

# **The Use of Languages in Mainstream Grade 4 Schools in KwaZulu-Natal: Implications for Policy Development**

**By**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The South African Language in Education Policy (LiEP) of 1997 and the Department of Education National Curriculum Statement (2002) require that learners' mother tongue is maintained and developed and used as a language of learning and teaching (LOLT) for the first three years of the Foundation Phase. English is recommended as the (LOLT) from Grade 4 upwards. This sudden change presents enormous language challenges especially in Grade 4 as teachers and their learners negotiate transition from isiZulu as first language (L1) to English as LOLT. This study investigates language challenges that Grade 4 learners and their teachers encounter in three South African mainstream schools as they negotiate transition from isiZulu to English as Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) and the implication of these challenges on language policy development. The study adopted a qualitative-interpretative methodology. Six Grade 4 teachers were purposively selected from three mainstream schools in KwaZulu-Natal for interviews three of which were observed and interviewed after the classroom observations. Data was generated through pre-observation interviews, video-recorded lesson observations, and post-observation interviews. The data collected was analysed and interpreted using an open coding in order to answer the study's critical questions.

The findings revealed that serious language challenges occur whilst teaching Grade 4 learners in English as a FAL due to learners' limited knowledge of grammar and vocabulary in the LOLT. The study also revealed limited understanding ability, (s)low articulation, poor performance and participation, and psychological distress emanating from learners' social problems as part of the challenges. The study further showed that teachers frequently switched to the mother tongue to ensure sufficient meaningful communication in their classrooms. Additionally, the study revealed teachers' exclusion in policy formulation and development process and lack of adequate training which exacerbates teachers' ignorance of the policy contents leading to the teachers' indiscriminate use of code-switching. These worsen learners' language difficulties, thus under-develop the learners, and create unequal opportunities for effective learning by all learners through English as LOLT. They widen the gap and hinder education when teachers are not able to negotiate the transition from the foundation phase to Grade 4.

Teachers were convinced that the study by EFAL learners of English in the Foundation Phase would go a long way in alleviating the language and learning challenges encountered by learners in Grade 4 and thus improve the quality of communication and interaction that needs to take place in the classroom between the learners and their teachers as they negotiate transition to English as LOLT. The study recommends a review of language policy that will integrate quality in the learning of English in the Foundation Phase, in addition to learning the mother tongue throughout high school education. It also recommends an increased participation of teachers in policy-making processes and intensification of teacher professional development in language teaching in relation to the language in education policy.

## DECLARATION

I, OKOYE FELIX IFEANYI (209537168) hereby declare that this research study “The Use of Languages in Mainstream Grade 4 Schools in KwaZulu-Natal: Implications for Policy Development is my own work and all sources used or quoted have been indicated, acknowledged and listed in the references.

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OKOYE F. I

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DATE

## **DEDICATION**

**This dissertation is dedicated to my family and to God Almighty**

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I wish to thank my parents Mark and Rose Okoye for their love, prayer and encouragements—I love you so very much! To my brothers Engr. Chukwudi Okoye, Late Izuchuwkwu Okoye, and Maduabuchi Okoye (a.k.a Nwokoye) for being pillars of strength for me especially for the many years I have been away from home. To friends and all those whose names are not here mentioned, thank you for your encouragement and for being source of inspiration to me. It is through your support that I achieved this tremendous success.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

ANC	African National Congress
BICS	Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills
CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
CS	Code-switching
DAC	Department of Arts and Culture
DoE	Department of Education
EFA	Education for All
EFAL	English First Additional Language
ESL	English Second Language
HRC	Human Rights Commission
ICT	Information Communication Technology
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
L1	Learners First language
L2	Learners Second Language
LANGTAG	Language Task Group (1996)
LiEP	Language in Education Policy
LO	Life Orientation
LOLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPO	Non-Profit Organisation
NQF	National Qualification Framework
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SASA	South African School Act
SGB	School Governing Body
SLT	Speech-Language Therapy

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **STUDY ORIENTATION**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

English as a First Additional Language (EFAL) as a language of learning and teaching has been the subject of considerable debate in international and local literature at different levels of schooling including primary schools. There has been an extensive debate on languages in education since after the demise of apartheid which has unleashed many education changes in South African educational system. The language policy for schools in South Africa has been at the centre of educational policy that this study is concerned about. This study investigates language challenges that Grade 4 learners and their teachers encounter in three South African mainstream schools as they negotiate transition from isiZulu to English as Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) and the implication of these challenges on language policy development. This chapter outlines the research problem and objectives which the study aspires to achieve, the research questions and sub-questions to be addressed. It also presents a background and a brief overview of search design. It concludes by raising the issues the reader can expect in subsequent chapters whilst it also defines a few terminologies used in the study.

#### **1.2 Background**

Teaching and learning in First Additional Language (FAL) is the process by which people learn an additional language in addition to their native language(s). South Africa is known for its diversity in cultures, religious beliefs, and languages adopted multilingual policy thus constitutionally giving recognition to eleven official languages that include nine major indigenous African languages such as: IsiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, and Xitsonga (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996, Section 6; Kamwangamalu, 2003, p.231). English and Afrikaans were the two former official and dominant languages during the Apartheid regime. The government of South Africa is also required to promote usage of native languages. The 1997 language in Education Policy (LiEP) following the stipulations of the South African Constitution (1996) and the School Act (1996) provides for uniformity in educational sector across the country (LiEP, 1997). The LiEP (1997) sees language as both a subject and as medium of teaching

and learning in South African schools and thus advocates for mother tongue instruction at least for the first three years of schooling before, the learners officially switch to English as the LOLT (DoE, 1997). The Revised National Curriculum Statement (NCS) of 2002 policy also stipulates that mother tongue should be used as the LOLT in Grades R-3.

In KwaZulu-Natal, isiZulu is the mother tongue of the majority of African learners and it is used as LOLT up to Grade 3, while English is officially prescribed as LOLT from Grade 4 upwards and taught as additional subject. The LiEP Act 27 of 1996 expects that learners should choose at least one approved language as a Learning Area in Grade 1 and 2; while according to the South African Schools Act of 1996 (Act No. 84 of 1996), the school governing body basically determines the LOLT. At the Foundation Phase, learners in most schools are taught in their First language (L1) and often by a single educator whereas from Grade 4 onwards, learners choose their LOLT and one additional approved language as a Learning Area (Matjila & Pretorius 2004; Department of Education, 2004). However, the majority of Grade 4 learners do not study English as a subject in the Foundation Phase, yet at Grade 4 they are expected to be taught in English as LOLT (Department of Basic Education, 2010).

Grade 4 is a transition between the Foundation and Intermediate Phases in primary education and this is the phase where many problems are experienced in teaching English as First Additional Language (EFAL) and/or as LOLT. Thus, the English second language (ESL) learners are expected to start using English as a LOLT in this grade while new concepts and subjects are introduced. According to the study conducted by the Department of Basic Education (2010) ESL learners constitute a significant percentage of the population in South African schools. These learners are also among the lowest ranking in academic achievement thereby representing the population faced with a wider range of academic challenges (Maswanganye, 2010). It is important to consider the lives of the participants with regard to their social context. Woods (cited in Manyike & Lemmer, 2008) stresses the importance of the contexts within which peoples' experiences occur. The situation in which Grade 4 learners prematurely abandon their mother tongue and switch over to English instruction and continue to experience language difficulties while still studying under ill-resourced learning conditions in mainstream schools raise an eye brow on the formulation, provisions and implementation of the language policy in schools. This situation necessitates a clearer

understanding of how teachers and learners negotiate the transition from mother tongue to English as LOLT and it is crucial for education and development in South Africa.

### **1.3 Rationale**

The Macdonald Report (1990) on the Threshold Project reports that research conducted in South African primary schools indicates that for many African learners a large gap exists between their L2 language ability and the language in which they are to learn subjects. Many LOLT researchers argue that learning can best happen if learners understand the LOLT in which they are taught (Heugh, 2006/2007; Myburgh *et al.*, 2004; Thomas & Collier, 2007/2009). In underprivileged areas of South Africa this challenge is exacerbated by enormous class size, lack of qualified teachers and inadequate study material. In South Africa NCS assumes that learners who are able to learn in their mother tongue can transfer the literacy skills acquired in their mother tongue to L2 (DoE, 2002).

The rationale for my study stems from the fact that it is unrealistic to claim that African language learners, despite lack of trained teachers and resources, are proficient enough in their mother tongue to make the switch after the first three years of schooling. The LOLT needs to be developed appropriately step by step in order to instil concepts whilst at the same time promoting the acquisition of language. According to Myburgh *et al.* (2004), 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 ineffectiveness and low academic achievement experienced by learners in South Africa. In KwaZulu-Natal, success in English is a cause for concern especially in mainstream schools (Radhamoney, 2010). African learners in KwaZulu-Natal need a firm background and thorough grounding in their mother tongue in order to facilitate conceptual and cognitive development in English. I also want to deepen my knowledge on the nature of classroom interaction in which Grade 4 learners and their teachers find themselves, the communication challenges they encounter as they negotiate transition from isiZulu to English as LOLT and how these challenges impinge on language policy implementation and education development. I am convinced that this study may substantially contribute to the debate towards sustainable language policy development that may lead to pedagogy improvement; and increased classroom participation that leads to increasing learners' access to LOLT in South African mainstream schools.

#### **1.4 Problem Statement**

The main problem for the study is the change over from the mother tongue medium of instruction from Foundation Phase to English as a LOLT in the Intermediate phase. What constitutes a problem is that during this transition from IsiZulu to English as LOLT most learners are linguistically not ready to make this leap (Heugh, 2006; Maswanganye, 2010). This seems to be related to the abruptness of the change that learners are unable to manage. In South African education, this problem was first identified in the study conducted by Macdonald (1990) in the Threshold project.

Current reports and results about performance of grade 3-6 learners in national systemic evaluations reflect that South African learners are poor readers and writers in Grade 3 and Grade 6. The 2006 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) that assessed the reading performance of Grade 4 learners from 45 participating jurisdictions in which South Africa came last can be linked to language complexities in South African schools (Mullis, Martin, Kennedy & Foy, 2007). When learners are taught in the language other than the one they speak or are familiar with they are more likely to fail or perform poorly. The change of the language of learning and teaching from mother tongue to English in Grade 4 is problematical because of the challenges in adjusting to the use of English as LOLT (Macdonald, 1990; Alexander, 2005; Heugh, 2006; Maswanganye, 2010). These challenges may significantly hinder equal opportunities for effective learning by all learners and gravely affect learners' intellectual and personal development. Managing the transition at Grade 4 is the main issue of study in this research as teachers and learners in mainstream schools are faced with insurmountable language problems at Grade 4. Learning and changing over to a second language is a traumatic experience; it takes a learner up to seven years to acquire adequate skills in a second language (de Wet, 2000). According to Smith cited in de Wet (2000), black learners' lack of proficiency in English is the most important reason for high Grade 12 failure rate. The failure to switch smoothly to English as a LOLT in Grade 4 poses further problems for education and development since it impacts on the implementations of the enabling policy as well as on teaching and learning in Grade 4 classrooms. The educators in traditional black schools were observed to often lack the English proficiency that is necessary for effective teaching (Rossouw & Lemmer cited in de Wet, 2000). Educators do not have the knowledge and skills to support English language learning or to teach literacy skills across the entire curriculum. A similar view is held by Dedman (cited in de Wet, 2000) who argues that a large number of African educators educate in "an English dialect." Van den

Berg (cited in de Wet, 2000) warns that being taught by insufficiently qualified teachers has negative consequences for the learners because learners often imitate their role models who may be using incorrect pronunciation, grammar or vocabulary.

## **1.5 Main Objective**

The main objective of the study is to investigate the challenges that emerge as Grade 4 learners and their teachers negotiate the transition from isiZulu (L1) to English as LOLT and to further relate the implications these challenges have on language policy development.

### **1.5.1 Sub-Objectives**

- To examine how Grade 4 learners and their teachers negotiate transition from mother tongue instruction to English as new concepts are being introduced and taught.
- To investigate the communication challenges that emerge at this transitional stage especially with the introduction of new concepts to the learners.
- To explore how English and isiZulu are used in Grade 4 classrooms.
- To contribute to an on-going research in this field, as well as to provide perspectives on pedagogy improvement, teaching initiatives and language in policy reform that can lead to educational policy development in a multilingual society such as South Africa.

## **1.6 Key Research Questions**

The study attempts to answer two research questions namely:

- How do teachers and learners negotiate the transition from IsiZulu to English as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) in Grade 4?
- What are the implications of the language(s) of teaching and learning used in Grade 4 mainstream schools on language policy development?

In order to answer the key research questions, the study identifies sub-questions that serve as an engine for the entire investigation. These questions are as follows:

### **1.6.1 Sub-research Questions**

- What are the different purposes of using isiZulu and English in Grade 4 classrooms?
- How do teachers use English and isiZulu to introduce and teach new concepts?
- What challenges are faced by educators in teaching English and Life Orientation when using English as LOLT in Grade 4 classrooms?
- What are the implications of these challenges for language policy development?

### **1.7 Research Design**

This study was designed within an interpretivist paradigm and is qualitative in nature, focusing on language challenges in Grade 4 and its implications for education and development. The interpretivist approach allows for meaning to be sought within context through observation of, and conversation with, people in their own environment (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). Cohen *et al.* (2007, p. 22) described the interpretive research paradigm as a process which “begins with individuals and sets out to understand the interpretations of the world around.” Thus, interpretivist approaches rely heavily on qualitative methods as such the methods of data collection used in this study (interviewing and observation) to ensure an adequate dialogue between the researcher and those with whom he interacts in order to collaboratively construct meaning and interpret reality (Henning, 2004). It has been argued by Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) that the detail and effort involved in interpretive inquiry allows researchers to gain insight into particular events as well as a range of perspectives that may not have come to light without such scrutiny. In this study, the interpretive approach remained the flexible tool that allowed me to explore the challenges arising from use of language(s) in Grade 4 and its implications for policy development.

Six teachers were selected for interviews and observation in three mainstream schools in KwaZulu-Natal. In order to answer the study’s critical questions three sources of data collection were used. These include semi-structured pre-observation interviews, video-recorded classroom observations and post-observation interviews. The six teachers were interviewed during pre-observation interviews. Based on their availability, three teachers were randomly selected from the six teachers for classroom observations and post-

observation interviews. The pre-observation interviews were designed to explore teachers' experiences on classroom language use and the challenges they faced, as well as the implications of these challenges to language policy development (see attached appendix 7). The observation was conducted to verify the teachers' responses obtained from pre-observation interviews. Post-observation interviews sought to integrate teachers' views and clarifications on data obtained through observation. It also aimed to explore teachers' views on how best language policy could be developed to respond to the challenges identified in this study. English and Life Orientation were the Learning Areas selected for observation. During the study ethical consideration principles were strictly adhered to in order to guarantee the confidentiality, anonymity and privacy of the participants and their schools. Authorisation was secured from the Department of Education, school authorities, participants, parents and then from the University of KwaZulu-Natal Ethical Committee for the approval and ethical clearance to conduct the study. The data collected was analysed manually using open coding and presented in themes and subthemes as they arise (see chapter 4).

### **1.8 Limitations of the Study**

As the researcher I relied mostly on data collected from teachers through interviews and observation although this does not guaranteed that data collected directly from learners could not have added value to the study. Observation was considered appropriate to the study considering the reasoning capacity of Grade 4 learners to substantially and effectively participate in the study at individual level.

It is difficult to make generalisation in a qualitative study given that the study adopted three schools within one province. The result obtained thus applies to teachers in three schools and cannot be generalised to others although it is assumed that valid data was collected. The study does not intend to make generalisations, but to outline, describe and analyses of Grade 4 classroom interactions with the aim of identifying language challenges and its implications to the policy development. Silverman (2006) claims that qualitative research a design allows for deeper enquiry into the experience and views of participants through an in-depth process of data collection. Using qualitative methodology in this study allowed me more spontaneity and flexibility in interviewing and observing language and communication challenges in Grade 4 classrooms.

## **1.9 Structure of the Dissertation**

This dissertation consists of six chapters:

Chapter 1 introduces the reader to the study background and rationale. It further provides the problem statement; research objectives and questions which were to be addressed by the study, and a brief study design. It outlines the chapter sequence for the dissertation, and clarification of terms used in the study.

Chapter 2 reviews relevant international and local literature. Firstly, it examines the national legislative and policy frameworks relevant to this study. Secondly, the literature focused on teaching in transition classes, use of code-switching, and language models commonly used in Africa. It discusses development as an objective of education, and finally presents the theoretical perspective adopted by the study.

Chapter 3 outlines the research methodologies and the ethical issues applied in the study. It provides an overview of qualitative research methods; describe the research design and sampling process associated with this study. It expands on the reasons for the choices of these methodologies.

Chapter 4 presents results and analysis. It takes the reader into the observation results, teachers' comparative views, and experiences toward transition challenges and how these challenges create or delimit transformative change or development.

Chapter 5 presents the interpretation and discussion of findings obtained from pre-observation interviews, observation, and post-observation interviews.

Chapter 6 presents a brief summary of the findings, and then makes recommendations and conclusions that emerged in the study.

## 1.10 Clarification of Concepts

**Bilingualism:** Refers to the ability to communicate effectively in two languages, with more or less the same degree of proficiency in both languages.

**Code-switching:** Refers to switching from one language of instruction to another language of instruction during teaching and learning. In this study it refers to learners and teachers with isiZulu as their mother tongue switching to English as LOLT.

**Development:** Refers to the ability to stimulate deeper and more innovatively than adequately addresses the systemic root causes of an identified problems within the system at particular time.

**Dual medium of instruction:** Refers to the use of two media (languages) of instruction by a teacher in a lesson, thus switching from one medium (language) to the other, on a redistributive ratio.

**Education and Development:** Refers to the interdisciplinary field that expounds on how Education programmes should be designed to promote the full development of human personality and strengthen respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms (Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 26).

**Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT):** Refers to the language medium in which learning and teaching, including assessment, takes place. In this Grade 4 study it refers to English.

**Mother tongue:** Refers to the language that a learner has acquired in his/her early years and which normally has become his/her natural instrument of thought and communication.

**Policy development:** Refers to the decision process by which individuals, groups or institutions establish policies pertaining to plans, programmes or procedures with the aim of maximizing policy implementation and objectives.

**Section 20 schools:** Refers to a school where funds from the Department are not directly deposited into the school's bank account but rather the school has to make requisitions to the DoE for whatever it needs.

**Transition:** Refers to the switch from using the first language as LOLT to a second language (Heugh, 2006).

### **1.11 Conclusion**

This chapter focused on the orientation of the study. The next chapter deals with the reviewed literature that draws attention to concepts that inform the study. This includes critical examination of the enabling policies and the use of code-switching for effective learning in transition bilingual classrooms. Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework adopted by the study.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the background, focus, and purpose of the study. As previously stated, this study aims to investigate the language challenges in Grade 4 mainstream schools classrooms and the implication that these challenges have with regard to language policy development. The concepts of language and policy development are the main focus in the study; hence the literature review attempts to address both issues and how they interrelate within the South African education system. This chapter has three focal points. Firstly, the review examines relevant legislation and policy principles that reveal, and determine language development pattern, choice, and language use in South African schools. This is to argue that the disjuncture caused by inconsistencies in the policy clauses contribute to the policy failures that end up “under-developing” the people it was meant to develop. Secondly, the chapter reviews existing literature and relevant concepts focusing on, language as a barrier to learning, teaching in transition classes, uses of code-switching, language models in Africa, and second language acquisition focusing on BICS and CALP. Literature on development as an objective of education is provided. Finally, the theoretical framework adopted by the study is presented.

#### 2.2 Policy and Legislative Background

The four policy documents relevant to this study include the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1996a), South African Schools Act (SASA) (RSA, 1996b), 1997 Language in Education Policy (LiEP), and Revised National Curriculum Statement (NCS) of 2002. The language policy for schools is guided by principles derived from the Constitution and the SASA. The former Department of Education (DoE) adopted the LiEP in 1997, which was further clarified in the NCS of 2002, and Curriculum 2005 (C2005). These policies will be examined in the section below.

##### 2.2.1 The Constitution of Republic of South Africa (1996a)

The Constitution of Republic of South Africa (1996a) deals with the subject of language in a variety of inter-related manners. The founding provisions of the Constitution recognise eleven (11) languages as the official languages. These languages comprise Sepedi, Sesotho,

Setswana, SiSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu. Considering SASA's holistic and inclusive approach to language policy, Sign Language tends to possess the status of an official language which is used for purposes of learning at a public school. On these grounds one may speak of twelve "official" languages instead of eleven languages as stipulated in the Constitution. The Constitution in section 6(4) recognises that all the official languages mentioned above must enjoy parity of esteem and must be treated equitably in all ramifications (RSA, 1996a). The Constitution under section 6(2) of its founding provisions prioritises the need to "elevate the status and advance the use of indigenous languages" as a form of redress. The provision set out in section 6(4) has important implications for the determination of language policy in schools given that available texts and study literature for most schools are written in English and Afrikaans. In the context of contemporary debates on the status of English as LOLT in South African schools, the implication is that English language would acquire dominant status over other indigenous languages. This has already been a problem in the South African school system as the plan and effort to reproduce study texts in all the indigenous languages has not been actualised. This situation creates significant disjuncture between the specifications of the policy principles and obtainable classroom practices. The complexity of South African policies can be traced back to its past history in that the policies were used primarily to accomplish several purposes. For instance, the language policy was not only concentrated on learners' welfare but also used as a vehicle for transforming social and language injustices of the apartheid era. This thus creates a dilemma in which the State is unable to commit sufficiently resources to support efficient implementation of these policies yet cannot withdraw the policies at the expense of the learners and their rights as enshrined in the Bill of Rights.

The Bill of Rights is part of the constitution that spelt out the fundamental human rights of every South African (RSA, 1996, Chapter 2). In relation to this study, section 29(2) of the Bill of Rights is unequivocal about the rights of ALL to receive education in the official language(s) of their choice in public education institutions. The Bill of Rights also points to principles that should be considered in order to ensure effective access to, and effective implementation of this right, namely the need for equity, redress and practicability. In addition, the Bill of Rights also compels the state to consider all reasonable education alternatives to promote the exercising of this right. Unfortunately, even though the Bill of Rights affords learners the right to learn in the language(s) of their choice, this right is

restrained by the state's inability to practically provide proficient resource to facilitate the implementation of this right. Consequently, post-apartheid South African schools (especially mainstream schools and/or the ex-DET schools) continue to suffer gross resource constraints that range from limited translation to reproduction of texts in various official (indigenous) languages (Department of Basic Education, 2010). The policy frameworks discussed in sections below will critically reveal lapses and inconsistencies in the legislative clauses that can lead to policy failures.

### **2.2.2 The South African Schools Act**

The South African Schools Act (SASA) aims at redressing past injustices as well as further the advancement of democratic principles of decentralising the power of decision making to the school governing body (SGB), the teachers, and parents (Act 84 of 1996). Section 6(2) of SASA (RSA, 1996b) prescribes several preconditions in relation to the determination of language policy in public schools. Of great importance for this study is the power that the Act confers on SGBs to determine the language policy of a school, although subject to the provisions of the Constitution, SASA and any applicable provincial law. In that regards the SASA (RSA, 1996b) invested on the SGB of a public school the power to determine the language policy of the school. This power must be exercised subject to the principles sets out by the Constitution in the three clauses below:

- given the historically diminished use and status of previously disadvantaged indigenous African languages, the state must take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages (RSA, 1996a, Chapter 1, section 6 [2]).
- Everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public education institutions where that education is reasonably practicable. In order to ensure the effective access to, and implementation of, these rights, the state must consider all reasonable educational alternatives, including single medium institutions, taking into account – equity; practicability; and the need to redress the results of historical racially discriminatory laws and practices of apartheid (RSA, 1996a, Chapter 1, section 29[1&2]).
- Everyone has the right to use the language and to participate in the cultural life of their choice, but no one exercising these rights may do so in a manner inconsistent with any provision of the Bill of Rights (RSA, 1996a, Chapter 1, section 30).

With regards to the three clauses stated above the SASA reference to the Constitution is imperative as this provides direction to the SGB's decision. In this way the SGB of a public school is guided to promote as well as maintain through the school's LOLT, the eleven

official languages. It is on these grounds that section 29(2c) can be interpreted as an injunction to pay attention to African languages which were marginalised under the previous apartheid regime. Still there are other factors that can influence the decision of SGBs or determine the selection of the school LOLT such as the availability of study material and the domineering influence of English given its global recognition.

### **2.2.3 The Language in Education Policy**

The LiEP of 14 July 1997 is drawn from the provisions of the nation's Constitution. It was adopted in 1997 by the former DoE and its stipulations further clarified in the revised NCS of 2002. The underlying principles of LiEP is to maintain the use of home language as the LOLT especially in the early years of learning, while providing access to an additional language(s). The LiEP in relation to this study stipulates that:

- Learners shall be offered at least one approved language as a subject in Grades 1 and 2.
- From Grade 3 onwards, all learners shall be offered their LOLT and at least one additional approved language as a subject.
- Learners must choose their LOLT upon application for admission to a particular school; where a school uses the LOLT chosen by the learner, and where there is a place available in the relevant grade, then, the school must admit the learner.
- In a situation where no school in the district offers the learner's desired language as a medium of learning and teaching, the learner may request the Provincial Education Department (PED) to make provision for instruction in his/her chosen language. The PED must make copies of the request and make it available to all schools in the relevant school district.
- The PED must keep a register of requests by learners for teaching in a language or medium that cannot be accommodated by schools; and all language subjects shall receive equitable time and resource allocation.
- It is reasonably practical to provide education in a particular LOLT if at least 40 learners in Grades 1 to 6 or 35 learners in Grades 7 to 12 request it in a particular school. As such the LOLT provided by a school depends to a large extent on the choices made by learners (or parents) in selecting their LOLT (LiEP, 1997, p.47).

In essence, the LOLT provided by a school depends hugely on the choices made by learners (or their parents) in selecting their LOLT. It is important to point out that LiEP when read together with SASA which confers certain rights on SGBs in determining the language policy of a school (as discussed above), places a lot of emphasis on choice, rather than strong state intervention, as a basis for determining the policy pertaining to the LOLT in schools.

Considering the above provisions by LiEP, one may conclude that LiEP, at least in principle, attempts to promote the use of learners' home languages in schools, as well as ensuring that learners acquire an additional language of communication. In effect, proper implementation of LiEP may facilitate the bridging of race, language and regional divides, while encouraging respect for others languages. But whether this happens is a different issue. For instance, the study conducted by the Department of Basic Education (2010) on the status of LOLT reported that though isiZulu is currently the home language of majority of the learners in the country yet only 25% learn via isiZulu compared to the majority of learners (65%) who learn via the English medium. This was not as a result of direct policy impact but dependent on the circumstances prevailing decision of the SGB. Oftentimes the circumstance may be determined by disposition of the parents who in most cases do not only decide the school and/or language for their children but also influence SGB's decision through parents' association in most schools (Maswanganye, 2010).

