they are taught is different from what they know from their communities.

The language they speak and use daily is not the same language as the one that they are taught in the classroom. Consequently, this has a negative impact on the performance of learners in reading, speaking, and writing of home languages in schools. Learners tend to use their regional dialect to learn the home language. Although the dialect that is studied emanates from the recognised language, it has many differences, which then leads to learners struggling with the official or standard language.

After a review of the above studies, gaps were identified. For instance, most of the studies were conducted on the influence of dialects on languages in general and hardly probed how this could affect learners' oral proficiency. In a nutshell, the studies did not focus on a certain language skill. There was a need to focus on a single language skill, which in the case of this study was oral proficiency. Hence, the present researcher investigated why learners struggled to express themselves fluently in SEPHL. The findings of the reviewed studies provide lenses through which the research questions could be answered. For instance, oral proficiency in SEPHL classrooms could be attributed to dialect formation. Dialects impact on how learners use language in their everyday life. They form a basis of communication among communities and societies.

2.25 LANGUAGE STANDARDISATION AND STANDARD LANGUAGE

A standard language is defined as the acceptable and official way of using a language. This prescribes how the language should be spoken and or written. Language standardisation is a process by which a dialect in a society becomes a standardised language and thus carries features of prestige where the standard language is appreciated higher than other language forms (Letsoalo, 2020). A standard language often forms what is referred to as an official language.

In contrast, Thamanga (2018) states that it is almost impossible to provide a clear definition of a standard language by language specialists and, on this assertion, Malimabe (2020) argues that what is a standard language currently may not be one in the future, and what is regarded as non-standard could achieve a standard form. Nonetheless, Wyk-Van (2019) and Malimabe (2020) share the view that a standard language should be a language which is accepted by society as a super-ordinated variety. Academics often agree on what should constitute a standard language but differ on the extent a language can be given a standard status over its counterparts.

Language standardisation, according to Webb and Kembo-Sure (2018), is the process by which an authoritative body (such as a government-appointed body) specifies how a language should be written (orthography), how it should sound, how its words should be spelled, which words are acceptable in a formal situation, and what the appropriate grammatical constructions of the language are. As a result, this body adjusts the language's syntax, lexicon, pronunciation, and writing system. The languages that are typically picked or standardised belong to the dominant linguistic communities and/or groups.

In the context of the current study, the standard language in discussion is Sepedi. It is a language spoken by learners and teachers from the community in which the study was conducted. The language has a variety of dialects, which are used in different communities. Nonetheless, there are certain lexical and orthographical structures which are accepted and ordained as formal language. Learners usually struggle to adapt to the use of the standardised language as they are already used to speaking in their vernaculars. This creates a situation where learners cannot produce the standard language in their speech patterns and in writing. This study investigated why learners struggle to express themselves fluently in SEPHL despite it being their home language. Furthermore, the researcher established the relationship between dialects or non-standardised language varieties and the standardised language using the definitions provided above as references.

2.26 THE EFFECT OF LANGUAGE TRANSITIONING IN THE CLASSROOM IN RELATION TO MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION OR LANGUAGE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING (LOTL)

Language transitioning is the process of changing from one language to another in succession. Keneilwe (2022) defines language transition as a change from using a certain language, which is ordinarily the home language, to the second or a different language used as a medium of instruction. The definition is further supported by Lenkiu (2017) who states language transition is a transformation from using a certain language, which in most cases is the home or home language, to any other formal language used for teaching and learning. From the definitions, one can draw an understanding that language transitioning is simply alternating between two or more languages for a specific purpose.

The South African Constitution (1996) states that all languages are equal and should be given the same status in societies. This implies that all the twelve official languages possess the same status in the education spectrum. The educational policy of the Department of Education prescribes that learners should be taught in their home language in the early stages of their academic journey (Education, 2010). In this case, learners are introduced to education in their mother tongue in the early stage of their education, which is called the foundation phase. As learners progress, they are expected to transition into a different phase which requires them to learn in more than one language. In this phase, learners are taught designated subjects or curriculum subject matter in the language of instruction, which in most cases is English. The language of instruction in the classroom is called the medium of instruction.

Medium of instruction is the formally recognised language used by teachers in the classroom to deliver curriculum (Stein, 2020) whereas the language of instruction is the medium through which instruction and assessment take place (Education, 2019). Most schools employ English as their primary language of instruction for both teaching and learning. To fulfil the objectives of the educational policy of teaching learners more than one language, learners are taught their mother tongue as a home language and English as second or additional language, with the latter being at the centre of curriculum delivery.

The teaching of two languages in schools compels learners to strive for competence in both languages. This opens a gate for the concept of language transitioning. Learners find themselves in a situation where they ought to change from one language into another. This is called language transitioning. The process of language transitioning has adverse effects on the academic performance of learners. Sibanda (2017) states that transitioning from the foundation phase to the intermediate phase where learners learn more than one language can be an advantageous or a disadvantageous process, depending on which language a learner belongs to.

Sibanda (2017) further states that in South Africa, the process of transitioning has proven to be a disadvantageous journey for learners. In this context, the study states that an average of eighty percent (80%) pupils in South Africa use home/African languages in their early phase of learning (Grade R-3) and as such, learners who proceed into another phase, where they are expected to learn in a different language, experience difficulties, as numbers indicate that 78% of the learners cannot read for comprehension in other subjects except home languages. This is because they have not yet experienced a deep language acquisition at a structural level (Chomsky, 2016).

In the classroom context, learners struggle to transition between two languages, namely; the mother tongue and an additional language (LOLT). The transition causes learners to develop inadequacies in both languages. This is because learning this language has not yet occurred at a structural level required to develop deeper understanding (Chomsky, 2016). This has a significant effect on the oral proficiency of learners in languages. The transition causes learners to engage in multi-language communication where they mix words from the two languages in their speech patterns.

The adverse findings discussed above on the effects of language transitioning in the classroom on learning languages were used as part of the knowledge reviewed that gave direction to the study on the main reasons why learners struggle to express themselves fluently in SEPHL, which is a mother-tongue. Using the discussions, one can predict that language transitioning in the classroom contributes to the phenomenon.

2.27 CONCEPTUALISING ORAL PROFICIENCY IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

To give deep meaning of oral proficiency, it is important to consider various definitions of the concept in relation to language education. In this case, the meaning of the concept was contextualised to classroom situations. According to Education (2010), oral proficiency refers to the standard of competence at which learners can utilise a language for various purposes such as academic learning and communication. In this context, the definition is binding on the side of teachers and learners as participants. Oral proficiency is the ability to speak a language (Indeed, 2023). In relation to the provided definitions, it becomes clear that oral proficiency is concerned with the ability to speak a language fluently. The definitions were used to make meaning of the concept in the classroom context.

In the classroom context, oral proficiency involves both teachers and learners. Teachers need to be competent in the language they use for instruction in the classroom, and learners need to be conversant with the language they are taught in. On the side of teachers, the language they use to teach is termed the language of learning and teaching. This refers to the medium in which teaching and learning occurs through (Education, 2010).

Teachers need to be competent in the languages they use to teach in the classrooms. The languages are called language learning areas. All the twelve official languages recognised by the language board, Braille, and South African Sign Language recognised by UMALUSI are included in this notion (Education, 2010). In the classrooms, teachers teach using medium of instruction, which in most cases is English, and another second language, which is referred as mother tongue and or an additional language.

Oral proficiency is not unique to language education alone. This concept expands across the curriculum. Dippenaar and Payper (2011) affirm that teacher language proficiency is crucial to the success of learners, meaning, where a teacher is not proficient in the medium of instruction, the success of the learners in their academics is minimal. This means that it is vital that both teachers and learners become proficient in the language used in the classroom for effective teaching and learning to occur. Language learning areas are also crucial as they all form part of the curriculum offered

in home languages in schools. In this sense, oral proficiency is central to the two concepts, which are language of learning and teaching (LOLT) and language learning areas.

For South African schools, the Constitution and the SASSA Act provide that it is the prerogative of the School Governing Body (SGB) to make a determination on the language of learning and teaching, commonly referred to as the medium of instruction and further state that learners need to learn two languages, which include the mother tongue as a measure of redressing injustices of the past and pondering parity for all languages (Education, 2019). The implications of the above assertions thereof provides that learners learn the language of medium of instruction as second additional language and the mother tongue language as first additional language.

2.28 IMPLICATIONS OF ORAL PROFICIENCY ON LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

In the context of language education, teachers need to have the competency in the language they use to teach (LOLT) for them to deliver effective lessons. Thus, ensuring that teachers are proficient in the language of learning and teaching is significant. Effective teaching and learning rely on the ability of the teacher to speak the language fluently, discourse and interactive skills and calls for comprehensive communication skills (Hanlie et al., 2011). In this regard, oral proficiency is central to the curriculum and to a greater extent, language education.

In South African schools, the languages are mainly English, and then any other African language taught as a home language. The languages do not have the same status and popularity among teachers and learners. African languages are only taught during their periods while English is used across the curriculum. This has adverse implications on the development of African languages as they are overshadowed. Teachers and learners have negative attitudes towards the teaching and learning of African languages (Langa, 2015). Consequently, teachers and learners tend to have no interest in languages and as such, they show signs of poor performance.

This affects the oral proficiency of both teachers and learners in language education, which involves the teaching and learning of African languages as home languages. This is because learners do not know the importance of language learning in relation

to cognitive development. Learners need to acquire a sense of how crucial language learning is in the development of cognitive skills (Dippenaar & Payper, 2011).

2.29 SUMMARY

Numerous scholars have written about issues encountered in language education, particularly on oral proficiency. The researcher reviewed studies in relation to the research topic, which focused on oral proficiency, and other significant factors involved in language education such as language learning theories, language policies and factors associated with languages education. The literature review revealed that thorough research has been conducted in this field of language education, mainly on oral proficiency, orthography, language theories and language fluency. However, very little attention has been paid to why learners struggle to express themselves fluently in SEPHL classrooms. The gap identified revealed the need for more research to establish why learners are struggling to speak fluently in SEPHL, which is a home language in most South African schools. This is the gap the researcher explored. In conclusion, the gaps identified justified the need for this study to be conducted, as it added towards reducing the knowledge gap.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter provided an extensive review of the literature related to the study topic. In the chapter, the researcher highlighted the similarities among the literature, the contrasts therein and identified the research gap in the said literature.

This chapter explains the steps, methods and procedures that were followed to complete the study. In essence, the chapter reveals the methodological procedures that guided the direction of this study. The researcher used this chapter to state all the methods and procedures of the study and to justify why each aspect was preferred for a specific purpose.

In a nutshell, the chapter states the methodology that was relevant to this study and elaborates on its procedures and principles towards addressing the research question of the study. It describes the design, population and sampling techniques, data collection and analysis.

3.2 RESEARCH PLANNING/THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The research plan is informed by the methodology. It sets out the plan from which the researcher envisages to undertake the research. It is crucial that a researcher develops an appropriate research plan and approach in addressing the research problem. According to Petraits (2023), a research plan is a framework that depicts how the researcher intends to approach the research problem. The plan can take various forms such as a written outline, a narrative, a visual/concept map or timeline. It changes and develops throughout the research journey (Irene & Albine, 2018). A research plan is the main part of the study and describes the researcher's proposed methodology. According to Rockville (2017), a research plan should address the following questions: What does a researcher intend to do? Why is the research important? What has already been done? And how is the research going to be conducted?

The study elected to use the qualitative approach, which according to Steven, Janelle, Grace and Brannan (2022), is a type of study that explores and provides deeper insights into real-world issues without using numerical data. This type of research plan gathers the participants' views and interpret them as findings.

3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology in common parlance refers to a way to systematically address a research problem. Methodology focuses on the steps that are generally implemented by a researcher to address a research problem along with the logic behind them (Kothari, 2020). This definition means that a research methodology is a collection of all the methods, and techniques a researcher will use to answer the research question in a systematic way.

There are two types of research approaches. They are the quantitative approach and qualitative approach. The quantitative approach involves the generation of statistical data, which is subject to rigorous quantitative analysis in a formal and rigid form. The qualitative approach is concerned with a subjective assessment of attitudes, opinions, and behaviour. In this case, the research is based on the insight of the researcher and impressions.

