EXPLORING THE DISJUNCTION BETWEEN SPOKEN AND WRITTEN ENGLISH AMONG SECOND LANGUAGE (L2) LEARNERS AT ST CHARLES HIGH SCHOOL, LESOTHO.

Mpheng Patricia Molapo.

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Education.
(By course work and Dissertation).

School of Education, University of Natal, Durban.
December 2002.

DECLARATION

This study represents original work by the author and has not been submitted in any form to another University. Where use has been made of the work of others, this has been duly acknowledged in the text.

_____

Mpheng Patricia Molapo.

Statement by Supervisor:

This mini-dissertation is submitted with/without my approval.

Signed: _____   Date: _____

Dr Robert J. Balfour.

iii

Abstract

This research project was primarily a qualitative investigation, the purpose of which was not to test a particular set of hypotheses, but rather to develop an exploratory analysis of the disjunction between spoken and written English among pupils at St Charles High School. In light of the lack of empirical and exploratory research on the use of English as a second language in Lesotho, the study aimed to investigate pupils' and teachers' perceptions on the use of English as a subject and medium of instruction. Chapter 1 presents an introduction of English and the formal type of education in Lesotho by missionaries just before the middle of the nineteenth century. Although English is regarded as the 'language of power' nevertheless the teaching and learning of the language has its own problems and teachers and pupils' experiences with second language learning in different local and international contexts are discussed in Chapter 2. The study used both qualitative and quantitative methods to gather and analyse data. A case study approach was employed using a range of instruments to collect data relevant to the aim of this project. The findings show that although pupils are generally proficient in spoken English and appear to understand the spoken language fairly well, assessment of their written exercises and during lesson observations indicates that their fluency in English is not related to their performance in written English. Therefore, fluency in English language does not necessarily form a sufficient basis to describe pupils as competent in English (L2). This does explain the possible difference between spoken and written English. The thesis does not offer tips for teachers nor are methods prescribed about how to teach English as a second language. Although limited to a particular high school (the detail and context of which are described in Chapter 3), much of what was found and the subsequent recommendations may be of value to improve the teaching and learning of English. I hope that this study, which was very much a pilot in nature, will help to highlight issues that might be addressed in more detailed studies in the field of second language learning.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF ACRONYMS USED IN THE STUDY

B.I.C.S.	Basic Interpersonal Communication Skill.
C.A.L.P.	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency.
C.A.H.	Contractive Analysis Hypothesis.
C.O.S.C.	Cambridge Overseas School Leaving Certificate.
E.C.O.L.	Examinations Council Of Lesotho.
E.S.L.	English Second Language.
J.C.	Junior Certificate.
J.C.E.	Junior Certificate Examination.
L2	English Second Language.
L1	Sesotho (mother-tongue).
N.C.D.C.	National Curriculum Development Centre.
N.S.E.P.	National Secondary English Panel.
P.S.L.E.	Primary School Leaving Examination.
W.A.E.C.	West African Examination Council.

Note: The terms 'pupils' and 'learners' are used synonymously in this study.

*Names used in this research project are fictitious.

CHAPTER 1   ENGLISH IN LESOTHO

Introduction

Lesotho displays characteristics of other African countries that were colonised: the experience of colonialism, the influence of missionaries on formal education in general, and in English language education in particular, and the desire for educational reforms since independence. These issues will be discussed in the first two sections of this chapter. In the third section, the quality of education in Lesotho will be reviewed, through several research projects that were conducted. Finally, the research project structure will be outlined in the last section of this chapter.

Through my observations of children learning English as a second language (L2) in Lesotho, I learned that despite near fluency pupils struggled to express themselves in clear academic English and this problem affected their academic progress. After ten years of teaching in Lesotho high schools, I wanted to investigate what caused the disjunction between spoken and written English among second language learners at St Charles High School. It is popularly believed that the language change (L1 to L2) and the difference between spoken and written English contribute to poor examination results (Balfour: 2000). However, more research is needed to establish which variables contribute to this disjunction. I wanted to find out what caused the decline in pupils' performance. In other words, the findings would confirm or dismiss the argument that language change (from L1 to L2) and the difference in spoken and written English language contributed to the poor English examinations results. This study was conducted with the hope that answers to these research questions would be useful in painting a picture of what the situation is in Lesotho.

1.1 The colonial experience

In his study on *Language Education in Africa* Obanya (1998) discussed how some African countries (referring specifically to Africa South of the Sahara) were colonised from about the middle of the 17th century to the 1960s. That each colonial power imposed its own language on

the African countries it colonised is a well-known fact. It is also well known that the imperial educational and colonial policies often determined the level of entrenchment of the colonial language and the extent to which indigenous languages were tolerated or consciously promoted in the educational system. In most countries that were colonised by the British, a typical pattern was for primary schooling to be conducted in the first language of the learners (which children speak at home) with instruction in a language of wider communication (English) introduced at a later stage (Obanya: 1998:p1).

With regard to schooling in Lesotho, the above-mentioned overview indicates that such practices outlined do occur in a direct way through the 'official curriculum'. I will not indulge in a detailed discussion about how that curriculum at least as it pertains to English language and literature is designed. Instead, in keeping with the central concern of the research project, I have focused on the disjunction between spoken and written English among pupils in Lesotho schools. The formal educational system that is present in Lesotho was shaped largely by the first missionaries who arrived in Lesotho. The focus of mission school education was the acquisition of literacy and the study of the Bible. The rationale of reading and writing was to produce people who could read the Bible and spread Christianity. By 1900, schools were still run by the churches and the government in Lesotho. However, in 1927, the Ministry of Education (MoE) was established. The MoE developed a curriculum to be used in all schools, regardless of whether they were run by the government or the church. However, the syllabi that were followed by schools were very removed from the lives and experiences of most Basotho and left little choice for adaptation to the local conditions (The Education Sector Survey: 1982).

1.2 Post-independence developments

At independence, educational reform was high on the agenda of many African countries and Lesotho was no exception. At the time of independence in 1966, subject areas and programmes were chosen with the view of producing a high level of manpower amongst Basotho and two areas received priority- the education of administrators to run the civil service and the training of scientists who were meant to push the newly independent country into a modern technological world.

2

Thelejane (1990) states that, in an attempt to remedy problems in education and enhance educational development, a number of plans were discussed: English as a subject and a medium of instruction in school was retained and it posed difficulties for learners. Children were expected to start learning English when they were ten years of age and English was an obligatory subject for the next seven years (Thelejane: 1990:p3). The system was similar to that found in England where English is a first language or acquiring English in England would be acquiring the language as a second language whereas in Lesotho pupils acquire English as a foreign language and they only depend on instruction and exposure. Although there were improvements made to the educational system, there was a marked contrast between the apparently effortless acquisition of the spoken English language and learning to read and write in English, both of which pose a serious challenge to learners and teachers (The education Sector Survey: 1982).

In 1980, the Education Sector Survey Task force was established. The members were directed to examine the problems and issues facing education in Lesotho from different perspectives and to ensure that the views of various sections of the society would be heard. Although improvements were made, on the education system, there were gaps, which caused weaknesses; the push out rate in schools was still low, children who entered primary school hardly proceeded to secondary school. There was an apparent decline in the quality of education and the indicators were bad examination results, poor performance in English language and the low push out rate (Thelejane: 1990:p11). However, the focus of this research project is the disjunction between spoken and written English among second language pupils in Lesotho and how it affects their performance. In the next section, the quality of education in Lesotho will be discussed with reference to the problem under study.

1.3 The quality of education in Lesotho

In countries where English is not the first language, learning a second language forms an important part of the educational process. However, pupils in Lesotho schools seem to struggle to learn a second language; this is evident in the results of their external examinations. This has prompted concern among academics and teachers that Lesotho's educational reality poses difficulties for pupils. For example, The Evaluation Research and Testing (ERT) section of the

National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) revised and introduced an assessment method of assessing school subjects whereby skills checklists and end-of-level tests were used to serve as prediction tools for performance at the end of primary schooling. However, in 1993, USAID sponsored a project named Primary Education Project (PEP) where tests were produced (Attainment Tests) to replace end-of-level tests. These were produced to be used as checkpoints at two levels of Grade 3 and Grade 6. These were for the following subjects: Sesotho, English, and Mathematics which were some of the core subjects. There were plans to extend to other subjects later on. In a sitting, pupils were said to have mastered the test if their individual scores were 70% or better. The following table shows the percentage of pupils who in 1996 attained a score of 70% or more in the following written subjects, as there is no oral examination in Lesotho's educational system.