#### **2.2.4 The National Curriculum Statement**

The NCS of 2002 in its stipulations prioritises the importance of additive multilingualism and promotes the need for African languages to be taught at schools (Department of Basic Education, 2010). NCS read with LiEP in terms of when a language subject should be introduced as an additional language to present a policy inconsistency that needs to be rectified within and between the provisions of the two policies. At first the LiEP stresses that learners shall be offered at least one approved language as a subject in Grades 1 and 2, whilst NCS (DoE, 2002c) on the same subject stipulates that:

- all learners study their mother tongue and at least one additional language as language subjects from Grade 1;
- all learners have studied an African language for a minimum of three years by the end of the General Education and Training (GET) band;
- where learners have to make a transition from their mother tongue to an additional language as the LOLT, this should be carefully planned (DoE, 2002c)

Even though, the two policies sanctioned the use of mother tongue as LOLT in the Foundation Phase, the LiEP, on one side, recommends at least one approved language as a subject without being precise whether this language should be mother tongue or second language. NCS on the other side failed to specify whether mother tongue will be studied as a subject; thus NCS seems to assume the using mother tongue as LOLT is tantamount to studying it.

Apart from the above mentioned inconsistency found in the two policy documents (NCS and LiEP), NCS provisions above hugely highlight a great deal of ambiguity subject to further re-examination and explanation. This is evident in the logic of the three statements when carefully read. Just after the first two statements the document made a conceptual leap of making a comprehensive policy statement, by reducing the statement to a recommendation. It also appears to me that the policy, in the third statement, is referring to learners who will neither follow the policy nor the recommendation. The phrase “carefully planned” too raises an eye-brow that responsibility is being delegated to implementers without much specificity and clarification in terms of who is being referred to as the planner. I suppose the teachers, school authorities and school system supposedly are the agents to this ‘planning’ responsibility, but it is not yet clear on who does what. The policy and policymakers also seem to have made a lot of suppositions and/or undermined very crucial issues regarding the agency of teachers and school system. In the section below I will discuss these suppositions in relation to the policy expectations as seen in the three policy statements above.

At this point, I intend to emphasise the need for policy revision and further examination of obvious ambiguities found in such a crucial and relevant policy document, NCS. According to Weimer and Vining (2005), this type of policy gap (as mentioned above) need to be addressed through policy reforms rather than the tacit approach with which the current education policy has taken. Just as I earlier mentioned, some responsibility is being shifted or delegated but not clearly specified by the policy as to who makes the decision. As is now well known, this type and observable policy gap(s) is not divorced from the policy effort and prejudices to rectify the legacy of Apartheid in terms of language discrimination. The issue that took the youth to the streets in 1976 in protest against the violation of their language rights which tragically claimed over one hundred and seventy-six lives (Gains, 2010). Until 1994, the struggle accompanied by sustained violence and conflict continued for more than a decade though resulted ultimately in the collapse of the hated apartheid regime. Meanwhile among the emerged and emerging leaders, teachers, parents and policymakers of the new nation’s democracy are amongst this same generation of protesting youth of 1976. It is not a surprise however why these gaps and inconsistencies exist not only in education and language policies but virtually in the entire nation’s policy spectrum. Thus I argue that the struggle and sensitivity of apartheid continues to prevail in the new democracy aiming to protect and promote language rights, even perhaps to the point of it affecting the clarity of

policy guidelines. In this case, development and deepening of democracy must include identification of “distorted” policies and then construct an appropriate reform and reconstruction of the policy (Weimer & Vining, 2005).

Compared to other African nations the present democratic principles in South Africa try to avoid top-down (and dictated) policies. One piece of the evidence of this democratic move is found in the policy of making the school guidelines liberating by integrating parents and SGB in choosing the LOLT in schools. I have the perspective that this does not only constitute good democratic and developmental moves to language and education development even though there are fundamental problems that allow schools and SGBs not to choose African languages. According to Makelele (2005), the choice of one’s own language in South Africa is restricted by two major factors. Firstly, the majority of the children speak African languages but because of limited availability of text books and other supporting materials beyond Grade 4 the SGB always chose English. Secondly, study materials in former official languages such as English and Afrikaans are abundantly available coupled with the parents craving for their children to learn English (Makelele, 2005). The choice between English and Afrikaans is obviously given the negative association of Afrikaans with apartheid, the whole idea of ‘choice’ therefore becomes limited thus leaving SGBs even in mainstream schools to “prefer” English to Afrikaans. Such situations described above constrain effective implement of policy that requires learners to learn their mother tongue and approved additional language(s) as well as being taught in one of the official languages from Grade 4 onwards. This is evident from the fact that the most of the previously disadvantaged languages still do have unequal status between themselves in the society. The report from local study conducted by the Department of Basic Education (2010) on language status indicated that the issue appears more helpless when the status of indigenous African languages is compared to that of English language. For instance, the national language policy that promotes multilingualism stipulates that any official languages (e.g. isiZulu) or English can be employed as the LOLT but the same policy insists that learners must be assessed in English language (DoE, 2004). The above-mentioned inconsistencies between the policy provisions and realities in schools contribute to the language communication difficulties experienced in teaching and learning in transition classes.

## **2.3 Teaching in the Transition Class**

There are concepts related to teaching in transition classrooms which are important and relevant to this study. These concepts are discussed below:

### **2.3.1 Code, Code-switching, and Code-mixing**

Several scholars attempt to define code-switching and code-mixing (see Hoffmann, 1991; Atoye, 1994; McCormick, 1995). A code can be regarded as a verbal component of which may take the form of small morpheme or as complex and comprehensive as the entire system of language. In this study, English or isiZulu language is a code, so also is its single morpheme (Ayeomoni, 2006). I consider it important in this study to distinguish between code-mixing and code-switching as the two concepts can easily misconstrued. Several scholars attempt to define code-switching and code-mixing (see Hoffmann, 1991; Atoye, 1994; McCormick, 1995).

Hoffmann (1991) defines code-mixing as an alternate use of two (or more) languages within the same sentence or phrase while code-switching comprises the use of more than one language in an utterance and/or during same conversation. McCormick (1995, p. 194) however takes code-switching to involve the “alternation of elements longer than one word”, while in code-mixing “shorter elements, often just single words” is involved. Taking the definition much further for clarity purposes Bokamba (cited in Ayeomoni, 2006) defines and distinguishes between the two concepts as follows:

Code-switching is the mixing of words, phrases and sentences from two distinct grammatical (sub) systems across sentence boundaries within the same speech event... code-mixing is the embedding of various linguistic units such as affixes (bound morphemes), words (unbound morphemes), phrases and clauses from a co-operative activity where the participants, in order to infer what is intended, must reconcile what they hear with what they understand (Ayeomoni, 2006, p. 78).

Bokamba’s definition sounds much clearer and similar to that of Baker’s (2006) description of the two words. Code-mixing combines different words from different languages in the same phrase or sentence. It is common among peers and mostly used for an informal conversation. While code-switching entails using different language to repeat a word, phrase or sentence which was made in another language. Having said that one may agree with me that code-switching may lead to concept clarification and understanding in a bi/multilingual context than code-mixing. I am inclined to agree that this represents one of the cardinal

reasons why South African LiEP of 1997 support the use of code-switching in schools especially in transition classes to the best interest of learners.

According to the National Centre for Curriculum and Research Development (2000, p. 68), code-switching has been observed as a “main linguistic feature in classrooms where the teacher and the learners share a common language”, even though they have to use an additional language for learning. In this case, the teacher in his/her discretion would appropriately apply code-switching in the learners’ language as a form of scaffolding as described in the study’s Theoretical Framework below. Scholars such as Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) and Cummins (2000) states that in order to ensure appropriate delivery (language) teachers need to be trained on the use of code-switching. According to Baker (2006), code-switching can be used appropriately in bi/multilingual environment or classrooms essentially to describe changes that are relatively deliberate and purposeful. For instance, code-switching can be used: (1) where word(s) are yet unknown in one of the languages or where a point is needed to be emphasised; (2) in quoting of someone and for clarification purposes; (3) for an easy and efficiency of expression; (4) to express group identity and status such as in seeking alliance, identification and acceptance by the group; and (5) to exclude someone from an episode of conversation or to interject in a conversation (Ayeomoni, 2006). For this study purpose, focus is concentrated on how code-switching as a strategy applied by the majority of African teachers in teaching learners in South Africa schools. In the section below I present a review of research on code-switching in bilingual and multilingual classrooms in South Africa and elsewhere.

### **2.3.2 Research about code-switching in African classrooms**

The reports from Adendorff’s (1993) study on the functions and implications of Zulu-English code-switching among teachers and their learners whose mother tongue is isiZulu suggests that at this time in history the majority of isiZulu speaking learners and their teachers may regard code-switching as undesirable. Adendorff (1993) argued that this scenario may have been engendered by social repulsiveness toward English and Afrikaans during the apartheid era. But this “cold” attitude by learners and teachers thus raises concerns on whether code-switching as a rich and crucial really serves as a communicative resource in isiZulu-English classrooms in KwaZulu-Natal (Adendorff, 1993, pp. 4, 5, 20). On the contrary, Adendorff’s (1993) study indicated that the above-described attitude towards English had no significant

effect on the outcome of code-switching isiZulu-English classrooms which he studied. According to the report, code-switching allowed the teacher to fulfil his/her “academic and social agendas by enabling him/her... to clarify information, encourage, provoke and involve his pupils” (Adendorff, 1993, p. 11). Thus the teachers and learners engage in code-switching between isiZulu and English in order to fulfil their social functions, in building relationships and for academic purposes although some teachers also resort to code-switching when attempting to signal solidarity or authority. Similarly, Ncoko, Osman and Cockcroft (2000) in their study of isiZulu-English code switching in a primary school confirm the above findings. According to Ncoko *et al.* (2000), primary school learners apply code-switching to fulfil a variety of social functions that include defiance, neutrality and desire for exclusion or inclusion, expression of solidarity, reiteration and for ensuring adequate transfer of meaning. Considering the outcome of the findings discussed above I am inclined to say that most of post-apartheid studies on code-switching in South Africa have similar focus. These studies recognise the need to eliminate the idea that code switching is a sign of poor bilingual proficiency by highlighting mostly its potential benefits in the education and language development (Ncoko *et al.*, 2000; Setati, *et al.*, 2002).

However, similar studies conducted in Lesotho by Setoi’s (1997) and Molapo (2002) indicate slightly different results although revealing that the majority of African teachers use code-switching for teaching. Setoi’s (1997) and Molapo (2002) argue that African teachers resort to code-switching probably due to lack of special preparation for teachers and learners for the transition from mother tongue to English. Similarly, the findings from a local study conducted by Masilo (2008) reports that African teachers teaching in mainstream schools are likely to use code-switching especially during the stage of transition from mother tongue instruction to English. This implies that teachers and learners use code-switching as a technique to facilitate communication and interaction between themselves especially in transition classes. Given that background, code-switching can be viewed as a classroom practice that involves using more than one language in order to contextualise and facilitate communication, classroom interaction and participation (Nilep, 2006; Escamilla, 2007). It also implies that the absence of code-switching in bilingual classrooms may precipitate communication breakdown in the classroom where learners and teacher do not understand each other which jeopardises proper teaching and learning (Alidou, 2007). Here code-switching is seen as being imperative in ensuring effective communication between bilingual learners and their teachers. The study conducted by Escamilla (2007) on the impact of code-

switching on learners who were learning English and Spanish, indicates that code-switching remains a vital element of communication especially for children from a bilingual environment. The study thus concluded that as children learn and live their lives in bilingual environment code-switching remains an important element of communication. In other words, the children deploy the use both languages (English and Spanish) in expressing themselves (Escamilla, 2007).

In South Africa, a local study conducted by Kieswetter (1995) on the pattern of code-switching between isiZulu, English and Swazi shows that most bilingual teachers in South Africa use code-switching more than LOTL during teaching. The study also indicated that code-switching is an effective tool for clarification, facilitation of understanding and participation in bilingual classrooms. This same phenomenon is confirmed in a local study conducted by Van Dulm (2006) which focused on the functions of code-switching between English and Afrikaans in multilingual classrooms school. Van Dulm's study reported two important uses of code-switching. Firstly, code-switching could fulfil a number of academic functions that range from expansion, clarification, and confirmation of the content being taught. Secondly, code-switching could also fulfil a variety of social functions such as regulating the level of formality of a conversation, both in humorous exchanges between teachers and learners and among learners, and in expressions of identification with a particular in-group (Van Dulm, 2006). Consequently, the study concludes that code-switching plays a positive role as an effective communicative tool in multilingual and multicultural classrooms (Van Dulm, 2006). There are not many studies on code-switching in the isiZulu/English context especially in the transition level. It is difficult however to say that findings from the studies discussed above are transferable to an English/isiZulu context. Meanwhile a study conducted by Olugbara (2008) on the effect of isiZulu/English code-switching on learners' performance in and attitudes towards biology indicated that how LOLT is used in classrooms affects the choice of learning areas by the learners. Here the findings indicated that African learners (i.e., isiZulu learners) have problems with the sole language of instruction being used to teach them (Olugbara, 2008). As such the study concluded that the LOLT for teaching science subjects is an important factor in a learner's performance and attitudes towards particular areas of learning. Thus the LOLT used in making learners improve their academic performance and attitudes towards science in KwaZulu-Natal schools must integrate considerable using of code switching in classrooms. There are two outstanding commonalities between the studies discussed above. Firstly, they

all agreed that code-switching correlate positively with the educational attainment of the learners. Secondly, it can be utilised to improve communication, to clarify, enhance, or reinforce lesson material in a bilingual classroom.

Even though most studies on code-switching as earlier discussed primarily highlight the importance, as well as identifying the incidents and functions of code-switching to education, code-switching has also received substantial criticism. The local study conducted by Adler (1996) which examines classrooms where the mother tongue of the teacher and learners is different from the LOLT identified code-switching as one of the dilemmas of teaching and learning in bi/multilingual classrooms in South Africa. The study reveals an ongoing dilemma for the teacher as to whether or not he/she should code-switch between the learners' mother tongue and LOLT especially in the public domain. The teacher is caught between trying to decide what best for his/her learners in a particular context or circumstance. In this context, the teacher knows that the learners' need to access LOLT and that learners' assessment will always be in LOLT of which is English. Personally, in my classroom experience as a teacher there had always been the dilemma on whether or not to encourage learners to use their mother tongue in group discussions or during the entire class discussion. In as much as the teacher needs to apply code-switching as supported by LiEP in South Africa, the teacher also needs to be trained on how best to apply code-switching. In the study conducted by Ayeomoni (2006) in Ondo State, Nigeria among primary school learners who live in a bilingual community shows that teacher misuse of code-switching hampers the child's linguistic and academic performance right from his/her early age. As such Ayeomoni (2006) concludes that teachers teaching in English as LOLT should creatively and prudently apply the use of code-switching to best serve the learners' needs. All the same, an "overuse" of code-switching such as is often used until secondary school mean that learners have very little chance to use English and this may affect the learner's mastering of the LOLT. In that case I strongly agree with the suggestion offered by Adler (1996) that the dilemma of code-switching in multilingual classrooms is better managed than resolved.

Furthermore, Ayeomoni (2006) also critically argues that there are social and political aspects of switching between languages, as there are in switching between discourses, registers and dialects. Thus in as much as code-switching can be deliberate and purposeful it can also be political just as there are power differentials within the languages (Ayeomoni, 2006). For instance, in South African context, code-switching historically had an inferior status as most

people still consider it as a grammarless mixture of languages (Setati, 2002), as such some monolinguals see code-switching as an insult to their rule-governed language. Grosjean (1982) points out that in order not to be stigmatised some bi/multilingual prefer not to code-switch, others restrict their code-switching only to situations where they will not be stigmatised. For instance, learners in a multilingual classroom may withdraw from participating in a classroom discussion or decide to switch only when interacting with other learners - not with the teacher. Also in the situation where people who code-switch have not mastered the languages, it is believed that people who codes-switch are those who know either of the languages well enough to converse only in one of the languages (Ayeomoni, 2006). In taking the argument further, Secada (1991) warned that code-switching is becoming the norm in bi/multilingual classrooms which if not controlled may affect ESL learners in mastering the English language. On the contrary, Poplack (cited in Ayeomoni, 2006) argues that code-switching as a verbal skill requires a large degree of competence in more than one language, rather than a defect arising from insufficient knowledge of either or both languages. Poplack maintains that code-switching is a verbal strategy, used in the same way that a skilful writer might switch styles in a short story (Ayeomoni, 2006). For instance, a teacher can use the learners' mother tongue as a code for encouragement and inspiring the learner. Thus by using a learners' mother tongue in this manner, the teacher maybe implicitly saying to learners "I am helping you; I am on your side."

Though Secada (1991) in his apprehensive views as described above was not specific on how the use of code-switching in bi/multilingual classroom can affect ESL learners linguistically. I agree with Grosjean (cited in Ayeomoni, 2006) who argues that language practices in bi/multilingual classrooms should not be the same as in any other classroom. According to Grosjean's argument a very important aspect of multilingualism, one which makes the multilingual or bilingual person an integrated whole, is code-switching (Ayeomoni, 2006). The observation of non-mathematics lessons in KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa by Adendorff (1993) represents a good manifestation of argument put forward by Grosjean. According to Adendorff's (1993) study, most teachers who teach in English frequently switch to isiZulu in order to advance their explanation thereby ensuring all learners are carried along. These teachers also use code-switching to raise controversial issues (i.e., as a language of provocation), as well as a necessary tool to maximise class participation. Conversely, it makes sense given that most bi/multilingual persons are likely to code-switch when they cannot find an appropriate word or expression in a particular language to designate/describe

the meaning they have in mind. Similarly, in the presence of conceptual inadequacies (i.e., in a lack of necessary vocabulary item or appropriate translation) any bilingual person is likely to switch. In classrooms too if bilingual learner(s) have limited conceptual cognition in LOLT those learner(s) are likely to regularly code-switch to their mother tongue. This places an important responsibility on the teacher regardless of whether the official policy supports code-switching or not. The teachers will have to make an individual moment-to-moment decision concerning the language choice that most serve the need of learners as well as facilitate effective communicate.

In South Africa the Language in Education Policy (LiEP) recognises eleven official languages and it is supportive of code-switching as an effective mechanism for teaching and learning in bi/multilingual classrooms (Ayeomoni, 2006). Therefore, the technique of code-switching in order to conduct their lessons appeals to South African teachers. Based on the discussions made about code-switching above, and within the policy environment that encourages the use of code-switching, it is important that research does not only focus on whether code-switching is used or not but also on how and why it is (or should be) used or not used. Heugh (2006) states that findings from psycholinguistic and second language acquisition research shows that the transition models adopted in most parts of Africa have flaws and need to be studied for education and development purposes. It is in this regard that Heugh (2007) identifies the following models which are commonly used in Africa. These models include the transitional, subtractive and bilingual education which will be discussed in the following paragraph.

#### **2.4 Second Language Acquisition**

According to Heugh (2006), transition can take place when the learner is at the Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) or Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) stage of second language acquisition. The BICS and CALP are distinguished as two important aspects of second language development stages by Cumming (1991), a renowned expert on second language acquisition and development among early-school-aged learners. The former is being referred to as conversational fluency which most learners develop within the first two years of being immersed in an English language environment. BICS comprises as well as being used in everyday conversation, language and play most of which combine informal or semiformal conversational routine such as greetings, asking questions and addressing of each other. This type of everyday language is heavily contextualised and is

sometimes augmented by gestures such as pointing to the object being spoken about, and sometimes includes pantomiming (Alecio, *et al.*, 2004). In contrast, CALP is referred to as the kind of language skills required to achieve academic success which includes writing and reading. EFAL learners typically need at least five years of studying English principles to develop age appropriate skills without which learners will not be able to cope with academic work. In a multilingual context how to effectively teach learners from diverse cultural backgrounds remains a concern globally.

## **2.5 Language Teaching Models in Africa**

Heugh (2006) identifies the following as the predominant models commonly used in Africa. These are a subtractive model, a traditional model, and the bilingual education model.

### **2.5.1 Subtractive Model**

The subtractive model is called a sink-or-swim system whereby learners are compelled to receive instruction through the medium of FAL, disregarding their mother tongue at a very early stage of learning. Sometimes it refers to as “submersion model”. This occurs when a child is submerged in the second language (Heugh, 2006) where the FAL is the only the language of learning and teaching. This is the most common way of educating African learners in most urban and private schools in Africa. In the context of this study, submersion is often the system used in former Model C schools in South Africa. In this model, the FAL dominates the learners’ mother tongue, and as several authors affirmed, it assimilates and marginalises all other languages on the pretext that it opens ways to better chances of success in the learner’s life (Makoe, 2007; Cummins, 1991). In as much as the statement above may be true, I tend to argue that it takes more than knowing a particular language (say English) to be successful in life, one also has to get appropriate education and qualification in order to have a better chances of employment. In the South African school context where bilingual learners at as early as Grade 4, learning a second language engenders a level of anxiety on the learner(s) especially when the learner has not mastered his/her mother tongue. In the study conducted by Cummins (1991) and Heugh (2006) in relation to bilingual education it was concluded that subtractive bilingualism leads to academic and linguistic failure among bilingual learners. In this context linguistic failure refers to a situation in which the learners may end up failing to master even the second language which he/she only gets a chance to utilise at school. Most of the African learners, right from childhood, have gradually begun to

understand the language their parent used at home before they are sent to model C schools. The consequences of which is confirmed by Handscombe's (1994) who argues that when the mother tongue is suddenly removed this can lead to damages in social and cognitive areas which may takes a long time to rectify. In taking the argument further, Maswanganye (2010) argues that in South African schools submersion which tends to be overemphasised mostly in urban private and former Model C schools, where most, if not all the subjects and grades are taught in the English language (or Afrikaans) still perpetuate language dominance over indigenous African languages.

### **2.5.2 Transitional Models**

In transitional models the learners begin schooling in their mother tongue and gradually they move to second language instruction. When the switch is done after the first five years of schooling it is called "late exit" but if it is done between the second and third year of schooling it is referred to as "early exit" (Heugh, 2006). The purpose of this model is to target a single language (usually the second language) through the learners' schooling career. According to Manyike (2007) in transitional models educators are sufficiently bilingual to enable them to code-switch from the learners' mother tongue to English depending on the overriding need of the learners. These educators are invaluable in assisting learners through the transition. The transitional models can be divided into two categories: the *early exit* and *late exit*. The late exit occurs when the learner switches to the second language after the fifth or the sixth year of learning. In the early exit learners are allowed to "use their language for 40% of the time until they reach the sixth grade" (Manyike, 2007, p. 65). The mother tongue and FAL are currently used by the learners to facilitate understanding thus the mother tongue at this point serve as a temporary bridge to FAL. In this model instruction is provided in the mother tongue or FAL for all learning areas with a small portion of instruction provided in the mother tongue for all learners to benefit. Learners in the late exit gradually transferred or exit out of mother tongue instruction (Alecio *et al.*, 2004, p.168) unlike in early transition. Heugh (2006) argues that all early exits are expensive as it requires teachers who have developed native-like proficiency in the learners' mother tongue to teach as well in the second language. Unfortunately, for most South African learners at this stage, transition comes sooner, not in Grade 6 but in Grade 4, before learners have acquired CALP skills in their mother tongue. In spite of a teacher-shortage crisis in South Africa only teachers who have (or have developed) native-like proficiency in learners' mother tongue can teach as well in a second language. Heugh (2007) further argues that due to poorly resourced conditions or

constraint in most African schools, five or six years of learning a second language as a subject may not be sufficient to facilitate successful transition to second language as LOLT.

### **2.5.3 The Bilingual Education Model**

The bilingual education model is a system “where a large number of learners of same language are congregated together in the same area to learn an additional language” (Coelho, 2004, p. 168). The bilingual model is classified under two categories, the additive bilingual education (or strong bilingualism) and weak bilingualism.

**Strong Bilingualism:** this is also known as Additive bilingual education model. It is practised in most African countries where the mother tongue remains the LOLT with second language taught as a subject. This requires a well-trained teacher in second language acquisition and transition class to develop enabling learning environment. In some cases, both mother tongue and second language are taught until the learner graduates from high school education. It is however important to mention that learners in this model gain a high level of proficiency in both their mother tongue and the second language (Heugh, 2006).

**Weak Bilingual Model:** this emerges when subtractive and early-exit transitional models are applied together (Heugh, 2006). In the context of South Africa the policy requires learners in public schools who make “early exit” to be taught in English as LOLT at Grade 4. In principle South Africa’s NCS ascribes to the policy of bi/multilingualism, but in practice early-exit tends towards monolingualism. According to NCS, public schools have to offer at least two languages in their primary education level, i.e. the mother tongue and FAL with the Second Additional Language as optional. In the Intermediate Phase the mother tongue serves as a temporary bridge to instruction in an all English instruction classroom. The NCS policy frame at this point may need to get something straight. At first NCS assumes that learners who are able to speak and read in their mother tongue will be able to transfer their literacy skills acquired in mother tongue to FAL (DoE, 2002, p. 33). The policy seems to assume that the transition and LOLT pattern designed for public schools – such as the use of code-switching – could bridge the gaps created by “early exit” as we discussed earlier. Experience has shown that early transition impacts on the academic achievement of the learner both in terms of language acquisition and intellectual development of the learner. In the following section the transition process and implications to the learner’s development is examined.

#### **2.5.4 Language as a Barrier to Learning and Development**

According to Heugh (2007), language is at the heart of school learning. If language cannot be used for the purpose of learning, it becomes a barrier to learning rather than a channel for education. Thus language can be a barrier to effective learning if a learner cannot understand a lesson or the teacher is not confident in the LOLT. Unfortunately, in KZN rural areas and some other disadvantaged places in South Africa learners often have low ability and understanding of English language as the LOLT (Brock-Utne & Alidou, 2006; Heugh, 2006). Secondly teachers are often less confident in English (Maswanganye, 2010). The implication of this is that both teachers and learners continue to struggle, while the standard of learning content is often lowered as well as the quality of education. Thus the learners often do little talking, reading and writing in English as LOLT due to lack of language proficiency (Alidou & Brock-Utne, 2006).

According to the policy prescriptions, teaching, learning and assessing of many learners takes place through a language which is not their mother tongue. This does not only places these learners at a disadvantage, but it also leads to linguistic difficulties which contribute to learning breakdown. Cummins (2000) emphasised that second language learners are often subjected to low expectations, discrimination and lack of cultural peers. Whilst the teachers lack adequate training, and resources they often experience difficulties in developing appropriate support mechanisms to assist second language learners.

Communication is essential for learning and development in both formal and informal contexts (Makoe, 2007). EFAL learners from disadvantaged schools and areas experience enormous barriers to learning and development due to limited access to LOLT. These learners more often than not find themselves completely excluded from learning and development experiences given the language barriers arising from the general unavailability of alternative communication to enable them to engage in the learning process. Lack of exposure to LOLT thus exacerbates the language barriers in such a way that the learner continues to struggle until he/she gets to university or other higher learning. Cummins (2001) maintains that this leads to poor performance such that children from underprivileged families experience education in second language as a greater barrier than children from rich families, early school dropout, increase in unemployment, poverty, and low personal development.