This research paper was based on the qualitative approach. A qualitative approach involves gathering and analysing non-statistical data to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences, which can be utilised to collect insights into a phenomenon and create new ideas for research (Bhandari, 2022). This was a relevant approach to this study because it dealt with human beings. This research paradigm is concerned with the experience of participants in their own setting (Clark, 2020). This means that this study deeply considered the views of the participants to derive the primary information that shaped the findings of this research. This research combined all the qualitative research data collection methods to establish accurate and reliable information about the study.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

This refers to the general procedure that combines the various components of the study in a consistent and logical way. It comprises the layout of the collection, measurement, and analysis of data (Shanti & Alok, 2017). A research design states how the researcher will establish answers to the research question. It outlines the specific details of the research inquiry (Kumar, 2011). This is the conceptual structure within which research will be conducted. A design can also be referred as a plan, structure and strategy of investigation used to obtain answers to research questions and problems (Kumar, 2011). This study adopted the case study research design. According to Prabhat and Meenu (2015), a design is a framework for a study that is used as a guide in collecting and analysing the data. It is a blueprint that is followed in completing a study.

3.5 RESEARCH PARADIGM

A research paradigm is based on the belief of the researcher pertaining to what constitutes reality and how knowledge can be understood. This study was vested in constructivism. This research paradigm states that reality is subjective, and that this reality can only be partially understood because it is constructed in the minds of individual people (Pretorius, 2024). Based on this paradigm, reality is individually constructed through social, cultural, and historical contexts. Constructivists embrace the value-laden nature of research, emphasising reflexivity and ethical responsibility, and valuing the co-construction of knowledge with participants (Pretorius, 2024). Constructivists encourage the co-construction of knowledge with participants and embrace the value-laden aspect of research, emphasising ethical responsibility and reflexivity. The constructivist paradigm was elected for its nature that allows a researcher to follow qualitative research approach.

3.5.1 CASE STUDY

It is an approach in which a particular instance or a few carefully selected cases are studied thoroughly (Kumar, 2011). Moreover, according to Shanti and Alok (2017), a case study is conducted in a specific setting. The authors agree that a case study should always involve a carefully selected area as its case, which involves its participants. This research design is usually adopted by researchers that are

interested in studying human experiences and their surroundings (Cohen, 2018). This study followed the case study research design by formulating research questions that were addressed through the cases which the researcher considered when collecting and analysing data.

The design was preferred because of its nature that allows the researcher to deal with the phenomenon in its social context and through lived experiences. It also allowed the researcher to study the phenomenon in its natural setting. In this case, the study was conducted in the classrooms of SEPHL, which was the natural setting of the phenomenon.

3.6 POPULATION

Population means a group of people about whom a research will be conducted. It is primarily the people who are the focus of a study. A research population is also known as a group of individuals that have similar characteristics or traits. Thus, a population is a set or group of people and units on which the findings of the research are to be applied (Alex & Bridier, 2021). Moreover, population is defined as the entire group of people about whom observations will be made, making it the parent cohort from which the sample is to be formed.

This study was conducted in Sekhukhune East Bogwasha Circuit. The Bogwasha circuit is situated at Ga Sekhukhune in the East District. It constitutes a total number of 32 schools. The study focused on two sampled schools from the Circuit. The two schools were referred to as **School A** and **School B** to protect their identity in line with ethical consideration procedures.

The process of selecting the schools was mainly influenced by accessibility. The first school was preferred because it is a place of work for the researcher and the second school is proximal to the location where the researcher lives. This study focused on Grade11 learners doing SEPHL from the sampled schools.

School A has a total of 105 Grade 11 learners while school B has a total of 60 learners in the same grade. The study also included one educator for SEPHL from each sampled school and one curriculum advisor from the Circuit. This brought the total population of the study to 163 individuals.

3.7 SAMPLING

Sampling is a process of narrowing down the desired group or items that research will be conducted on to make it possible for the researcher to obtain information easily (Alicia, 2020). The research adopted the purposive sampling method. The purposive sampling method implies that a researcher will choose a specific group of people as the population of the study based on the desired outcome. According to Tarhedoost (2016), "in order to answer a research question it is impossible for researchers to be able to collect information from all existing cases".

This means that it is necessary for a researcher to identify a case upon which the study will be based. A purposive sampling was selected for this study to ensure that the researcher accessed credible information from the selected case as it would have been impossible to study all the cases (Tarhedoost, 2016). A sample is a group of units of analysis in the study on what or whom data are provided (Alex & Nancy, 2021). The purposive sampling was elected because it is known to be representative of the total population, or it is known that it will produce well matched groups (Prabhat Pandey & Mishra, 2015).

The nature of the sample was that seven learners were selected from each of the two schools as participants. The selection criterion was based on the purposive sampling method. In this case, the sampling was based on the academic performance of learners. The researcher administered a pre-assessment task in a form of unprepared speech (Oral) in which learners were graded using the CAPS document rubric.

Based on the outcome of the assessment, the researcher selected three exceptional learners, three moderate and four inadequate learners to participate in the study. Consequently, the study comprised seven learners purposively sampled from each school, two educators teaching SEPHL and one subject advisor, which led to a population of ten individuals.

TABLE 2

Number of participants

Targeted number of participants	Number of Learners	Number of teachers	Number of subject advisors
Stats:	7	2	1
Number of schools	2		
TOTAL			
10			

The above table shows the number of participants who participated in the study. The table represents the sample of the participants who were purposively sampled to form part of the research. The sample comprised seven learners from two schools, which are outlined as school A and school B, two educators who teach SEPHL, and one subject advisor.

3.8 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

3.8.1 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interviews were used as a tool for data collection. The participants were asked various questions pertaining to the research topic. The views of the participants were used for reference when making inferences about the research question. Interview questions were developed and attached to the informed consent form. The questions included an interview schedule which outlined the dates and time at which the interviews were to be conducted.

This study adopted semi-structured interviews as the data collection method. Semi-structured interviews involve asking the participants open-ended questions (Bandari, 2019). The responses of the participants may compel a researcher to pose a follow-up-question to ensure that the relevant information is attained. Interviews were conducted as a primary means of collecting information.

The information attained from the interviews was used to draw conclusions of the research using the observed data, which were gathered through observations. Interview questions were developed and given to the participants. Semi-structured interviews are based on subjective questions, which are not conclusive. The researcher may use the responses to draw new conclusions (Daniel, 2018).

3.8.2 CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

There are two types of observational techniques: direct observation, where the researcher is an unbiased, passive outside observer who is not involved in the phenomenon of interest (as in case research), and participant observation, where the researcher is an active participant in the phenomenon and their inputs or mere presence affects the phenomenon being studied (as in action research) (Santa, 2017).

During the oral activities, the researcher observed how the learners used language to present their ideas in the classroom. The researcher focused mainly on the choice of words to determine whether the learner's paid attention to their language usage in terms of speaking the standardised language rather than using their dialects, which are inherent in their language.

3.9 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is defined as studying organised material to establish facts about a research problem. The data are studied from as many angles as possible to explore new knowledge (Pandey & Pandey, 2015). In essence, data analysis is a strategy or process in which one systematically applies methods, techniques to describe draw conclusions from, or evaluate data (Jankielewicz & Whiting, 2023). Furthermore, data analysis is a technique in which data are collected and organised so that the researcher was able to draw insight into the data and determine relationships. In a qualitative research, data analysis involves a process that focuses on gaining insight and an understanding of an individual or participants in the study.

Data were analysed through the lenses of the qualitative research approach. The analytical method used was thematic analysis. This paradigm has three methods of data analysis. They are data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing. Data reduction is an analytical method of reducing the collected data into the crucial aspects

that can be used to draw the conclusion of a research. Data display is the second step which goes beyond data reduction by providing a compressed picture of the information that leads to conclusion drawing. The data are commonly displayed in themes. In the third step, which is conclusion drawing, conclusions are finalised once the analysis is complete by taking a step back to assess what the analysed data mean and the attendant implications on the research question (Bhandari, 2022). This study combined the above three steps to analyse the data collected accurately.

3.10 THE IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCH

The significance of this research is that it will showcase the solutions to language learning problems and challenges experienced by SEPHL learners and teachers concerning language proficiency. The study also emphasised the importance of learning home languages in schools and how they can help learners develop academically. Moreover, the study might provide learners who will help language teachers to teach crucial language skills such as speaking and writing. The study might also bring to light the effects of language dialects on official or formal languages. Through this research, teachers will understand learners' challenges in speaking fluent SEPHL in their oral activities.

The study might also come in handy for curriculum officials, as it uncovered the obstacles that are prevalent in the subject. The study made viable recommendations which will improve the teaching and learning of SEPHL, if implemented. Through the findings of the study, curriculum monitors can develop mitigation strategies related to the research problem and the research question of the study. Furthermore, the study might help communities to preserve the cultural heritage of their language and maintain its official status. Communities could also learn more about their language and its rich history as well as its related dialects which emanated from it.

3.11 QUALITY CRITERIA

This study fell within the qualitative research paradigm. It addressed the quality criteria through the following aspects:

3.11.1 CREDIBILITY

Interpretive research should be credible and believable to readers (Daniel, 2018). This can be enhanced by providing evidence of further engagement in the specific field of research. The recordings from interviews were used to establish the facts of the research to enhance credibility. Another method that was used to ensure credibility was triangulation. This is using many sources to merge information from individual studies into one cohesively.

3.11.2 TRANSFERABILITY

A study should be able to resonate in the same way with people from different educational settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The work of this study will be transferable to other educational settings such as circuits and classrooms from other home language lessons because it dealt with issues that are commonly experienced.

3.11.3 DEPENDABILITY

This is the state of being trustworthy and reliable (Longman, 2017). Interpretive research can be dependable when it is authentic and reliable (Lorde, 2018). Other researchers can use a different set of data and research methods to arrive at the same conclusion as this study because it followed all the relevant research approaches.

3.11.4 CONFIRMABILITY

This is the aspect where the findings of the research can be independently confirmed by those that took part (participants) in the study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The findings of this research were based on the data derived from the participants. The researcher ensure that all the information from the participants was considered, including the information that the researcher disagreed with.

3.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations in research means abiding by the research ethics and principles when conducting a study (Roth, 2019). The ethics are guidelines meant to guard the conduct of researchers in their study (Akarangana, 2016). It is vital that researchers consider all the ethical principles when conducting research to ensure that it is done within the confines of the ethics.

3.12.1 PERMISSION TO CONDUCT THE STUDY

The researcher ensured that permission is obtained from the University of Limpopo Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) before conducting the research. TREC granted the researcher the ethical clearance to conduct the research was sought from the university before undertaking the research. The participants were protected, respected, and valued. All the participants of this study were asked for permission by the researcher through letters, emails, and other communication platforms to affirm their willingness to participate in the study before it commenced.

3.12.2 INFORMED CONSENT

Participants need to be cleared on the nature of the study in which they will form part as part of ethical principles (Akarangana, 2016). The researcher informed the participants about the nature of the study through a consent form, which protected them from any form of exploitation in the study. The participants were made aware that they would not be held liable for any loss or penalty that might have occurred during the study. Participants could withdraw their participation in the study any time they wanted.

3.12.3 RESPECT, DIGNITY AND STANDARD OF CARE

Participants were treated with respect, dignity and care. The researcher ensured that the well-being of participants was protected throughout the study. The researcher disclosed all the information pertaining to the study as part of respecting participants and explained the voluntary nature of participation. The principle of dignity dictates that the researcher must work to protect research participants' autonomy while ensuring the disclosure of all the fundamental aspects of the study (Jennifer, Grace & Paras, 2022).

3.12.4 PRIVACY, ANONYMITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Data obtained through anonymity must be protected to ensure that there is never a link between the information and the participants (Lancaster, 2017). The identity of the participants was not be revealed. Participants were marked with letters as pseudonyms to protect their identity. Confidentiality relates to a condition in which the researcher knows the identity of a research subject but takes an initiative to guard against revealing that identity to others. Documents such as interview responses and communications with the participants were made confidential. This is because people

participating in any study have a view that their information will be treated in a confidential manner (Lancaster, 2017). The information obtained from this study was encrypted to protect the participants' names and identities when discussing the findings.

3.12.5 BENEFITS AND RISKS/HARM

This is the most crucial aspect of ethical considerations. It ensures that participants are protected from any form of harm throughout the study. Participants need to be assured that a study they are participating in will not bring them any harm or put them at risk (Creswell, 2014). Participants were assured that they would be protected from any form of harm. Their safety was guaranteed.