Figure 1: Table explaining pupil performance in core subjects.

SUBJECT	PERCENTAGE
Sesotho	70%
English	33%
Mathematics	50%

The scores of pupils, however, were not disaggregated by gender or region and as such, there is no comparison using those two variables. These findings are relevant to my proposed research project as they indicate that performance in English language has always been poor especially at primary level. Although several assessment methods were devised to improve the performance of pupils at primary level, Thelejane (1990) argues that on entry to the secondary level, pupils tend to show a distinct difference in the ability to speak English (in which they do well) and write in English (in which they do poorly). This adverse situation affects performance. This is an indication that sufficient attention has not been devoted to determining why pupils in Lesotho schools with years of so called English instruction behind them do not manage to get to tertiary level.

The next section of the chapter explores research conducted on pupil performance in English as a subject in Lesotho schools. The aim is to explore the causes of poor academic performance in English as a subject amongst pupils from pre-schools and primary schools learning English as a second language.

Moloi (1996) conducted a research project on children in Lesotho pre-schools. She discovered that children who attended English-medium pre-schools were exposed to English for a maximum of 20-25 hours a week (for the rest of the time they were in an environment where only Sesotho was used). The children would actually only speak English again when they began their year at primary school. For example, a 6-year-old child comes to school, having mastered the task of learning to communicate in the home language (L1). The child has learned to use language (L1) to express needs and feelings within the social context of everyday life of the home. However, the classroom presents a new complexity. The child now has to learn other means of communication, the second language (L2). Moloi's study is supported by Calfee and Freedman in McLaughlin (1985:p8) who state that all children, having been raised on the natural and intimate language of the home, experience a significant mismatch between their home language and the spoken and written varieties of language in the school. These findings are relevant to my research project in that as much as children are exposed to English at an early age (6-7years) they still perform poorly in their examinations. This suggests that immersion approach was not adequate. To this point, discussion of the second language learning process has been based on findings of research with pre-school children. I would like to turn now to the question of how (and whether) this process is different for pupils in the primary and high school level.

Sesotho (L1) is used as a medium of instruction at primary level up to Grade 4. From Grade 5 the medium of instruction changes to English and pupils are expected to use English language (L2) throughout their learning years. Jones (2001) in (Hall and Hewings: 2001:p104) suggests that the change from L1 to L2 is too abrupt for pupils. Thelejane (1990) conducted a study in which he investigated the implementation of educational policies in Lesotho. The findings can be described as follows: in reality, a mixture of languages is often used until secondary level and pupils have very little chance to use English. At primary level, very few pupils manage to pass English and other compulsory subjects that enable them to move to the next level. Hammerly (1991:p4) asserts that an immersion approach does not result in basic linguistic accuracy, even after many years of exposure. As the aim of taking learners to English medium schools is immersion, the language that is acquired is hardly adequate for academic writing purposes. Hammerly argues that pupils do sound fluent after immersion because they are under pressure to communicate and are encouraged to do so regardless of grammar. Whereas achievement ir

5

schools is highly dependent on the pupils' ability to express what they know clearly and in an accepted form since the educational system is founded on the child being able to 'display' knowledge. This 'display' most often takes the form of spoken and written language.

Khati (1985) and Lefoka (1986) whose research indicates that exploring the disjunction between spoken and written English among second language learners is relevant and necessary, argue that although children are introduced to English at an early age (5-6years) in pre-schools, they perform poorly in English at high school level. The pupils' comprehension and expression in oral and written work, as well as their achievement in examinations, leave much to be desired (Khati: 1985 and Lefoka: 1986 in Moloi 1996:p1). These findings suggest that high school entrants from English medium pre-schools and primary schools in Lesotho are not likely to be prepared adequately for the language and writing demands of high school education. This claim is relevant to my research project because it supports the argument that pupils in Lesotho, despite the fact that they attend English medium pre-schools, are not sufficiently exposed to English in their school lives. At primary level, the change in the use of the medium of instruction (from Sesotho to English) occurs at a time when the pupil has achieved communicative competence in Sesotho (L1) but not academically well-prepared to make a 'second language' an object of serious study. At primary level there is also an increase in some of the most cognitively demanding subjects which Cummins (1984) would characterise as precisely those that require a well developed second language proficiency, subjects such as English, Geography, Mathematics and Science, just to name a few. Addo suggests that it is only when the pupil is well versed in the English language that he or she can understand the other subjects especially those that are taught in English (Addo: 2002:p1). Teachers will attest that a smooth and seamless course is rarely the pattern for second language acquisition within a school setting.

Mosoeunyane (2002) supports this claim and based on his experiences as a teacher in Lesotho high schools for nine years, has observed that many pupils could not present their written work in clear academic English to make concepts understandable to the reader. Talukdar and McMurchy (1996) in Moru (2002:p20-23), in the study that they conducted in 1996, found that the English language proficiency of pupils in high schools of Lesotho was very poor. These findings imply that the quality of school instruction associated with communicative language

teaching of English is inadequate and requires further investigation. There appears to be little research in Lesotho suggesting that English as a medium of instruction assisted pupil's learning, while other research does suggest that when English is being taught incompetently or partially, it hampers and impairs the learning process (Balfour: 2000:p6).

Lesotho like many developing countries has relied almost exclusively on a system of national examinations. This is done to identify pupils who receive a high school leaving certificate to gain access to the university or other educational institutions. For one to 'pass' a combination of subjects is required: English, Mathematics, Sesotho and one of the science subjects together with an additional subject from the social sciences forms the basic requirement. There were three authorities responsible for conducting examinations in Lesotho. The Ministry of Education itself dealt with the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE). The Examinations Council handled Junior Certificate Examination (JCE) and the Cambridge University Syndicate catered for the senior secondary schools. Of the three examinations, perhaps the most critical from the nation's point of view was the PSLE. Not only did it measure the attainments of those who completed primary school, it was also the gauge of the foundation on which all other education and training was built (The Education Sector Survey: 1982:p21). Yet the argument was put to the task force that the PSLE was the least professional of the examinations.[1] The Examinations Council of Lesotho (ECOL) that dealt only with the external/public examinations assessed only one skill, namely the writing skill. The listening skill was once included but after many unsuccessesful attempts it was discontinued due to ineffectual administration. The National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) in is located The National Secondary English Panel (NSEP), that deals with the design and implementation of the curriculum in schools, tried to address the problems and inadequacies identified. This was done through the revision of the curriculum and this issue and its relevance to the study will be discussed in Chapter 3 of this research project.

---

[1] There was no examination section in the Ministry of Education, only the Examination Officer, who was compelled to function as little more than an administrator. Some unfortunate consequences are said to occur because of this unsatisfactory organisation.

The National Secondary English Panel (NSEP) had designed the English language curriculum such that all the skills are assessed. In their mission statement, the panel proposed that the syllabus should provide a range of relevant, systematic and graded objectives, knowledge, skills and attitudes that would enable the teacher to teach English language effectively promoting the four basic skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The ultimate result being the attainment of proficiency in the English language and competency in its use in all situations (Junior Secondary Syllabus: 2002:p5). Such an optimistic vision was deficient in at least one important aspect: only one skill was assessed by the Examinations Council of Lesotho (ECOL), namely the writing skill. Other skills' examinations were not incorporated into a public examinations system. The fact that only one skill was tested had resulted in the poor performance of English in examination scores. Within this context, even those teachers who were committed to communicative approaches, and in particular to spoken English, were forced to concentrate on teaching literacy skills as a matter of necessity (Harris: 2002:p29). My study is not based on how examinations are conducted as such, but this section reviews the most critical issues that have faced the education system since post-independence. My intention here has been to explore the disjunction between spoken and written English among second language (L2) pupils and this information will thus contribute towards the expansion of knowledge in this area of educational research.

1.4 Preview of other chapters

Ensuing chapters will elucidate the following:
Chapter 2 presents a review of the critical literature pertinent to this study. In the first section, key concepts and issues in language learning, are outlined in relation to the study. This section offers introductory definitions of key terms, which will be explored in detail in the following chapters. The next two sections outline the theoretical framework that forms the basis of this study. The final section focuses on different international contexts where English is a second language and a subject in schools.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodology and the design used in the project. These will include a situational overview of the research site and a motivation for qualitative research. The design of the research instruments: classroom observations; oral and written exercises and interviews for pupils; questionnaires and considerations of validity and reliability are discussed. The process by which the study came to being is also discussed in terms of how it was implemented in St Charles High School, Lesotho.