## 2.6 Current Debates and Critical Issues on Transition from Mother Tongue Instruction to English

There is near-universal agreement on the pernicious effects of the early abandoning of mother tongue as LOLT in favour of a language of higher status (English). Variations of such 'subtractive' include target language submersion from day one of schooling, delayed sudden immersion, and gradual immersion in the target language. A longitudinal study by Ramirez *et al.* (1991) confirms the poor learning outcomes of early-exit bilingual programmes (delayed immersion) for language minority children. In South Africa, the findings from HSRC's Threshold Project recorded that four years of mother tongue education is grossly inadequate in preparing learners for the abrupt switch to English as LOLT (MacDonald, 1990). Makoni, Busi and Mashiri (2007) added that such early exit has not only contributed to school failures but also hampers the expected and developmental benefits of bi/multilingual education in South Africa. The benefits which range from cognitive, linguistic, and social-cultural context that leads to development of both the citizens and the entire nation. In concurring to the above idea Thomas & Collier's (1997) longitudinal study into school effectiveness for "language minority students" identified three key predictors of academic success, namely:

- Early exit “syndrome”
- the use of above transition approaches in teaching the academic curriculum through two languages; and
- changes in the socio-cultural context of schooling without corresponding policy changes

In taking the argument further, Thomas and Collier (1997, pp.1-2) highlight the value of late exit as the preferred approach to bilingual education by stating categorically that:

Only those learners who have received strong cognitive and academic development through their first language for many years (at least through Grade 5 or 6), as well as through the second language (English), are doing well in school as they reach the last of the high school years (Thomas & Collier 1997, pp.1-2)

Thomas and Collier's (1997) statement above tends to place language at the heart of educational achievement and development. This makes sense especially when language is seen as the means by which a person learns to organise his/her experiences and thoughts (Baker, 2006). Language learning therefore stands at the centre of the many interdependent cognitive, affective and social factors that shape teaching and learning process (Thomas

&Collier, 2000). Thus messing with language patterns in education implies messing up education itself, or to be specific, the quality of education. This justifies the reason(s) why LOLT issue is particularly important in a multilingual society such as South Africa – especially for the learners, parents, educators and policy-makers. Myburgh *et al.* (2004) states that authentic teaching and learning cannot take place where the learners do not speak the language of instruction. In agreeing with Myburgh *et al.* (2004) it can be purported that such a situation accounts largely for the school ineffectiveness and low academic achievement experienced by learners in Africa. As earlier mentioned, the transfer of skills from mother tongue to L2 can only materialise if the learners have acquired proficiency in their initial cognitive language (Cummins, 2003). The learners who understand concepts such as rhyme and figurative language learn to use these features in another language (Coelho, 2004). For Cummins (in Coelho, 2004) FAL learners should not be rushed into learning a second language before they have learnt to decode several discrete language skills in their mother tongue. They must be confirmed as having mastered specific literacy skills and concepts before they are allowed to learn in L2, otherwise the switch to L2 become an arduous task (Coelho, 2004).

However, while we await mother-tongue instruction and printing text in African languages to materialised the policy reforms of post-apartheid democracy need to ensure that every learner has access to quality education. In the context of this study, one of the significant ways of doing this will be to ensure that learners have access to LOLT. Another way is to ensure that LOLT in schools serve the best interest of learners with regard to their diverse contexts, otherwise, the situation of which Heugh (2006) describes as subtractive bilingual approach will continue to re-inforce itself on South African learners with the numerous challenges it has been identified with. The challenges of subtractive bilingualism are the replacement of the mother tongue at a very early stage (say at Grade 4) which I described as “linguicism” (i.e., linguistic racism), and its discrimination against the learner whose constitutional rights to learn and know his/her mother tongue are violated. Besides these challenges, one may argue that moving the mother-tongue instruction from the educational process at that early stage in itself represents a drive towards monolingualism. The South African language policy advocates bilingualism whereas in reality what is obtainable strives towards monolingualism which has an adverse effect on bilingual learners. For instance, the study conducted by the Department of Education (2008) on literacy proficient level indicates that South African learners when tested for their ability to read at age-appropriate levels perform poorly

compared to their colleagues from other African countries (see DoE 2008, p. 5). Also in 2005, the study which aimed at evaluating language competence of intermediate phase learners in South Africa indicated that 63% were below the required language competency level for their age level. Only 14% of the learners (among whom were English first language speakers) who were outstanding in their language competence. According to the report, 23% were satisfactory or partially competent – (DoE, 2008, p. 6). The poor literacy performance results seems to be an indication that to plunge learners in English single medium school or replace their mother tongue as early as Grade 4 does a lot of harm to their performance.

According to Heugh (2006), the pattern of language used in South African schools is inherited from the colonial system which succeeded and worked for the colonial system but does not anymore. The primary aim of using such a language pattern during colonial rule in Africa was to develop the leadership needed in training manpower required for development and colonialism in Africa as envisioned by the colonial master (Heugh, 2006). The colonial version of language use is no more relevant in the present Africa today. Due to cognitive and academic difficulties resulting from early transition most African learners struggle in developing competence in L2 given that they have not mastered their mother tongue before transition to second language. Such problems are not found for instance in Nigeria where both English and mother tongue are compulsorily studied as subjects from first grade until the learner finishes high school. Such language learning patterns used in the Nigerian school system is synonymous with the “Strong bilingualism” discussed above and can respond appropriately to South African situation as it may significantly enhance learners’ access to LOLT and at the same time their mother tongue, leading to personal growth and educational achievement and development.

## **2.7 Development as an Objective of Education**

Recently, the conceptualisation of education has been stretched to incorporate a variety and other forms of the education both within the developed and developing countries of the world. A Good example of the modern education trend is the inclusive education which focuses on education of people with disabilities, such as the use of sign language (see Mosse, 2001). John Dewey (cited in Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2006) defined education as an act that has an influential effect on the mind or physical ability of an individual. The Dewey’s definition implies education as a means to development in the society through transmission of knowledge, values, culture and skills beneficial to human co-existence (Dimitriadis &

Kamberelis, 2006). In developing countries, education cannot be inclusively defined without its role in developing the individual and the society at large. For example, the Communion for African (2005, p. 181) document defines the role of education as follows:

Education is a fundamental human right. It is a means to the fulfilment of an individual. It is the transfer of values from one generation to the next. It is also critical for economic growth and healthy population...The case for education is overwhelming—both in terms of fulfilling human security and as an investment with very high returns the (Communion for African 2005, p. 181).

The above quote indicates that education may be broadly seen as to direct and prepare the individual(s) toward various social roles that lead to social transformation through conscientisation and intellectual enlightenment. Thus education becomes a vehicle in maintaining social order and development status quo as it prepares individuals to responsibly assume existing social roles in the social structure created to support good governance. Lev Vygotsky (cited in Dahms *et al.*, 2008) affirms that education should develop a higher level of thinking that enables humans to analyse complicated situations and solve problems. The level of literacy, social order, poverty and preservation of human rights are often criteria for measuring development and good governance in the modern democracy (Dahms *et al.*, 2008). The reason for exploring the above definitions on education was to emphasise that the goal of education is not limited to cognitive or intellectual stimulation, but includes the education and development of the person and the society (Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2006). Thus in its broadest sense education incorporates every process of equipping someone with information, knowledge, skills, societal values and norms which aim at changing the individual into a “better” person who knows his/her rights, respects other people’s rights, becomes self-reliant and a good citizen (Mosse, 2001).

The needs to adapt to globalisation changes and challenges, as well as to meet up with the issues involved in the crisis in education have intensified the arena of policymaking. Consequently, proper legislation, policymaking, reforms and scrutiny have become imperative for actualisation of sustainable development in the modern democracies (Dahms *et al.*, 2008) For instance, in keeping abreast of global trends, South Africa among other African countries, is constantly advancing on the information technology front. The use of the cell phone, computer and internet, through electronic mail multimedia learning is increasingly becoming an everyday utility for modern education. In developing of knowledge management, dealing with classroom multi-media development, training of education

administrators and language teachers, policymakers must bear in mind that certain things have to happen first (Tikly, 2004; Dahms *et al.*, 2008). Without well-researched and proper scientific knowledge of the contextual status and challenges of LOLT in South African schools it will be difficult to know what computer programme(s) and language will best serve the language needs of learners in a particular context and grade level. Thus “misplaced” policymaking and reform will persist in making the objectives for government’s heavy spending in developing education and the support for proper policy implementation unrealisable. It is important to note that the process of getting these gaps bridged in the South African education system calls for adequate policy and development measures.

### **2.7.1 Conceptualising Development**

This study being framed within the specialisation of Education and Development raises the issue of how successful is formal education in meeting the literacy needs of Grade 4 learners in mainstream and disadvantaged schools. However, the conceptualisation of “development” as used in this study becomes imperative. Amongst numerous definitions of “development” this study adopted the definition by Tikly (2004) who defines development as:

the ability of people, organizations and societies to shift away from attending to situations in a quick fixed and reactive manner to a deeper and more innovative and context specific manner that adequately addresses the systemic root causes of the problems identified within the system at particular time (Tikly 2004, p. 37).

In the South African context, development may mean a process that leads to “progress” for the better, from one historical or political or economy of a social context or space, to another (Youngman, 2000). It is important to note that how development is understood and achieved is a highly contested terrain that is dependent on disciplines, contexts and conceptualisation paradigms. According to Ake (1996), the primary principle of development in Africa is that the people have to be the agents, the means and the end of development. This principle constitutes the backbone or framework of all development policies; their mechanisms of implementation and the distribution of the benefits in Africa (Ake, 1996). Education is one of the key factors in achieving sustainable development in Africa (Tikly, 2004) although not all education leads to development. Experiences have shown that people want education in order to increase their chances of survival and wellbeing. For instance, in the labour market, people without proper education or qualification do not fit into professional vacancies so that they remain unemployed even when there are job opportunities. The situation is exacerbated

when, in addition, they cannot understand the dominant language (i.e., English). In some cases, people may have certain level of education but due to the quality of education they received they cannot communicate effectively in English. This raises the issue of how can education policies be designed and strengthened to reflect Education for All as a fundamental human right such that education adequately supports development as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Education programs should be designed to promote the full development of human personality and strengthen respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms (Article 26).

This process includes ensuring that the formation of policies and their implementation grant teachers' access to trainings, on-going professional development through open and distance learning, that they are adequately remunerated, teachers' participation in policymaking process and must be accountable to both learners and community, that teachers have full knowledge of relevant policies, as well as accepting their professional responsibilities. Tikly (2004) noted that teachers are crucial players in promoting good quality education in schools; they are advocates for, and catalysts of, change as such no without active participation and ownership of teachers. Thus improving the capacity of teachers becomes tantamount to facilitating teaching and learning in schools. Whereas well-resourced schools and the use of appropriate language in teaching count in achieving education for all in the nation's democracy. Without accelerated progress towards education for all, national and internationally agreed targets for poverty reduction, promotion of education as fundamental and universal human rights will be missed. Thus inequalities in African societies continue to widen as revealed at the beginning of new millennium by Education for All (EFA) Assessment of 2000 (Dakar Framework for Action, 2000).

According to the EFA 2000 Assessment more than 113 million children (16% of whom were girls) have no access to primary education (Dakar Framework for Action, 2000). Over 800 million children under the age of six, less than a third, benefit from any form of early childhood education globally. While over 880 million adults are illiterate the majority of whom are women. The Education Statistics in South Africa 2009 has shown that up to 22% of disabled children are not attending school (Department of Basic Education, 2010). In KwaZulu-Natal province, isiZulu is the mother tongue of 87% but only 22% are taught in isiZulu. These figures represent an affront to human dignity and a denial of the right to education. Arguably, situations like this exacerbate the barriers towards poverty alleviation as

well as jeopardising the attempt to attain sustainable development, therefore should strictly be deemed as unacceptable. In other words, genuinely participatory development and poverty reduction are likely to occur where education is practically recognised as fundamental and universal human rights as declared in 1990 EFA World Conference in Jomtien, China (Dakar Framework for Action, 2000).

However, without education the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) aimed to be achieved by 2015 in developing nations will remain euphoric and idealistic and thus unrealistic (UNDP, 2010). An educated population remains the fundamental platform for meeting most of the MDG's agenda such as poverty reduction, manpower development, skill training, access to and quality of education, reduction in high HIV and AIDS prevalence and infection rate, and institutional development. Thus quality education provides individuals with a firm foundation for life-long learning and skills acquisition, which are increasingly necessary elements of a dynamic, fast-moving knowledge-based society. Experiences have shown that in the modern globalised world fewer literate and uneducated people are in a better position to obtain meaningful decent, formal, and gainful employment, and to create work opportunities for themselves and others. It is however against this background that education wields its potential to iron out income disparities in society. Since 1994, the democratic government of the ANC in South Africa has worked to reverse the detrimental impact that apartheid education policies and practices have had on the majority of South Africa's population. Following the 2009 National Education Statistics by the Department of Basic Education (2010), South Africa is on the right track towards achievement of its MDGs even though sustained effort needs to be intensified in uplifting the quality of education in most mainstream schools. The studies done in conjunction with the World Bank (2005) in Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Uganda and Tanzania, indicated that similar factors combined to weaken the quality of teaching in underdeveloped areas in Africa. First, (qualified) teachers often prefer to teach in urban areas and as a result most rural schools may be left with empty posts, or have longer delays in filling them. In the South African context most of these posts are filled by foreigners, unqualified, less experienced teachers or teachers who barely speak the learners' mother tongue.

The study's literature is organised into meaningful themes concerning various policy and legislative frameworks in South Africa and different approaches to teaching in a language transition class. The literature is specifically useful in understanding how teachers interact

with Grade 4 learners in the classroom and the implications of their interaction for language policy development. The aim is to ensure that the study's literature are clearly stated and correspond with the aims of the study.

## **2.8 Theoretical Framework**

This study adopts a socio-cultural approach towards development and language teaching that is entrenched in the work of Vygotsky (1978) and the sociocultural theory. In addressing learning the theory emphasises that teachers can use strategies to create classroom conditions that foster learning by modelling, scaffolding and the development of the learners' ZPD. Language permeates through all the strategies within Vygotsky's theory. The social cultural theory views interaction between teacher and learners as a developmental process which takes place in a social context. Vygotsky argues that social learning precedes development such that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the process of cognitive development. This is in contrast to Jean Piaget's understanding of child development in which development necessarily precedes learning. Vygotsky (1978) states that every child's personal and intellectual development has two phases; firstly, it happens on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people and then inside the child. Vygotsky focused on the connections between people and the socio-cultural context in which they act and interact in shared experiences. According to Vygotsky (1978), humans use tools that develop from a culture, such as speech and writing, to mediate their social environments. Initially children develop these tools to serve solely as social functions, ways to communicate needs. Vygotsky also believes that the internalisation of these tools lead to higher thinking skills.

In this study the social context is a classroom where learners and their teachers interact using language, as well as making teaching and learning remains within the culture of the school. According to Vygotsky (1962), the ZPD is engaged as learners interact with more knowledgeable persons, adult, peers or teacher, and are able to advance from their present level of development to a higher developmental level. Vygotsky referred to the conceptual distance between what the learners can achieve on their own and what they cannot do without assistance as "Zone of Proximal Development" (ZPD). In the context ZPD, the pivotal role of language and imitation play in cognitive development of a child is emphasised. First, language is the main means by which adults transmit information to children; Secondly, it is a very powerful tool of intellectual adaptation of the child who is at the ZPD. Vygotsky maintained that when learners imitate more experienced persons or teachers, by responding to

leading questions, observing demonstrations, and mimicking answers their behaviour, vocabulary and ideas advance from their present level of development. The concept (ZPD) in this study directs our search towards observing specific language challenges that emerge as isiZulu-speaking learners and their teachers negotiate transition to English as LOLT.

Another concept in Vygotsky's theory is scaffolding. Scaffolding involves support that is responsive to the particular demands made on [Learners] learning through the medium of a L2—thus a language support by the teacher which is critical for learning success (Vygotsky, 1978; Gibbons, 2002). The construction of a scaffold occurs at a time where the child may not be able to articulate or explore learning independently due to language barriers. Building on ideas presented by Vygotsky (1978), Echevarria, Vogt, and Short (2004), concurring with input from immersion and world language teachers categorised scaffolding techniques into three categories: the verbal scaffolding which includes techniques that are focused on language development; procedural scaffolding techniques that relate to grouping and classroom activity structures; and instructional scaffolding which involve utilising tools that support learning such as language. The scaffolds provided by the teacher do not change the nature or difficulty of the task; instead, the scaffolds provided allow the learner to successfully complete the task. In this study scaffolding guides the inquiry on how teachers creatively use language in communicating with learners in their specific context. In a qualitative interpretative research paradigm, human context and interaction are important.

Modelling requires a teacher within the cognitive domain or subject area to demonstrate a task that the learner can experience and construct conceptual model of the task that will help him/her to eventually take responsibility of doing the task (McLeod, 2007). Through modelling the teacher provides the learner with a step-by-step demonstration of what is required of him or her. This process needs to be guided by the principles stipulated in the curriculum and in the best interests of the learner (Baker, 2001). Modelling is a quite creative strategy which is very effective when teacher and learners are accessing meaning during reading and writing. Since coaxing children to read can often be a major problem in Grade 4, teachers need to use every available resource at their disposal to motivate young readers. The teacher can display diagrams or charts, draw, sing, and dramatise the concept being taught or read. The teacher can also use the grouping of the learners to enhance classroom communication (McLeod, 2007). Though neither classroom practice nor reading was the primary focus of this study, modelling enabled me to examine how often teachers deploy or

abandon the use of above-mentioned teaching aids and how this affects classroom interaction, communication and learner development. As an interpretivist researcher, I have access to the schools as such the theory helps me to understand how teachers and learners negotiate transition from mother tongue instruction (isiZulu) to English as LOLT. As a qualitative researcher, I explored phenomena in their natural setting. During data interpretation and analysis this theory also helped to explain the emerging themes and sub-themes to ensure that the research questions were correctly answered.

## **2.9 Conclusion**

This chapter provided an overview of the literature relating to how government principles and ideologies play out in teaching English to African learners as LOLT at primary level. The chapter also reviewed literature on teaching in a transition class, code-switching, language models in Africa, and language acquisition process in relation BICS and CALP. The review finally explored concepts education and development arguing that without access to quality education, development *per se* is jeopardised. The review further suggests that policy reforms must concentrate on language challenges, shortages of qualified teachers and insufficient study materials in schools if sustainable development and education for all (EFA) were to emerge as conceptualised by World Education Forum. The chapter also presented the theoretical framework adopted by this study.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and explains the research methodology, methods and techniques chosen and utilised to generate, interpret and analyse data for the study. It also describes the context, sampling, ethical issues, access to the school, limitations, triangulation, validity and reliability of the study. In order not to lose insight on the reason why the researcher chose the research process, it is imperative to remind the reader of the key questions as follow:

- How do teachers and learners negotiate the transition from isiZulu to English as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) in Grade 4?
- What are the implications of the language (s) of teaching and learning used in Grade 4 mainstream schools on language policy development?

In order to respond to the above questions the study identifies the following sub-questions:

- What are the different purposes of using isiZulu and English in Grade 4 classrooms?
- How do teachers use English and isiZulu to introduce and teach new concepts?
- What challenges are faced by educators in teaching English and Life Orientation when using English as LOLT in Grade 4 classrooms?
- What are the implications of these challenges for language policy development?

#### 3.2 Research Paradigm

This study was designed within the qualitative interpretivist paradigm. The interpretivist approach allows for meaning to be sought within context through observation of, and conversation with people in their own environment (Kalof, Dan & Dietz, 2008). Cohen *et al.* (2007, p.22) described interpretive research paradigm as a process which “begin with individuals and set out to understand the interpretations of the world around”. The approaches rely heavily on naturalistic methods which include interviewing and observation for collection of data to ensure an adequate dialogue between the researchers and participants

who collaboratively construct meaning and interpret reality (Henning, 2004). Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) argued that the detail and effort involved in interpretive inquiry allow the researcher to gain insight into particular events and range of perspectives that may not have come to light without such scrutiny.

Similarly, Leedy and Ormrod (2006) held that interpretive research paradigm answer questions about the complex nature of phenomena, often with the purpose of describing and understanding the phenomena. The interpretivist researchers achieve this purpose by looking at a detailed observation of people's behaviour in natural settings in order to arrive at an understanding and interpretation of how people create and maintain their social worlds. The advantage of working within an interpretive paradigm is that it allows for 'thick descriptions' to unfold which allows the researcher to make sense of the participants' world by interacting with them using interviews (Jocher, 2006). In this study, the interpretivist research paradigm remained the flexible tool that allowed me to understand, by the process of observation and interpretation, the classroom experiences and challenges arising from use of language as teachers interact with their learners.

### **3.3 Research Design**

#### **3.3.1. Locating the Research as a Qualitative Study**

This study adopts a qualitative research design similar to the perspectives described by Babbie and Mouton (2001) who assert that the best way to investigate the subjective experiences of the participants is through an in-depth qualitative approach. There are two main approaches to research, the quantitative and qualitative approach (Kalof, Dan & Dietz, 2008). The quantitative is concerned with the use of survey or questionnaire to investigate usually the "how" of a particular phenomenon and it has been criticised because of its mechanistic and reductionist view of reality in which it limits respondents to forced choices, intention, freedom of individuality, and its discontinuation of researcher's ability to interpret and represent his/her experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). In contrast, the qualitative research design allows for an enquiry into the experiences and views of participants and it also allows for an in-depth process of data collection (Silverman, 2006). This study adopted a basic qualitative research approach in order to enrich understanding of the research topic and allows for new and deeper dimensions to emerge (Jocher, 2006). Despite the limitations for which qualitative data has been criticised especially the issues of it being "subjective,

impressionistic, idiosyncratic and biased” (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p. 313), Miles and Huberman (1994, pp. 10-11) identify strengths of using qualitative data as following:

- Qualitative data focuses on naturally occurring data, ordinary events in natural context. Thus they give us a strong handle on what ‘real life’ is all about.
- The data is locally grounded in that the data was collected in close proximity to the specific situation.
- Qualitative data is characterised by its richness and strong potential for revealing complexity, such data provides ‘thick descriptions’ that are vivid, nested in real context, and have a ring of truth that has a strong impact on the reader.
- Qualitative data with their emphasis on the ‘people’s lived experiences’ are well suited for locating the meanings people place on the events, processes and structures of their lives and for connecting these meanings to the social world around them.
- Finally, the qualitative data is useful when one needs to supplement, validate, explain, illuminate, or reinterpret data gathered quantitatively from the same setting.

As a qualitative researcher I decided to use interviews, observation and post-observation interviews as sources of data collection for this study. Since the primary task of a qualitative researcher is to uncover and explain the ways in which participants in particular settings understand, account for and take action to manage their situations (Babbie & Mouton, 2001), I used semi-structured interviews, aimed to seek and understand teachers’ views and experiences on their classroom use of language challenges. Whilst classroom observations were used to uncover and explain the nature of the interaction in which Grade 4 learners and their teachers found themselves in mainstream schools. Post-observation interviews were used in order to seek clarification from teachers whose lessons were observed and to integrate their views in analyses in order to limit possible imposition of my “biased” interpretation on the data interpretation and analysis. Thus this was also one of the means through which I remained objectively detached from infiltrating observation with personal prejudices (Welman *et al.*, 2005). Yin (1994) identifies a number of requirements for a researcher to be successful and objective within a qualitative research approach. These include extensive background knowledge, an unbiased and flexible approach and the ability to ask the right

questions and correctly interpret the answers. In addition, Jocher (2006) and Stake (1995) both emphasise the value of clear and concise descriptions of all observations as another way to limit possibilities of researcher's possibly biased views. Therefore, as the researcher and a role player in administering of interviews in collecting relevant data I had to take great care to be unbiased and neutral during the research process. I also exercised great prudence during the interviews and discussions of observation data with the teachers knowing that some interviewees are likely to be affected by the dynamics of their emotions and objectivity depending on their current state, experiences and the convenience of the interview schedule (Stake, 1995).

### **3.4 Selection of Research Sites (The School Contexts)**

Three ex-DET only schools were purposively selected in the Pietermaritzburg area of KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa. For purposes of anonymity and confidentiality the selected schools were represented in the dissertation as School A, School B and School C. It is important to remind the reader that the names and areas mentioned in this report are also pseudonym. The initial identification of the schools was through contacts from the Department of Education (DoE) and the basis on which the schools were selected was their possession of the characteristics most appropriate for this study. Later my initial visits were to first familiarise myself with the conditions in the schools, meet and inform the school principals of my study, and then request their voluntary participation. The reason for selecting the schools was twofold: firstly, I chose the schools for convenience and for easy access over a six month period. Secondly, given that the study objective focuses on transition from isiZulu to English as LOLT, the selected schools provided an appropriate scenario for this study in that: the schools are mainstream schools, the majority of the learners and teachers are isiZulu speakers, isiZulu is the dominant language of communication in the area in which the schools are located, as teaching and learning in English is likely to create challenges for teachers and learners. The context of the selected schools is described as follows:

#### **School A:**

School A is primary school that offers Grade R to Grade 7 and is located at Sweetwaters, outside Pietermaritzburg city, in KZN. The school has 760 learners and 21 teachers at the time of the study; both the learners and teachers are isiZulu mother-tongue speakers except for three science teachers who are of foreign origins. Within this area most of the parents are

unemployed, uneducated and barely speak the English language. The majority of the learners walk 10 to 12 km to and from school, many of whom are from broken homes having either single parents or even not having without parents. Very few learners have both parents. Some learners receive social grants, whereas others are raised by their grandmothers who are already pensioners and in some cases very ill. Poverty is quite evident in this area of KwaZulu-Natal and the rate of HIV/AIDS is awfully high too. Half of the learners receive school uniform from civil society organisations such as NGO's and NPO's working in the area. Despite most parents being unable to assist their children with their homework, some learners cannot even study at night because of poor living conditions and unavailability of life basic necessities such as food and electricity.

The school is located in as old building with a limited number of classrooms; most of these classrooms have broken window which have not been replaced. In spite of having a limited number of chairs and tables for the learners, the classrooms are not spacious enough to accommodate the number of learners in the classes. There is no fence around the school which makes it possible for learners to leave the school premises at will and even before school dismissal time which is 13:00 for the Foundation Phase and 14:00 for the Intermediate Phase. The school also has a poorly maintained sport facility and has no library. Due to the absence of electricity and water the old toilet facilities have long been out of use and at the time of my study, the school was categorised as a Quintile two. Quintiles are categories or ratings used by the National Department of Education to identify schools on a continuum of poorly resourced schools to well-resourced schools with quintile five being the highest score. The School B is a poorly-resourced school. There was a shortage of teachers as most of the teachers are not qualified. For instance, thirteen teachers were teaching with matric qualification, while only three of them furthering their studies at the time of the study.

### **School B:**

School B is also a primary school that offers Grade R to Grade 7 and is located approximately 35km away from Pietermaritzburg, in KZN. The school has fairly old classroom buildings and sports facilities surrounded by a low-cost housing development. The housing development is separated from the schools premises by a narrow community road. The rate of unemployment and number of poorly educated parents within the community appeared to be very high at the time of this study. Astonishingly, none of these factors have deterred the school from being highly successful, both academically and in extra-curricular

activities such as sports. This is evidenced by the innumerable trophies and shields, certificates and general sponsorship acknowledgments displayed in the foyer within the administration block. Most teachers live in town, and drive or take transport to school each day. A few neighbouring parents volunteer to assist in doing menial jobs at the school including helping with administration and cleaning. According to the Principal, this volunteer assistance has been offered by the community and has been in process for over seven years.