3.13 SUMMARY

This chapter outlined the methodological aspect of this study. It elaborated on the methods and techniques the researcher embarked on in answering the research question. The methodological aspect of this study was systematically designed to serve as a framework from which the researcher adopted ways that assisted in developing a clear and concise conclusion concerning the phenomenon. All the aspects mentioned in this chapter were followed diligently, as they formed a structure that the research followed. The next chapter will present the findings and data analysis that was done through the framework discussed in this chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discussed the methodological approach adopted in the study. The current chapter presents the qualitative research findings pertaining to the research questions of this study. This chapter presents the data collected from the participants and further provides a clear and concise analysis of data in relation to the research topic. The study investigated learners' challenges in speaking fluent Sepedi Home Language (SEPHL) in Grade 11 classrooms at Bogwasha Circuit, in Sekhukhune East District, Limpopo Province, South Africa. The data were analysed in correlation with the theoretical framework and related literature in the field of this study. The findings were based on the data that were collected through observation and interviews. The data were analysis using the thematic analysis technique.

4.2 DATA MANAGEMENT AND ANALYSIS

There were three groups of participants in this study, namely; Grade 11 learners learning SE|PHL from School A and School B, SEPHL teachers from Schools A and B, and a subject advisor from the district. The participants were given a questionnaire to complete at different times.

TABLE 3: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF LEARNERS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE STUDY

Learners	Age	Gender	Language
A	15	Male	Sepedi
B	15	Male	Sepedi
C	16	Female	Sepedi
D	15	Female	Sepedi
E	17	Female	Sepedi

F	16	Female	Sepedi
G	15	Male	Sepedi

The table above represents the biographical information of all the learners who were sampled to participate in the study. The learners were purposively sampled from two schools listed as School A and School B. The sample was enlarged to enhance the credibility of the findings of the study. The learners are aged averagely between 15-17 years and were all doing Grade 11 with Sepedi as their home language.

The sample comprised learners who performed at various levels in SEPHL. The sample constituted lower, middle and upper performing learners. All the learners were home speakers of Sepedi and therefore Sepedi was their home language. Despite all of them being home Sepedi speakers, the learners came from areas where the Sekone dialect is dominant and thus they speak Sekone in their daily interactions. The dominance of this language contributed to the challenges that the learners faced in SEPHL classrooms, as learners are more conversant with Sekone than with SEPHL.

TABLE 4: BIOGRAHICAL INFORMATION OF TEACHERS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE STUDY

Age	Gender	Qualifications	Major	Experience
52	Female	Bachelor of education Languages & SOCIAL SCIENCES	Sepedi & Geography	26 years
45	Male	Bachelor of education in Languages	Sepedi	17 years

The above table represents the biographical information of teachers who took part in the study. The table illustrates the biographical information of teachers in terms of age, gender, qualification, major and their experience in the teaching fraternity with Sepedi being their major subject. The participants were two female educators aged 45 and 52, respectively.

Teacher A was 52 years of age and in possession of a Bachelor of Education degree, majoring in Sepedi and Geography with 26 years of teaching experience. Teacher B was aged 45 and in possession of a Bachelor of Education degree, majoring in Sepedi with 17 years of experience in teaching. Both teachers represented a mix of highly experienced teachers with a vast knowledge of teaching SEPHL.

TABLE 5: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF SUBJECT ADVISOR

Age	Qualification	Major	Experience
56	BED Languages, Honours in Curriculum Studies.	SEPEDI	30 years in education fraternity

The table represents the biographical information of the subject advisor who was part of the study. The subject advisor served as an educator of SEPHL before ascending to the position of the subject advisor. The participant was in possession of a Bachelor of Education degree in languages, majoring in Sepedi, and an honours in curriculum management. This made the participant highly qualified to serve as a rich source of information for the study. The subject advisor was aged 56 and had 30 years of experience in the education fraternity.

4.3 SUMMARY OF BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

All the participants in the study were Bapedi and Sepedi was their home language. This made them relevant to the study, as they were the main role players in the field of SEPHL. Their participation in the study informed all the findings of the research. The participants voluntarily participated in the study by responding to a set of questions presented to them. The researcher used an interview guide to capture the

data from the participants. The responses of the participants were captured on the provided questionnaire. The data also included a set of information that was collected through observations conducted by the researcher on the research topic. The participants were given a topic to present as an oral activity. During the presentations, the researcher observed crucial language skills such as speaking and reading. The observed data is captured in writing for presentation and analysis.

The following table presents the number of participants from each school in the Bogwasha Circuit.

TABLE 6: NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM THE STUDY

NAME OF SCHOOLS	LEARNERS	TEACHERS	SUBJECT ADVISOR
SCHOOL A	4	1	1
SCHOOL B	3	1	1

4.4 RESEARCH RESULTS

4.4.1 ANALYSIS FROM THE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Table 7: Research questions, main themes and sub-themes that emerged from the research objectives in the coding process.

Research Questions	Main Theme	Sub-themes
Why are learners struggling to express themselves fluently in SEPHL?	The influence of English on SEPHL	The influence on pronunciation.
Do you think learning SEPHL is important in your education?	Learners' attitude towards SEPHL.	Technological dominance and English.

Do you think LOTL affects your learning in SPEHL?	The effect of the language of teaching and learning.	The effects of code-switching and the influence of Sekone.
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4.4.2 FINDINGS FROM LEARNER INTERVIEWS

4.4.3 HEGEMONY AND ITS INFLUENCE

English is a dominant language in the world. Its dominance has spread across the globe, including as far as into African societies. English is deemed a global lingua franca; it has the largest number of speakers in the world and has thus become a default language in many fields. It is a common language for individuals who do not share the same the same home language (Haller, 2019).

The data above are an indication of the extent of how influential the English language on other languages and societies is. In the interviews, the influence of English became a prevalent theme. The participants traced their inability to speak fluent SEPHL to the dominance of English and the influence it had on their language speaking.

Participant A expressed the following view on the influence of English:

We are used to speaking English.

The expression above emphasises the dominance of English. Learners are more comfortable speaking in English than any other language. To a greater extent, they were even more accustomed to speaking English than their home language or mother-tongue.

Participant B said:

English affects how I speak Sepedi because I end up forgetting Sepedi words and end up adopting English words in my vocabulary.

Evidently, learners would rather use English to express themselves over using their home language. Therefore, the influence of English is a proven phenomenon that affects how learners speak their home languages. In this case, the influence is on SEPHL, meaning English influences how learners speak Sepedi.

4.4.4 THE INFLUENCE ON PRONUNCIATION

The influence of English on SEPHL is also notable on pronunciation. A participant indicated that English affects their pronunciation of Sepedi words because they tend to pronounce them in an English accent.

The following is a verbatim from **Participant C**:

English affects my pronunciation of Sepedi words. This is because I sometimes pronounce Sepedi words in an English manner.

The above assertion substantiates the notion that English has an adverse influence on other languages. Learners speak English most of the time. As such, they become more fluent in English more than any other language. Suffice it to say, learners become fluent in a language they speak frequently.

4.4.5 TECHNOLOGICAL DOMINANCE AND ENGLISH

Most technologies have English as a default language. Technology is a dominant factor in the world. Almost everything people do relies on technology. As a result, learners are always exposed to the English language. This is a common phenomenon amongst the grade 11 learners learning SEPHL.

Participant A had the following to say on technology:

Due to the advancement of technology using English as a medium of expression, a lot of learners are influenced to use English regularly because they are always using technologies in their lives, and they end up using English words while speaking Sepedi.

Therefore, the popularity of the English language overshadows other languages. Grade 11 learners are accustomed to using English to communicate because it has imposed itself as a global language. This phenomenon expands as far as into the daily lives of learners. They interact with technology and its proponents in English, thus undermining the significance of their home languages.

On whether English influences the way they speak Sepedi,

Participant C indicated that:

Yes, because most of us love English more than Sepedi. English is the easiest language to learn for us learners compared to Sepedi.

Learners usually do well in the things they appreciate. The above view is an expression of love towards the English language. This means learners love English more than Sepedi, which is their home or home language. They essentially find English more appealing to learn than Sepedi.

With English being the dominant language, learners end up acquiring more English words into their vocabulary over those of their home language. Their inadequacies in the language lead to their mixing the languages when they communicate. This is done to achieve understanding in communication. This results in learners having poor oral proficiency in the home language, as they become more conversant and comfortable in code-switching (Netshipisi, Madima & Makananise, 2022).

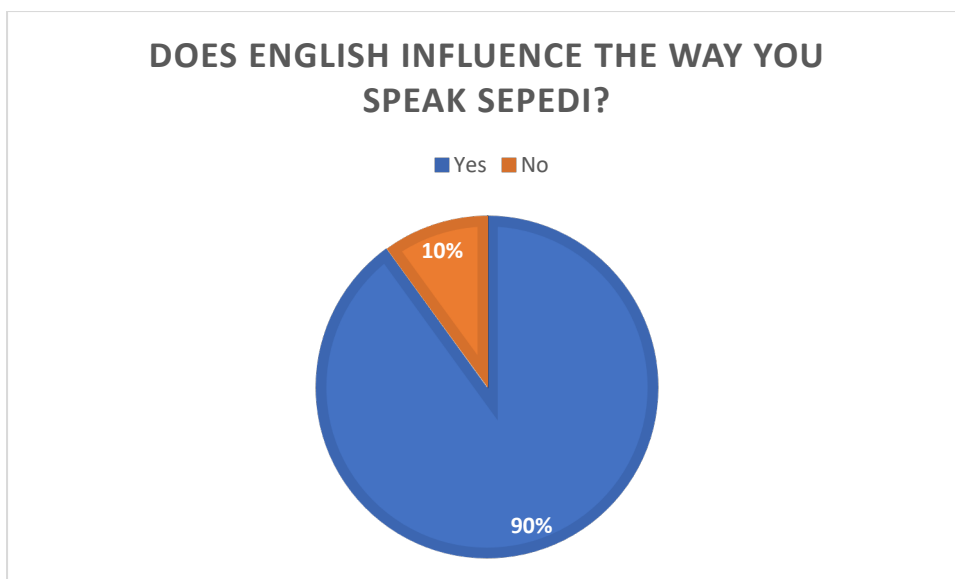
4.4.6 A GRAPHICAL ILLUSTRATION HEGEMONY ON SEPEDI

Learners were asked the following question: Does English influence the way you speak Sepedi? They had to respond with Yes/NO. The results are as follows:

A total of 20 learners from Schools A and B were asked the question, 'Does English influence the way you speak Sepedi?' The results are as follows:

Yes 5

No 2



The pie chart above illustrates that a majority of the participants held a view that English influenced the way they spoke Sepedi. The graphical expression can thus be used to conclude that English has an adverse effect and direct influence on the teaching and learning of SEPHL. The influence is precisely attributed to reading, writing, and speaking. Participants indicated that they were more fluent when reading and speaking English words than when they did the same in SEPHL. The influence extends as far as speaking and pronouncing words.

4.4.7 LEARNERS' LANGUAGE ATTITUDE TOWARDS SEPEDI

Attitude plays a crucial role in the education of learners. Learners learn and appreciate what they deem necessary and important for their development. There was a sense in which learners did not know why they needed to learn SEPHL. A study on the relationship between mother-tongue education and academic achievement points to a good correlation between the two concepts (Myburgh, Poggenpoel, Van Rensburg, Clegg, Landon & Reilly 2010).

Learners presumed the learning of SEPHL as a prerequisite to progress to the next level or grade in their education. This narrow understanding undermined the significance of home languages in the education journey of the learners. This proposition is supported by the following assertions made by a **Participant D** on whether they thought learning SEPHL was important:

I can say for grade R-12 it is important because it's going to help me to progress to the next grade, but when I reach tertiary level, it will not be important because I will be using for learning and communication most of the time.

It has also been estimated that bilingual learners tend to perform better in their scholastic achievements when the school teaches children's home language and where appropriate, develops literacy skills in that language (Cummins, 2001). On the contrary, when learners are encouraged to disregard the use of home language, the development of that language suffers, and this hinders their personal and conceptual development.

Participant E said:

It is important because it helps us to develop language skills and its part of the most important subjects in our education.