Chapter 4 presents an analysis of data emerging from questionnaires, lesson observations, oral and written exercises and pupil interviews. I also present a detailed discussion of my findings. The discussion focuses on pupils' and teachers' responses on what constitutes the disjunction between spoken and written English, as well as pupils' attitudes towards English as a subject and language of instruction are also addressed.

Chapter 5 draws the conclusions and recommendations of the study together, noting its most salient features and weaknesses, while still at the same time addressing the differences between spoken and written English as found in the context of Lesotho. Following Chapter 5 are the bibliography and appendices. The latter comprises questionnaires for pupils and teachers, sample of interviews with pupils, sample of lesson observations, oral and written English exercises, and finally pupils' raw scores, all of which are presented sequentially.

Finally, it is important to note that the idea of my study was to explore the disjunction between spoken and written English and to achieve an understanding of where problems arise for second language learners. There may be more to learning a second language in a school setting (especially when that language is the language of instruction) than simply learning how to speak the language well. In the next chapter problems and theories with English as a medium of instruction in an international context will be reviewed.

CHAPTER 2   RESEARCH ON SPOKEN AND WRITTEN ENGLISH

Introduction

After a brief discussion of the history of English as a second language and subject in Lesotho schools in Chapter 1, this chapter will provide a context for subsequent discussions. A great deal of research has been done on language learning and communicative competence. The disjunction between spoken and written English among second language (L2) learners at St Charles is explored referring mainly to Vygotsky and Cummins' theories. Cummins and others speak of the 'linguistic facade,' whereby learners appear to be fluent in a language because of their oral skills but have not mastered the more disembedded and decontextualised aspects of the language (O'Connor & Michaels: 1996:p65). In this chapter these issues are explored with reference to the theories of Chomsky, Hymes and Krashen. But first, key concepts and issues in second language learning will be defined. The next two sections of this chapter will outline the theoretical framework that informs my research project. Problems of English as a medium of instruction and subject in different international contexts are discussed. Chapter 2 is also concerned with the experience of other countries that use English as a language. These countries are referred to because of the similarity between the problems they face and those facing second language learners in Lesotho.

2.1 Key concepts and issues in second language learning

This section provides an overview of key concepts and issues in the exploration of the disjunction between spoken and written English among second language learners. Second language acquisition is a complex process, involving many interrelated factors.

2.1.1. A second language

First, calling a language 'second' implies that it is acquired later than a first language. A second language is a language acquired in an environment where the language is spoken natively (mother tongue). For example, a Mosotho child acquiring English in England would be acquiring it as a second language. However, if he or she were studying English in a classroom in Lesotho,

10

(that is outside of an environment where the second language is spoken natively), he or she would be acquiring it as a foreign language. In which environment the acquisition takes place is often related to the first variable, whether it takes place in a classroom or not, since foreign languages usually require instruction whereas second language can often be 'picked up' from the environment. In the field of second language acquisition, and in this research project, I shall refer to both as instances of second language acquisition, taking up the differential effects of the two settings in the next section of this chapter.

2.1.2. Second language acquisition

According to Ellis (1985:p5) second language acquisition is the study of how learners learn an additional language after they have acquired their mother tongue. Second language acquisition is used as a general term that embraces both untutored (or 'naturalistic') acquisition and tutored (or 'classroom') acquisition. Central to this research project, is the meaning that second language acquisition refers to all the aspects of language that the learner needs to master. However, the focus is on how learners acquire the ability to communicate and use their knowledge to communicate their ideas. This study will therefore explore both what seems to be invariable and what is apparently variable about spoken and written English. The term 'acquisition' is used to refer to 'picking up' a second language through exposure, whereas the term 'learning' is used to refer to the conscious study of a second language mostly conducted in a classroom situation (Ellis: 1995:p6).

2.1.3. Communicative Competence

Chomsky (1965) made the distinction between a speaker's underlying mental representation of the grammatical rules of a language (competence) and the speaker's use of the language in real-life situations (performance). Hymes (1971) was responsible for extending Chomsky's largely syntactic notion of competence to cover the rules that a speaker uses to construct communicatively appropriate utterances. This is known as Communicative Competence. However, because the rules the learner has internalised are not open to direct inspection, it has been necessary to examine how the learner performs, thus the utterances that the learner produces are treated as windows through which the internalised rule system can be viewed (Ellis: 1985:p5). In one sense, therefore, this research project explores the difference between spoken

11

and written English amongst second language pupils; it looks at results of pupils' oral and written English exercises, interviews, questionnaires and lesson observations and these were treated as evidence. In order to explore the disjunction between spoken and written English in this study, it was necessary to consider all the factors discussed in this section.

2.2 Theories of Language acquisition

There are many different approaches to the study of second and foreign language learning. These approaches range from the early beginnings of Contrastive Analysis (Weinreich: 1953) to the behaviourist views of Skinner (1957) to theories of Principles and Parameters (Chomsky: 1959) and to the social perspective on language learning (Schumann: 1978). Over time, a number of theories of second language (L2) learning have evolved, each emphasizing a particular range of factors that were at that time regarded as having most influence on the processes and effectiveness of language learning. Overviews of language learning research such as those by McLaughlin (1985), Cook (1993), and Ellis (1994) summarize the wide range of approaches to language learning. For the purpose of my research project, I have selected a few aspects of Vygotsky, Cummins, Chomsky and Hymes's theories, which are directly relevant to my project.

A theory of language acquisition was put forward by Chomsky (1959). He believed that language acquisition was rule-governed. He further suggested that aspects of language acquisition play an important role in learning to read. Many children who struggle with reading also have trouble with oral or spoken language. Behaviourists see errors as first language habits interfere with the acquisition of second language habits. They argue that if there are differences between the two languages that the learner has to learn, acquisition will be more difficult. This happens especially if the mother tongue (L1) has a different (or no) system of classification. This finding supports the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (Lado: 1957) in that L1 has a definite bearing on the learning of L2. While these developments in language acquisition theory are important, Vygotsky and Cummins' theories that are discussed in the following paragraphs informed my research project. These theories are relevant in exploring the disjunction between spoken and written English among second language (L2) learners as they both make reference to acquisition of first and second language and to the fact that conversational proficiency develops more quickly than academic proficiency.

12

Cummins (in Shoebottom: 2001:p1) made the distinction between two differing kinds of language proficiency. BICS are Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills; these are the 'surface' skills of listening and speaking, which are typically acquired quickly by many learners. CALP is Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency, and, as the name suggests, is the basis for a learner's ability to cope with the academic demands placed upon them in the various subjects. Cummins states that while many children develop native speaker fluency (that is BICS) within two years of immersion in the target language, it takes between 5-7 years for a child to be working on a level with native speakers as far as academic language is concerned. This means as teachers, we should not assume that non-native speakers who have attained a high degree of fluency and accuracy in everyday spoken English have the corresponding academic language proficiency. Knowledge of a language, therefore, involves knowing both grammatically and socially appropriate sentences (Hymes: 1971 in Pride *et al*: 1972).

Vygotsky (1934/1962b) asserts that, conversational proficiency is generally found to be developmentally prior and acquired more quickly than academic proficiency. (Cummins and Swain: 1986, Collier: 1989). In other words, the problem of moving from oral to written language is compounded for many second language learners by the problem of moving from L1 to L2 and it may be further compounded if the home culture is an essentially oral one (Cook-Gumperz & Gumperz: 1981) in Freedman (1985). This is supported by the fact that it is widely acknowledged that an explanation of language proficiency is incomplete without a language comparison between the target language (L2) on the one hand, and the mother tongue (L1) on the other. Although Hymes accepts the distinction between competence and performance, he chooses to study performance. He formulates a concept of communicative competence to take into account the speaker's ability to use language in ways that are grammatically acceptable and appropriate to that situation. Hymes's theory is relevant to this research project because he states that acquiring 'communicative competence' entails acquiring both a grammatical knowledge of a language and the ability to use language within appropriate social contexts.