Apparently, the school had an enrolment of approximately 667 learners and 17 permanent educators including 2 Grade R teachers, one temporary male educator who was a foreign national who does not understand isiZulu. Twelve other female educators and four male staff are black South Africans teachers and speak isiZulu. The principal, one deputy principal and five HODs present in the school during the time of this study were formally appointed by the Department of Education. Grade 4 has two classrooms that were referred to as Grade 4A and 4B which at the time of the study accommodated 40 and 37 learners respectively. The school has no definite library except for a “book corner” which constitutes a shelf-like wooden box kept in each of the classrooms for storing the books. In Grade 4 this box contains books and old charts.

### **School C:**

School C too is a primary school that offers Grade R to Grade 7 and is located in the Howick region of KZN. It had an enrolment of 987 learners at the time of the study. The school was overpopulated given the number of classrooms available to accommodate these learners. A good example of this was the Grade 4 classroom which was observed. It has 134 learners who share two classrooms that were not spacious and well ventilated. The school staff comprised the principal, deputy principal and three HODs present in the school at the time of this study and were all formally appointed by the DoE. The staff consisted of 12 educators, eight female and four male, most of who were black and were isiZulu speaking. Although the school draws its pupils from predominantly lower income families, in recent years, the learners’ performance has been considerably high. This indicates that the culture of teaching and learning has been very effective in the school. This is evidence of an efficient administration both from the board and at teacher level. Despite the school having a fairly old building, there were neither enough chairs nor tables to accommodate the number of learners enrolled at the school. Few teaching aids were displayed on the classroom walls and the school had responded to national and provincial changes by adopting the National

Curriculum Statements (NCS). Financially, the school depended heavily on the annual school fee of R90 per child, as it was a Section 20 school. Thus the school always to make requisitions to the DoE for whatever it needs. However, the Department only acts on behalf of the school if it considers the request necessary and affordable, and this takes a long time and is sometimes fruitless. Consequently, school C has fundraising activities and initiatives which they deploy to support the school financially even as they wait for DoE to act on their requisition(s). Fortunately, the school has a fully equipped library and resource centre where learners can enter ‘a new world’ though few books beyond Grade 4 are translated into isiZulu. The DoE considers the school one of the most effective schools in the area given the recent academic performance of its learners of which has been good virtually in all ramifications.

### **3.4.2 Sampling of Participants**

Miles and Huberman (1994) noted that qualitative research involves small samples of people researched through in-depth methods such as face-to-face interviews and rigorous observation that focus on the experiences of the participants. In this study, I limited my sample to six teachers who were purposely chosen. After the pre-observation interview three teachers were randomly selected from the six teachers for observation based on their availability and convenience. The teachers were identified through the DoE records before they were consulted during my initial visits to the schools in order to seek their voluntary consent and participation in the study. The reason for using purposive sampling was to ensure that only experienced teachers with at least five years of teaching experience in Grade 4 classrooms and three years of teaching in the selected schools. The criteria used for the selection of participants were that the teacher must have the same cultural background as the learners and must be an isiZulu mother-tongue speaker. To further vary the criteria for selection, consideration was given to the age of the participants, their gender, teaching qualification obtained, and the subjects that they teach. At the time of the study, participants who were between the age of 35 and 50 years were selected. It was important to collect meaningful data from teachers who were mature, well balanced and had reached the five year mark in the current educational system. From the above discussion it is obvious that participants in this study were chosen not only purposively but also conveniently in terms of sampling such that the selected sample was based on “fitness of purpose” (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p. 67). Burns cited in Cohen *et al.* (2007) argues that purposive sampling serves the real purpose of the researcher in discovering, gaining insight and understanding into a particular

chosen phenomenon. Purposive sampling is an appropriate method for this study because it does not only assure “availability and willingness” of participants to participate but also it ensures that the cases that are typical of the population are selected (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006, p. 139). Whilst convenience sampling makes no pretence of identifying a representative subset of a population in which the researcher takes people that are readily available and befit the purpose of the study (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). Thus choosing the nearest individuals to serve as respondents and continuing the process until the required sample size has been obtained with regards to those available and accessible at the time.

### **3.4.3 Access and Ethical Issues**

As a researcher it was my responsibility in the search for new knowledge to protect the participants of my research from any hazards of social science research process (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). Consequently, the wellbeing and integrity of the participants in this study was of the utmost priority in considering ethical issues. I adhered strictly to ethical behaviour, the research ethics and policies of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, the institution where I was registered for my degree of Masters in Education. An ethical clearance application was submitted through my supervisor to the University Ethical Clearance Committee for permission to conduct this research. The ethical approval was granted which enabled me to continue with the research process of data collection (see attached Appendix 6). During the study process, an Informed Consent letter was dispatched to selected teachers in order to inform them of the research aims and objectives, and also request for their voluntary participation to the study (see attached Appendix 1). According to Diener and Crandall (cited in Cohen *et al.*, 2007), the importance of this procedures is that it allows individuals a choice as to whether to participate in an investigation having been informed of the facts that may influence their decisions. Having secured acceptance from the teachers, permission was sought and granted from the authorities or the principals of selected schools in which the teachers work (see attached Appendix 4). In the consent letter the principals were also familiarised with the aims and objectives of the study and requested to allow their schools to be used as study sites.

Consent letters were also sent to and signed by the parents/guardians to enable me observe and video their children. An application was submitted to the KZN Department of Education for approval and authorisation to conduct my study as well as to interview the teachers in the selected schools.

The consent letters contained full information about the purpose of the study, maleficence and beneficence. Thus, participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time they wanted to withdraw (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). In the consent letter participants were also guaranteed that the study would not do any harm to them. This form of assurance protects the participants rights as Cohen *et al.* (2007, p. 52) confirms that “consent protects and respects the rights of self-determination and places some of the responsibility on the participant should anything go wrong during the research”. In addition, participants were guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity that their responses would be used only for academic reasons and none of the responses would be linked to their personal identity. Consequently, the names of the schools, places, teachers and learners used in this study are pseudonyms.

#### **3.4.4 Selection of Learning Areas**

English First Additional Language and Life Orientation (LO) were the two learning areas selected for this study. The basic reasons for selecting English and LO were twofold. Firstly, these two subjects are Grade 4 subjects offered in the three selected schools; consistently, it was easy to observe the two learning areas in each school. Secondly, the two subjects have implications not only to personal development of the learners but also to their intellectual development. For instance:

##### **Life Orientation:**

The C2005 - which was streamlined, strengthened, and revised into Revised National Curriculum (RNCS) – and CAPS uphold similar learning outcomes and assessment standards for LO. The CAPS (curriculum) which came into use from 2012/2013 upholds the principle of the South African Constitution that are relevant to the growth and development of South African society. In these curricula LO modules are structured to enable and encourage learners to:

- participate
- think and reflect, analyse and organise
- share and communicate
- show respect and take responsible for themselves and others
- see themselves as part of a large, diverse society
- develop skills for effective learning

- participate in their communities and
- be aware of educations and career opportunity (see Cadle *et al.*, 2005).

Thus LO as a learning area aims to empower learners to use their talents to achieve their full physical, intellectual, personal, emotional and social potential (DoE, 2002c). For instance, LO enables learners to make informed decisions about personal, community and environmental health promotion, form positive social relationships, to know and exercise their constitutional rights and responsibility, to develop positive orientation to study and work, and to make informed decision regarding further studies and careers that allows them play active and responsible role in economy and the society. LO as a learning area also helps the learners to move forward as strong and happier persons in their new environment.

Observing LO enabled me to explore the implications and how language difficulties can deprive learners of learning opportunities. An opportunity such as: the access to quality education, information that equips learners for meaningful and successful living in a rapidly changing and transforming society.

**English First Additional Language (EFAL):**

The purpose of learning English is – but not limited to – enhancement of effective communication and mastery of language that is achievable through reading, listening, speaking, and writing (DoE, 2002c). Learning of English language is critical a South African child such that learners will be able to access and use a variety of resources (human, technological and print). They will be able to connect ideas across various learning contexts, link new information and ideas to existing ones. They will be able to use English language for learning, to think critically and to evaluate thoughts and ideas. Language is linked to power as such language empowers one to take control of one’s life in the world where English is dominant language. In multilingual South Africa, learning English by a First Additional language learner requires additive multilingualism. Additive multilingualism means that the teacher helps the learners to maintain and develop the primary language whilst also gain competence in additional language.

In observing an English First Additional language lesson it was easier to see how the teacher communicated certain English words that have no conceptual equivalents in isiZulu and how they taught new concepts to learners with no English background.

### **3.5 Data Collection Methods**

Pre-observation interviews, observation, and post-observation interviews were the data collection methods used in this study. The data collection process took place November 2011 and lasted five weeks. The fourth term in 2011 was chosen because at this time educators have implemented their year plan and so they have the information needed for this study from the year's experiences.

#### **3.5.1 Pre-observation Interviews (with Six Teachers)**

An interview is a principal process of gathering information that has direct bearing towards answering the research question(s) (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). It was of utmost importance to me that the interview with each teacher became a “conversation with a purpose” (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p. 249), where each interviewee, as explained by Kitwood cited in Cohen *et al.* (2007, p.350) defines a situation in a unique way. During the interviews I allowed participants to express themselves openly and freely as Neuman (2003) established that through interview one is able to reveal and explore the nuanced descriptions of the life-worlds of participants. For this study purpose, semi-structured questions were used to facilitate rapport and allow for a greater flexibility of coverage (see attached Appendix 7). Semi-structured interviews are conducted with a fairly open framework which allow for focused, conversational two-way communication; unlike the questionnaire, semi-structured question or interview allowing both the interviewer and the person being interviewed the flexibility to probe for details or discuss issues as they arise that they were not prepared for in advance.

Six Grade 4 teachers were interviewed in selected schools (including the three teachers whose classroom lessons were observed).The pre-observation interviews aimed to generate data in order to answer the two key research questions as stated above in this chapter. The pre-observation interviews were also aimed towards identification of the teachers' knowledge base of language policy and practice and how it affected their work in teaching Grade 4 in the Intermediate phase. The interviews were conducted after school hours to avoid interruption of the normal school programme. Prior to the interview the participants were informed that the interview was planned to last between 10 to 15 minutes and according to date and venue

agreed upon by each teacher and the researcher. Having given their consent for voluntary participation the teachers were contacted by phone to confirm the interviews according to their convenience and in relation to the study time frame. The principals were also contacted to confirm the schedule for the interviews.

Interviews, like other data collection methods, have limitations. According to Cohen *et al.* (2007, p. 349), interviews could be “expensive in time, open to interview biasness, may be inconvenient for respondents, issues of interviewee fatigue may hamper the interview, and anonymity may be difficult”. The interview limitation relevant to this study is that the teachers may want to say things that they consider helpful to the researcher though different from the reality. The teachers also might bring in personal ideas and emotions which may compromise data and the study credibility. I was watchful of these limiting factors and exercised prudence with regards to the tone of my voice and gestures during the interviews. This was to sustain study objectivity and the degree of accuracy of the data that would be gathered and presented. I also applied the use of extensive probing and follow-up questions throughout the interview process to circumvent the possible subjective interpretations and to limit bias interpretations. The interviews were audio taped. The reason for recording the interviews was to be able to keep a full record of the interviews and to show participants that everything they said was taken seriously. After the completion of each interview the interview was transcribed verbatim by the researcher which includes the responses given by each interviewee to the questions posed, comments made by participants relating to the research. This was done in line with Stake’s (1995) suggestion that interview records could be more valuable when the interview transcripts constitute a comprehensive commentary of the interview instead of just raw data.

### **3.5.2 Classroom Observation (Using Video Recording)**

Classroom observations used in this study respond to the key research question one. It aimed to triangulate responses and claims made by teachers during pre-observation interviews. Classroom observations were aimed at gaining deep insight on how teachers and learners negotiate the transition from IsiZulu to English as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) in certain lessons in Grade 4 classrooms. Three teachers each from the selected schools were observed. Two lessons in English language and LO lessons were observed in each school so that in all six lessons were observed. The focus was not on how teachers teach English or LO but on classroom language use. A video recorder was used with microphones

placed close to both the teacher and the groups of learners in each of the lessons observed to ensure audible and amplified verbal utterances of the teacher and learners during classroom interactions. Because of the incidental noise in the class the microphone enabled me to hear the speech of the teacher and targeted learners during the transcription. Two data collectors were present during the observations excluding the researcher; both were fluent speakers of isiZulu and English. One data collector was charged with the responsibility of taking field notes alongside the researcher; thus recording important non-verbal cues, text and material used, as well as other contextual information. The other data collector took care of the video recorder or camera. This was to ensure that no important information was omitted or taken for granted as Sacks (cited in Silverman) affirmed that:

We (i.e., researchers) cannot rely on our notes or recollections of conversation. Certainly, depending on our memory, we can usually summarize what different people said...it is simply impossible to remember everything such matters as pauses, overlaps, in breaths and the like (emphasis added) (see 2006, p. 204).

The video-recorder was reviewed for subsequent (re)observation during interpretation and analysis. According to Silverman (2006, p. 204), by replaying, studying and examining the video record of object under study, the researcher would be able to focus on the “actual detail” in a way that interpretation can be improved and analyses take off on a different tack unlimited to the original transcripts and/or field notes. Silverman (2006) claims that observation through video-recording tells us more about the participants and their views that not only words are revealed but also visual images, gestures and body movements (Silverman, 2006). This justification gives credibility to the use of video recording in aiding observations in this study. Among the limitations of using visual images is the question of how does one know the relation between what the subjects do when they are being monitored and what they do in everyday life. Cohen *et al.* (2007) noted that if human beings feel monitored they are most likely to spice-up, fake, conceal or obscure certain behaviour they display in ordinary circumstances. Bearing this limitation in mind I combined three different data collection techniques to collect same types of data so that the weakness of one method is supplemented by the strength of the other (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Classroom observation was an appropriate technique to this study because “it offers an investigator the opportunity to gather data from naturally occurring social situations” (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.398) such that specific attention was paid to context, personal and social interaction between learners and their teachers. The process that Bernard (2000, p. 337)

believes could strengthen the study's credibility, reliability and objectivity, as well as facilitate proper translation of participants' actual experiences into contextualized communicable and interpretable representation.

### **3.5.3 The Observation Experience**

Cohen *et al.* (2007) assert that it is important for a study report to include the researcher's experiences especially in terms of the physical setting, perspective, and subtle factors. The subtle factors here refer to factors that add to the heuristic and interpretive meaning within the broad qualitative context. This included reporting informal and unplanned activities that I witnessed during data collection. From an objective observer viewpoint, my involvement was known from a non-participant point of view, and the simple trade-off was between the depths of information revealed and, the level of confidentiality I promised. The observation experience went as follows:

#### **School A**

I went with two research team before 6:50 am having earlier scheduled with the class teacher and the headmaster to observe the first lesson In School A. One member of my research team was to handle camera ensure that the entire classes were properly videoed. The second person on the team was a retired isiZulu-speaking teacher also was taking note of the observation. This is to ensure that aspect of language is covered given that the researcher is a second language speaker of isiZulu. There were about 52 learners in the class which combines males and female.

English First Additional language was the first lesson observed followed by Life Orientation in School A. The two subjects were taught by the same teacher, Ntokozo. A. Classes began at 8 am daily but the first lesson observed was delayed. The teacher who conducted the lessons was also the HOD and had to perform some administrative duties for an hour every morning before proceeding to classroom. During the time my team and I could not set up the video given that the cleaning of the classrooms caused further delay towards. My team and I were only able to set up the camera and take our positions while the teacher was hurriedly taking the register. As a result of the above mentioned delay my team and I had to re-adjust our observation time with one hour thirty minutes postponement. The outcome of the observations

### **School B**

The teacher Nomali was observed in School B. The observation went smoothly except that during the LO lesson at School B. I was expecting to observe the teaching and learning interaction in a class where a new concept or (at least) a new topic was introduced. But the lesson was revision on a previous lesson in preparation for a class test which was to take place the following day according to the teacher. The observation started at 9: 55am as it was the second lesson on the school timetable for the day. In school B, Nomali began to deliver the lesson on verbs which lasted for about 50 minutes. The teacher took English textbooks and workbooks from the shelf located at the corner of the classroom and distributed them among the learners. She told them to open page 16 such that learners had the lesson topic (verbs) opened in front of them. The teacher described a verb as a doing word. She gave examples and then asked if anyone could describe a verb but there was no volunteer; no hand was raised. More will be discussed on this in chapter 4 (data presentation).

### **School C**

Teacher Dudu was observed in School C. The observation took place according to schedule after break. My team and I were able to set up the video camera while the learners were on break. Although in all the schools some learners were observed to have been passengers in the classroom as many of them were distracted by the presence of my team and I. In School C learners were not only distracted but majority seemed excited by the presence of the camera. Though there were some who were not affected by the presence of my team and I.

The instrument worked well although observation time was insufficient in School C as most of the classroom challenges were not foreseen. At first I thought that 45 minutes would be enough for each lesson to be observed, but it was not. Because it was afternoon my team members got exhausted before the end of the observation given scorching sunshine and high temperature of that day. My team and I however spent the afternoon observing many aspects of the classroom interactions in a bilingual instruction of Grade 4 learners.

It is important to mention that after the pre-observation interview two teachers declare their intention to withdraw from the study for reason they both considered private. The third teacher declined from classroom observation because of health reasons as she was due for maternity leave. As a result only three of the six teachers (who participated in pre-interview) were available for observation, each from the selected schools.

### **3.5.4 Post-Observation Interviews (semi-structured)**

The post-observation interview responds to the key research questions as stated above in this chapter. Firstly, post-observation allowed me to seek teachers' views and clarifications on the data collected through observation. This aimed to strengthen the study's objectivity as it helped to reduce the possible imposition of my "bias" views on data collected through observation. Post-observation interviews explored teachers' views on how best language policy would be developed to address language challenges as observed in selected schools. This was very important to the study as it is also concerned about development and in particular language policy development. I scheduled to meet with each teacher at his/her convenience for the interview. However, prior to the interview each teacher was given the videotape of his/her lesson to view, and the opportunity to select any episode(s) from the videotape to talk about during the interviews. It was to get teachers to think and talk about how they deal with day-to-day language challenges of teaching and to think about ways of how they can inform policy development. The instruction was that the episodes to be selected by the teacher might be:

- moments in which the teacher was in doubt about what next to do;
- moments when the teacher suddenly had an insight about what was going on;
- moments in which the teacher become aware of using language initiative(s) for elaboration, simplification and explanation in the classroom; or
- something that the teacher realised in retrospect, he/she did not think of at the time.

The interviews lasted between 30 to 45 minutes and were audio taped, transcribed, and used to ensure that the key research questions were satisfactorily answered.

### **3.6 Data Transcription and Coding**

According to Neuman (2003) transcription is an important facet of the data collection phase. In this study context, transcription involves the process of capturing audio-taped data into written form, developing and transforming raw data into a data set for subsequent and more detailed analysis (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). All interviews were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim. I engaged the process of transcription myself thus producing an account of each interview (full transcripts are available upon request). I was able to decipher and recollect some of the inaudible sections of the tape having undertaken the interview process myself. It

is important to note that interpretation of transcribed data is still required given that the data, at transcription stage, is not yet a complete and objective record (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). The non-verbal behaviours and the nuances of emotional expressions are not (or not fully) captured in the transcript as such interpretation is still required from the transcriber or any other listener (Stake, 1995). Even though it was tedious, and time-consuming, I found the process of transcription quite beneficial in terms of starting the process of analysis. I applied open coding by which the data collected are divided into segments and they are scrutinised for commonalities that could reflect categories or themes (Neuman, 2006; Henning, 2004). Coding is a process of reducing the data to a small set of themes that appear to describe the phenomenon under study (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). Codes were developed for basic description of phenomena, interpretations of data, connecting patterns in the data and making reflective observations of the research process (Welman *et al.*, 2005). Both the observation and interview data were coded and analysed using the same pattern.

### **3.7 Data Analysis and Interpretation**

This study adopted thematic interpretative analysis for the responses obtained from pre-observation interviews, observations and post-observation interviews. Data was analysed manually using open coding and was presented in themes and sub-themes by using data generated from the above-mentioned sources. According to Welman *et al.* (2005) one of the main outputs for analysing qualitative data is to identify the dominant themes that occur in the data whilst the coding of data attaches meaning to raw data through tags or labels that then enable data to be categorised within the different thematic areas. Thematic analysis within qualitative research paradigm assists in providing comprehensive rich data of the study (Silverman, 2006) and then report patterns according to the data obtained (Kalof, Dan & Dietz, 2008). Thematic analysis allows in some instances for participants to be quoted verbatim in order to emphasise the point made (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). Using thematic analysis I was able to explain the emerging themes, which is the main focus in trying to explain the experiences, perspectives and reflective observations made during the data collection process. In order to ensure that the important and relevant emerging themes are not omitted and/or misplaced, coding was applied while being guided by the sub-research questions of this study. Miles (1994) asserts that theme identification and coding processes enabled large amounts of data collected during research processes to be reduced to manageable and understandable texts that served as a basis for further analysis and interpretation.

In analysing the data obtained through observation I viewed the videotape repeatedly while making notes, reflections, and commentary on emerging issues and later compared my notes to the field notes and post-interview transcripts. I identified the emerging themes and still guided by my sub-research questions I embarked on developing codes, checking if the codes are reliable, immersing in the data and summarising data to obtain themes; then I continued coding and linking the different codes to identify themes and finally legitimising the coded themes (Kalof, Dan & Dietz, 2008). The data was organised into themes and then coded in such a way that it was possible to display the data in a manner that is systematic and logical to draw conclusions (Miles, 1994). Creswell cited in Leedy and Ormrod (2005) describe thematic data analysis as a spiral that is, in view, equally applicable to a wide variety of qualitative studies.

Similarly, in analysing the data obtained through the interview I went through the interview reports several times after the transcription. The intention was to increase my familiarity with the transcribed data and then undertake similar steps as in observation above. Firstly, I organised the data in the form of smaller units as an initial coding process, after which I perused the entire data several times in order to get a sense of what it contained as a whole. Then I analysed the reports to identify dominant themes on a general and sectorial basis after which they were documented and different themes identified. At this point, I identified general themes and sub-themes, classified and categorise these themes and sub-themes accordingly. I then compared and contrasted the themes based on contexts against a wide spectrum of critical examination in order to identify areas of convergence and divergence. The stage of searching for commonalities and discrepancies was a unique experience. It requires an approach of flexibility and openness in allowing the data to present itself without distortion from preconceived categories or ideas on my part as the researcher. Finally, I integrated and summarised the data for the readers. These steps and analytical processes enabled me to deepen my understanding of the data in order to attain a fairly logical process of documenting the findings.

### **3.8 Validity and Reliability**

Winter(cited in Cohen *et al.* 2007) states that validity in qualitative data is addressed through the honesty, depth and richness in scope of the data, ensuring that the study process ultimately seeks and addresses the question of whether the instrument measured is what it purported to measure. Similarly, Leedy and Ormrod (2006) affirm that:

Validity as a measurement instrument is the extent to which the instrument measure what is supposed to measure and it also refers to the accuracy of references which are made based upon the outcome measures (Leedy & Ormrod 2006, p.28).

In other words, when qualitative researchers refer to validity, they imply that the researcher is plausible, credible, defensible and trustworthy, thus the researcher is aware of any possible bias in the research process (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). There are two types of validity; the internal validity also refers as credibility and external validity which is the transferability (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). Internal validity deals with the question of to what degree the researchers report represent the physical contribution of participants (Leedy & Ormrod, 2006). I established the credibility (internal validity) in this study by firstly summarising at the end of each interview what was said, and checking the correctness of my understanding with that of the participants. I also cross-checked the video footages obtained from classroom observation, with the teachers' interview responses. During the post observation interviews which combine to form part of the process of data interpretation and analyses, I obtained an appointment to meet with each of the teachers (whose lessons were observed) to watch and discuss certain video clips from data collected through observation. On one hand this aimed to integrate teachers' views on analysis of data collected through observation. On the other hand it helped to reduce possible imposition of researcher's "biased" views on the findings. Transferability or external validity refers to the degree to which the results can be generalised to the wider population, cases or situations (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). Lincoln and Guba (1995) suggest that, for qualitative research to be generalisable, it must offer a thick description of its context. Although I will attempt to represent a thick description, but generalisability is not my key focus in this study. This complied with Lincoln and Guba's (1995, p. 316) claim when they state that "it is not the researcher's task to provide an index of transferability...researchers should provide sufficiently thick data for readers to determine whether transferability is possible".

One of the main problems with qualitative study involves the subjectivity of the researcher in interpreting observations and drawing conclusions which may compromise the study validity (Bernard, 2000). In order to guard against subjectivity, Yin (1994) suggests that qualitative researcher(s) must use multiple sources when collecting evidence, establish a chain of evidence, and develop transcripts of interviews in order to reduce claims of subjectivity. In this study several data collection techniques and sources were utilised. I also deployed a

prolonged engagement with the participants and by requesting to review the transcripts, videotape, and analysis with them (i.e., the three teachers observed). The aim was to ensure that the meaning they communicated was correctly captured and that my possible imposition of bias views of data was minimised. By so doing the study's credibility and that of the research findings were established which solidify the study's reliability and objectivity (Yin, 1994, p. 337). In addition, I also applied the use of extensive probing throughout the interview process to circumvent possible subjective interpretations as another way to limit bias interpretations infiltrating the analysis of data.

Reliability refers to the stability over time, the consistency through repetition, and the extent to which findings can be replicated or reproduced by another inquirer in same context (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). The reliability of an investigation must relate to the credibility of the findings as well as to determine whether the evidence and the conclusions can stand up to scrutiny (Welman *et al.*, 2005). A reliable measure has to yield the same outcome if tested more than once as such in qualitative study the researcher is concerned with the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the data (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). The careful exploration of the methods of data collection and use of multiple methods to gather data strengthened the study's reliability. Reliability also was enhanced as both interviews and observation seek to explore communication and language challenges in Grade 4 isiZulu/English classrooms and these impacts on policy. On a pragmatic level, I was as objective as possible when conducting the interviews knowing that my opinions and attitude towards the phenomenon may allow respondents to speak freely from their interpretation about the core characteristics of the study.

### **3.9 Conclusion**

This chapter has provided the reader with the research methodology and design of this study as to how various instruments were used. The data collection techniques adopted by the researcher as explained in this chapter indicated that an in-depth and rich data were gathered to answer the research questions. The next chapter presents the study's findings.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents data and analyses results derived from pre-observation interviews, observations and post-observation interviews conducted with three teachers whose detailed attributes are described below. The main objective of the study was to investigate the challenges that emerge as Grade 4 learners their teachers negotiate transition from isiZulu to English as LOLT, and to explore the implications of these challenges on education and language policy development. The findings are qualitatively presented in themes and sub-themes which are influenced by the research questions stated in chapter 1. The research questions investigated in the study were:

- How do teachers and learners negotiate the transition from isiZulu to English as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) in Grade 4?
- What are the implications of the language (s) of teaching and learning used in Grade 4 mainstream schools on language policy development?