The above assertions point to the significance of mother tongue education. It is crucial that learners learn their mother-tongue. The Department of Basic Education (DoE) has introduced the learning of mother-tongues as home languages in schools. According to the DoE, home language refers to the language that is spoken most frequently at home by a learner while mother tongue refers to the language that a learner has acquired in his/her early years, and which has normally become his/her natural instrument of thought and communication (DoE, 2020).

Although the DoE emphasises the importance of mother-tongue education, much of the effort is not put in place to ensure learners understand the significance of learning mother-tongue in their education. This is evident from the data collected on whether learners thought Sepedi was important for their education. In response, **Participant F** said:

No, it is not important because the world is becoming globalized and in following my career, I will be expected to speak English as a medium of expression.

According to Adul and Remia (2013), where learners do not speak the language of instruction, authentic teaching and learning cannot take place. It can be purported that such a situation largely accounts for the school's ineffectiveness and low academic achievement experienced by students in Africa. It therefore becomes important to encourage the use of home language as the LOLT, especially in the earlier years of schooling. The use of home languages across all grades for learners will require significant effort. There is a great need to equip learners with the knowledge of the importance of learning a home language in their academic development. It was discovered that learners did not have a clear understanding of why they learnt a home language. In view of this, **Participant G** questioned:

Why do we have to learn SEPEDI? I do not know of any workplace where they say speaking Sepedi is a requirement. I wonder why we are taught something that is not going to contribute to our future.

TABLE 8: LEARNERS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS SEPHL

POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
2	5

The table above indicates that only two participants expressed value for the learning of SEPHL in schools. The gap between the participants who showed positive and negative attitude is vast. It therefore suggests that there is a need to educate learners about the benefits of learning home languages in schools. The use of learners' first language as the Language of Teaching and Learning (LOLT) would be in line with the Education for All goals. Learning in one's own language holds various advantages for the learner, including increased access, improved learning outcomes, reduced chances of repetition and drop-out rates, and socio-cultural benefits (World Bank, 2005).

4.4.8 THE EFFECT OF LANGUAGE OF LEARNING AND TEACHING ON LEARNING OF SEPED I HOME LANGUAGE

The concept LOLT refers to the language medium in which learning and teaching, including assessment, takes place (DBE, 2020). LOLT is a medium of instruction or a language used in the classroom during school day (Stein,2020). In line with the above definitions, the study uncovered the effects of LOLT on learning of SEPHL.

A policy document of language in education states that although the concept of LOLT seems reasonably clear, teaching and learning do not necessarily occur in a single language. For instance, anecdotal evidence indicates that there are instances where teaching and learning occur in one language whereas assessment is administered in a different language. Alternatively, teaching and learning can occur in two or more than one language in the same classroom through dual medium instruction (DBE, 2020).

The above means that it is possible for more than one language to be adopted as LOLT in the same classroom. This has always been the case in home language

classrooms, particularly concerning African languages where teachers saw a need to transition to English when teaching complex concepts for learners to grasp. This phenomenon is often referred to as code-switching. The reality in South African schools, particularly in rural schools, the LOLT is mainly English. This means that teaching and learning occur mainly in English. Learners only learn in their home language during a home language period, which in most cases is African languages. Learners spend most of their learning, communicating and engaging the content in English. As a result, there is a great deal of less time to use home languages in the classroom. **Participant G** had the following to say on LoLT:

All subjects are taught in English. We use English more often in the classroom as well as outside than Sepedi. We only speak Sepedi during the period of home language.

There is a disparity in terms of equating the two languages. The view expressed above paints an image that English is dominant across the curriculum. Consequently, it overshadows other languages learnt in the schools as home languages. According to Mncwaango, Elliot and Nkanyiso (2021), the issue of bilingual classroom remains a subject of debate in South Africa owing to the dominance of a minority language, which is English as a medium of instruction in most academic institutions. The authors state that as a minority language, English dominates education and other sectors and thus threatens the role of indigenous languages in learning. Their study concluded that language should be taught by language teachers, and learners need to be scaffolded during the transition from mother-tongue instruction to English instruction. This would mean that learners will be able to draw on their full linguistic repertoire, which will thus improve their learning of both home language and the second language (English).

Conclusively, it can be stated that the dominance of English and its use as the main language of learning and teaching in schools has an adverse effect on the learning of indigenous languages. In this study, the effect was evident on the learning and teaching of SEPHL. The phenomenon presented a challenge of language proficiency and writing.

4.4.9 CODE-SWITCHING AND ITS ROLE IN THE DISCOURSE

Bilingualism refers to the ability to communicate effectively in two languages, with the same degree of proficiency in both languages. In the classroom, teachers can use

more than one language to deliver the lesson. In most schools, the LOLT is English. All curricular needs are delivered in English. It is only during the teaching and learning of home languages that learners get to be taught in their mother-tongue.

Code-switching refers to alternation between one language code to the other depending on the context (Morrison, 2024). This can occur when a teacher or a learner alters into a different language in the classroom. In the context of this study, code-switching was looked at through the lenses of the teaching and learning of SEPHL. According to the Educational (2021), the Home Language Assessment Standards assume that learners come to school able to understand and speak the language. Any language that a learner understands and speaks when he/she enters school will be his/her home language. In most cases, this would be his or her mother tongue. Although code-switching can have good impact on teaching and learning, it comes with challenges and issues.

TABLE 9: PARTICIPANTS WHO SUPPORT CODE-SWITCHING

Participants	Yes	No
Learners	7	0
Teachers	0	2
Subject advisor	0	1

Table 9 illustrates those 7 learners, the total number of participants, were in support of code-switching. This can be attributed to their vocabulary disparities in both English as LOLT and Sepedi as a home language. Learners supported code-switching as a method for complementing their language disparities in both languages used in the classroom. On the contrary, subject officials such as educators and subject advisors did not support code-switching.

It appears that both teachers and subject advisors shared the same sentiments on the phenomenon of code-switching. Teachers and subject advisors did not support code-switching in the classroom. This could be because it is viewed as drifting away from the subject matter and the fact that assessment does not support code-switching. On

the contrary, learners who participated in the study showed great support for code-switching in the classroom. They believed that learning is easier when teachers momentarily translate the subject matter into one of their familiar languages. In essence, code-switching enjoyed support from learners while officials such as teachers and subject advisors do not support it.

Participants were given a questionnaire to respond to on code-switching. The question posed was 'Do you support code-switching in the classroom when learning SEPHL?'

Participant A responded that:

There are some words that are difficult to spell and pronounce in Sepedi, we use English and mix it with Sepedi to cover for the words we do not know well in Sepedi, so, code-switching is the way to go.

Participant B said:

We struggle to express ourselves in Sepedi fluently, this is mainly because we are used to mixing languages.

Participant C commented:

I cannot speak without mixing English and Sepedi while communicating. I mix two languages when I cannot remember some words in other languages.

Participant D responded thus:

I cannot speak without mixing languages because I come from a diverse family. I have two parents who speak different languages, another reason is because I was enrolled in a private school where we spoke only in English, now that I am doing Sepedi, it is difficult to understand or speak it without mixing English.

Participant E had the following to say on code-switching:

Some words in Sepedi language are difficult, I usually forget them and quickly use English words to make up for them.

Through the responses acquired from the questionnaire on code-switching, a conclusive analysis can be made that code-switching is popular amongst learners. The participants provided reasons for alternating between Sepedi and English. They

attributed the phenomenon to a lack of vocabulary in Sepedi. Participants faced challenges in speaking fluent Sepedi in the classroom. Consequently, they resorted to code-switching as a mitigation to compensate for their lack of vocabulary in Sepedi.

4.4.10 THE INFLUENCE OF SEKONE DIALECT ON STANDARD LANGUAGE

Sekone is a regional dialect spoken in the Sekhukhune region. It has adverse effects on how learners learn and speak Sepedi. The Sekone dialect originates from the Sepedi language, which is called SEPHL in the classrooms. Learners in this region speak the dialect in their social interactions. It is a language they are accustomed to, and they have learnt from home. Sekone influences how learners learn SEPHL. It creates a challenge for them as they integrate dialects into the standard language. Consequently, they are unable to learn a standard language.

Participant A commented on how dialect affects or influence the learning of SEPHL:

It affects me yes. This is because the way we speak is different from the language we are taught. We write the same way we speak.

It is a common practice that learners speak and write the same way. Learners that speak Sekone are commonly guilty of using it in the classroom. This creates a challenge as Sekone is significantly different from the standard language (SEPHL). Learners write and speak words from their regional variety in the classroom. Gough (2020) investigated the influence of language dialects in South African societies. He argues that dialects are currently established throughout South African societies, among people from a variety of linguistic and ethnic backgrounds, precisely the black communities. He explains that language dialects give rise to new language structures and forms. As a result, learners often disregard the official language because they eventually become comfortable with using their dialects.

On whether a dialect affected their learning of SEPHL, **Participant C** said:

Yes, because I speak what I heard from my elders and speak what I know but I write a different thing in the books.

Dialect creates a challenge for learners, and they get lost in the dugout. This is mainly because they possess a thinking that the dialect they speak is the formal or correct form of the standard language. Consequently, learners use their dialects in the

classroom. They then tend to have a misconception on the correctness of the dialect and standard language. **Participant G** had this to say on the effects of dialect on SEPHL:

Sekone affects how we speak because it consists of many slang words which can then be used while speaking Sepedi.

In view of the response above, it becomes evident that learners view their dialect as an alternative for words that they cannot find expressions of in Sepedi. They tend to use their dialect to compensate for their vocabulary inefficiencies in Sepedi. Consequently, they adopt their dialectal slangs into the formal language. According to Lanham (2018), dialects have also had a strong influence on African languages and that enormous stock of dialects has been adopted into communities. This is indicated by the pervasiveness of people speaking the same language differently in the same communities. Karien et al (2017) agree with this notion, as they researched on the influence of other languages on African languages.

All the participants admitted that Sekone influenced how they spoke Sepedi, which is the standardised language learnt as a home language in schools. **Participant B** had the following to say:

I did not know there is a difference between Sepedi and the language I speak (Sekone), as a result, I always spoke and wrote in Sekone in the classroom and my teacher would always scold me for using improper language.

Therefore, Sekone influences the learning of SEPHL and thus it can be attributed to the poor performance of learners in Sepedi. All the participants expressed a view that Sekone dialect, which is the regional variety they speak had an adverse effect on how they spoke. Moreover, it affected their learning of SEPHL, as they were accustomed to using words from their dialects to express themselves both verbally and in writing.

4.4.11 CULTURAL MIX AND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Cultural mix is when people come from different cultures dwell in one area. Such people tend to have distinct cultures, languages, social norms, and other practices. There is a direct relationship between culture and the learning of a language. Individuals utilise language for communication and learning a new language involves learning how to use words, rules and knowledge about knowledge and its usage to

communicate with homes of the language (Wen-Cheng & Chien-Hung, 2010). This comprehension of language views language not simply as a body of knowledge to be learn, but as a social activity in which to form part of (Wen-Cheng & Chien-Hung, 2010). During interviews, the theme of cultural mix and language learning raised emerged. One of the participants indicated that their learning of SEPHL was impacted by cultural differences in the school environment. **Participant D** said:

We struggle to express ourselves fluently in SEPHL because we come from different places and speak different languages, and it takes time for us to learn SEPHL because we are mixed with people of different languages and culture.

Cultural mix has adverse effects on language learning. In this case, it impacts on the learning of SEPHL. When learners come from different places, with different cultures and speaking different languages, it becomes difficult for them to learn one language that will be a common medium of communication. In this context, both the target language and culture are simultaneously prevalent and can be engaged concurrently.

The theme of cultural mix also arose because of learners speaking different languages as their home languages. In the context of this study, SEPHL was taught as the first language. Worryingly, some learners were learning SEPHL as a first language, despite it not being their home or home language. This means the learners came from different areas where different languages are spoken. This can be attributed to the area being an industrial place. **Participant E** said:

We are unable to speak SEPHL fluently because we are not used to speaking Sepedi most of our time. Some of us have challenges because it is not our home language.

There is a challenge of learners doing SEPHL as a first language despite it not being their home language. According to the DBE, home language is defined as a language that is spoken in a particular setting and promotes abstract reasoning (DBE, 2020). An expectation is that everyone who is doing any language as their home language is a home speaker of that language, or it is their mother-tongue. This is contrary to the discovery made in this study. Learning an additional language, which is any language different from the one spoken at home, involves developing an awareness of the ways in which culture interrelates with language whenever it is used (Wen-Cheng & Chien-

Hung, 2010). Furthermore, on cultural mix, another participant indicated that their learning of SEPHL was adversely impacted by diversity. The study noted that participant learners came from various ethnic groups. This meant that the school environment is a diversified one. **Participant F** had the following to say on why they struggled to express themselves fluently in SEPHL:

It is because of the situation of diversity. We are mixed with people from different ethnic groups, with different culture and languages. We only use SEPHL in the classroom for learning. We interact less in the language.