2.2.1. Teachers' experiences with conversational and academic proficiency
The issues of how language proficiency relates to academic achievement are relevant to the educational development of any developing or developed country. Research conducted

internationally indicates that pupils who learn English as a second language in school do not perform well, while pupils who are exposed to English at primary level nonetheless do poorly in their academic work. These seemingly contradictory findings have long puzzled educators and have become more salient in many parts of the world where English is used as a second language. Out of the huge amount of research on second language learning, I have selected studies, which are useful to an analysis of the disjunction between spoken and written English among second language (L2) learners at St Charles High School. Many of the studies to be reviewed in the next section focus on the problems learners have in learning English as a second language and subject and therefore are highly relevant to the Lesotho context where English is a second language and medium of instruction in schools.

Ingvarsdottir in McKay (1995) focussed attention on pupils' academic performance in English to the fact that in Iceland, English is a second language. Teachers do share their experiences thus; in class, it is fair to say that listening and reading comprehension is good, speaking is also fluent, at least as long as the topic is not too complicated. Writing is more problematic though. Most pupils find fluency more important than accuracy (McKay: 1995:p20-21). Research conducted by Ingvarsdottir in Iceland among second language (L2) learners of English is relevant for my proposed study in that pupils in most schools in Lesotho easily impress teachers with their fluency, especially those who attended English medium schools. This situation is similar to that of Iceland in the sense that when spoken to, pupil's command of English sounds fine. But before the year is over the very pupil's academic performance drops and Cummins (1992) suggests that proficiency in face-to-face communication does not imply proficiency in the more complex language needed in many classroom activities. Silva (1996) states that as was the case in most colonies, English was brought to South Africa during the 19th century and like most countries, much of the value attached to English resides in its status as an international language. While parents insist on education in English for their children, the poor use of English as a medium of instruction and the poor performance of learners in English as a subject hampers the wider educational process and these issues will be discussed in the next paragraph.

In South Africa, for example, English has come to be seen by many people as the 'language of power' even though there are many other languages spoken. People, who are fluent in English and who use English effectively and appropriately in social, political and educational contexts, are often considered more advantaged and more powerful than those who cannot. For this reason, many non-mother tongue speakers of English strive to learn to speak English even though they face many difficulties doing so. Kapp conducted a study on the role and status of English at a former DET school. This study is similar and relevant to my research project as she was also concerned with attitudes to English and the language practices of the senior high school students of Grade 11, who used English as a medium of instruction and second language. The findings in her study were such that "despite the fact that students often attributed failure in examinations to a lack of proficiency in English, the dominant view was that English should be their medium of instruction at school"(Kapp: 2000:p237).

The Examinations Council of Lesotho (ECOL) on Friday, February 14, 2003 released the 2002 Cambridge Overseas School Certificate (COSC) results and 208 (2.9 %) candidates obtained first class, which is higher than that of 2001 by 39 candidates. According to ECOL's report, 3, 579 candidates met the requirements of the COSC and the figure surpassed that of 2001 by 460 candidates. Three thousand, four hundred and sixty seven (3,467) learners obtained the General Certificate of Education because they failed English language or did not get a credit in any of the subjects they passed, and did not meet the grouping requirements of School Certificate examination and their aggregate was higher than 45 and they could not be admitted in any institution of higher learning. Candidates still lack practical experience, which they ought to gain through practical work. They have problems with interpretation of data presented in the form of diagrams and tables. They are unable to analyze data and derive information from it. Questions demanding candidates to apply science content in everyday life contexts still posed problems to candidates, "ECOL's report stated. "This is a skill that needs to be developed in learners very early in their Mathematical courses, as early as primary school level," the report added (Mopheme: http://allafrica.com/stories/20030220:p1).

Moving from primary schools and high schools to institutions of higher education, in studies conducted on immigrant students in California, it was discovered that teachers often assumed that once students could converse comfortably in English, they were in full control of the language. They assumed that a student's ability in everyday oral communication was a valid measure of his or her competence to use the language in a wide variety of settings, including demanding academic work. However, gaps exist between everyday and academic language use, for first language as well as second language speakers (Cazden: 1988; Heath: 1983). O'Malley and Chamot (1990) report on students' perceptions of English at the University of California at Berkley. Students of English as a second language (ESL) study other subjects within the mainstream classroom and they experience difficulties. These students may have developed social communicative skills, either in class or through living in the English-speaking community, but they experience problems in using English in a more academic context in other areas of the curriculum as they move through the educational system.

Research conducted among non-native speakers studying English literature at degree level in 1995 in Kwazulu-Natal indicated that the elite group of black South African University entrants from so-called English medium schools were not adequately prepared for the language and writing demands of tertiary education (Balfour: 1995). These findings imply that the quality of school instruction, associated with communicative language teaching of English was inadequate and required further investigation (Balfour: 2000:p6). Subsequently, Moletsane (2001) conducted a study at the University of Natal, Durban among a group of students who had enrolled in *issues in teacher education and development* a module taught in the first semester of 2001. These students came from diverse educational and social backgrounds. Some of the members of the group English was not their mother tongue but had been the language of instruction during their own student years and it has been the language of instruction during their tenure as teachers. However, Moletsane in her findings claims that the majority of students (of all races) in educational programmes seem unable to demonstrate adequate writing skills and to represent the realities of their teaching environment in the school, let alone be critical about or to transform them.

2.2.2.The progress of English in the curriculum

Research from other contexts in Africa also illuminates the problematic nature of English as a medium of instruction and as a subject for second language learners. Agbogah (2002) in his article, *"Bad English-A combination of factors"*, explores the use of English as the official language in Ghana. As found elsewhere in Africa English is the language studied and used at all levels of education. There is no progression without a pass in English, since it is a compulsory subject at the first and second levels of education. Although English is significant in the educational system, there have been complaints in recent times about the rate of failure of pupils in English language at all levels of school examinations. The reports of the chief examiner of the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) attest to this fact every year (Agbogah: 2002:p1-2). Based on my experience as a teacher and a marker in the junior certificate Examinations in Lesotho, I have observed that many students could not present their writing in clear academic English. As the years went by, I witnessed a steady fall in the standard of the pupils' English in Lesotho. Out of the theoretical approaches and perspectives outlined in this chapter, there is none that uniquely illuminates the project at hand. Nevertheless, if the intention is to explore the disjunction between spoken and written English and critically examine the data collected, there is a need to have an informed position from which to approach this. The theories described above collectively provide a theoretical base from which to start.

2.3 Conclusion

In Chapter 1, I explored the introduction of English as a subject and medium of instruction in countries that use English as a second language. In Chapter 2, the review of the literature reveals challenges and misconceptions that were experienced through the processes of implementing English in the curriculum. These were evident in the poor academic achievement of pupils in English as a subject. This chapter is intended to provide a context for the chapters that follow. The brief review of second language learning theories is meant as a framework for exploring the disjunction between spoken and written English among second language learners in this research project. In the next chapter, I provide the description of the methodology that I have used in collecting data for my study.

CHAPTER 3   RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This research project seeks to problematise and explore the disjunction between spoken and written English among second language learners at St Charles High School, Lesotho. I set out to investigate the following research questions:

a) To what extent may the disjunction between spoken and written English among second language (L2) learners be attributed to language change (from L1 to L2)?

b) Do popular notions of fluency in English language form a sufficient basis to describe learners as competent in English (L2)?

c) Why do pupils struggle to express themselves in clear academic English?

The first section in this chapter outlines the strategies that were devised to gain access to the school and to gain co-operation of teachers and pupils in relation to the project. In the second section, the case study approach that was specifically adapted for this research project is discussed. In the third section, research instruments, which were developed to investigate and explore the disjunction between spoken and written English, are described. As there were no standardised or national equivalent exercises, short oral and written English exercises were developed locally in close collaboration with teachers. The aim was to provide data about pupils' oral and written English proficiency. These exercises are explained in detail in sections to follow. The aims of using questionnaires to highlight pupils' written and spoken English proficiency are also discussed in the third section. The intention was to explore how the study sought to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the disjunction between spoken and written English. In Figure 2 the design of the study is rendered graphically. Each component of this figure will be explained in this chapter.

Figure 2: The research design used for the study at St Charles High School.

PHASE 1

Establishing a database.
Access and selection of sample.

PHASE 2

Trial and implementation of oral and written English exercises.

Focus groups interviews.

Design lesson observation.

Administering questionnaires to pupils

Pupils' assessment questionnaires (for teachers).