This chapter is organised into three sections. Section One presents the detailed analysis of the pre-observation interviews with six teachers. The six teachers who were interviewed include: Nomali, Dlamini, Nothando, Ntokozo, Dudu and Zuma. Section Two analyses observation results beginning with a brief description of personal details and attributes of the three teachers observed. The three teachers who were observed and interviewed after the observations are Ntokozo, Nomali, and Dudu. Section Three presents post-observation interview results as conducted in the three schools.

#### 4.2 SECTION ONE: RESULTS FROM PRE-OBSERVATION INTERVIEWS WITH THE SIX TEACHERS

This section presents findings of the interviews conducted with the six teachers from the three schools. This responds to the sub-research question: what are the different purposes of using isiZulu and English in Grade 4 classrooms? The pre-observation interviews were designed to explore teachers' perceptions and experiences of classroom language use and challenges, as well as the implications of these challenges to language policy development (see attached

appendix 7). The interviews aimed to generate data in order to answer the two key research questions as stated above in this chapter. Focus was concentrated on finding the purposes of using particular language(s) during lessons, communication challenges, and the implications these have for language policy development.

#### **4.2.1 Purposes of using IsiZulu and English**

The teachers responses indicated three purposes for using isiZulu in their classrooms namely for clarification, checking understanding, encouraging participation and for building relationship between learners and the teacher.

#### **4.2.2 Clarifications**

All the six interviewees stressed that most learners in their classrooms were unable to communicate in English and switching to isiZulu for clarification became imperative to ensure effective communication, facilitation of deeper understanding and encouragement in class participation. The testimonies provided by the teachers included the following:

*Zuma: I use isiZulu as well as allow the learners to use isiZulu so that I can make things easy for them. My intention is usually to break things down for them (i.e., the learners) in isiZulu, otherwise you not sure whether they understand and grasp the topic or concepts being taught.*

*Dudu: but while teaching in English I still have to explain things in isiZulu because the learners are not used to English. For instance, if am teaching with about a story I always try to translate in Zulu so that they will understand....*

From the responses the teachers highlighted that teaching comprises explaining and mediation of knowledge between them and learners.

#### **4.2.3 Checking for understanding**

All participants mentioned the point that they used isiZulu to check for understanding in Grade 4 classrooms and to make sure that no learner is left behind. Similar to the responses of the previous the interviewees these three teachers said:

*Dlamini: I often check for understanding by asking them: Uyaqonda? Of which literary translated to “do you understand?” after each explanation in Zulu I*

*even go further inquire from them (learners) using Zulu interjections like Uqondani? Or Kuthimani? Meaning “what do you understand?” basically to find out and check the level of their understanding.*

*Nothando: I found it easier to use nearby similarities in isiZulu to explain certain concepts that have no isiZulu equivalent. I do allow them because it is my way of ensuring that I understand their misunderstandings as well as confusions on the subject under discussion.*

The responses reveal that before teachers proceed further with teaching they first need to establish whether or not learners understand. If learners do not understand what is being taught the teachers adapt their teaching or code switch so that learners may understand them before the teachers proceed further.

#### **4.2.4 Encouraging participation**

All the six teachers interviewed acknowledged that they use isiZulu, as well as allowing their learners to speak isiZulu during lessons generally to encourage classroom participation especially when the learners need to ask questions, conversing with peers and/or in their groups.

*Ntokozo: Even if you force them (i.e., the learners) to use English they are still going to discuss in isiZulu, if you scold them the majority will not partake in the discussion. So, it is better to allow them do it (referring to speaking of isiZulu by the learners).... They do it simply because they are comfortable with their mother tongue and they can converse quicker using isiZulu. I also allow them to ask questions in isiZulu, though a few learners often attempt with lot of difficulty to ask their questions in English, which usually takes time for them to articulate what they want to say.*

*Dudu: When these learners are together their communication in IsiZulu emerged spontaneously and they evidently thought more clearly, as well as articulated themselves more confidently and easily in isiZulu. So for me it is more productive to allow them converse in isiZulu during group discussions....*

Pedagogically, active learner participation is an indicator of learners' understanding and assimilation of the new ideas. It is also evidence that learners understand as participatory methods of teaching are highly encouraged in the curriculum.

#### **4.2.5 Relationship building**

Another issue raised by the interviewees is the use of isiZulu to create rapport and understanding between the teacher and learners. Using the learners' mother tongue appears to be one way of helping the learners to relax and feel comfortable in the presence of the teacher and other learners. Similar to the responses from other interviewees Nothando aptly asserts:

*Sometimes a learner or learners portrayed signs of being afraid or sad to speak in the classrooms. In dealing with situation like this I usually use isiZulu to show the particular learner(s) that I empathise with whatever his/her problem might be. By so doing I would be able to find out what their problems are otherwise you may be teaching but with nobody listening or understanding what you are saying....*

*Dudu: a teacher who cannot speak the learners' mother tongue would not be able to teach in Grade 4, he or she may find it difficult to establish proper interpersonal relationship with the children. Without a great deal of understanding between the teacher and learners, the children simply would not be responsive.... It is obvious that they all speak isiZulu in their homes as they play with other children, as such talking to them in isiZulu helps to make them feel at home....*

The teachers understood that in a learning context both parties must develop a good working relationship. Having a good relationship with learners is a quality of good teachers. Good teachers have a passionate desire for the success of their learners. Teachers can develop a good relationship in a variety of ways such as language and communication.

#### **4.2.6 Introduction and teaching of new concepts**

Teachers in responding to the question: *How do teachers use English and isiZulu to introduce and teach new concepts?* The rationale was to investigate further why teachers use a particular language in teaching new topic/concepts, as well as to understand their language combination pattern.

#### **4.2.7 Code-switching in English and IsiZulu**

Except for Nomali all other interviewees acknowledged that they combine English and isiZulu in introducing new concepts.

*Zuma: Let me start by saying that it is impossible to teach new concepts exclusively in English to isiZulu-speaking learners especially in Grade 4....So what happens is that I do what is called “code-mixing” and “code-switching;” which means explaining concepts as much as I can in both languages (i.e., English and isiZulu) just to make sure that they (i.e., the learners) grasp the content and concept being thought....*

*Dlamini: I read out the concept in English from the text but one way of or method of making sure they understood these concepts is to code-switch rather than given them the entire lesson in English...you can see it, they (learners) respond better once you say it in Zulu...I use about 70% of Zulu.*

*Nomali: it is important to teach these learners in English so that they get used to it.... We not are helping them by speaking Zulu to them in the class....*

These teachers also agreed that they often use more isiZulu than English for teaching in Grade 4 classrooms although it was generally unclear whether the teachers can distinguish between “Code-switching” and “Code-mixing”.

#### **4.3 Challenges that occur in Grade 4 classrooms**

The teachers were asked the following question: *What challenges are faced by educators in teaching English and Life Orientation when using English as LOLT in Grade 4 classrooms?* The aim was to let teachers talk about their experiences as they teach in Grade 4 classrooms, all the interviewees mentioned learners’ language-related challenges such as limited understanding, slow articulation, low participation and performance, misunderstanding and pronunciation problem, and psychological distress.

##### **4.3.1 Learners’ limited ability to understand English**

One general point raised by interviewees concerning communication and language problems was the slow and limited ability of Grade 4 learners in grasping of the contents being taught.

The extent to which this translates into problems for the teachers is however apparent from their responses.

*Nothando: that DoE requires these learners to be taught in isiZulu all through their foundation Phase and then suddenly shift to English at Grade 4 is a challenge for me because they don't understand English at all; it makes the lesson very slow and boring. The effort in trying to get them (i.e., learners) grasps the content in itself is exhausting....*

*Dlamini: in most case this (making sure they grasp the concept) is a very slow process and can be frustrating if you are not a very patient teacher or have no special training in handling such situation....*

In the above responses teachers revealed that the shift from the LOLT used in the Foundation Phase to English in the intermediate phase is a challenge. The exclusive use of English leads to misunderstandings. The teachers attempt to make learners understand or grasp concepts by using isiZulu.

#### **4.3.2 Low participation and performance**

The issue of low participation and performance were generally raised by the interviewees. Similar to the responses of other interviewees Ntokozo and Dudu said:

*Ntokozo: As a teacher trying hard to teach, I often found that some learners cannot participate in English even in their group discussion....same applies to their class performance...you may explain everything to them in Zulu but they cannot write or speak English so at the end of the day they will still fail during assessment .*

*Dudu: they do not perform well academically as you and I know that these learners have been taught in isiZulu all through their Foundation Phase and even to this moment...it is unrealistic to expect them to perform. They must know the basics in English and a bit of isiZulu so that they can cope during the lesson....*

Teachers in the responses above confirm that language constitutes major hindrance towards academic performance, progress, and intellectual development of EFAL learners.

Consequently, the issue of how language is being used as LOLT and for teaching and learning purposes become particularly important in multilingual societies.

#### **4.3.3 Problem of pronunciations and misunderstanding**

The problems of pronunciation and misunderstanding which, according to the interviewees frustratingly drag the lessons, is very significant in responses obtained from of all the six teachers interviewed. Synonymously with to the responses from other interviewees Ntokozo noted:

*There are some words they (learners) are often misunderstood and even pronounce or have it written in isiZulu instead of in English language. The word like “khipa” (which in isiZulu translated to mean—to put out or move) is often used by learners in place of the English word “keep”...you as a teacher keeps on correcting the same thing each day and it is frustrating....*

*Nothando: Pronunciation is always a problem because these are Zulu-mother-tongue speaking learners. They tend to mix English pronunciations with isiZulu. You do not know whether to start correcting them or to first figure out what they want to say...besides this continually dragging the lesson. I really get bored sometimes as well as the learners because the lesson becomes really slow and too slow.*

Teachers identified a problem of words that seemed to have similar pronunciation but in different languages. Thus, the failure to distinguish English words from words in isiZulu, and mispronunciation slows the pace of teaching and causes distortion of vocabulary.

#### **4.3.4 (S)Low articulation**

The interviewees all raised the issue of Grade 4 learners’ (s)low articulation of their responses in the classroom which also manifest in the way these learners write. The teachers agreed that this problem is most noticeable when the learner(s) are asked question in the class. In line with the responses of other interviewees Dudu, Nomali and Nothando said:

*Dudu: These learners begin with conceptualising the answer in isiZulu but this is only if they understood the question. If they manage to articulate the answer they then grapple with translating the answer back to English and this process*

*takes a lot of time as the learner lacks sufficient English vocabulary to designate his or her response. This also happens in the way they write....*

*Nomali: the problem these learners have is when you ask them question in English they start to think the answer in isiZulu. For instance, if you ask the learners say--how many times should they brush their teeth daily? The learners will start now getting the facts in isiZulu, when the facts are here regardless of whether they are complete or incomplete...the learners has a task of translating these vague perceptions they have into English before they could respond. Sometimes this process takes long and I have to wait....*

*Nothando: ...not only on oral tasks do these happen, when it comes to written English, when the learner has to express him/herself this same problem comes....As a teacher you read what the learner wrote and you realise that their English are a direct translation from isiZulu. You also realise that you have multiple tasks to perform; first you have to correct grammar, spellings, sequence and the meaning of the written task...*

Learners depend on their mother tongue to understand English. They translate messages from the mother tongue to English. Pacing of lessons becomes very slow because of the process involving translation. Teachers do not give room or time for this cognitive activity.

#### **4.3.5 Psychological distress**

An issue of emotional distress was another general concern raised by the interviewees. According to interviewees' synonymous responses the causes of this problem may differ from one learner to another and are often strongly linked to psycho-socio, and economic problems. Dlamini thus remarked:

*When learner(s) look moody or grumpy it affects the whole class if you don't deal with it as a teacher... when I question him/her and then you may find out that he/she is hungry and needed something to eat. Or you may realise that the learner is being abused or ill-treated at home and he/she takes this baggage to school...other times it is that the parents refused to assist the child to complete his/her homework. Some learners may complain they do not have electricity (or equivalent) at home therefore could not do their homework...and so at school he/she is scared....*

Dudu added that: *as a teacher trying hard to teach, I often found that some learners cannot participate in English or isiZulu even when you encourage them to participate they may end up start crying disturbing the whole class. When you inquire from them why they are crying you realise that they are either tired from a long walk to school or they are hungry. Some are missing their late parent(s) and learners in such situations or mood can't concentrate let alone grasp the content and concepts being taught...these situations are not easy to deal with especially if you are not a counsellor or have related training....*

Learning a language is emotional. The teachers' responses above confirm that learners' emotional states are put under a lot of stress at this stage of sharp shift to English as LOLT. Most learners are also affected by external factors.

#### **4.4 Teachers' views towards the Language Policy**

The question posed to the teachers was: *What is your opinion about the policy of using the mother tongue in the Foundation Phase and transition to English as a LOLT in Grade 4?* The aim of the question was to let educators talk and comment on what they think of LiEP.

##### **4.4.1 Need for teaching English from the Foundation Phase**

The interviewees all staged their support for the studying of English to be introduced in Foundation Phase. Like other interviewees Zuma emphasised:

*It does not help not to teach these learners, at least, English alphabets and phonics in Foundation Phase...it is a big challenge for me that DoE insist that these learners be taught in their mother tongue all through the Foundation Phase... in my school and even in other schools some teachers are beginning to use English also in Grade 3.*

Dudu: *really it is a big challenge for me that many Grade 4 learners in my class do not have any basics in English....Learners cannot learn in English if they don't understand English at all and this hampers their personal and academic development thus the quality of education they receive. The policy is*

*not fair if you ask me...the learners must learn English from Foundation Phase.*

Teachers preferred an early introduction of English in the Foundation Phase to prevent some problems of understanding English manifesting in Grade 4. They argue that the current policy disadvantages learners.

#### **4.4.2 Need for teachers to be familiar with policy contents**

The interviewees acknowledged that most teachers are unaware of the policy contents which hinges on implementation. Although the interviewees agree that teachers are often unaware of the policy content, they seem to disagree on the causes of this phenomenon. Some interviewees blame the DoE for its inability to provide adequate training to educate teachers on policy requirements. Others blame teachers for being reluctant and lazy readers of policy documents handed to them by DoE.

*Nomali: teachers do not have good knowledge of the policy contents. For instance, most teachers in KZN don't know what policy requires of them so they just stick to methods they are used to.... If the teachers do not know what they are required to do, even their initiatives will be in error.*

*Nothando: Teachers don't know much about the policies....In fact, the problem I see with DoE is that they won't have—what I would say enough workshops where teachers can discuss these policies. All they do is hand out policy documents to teachers...and majority of the teachers, like their learners, are lazy in terms of reading.*

The points generally raised included the need to teach English from Foundation Phase so as to prepare learners for using English as a LOLT in Grade 4. Lack of appropriate knowledge of policy contents by the teachers, lack of language training and adequate support from DoE are emphasised by teachers.

#### **4.4.3 Need for language training and support from DoE**

The responses revealed that lack of adequate training and support from the government was a common experience in KwaZulu-Natal. All participating teachers felt that they had not received adequate training that would equip them to teach in two languages at this crucial

stage in the learners' development. Sequel to this, teachers felt that they are not competent on the required pedagogy for teaching in Grade 4. Similar to other teachers' views Zuma said:

*There is very little support given by the Department of Education. There is few training here and there... but neither of these trainings is on language use nor specifically for teaching in transition class. DoE assumes we got specialized training from the institution we attended but believe you me, even from the college where I was trained; I received training for teaching in primary level but not for a special class. It is obviously not my fault if the learners are suffering....*

Dudu added that: *During my primary school teacher education we were not trained for a transition class. The trainings given by the DoE follows the same track; that is if there are such trainings or workshops on teaching in a transition class. I think the policy expect too much from us even though we are not well equipped.*

Teachers felt that the Department of Education did not support them and their needs were not prioritised by the DoE. The teachers expressed that they were not equipped to deal with the challenges of the transitional class.

#### **4.4.4 Exclusion of Teachers from the policy-making process**

The interviewees all acknowledged that teachers are often left out during formulation and reform processes of most education policies. In their responses they unanimously agreed that integrating teachers in policy formulation processes from the grassroots remains another way to essentially get teachers involved inactive implementation. But for all the interviewees this has never happened. In agreeing with other interviewees, Ntokozo remarked:

*Oftentimes teachers are not consulted especially from the grassroots when these policies are drafted... and even when these policies were finally made we (referring to teachers) are not provided with adequate platform that may allow us to discuss, learn and familiarise ourselves with the policy requirements. The result of this is that most teachers tend to abandonment and/or loss of interest on a particular policy...*

Nomali added that: *most teachers in South African are unqualified therefore need more training on education policy contents as well as on how best to implement these policies... integrating teachers from the grassroots into policy-making process will increase teachers' awareness about particular policy. Recently there have been frequently changes in curriculum and education policies...and all the teachers get is policy papers handed to them to read....*

At this point the teachers' responses referred to problems encountered which seemed exacerbated by their exclusion from policymaking process.

The pre-observation results can be summarised as follows:

- i. The purposes of code-switching to mother tongue includes:
  - clarification
  - checking understanding
  - encouraging participation
  - for building relationship between
- ii. In introducing and teaching of new concepts teachers combine the use of English and isiZulu.
- iii. The language and communication challenges generally pointed out by teachers include:
  - learners' limited understanding
  - slow articulation
  - low participation and performance
  - misunderstanding and pronunciation problem
  - psychological distress
- iv. Teachers' opinion towards language policy revealed that:
  - the need for Foundation Phase English
  - the teachers have incomprehensive knowledge of the policy contents.
  - there is need for language training and support from DoE
  - there is a need for more inclusion of the teachers into policymaking process.

## 4.5 SECTION TWO: RESULTS FROM LESSON OBSERVATIONS

Classroom observation was used to triangulate responses and claims made by teachers during pre-observation interviews. The observations were aimed towards gaining deeper insight on how teachers and learners negotiate the transition from IsiZulu to English as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) in certain lessons in Grade 4 classrooms. The video coverage is a major form of data collection in the class sections observed. Classroom observation responds to the key research question one: *how do teachers and learners negotiate the transition from isiZulu to English as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) in Grade 4?* The observation findings are presented in themes and sub-themes in the sections below. In some instances where it is necessary participants were quoted verbatim to clarify their perspectives.

### 4.5.1 Profiles of the teacher participants in lesson observations

Although Chapter 3 contains the details about my participants, at this point I would like to reiterate the key features of the three selected teachers whose lessons were observed.

Teachers	Age	Gender	Qualification	Teaching experience in Grade 4	Teaching experience in other grades	Preferred language of teaching
Ntokozo	38 years	Male	B.Ed.	8 years	3 years	English and isiZulu
Nomali	41 years	Female	PGCE & TESL	6 years	11 years	English
Dudu	36 years	Female	Diploma & B.Ed	5 years	9 years	English and isiZulu

### 4.5.1 The observed practices of using the LOLT

A total of six lessons were observed. Each teacher was observed twice when teaching English and LO. The analysis of the teacher's use of language in six lessons observed in selected schools revealed that language alteration or code-switching among Grade 4 teachers was common and usually purposeful. The observations indicated that teachers switched to isiZulu for at least four distinct purposes: (1) to encourage class participation (2) for translation; (3)

for clarification and deepening of understanding; and (4) classroom management (see sections below). While there may have been other purposes, these four appeared to be the most frequent and consistent during the observation.

#### 4.5.2.1 Way of encouraging class participation

The English lesson that was conducted by Nomali who maintained the use of English rather than isiZulu in School B best illustrates the point. Nomali was talking about a *dog* and so she asked the learners: “*what is the spelling for dog?*” At first no one raised a hand, the teacher then insisted for an answer yet no learners volunteered for about 3 minutes. At long last a learner attempted an answer:

- Learner: *wrongly spelled D-O-C.*  
TPB: *Is he right?*  
Learners: *Silence*  
TPB: *Is he right, class?*  
Learners: *No*  
TPB: *Okay, Who can tell us the correct spelling of Dog?*  
Learner: *Dog? (Pronounced as in D-O-CK)*  
TPB: *Yes! Dog! Spell it (the teacher retorted)*  
Learner: *D-O-G*

Then the teacher wrote “dog” on the board and asked learners “*what is a dog?*” The silence continued until after the teacher yelled: “*you have to talk!*” A learner from her seat said “*Inja*” (a word for a dog in isiZulu). The teacher retorted again “*speak English please!*” At this point there was even more silence as learners seem to be more afraid to try or speak out. Then the teacher asked the learners to go into their normal groups of ten, immediately the whole scenario changed as there was noise everywhere in the class. This raised an important concern as well as showed that participation always increased in whenever learners seem freer to speak and make contributions using isiZulu.

In the LO lesson conducted by Ntokozo where he was teaching about animals; he asked learners: what is porcupine? The looks on the learners’ faces indicated that learners lack understanding and could not identify with the word porcupine until teacher Ntokozo code-

switch to mention “*ingungumbane*” which is the Zulu translation of a porcupine; the learners all raised their hands.

Contrary to the interview responses where teachers claimed to use isiZulu and English equally during lessons, the observations showed that isiZulu was predominantly used rather than English during lessons to explain, clarify and simplify concepts. This was evident in the classes conducted by Ntokozo and Dudu in which isiZulu was mostly used to encourage class participation and for effective communication.

#### 4.5.2.2 Translation

Ntokozo, Nomali, and Dudu were observed using isiZulu to translate particular words which the learners appeared not to know or which were clearly beyond the range of their vocabulary. For instance, Dudu during her LO lesson in School C used the word “stubborn.” Sensing a lack of understanding, she backed it up immediately with the isiZulu translation of which the learners can easily identify with than the English word. An extract from the LO lesson conducted by Ntokozo presents a good example of this phenomenon where the teacher feels the need to translate or switch to the mother tongue.

Teacher: *Good morning class. In today’s lesson we are going to learn about a family story.*

(There is a long pause so the teacher intervenes and repeats the statement in the learners’ mother tongue)

Teacher: *esifundweni sethu sanamuhla sizofunda ngemindeni* (In today’s lesson we are going to learn about family story)

Teacher: *Open your workbook page 5; Unit 2 and repeat after me.* (In the book are written English and Zulu names of the respective family members)

**Figure 1.1** (is an Extract from the learners’ workbook)

*Topic: The Family*

Read these words:

Mother:	umama	Sister:	usisi
Father:	ubaba	Brother:	ubhuti
Granny:	ugogo	Baby/child:	Ingane
Grandfather:	umkhulu	Son:	indodana
		Daughter:	indodakazi

(The teacher reads and the learners continued to repeat after her. The teacher after reading the passage for several times turned over to Unit 2 of the workbook where there are fill-in-the-blank-spaces exercises)

Teacher: *who can read with me?* (None of the learners volunteered. The teacher then appointed one learner—Pamela)

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ *is my mother.* (Pamela repeated after her and the teacher retorted)

Teacher: *gcwalisa esikhaleni ngegama lamama wakho* (Fill the space with your mother's name!)

Pamela: *Mary is my mother.*

Teacher: *I have \_\_\_\_\_ sisters* (at this point Pamela was lost)

Teacher: *who else will read with me?*

Teacher: *ubani ofuna ukufunda kanye name?* (The teacher switched to isiZulu).

Meanwhile the significant issue revealed in the above lesson recap is the importance of code-switching in this lesson. The teacher at the key points of her engagement with the learners felt the importance to translate her instructions (or reading in English) to their mother tongue. It was also observed that as the lesson progresses both the teachers and the pupils slip between English and isiZulu as they proceed to make meaning in this lesson.

#### **4.5.2.3 Clarification and deepening of understanding**

The word “lost” was used in an English lesson presented by Ntokozo. He took care to explain the word both in English and isiZulu to make sure that learners understood the word before he asked the learners to make a sentence with the word “lost.” But none of the learners was able to make a sentence with the word. At this point, the teacher deemed it necessary for further clarification to pause to help the learners. This time the teacher made a sentence in English using the same word “lost” and asked the learners to translate and explain the meaning in isiZulu. The teacher asked:

Ntokozo: *what does “I lost my book” mean?*

Learner A: *“Angiyiboni incwadi yami”* (I don't see my book.)

- Ntokozo: *“I was lost in the market”*. Who can translate that?
- Learners: *Silence.*
- Ntokozo: *“Ngabe lokho kusho ukuthi: awuziboni usemakethe?”*  
 (“Does that mean: you don’t see yourself in the market?”)
- Learners: No! (chorused the learners)
- Ntokozo: what does it mean?
- Learner B: *“Ngeke ngibonakale emakethe”* (I cannot be seen in the market)
- Ntokozo: *“Angibonakali” usho ukuthi “Ngilahlekile” Angithi?*  
 (“I cannot be seen” means “I got lost” Okay?)
- Learners: *Yebo!* (Meaning “Yes!” in isiZulu)

The teacher not only managed to clarify the concept “lost” but also seemed to have cleared the possible confusion that may arise in transitive and intransitive use of the word “lost.” Teacher Ntokozo hence assisted the learners to see that English grammar differs from Zulu grammar whilst trying to make further explanations. This learning process may not have been possible without the use of code-switching through mother tongue and this strategy is not available to a monolingual English teacher.

In terms of ensuring that learners understand the concepts being taught, the observations revealed that teacher; Nomali used English synonyms to explain English words, phrases and sentences and barely used their mother tongue. She was often the only one talking while the learners were moping at her. For instance, in LO lesson conducted by Nomali, she asked her learners what they would do if they were lost. There was dead silence which seemed to be suggesting that the learners were confused on what the question was all about particularly given the expressions on the learners’ faces. Even when she rephrased the question (in English) the learners’ response showed that they had completely misunderstood the question:

- Nomali: *could you go to the policeman and tell him that you were lost?*
- Learners: *No-o-o.*
- Nomali: *Why?*
- Learner: *I did not lost.*

Nomali was also observed to often shoot down the learner(s) whenever they speak isiZulu in her classroom. She never bothered to confirm whether what the learner said in isiZulu was related to the task or not, she often rushed them, assuming they were not paying attention. On the contrary, the observation showed that what learners often say in isiZulu relates to the lesson such in a way that sometimes they clarify direction for each other. Often times the Zulu interjections made by the learner(s) provide the answer the teacher was looking for even though the teacher would shun them down. For instance, a learner remarked in English that *an* Elephant is fat, and Nomali agreed. When another learner reiterated in isiZulu, “*ikhuluphele* (so fat)” in isiZulu, that learner was scolded by Nomali.

#### **4.5.2.4 Classroom management**

Lesson observations showed that Ntokozo and Dudu used isiZulu to reprimand their learners especially if they were making a noise, fighting or quarrelling. These teachers used to switch to mother tongue strategically in their classes to keep the learners’ attention focused on the lesson but also used the same language to reprimand them or draw their attention. Generally, increased classroom participation and lesser noisemaking were observed in School A and C where Ntokozo and Dudu used more isiZulu to interact with their learners even in cautioning them. For instance, at School A and during the Life Orientation lesson Ntokozo left the classroom for few minutes talk with a co-HOD who was waiting outside the classroom door. The level of noise increased immediately he left the classroom but from the outside he shouted “*thulan’umsindo!*” (which means: *keep quiet!*). Immediately there was serenity in the classroom. The video coverage showed that Nomali always shouts keep quiet using English to learners who only stop at the thunder of her voice and then continue their murmuring. Unlike in schools A and C where learners have more power and control in terms of how the lessons roll out than just being spectators.