Language and diversity are interrelated concepts. People of the same language belong in the same diversity, and people with a different language then become a different diverse group from the latter. In a nutshell, diversity is mainly brought by language and other related aspects such as tradition, culture, believes etc. Language is an immediate and sensitive measures of diversity (Blommaert, 2013). **Participant C** made the following assertion:

I am unable to speak Sepedi due to coming from a mixed family. I have parents who speak different languages, and another challenge is having been introduced to private schools at early age where we were taught to use English a primary language.

According to Blommaert (2013), little differences in aspects such as accent and speech patterns betray a persons' regional, social class, ethnic and or gender backgrounds. Therefore, hearing a different language spoken provokes a sense of foreignness. The assertion by the author above complements the views expressed by the participants on how diversity affects their learning of SPEHL.

4.4.12 LANGUAGE USE

Participants revealed that they were accustomed to using English for communication. Language use refers to the way individuals employ language to communicate ideas, thoughts, emotions, and intentions within a specific context or social setting. It encompasses various aspects such as vocabulary choice, grammar, syntax, pragmatics, and discourse conventions (Hymes, 1972). Language use is shaped by cultural norms, societal expectations, and individual experiences, and it can vary greatly across different languages, communities, and situations. Learners use English frequently as the mode of communication in their communities, homes, and other

societal contexts. This alters their ability to speak fluently in their home language being SEPHL in this case.

On whether they can speak Sepedi without indulging English words, **Participant B** indicated that:

No, we have normalised using English words to a point that it is almost impossible to speak our home language (SEPHL) without indulging English words.

Language use is important in learning every language. Learners learn a language depending on how often they use it. If learners are not exposed to a certain language, they may not be proficient in it. Oral production is important in learning and understanding a language. From the response above, it can be said that learners have challenges with SEPHL because they do not use the language frequently. They rely heavily on English for their daily communication. **Participant A** made the following comment of the theme of language use:

As learners, we have a tendency of involving English words when speaking Sepedi mainly because some Sepedi words are hard to pronounce and because we are required to speak English when in the school premises.

The issue of environmental expectation is notable in the above response. Learners are expected to use English in school premises for communication, which hinders the learning of other languages. The expectation overshadows other languages. As language use is shaped by cultural norms, societal expectations, and individual experiences, learners become accustomed to using English more than their home language being SEPHL in this case. Another phenomenon that was alluded to by the participants that is relevant to the theme of language use was the lack of oral expression from elders and active teaching from parents. **Participant C** said:

Our parents teach us to speak in the dialect we use at home through interacting with us using the dialect from a young age up to now. Our elders seldom speak, so we cannot really learn language from them.

Active teaching from parents involves engaging in the surrounding community that children or students experience daily (Rudd, 2020). The students actively learn language outside the classroom from their parents. If the parents speak a certain

dialect, their children are prone to adopt that language as their home language. Consequently, they learn informal languages outside the classroom and tend to confuse it with the standard language used in the classroom. Learners must use language to develop in it and thus become competent (Morell, 2020). In a nutshell, the theory of language use states that learners need to use a language to learn it. Learners learn language as they use it. Language learning does not only conform to knowing and understanding language structures and its logic but being able to use it to interact with people is the way to learning it (Aguikar & Barr, 2020). Hence, the theory is termed “language use”. Wittgenstein’s theory advocates interaction in a language (Morell, 2020).

4.5 ANALYSIS OF CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

4.5.1 ORAL PRODUCTION

During observations, the researcher noted that learners faced problems of oral production. Oral production refers to producing an oral text for one or more listeners; for example, giving information to an audience in a public address. This may include reading a written text aloud, speaking from notes, acting out a rehearsed role, and or speaking spontaneously (Europe, 2020). According to Hortua, Garcia Garcia and Arevalo (2018), oral production is perceived as one facet of overall oral proficiency that involves the production of any language words and the way those words are blended together to create meaning; that is to refer to any piece of language produced by a speaker with the purpose of eliciting meaning is considered part of the oral production.

4.5.2 OBSERVED PHENOMENON IN THE CLASSROOM

In terms of the oral production of learners in SPHL, learners faced difficulties in pronouncing Sepedi words. The difficulties were observed in both their reading and speaking. Participants were given a topic to prepare a speech and present on. During the presentation, the participants visibly struggled to read aloud their own texts. Most difficulties came from complex words that were not often used. Participants faced difficulties in producing fluent words when speaking and reading aloud. They stammered while attempting to read out words in SEPHL. Consequently, they were unable to read for meaning. This was one of the challenges that could be attributed to

poor performance in SEPHL. Moreover, the researcher observed that learners mainly struggled with uncommon words such as idioms and proverbs. For example:

“Lefotwana e sego la gago o le hloba le gaela”

“Nama re tima mmeši mong mphaka re ja le yena”

The above quoted words were idioms from SEPHL. Participants were unable to express them fluently without stammering. This is an indication of poor oral production in line with the definition provide by Europe (2020) who states that oral production refers to producing an oral text for one or more listeners; for example, giving information to an audience in a public address. This may include reading a written text aloud. In this sense, it becomes evident from the observations that learners faced challenges of oral production in SEPHL.

4.5.3 ORAL PROFICIENCY

A TABLE SHOWING THE ORAL PROFICIENCY OF LEARNERS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE STUDY IN SEPHL

Below is a representation of observation results from the participants’ oral proficiency. The results came from a total of twenty (20) participants, ten (10) from each school, namely; School A and School B.

Table 10: ORAL PROFICIRNCY OF LEARNERS

Participants	Speak	Read Aloud
A	Poor	Good
B	Good	Good
C	Poor	Poor
D	Poor	Poor
E	Poor	Poor
F	Poor	Good

The observations on oral proficiency were conducted with learners participating in an oral assessment. They were expected to render a speech on a topic of their choice. The ratings were conducted on a scale of 'Poor' and 'Good'. Poor was attributed to speaking with difficulties, pronouncing words in the speech patterns and stammering while attempting to produce spoken language. Good was attributed to the ability to speak and pronounce words without any difficulties. Participants with a rating of good were able to produce spoken language effortlessly. Conversely, participants rated on the scale of poor had challenges producing verbal or spoken language.

4.5.4 THE OBSERVED RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPEAKING AND READING ON ORAL PROFICIENCY

Participants are rated on a scale of good in speaking ultimately did well in reading. The table shows that there is a correlation between the ability to speak fluently and the ability to produce a written text into verbal language. On the other hand, participants who faced difficulties in speaking also faced similar challenges in spelling out words. During the observations on oral proficiency, only one participant was rated good in speaking SEPHL out of a total of seven participants. This meant that the remaining cohort were rated poor in speaking SEPHL. Consequently, the observations revealed that learners faced challenges of oral proficiency in SEPHL. The challenges highlighted issues such as an inability to spell out words, mispronunciation, and poor execution of verbal activities.

4.5.5 SPEECH PATTERNS

A rubric was used to assess the speech patterns of participants. During the observation, the participants were asked to present a speech of their choice. The purpose of the oral activity was to assess the speech pattern of learners. Speech pattern refers to the distinctive method an individual talks. This includes accent, rhythm, tone, and pitch, which are crucial for communication (Mileva, 2024). According to Robbins (2023), speech pattern refers to a characteristic mode in which an individual expresses themselves. This varies from a dialect, defined as a regional variation in a language predominantly called accent. As Mileva (2024) states that speech pattern is concerned with accent, rhythm, tone and pitch, the researcher observed the listed aspects and displayed the observations in a table form.

A TABLE DEPICTING OBSERVED SPEECH PATTERN RESULTS

Description: The speech patterns were rated into three categories. The ratings varied from poor, fair and good.

Explanation of ratings:

Poor: Participants rated in this category displayed a low level of proficiency when articulating their speech.

Fair: Participants rated as fair are average, their oral proficiency had acceptable levels of mistakes.

Good: Participants in this category displayed an excellent level of oral proficiency, meaning they expressed themselves without difficulties.

The ratings are marked with “x” in every block that represent the levels listed above.

TABLE 11: OBSERVED SPEECH PATTERNS OF LEARNERS

PARTICIPANTS	POOR	FAIR	GOOD
A		x	
B	x		
C	x		
D			x
E		x	
F	x		

Noteworthy, the observed aspects, which are tone, rhythm; accent and pitch as stated by Mileva (2024) constitute a combination of oral production. They cannot be observed independently; consequently, they form part of every verbal communication. This explains why the ratings are done holistically.

4.5.6 INTERPRETATION OF SPEECH PATTERNS OBSERVED: SEKONE AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF PARTICIPANTS SPEECH PATTERNS

During the observation, it was noted that Sekone dialect had a direct effect on the speech pattern of the learners. Participants were unable to express themselves in a formal language. They adopted Sekone words into their speech as they articulated their ideas. This phenomenon can be attributed to the influence of dialect on SEPHL. Sekone has a direct influence on the speech pattern of learners. Ultimately, this appeared to be a challenge in learners speaking SEPHL fluently. Learners incorrectly integrated words and slangs from their dialects when speaking.

4.6 FINDINGS FROM TEACHER INTERVIEWS

Teachers were also provided with a questionnaire to complete. The questions pertained to their experiences of teaching SEPHL, and the challenges that they encountered. The purpose of the questions was to establish the challenges of learners in speaking fluent SEPHL, despite the language being a mother-tongue. Participants were two teachers, where one emanated from School A and the other from School B.

The teacher from School A was referred to as **Teacher A** and teacher from School B was referred to as **Teacher B**. The questions on the questionnaire were divided into three distinct categories. The categories included oral proficiency, influence from other languages and the impact of the phenomenon on oral proficiency. The three distinct categories also served as themes that guided the analysis of the findings of the study.

4.6.1 TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE AND RESPONSES

TEACHER A

PART A

Oral proficiency

1. Why are learners struggling to express themselves fluently in SEPHL?

Learners are struggling to express themselves fluently in Sepedi Home Language because they speak slang languages more often which affect the way they speak Sepedi Home Language.

2. Can your learners speak Sepedi without indulging English words in sentences? Explain.

No. The main cause is the lack of Sepedi vocab which disable them to construct sentences in their minds that they will express orally.

3. Can your learners present a speech fluently in Sepedi? Support your answer.

No. my learner lack ability to present speech fluently as they are unable to read words and express Sepedi words, the way they are supposed to be expressed, they tend to misunderstand the meaning of the single written word in their sentence.

Influence of other Languages

1. Does English influence the way learners speak Sepedi? How?

Yes. Hence, as there are words that are borrowed from English language, people or learners who have low Sepedi vocabulary tend to fulfil their vocabulary by borrowing almost every word which negatively impact the way they will express their selves in English.

2. Does dialect (Sekone) influence the way learners speak Sepedi?

Yes. On dialect, the words differ region to region, the word. e.g., In Sekone, they use the word “ke fo” instead of “Ke tlo”. Words are not the same when expressed in Sekone reason being the accent tend to modify the way we express words in different regions.

3. What is the effect of mixing other languages when speaking Sepedi?

The effect of mixing other languages with Sepedi is that a learner end losing the total meaning of other spoken Sepedi words, which in future will disable him or her to speak pure Sepedi fluently.

PART B

The impact of poor oral proficiency

1. What is the impact of the phenomenon on SEPHL performance in schools?

Does it affect your results?

As learners write words the way they express them, this makes learners to misinterpret questions and answer the questions they don't understand leading to poor performance in Sepedi Home Language.

2. Do you think learning SEPHL is important in learners' education?

Yes. As Sepedi is one indigenous language in South Africa, it helps in conserving South African culture too and protecting our indigenous languages from extinction.

3. How can the investigated phenomenon be addressed?

Learners can be encouraged to speak Sepedi more often and read Sepedi books on spare time, this will aid them to improve their vocab and their understanding on certain Sepedi words.

4. What ways can be used to improve learners' oral proficiency?

Encourage learners to participate in Sepedi spelling bees.

Encourage learners to speak Sepedi more often at home.