PHASE 3

Collate results from the instruments
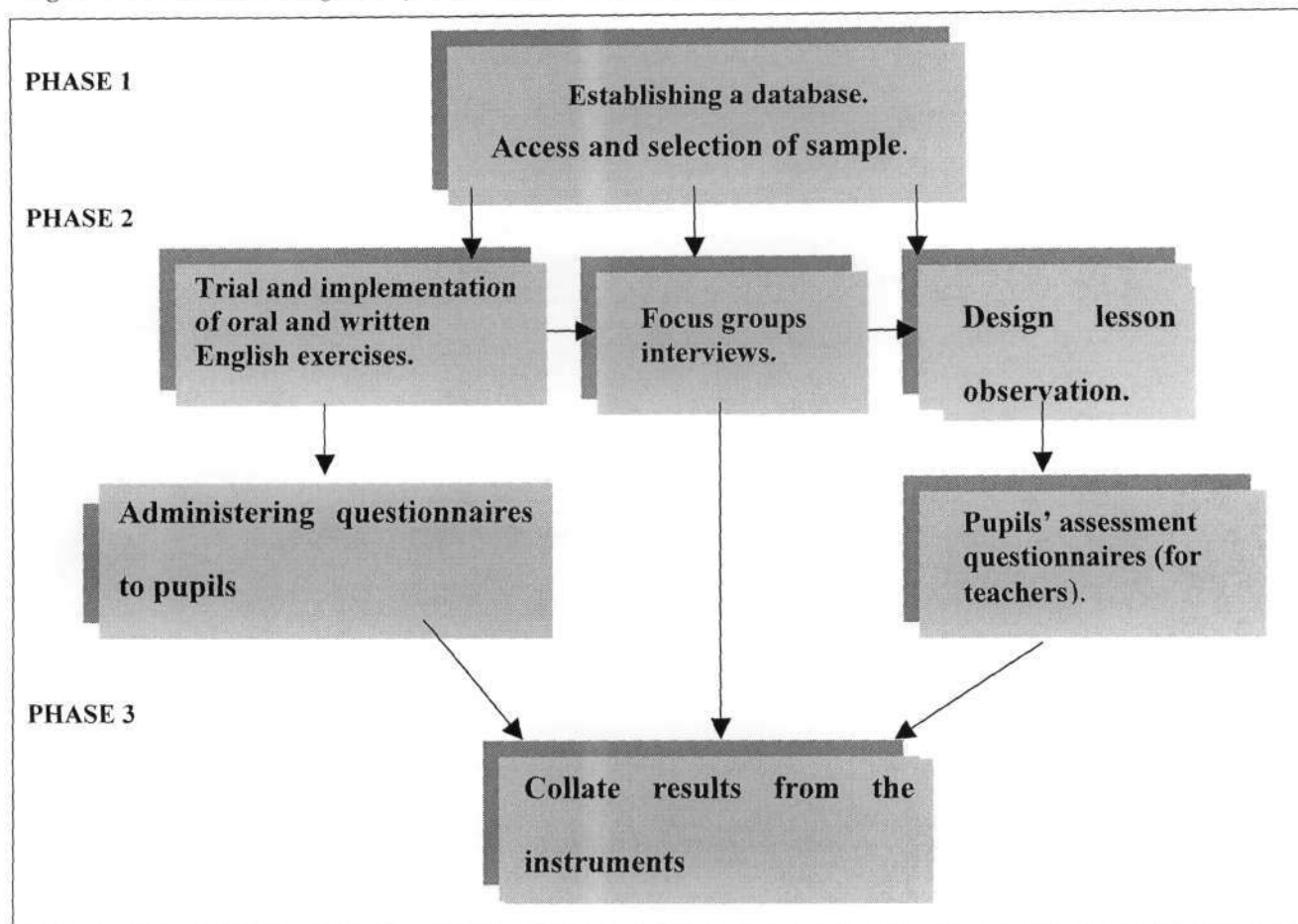
3.1 The design and implementation of the project

Initially the project required the design of three components (as displayed in Figure 2). First, the database had to be established. This consisted of the selection of pupils who participated in the study. The selection was based on these criteria: age, gender, and ability. The second phase consisted of the design and usage of lesson observations, the development of oral and written English exercises, and interviews with selected pupils. Administering questionnaires for pupils and teachers later followed these activities. Questionnaires were piloted and adjusted before implementation. The third phase of the project comprised of the collation of pupils' scores in the proficiency exercises and questionnaires. Information collected was put together in the form of a written summary. These were used to describe the disjunction between spoken and written English. Prior to entering the school it was necessary to conceptualise the ideal implementation of the project.

19

The other aspect of design was the envisaged form of implementation. If the research were to be implemented successfully, it would need a form that would address the questions effectively. A number of related concerns were anticipated before the implementation of the study. First, the need for a continued observation of pupils and English lessons was a concern if pupils' spoken and written English was to be evaluated. Second, the researcher needed to 'plan' time for any unforeseen events (public holidays, church events for example, Fatima pilgrimage, absenteeism, and rainy days). At this point a schedule of work (in Figure 3) had to be designed as the research project itself had to be effectively organised, this included gaining access to the school, implementation of the methodology outlined in this chapter and evaluation of the data collected.

Figure 3: The schedule of work at St Charles High School (Developed in 2002).

Phase 1	JULY – AUGUST: Gaining Access.
1	Gaining access to the school: Obtaining permission from the principal.
2	Team identification: Meet with principal/ teachers to explain project and select sample.
3	Observation of lessons.
Phase 2	SEPTEMBER –OCTOBER: Implementation.
1	Time: Negotiation with teachers for the time to use for the activities (point 2, 3 and 4).
2	Short oral exercise for the pupils.
3	Short written English exercise.
4	Focus groups interviews.
5	Questionnaires for pupils.
6	Teacher's assessment of pupils' language proficiency questionnaires.
Phase 3	NOVEMBER - DECEMBER: Closure.
1	Collection of material: Tentative indications of findings.
2	Evaluation of all the material collected.

Contact with the teachers and pupils was necessary if I was to establish a relationship of trust and credibility, crucial factors that could affect the data negatively. In terms of these concerns, the case study appeared to offer the best possibility of understanding the disjunction between spoken and written English among pupils for the following reason. The scope of a case study would enable the in-depth investigation of specific issues over a sustained period within a clearly defined context. For example, since the study was concerned with the disjunction between spoken and written English it required a long period of collaboration with the teachers and regular observations of the same sample of pupils. The next section outlines the methodological approach that was adopted for this research project.

3.2 Methodology

In order to understand the disjunction between spoken and written English among second language learners at St Charles, a case study approach was chosen because the phenomenon under study needed a sensitive understanding of a 'real' context in which thorough work could be done with pupils over a period.

3.2.1.The case study: a rationale

Yin's (1988) definition of a case study seemed apposite. Yin's definition of case study is an empirical inquiry that...

- investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context; when
- the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not evident; and in which
- multiple sources of evidence are used (1988:p23).

I found the case study approach of great value since in qualitative research the researcher selects a particular case, rather than a variable, through which the researcher gains an understanding of a broader phenomenon.

According to Cohen *et al.* "case studies can establish cause and effect...one of their strengths is that they observe effects in real context, recognising that context is a powerful determinant of both cause and effect" (2001:p181). Miles and Huberman think of a case as "a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context" (1994:p25). They argue that if the phenomenon being studied is not intrinsically bounded, then it is not a case. One technique for assessing 'boundedness' is to ask how finite the data collection will be; whether there is a limit to the number of people involved who could be interviewed. If there is no end, actually or theoretically, to the number of people who could be interviewed or to observations that could be conducted, then the phenomenon is not bounded enough to qualify as a case. In this study, a Grade 11 classroom and pupils served as a bounded community.

Unlike experimental, survey, or historical research, a case study does not claim any particular methods for data collection or data analysis. Any and all methods of gathering data, from testing to interviewing, can be used in a case study, although certain techniques are used more than others. By concentrating on a single phenomenon or entity (the case) the researcher aims to explore the interaction of significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon. As Yin observes, "the case study is a design particularly suited to situations in which it is impossible to separate the phenomenon's variables from the context" (1988:p24). Following Yin's definition, my case study design took as given the need to explore the disjunction between spoken and written English within a particular school community. The aim was therefore to explore the factors that brought about the disjunction between spoken and written English among second language (L2) learners. Instruments were developed to collect as much data as possible on speaking and writing processes. The pilot phase and adjustments will be discussed later in the chapter but first I intend to discuss the location and selection of the population used in this research project.