Teachers were often caught up in classroom regulation and they often used isiZulu. IsiZulu was powerful as it achieved serenity in the classroom. The implications of the policy are analysed in the results presented in the subsequent language section.

#### **4.5.3 Implications of the LiEP on the observed classroom practices**

In addition to the challenges pointed out in the interviews with the six teachers mentioned above, the video coverage revealed three language and communication challenges faced by

learners in the selected schools. These challenges include learners' low level of understanding, learners' limited vocabulary and grammar in both in mother tongue and in LOLT (English) and indiscriminate use of code-switching by the teachers.

#### **4.5.3.1 Lack of English vocabulary and low levels of understanding**

The observation of six lessons in school A, B, and C revealed that Grade 4 isiZulu-speaking learners have very limited English vocabulary and grammar. This was another challenge common to Grade 4 learners in the schools observed. It was observed that these learners have difficulty in understanding concepts being taught primarily because they lack the necessary proficiency to comprehend the LOLT as used in the text or by the teacher. For instance, in LO lesson conducted by Dudu in which she employed both the use of isiZulu and English to explain the word "darkness," she used synonyms like "blackout" and "night" but the learners were more confused than ever. The frustrating expression on the teacher's face showed that if it was possible to draw "night" and "blackness" on the chalkboard, she would do so. One learner finally picked up what the teacher was trying to designate after about six minutes of the teacher using other explanations—this time in Zulu. The learner was asked by the teacher to explain the concepts to other learners in Zulu which she did. This however makes the class quite boring as the lessons are often dragged far beyond the schedule.

#### **4.5.3.3 Indiscriminate use of code-mixing in place of code-switching**

Observations also showed that teachers often and unconsciously use code-mixing in place of Code-switching. In most cases, code-mixing occurred frequently and in many instances, as teachers had to use extended explanations in the mother tongue to clarify and explain concepts as well as teaching the content. The sentences below depict teachers' use of code-mixing and were taken from similar patterns of language use as made by each teacher during the lessons in trying to explain things using the mother tongue.

*Ntokozo: (Show picture of a learner sitting at a table with a pencil and paper in front of him, and the teacher said to the learners) "This is Khumbu, ubuya e library and she missed the class lokubhala u ABCD"*

*Dudu: (show picture of a teacher-listener looking at the female learner-reader standing beside him, and the teacher asked the learners) "Ubani lona and what is he doing"*

*(There was no response from learners—the teachers continued) “Who is she and wenzani?”*

The results from classroom observations showed that teachers frequently switch to mother tongue for the following reasons:

- to encourage class participation
- to translate certain concepts to aid understanding
- for further explanation
- to deepen understanding of concepts being taught
- for class regulation and drawing of learners’ attention

ii. The language and communication challenges observed include:

- learners lack of English vocabulary
- learners low level of understanding
- indiscriminate use of code-mixing in place of code-switching by the teachers

#### **4.6 SECTION THREE: RESULTS FROM POST-OBSERVATION INTERVIEWS WITH NTOKOZO, NOMALI AND DUDU**

Post-observation interviews with the three teachers whose lessons were observed aimed to seek clarification about why they used a certain LOLT when teaching Life Orientation (LO) and English in Grade 4 lessons and to allow teachers to talk about their classroom challenges and use of language in their individual lessons. The instruction given to teachers was to select episode(s) each of them would like to talk about during post-observation interviews. The teachers were also told that the episodes to be selected might be:

- moments in which the teacher was in doubt about what next to do;
- moments when the teacher suddenly had an insight about what was going on;
- moments in which the teacher become aware of using language initiative(s) for elaboration, simplification and explanation in the classroom; or
- something the teacher realised that, in retrospect, he/she did not think of at the time.

During the post-observation interview, teachers were also asked questions that required them to express their individual opinion on the current language policy. The aim was to integrate teachers' views thereby minimising the possible imposition of my "biased" ideas on the data.

#### **4.6.1 Teacher Ntokozo**

Teacher Ntokozo selected one episode. The episode revealed the interaction between groups of learners in their discussion group. The class is divided into six groups of five members each a round table discussion group. Each group contains male and female students to ensure group work where learners work together and learn collaboratively with each other. He chose it because according to the video clip the learners in their various discussion groups feel freer, as well as showing an increased confidence to discuss and work together on their own.

When I realised that Ntokozo had selected only one episode and had little to say about the selected episode I decided to ask him more probing questions one of which was aimed at making him elaborate on his chosen episode. When I asked him to explain why he chose the particular episode he responded:

*group learning gives me the opportunities of learning more about learners' interest(s) and needs, their ability to form social relations, enhance communication and the attitudes they have towards each other as well as learners....*

When Ntokozo was asked what in his opinion was the cause of such increased participation in group learning. He said:

*the group learning bridges a possible communication gap that could exist between the teacher and learners due to communication breakdown. Thus, in group learning, the effect of strong speaking anxiety that may engulf learners due to limited proficiency in using LOLT (i.e., English) during lessons is drastically reduced.*

Despite the evidence as shown on the video clip Ntokozo also pointed out that the learners make quicker attempts to consult each other in resolving their lesson task compared to when the teacher was teaching. When asked to clarify what he made out of this scenario, Ntokozo said:

*This for me takes the lesson to another level in which learners talk to each other in their own language regarding the topic which, of course, develops the learners thinking skills; hence, the process in which learners participates in the learning...*

During the interview Ntokozo identified the learners' limited proficiency in English as the root cause of language problems encounter in Grade 4. He said:

*At Grade 4 these learners are not yet proficient even in their mother tongue and even code-switching in isiZulu requires a lot more creativity and hard work from the teacher, otherwise most of them (the learners) cannot still understand.*

Ntokozo suggested that policy should allow learners to learn English from the Foundation Phase. In his words:

*The policymakers need to design a policy that incorporates learning of English, at least the basics, in Foundation Phase. There is also need to make learning of one's mother tongue mandatory until one finishes school. This is how it is done in other countries especially those who use English as the language of instruction.*

Ntokozo's last comment is about policy development. This is a very significant finding because it shows that teachers are not consulted during the policymaking process which needs to be considered because teachers are the primary implementers of the policy. If a policy is not developed through a consultative process involving teachers its success cannot be guaranteed.

Findings from the post-observation interview with Ntokozo could be summarised as follows:

- Teachers not consulted from the grassroots during policy development process.
- Group leaning reduces learners' speaking anxiety.
- Group learning increases class participation.

- Learners' limited background in English vocabulary remains a major contributing factor to language challenges in Grade 4.
- Need for policy to recognise learning of English in Foundation Phase.

#### **4.6.2 Teacher Nomali**

Nomali also selected one episode from the video footage of her English lesson where she was asking questions and the learners were moping at her. I began to deliver the lesson on verbs which is supposed to last for about 50 minutes. Students had their textbooks in which the lesson topic was open in front of them. The teacher described a verb as a doing word. She gave examples and then asked if anyone could describe a verb but there was no volunteer; no hand was raised. Learners seemed to have forgotten what Nomali had taught them. Although at the same time the teacher asked the question most of the learners seemed to be distracted by my presence. Many of them were observed to be busy looking at the video camera. Nomali was concerned about the learners' inability to respond to her question. In her view the incident was a clear indication of the learners' lack of understanding of what was being taught as a result of language difficulty. In speaking further about the episode she stressed that:

*such a situation is frustrating and could be more painful particularly to see learners go through that by themselves.*

When she was asked what she made of the situation, she maintained that to continue teaching these learners in their mother tongue would exacerbate their language problems. She said:

*I really don't think it is a good idea trying to teach these learners in their mother tongue. Teaching them in mother tongue jeopardises their chances of learning English.*

The video clip of Nomali's lessons and observation notes showed that she made a conscious effort to avoid the use of isiZulu in the classroom as she herself also acknowledged during pre-observation interviews. Meanwhile, Nomali was the only teacher in Educator Profile (see attached appendix 7) who described her ability to speak isiZulu as being "poor." Therefore, I decided to throw probing questions seeking clarifications on why she prefers the use of English over isiZulu for teaching, she said:

*I should not waste my time speaking isiZulu...that is their mother tongue!...The reason some of these learners are not following is not just language problem but because sometimes they have problem from home therefore not happy—for instance, if the learner hasn't ate anything and he/she is hungry...*

Despite blaming learners' social problems such as learners coming to school hungry- Nomali also seemed to be convinced that switching to mother tongue does not make any significant in improving classroom participation as she said:

*No matter how much you try, even when you encourage them (i.e., the learners) to speak in Zulu, they still won't participate. You may think they understood what was taught until when you are marking their books, and then you realise that you may have to repeat the lesson....*

It was still unclear whether Nomali's convictions were motivated by her teaching experience or by her limited proficiency in speaking learners' mother tongue. For clarity purposes, I rephrased the question to: what primarily informs your conviction that teaching the learners in English is ideal? She said:

*I am just uncomfortable using Zulu in teaching these learners and am insecure about it knowing that these learners will be assessed in English.....So, for me it is a dilemma.*

When asked to suggest how policy development or policymakers could be used to solve the problem or dilemma as she had described it, she added that

*even when isiZulu should be maintained as LOLT in Foundation Phase, these learners still need to start learning English as part of their literacy studies. Policymakers need to make this happen...and it has to reflect in the curriculum and textbooks, as well as in the teacher training programmes to ensure that teachers are (re)trained on how to teach English in Foundation Phase....*

The post-observation interview with teacher Nomali showed that:

- Though teacher Nomali chose one episode, she discussed some crucial issues such as poverty, hunger, and long distance travelling to school as factors that exacerbate difficulties experienced by ESL learners.
- Her choice of episode was motivated by her concerns for language challenges faced by learners which for her indicate a lack of understanding and evidence of language barrier.
- She is convinced that teaching Grade 4 learners in English is ideal.
- Also convinced that switching to mother tongue makes no significant meaning in helping the learners.
- Identified code-switching and only-English assessment as a dilemma that calls for a new view of the language policy.
- Advocated for Grade English to be taught from Foundation Phase.

#### **4.6.3 Teacher Duda**

Teacher Duda nominated two episodes. The first episode was taken from her English lesson where she was asking the learners the difference between proper nouns and common nouns. The learners were unable to remember what she had just said in the classroom. The class was supposed to be a revision class for an upcoming test. According to the learners' workbook they have written homework on the same topic. When Duda was asked for her views on the root cause of this problem she said that giving these learners a classroom exercise and homework were still not enough to get them to remember what was being taught. The learners are likely to remember the part of the lesson that was taught in mother tongue than in English... using more of mother tongue in teaching may help to deepen understanding of the lesson. Similar to Nomali's views above, Duda affirmed also that such a situation represents low understanding of the concepts and can be linked to learners' lack of background in English.

The second episode Duda chose to talk about is from her LO lesson. She emphasised that to use more of isiZulu than English in the class benefits the learners more. The reason she gave was that the learners are more likely to remember, and to understand the concept explained in their mother tongue than in English. She added that giving these learners class exercise and

homework are not enough in getting them to remember what was being taught. They need further explanations in their mother tongue.

*These learners need further explanations of the concepts in Zulu....They are likely to remember the part of the lesson that as taught in mother tongue. Though many of them will still fail during assessment given that they cannot write or meaningfully express their thoughts in English....*

Nomali maintained that African learners especially those from disadvantaged rural areas were yet not ready to be taught in English in Grade 4. Thus to enhance comprehension and vocabulary development teaching these learners require special technique(s) such as regular translation in mother tongue, and proper use of code-switching. She remarked:

*Without taking up a lot of class time I translate in isiZulu...really unplanned translation can be effective especially when the goal is to enhance comprehension rather than vocabulary development. Selective translation may be expedient at this stage and at the detriment of the learners....So I translate every word the learners found to be strange.*

When I asked her how she would like the policy or policymakers to incorporate her classroom practices in developing a suitable language policy, she succinctly suggests:

*We can learn from countries like Nigeria and Zimbabwe...if the Language of learning and teaching, as well as assessment remains English from Grade 4 level, then, the policymakers must design a policy that should mandate every learner to learn his/her mother tongue until he/she finishes school i.e., from Grade R to 12.*

In her explanations teacher Dudu further asserts that for language policy to be effective it has to possess qualities that can respond directly to language and communication challenges that emerge in teaching African language-speaking learners in English as LOLT.

*Dudu: Like I said earlier, African learners who are schooling in mainstream schools have limited background English as well as vocabulary and grammar....for the language policy to achieve its developmental objectives in this effect...it has to be able to guarantee quality education as well as access to*

*LOLT for every South African child. It must also spur teacher skills training and professional development; as well as incorporate teacher participation in its reform process....It must capacitate teachers in implementing curriculum policies, as well as in coping with teaching in both English and mother tongue especially in transition classes.*

The post-observation interview with Dudu can be summarised as the follows:

- Teacher Dudu chose two episodes and said little about the episodes both on language challenges learners experience in her house.
- She believed that switching to mother tongue aids learners' comprehension and vocabulary.
- She was convinced that African learners from disadvantaged areas are not yet ready to be taught in English in Grade 4.
- Convinced that teaching in Grade 4 requires special technique(s) which includes regular mother-tongue translation of concepts being taught and proper code-switching.
- Unless the language policy responds to language challenges confronted, guarantee quality education and access to LOLT to African learners it cannot claim to have achieved its developmental objectives.

#### **4.6.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has presented the results emanating from the pre-observation interviews, observations, and post-observation interviews as conducted in the selected schools. Chapter 5 presents the interpretation and discussion of the results in Chapter 4.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter interprets and discusses the results as presented in the previous chapter. The discussion of results is categorised into three phases namely: pre-observation interviews, classroom observations, and post-observation interviews and are discussed and correlated with the relevant literature reviewed in Chapter 2. The discussion attempts to unravel teachers' understandings of how their work is a mirror of policy in terms of how policy development impacts on implementation as they negotiate the transition from IsiZulu to English as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) in Grade 4.

#### 5.2 Discussion of Pre-observation Interviews

The themes identified in the teachers' responses during pre-observation interviews indicated that the teachers frequently switched to isiZulu primarily to ensure clarification, checking understanding, encouraging class participation, and building of classroom relationship. However, the teachers did not mention a specific purpose for which they used English in the classroom. This was very surprising because English is the language they ought to use as a LOLT. Seemingly isiZulu was the dominant LOLT. This practice endorsed views of the National Centre for Curriculum and Research Development which indicates that:

code-switching has been observed as a main linguistic feature in classrooms where the teacher and the learners share a common language", even though they have to use an additional language for learning (in this case the English language), the teacher in his/her discretion applies code-switching in the learners' language as a form of scaffolding (2000, p. 68),

Although it was difficult to ascertain from the pre-observation findings whether the switch to mother tongue was code-switching or code-mixing as it is clearly distinguished in the study's literature review (see Chapter 2). Lesson observations discussed in the next section made it clearer that teachers often use code-mixing in place of code-switching against the LiEP prescriptions. Thus these teachers seemed ignorant of the difference. The implication is that as teaching strategy the teachers apply the use of code-switching in error, and create more

communication problems for the learners (Baker, 2006; Ayeomoni, 2006). This is a clear indication that teacher capacitation is low. It is therefore one of the implications for teacher development that teachers become well versed about these linguistic tools such as code-switching and code-mixing and language alternation which they often use in their classrooms without a clear understanding and meaning

The fact that teachers did not seem to know why they use English in the class is another indication of low teacher capacitation and need for teacher development. For instance, when they were probed about the purposes of using English—some teachers said that “English is a medium of instruction which is also used for assessment.” This response showed that teachers simply saw themselves as implementers of the official policy but fell short of showing the dilemma they face when they teach through code-switching and yet assessment is conducted in English. The teachers who were interviewed on policy development issues also had very little to say about how a policy might contribute or not contribute to development. Some of them gave very “simplistic” responses and were unable to explain further when asked probing questions. This may be attributed to teachers’ limited awareness of policy related issues and lack of capacitation. In their responses however the teachers saw themselves rather as policy implementers not as developers. Thus, they felt excluded and cannot own the curriculum policies of which they are the primary implementers. Pretorius and Machet (2004) believes teachers are key actors in development and implementation of education policies and must be empowered to play that role. Without the teachers’ engagement on the policy formulation development might be inhibited.

The question of how teachers’ competence in mother tongue impacts on their classroom interactions could not be determined through the pre-observation interviews results. However, local and international studies conducted by Makoe (2007), DoE (2008) and Cummins, (2003) showed that teachers need to be proficient speaker of learners’ mother tongue, as well as English to meaningfully teach Grade 4 learners especially in mainstream schools Language is a social and educational phenomenon. During lesson observations focus was concentrated to find out how the teacher’s competency in isiZulu impacts on the classroom interaction. The finding from Nomali’s lessons in relation to Ntokozo and Dudu reveals shows that when communication through language is messed with proper learning cannot take place. Hence, education happens is a social phenomenon within social contexts. Therefore the development of language and educational policies should be responsive to the

social contexts and development where learning happens, and must include extensive teacher skills training (Heugh, 2007).

The responses from the six teachers interviewed indicated that they needed language training focused on teaching Grade 4 learners with English as second-language. The literature reviewed in Chapter two emphasizes that in South Africa the Curriculum (2002) and LiEP (1997) endorse as well as support the use of code-switching for teaching and learning to ensure meaningful instruction. This implies that lack of proper knowledge and use of code-switching by the teachers will continue to hampered curriculum policy implementation and the quality of education learners receive in their classrooms. Meanwhile, the unheard teachers' voices to policy development seemed to be captured through their responses when they indicated that current policy does not allow learners to learn the LOLT and hence they have to use code-switching. This showed ambivalence in the teachers' understanding how to use code-switching in the classroom merely as intervention but not necessarily as the medium for teaching throughout the day or compliance to the policy.

The findings also indicated that due to language challenges some learners tend to be reserved or less participatory in the lesson. The study conducted by Du Plessis and Naude (2003) shows that when this happens, the affected learners also suffer all sort of frustration, social isolation, and disciplinary problems. This may also imply that language difficulties experienced by these learners, as revealed by teachers in this study, may have impact on the rate of primary school dropouts in most South African schools. According to Hunt (2008), learner's limited access to LOLT in the early years of learning can influence dropout rates. Similarly, Morrow, Jordaan and Fridjhon (2005) stressed that learners limited proficiency in English leads to difficulty of expressing themselves, while the confusion from not understanding instructions, contributed to a lack of (self) confidence and an unenthusiastic motivation. Thus ensuring that teachers are trained to use local language in the early grades to teach would mean better understanding for children starting school, thereby reducing the likelihood of their dropout due to lack of academic progress.

The reason given by teachers for switching to mother tongue seems to reflect their conviction that the learners are not ready to be taught in a second language. According to the studies literature review (see Chapter 2), this is synonymous with the claim made by Coelho (2004), Minskoff (2005) and Heugh (2007) that the children need strong foundation in their mother

tongue which would serve as basis for future learning in second language. This has implication for subsequent policy development and reforms in South Africa and should be deliberated upon by policymakers and developers. Thus to get education right in this country, we need to get the language policy right!

Teachers in this study emphasized that most learners were unable to concentrate and participate in during lessons due to socially related problems that include hunger, lack of understanding of LOLT, not being supported by home circumstances, and tiredness from a long walk to school. These are serious issues particularly with disadvantaged and rural schools in South Africa. In the study conducted by Mc Ewan (2007), some teachers in ESL classrooms believe that learners are incapable of meeting academic standards not only because of limited English proficiency, but also due to issues related to poverty, long distance travel to school, low ability and/or lack of motivation. Apparently, a lot has been done already by the government in collaboration with school authorities in providing food and transportation for learners in rural areas but more need to be done to ensure such initiatives work efficiently and inclusively.

One crucial point raised by the teachers is that learners should at least be taught English phonics and the letters of the alphabet in their Foundation Phase. Teachers' response showed that some mainstream schools teach English to learners in Foundation Phase as an attempt to bridge language challenges that emerge during transition in Grade 4. Conversely, policy that emerging from implementers' practices is considered to be "bottom-up"—meaning that such policy emanates right from the grassroots and has already been in practice though informally by implementers. According to Weimer and Vining (2005) most bottom-up-made policy models are likely to enhance implementation especially where implementers own the policy.

Teachers also specified their limited awareness of the policy contents. The onus lies on DoE to conduct workshops and training to familiarize teachers with the policy contents. This suggests that teachers need as much assistance and support as they can get from the government and policymakers that includes curriculum adjustment and training of teachers. The Department of Education (2008) report indicated that most language teachers in the Intermediate Phase did not receive training on material development, and the majority of these teachers are not language teachers; therefore they need in-service training on the

language use (DoE, 2008). Grade 4 teachers need to be more resourceful, and trained readily to handle language challenges associated with transition classes (see Uys *et al.*, 2007).

The teachers in this study expressed concerns of being left out during reform processes and making of most education and curriculum policies as it appeared on schools' LOLT policies. There is a need for teachers to be consulted from grassroots level when the policies—especially curriculum policies—are formulated. As expounded in the study's literature review, the curriculum implementation plan overlaps with its design given that implementation significantly depends on the quality of initial planning and the precision to which the plan is executed. The four factors that determine the nature of policy design and implementation include co-option of key actors, ensuring adequate communication, sufficient support, and the implementers' willingness to co-operate (see Rogan & Grayson, 2003; Onwu & Mogari, 2004; Shower *et al.*, 2009). The question of how to persuade teachers to implement a curriculum requires rigorous consideration of why some teachers opt for developing curriculum while others do not. According to Cochran-Smith and Lytle (cited in Shower *et al.*, 2009), some are more likely to implement curriculum which they own as primary participants to its development or reform.

Dole (cited in Rogan and Grayson, 2003) describes curriculum generated out of classroom practice into formalised pedagogy as 'enacted' and 'experienced' curriculum. Such curriculum changes and adjustment breed consensus adoption as it incorporates 'mutual adaptation' of both developers and learners (Showers *et al.*, 2009, p. 125). Thus, the curriculum implementation purposes are optimised due to joint creation effort. The key players of curriculum implementation can include learners, teachers, administrators, consultants, state employees, university professors, parents, lay citizens and political officials interested in education (Rogan & Grayson, 2003). The interaction process among participants requires an adequate measure to ensure that expected implementation outcome is realised and not hijacked by dominant persons (politicians). Actors cluster participation may prolong implementation but it allows proper concession to context and culture.

Teachers also expressed how inadequate support from the government impedes the process of teaching and learning in mainstream schools. To facilitate implementations, curriculum designers need to provide necessary support for their recommendation, curricula innovations or modifications. Rogan and Grayson (2003) stated that the broad indication of innovation

support falls within the category of physical resources, alliance, capacity building and financial support. There is a need to build self-confidence among those affected; such support involves sustained in-service training or staff development and mobilisation of teachers' voices.

Shawer *et al.*, (2009) suggests that there is a need for a trusting relationship to be built among parties involved in implementation between administrators and teachers. Alliance and support are created leading to maximisation of implementers' services. Onwu and Mogari (2004) showed that systematic workshop, evaluation of teachers and principals by service trainers or support officers, performance incentives and provision of materials can boost teachers' enthusiasm, confidence and support. Partnership and alliance among implementation participants lead to gaining of local knowledge and recommendation requisite for enacting created curriculum or its reform (Shawer *et al.*, 2004).

### **5.3 Discussion on Classroom Observation Results**

The result of classroom observations from the three mainstream schools indicated that teachers frequently switched to mother tongue for the following reasons: to encourage class participation, to translate certain concepts to aid understanding, for further explanation, to deepen understanding of concepts being taught, and for class regulation. The language and communication challenges observed include: learners' lack of English vocabulary, learners' low level of understanding, and indiscriminate use of code-switching by the teachers. These problems had adverse implications for learners' intellectual and personal development that leads to socio-economic impediments of the learners who study in mainstream schools. Canagarajah (1999) argues that schools that teach (in) a language associated with a higher socio-economic status (English), in effect, provide better opportunities for those who study in those schools. Language is a form of linguistic capital. Linguistic capital can be defined as one's fluency, expertise and comfort in a language which is used by groups that possess economic, social, cultural and political power and status in local and global society (Bourdieu, 1991). These circumstances severely limit teachers' work and are also an impediment to development especially when development, upward mobility and social capital are all encoded in a language which many have limited knowledge and understanding. Teachers and learners need development through policies and practices that promote development.

Over-population, non-spacious and poorly ventilated classrooms, and the lack of furniture were identified as some learners were observed to be kneeling down when they were writing due to the lack of a sufficient number of desks. Their books were placed on top of their school bag or on the bare floor. These schools as described in Chapter 3 are seriously challenged in terms of both human and material resources. A study conducted by Maswanganye (2010) showed that under-resourced schools always find it very difficult to operate optimally in NCS. Schools without well-ventilated and spacious classrooms with enough seats and desks for learners convenient cannot create a conducive environment for effective teaching and learning. During observations I noticed that over-population and overcrowding severely militate against the use of appropriate teaching and learning practices. With regard to the LOLT teachers are forced to use code-switching in order to teach within the transmission modes of teaching. They resort to using a language that will be understood while trying to reach many learners at the same time. Under such conditions learning is seriously compromised and teachers spend their day doing only minimal teaching and faced by the language problem they use the language that learners can understand for just keeping them busy. Learning and development are compromised seriously through the lack of responsiveness.

In all the observed lessons the common resources used were mostly workbooks not textbooks. A workbook differs from a learners' book. A workbook partially gives learners some practice of what should be covered in the learners' book. Teaching using only a workbook is not the best way of teaching a language as it happened in the observed lessons. For instance, Teacher Ntokozo like other teachers was observed using a workbook when teaching in class. This may be an indication of teachers' preference for workbook over textbooks, or those available textbooks are either insufficient or obsolete. During Ntokozo LO lesson most learners were observed to be sitting without a desk so that their exercise books were placed on their laps though these learners appeared to have adequate stationeries. Lack of resources, learning materials and physical materials in mainstream schools in South Africa remains a great concern for education and development. There was also a general lack of language teaching materials in African languages arising from very little attempt by the government to encourage writing of books in African languages (see Pretorius & Mampuru, 2007; Makoe, 2007).

The analysis of video recordings also captured the fact that these workbooks are under lock and key in various classrooms which also indicated the lack of functionality in the schools. Recent studies conducted in South African schools showed that there are no well-resourced libraries in most mainstream schools (South African Journal of Education, 2009). In this study only School C, among the three participating schools, has a library and the three schools all lack printed books in isiZulu for the classes beyond Grade 3. According to a study conducted by Pretorius and Mampuru (2007), only 27% of the schools in South Africa have libraries. Most of those schools with libraries are still seriously challenged with regards to material and human resources.

The observation revealed that there were very few charts displayed on the classroom walls of the selected schools. The conditions such as these cannot encourage learners in terms of vocabulary building, reading and language learning. According to Wagner, Andrea and Kante (2007), “print-rich classrooms” facilitate vocabulary building. Learners who are exposed to a print-rich learning environment tend to be curious and try out the new words displayed on the wall or in the text. Words accompanied by pictures and concrete items, such as labelled chairs, tables, windows, doors and books inspires learners in their early years of language learning (Makoe, 2007). In schools A, B and C educators appear not to be used to teaching with charts since none was provided. These educators neither improvise teaching aids nor did they try to make classroom colourful, they just teach even though the learners are the ones losing. According to Wagner, Andrea, and Kante (2007), learners enter school with differences in vocabulary and ‘print-rich classrooms’ enhances vocabulary building. But if these learners are not exposed to an educative conducive environment, socio-economic status and other risk factors constrain these learners. Classrooms should be unique, busy, and colourfully decorated with upgraded charts especially at this stage of learning (Makoe, 2007). This is crucial for the learners’ intellectual development as a print-rich classroom may stimulate and captivate learners’ interest in vocabulary and language development.