Encourage learners to read more Sepedi books.

4.6.2 THE OVERALL ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS FROM TEACHER A:

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS ON ORAL PROFICIENCY

Based on the findings made from Teacher **A**, learners are not fluent in SEPHL because they use slangs. In essence, the teacher is referring to dialects. Sekone is central to the language spoken in the Sekhukhune East District, and therefore presents itself as a contributing factor to learners facing challenges in speaking fluent SPHL. Fluent SEPHL involves the use of the formal language to communicate, learn and speak in the classroom. Although dialects are spoken frequently in societies and have become dominant, they have not yet been recognised as official languages. Consequently, their dominance overshadows the formal or standard language and thus hindering learners from attaining proficient oral skills. Moreover, Teacher **A** alluded to the issue of vocabulary. According to the findings, learners have poor vocabulary in SEPHL and thus they find themselves wanting when attempting to produce spoken language. The lack of vocabulary leads them into borrowing words and expressions from other languages they are fond of such as their regional variety (Sekone) and quite often from English.

4.6.3 ANALYSIS FROM THE FINDINGS ON THE INFLUENCE OF OTHER LANGUAGES

The findings on this part reveal that the influence of other languages bears a greater effect on learners speaking fluently in SEPHL. The influence of other languages therefore arose as a theme related to challenges of learners speaking fluently in SEPHL. According to the responses from Teacher **A**, learners have poor vocabulary in SEPHL. As a result, they tend to borrow words from English and other dialects. Learners mix languages to compensate for their vocabulary inefficiencies. In this case, the influence is evident from two languages being responsible for learner challenges in speaking fluent SEPHL. One of the languages referred to here is English due to its dominant nature in the schooling fraternity, where learners use it as a medium of instruction across all subjects, and another language is Sekone, which is a regional variety of Sepedi.

Teacher **A** stated that the use of English across the curriculum caused learners to lose the meaning of their home language. The dominance of English thus shadowed SEPHL in schools. Consequently, learners lost oral skills in the language. Moreover, the issue of regional variety where words are spelt and written differently from the formal language caused learners to perform poorly in their home language (SEPHL).

4.6.4 ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF POOR ORAL PROFICIENCY ON SEPHL

Based on the findings from Teacher **A**, poor oral proficiency has an adverse impact on the overall performance of SEPHL in schools. Teacher **A** stated that the problem manifests itself when learners tackle questions in the examination sessions. The teacher also stated that learners write words according to how they speak them. This means that they are more likely to write in their regional dialect (Sekone) as opposed to using a formal language to respond to questions. As such, they perform poorly in their examinations. Furthermore, they tend to misinterpret the questions as they are presented in a language slightly different from the one, they use in their daily lives to interact.

TEACHER B

Oral proficiency

1. Why are learners struggling to express themselves fluently in SEPHL?

Learners struggle to express themselves in Sepedi Home Language because along their academic journey they are encouraged by their teachers to learn how to speak English than Sepedi. Most of the teacher from primary and secondary schools thinks that it is essential for learners to learn how to speak English since it is a lingua franca for communication hence, learners end up struggling to express themselves in their own home language which is Sepedi because they lack fundamental skills and knowledge of communication of their own home language.

2. Can your learners speak Sepedi without indulging English words in sentences?

Explain.

My learners cannot speak Sepedi without incorporating some English words and grammar into their speech because they lack Sepedi vocabulary. This was influenced by their willingness and perhaps their teachers' choice of encouraging them to learn to communicate in English from primary school and neglect learning how to communicate in Sepedi.

3. Can your learners present a speech fluently in Sepedi? Support your answer.

In terms of presentation of speech in Sepedi, they can fluently present it. The reason is that they come prepared as they wrote everything that they are going to present on the paper. When they write the speech that they are going to present, they ensure that they rectify all grammatical errors so that they can be fluent when they present which is simpler for them than when they must utter Sepedi without any preparations.

Influence of other Languages

1. Does English influence the way learners speak Sepedi? How?

Most of the learners' vocabulary of Sepedi is guided by their English vocab, hence they depend on English for thinking when speaking Sepedi and when they cannot find appropriate word, they incorporate English into their Sepedi grammar.

2. Does dialect (Sekone), influence the way learners speak Sepedi?

Dialect influence how they speak Sepedi because it is the most common language they use in their community and their home for communication. Hence, when they must speak Sepedi, they are not fluent, and they end up blending it with dialect.

3. What is the effect of mixing other languages when speaking Sepedi?

Some of the Sepedi words extinct since they are not used frequently. Sepedi also changes to other language like the way Dutch language changed to Afrikaans because of blending languages when speaking.

PART B of interview questions

The impact of poor oral proficiency

1. What is the impact of the phenomenon on SEPHL performance in schools?

Does it affect your results?

Average performance on Sepedi Home Language is moderate because only few learners comprehend Sepedi and have a bit of Sepedi vocabulary. Since most of my learners do not obtain higher levels in Sepedi, my results are affected.

2. Do you think learning SEPHL is important in learners' education?

I don't think learning Sepedi Home Language is important in learners' education because all the subjects and modules are written and taught in English language except for Sepedi Home Language.

3. How can the investigated phenomenon be addressed?

It can be addressed by addressing the issue of language that must be used in schools for communication.

4. What ways can be used to improve learners' oral proficiency?

By encouraging them to read Sepedi Home Language books (Padi) to increase their vocabulary. Encouraging them to communicate more in Sepedi than in English so that they can be fluent when they speak Sepedi.

4.6.5 THE OVERALL ANALYSIS OF THE FINDINGS FROM TEACHER B: ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS ON ORAL PROFICIENCY

Teacher **B** proffered that learners faced challenges of oral proficiency in the classroom. The teacher explained that learners were unable to speak fluently in Sepedi mainly because English is at the centre of their academic journey. Learners spend most of their time learning in English due to the language policy in most schools that promotes the English language.

The two teachers who participated in the study shared a view that learners experience challenges of oral proficiency in SEPHL. Teacher **B** believed the issue was centred on the dominance of the English language in the classroom where a majority of the curriculum is covered in English. Conversely, Teacher **A** pointed to the issue of dialects in society, which dominates spoken language. In this sense, it becomes clear that both English and dialect pointed by Teacher **A**, which is Sekone are responsible for learners' inability to express themselves fluently in SEPHL and thus encounter challenges in attaining oral proficiency. In a nutshell, teachers attributed the challenges of oral proficiency in SEPHL to the dominance of other spoken languages in the schools and societies.

4.6.6 ANALYSIS FROM THE FINDINGS ON THE INFLUENCE OF OTHER LANGUAGES

The data derived from the interviews indicate that there is a huge influence of other languages on SEPHL in the classrooms. According to the views shared by Teacher **B**, there are two languages responsible for the phenomenon. The languages are English and the Sekone dialect. English is responsible for influencing the way learners speak SEPHL because it is a dominant language and is mostly used by learners in their daily communications and interactions. This is articulated by Teacher **B** in the following response:

Most of the learners' vocabulary of Sepedi is guided by their English vocab, hence they depend on English for thinking when speaking Sepedi and when they cannot find appropriate word, they incorporate English into their Sepedi grammar.

The response speaks to the adverse influence that English has on learners' learning of SEPHL in the classroom. On the other hand, Teacher **B** also believed that Sekone had an impact on learners' ability to speak formal Sepedi:

Sekone influence how they speak Sepedi because it is the most common language they use in their community and their home for communication. Hence, when they must speak Sepedi, they are not fluent, and they end up blending it with the dialect.

The above is evidence that part of the challenges of learners speaking fluent SEPHL is the influence of other languages. When languages come together in a community, they are inclined to mix and thus influence each other.

4.6.7 ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF POOR ORAL PROFICIENCY ON SEPHL

Teacher **B** stated that poor oral proficiency and other challenges explained above were responsible for the poor performance of learners in SEPHL. The teacher indicated that learners performed poorly in their grades in SEPHL. When learners encounter challenges in their learning, results are more likely to suffer. Poor oral proficiency limits the performance of learners in oral activities such as presentations.

Teacher **A** and Teacher **B** agreed that poor oral proficiency and challenges learners encountered had an adverse effect on their learning of SEPHL. Teacher **A** stated that poor oral proficiency was responsible for learners doing poorly in their examinations, as they often interpreted the examination in their regional dialect while Teacher **B** explained that poor oral proficiency hindered the performance of learners in oral activities, thus ultimately contributing to poor performances.

4.7 FINDINGS FROM SUBJECT ADVISOR INTERVIEWS

What is the overall performance of SEPHL in your Circuit?

Not as expected. Sepedi is a home language, we therefore expect learners to do exceptionally well however, the performance is not pleasing.

What do you attribute to the poor performance in SEPHL?

Sepedi teachers lack the necessary support. Their subject is not allocated enough resources as compared to other

subjects in schools. Another factor is that our children love speaking English, and they do not really love Sepedi.

What are the challenges teachers face in teaching SEPHL?

Issues of lack of resources. In most cases, teaching and learning materials are short in schools. Every year, there are deficiencies of learning materials. Some teachers in various schools are not subject specialists, they are allocated Sepedi to teach merely based on it being their home language.

Is there a balance between curriculum deliverance of SEPHL and other subjects?

Yes, Sepedi is allocated enough time as it is counted amongst core subjects. However, lack of curricular activities such as spelling competitions, writing competitions and others is a problem.

What ways can be used to improve the performance of SEPHL?

Train teachers as much as possible. Principals also need to be encouraged to allocate Sepedi to qualified educators who specialised in the Subject. The department also need to allocate more resources to SEPHL for teaching and learning.

4.7.1 Analysis on the findings from the subject advisor

Based on the responses of the subject advisor, SEPHL is not doing particularly well in schools. The subject advisor states that the overall performance of SEPHL is poor. According to the findings, part of the reasons for poor performance is lack of resources, where teaching and learning materials are insufficient, lack of teacher support and most importantly appointing less qualified teachers to teach SEPHL. The subject advisor stated that in some schools, teachers are allocated SEPHL to teach based on the language being their home tongue as opposed to being qualified to teach it. Consequently, the performance plummets.

4.8 SUMMARY

This chapter presented the overall findings of the study. The chapter encompassed the findings and their analysis. All the findings were based on the responses of the

participants in the study and were interpreted in line with the theoretical framework of this research. The researcher uncovered the challenges that learners encountered in learning to speak fluent SEPHL. Based on the findings in this chapter, the research can conclude that the research questions in chapter one has been answered. The findings provides a deep insight as to what the study aimed to investigate. The next chapter will discuss the findings of the study and make recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings of the study on the challenges faced by learners in learning SEPHL and the attendant recommendations on the phenomenon. The findings are discussed and summarised in line with the recommendations. The chapter also concludes the study by presenting closing arguments and drawing inferences sought by the study. The findings are derived from the data analysed in the previous chapter. Moreover, the findings were presented in themes and discussed according to the themes.

5.2 SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

CHAPTER ONE

This is the first chapter of the study. It showcased a brief introduction and background of the study. The chapter was a skeleton of the entire research as it outlined how the researcher intended to undertake the research by briefly elucidating the reviewed literature, methodology, the significance of the study, and ethical considerations. The chapter also stated the research problem and justified the need for the study. In a nutshell, the chapter set the tone for the study and all the subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER TWO

This chapter presented the literature review. In this chapter, the researcher reviewed the literature that related to the research topic, such as books, articles, and journal

articles related to the research topic and the research problem. The chapter made linked existing studies and knowledge with the current study. The chapter also discussed the theoretical framework of the study. The review enabled the research to identify research gaps in the literature that needed to be covered by the current study. Through the literature reviewed, the researcher has established the aims and objectives of the study. The literature provided a specific gap that needed to be explored and thus has led to the conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER THREE

The established the foundation of the research. It presented an outline of the study in terms of the research methodology, approach, research design, ethical consideration and the significance of the study. In this chapter, the researcher discussed all the methodological approaches and justified their suitability to the study and their relevance is addressing the research questions. In essence, the chapter presented the framework that the study adopted, which was the qualitative research approach.

CHAPTER FOUR

This chapter presented the findings from the interviews with participants, observations and the analysis of the data. The data were presented according to the methodological approach employed in the study. In this chapter, the researcher presented the findings in light of the research objectives and analysed them thematically, and to fulfil the aims and objectives of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

This is the final chapter of the study. In this chapter, the researcher presented the summary of the findings, recommendations and highlighted the possible gaps that the study could not cover for future research purposes. The findings of the study were discussed in this chapter in line with the study's aims and objectives, and were interpreted against existing knowledge and finally presented the recommendations that the study made.