3.2.2. Locating site and sample

Contact with the school was initiated in July 2002, though the formal implementation of the project began in September. Formal access to St Charles High was gained through a series of preliminary meetings with the Principal and the English teachers. The Principal approached the Head and members of the English Department and later the researcher met with the English Department for the necessary arrangements and approval of the study. It was hoped that pupils would be observed, be able to complete the questionnaires, and written and oral English exercises. Once access had been granted, I then began to design and define the implementation of the project.

St Charles High School is situated in Botha-Bothe, in Lesotho. It is a co-educational school catering for the Grade 8 to Grade 12 pupils. The school serves approximately six hundred pupils, all Sesotho speakers. I had been employed in a full-time capacity, as a teacher since July 1995. This had enabled me to establish a rapport with the pupils over the years at the school. St Charles High School was an obvious choice as a site for this research because of my familiarity with and access to the school. Furthermore, St Charles High School served, in 1997, as a pilot school together with another fourteen schools throughout Lesotho in testing the revised Junior

Secondary English Syllabus that was designed by the National Secondary English Panel (NSEP). This new syllabus embraced the recommendations made by the Task Force and NESP at a National Seminar on Lesotho Secondary Education Policy and Localisation of the O'level Curriculum[2]. The main concern of The National Secondary English Panel (NSEP) was to promote relevant knowledge, skills, and attitudes in the country's educational arena. Since St Charles High School, where the revised English syllabus was piloted, is not in an urban area, the school represented a useful contrast to its urban equivalents. Having secured a site for my research project, I then set out to select pupils I was to work with from two Grade 11 classes. Before the sample selection can be discussed, it must be brought to the attention of the reader that Grade 11 classes were streamed according to subject choice, Grade 11A is a *Humanities* class while Grade 11B is a *Science* class, and the selection of the sample was conducted with this in mind.

There are two ways of choosing samples: random and non-random sampling. With stratified random sampling, the population is split into layers or strata, on the basis of variables chosen by the researcher, such as gender, age and ability (White: 2000:p61). The sample was selected using stratified random sampling in order to obtain a sample representative of the whole population. Cohen *et al.* (2001:p101) suggest that stratified random sampling is a useful blend of randomisation and categorization, thereby enabling both quantitative and qualitative pieces of research to be undertaken in selecting a sample group. The criteria used for selection was that pupils should have had the experience of two national examinations. A second criteria was that the sample should be representative of the whole Grade 11 population, that is Grade 11A (*Humanities*) and Grade 11B (*Science*).

Grade 11 pupils were selected because they had the experience of two national examinations behind them (Grade 7 and Grade 10 external Examinations)[3]. The sample group used for this study, comprised twelve boys and twelve girls aged between thirteen and sixteen of mixed ability

---

[2] The high school phase is completed in two years after junior certificate and pupils sit for an examination administered by the Cambridge Overseas Examinations Syndicate. Those who complete this phase are awarded an Ordinary Level Certificate known as Cambridge Overseas Schools Certificate, which is a gateway to tertiary education. After the seminar, the aim was to localise the design and marking of the high school examinations.

[3] Grade 7 and Grade 10 Examinations are important because they do not only measure the attainment of those who leave primary (Grade7) and secondary (Grade 10) school but also evaluate the foundation on which all other education is built on.

from both classes. It was to this group that short oral and written English exercises and questionnaires were administered. Interviews and lesson observations were also conducted. In addition to this, two English teachers also formed part of the sample (the home language for both pupils and teachers was Sesotho). The next section in this chapter deals with an important part of the research project framework, an orientation towards qualitative research methods. Its relevance to this case study will also be discussed.

3.2.3.Assumptions of a qualitative approach

A qualitative orientation underpins the methodology of this research project. The choice of such an approach stems from the research questions stated in the introduction of this chapter; those questions, (a) and (b) in particular, require a qualitative focus since it is not possible in a real life school context to isolate variables affecting learning and language perceptions. I opted mainly for qualitative research because McMillan and Schumacher (2001) show that the qualitative researcher views reality as multi-layered, interactive, and a shared social experience that can be studied from the participants' perspective with either interactive techniques for example, observations and interviews or non-interactive techniques for example, use of historical documents. While there are different qualitative techniques that can be used to provide verbal descriptions of the study at hand, the goal of each is to capture the richness and complexity of behaviour that occurs in the natural setting. The investigation was conceptualised as is described in paragraphs to follow.

Classroom observations, were conducted using a systematic format of recording data, were to be verified and extended beyond the classroom by means of questionnaires requiring pupils to self-report on their English language skills. A further questionnaire was designed for teachers to assess pupils' overall English language ability. Data gained from those served as a starting point from which to investigate the disjunction between spoken and written English. Since pupils' speaking and writing skills were crucial to an understanding of the disjunction of spoken and written English, the second phase, of research consisted of the development and implementation of oral and written English exercises and interviews. In this phase, information on pupils' communicative skills and attitudes towards English were collected. Each of these qualitative techniques is discussed in the ensuing sections.

24

In this section, the design and methodology of the project are described in terms of how the project was implemented in Lesotho. More importantly, that ideal had to undergo certain adaptations in order to be feasible in a real life situation. Although oral and written English exercises were designed and instruments for the collection of data developed, it would have been neither possible, nor desirable, to implement these without the proper piloting of instruments and cooperation of teachers and pupils. In an attempt to include elements of both quantitative and qualitative research methods, and provide opportunities for cross-referencing, to create a more nuanced profile of the research context, I employed the use of research instruments described in the next section.

3.3 Research Instruments: design and assumptions

In this section, I have described the assumptions and design of the instruments, which were necessary to conduct research on pupils and teachers' perceptions regarding the disjunction between spoken and written English in Lesotho High Schools. Since my study aimed to investigate classroom dynamics and English usage, a non-participant observation instrument was needed. This meant that the researcher therefore did not take part in the lesson but listened and observed the classroom interaction. The purpose of my observation instrument was to 'uncover constructions' and to facilitate immersing oneself in and understanding the context (Ely: 1991:p51). In this way I aimed to construct an in-depth understanding of classroom dynamics in order to ascertain what was valid and consequential for the study.

Ely (1991:p45) when referring to Walcott (1988) identifies three types of participant observation styles: active, privileged and limited. For the purpose of this study, I opted for both a 'privileged' and 'limited' style. A privileged observer is someone who is known and trusted in the setting and has easy access to information about the context. Since my role was only to observe the English lesson and not actively participate in the lesson, my participant observation style was 'limited'. The English language skills that were observed during lessons are shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Language skills that were assessed during the observed lessons.

1) Vocabulary
2) Reading skill
3) Understanding written English
4) Write in English

(Extract from Appendix F: Lesson observation)

During lesson observations, only pupil-teacher and pupil-pupil interactions were observed. Pupils' attitudes and perceptions also formed the basic part of this study. The research instrument designed specifically to obtain information on pupils' attitudes towards the disjunction between spoken and written English is reviewed in the next section.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) argue that qualitative research allows for the incorporation of a range of techniques and instruments to gather data. One of the instruments that qualitative research may employ is the questionnaire. Hitchcock and Hughes (1995:p95-6) suggest that there is no 'best method', and that a researcher must decide on the most appropriate methods that are suitable to the research questions being explored. I chose the questionnaire on the basis that it would supplement my qualitative findings of the research.

The questionnaire was designed primarily to gauge pupils' existing awareness of the disjunction between spoken and written English. In Figure 5 are some of the features that characterised pupils' questionnaire design, which was divided into three themes (please see Appendix: A for a detailed description of the pupil questionnaire).

Figure 5: Sample Questions from pupils' Questionnaire.

How easy is it to do these things in English	*very easy*	*quite easy*	*quite hard*	*very hard*
Spoken English language				
1) Discussion in class?				
2) Expressing opinions?				
Reading in English				
1) Reading carefully to understand the story?				
2) Reading quickly?				
Written English				
1) Writing grammatically correct answers?				
2) Spelling and punctuation?				

(Extract from Appendix A: Pupils' Questionnaire)

Teachers' questionnaires used in this study were adapted from an existing instrument used in Balfour (1995) and Weir and Roberts (1994). Teachers' assessment of pupils' language proficiency questionnaire were divided into three themes: assessment on spoken language, written English, and pupils' oral English skills to enable easy cross-referencing. Teachers were to tick appropriate boxes on questionnaires, which were labelled with pupils' names. Please refer to Appendix B for a detailed review of the questionnaire. Figure 6 is an extract from the teacher questionnaire.