The teachers who were observed in this study also acknowledged both in the Educator’s Profile (Appendix 7) and in post-observation interviews that they had no adequate training in handling two languages in Grade 4 classes. This situation is exacerbated by a lack of qualified teachers, poor-print environment, and the government’s inability to provide sufficient support to the schools and teachers. Without the provision of adequate skill development and language trainings for the teachers, teaching and learning in lower grade

will remain a difficult task given that most teachers are unqualified while teaching in an ill-resourced environment (Maswanganye, 2010). Brigaman (2002) states that in teaching lower grade learners there is need for effective and qualified teachers, as well as improved learning environment. The term “effective teachers” here refers to innovative and trained teachers who are fully aware of their responsibilities as specified in curriculum policies, and who are creative and willing to apply the curriculum using prescribed teaching methodologies.

The observation also depicted that teachers frequently switched to isiZulu in order to help their learners make meaning of concepts being taught. The observation also indicated that their frequent switching to mother tongue was primarily driven by the impulse to respond to learners’ language and academic needs. For instance, switching to isiZulu enables the two teachers (Ntokozo and Dudu) to effectively manage and direct the lessons, deepen understanding, and encourage class participation. As expounded in the literature review (see Chapter 2), Allecio *et al.* (2004), Setati (2005) and the DoE (2002) affirm that code-switching has the tendency of causing learners to express themselves in mother tongue rather than trying to respond in FAL. Thus the significant issue here is the importance of code-switching. A good example was the English lesson on “Family Story” conducted by teacher Ntokozo (see Chapter 4). At a point in her engagement with the learners she felt the importance to translate her instructions (or reading in English) into mother tongue. It was evident when she raised a question, that learners did not fully understand what was being asked because it was being asked in English. Though the content of the lesson seems to correspond with the learners’ stage of learning but clearly these learners still lack the ability to comprehend the nature of the content being taught. The use of English itself created a barrier to spontaneous responses from pupils since these learners have very little or no background of English. But immediately the questions were translated into mother-tongue, it was clear that learners began to understand what was expected of them and were able to respond to the teacher. This was the positive benefit of using the mother tongue. However, the learners’ proficiency in English as a LOLT remained undeveloped.

The observation of Nomali’s lessons revealed possible difficulties associated with teaching learners with limited background of English by a teacher who did not speak or understand the learners’ mother tongue. According to the video data, when the learners did not understand, Teacher Nomali was often unable to either make herself understand the situation or to get at the source of the learners confusion, probably because of her inability to speak “good” Zulu

even though that is her mother tongue. In South Africa, teaching and learning in English both as LOLT and FAL and as a “foreign” language bring about many challenges as such requires innovative teaching. A local study conducted by Olio (2010) affirmed that innovative teaching requires resourceful and successful teacher(s) Nomali does not seem to fall under such a category. Good and Trophy (cited in Adams & Hamm, 1994) describe a successful and resourceful teacher as a flexible teacher who provides a supportive environment knowing that teaching though a complex undertaking requires time and perseverance. The study observation result revealed how Nomali’s persistence in using more English during lessons resulted in confusion which frequently arose in all her lessons. The reason for the confusion was two-fold: firstly, the learners had difficulty in making themselves understood in the LOLT, which is English. Secondly, these learners lack the basic skills necessary to rephrase what they wanted to communicate in English. In this case, code-switching and mutual understanding between the teacher and learners become imperative in enhancing communication in the classrooms. Thus teaching in Grade 4 classroom of EFAL learners requires the teacher to connect to every learner using strategies that gradually capacitate the learner to take-over learning in a second language by himself or herself (Melton, 2002). It is with this background that having a teacher like Nomali teaching in Grade 4 mainstream schools is problematic. Such a teacher would rather fit in urban schools. It was clear that there was a huge distance and a very little interaction between Nomali and the learners. Firstly, she seemed not to be disturbed whether the learners were making any meaning out of the lesson, or whether it was passing them by completely. Secondly, the picture of instruction derived in Nomali’s class is one of difficulty and frustration. Apart from her “poor” command of isiZulu, she seemed to lack the ability and skills to evaluate and confront the special needs of her learners. Minskoff (2005) asserts that the goals of instructions at Intermediate Phase require that a qualified and hardworking teacher should function as a leader, facilitator, and motivator as well as a mentor who is motivated to teach learners; maintain and produce academic progress; provide for the learner's integration into the mainstream of school and society; validate and preserve in learner’s native language and culture. The first step would be to encourage Nomali to go for relevant training that would enable her concentrate on clear and simple instructions along with an appropriate use of code-switching. Such trainings, if well structured, may benefit teachers who found themselves in similar situation as teacher Nomali.

Observation also revealed the teachers' frequent and unconscious use of code-mixing in place of code-switching. The curriculum (2002) and South African LiEP (1997) promotes multilingualism as well as support the use of code-switching in schools. Except for Nomali other teachers observed in this study were likely to use code-mixing rather than code-switching which create confusion and misunderstanding for the learners as this study indicates. To recap from the literature review (see Chapter 2) the distinction between code-mixing and code-switching, is that code-mixing involves using different languages within an utterance of either a sentence or phrase. Whereas code-switching entails the use of one language at a time to reiterate and/or repeat a word, saying, quote, phrase or sentence that was made in another language. Thus this study's findings showed teachers' indiscriminate use of code-mixing in place of code-switching as problematic.

Such indiscriminate use of code-switching is a clear indication that teachers do not know the distinction/difference between code-mixing and code-switching. The implication of this is that even if the teachers are aware of the policy contents they would still apply this policy in error so long as they are knowingly unable to distinguish between code-switching and code-mixing. In order to turn this around, teachers need to be able to distinguish between code-mixing and code-switching. The teachers also need proper knowledge of how best to apply code-switching which calls for sustained teacher development trainings and workshops in this area.

Apart from the poor-print environment as well as language and communication challenges learners were being confronted with, these learners also were exposed to a lot of code-switching. Even though the switch may be in error, if corrected it will be of great advantage to the current educational system in South Africa. According to Setati (2005), code-switching is a measure teachers cannot do without especially in South African situation also has the tendency of causing learners to express themselves in mother tongue and deepen their understanding of the concept being taught rather than try explaining or answering in FAL.

#### **5.4 Discussion on Post-observation Interviews**

Halliday (1993) cited by Well (undated) emphasises that "Language has the power to shape our consciousness and it does so for every human child by providing the theory that he or she uses to interpret and manipulate their environment."The LiEP drawn from the South African

language policy intended to promote previously disadvantaged (African) languages but this policy also needs primarily to be able to capacitate and develop the learners (Heugh, 2006). Learning in one's mother tongue holds various benefits for the learners which include increased access, improved learning outcomes, reduced chances of repetition and drop-out rates, and socio-cultural benefits (World Bank, 2005). But encouraging these benefits does not have to exclude the fact that African language speakers should learn to speak English and that at some point these learners will end up learning through the medium of English. Otherwise if the policy which is meant to develop, uplift and capacitate the people fails to achieve its developmental goals; the policy ends up "under developing" the people.

The three teachers observed and interviewed in the post-observation interview had challenges in selecting episodes and talking about them with me. Two teachers chose to discuss one episode each but teacher Dudu selected two episodes. Thus the teachers could not and were not prepared to actually engage and talk about their language experiences, and practices in teaching in Grade 4. It is an indication that most teachers do not feel good about their work but would not quit their only means of sustainability. However, these teachers seemed to lack assertiveness and will not speak owing to the fear of either losing their jobs or not being listened to by the authorities. This is important area of development that needs focus, if teachers are to feel good about their own work. The teachers interviewed all complained of being overloaded with schoolwork and family responsibilities, but even when they responded; for instance, on policy issues, they each had very little to say. On realising the teachers' difficulty to discuss their own practices in which none of them were able to select more than two outstanding episodes to voluntarily speak about I decided to prompt them with probing questions during the interviews. The probing questions seemingly differ from one teacher to another but basically had the same purpose. Firstly, as the teacher explained his/her episode(s) I directed probing questions to allow the teacher explain and clarify his/her comments. Secondly, teachers were asked probing questions on their experiences and the challenges encountered during their lessons. Finally, there were questions on language policy development and how in their opinion would the language policy be made to respond to their classroom challenges (see attached appendix 9). This was very difficult, but it was also a telling point about the need for development of confidence among teachers to discuss their own work. This was an opportunity for them to engage with the researcher and with colleagues about how they teach. Unfortunately this was not done.

The level of teachers' knowledge and responses on policy issues were low. The implication of this for policy is that LiEP may be abandoned or not implemented in full if the teachers are unaware or unclear of its contents. This may occur when inadequate workshops and communication channels are provided to train and inform the teachers on what the policy requires of them. In this case, the implication of "bad" communication of policy contents results in creating disparity between the policy specifications and practice. In other words, to achieve favourable outcomes in terms of policy implementation process, certain conditions need to be met. Firstly, clear objectives and implementation procedures have to be established (Weimer & Vining, 2005) in that the teachers must be able to comprehend the logic, language and content of the policy which is to be implemented by them. Otherwise the policy would become what I may describe as "paper policy" of which does not lead to any capacity building of the people and education development. This is an uncomfortable issue which shows that teachers' empowerment is very low given that they cannot engage or reflect unless they are prompted. Teachers need training specifically on use of language in teaching in Grade 4 learners with English as second-language. The literature reviewed emphasizes that in South Africa the Curriculum (2002) and LiEP (1997) endorse and supports the use of code-switching for teaching and learning schools.

The teachers generally acknowledged that they frequently switch to mother tongue to facilitate effective communication during lessons. This though helps the learners in understanding the concept being taught but has implications in mastering the LOLT by these young EFAL learners. These learners as our teachers acknowledged in post-observation interviews have very low English ability as LOLT. The implication of this is that the learners end up learning mostly in their mother tongue, in the classroom where language is mixed even though they are to be assessed in English. Arguably, these learners are being set up so long as they continue to grapple with understanding these two languages which they are yet to master (see Heugh, 2007). Fleisch (2008) and Pretorius (2002) feel strongly that shifting from mother-tongue instruction in the first two to three years of primary school to English as LOLT compounds the language acquisition problem of African learners.

With the exception of Nomali, teachers believe in their perceptions (or misperceptions) of the value of the language assistance rendered by them to their learners make a significant change in teaching their learners in English as LOLT. The observation showed that teachers'

combination of language during teaching is often inappropriate and has adverse implications for learners' cognitive development, and to proper curriculum policy implementation. Language is at the heart of learning; when it is messed up the entire learning objectives crumple. In other word, if language cannot be used for the purpose of learning, it becomes a barrier to, rather than a channel for education (Brock-Utne & Alidou, 2006; Heugh, 2006, 2007).

This study revealed that the use of English language as LOLT in Grade 4 classrooms (of FAL learners) tends to lower the standard of learning outcome. For instance, in terms of cognitive development teachers have to frame their tests to learners' language capability thereby lowering the standard of what the learner is supposed to learn. The classroom discourse is often shallow in meaning and in terms of content. The learners do a lot of repetition and memorisation. As such classroom lessons are often cognitively not challenging such that learners often do little talking, reading and writing in the LOLT (Brock-Utne & Alidou, 2006; Fleisch, 2008; UNESCO, 2005). The learners end up engaging in activities of doubtful pedagogical benefit in a language which they do not know well enough. In order to broaden the language competencies at primary level, appropriate use of LOLT, code-switching and learning of subject terminologies should be achieved simultaneously (Cummins, 2000).

Teachers also expressed a lack of skills which are necessary in handling two languages in Grade 4 mainstream schools due to inadequate training and support by the Department of Education. Alexander (2002) maintains that teacher training is a key need to support proper implementation of the language-in-education policy in a multilingual approach to education as found in the South African context. In South Africa educators need training in bilingualism, second language acquisition, and teaching in a second language (O'Connor, 2003; Du Plessis & Naude, 2003; Du Plessis & Louw, 2008). Teachers teaching in transition classes need special language awareness and sensitivity especially on how different environment context home, community and school affect the learner (Young, 1995). Uys *et al.* (2007) suggests that language-across-the-curriculum should form part of South African educator training courses. The implication of teachers being incompetent in language pedagogy and learners' limited understanding ability in LOLT is that we limit learner's and school achievements. In other words, there is a low ceiling on what learners can achieve or learn in LOLT in which they are incompetent.

Teachers unanimously expressed the fact that they are not properly consulted during policy formulation and development process so that most policy reforms take a top-down approach. Thus including teachers as key agents in curriculum development and planning remain an effective way of enhancing appropriate implementation of curriculum policies in their classrooms. It is also a way of encouraging participation in development. This was affirmed in the study conducted by Carl (2005) and Uys *et al.* (2007); so if teachers were properly involved in curriculum-making process from grass roots level they would own the curriculum which may lead to proper curriculum implementation. Rogan and Grayson (2003) hold the view that for implementation to succeed, those involved must understand the programme purpose, their own roles, and must be willing to interact with other key players. The expected implementation outcome may fail if the complexity of implementation stages is not appreciated rights from the first stage of initial formation and development of particular policy. In South Africa teachers must be consulted as the key people from the grassroots during policy development. Among the implications of a top-down policy approach is that school improvement initiatives are inhibited; even if there are school initiatives, these will have less impact if language places a fundamental constraint on school achievement.

Another salient point raised by teachers in this study is their ignorance of policy contents. This has implications for policy development and implementation in the South African school system. The more teachers show disinterest, ignorance or are not aware of the policy content(s) the more the policy implementation problems are exacerbated. Thus proper implementation of the language policy in schools cannot ensue or be achieved without teachers being fully aware of policy contents and willing to apply those policies in their classrooms. For the teachers to accept particular policy innovation they need to perceive the need, quality, worth and practicability. For instance, a new curriculum policy needs to present teachers with some benefits, security and practical dynamic procedures supported with adequate funding and training (Rogan & Grayson, 2003). Otherwise resources are committed where they cannot do much good so that a great deal of time, money and effort may be spent on designing policies that look brilliant on papers yet the “good ideas” are never translated into classroom reality. For instance, the huge amount of money spent on school improvement is wasted if there is a fundamental, unrecognised linguistic limit on quality.

It was interesting to discover the teachers' were discontented with the impact of the current language policy on teaching and learning in English as LOLT in Grade 4 mainstream schools. The teachers were convinced and also advocated policy reform(s) that will respond effectively to language and communication challenges they experience in teaching English as LOLT in mainstream primary schools.

### **5.5 Implications to Language Policy**

In responding to the second key question of the study: "What are the implications of the language(s) of teaching and learning used in Grade 4 mainstream schools on language policy development?" this section discusses how the use of languages in Grade 4 mainstream schools impact on the language policy.

Although the South African Language in Education Policy (1997) prescribes that teachers should teach in English as LOLT starting from Grade 4 level with mother tongue being used as a bridge to reducing possible language and transition challenges, this study showed that teachers who were observed struggled to implement this policy in their classrooms. Teachers adapted the teaching strategy of frequent switching to mother tongue in order to manage their teaching and in order to help learners make meaning of what is being taught. However, the patterns of switching between English and the mother tongue as made by these teachers while teaching in their classes were found to be incorrect. The teachers were unconsciously using code-mixing rather than code-switching primarily because most teachers could not distinguish between the two strategies. Considering the study findings, adopting the strategy of switching to mother tongue by the teachers is primarily engendered by their desire to respond to learners' language and academic needs and context. The teachers did not switch between languages as a way of adhering to the policy requirements as mentioned above. The teachers regularly switched to mother tongue to ensure that their learners made meaning of what is taught in LOLT. The provision of insufficient trainings and workshops limit the teachers' ability in handling two languages in Grade 4, as well as decreasing the opportunity of acquainting themselves with the policy contents that change frequently. A further implication is that teachers cannot be relied upon to carry out instruction and policy principles which they know nothing about. Teachers also spoke about not being properly consulted during policy making process; rather a top-down instruction is given to them to be executed. Oftentimes the top-down instructions do not correspond to issues of teachers' working context and/or correspond to the learners' needs. The implication of this is that

teachers cannot be held responsible for not implementing policies which do not correspond to learners' needs in the contexts in which teachers are teaching or working.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

This chapter interpreted and discussed the data emanating from the pre-observation interviews, classroom observations, and post-observation interviews as conducted in the selected schools. Also the chapter further linked the empirical results with the concepts discussed in literature reviewed in Chapter 2. The chapter also discussed the implications of the findings to language policy and development. The conclusion and recommendations will be dealt with in Chapter 6.

## CHAPTER SIX

### SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

#### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary, recommendations and conclusion. The section on recommendation highlights the areas of development and possible development strategies. The recommendations underline the need for commitment from the government, and DoE in providing more specialized and language trainings, seminars and workshops for public school teachers. Prior to the conclusion, the chapter also makes suggestions for further study.

#### 6.2 Summary of the findings

Teaching through English as LOLT from Grade 4 has received much attention in African countries. From Grade 4 English is advocated as the LOLT which according to this study creates a great deal of language difficulty, especially for learners in disadvantaged or mainstream schools. The findings revealed that serious language challenges arise in teaching in English to Grade 4 FAL learners due to the learners' limited knowledge of grammar and vocabulary in LOLT. The study has also shown that limited understanding ability, (s)low articulation, poor performance and participation, and psychological distress emanating from learners' social problems are challenges facing ESL learners in mainstream schools. The study further showed that teachers frequently switch to mother tongue to ensure sufficient communication and make meaning in their classrooms.

The study indicated that code-switching is a dominant teaching strategy used frequently by African teachers. Secondly, the teachers are viewed as classroom curriculum-policy implementers not necessarily as developers and important party to policymaking. Most teacher participants of this study affirm that they are not properly consulted during education policymaking process (see chapter 4). Apart from teachers being exonerated and excluded from educational and curriculum policymaking process, adequate training and support were also lacking. These issues are cardinal impediments to language policy development and curriculum policy implementation challenges in South Africa.

This study showed that there are additional facts which contribute to language and academic difficulties experienced by Grade 4 learners from mainstream schools that are related to

development. These factors include learners' socio-economic factors, and a lack of adequate skills and techniques to teach in a second language to second language learners. Teachers teach with enormous resource constraints such as print-rich environment, textbooks, and translated books in native languages. The data revealed that in addition to severe resource constraints faced by mainstream schools, classroom participation is continually jeopardised, as well as hindered by socio-economic obstacles such as hunger, distance travel to school,

This study indicated that teachers scaffold children's learning by using mother tongue and by using code-switching. However, this was observed to be a complicating issue for the learners by causing more confusion for Grade 4 learners and not providing the opportunity to learn English well. Teachers were found to be ignorant of the policy because the DoE did not educate the teachers on the language policy produced without teacher consultations from grassroots during policy formulation processes. The study therefore presents the need for professional development for teachers and skill training in the area of teaching in a second language.

It was also found that the exclusion of teachers in the policy formulation and development process; and a lack of adequate training and workshops exacerbate teachers' ignorance of the policy contents which leads to failure by the teachers to implement policy. Finally the study also revealed teachers' indiscriminate use of code-switching. These challenges contribute enormously to learners' language difficulties, the under development of learners, and the creation of unequal opportunities for effective learning for all learners.

### **6.3 Recommendations**

The teachers who participated in this study noted several problems and challenges in relation to their teaching in English as LOLT to Grade 4 EFAL learners who are also novice learners of English. The recommendations that are made are as follows:

#### **6.3.1 Language policy**

The South African language policy specifies that from Grade 4 level upwards English should be used as the LOLT. But when it comes into practice, there is a huge 'gap' and/or 'disjuncture' between the policy prescription and the actual classroom practices of teachers and learners. As indicated in the literature review (see Chapter 2), the South African language policy was primarily informed by the need to bridge the language dominance of the apartheid

regime. This language policy needs to be reviewed. According to Heugh (2006), transition from mother tongue to second language at early stage (as required by South African language policy) does not produce successful results. This is because of the fact that when the mother tongue is suddenly removed (at this early stage) there can be damage in social and cognitive areas which will take a long time to rectify (Heugh, 2006).

I strongly recommend “additive” or “strong” bilingualism for the subsequent language policy development and reform in South Africa. By strong bilingualism I am referring to the situation in which both mother tongue and second language are taught until the learner graduates from high school education. It is the language model mostly favoured by language experts as well as being the most advocated worldwide for EFAL speakers (Cummins, 2000; Heugh, 2006; Baker, 2006). The additive model aims to introduce English alongside with the mother tongue and sustain both for a longer time in a manner that gives the learners an opportunity of learning both languages (e.g., isiZulu and English) equally well.

### **6.3.2 Study of English in Foundation Phase**

While mother tongue remains the LOLT in Foundation Phase I recommend that the policymakers should design, as well as develop a policy that should mandate every learner especially EFAL learners to learn English language from Grade R. The teacher participants in this study are convinced that the study of English in Foundation Phase by EFAL learners will go a long way to alleviating the language and learning challenges encountered by these learners in Grade 4. Thus, it will improve the quality of communication and interaction that take place in the classroom between the learners and their teachers as they negotiate transition to English as LOLT.

### **6.3.3 Teachers’ training and support and professional development**

There must be professional development for primary school teachers especially those teachers who are English second language speakers, like these teachers who took part in this study. It must include comprehensive in-service and pre-service training of educators and should be done to ensure that they are well-equipped to teach in bi/multilingual, multicultural and multiracial inclusive schools. Training of educators is a key need to support the proper implementation of the Language in Education Policy in a bi/multilingual approach to education as found in South African society (Radhamoney, 2010). The training should

include assistance in planning and designing lessons and activities that will foster teaching and learning in a transition class. Language teachers need to be well-groomed and properly trained in order for the culture and love for education and learning to emerge. Thus, teachers having a wider knowledge of the language(s) and teaching techniques with broader applicability is critically important for successful and meaningful instruction (Du Plessis & Louw, 2008).

#### **6.3.4 Teacher Participation in Policymaking Process**

Teachers' views should be incorporated in the educational policymaking process from the grassroots, for more effective implementation to emerge. The question of how one might persuade teacher educators to implement a curriculum requires rigorous consideration of why do some teachers opt for developing curriculum policies while others do not. If teachers, as primary agents or implementers of education policies, are properly consulted and integrated for curriculum development they will own the curriculum and consequently ensure its effective implementation (Rogan, 2003).

#### **6.4 Suggestion for further Study**

There is a need for study of teachers' professional development initiatives in order to get a sense of the extent and direction to which classroom use of language maybe strengthened within teacher education framework in the South African context. Replicating this study in other areas of KwaZulu-Natal province and comparing the results from such studies may help in the process of discerning whether (or not) mother tongue instruction is the best approach. There is need for studies that can reveal the correlation between that impact of language deficiency and the dropout rate of isiZulu-speaking learners in Intermediate Phase.

#### **6.5 Conclusion**

The purpose of this research study was to investigate the language challenges in Grade 4 mainstream schools classrooms and the implication that these challenges have towards language policy development. In answering the study's critical questions, the overall findings showed that the language policy used presents challenges for EFAL learners in mainstream schools in South Africa. The findings also revealed that the professional development of the teachers for a transition class needs to be considered. While teachers present themselves as

being excluded from policymaking process the study recommends an increase of an active participation of teachers in educational policymaking process.

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**APPENDIX 1: Invitation Letter to the Teachers and Individual Consent Form**

**Faculty of Education**



School of Education and Development  
University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Private Bag X01  
Scottsville  
3209

**The Educator**

**Date**.....

Dear .....

**Invitation to Participate in a Voluntary and Confidential (Masters) Research**

I am currently a first year Masters student in Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg. I am presently engaged in a research study on “The Use of Languages in Mainstream Grade 4 Schools in KwaZulu-Natal: Implications for Policy Development”.

In this regard, I have chosen you as a Grade 4 teacher and suitable candidate whom I believe has potential and can provide valuable insight in extending the boundaries of our knowledge on this study area. Please note that this is not an evaluation of performance or competence of your teaching skills and by no means is it a commission of inquiry! Your personal identity, participation and responses will be treated with utmost confidentiality and anonymity throughout the study and at no stage shall it appear in print.

I would appreciate your honest participation and responses as well as the permission to use your responses for official research purposes only. If you have any queries about this study, feel free to contact me at **0785935240** (email: felizokoye@gmail.com) or my supervisor at **033 260 5501** (email: mbathath@ukzn.ac.za). Be reminded that you are free to withdraw your participation at any time.

If you are willing to participate, please sign the attached consent form which gives me the permission to use your responses in my research study. The interview will be scheduled to suit your convenient considering the time allocated to this study.

Yours faithfully

\_\_\_\_\_

Okoye, Felix Ifeanyi



## Individual Consent Form

<b>Study Information</b>	
<b>Study Title:</b> The Use of Languages in Mainstream Grade 4 Schools in KwaZulu-Natal: Implications for Policy Development.	
<b>Principal Investigator:</b> Okoye, Felix Ifeanyi	<b>University:</b> University of KwaZulu-Natal
<b>Location:</b> Pietermaritzburg	<b>Phone:</b> 078 593 5240
<b>Course:</b> Education and Development	<b>Year of Study:</b> 2011/2012
<b>Supervisor:</b> Dr Thabile Mbatha	<b>University:</b> University of KwaZulu-Natal
<b>Location:</b> Pietermaritzburg	<b>Phone:</b> 033 260 5501

1. This Study is done as part of the M.Ed. programme at University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg campus.
2. The information gathered as part of this study is due to the University.
3. None of the Information gathered as part of the study is to be used for official purposes or be relayed to authorities.
4. You are free to choose whether or not to participate in this study.
5. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled if you choose not to participate.
6. Know that your identity in the study will be treated with utmost confidentiality.
7. The result of this study may be published for scientific purposes, but will not give your name or any identifiable references that can directly link to you.
8. Note that there are no financial or material rewards that come with participating in this study.
9. A copy of this report will be available upon request.

**.....DETACH AND RETURN.....**

### Declaration of Consent

I ----- (Please write your **NAME** in full)

Hereby confirm that I understand the content of this document as well as the nature of the research project. I consent to participating in the research project. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

Teacher's Signature: -----

Date -----

**APPENDIX 2: Letter to the School Principals**



**Faculty of Education**

School of Education and Development  
University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Private Bag X01  
Scottsville  
3209

**The Principal**

**Date**-----

.....  
.....

Dear .....

**Dear Sir/Madam**

**Request to Use Your School as a Research Site**

I, Felix Okoye, a Masters student in *Education and Development* at the *University of KwaZulu-Natal*, Pietermaritzburg Campus is hereby requesting to use your school as a research site for the study on the topic: ***The Use of Languages in Mainstream Grade 4 Schools in KwaZulu-Natal: Implications For Policy Development.***

I have chosen your school because I believe that it provides appropriate context and your teachers have the potential and can provide valuable insight in extending the boundaries of our knowledge on this study. Please note that this is not an evaluation of performance or competence of your teachers and by no means is it a commission of inquiry! The identities of all who participate in the study, as well as the schools itself will be protected in accordance with the code of ethics as stipulated by University of KwaZulu-Natal.