5.3 SUMMARY OF MAIN RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.3.1 THE INFLUENCE OF ENGLISH ON SEPEDI HOME LANGUAGE

The interviews with the learners revealed the influence of English on SEPEDI HOME LANGUAGE as a theme. When asked to state the challenges they faced in learning Sepedi Home

Language (SEPHL), the participants attributed the challenges to the influence of English on their learning of SEPHL as a factor. The study found that English has a direct influence on SEPHL. Participants traced their inability to speak fluent SEPHL on the dominance of English and the influence it has on their language speaking.

Participant A expressed the following view on the influence of English:

We are used to speaking English.

The expression above emphasises the dominance of English. Learners are more comfortable with speaking in English than any other language. To a large extent, they are even more accustomed to speaking English than their home or mother-tongue.

Participant B said:

English affects how I speak Sepedi because I end up forgetting Sepedi words and end up adopting English words in my vocabulary.

Based on the views shared by both Participants A and B, there is a direct influence of English on SEPHL. The influence can be attributed to poor performance in the subject and overall, on how learners learn SPHL in the classroom. The dominance of English in the academic space poses a threat to the performance of indigenous languages such as SEPHL. This notion is substantiated by Makhanya and Zibane (2020) in their study, where they found that learning in South African schools continues to be dominated by a language that was posed by colonialism and assert that access to education is hindered by the dominance of English over indigenous languages.

The view is supported by another study which states that the use of English language in the classrooms for teaching and learning, instead of indigenous languages, severely and negatively affects students' performance in their mother-tongue education (Mphasha, Nkuna & Seba, 2022). The study found that learners would rather use English to express themselves using English over their home language. Therefore, the influence of English is a proven phenomenon that affects how learners speak their home languages. In this case, the influence is on SEPHL. English influences how learners speak Sepedi.

5.3.2 LEARNERS' LANGUAGE ATTITUDE TOWARDS SEPEDI AS THEIR HOME LANGUAGE

There is qualitative evidence that suggests learners have a negative attitude towards SEPHL. Their attitude towards SEPHL is misguided by misconceptions and information deficiency. The empirical data points that learners do not have knowledge of why they need to learn home languages. In the context of this study, the home language of participants is SEPHL. According Education (2020), home language refers to the language that is spoken most frequently at home by a learner while mother-tongue refers to the language that a learner has acquired in his/her early years, and which has normally become his/her natural instrument of thought and communication.

Although the Department of Basic Education (DBE) stresses the importance of mother-tongue education, much of the effort is not put in place to ensure learners understand the significance of learning mother-tongues in their education. The study found that learners do not value the study of their mother-tongues in schools. To this effect, when asked whether learning SEPHL in schools was important, **Participant F** said:

No, it is not important because the world is becoming globalised and in following my career, I will be expected to speak English as a medium of expression.

The study also found that that learners did not have a clear understanding of why they learnt a home language. In this study, the concern in learning SEPHL was stated by **Participant G**, who questioned:

Why do we have to learn SEPEDI? I do not know of any workplace where they say speaking Sepedi is a requirement. I wonder why we are taught something that is not going to contribute to our future.

A study by Magwa (2015) found that English enjoys the prestige of being a dominant language at the expense of indigenous African languages. The study findings clearly indicated that participants would rather use English for their education as a medium of instruction because it is a language that gives power and prestige. This is similar to what has been established by this study as the empirical data suggest that learners have a negative attitude towards SEPHL because they prefer to use English.

5.3.3 TECHNOLOGICAL DOMINANCE IN THE SOCIETY

The study found that the dominance of technology in societies affects indigenous languages. This is mainly because technological programmes are developed and programmed in foreign languages and are therefore not inclusive of indigenous languages such as SEPHL. A participant stated that the use of technology impacts on their learning of SEPHL because technology is dominated by the English language and as such, they are more conversant with it than the latter. **Participant A** had the following to say on technology:

Due to the advancement of technology using English as a medium of expression, a lot of learners are influenced to use English regularly because they are always using technologies in their lives, and they end up using English words while speaking Sepedi.

According to Ndlangamandla (2020), institutions of learning are yet to implement multilingual online pedagogies that include the majority who do not speak English as a first language. Therefore, digital literacy and networked multilingualism are enabling multiple linguistic resources to challenge the “English-only” ideology. The study indicates how monolingual online platforms are in learning institutions. The idea also supports the finding that technological dominance has an adverse effect on the teaching and learning of indigenous languages.

Access to digital technologies that support South African languages is limited and that affects the preservation of indigenous languages and severely hinders their promotion in the society (Sundani, 2023). In addition, another study states that languages are disappearing at an alarming rate in history, accelerated by the digital dominance of English (Marsden, 2024). The dominance of technology poses a greater threat to indigenous languages. A bigger danger for home languages is the shift into the digital age as learners increasingly communicate using online platforms, languages that are not supported by the dominant platforms are more likely to be wiped out (Sparrow, 2024).

In essence, the findings expressed by the foregoing authors support the finding that the technological dominance poses greater challenges to indigenous languages, and SEPHL in the case of this study. The challenge extends as far as posing a risk of extinction owing to the digital shift. Learners struggle to learn SEPHL because the

language is not included in the most dominant technology platforms. Consequently, as learners predominantly use online platforms that do not accommodate SEPHL, they are at the risk of forgetting the basic aspects of the language.

5.3.4 THE EFFECT OF LANGUAGE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

The study established that the use of English across all the subjects as a medium of instruction undermines the significance of home languages in schools. Learners are taught in English as opposed to the mother-tongue instruction. This further erodes the potential of learners learning in their mother-tongue. A study by Cilliers AND Mohohlwane (2023) found that improving the teaching of mother-tongue literacy improves both the mother-tongue and English reading skills, while enhancing teaching of English literacy impacts mother-tongue literacy for students. This indicates that is crucial for learners to be taught their mother-tongue to improve the learning of all other languages and knowledge. Mother-tongue is central to the development of learners in their academic journey.

The study of home languages, particularly indigenous African languages, has been used as a tool for transformation, inclusivity and to preserve languages while affording them the official status as other foreign languages. According to Antonique (2024), South Africa has a rich blend of cultures, traditions and languages; however, many learners in the country must adopt English as their language because it is the primary language used in schools and universities. The statement insinuates that English is central to educational journey of every person leaving in the country, which speaks to its dominance. UNESCO (2022) states that 40% of children are not accessing education in their mother-tongue.

Participant G had the following to say on language of teaching and learning:

All subjects are taught in English. We use English more often in the classroom as well as outside than Sepedi. We only speak Sepedi during the period of home language.

There is a disparity in terms of equating the two languages. The view expressed above paints an image that English is dominant across the curriculum. Consequently, it overshadows other languages learnt in schools as home languages. According to Mncwaango, Elliot, Freedom Makhathini Nkanyiso, 2021), The issue of bilingual classroom remains a subject of debate in South Africa owing to the dominance of a

minority language, which is English as a medium of instruction in most academic institution. Consequently, learners devalue their home languages because they are not used sufficiently in the education sector and other spaces. In South African schools, a majority of the schools use English as a language of teaching and learning. The mother tongue is only taught as a home language. All the subjects are therefore taught in English as a medium of instruction.

5.3.5 CODE-SWITCHING

The study found that code-switching has an adverse effect on the learning of SEPHL. Learners code-switch when they communicate and interact in schools and in communities. Code-switching refers to altering between one language code to the other depending on the context (Morrison, 2024). Learners use languages interchangeably to complement their vocabulary disparities. The participants indicated that they code-switched to make up for the words they were not able to recall in a particular language. They therefore mixed languages to make communication easier. Participants were given a questionnaire to respond to on code-switching. The question posed was “Do you support code-switching in the classroom when learning SEPHL?”

Participant A said:

There are some words that are difficult to spell and pronounce in Sepedi, we use English and mix it with Sepedi to cover for the words we do not know well in Sepedi, so Code-switching is the way to go.

Participant B added:

We struggle to express ourselves in Sepedi fluently, this is mainly because we are used to mixing languages.

Participant C commented:

I cannot speak without mixing English and Sepedi while communicating. I mix two languages when I cannot remember some words in other languages.

Participant D responded thus:

I cannot speak without mixing languages because I come from a diverse family. I have two parents who speak different languages. another reason is because I was enrolled in a private school where we spoke only in

English, now that I am doing Sepedi, it is difficult to understand or speak it without mixing English.

Participant E had the following to say on code-switching:

Some words in Sepedi language are difficult, I usually forget them and quickly use English words to make up for them.

In essence, code-switching enjoys support from learners while officials such as teachers and subject advisors do not support it. Learners have poor vocabulary in SEPHL. This is mainly because they use English to interact in their daily communications. According to Masana (2020), learners code-switch to communicate their thoughts clearly when they struggle with expressing themselves in other languages. In a nutshell, code-switching remains an integral part of language learning and language use. Learning of SEPHL is impeded by code-switching among learners, as they are unable to communicate in SEPHL clearly. The phenomenon can be traced to a lack of vocabulary.

Code-switching hinders learners' fluency in SEPHL. When learners use SEPHL, they mix it with their regional variety and some English words. Consequently, this alters their ability to speak fluent SEPHL.

5.3.6 THE INFLUENCE OF SEKONE DIALECT ON SEPEDI HOME LANGUAGE

Sekone was found to be among the challenges that hinder learners speaking SEPL proficiently. Learners are unable to speak fluently in SEPHL because of the influence from their regional variety (Sekone). Dialects are known to be impediments to formal/official languages in most societies. Learners often elect to speak in their regional dialect over the formal/official languages.

The empirical data display that there is a direct influence of Sekone on SEPHL. Sekone is a Sepedi dialect and is used interchangeably with Sepedi by the participant learners. Sepedi has is an official language in schools and is taught as a home language. The findings indicate that Sekone directly influences how learners speak SEPHL. According to Lanham (2018), dialects have also had a strong influence on African languages and that enormous stock of dialects has been adopted into communities. This is indicated by the pervasiveness of people speaking the same language differently in the same communities. Karien and Melchers (2017) agree with

the notion above as they researched on the influence of other languages on African languages.

Participant I commented on how dialect affects or influence the learning of SEPHL:

It affects me yes. This is because the way we speak is different from the language we are taught. We write the same way we speak.

The response from participant I clearly shows how learners are affected. They are accustomed to speaking in their regional dialect and therefore are unable to use a formal language. Learners struggle to speak SEPHL fluently because learners use their regional dialect to communicate. Sekone is a dominant dialect and is at the centre of communication. Learners must tussle with the idea of switching to a standard language when they communicate in the classroom. It therefore becomes a challenge for learners to learn to speak fluently in SEPHL in the classroom and when taking formal assessments.

Teacher B also believes that Sekone had an impact on learners' ability to speak in a formal Sepedi language. The teacher stated that:

Sekone influence how they speak Sepedi because it is the most common language they use in their community and their home for communication. Hence, when they must speak Sepedi, they are not fluent, and they end up blending it with the dialect.

The assertions by Teacher B supported the findings of this study that Sekone has a direct influence on learning SEPHL, particularly regarding oral proficiency. The study found that the influence of Sekone adversely hinders learners from speaking in the standard language.

5.3.7 POOR ORAL PROFICIENCY

The study also found that learners have challenge of poor oral proficiency. Learners are unable to express themselves fluently in SEPHL, owing to poor oral proficiency. The problem was attributed to a lack of vocabulary, the dominance of English, and the influence of the Sekone dialect in their language. Learners are accustomed to speaking in their regional variety, which has become part of their daily interactions. Consequently, they end up being unable to learn how to speak fluently in their home language (SEPHL) in the classroom. There exist notable differences between the

dialect learners speak, and the formal language they learn in the classroom. This results in learners struggling with home language studies and performing poorly. Haas (2022) states the reasons why learners struggle with oral proficiency by drawing a relationship between spoken and written language. The study asserts that learners usually struggle with oral proficiency when there exists the difference between the spoken and written language

On the question of why learners have poor oral proficiency, **Teacher A** pointed out that:

Learners are struggling to express themselves fluently in Sepedi Home Language because they speak slang languages more often which affect the way they speak Sepedi Home Language.