Figure 6: Sample Questions from the Teachers' assessment of pupils' language proficiency Questionnaire.

Please indicate how much difficulty the pupil has in each of the following	H	M	L	N	DK
1) Understanding spoken descriptions or instructions.					
2) Reading carefully to understand all information in the text.					
3) Writing grammatically correct sentences.					
4) Punctuating correctly, what the pupil has written					

*Key: **H**: great difficulty **M**: some difficulty **L**: very little difficulty **DK**: don't know
(Extract from Appendix B: Teachers' Questionnaire)

The data collected was useful in providing me with sufficient information to enable me to formulate a reasonable account of pupils and teachers' perceptions regarding the disjunction between spoken and written English. A decision was taken before the study to make the questionnaires as short as possible so that pupils would be able to complete them. At this point, mention must be made of the fact that the questions were oriented, towards the school experiences of pupils as far as English is concerned. This was done intentionally to determine the pupils' attitude towards English. In Figure 7 are some of the attitudinal questions that are reflected in pupils' questionnaire.

Figure 7: Attitudinal Questions from pupils' Questionnaire.

What stops you from joining a discussion?

I am shy about using English in front of the students.	
I do not feel good in using English in class.	
The teacher favours discussion with good English speakers.	
The teacher does not give me a chance to speak.	

(Extract from Appendix A: Pupils' Questionnaire)

Data collected through the questionnaire instrument was corroborated with data collected from oral and written English exercises. These exercises are outlined in the next section.

3.3.1.Locally developed oral and written English exercises

In order to investigate pupils' oral performance, the researcher designed an oral exercise, as there was no public oral examination. The focus of the oral and written English exercises was on pupils' oral ability and overall English proficiency. The data to be gathered from oral and written English exercises were compared to explore the disjunction between spoken and written English among pupils. A picture-based conversation (Oral exercise) was conducted between the researcher and the pupils. Pupils were given a picture; which had a series of drawings telling a story (Figure 8 is an extract from Appendix D, pupils' oral English exercise.). Then a number of factual questions based on the details in the picture were asked. The conversation was broadened by asking more general questions still related in some way to the picture The activities for the oral exercise were adapted from Nunan (1993), and the findings will be discussed in Chapter 4. Their performance was measured using a scale developed by Murphy-Judy (1997) (Appendix H oral exercise guidelines).

Figure 8: Oral exercise adapted and designed for pupils.
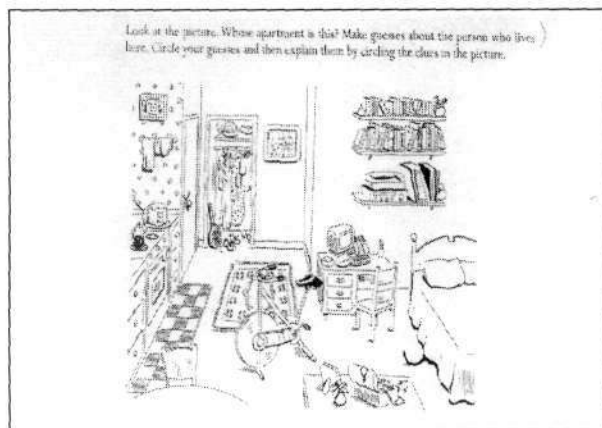
(Extract from Appendix D: Pupils' oral exercise)

Activities for the written English exercises were taken from (*English Made Easy*: revised: 1991). This is a textbook used for grammar and comprehension exercises. In order to ensure that these exercises were appropriate to the level of Grade 11, they were re-developed by the researcher and modified by the supervisor and finally assessed by the teachers in two schools before implementation. The written English exercise was intended to cover all aspects of the prescribed syllabus and was drawn from the content already familiar to pupils while focus in the oral

28

English exercise was on spoken language. In Figure 9 are some of the questions that pupils had to answer after reading the comprehension.

Figure 9:Some of the Questions on pupils' written exercise.

> 1. a) How can one flood a room with electricity?
>
>   b) How can huge electricity motors be started?
>
> 2. Which word tells us?
>
>   a) That generators are big machines.
>
>   b) That lifts move quickly.
>
> 3. Name five of the things that we can do with a single unit of electricity.

(*Extract from Appendix C: Pupils' written exercise*)

Figure 10 outlines some of the skills that were assessed in the oral and written English exercises. To view a detailed format of the said English exercises please refer to Appendices C and D respectively.

Figure 10: English skills that were assessed.

Oral English exercise	Written English exercise
The ability to carry on a conversation.	Whether pupils could write quickly and clearly.
To speak easily and fluently.	Read carefully to understand the story.
To respond without undue delay.	Get main points from the story.
To understand and be understood.	Make notes from the text.
	Write grammatically correct answers.

In order to corroborate data collected from questionnaires and oral and written English exercises I chose focus group interviews, which are discussed in the following section.

3.3.2.Focus group interviews

Kreuger (1988:p18) defines a focus group as a "carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions in a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment." Morgan (1988) asserts that deciding on the size of the group needs careful planning (if too small, intra-group dynamics exert a disproportionate effect; if too large, and the group becomes unwieldy and hard to manage, it fragments). Morgan (1988: p43) suggests between four and twelve people per group. In my study, twenty-four Grade 11 pupils, gender-balanced and of mixed ability, were selected to discuss the disjunction between spoken and written English among second language learners.

Among the advantages of group interviews, the literature suggests, that groups have a 'synergistic effect', suggesting that participants can build on each other's responses (Morgan: 1998 in Cohen *et al*: 2001). The responses are in-depth and in pupils' own words. It is from the interaction of the group that data emerges. However, one of the disadvantages of focus group interviews is that groups may be subjected to 'a herd instinct'- an opinionated individual may dominate the group. Bearing this disadvantage in mind, and in keeping with the central concern of the study, focus group interviews were chosen for this research project because focus groups are said to bring together a specifically chosen sector of the population to discuss a particular given theme or topic. Morgan (1988) and Krueger (1988) suggest that focus groups interviews are useful to triangulate with questionnaires and lesson observations. Figure 11 shows some of the questions that were asked during the interview session.

Figure 11: Sample Questions from pupil interviews.

| 1. Do you think it is important to learn English language? |
| 2. Do you experience any difficulties or problems with English as a medium of instruction? |
| 3. Which language do you speak socially? |
| 4. Do you enjoy reading? |
| 5. Which language do you use when discussing schoolwork? |

(Extract from Appendix G: Pupils' interview Questions)

Please refer to Appendix G for a more detailed description. In the next section, the triangulation of the instruments is discussed.

3.3.3. Validity and reliability of instruments

Reliability and validity are important aspects of design shared by qualitative and quantitative researchers. The study's integrity depends on relevant instruments (tests, lesson observations, questionnaires and interviews) in measuring the phenomena under study accurately. These instruments are expected to highlight problems that contribute to the disjunction between spoken and written English among second language (L2) learners. However, then it is anticipated that they may not be objective because they could be affected by a number of factors: regarding lesson observation, the 'observer effect' (Weir and Roberts: 1994) might occur and influence the behaviour of the teachers and learners. Henerson *et al* argue that at times the respondents may deliberately disclose wrong data consistently and they emphasize the limitation of looking at reliability by saying that:

respondents have an idea of which answers are socially desirable
not wishing to appear deviant, they hide their true feelings and bend
their answers to conform to a model of how they ought to answer
(1987:p135).

An attitude of this nature can influence the responses. Henerson *et al.* (1987) define validity as
the use of instruments used, whether they can measure the phenomenon under study. They point
out that, unlike reliability, validity is concerned with authenticity of data and the data-gathering
tool. Oppenheim (1992:p145) argues that validity is more important than reliability because a
measure can be highly reliable and yet poor in validity. Similarly, a measure cannot have
excellent validity if it is not also reliable. However, Verma and Beard (1981:p87) propose that
even though validity is important, there is no absolutely valid technique. In this research project
it was important to strive as much as possible to enhance the validity of the research
methodology and data-gathering techniques. One of the characteristic features of case studies is
that they employ a variety of different techniques; these include questionnaires, interviews, and
lesson observations and in this study, oral and written English exercises were also included.
White (2000:p67) asserts that if the problem is studied using both qualitative and quantitative
methods, there arises the need for *method triangulation,* which is discussed in the following
section.