The study requires classroom observation and video-recording of Grade 4 lessons in English and Life Orientation as well as pre and post observation interviews with teachers whose lessons will be observed. There will also be individual interviews with Grade 4 teachers who may like to voluntarily participate in the study. All the participants will be asked to complete a consent form and are guaranteed utmost confidentiality and anonymity. I will also strictly adhere to school rules and regulations.

Your response at your earliest convenience and your kind permission to the above regards will be highly appreciated. I can be contacted at **0785935240** (Email: felizokoye@gmail.com) or my supervisor at **033 260 5501** (Email: mbathath@ukzn.ac.za).

Yours faithfully

-----

Okoye, Felix Ifeanyi



UNIVERSITY OF  
KWAZULU-NATAL  
Faculty of Education

**Declaration of Consent**

I ..... (Full names of the Principal)  
hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of this research  
study. I am willing that my school be used as a research site in this study.

Signature of the Principal \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX 3: Informed Consent Letter for Parents/Guardians**

[A]English Translation



School of Education and Development  
University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Private Bag X01  
Scottsville  
3209

**Dear Parent /Guardian,**

Date.....

I am a Masters' student from the University of KwaZulu-Natal seeking your permission to allow your child to be observed and videoed in a research which will be conducted in his/her Grade 4 classroom. This research forms are part of my masters' study which aims to investigate language use as well as the challenges facing Grade 4 learners as they switch from the mother tongue instruction to English, and what implication these challenges have for the language policy development. The classroom observation and video recording will only take place in one day and will last for forty-five minutes.

**To make decision on whether your child will participate, there are things you should know:**

1. Your child does not have to participate in the study, only if you want him/her to;
2. If you decide yes, and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw your child;
3. The pictures and video information gathered during the observation will be used only for study purposes;
4. We cannot give you or your child material help or money; participation is voluntary. However, the result obtained from this study is expected to inform policy reform which may improve learning difficulties experienced by your child and other learners;
5. Your child will not be asked any question and will not be harmed in any way during the observation.

**If you want your child to be present in Grade 4 classroom where the observation and video recording will take place, please sign and write your name below:**

I understand the research process and what will be required of my child, and I consented voluntarily for my child to be observed and videoed.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Researcher's Contact Information**

Felix Ifeanyi Okoye  
School of Education and Development  
Faculty of Education  
University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Phone: 078 593 5240  
Email: felizokoye@gmail.com

### **Supervisors who may be contacted for further information**

Dr Thabile Mbatha  
Lecturer, Faculty of Education  
Education Building  
University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Corner Golf and Ridge Roads  
Pietermaritzburg  
Tel: 033 260 5501  
Email: mbathath@ukzn.ac.za

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**[B] IsiZulu Translation (Letter for Parents/Guardians)**

Mzali,

Ngingumfundi ogogodayo ovela e-Nyuvesi yakwaZulu-Natali owenza izifundo zocwaningo. Ngicela imvume yokubuka noku shutha (izithombe nokubukwayo) izingane emagumbini okufundela ezisebangeni lesine. Ucwanningo lubheka izinkinga izingane ezihlangabezana nazo uma kushintsha ulimi kusuka olimini lwasekhaya kuya esilungwini, nokuthi kungaba namuthelela muphi ukushintsha ulimi lokufunda noma elokufundisa. Ucwanningo luzokuba olosuku olulodwa futhi luthathe imizuzu engamashumi amane nanhlanu kuphela.

**Uhlelo neminingwane yocwaningo**

1. Ingane yakho ayiphokelekile ukuzibandakanya kulolu cwanningo uma wena mzali ungavumi.
2. Uma uvuma, ngokuhamba kwesikhathi ushintshe umqondo; ungaphinde uhoxise imvumo yakho.
3. Izithombe nombukiso kuzosetshenziswa kuphela ocwanningweni.
4. Akukho ukukhokhelwa kulocwaningo, kodwa, kuzosiza ukubona izinkinga ezikhona endleleni okufundwa ngayo ukuze kwenziwe ngcono indlela yokufunda kwezingane.
5. Izingane angeke zibuzwe imibuzo.

**Uma usinika ilingelo lokuthi ingane yakho yebanga lesine ibe khona kucwanningo lapho zizobukwa kuthathwe nezithombe, ngisacela usayine ngezansi:**

Ngiyaluqonda ucwanningo neminingwane yokuzokwenziwa nengane yami, futhi ngiyavuma ukuthi ibe ingxenye yocwaningo lokubukwa kuthathwe nezithombe.

**Igama:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Ukusayina:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Usuku:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Imininingwane yomucwanningi**

Okoye, Felix Ifeanyi  
School of Education and Development  
Faculty of Education  
University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Phone Number: 078 593 5240  
Email: felizokoye@gmail.com

**Umsizi womcwaningi (Supervisor)**

Dr Thabile Mbatha  
Lecturer, Faculty of Education  
Education Building  
University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Corner Golf and Ridge Roads  
Pietermaritzburg Campus  
Tel: 033 260 5501  
Email: mbathath@ukzn.ac.za

**APPENDIX 4: Authorization from School Principals**

**School A:**

**RIVER PRIMARY SCHOOL  
P. O BOX 104  
Tel: 033 330 3731  
Fax: 033 330 4383  
10 August 2011**

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

Sir/Madam

This is to confirm that Mr Okoye Felix with the student number 209537168 has been authorized to observe Grade 4 classes at River primary schools for the purpose of his masters' study in education.

We wish you good luck in your studies.



---

**THE PRINCIPAL**

**School B:**

**SEA Combine Primary School, Pietermaritzburg  
KwaZulu-Natal.  
27 May 2011**

**School of Education and Development  
University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Private Bag X01  
Scottsville  
3209**

Dear Mr Okoye

**Re: Response to Your Request to Use My School as Your Research Site**

The School Management Team supports any initiative that aimed at developing and promoting the culture of teaching and learning with regards to language use that is occurring within the parameters of the South African School Act. The School Management Team accedes to your request to use the school premise as your research site with great hope that the school and its community will benefit from the quality report you will offer once that study has been completed.

The teachers who wish to partake in your study have also been granted permission so long as it does not disrupt their official duties in the school. The School Management Team welcomes you to the school as well as wishes you success in your research and studies.

Yours Faithfully

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

PRINCIPAL

**School C:**

**OCEAN PRIMARY SCHOOL**

---

02 August 2011

University of KwaZulu-Natal

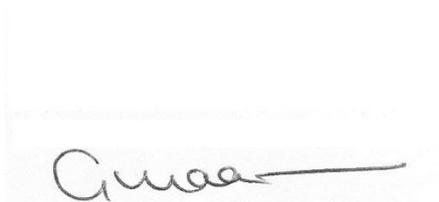
Pietermaritzburg

Faculty of Education

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:**

This serves to confirm that **FELIX OKOYE** has been granted permission to observe Grade 4 classes, date and time to be agreed upon.

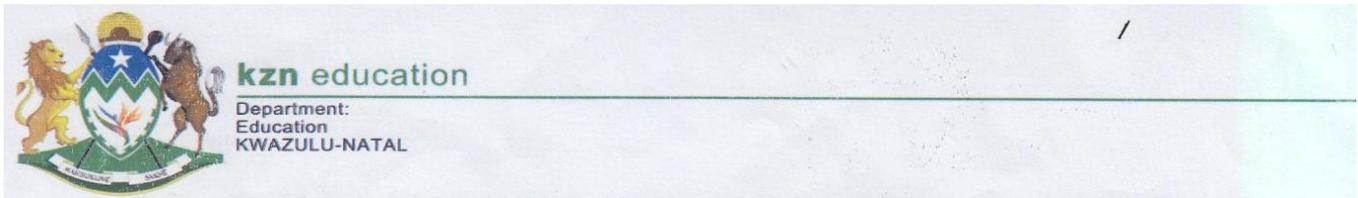
Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. M. M.', is written over a light blue rectangular background.

---

PRINCIPAL

## APPENDIX 5: Approval from the Department of Education [DoE]



Enquiries: Sibusiso Alwar

Tel: 033 341 8610

Ref: 2/4/8/72

Mr. Felix Okoye I  
28 Mills Circle  
Hayfield  
Pietermaritzburg, 3201

Dear Mr Okoye

### **RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTION**

Your application to conduct research in selected schools in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that educators and the learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, educators, schools and institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Head of Institutions where the intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period: from 01 July 2011 to 31 July 2012.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed by the Superintendent General. Please note that Principals, Educators, Department Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the schools, contact Mr. Alwar at the contact number bellow.

...dedicated to service and performance  
beyond the call of duty.

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

POSTAL: Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200, KwaZulu-Natal, Republic of South Africa

PHYSICAL: Office G 25, 188 Pietermaritz Street, Metropolitan Building, Pietermaritzburg, 3201

TEL: Tel: +27 33 341 8610/11 | Fax: +27 33 341 8612 | email:sibusiso.alwar@kzndoe.gov.za

9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Address to: The Director: Resource Planning; Private Bag X9137; Pietermaritzburg; 3200

The Department of Education in KwaZulu Natal fully supports your commitment toward research and wishes you well in your endeavours. It is hoped that you will find the above in order.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Nkosinathi SP Sishi, PhD**  
**Head of Department: Education**

2011 08 02  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

...dedicated to service and performance  
beyond the call of duty.

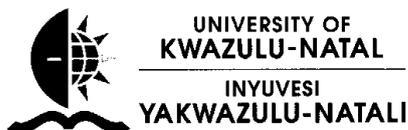
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TEL: Tel: +27 33 341 8610/11 | Fax: +27 33 341 8612 | email: sibusiso.afwar@kzndoe.gov.za

## APPENDIX 6: Ethical Clearance from University of KwaZulu-Natal



Research Office, Govan Mbeki Centre  
Westville Campus  
Private Bag x54001  
DURBAN, 4000  
Tel No: +27 31 260 8350  
Fax No: +27 31 260 4609  
[snymanm@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:snymanm@ukzn.ac.za)

16 May 2012

Mr FI Okoye (209537168)  
School of Education and Development

Dear Mr Okoye

**PROTOCOL REFERENCE NUMBER: HSS/0144/012M**

**PROJECT TITLE: The use of languages in mainstream Grade 4 schools in KwaZulu-Natal: Implications for Policy and Development**

In response to your application dated 19 October 2011, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.  
**PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.**

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

.....  
**Professor Steven Collings (Chair)**  
**HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**

cc. Dr T Mbatha  
cc. Dr MN Davids  
cc. Mr N Memela / Mrs S Naicker



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## **APPENDIX 7: Pre-observation Interviews (Semi-Structured)**

### **Section A: Language Use in Grade 4 Classroom**

1. What language(s) do you use for teaching in Grade 4?
2. In what circumstances do you use isiZulu in the classroom instruction rather than English or combine both languages?
3. Which of the languages do you use and for what purpose?
4. Would you explain how the language you use assist to bring about meaningful understanding in your classroom?
5. What strategies do you use to make your learners grasp the subject matter, follow the lesson, and then participate effectively in the class discussion?
6. What are the learners' attitudes towards English as medium of instruction?

### **Section B: Introduction and Clarification of new concepts**

7. Which language do you use to introduce new topics and concepts to Grade 4 learners?
8. What language(s) do you use to ensure learners grasp the concept being thought?
9. Do your learners have difficulty grasping these concepts? Why?
10. Does their difficulty have to do with understanding your language or the content?
11. What language do you use to check for understanding in your Grade 4 classroom?
12. How do you explain concepts with no conceptual equivalent in the learners' mother tongue?
13. What kind of examples do you use to explain difficult concepts?
14. What other resources do you use to teach your subject? Why?

### **Section C: Language and Communication Challenges**

15. What are your experiences of using English as LOLT to learners who have been using mother tongue, and are second language speakers of English?
16. What are the communication challenges that hold back learners in your Grade 4 classes?
17. Can you describe circumstance(s) depicting the challenges you have observed?
18. How would you classify the challenges?
19. Do you have learners with special needs? (if yes) What are these special needs?
20. What challenges do you encounter in assisting less participatory learners in your class?

### **Section D: Policy Development**

22. What is your opinion about the policy of using the mother tongue in the Foundation Phase and transition to English as a LOLT in Grade 4?
23. Do you think the transition from mother tongue to English as LOLT in Grade 4 is a suitable policy for teaching ESL learners in South Africa? (Probe: If yes, what do you regard as the policy strength?).
24. Does the current language in education policy accommodate your learner's needs?
25. If there were to be changes in the current LOLT policy what would you want to be changed, or included by policymakers in developing a suitable policy?
26. How would you want this to be explicitly stated in the language policy?
27. How in your opinion will this change(s) improved teaching and learning of Grade 4 learners in mainstream schools?
28. What do you think would be the impact of this change on your teaching?
29. What development interventions do you recommend towards overcoming the Language challenges experienced by Grade 4 learners in mainstream schools?
30. Given your observed practices and language use in your classroom what should be explicitly stated in the language policy?

**Section E: EDUCATOR PROFILE**

- 1. Name of the Educator : (Optional)-----
- 2. Position at school : -----
- 3. Sex : -----
- 4. Subject teaching :-----

**5. TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

- 5.1.1 No. of years as an educator :-----
- 5.1.2 No. of years as in this school : -----
- 5.1.3 No. of years of teaching Grade 4 : -----

**6. QUALIFICATIONS**

- 6.1.1 Academic qualifications : -----  
-----  
-----  
-----
- 6.1.2 Professional qualification : -----  
-----  
-----  
-----
- 6.1.3 Presently studying : -----  
-----  
-----  
-----

**7. LANGUAGE TRAINNING**

- 7.1.1 What training do I have to cope with teaching two languages (English and isiZulu)?  
-----
- 7.1.2 How do you describe your personal attributes and qualities-----  
-----

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**THANKS FOR YOUR TIME AND HONESTY**

**APPENDIX 8: Observation Schedule (Using Video Recording)**

*1. What are the things the researcher will observe?*

***Table 1.1***

<b>Things to observe</b>	<b>Specifics</b>	<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Learners</b>	<b>Researcher's Comment (RC)</b>
<i>Different Purposes Of Language Use in the Classroom</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Regulation</li> <li>▪ To draw learners' attention</li> <li>▪ Introduction</li> <li>▪ Conducting activities</li> <li>▪ Presentation of lesson</li> <li>▪ Assessment</li> </ul>			
<i>What Language Is Used To Introduce &amp; Clarify New Concepts</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Whether isiZulu or English is used</li> <li>▪ Or both</li> <li>▪ Variation of language use between English &amp; Life Orientation</li> </ul>			
<i>Whether Code-Switching Or Code-Mixing Is Used</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Rate how much of isiZulu and English (%)</li> <li>▪ Dominant language used</li> <li>▪ Learners use of language for asking questions and for group discussion</li> </ul>			
<i>Purpose of using code-switching</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Classroom management</li> <li>▪ Instruction</li> <li>▪ Reprimand learners</li> <li>▪ Elaboration</li> <li>▪ Simplification</li> <li>▪ Explanation</li> </ul>			
<i>Language &amp; Communication Challenges</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Teacher's pitch of voice, use of language, impatience with</li> </ul>			

	<i>learners</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Lack of understanding</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Learners' low level of communication skills</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Learners' language difficulties</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Confusion</i></li> </ul>			
--	--	--	--	--

2. *What language strategies are employed by the teacher for elaboration, simplification and explanation?*
3. *How does the teacher deal with conceptual inadequacy and misunderstandings?*
4. *What language(s) are used by the teacher and learners to ensure effective communication in the classroom?*

## **APPENDIX 9: Post-observation Interviews (Semi-Structured)**

### **[A] Post-observation Interview with Teacher Ntokozo**

#### **1. What episode(s) did you chose to discuss?**

R. Clip on group discussions of my English lesson.

#### **2. What do you want to say about the episode?**

R. I want to say that there was increased confidence and participation among the learners while they were in their groups working together on their own. It is obvious that these learners make quicker attempts to consult each other (and/or the teacher) in terms of problem-solving situations compare to when I was teaching; and I can see that really in the video.

#### **3. What in your opinion is the cause of such increment?**

R. In group discussion learners feel freer to communicate using their language. There is always that speaking anxiety experienced when it is between the teacher and learner than between learners. Besides, learners retain information on what is taught by peers longer than when the same content is presented by the teacher. This for me takes the lesson to another level in which learners talk to each other in their own language regarding the topic which, of course, develops the learners thinking skills; hence, the process in which learners participates in the learning process instead of passively listening to the teacher.

#### **4. Can you estimate the proportion to which you use English and/or isiZulu in the classroom?**

R. I try to apply the two languages in equal proportions in the classroom.

#### **5. What are your experiences when using English to teach learners who have been using mother tongue, and are not English-language speakers?**

R. I meet with problems in teaching the second language speakers of English. Communication is a major problem; we have problems in understanding each other. Learners at this stage are not mature in their mother tongue let alone in English.

#### **6. In your opinion what causes this problem?**

R. Zulu-speaking learners do not have enough opportunities to use the English language in conversations in their homes and communities where they live. It is unfortunate that they only practice at school this is not enough.

#### **7. How does this translate into problem for you as a teacher?**

R. Teaching these learners in the English in medium is exhausting more especially when I am introducing a new lesson or topic. The problems affect me more because I think I need more training and to be able to cope and to gain more competence with the rules of language. There are times that I do not complete my lessons because of a lot of repetition to ensure understanding. This too makes the lesson really boring most of the times.

#### **8. Do you get any assistance or support from the Department of Education in teaching a transition class?**

R. Sometimes the DoE provides supports but not much language training has been provided. Even here at school there is very little support given on language issues. Even from the college where I attended there was no special training on language.

**9. Does the current language in education policy accommodate your learner's needs?**

R. No.

**10. What is your opinion about the policy of using the mother tongue in the Foundation Phase and transition to English as a LOLT in Grade 4?**

R. I think it has to be changed or reviewed.

**11. If there were to be changes in the current LOLT in Grade 4 what would you want to be changed?**

R. It is good to retain isiZulu as LOLT in Foundation Phase but these learners from mainstream (and rural) schools need to start learning English in their Foundation Phase. It will help to reduce the language difficulty they experience during transition.

**12. What do you think would be the impact of this change on your teaching?**

R. It will increase learners' access to LOLT (i.e., English), understanding and participation. By so doing learners will be guaranteed of quality education which is a catalyst to personal, intellectual development and learner's capacitation.

**13. In your classroom/lesson you were using [language(s)]; how should policymakers incorporate your practice in developing a suitable language policy?**

R. The policymakers need to design a policy that incorporates learning of English, at least the basics, in Foundation Phase. There is also need to make learning of one's mother tongue mandatory until one finishes school. This is how it is done in other countries especially those who use English as the language of instruction.

**14. How will this change bring development?**

R. Once English is introduced in the Foundation Phase the government will see more reason to budget and strengthen the teacher development trainings as well as language training that may target teachers in disadvantaged schools. The training must focus on how to teach English in the Foundation Phase. Eventually the quality of education received in concerned schools will improve.

**15. Thank for very much for your time and honesty.**

R. Thank you.

[B] **Post-observation Interview with Teacher Nomali**

**1. What episodes have you chosen to discuss?**

R. My selected episode is where I was asking questions and learners were moping at me.

**2. What particularly do you want to say about that?**

R. For me it is really quite frustrating to see the learners go through all this by themselves alone. I am not pretty much bothered such situation recently because it is something I see every day. I really don't think it is a good idea trying to teach these learners in their mother tongue. Teaching them in mother tongue jeopardizes their chances of learning English.

**3. How does this affect classroom participation in your class?**

R. As you can see from the video that I obviously don't use often use isiZulu in the class neither do you I allow learners to use them but they still use it especially in their discussion groups.

**4. Do you insist in stopping them from using mother tongue in their groups?**

R. Yes!

**5. Why do you insist in preventing the learners from using their mother tongue if it really didn't bother you anymore as you mentioned earlier?**

R. their low participation and performance in the class do not bother me anymore. The thing is that no matter how much you try, even when you encourage them to speak in isiZulu, they still won't participate. You may think they understood what was taught until when you are marking their books, and then you realize that you may have to repeat the lesson. Keep teaching the same thing repeatedly to make sure they understand, and that is indeed depressing if you ask me.

**6. What do you think can be done to rectify this situation?**

R. I think it will be better to teach literacy and numeracy using English as LOLT in Foundation Phase especially for learners from mainstream schools. They do not speak English at their homes, neither in their various communities. Their mother tongue is isiZulu so why do we waste time teaching them in isiZulu or keep switching in isiZulu when they are supposed to be taught in English.

**7. Are there situation(s) that compel you to switch to mother tongue or use isiZulu in classroom?**

R. Yes.

**8. What situation might that be?**

R. In situations where there is no other means to demonstrate or explain the particular concept to these learners I translate the concept or word in isiZulu. Usually, I do not mind even if the translated word or concept is the only Zulu word in my sentence.

**9. Which language(s) you use for introducing and clarifying new concepts?**

R. I use mostly English sometimes Zulu but it does not happen very often.

**10. How do you feel about the situation?**

R. I am just uncomfortable using isiZulu in teaching these learners and am insecure about it knowing that these learners will be assessed in English. Meanwhile I cannot complete a sentence in isiZulu without adding English words. I do not want to confuse the learners the more. *Like you know* my Zulu is bad and I can only use about 20% of isiZulu in my class.

**11. Would you mind repeat what you just said using Zulu language?**

R. Angijabuliukusebenzisa isiZulu umangifundisangoba abafundi bazohlolwa ngesiSingisi. Angikwazi ukuqeka umusho isiNgisi ngingasifakanga. AngiSfuni ukuthi ngidide abafundi bami. Ngoba ngiyazi ukuthi isiXulu sami asikho sihle, ngisebenzisa u 20% weSizulu umangifundisa eklasini.

**12. What is root cause of these challenges experienced by your learners?**

R. As I have earlier mentioned, among the major problem experienced by these learners is that they have very limited vocabulary in English. This is exacerbated mostly by the parents' attitude. At home the learners are not encouraged to speak and converse in English especially in rural areas. As some parents still got this idea "you can't speak English at my own house because we are all Zulu speakers here, speak your English at school where it is appropriate for that and not here"

**13. What is your opinion about the policy of using the mother tongue in the Foundation Phase and transition to English as a LOLT in Grade 4?**

R. Well, even when IsiZulu is maintained as LOLT in Foundation Phase, these learners still need to start learning English as part of their literacy studies. Policymakers need to make this happen both for the teachers as well as for the learners, and it has to reflect in the curriculum and textbooks, as well as in the teacher training programs to ensure that teachers are (re)trained on how to teach English in Foundation Phase even when Zulu remains LOLT.

**14. What do you think would be the impact of this change on your teaching and development?**

R. I believe the more access the learners gain as to the LOLT the more the quality of education received by the learners is improved. The learner is capacitated to take charge of his/her learning by himself/herself. Quality education leads to both personal and socio-economic, political development and a sign of good governance. If the language challenges are reduced and teachers receive adequate training, then, both can comfortably find ways to make procedures and directions clear, to maintain order, and to deal with use of two languages in transition stage.

**15. Please thank for your time and the information you have given me.**

R. You are welcome.

[C] **Post-observation Interview with Teacher Dudu**

**1. Which Episode(s) have you chosen to talk about?**

R. I want to discuss two episodes. The first is taken from my English lesson where I was asking the learners the different between proper nouns and common nouns. You know I just finished telling them the different yet they could not remember. It is annoying because you do not know whether they did not remember what I just said in the class or they did not understand it in the first place.

**2. What in your opinion is the cause?**

R. I think they forget. It actually gets worse if I were to ask the same question tomorrow; they will not remember. I think the problem is that most of the learners do not revise their work at home; they just keep playing around at home and most parents do not care.

**3. What do you do to help this situation?**

R. Well, first I give them homework. Secondly, you can see that I gave them an exercise to write in the class and at their level the class exercise be to fill in the blank spaces. Usually “what” and “where” questions are used because questions with “how” may be complicated for them as it requires more thinking.

**4. Which other episode do you select?**

R. Yes, another episode I want to talk about is from my LO lesson. You can see that I used more of Zulu than English. The reason is that the more I use mother tongue to teach them learners the more they are likely to remember and understand.

**5. Do you know you suppose to use English as LOLT in your class?**

R. Yes I know we are to use English as LOLT, but not always.

**6. What do you mean by “not always?”**

R. Because I have to switch to mother tongue for understanding. These learners have not any background in LOTL which is English. I really don't have choice not to use isiZulu.

**7. Are you familiar with the South African Language in Education Policy (LiEP)?**

R. Yes, I know it but I don't follow it. I use both languages as if they are both LOLT. In fact I usually use both languages 50-50.

**8. Do you know that the LiEP allows you to switch to mother tongue in class?**

R. Yes!

**9. In your class you used “blackness” as a synonym to explain “night” but learners did not still understand: what would you have done?**

R. I could have used concepts which the learners could easily identify. She further explained that: it is important and more advisable to use familiar words and/or concepts in Grade 4. It makes the learning contents more meaningful to the learners particularly when they relate to learners' personal lives and cultural backgrounds.

**10. In your class you often engage into immediate and unplanned translation using Zulu; why do you do so?**

R. In engaging into immediate and unplanned translation I am able to reduce the learners' uncertainty as well as assured that they understood the concept being described or taught.

**11. How does this benefit your learners?**

R. Without taking up a lot of class time I translate in isiZulu for understanding. It is the right thing as form of scaffolding; really unplanned translation can be effective especially when the goal is to enhance comprehension rather than vocabulary development. Selective translation may be expedient at this stage and at the detriment of the learners as such I resort to immediate translation. So I translate every word the learners found to be strange.

**12. Does the current language in education policy accommodate your learner's needs?**

R. Not at all! My learners due to their context find it difficult to cope with transition in Grade 4. They have very limited background in English compare to their counterpart in township and urban contexts.

**13. What is your opinion about the policy of using the mother tongue in the Foundation Phase and transition to English as a LOLT in Grade 4?**

R. I think the Foundation Phase African learners should start learning English language as part of their literacy studies.

**14. How should policymakers incorporate your practice in developing a suitable language policy?**

R. I think we can learn from countries like Nigeria and Zimbabwe in terms of how they balance the learning of one's mother tongue with LOLT (English). In South Africa context, I suggest that if the LOLT and assessment remains English, then, the policymakers must design a policy that should mandate every learner to learn his/her mother tongue until he/she finishes school i.e., from Grade R to Grade 12.

**15. What do you think would be the impact of this change on your teaching?**

R. Like I said earlier, African learners schooling in mainstream schools have limited English background as well as vocabulary and grammar. To reform or re-design the language policy to achieve its developmental objectives in this effect...it has to be able to guarantee quality education and access to LOLT for every South African child. It must also spur teacher skills training and professional development; incorporate teacher participation in its reform process....It must capacitate teachers in implementing curriculum policies, as well as in coping with teaching in both English and mother tongue especially in transition classes.

**16. Thank you for your time and contribution to this study.**

R. You are welcome.

---

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND PARTICIPATION**