Teacher B states that:

Learners struggle to express themselves in Sepedi Home Language because along their academic journey they are encouraged by their teachers to learn how to speak English than Sepedi. Most of the teacher from primary and secondary schools thinks that it is essential for learners to learn how to speak English since it is a lingua franca for communication hence, learners end up struggling to express themselves in their home language.

The study found that poor oral proficiency is responsible for learners doing poorly in their examinations as they tend to interpret the examination in their regional dialect while **Teacher B** explained that poor oral proficiency hinders the performance of learners in oral activities and thus ultimately contributing to poor performances. **Teacher A** explained how poor oral proficiency poses as a challenge to learning of SEPHL:

As learners write words the way they express them, this makes learners to misinterpret questions and answer the questions they don't understand leading to poor performance in Sepedi Home Language.

Teacher A, poor oral proficiency has an adverse impact on the overall performance of SEPHL in schools. **Teacher A** states that the problem manifests itself when learners

must tackle questions in the examination sessions. The teacher states that learners write words as they speak to them, this means that they are more likely to write in their regional dialect (Sekone) as opposed to using a formal language to respond to questions. As such, they perform poorly in their examinations. Furthermore, they tend to misinterpret the questions, as they are presented in a language slightly different from the one which they use in their daily lives to interact.

5.4 PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The study made recommendations based on the views of the participants, findings from other studies and the researcher's views. The recommendations focused on the measures the DBE, teachers, and learners can implement to alleviate the challenges of learning to speak fluently in SEPHL.

5.4.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM LEARNERS

SEPHL should only be taught by suitably qualified educators.

The DBE must allocate more resources such as books, journals, language policies in home language education.

Teaching and learning materials should be available to all learners.

Increase the weighting of oral marks in assessment to at least 50 percent to make up for the time learners spend using SEPEDI in the classroom.

Language learning competitions such as reading, speaking, spelling bee should be extended.

5.4.2 PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS FROM EDUCATORS

The problem can be solved by encouraging learners to read SEPHL books (*Padi*) to increase their vocabulary and to communicate more in Sepedi than in English so that they can be fluent when they speak Sepedi.

Encourage learners to participate in Sepedi spelling bees.

Encourage learners to speak Sepedi more often at home through engaging learners to more oral activities.

Encourage learners to read more Sepedi books.

Learners can be encouraged to speak Sepedi more often and read Sepedi books on their spare time. This will aid them to improve their vocabulary and their understanding of certain Sepedi words.

The DBE needs to put more resources into the teaching and learning of SEPHL.

Appoint suitably qualified educators to teach SEPHL.

Teachers should instil a positive attitude amongst learners towards SEPHL.

5.4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM SUBJECT ADVISOR

Teachers should teach the significance of learning SEPHL in learners' education.

Train teachers as much as possible through inductions.

Principals also need to be encouraged to allocate Sepedi to qualified educators who specialised in the Subject. The Department also needs to allocate more resources to SEPHL for teaching and learning.

Language teachers should be encouraged to further their studies and improve their knowledge.

5.4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM RESEARCHER

The DBE must allocate more time to the teaching of oral activities and increase the weighting for oral assessment activities. This will put more emphasis on the significance of teaching speaking skills in the classroom.

Teachers should be inducted on a regular basis on teaching SEPHL and be equipped with various methods to make language learning more enjoyable for learners. Furthermore, introduce more oral activities in the classroom to improve oral proficiency of learners.

Speaking skills should be given more time in the classroom through discussions, presentations and sharing ideas. Moreover, resources should be made available for educators to use in teaching SEPHL.

There need to be campaigns to raise awareness about the significance of learning home languages in schools.

5.5 CONCLUSION

This is the last chapter of the study. The chapter presented a summary of all the chapters in the study, the findings and recommendations of the study. The study used the participants' responses to establish findings and recommendations of the study. The participants were learners, teachers and a subject advisor. The researcher also made recommendations based on the findings of the study. In a nutshell, the findings

of the study managed to answer the research questions in the first chapter. The findings established various reasons as to what the phenomenon constituted.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: (A LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL OF SCHOOL A)

POLOKWANE

MATLALA DIBENG

P O BOX 0746

The principal

Mogale Wa Bagale TECHNICAL

BURGERSFORT 1150

1560 Sediba Street

Dear principal

RE: NOTICE AND REQUEST FOR CONDUCTING A STUDY

This serves as a letter to notify and request permission to conduct a study in your school. I am Matlebjane PM, Student number 201826888 a Masters candidate at the University of Limpopo School of Education and I am requesting for a permission to conduct research on Sepedi home language within your circuit at schools that have been sampled.

The topic of the study is: **Grade 11 Learners speaking skills in Sepedi Home Language classroom at Bogwasha Circuit, in Sekhukhune East District, Limpopo Province, South Africa**

The works of this research will be under the supervision of Mr Phokwane PP and the Co-supervisor Dr Matji. They are research officials and supervisors in the school of education. I am asking for a formal permission to conduct the research at your school.

Should there be any inquiries about this research, please contact me on 0818438996 or through morkwe43@gmail.com at your convenient time.

Thank you.

Yours's faithfully.

MATLEBJANE PM

University of Limpopo

APPEDIX B: (A LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL OF SCHOOL B

P O BOX 0746
MATLALA DIBENG
POLOKWANE
0700

The principal
Bogwasha circuit
LEOLO TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL
BURGERSFORT 1150

Dear principal

RE: NOTICE AND REQUEST FOR CONDUCTING A STUDY

This serves as a letter to notify and request permission to conduct a study in your school. I am Matlebjane PM, Student number 201826888 a Masters candidate at the University of Limpopo School of Education and I am requesting for a permission to conduct research on Sepedi home language within your circuit at schools that have been sampled. The topic of the study is: **Grade 11 Learners speaking skills in Sepedi Home Language classroom at Bogwasha Circuit, in Sekhukhune East District, Limpopo Province, South Africa**

The works of this research will be under the supervision of Mr Phokwane PP and the Co-supervisor Dr Matji. They are research officials and supervisors in the school of education. I am asking for a formal permission to conduct the research at your school.

Should there be any inquiries about this research, please contact me on 0818438996 or through morkwe43@gmail.com at your convenient time.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully.

MATLEBJANE PM

**APPENDIX C: LETTER TO REQUEST PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH
(CIRCUIT MANAGER)**

P O BOX 0746
MATLALA DIBENG
POLOKWANE
0700

THE CIRCUIT MANAGER
BOGWASHA CIRCUIT
BURGERSFORT
PRAKTESEER 1150

DEAR CIRCUIT MANAGER

RE: NOTICE AND REQUEST FOR CONDUCTING A STUDY

This serves as a letter to notify and request permission to conduct a study in your circuit at the following schools: Mogale wa Bagale and Leolo Tech High school. I am Matlebjane PM, Student number 201826888 a Masters candidate at the University of Limpopo School of Education and I am requesting for a permission to conduct research on Sepedi home language within your circuit at schools that have been sampled.

The topic of the study is: **Grade 11 Learners speaking skills in Sepedi Home Language classroom at Bogwasha Circuit, in Sekhukhune East District, Limpopo Province, South Africa**

The works of this research will be under the supervision of Mr Phokwane PP and the Co-supervisor Dr Matji. They are research officials and supervisors in the school of education. I am asking for a formal permission to conduct the research at your school.

Should there be any inquiries about this research, please contact me on 0818438996 or through morkwe43@gmail.com at your convenient time.

Thank you.

Yours's faithfully.

MATLEBJANE PM

APPENDIX D: CONSENT FORM FOR TEACHERS

I..... (educator's full names and surname give my consent to participate in the study titled: **Grade 11 Learners speaking skills in Sepedi Home Language classroom at Bogwasha circuit, in Sekhukhune East District, Limpopo Province, South Africa.** I also confirm that the Information sheet about the study has been provided to me and I fully understand the nature of the study and its requirements thereof.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may decide to withdraw my participation at any time without prejudice. I am also aware that the findings of the study and the information gathered will be used to write a research report and my participation will be anonymised.

I agree that my views may be recorded and captured for further consideration by the researcher.

Participant signature: -----

Date: -----

Researcher's Name and Signature: -----

Date: -----

APPENDIX E: PARTICIPANTS' CONSENT FORM

Find the below Informed consent form attachment.

Informed Consent

--

Title of Research: Grade 11 Learnersi speaking skills in Sepedi Home Language classroom at Bogwasha Circuit, in Sekhukhune East District, Limpopo Province, South Africa

Disclaimer:

When you participate in this study, you will be asked questions in an interview fashioned approach.

1. Potential Risks

The study does not have any risk.

2. Confidentiality

Your responses are completely anonymous.

3. No harm

The study is not harmful.

Agreement:

I..... (Name & surname) agree that the content of my child's participation can be used for any educational purpose and presentations.

Withdrawal from the Study

Participants can withdraw from the study without penalties.

Signature of participant or parent:

Date:

APPENDIX F: PARENT CONSENT FORM IN SEPEDI

HLOGO: Mabokgoni a go bolela a barutwana ba mphato wa 11 thutwaneng ya Sepedi Leleme la Gae sedikothutong sa Bogwasha Sekhukhune East District.

MONYAKIŠIŠI: MATLEBJANE PM

NOMORO YA MOITHUTI: 201826888

LEINA LA UNIBESITHI: UNIBESITHI YA LIMPOPO

Ke nna Matlebjane PM, nomoro ya moithuti; 201826888 moithuti wa dithutwana tša godimo tša thutwana ya Masetase Unibesithing ya Limpopo lefapheng la dithutwana tša boithutela borutiši. Ke kgopela tumelelo ya go dira nyakišišo ya Sepedi Leleme La Gae sedikothutong sa sekolo seo ngwana wa lena a ithuago gona, fao le yena e tla ba go mokgathatema.

Hlogo ya nyakišišo ke: Mabokgoni a go bolela a barutwana ba **M**phato wa 11 thutwaneng ya Sepedi Leleme la Gae sedikothutong sa Bogwasha Sekhukhune East District.

Tumelelo ya gore Ngwana a kgathetema:

Ke le.....(Maina a botlalo a motswadi) ke dumelela ngwana wa ka gore a kgathetema nyakišišong yeo e tšweleditšwego ka godimo ebile ke hlatsela gore ke hlaloseditšwe ka yona ka botlalo le dinyakwa tša yona.

Ke dumela le gore monyakišiši o dirile Dikano tšeo di latelago:

Gi kgathatema ga ngwana waka ke ka maithaopo
Maithaopo a ka boetšwa morago nako efa goba efe ntle le ditlamorago
Dikakanyo tša bakgathatema di tlo ba tša sephira
Ke fela morutiši, morutwana le monyakišiši bao bat la bago gona ka nako ya nyakišišo.
Bjalo ka motswadi, ke dumelelwa go botšiša dipotšišo tša kgakollo mabapi le nyakišišo.

MOSAENO: -----

TŠATŠIKGWEDI -----

APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

STUDY TOPIC

Grade 11 Learners speaking skills in Sepedi Home Language classroom at Bogwasha circuit, in Sekhukhune East District, Limpopo Province, South Africa

MASTER OF EDUCATION

RESEARCHER: MATLEBJANE PM

SUPERVISOR: PHOKWANE PP

Instruments

This is a list of all the instruments that will be used to conduct the study.

An audio recorder (To record interviews)

A diary (To keep a record of all the important dates and activities)

Notepad (To note down the observed phenomena)

Permission from the university document to attain consent.

A consent form for participants

RESEARCH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Oral proficiency

Why are learners struggling to express themselves fluently in Sepedi home language?

Can you speak Sepedi without indulging English words in sentences? EXPLAIN

Can you present a speech fluently in Sepedi? SUPPORT YOUR ANSWER

Influence of other Languages

Does English influence the way learners speak Sepedi? How.

Does your dialect (Sekone), influence the way you speak Sepedi?

What is the effect of mixing other languages when speaking Sepedi?

Part B of interview questions

The impact of poor oral proficiency

What is the impact of the phenomenon on Sepedi home language performance in schools? Does it affect your results?

Do you think learning Sepedi home language is important in your education?

How can the investigated phenomenon be addressed?

What ways can be used to improve learners' oral proficiency?

APPENDIX H: OBSERVATION SCHEDULE.

The researcher will observe the following aspects during the research:

Language proficiency

How learners interact during language lessons