3.3.4. Triangulation of instruments

Triangulation helps reveal the richness and diversity of information collected as this increases
the sophistication and rigor of data collection and analysis. Although triangulation has
limitations because human behaviour is complex, I chose to use the 'triangulation' technique to
establish the validity and reliability of my study. Inputs attained from these various instruments
were cross-referenced to establish the convergence of data and its reliability. It must be borne in
mind that this seemingly complex qualitative research method was used to provide a database for
understanding the disjunction between spoken and written English among pupils at St Charles
High School, Lesotho. To ensure clarity (and thus validity) on each item on questionnaires and
interview questions, they were first piloted. The next section describes the pilot phase.

3.4 Piloting the instruments

In order to assess the validity of the questionnaires and interview questions, and check the nature of the instruments themselves, Anderson (1990) recommends that piloting of instruments be carried out. Oppenheim (1992:p147) argues that wording is a particularly important factor in attitudinal questions rather than factual questions. While Silverman (1993) suggests that it is important for each interviewee to understand the question in the same way, he suggests that careful piloting of interview schedules can enhance the reliability of interviews.

Questionnaires were administered to Grade 11 pupils at Khayelihle High School and their two English teachers. This school was similar to the target school in the sense that it was a rural school, and consisted of pupils and teachers who used English as their second language. Teachers and pupils were very cooperative. Unfortunately, pupils thought the researcher was their new English teacher as there was a shortage of teachers in the school. The pilot phase was carried out in August 2002 and the session lasted only for a week. Since Anderson recommends that a group of six to twelve volunteers be chosen to pilot a questionnaire, I chose twelve respondents of mixed ability, bearing in mind that these had to represent the target group. From the first trialling it became clear that there were a number of items on the pupils' and teachers' pupil assessment questionnaires that had to be changed because the questions were ambiguous. Considering these pupils' inputs, I re-drafted the questionnaires. The same procedure discussed above was followed but this time with colleagues, who took on the roles of critical mentors. In addition to the above, my supervisor assisted me in refining and finalising the questionnaires before they were used at the school. This exercise enabled me to make some modifications, which I might not have been aware of if I had not engaged in the pilot. In order to improve the validity and reliability of the oral and written English exercises, the exercises were piloted at Khayelihle High School and these are discussed in the next section.

3.4.1.Pre-testing of oral and written English exercises

The oral and written English exercises needed to be tested for reliability. Reliability means the degree to which a test consistently measures whatever it measures. It also means that the more reliable a test is, the more confidence we can have that the scores obtained from the

32

administration of the test. Although the written and oral English exercises could not be tested in Khayelihle High School because Grade 11 and 12 pupils were writing mock examinations, English teachers were invited to examine the oral and written exercises in terms of the appropriateness of the level. They reviewed the exercises and with modifications were able to recommend their appropriacy for Grade 11. Two ambiguous questions in the written exercise, which the teachers felt needed clarity, were re-edited and subsequently clarified. Having completed the pilot of the questionnaires and pre-testing the English exercises, I felt more confident about the implementation of my research project. The next section outlines the actual implementation of the study at St Charles High School in Lesotho.

3.5 Implementation

An application for permission to carry out my study at the school was made to the Principal of St Charles High School and the Head of the English Department. The application was conveyed to all the teachers but, more importantly, to the English teachers who were invited to examine the questions on the questionnaires and oral and written exercises. The teachers confirmed that the questions were to the standard usually prepared for Grade 11 testing. An effective means of ensuring the full involvement and commitment of the teachers and the pupils was to point out some of the positive outcomes of the research project, in terms of the way in which the school and the pupils would possibly benefit from it. This I did during team identification. In the paragraphs to follow, the actual implementation is discussed.

Several factors contributed towards the changed nature of implementation during this phase of the study. On arrival to the school, the principal informed me that they (teachers and pupils) had been working on the mission and vision statement for the school. That had interrupted lesson time, so the principal was rather reluctant to allow me to work with the pupils. The other factor was that pupils were writing their mock examinations in preparation for their final examinations. After much negotiation, I was able to meet with pupils after school. We arranged to meet during the Independence vacation, (27th September-7th October, 2002). Initially, twenty-four pupils were selected for this research project but on 30th September, only twenty-two pupils participated and these would serve as the population in this research project because the other

two sample group members never turned up or sent any excuses for their absence. I began the study with lesson observations. This was in order to gain an understanding of the classroom dynamics with reference to pupils' spoken and written English competence. Important features of these observations are discussed in the following section.

3.5.1.Classroom dynamics

Classroom observations began in October and four lessons were observed. The observed English periods are presented in Figure 12.

Figure 12: English lessons that were observed.

Date	Class	Time
07 October 2002	Grade 11A	8.00-8.40am
07 October 2002	Grade 11B	9.20-10.00am
09 October 2002	Grade 11B	1.50-2.30pm
11 October 2002	Grade 11A	9.20-10.00am

The first lesson was observed on 07/10/2002. As a non-participant observer, I sat at the back of the classroom in order to observe carefully the interaction between teacher-pupil and pupil-pupil in a learning situation. I avoided sitting at the front because there I would consistently be a reminder to the pupils that an 'outsider' was in their midst. For the purpose of my research project, the lesson was seen as being composed of different parts or phases, each having a distinct instructional purpose (Green & Wallat: 1981). The observation was structured in order to allow me to focus on particular information relevant to spoken and written English. The following were specifically observed: the first part of the lesson, the teacher greeted the pupils and introduced the lesson. "Today we focus on vocabulary and the use of words in context and how to answer comprehension questions" (Extract from Appendix F: lesson observation:07/10/02). The speaking and writing activities that became the focus for closer analysis occurred as the second and fourth part of the lesson. (A complete breakdown of each of the four parts of this lesson is provided in Appendix F). The teacher explained to pupils, during the introductory part of the lesson that at times one might be required to give the meaning of words in context and these instructions are in figure 13 below.

34

T: you may be given a word or phrase and asked which word in the passage has the same meaning. This is easier than being asked to give the meaning of the word but;

(i) Read the question carefully; you may have to find the word in a particular section or paragraph.

(ii) Make sure the word you choose is the grammatical equivalent; if it is not, it will not be the correct word.

(Extract from Appendix F: Lesson observation)

Since the teacher was using a reference book (to supplement the prescribed English text book) the teacher handed out to each pupil copies of the passage to be read. This was the crucial part of the lesson (and important to the study) because it was at this phase that the involvement and participation of pupils in the classroom activities became evident. The aim was to concentrate on how pupils read the passage (orally) and attempted to the written activity that followed. The second and fourth aspects of the lesson were specifically observed to assist in the evaluation of pupils' communicative English competence.

In this section, the discussion focuses on data emerging from lesson observations and pupils' behaviours that emerged during communication activities that took place as part of the regular classroom routine. The second lesson was observed on 9/10/2002 in Grade 11B classroom. The focus was on 'the use of conjunctions'. The teacher wrote the definition of a conjunction on the chalkboard, together with examples of conjunctions used in sentences.

Figure 14: Some examples of conjunctions.

1) Words: Limpho and Palesa.

2) Phrases: In the bedroom or in the dining room?
   The big boy and the small boy.
3) Sentences: He ran away, because he was afraid of the snake.
   I saw the accident when I went to school.

(Extract from Appendix F: Lesson observation)

In this lesson, the teacher began first with an oral activity. The teacher wrote twenty sentences on the board for pupils to correct orally. This exercise was later followed by a writing exercise, which was also written on the chalkboard as the teacher was using a reference book to supplement the pre-scribed textbook. The findings of these lesson observations will be discussed later in Chapter 4.

3.5.2.Scheduled questions for pupil interviews

Morgan in Cohen *et al.* (2001) suggests between four and twelve pupils per group for the interviews. The two focus groups consisted of eleven pupils each. Both groups were of mixed ability, and were balanced for gender.

With the interviews, which were conducted on 17/10/02 and 18/10/02, I managed to secure a private and quiet room on the school premises. These interviews were conducted during non-teaching time and pupils were interviewed in a group of eleven pupils (two groups were interviewed). The interviews lasted for one hour and forty-five minutes. Great flexibility within these interviews was allowed. Notes were taken in all interviews to ensure that no relevant details were lost. These interviews were interactive and the pupils and I were able to maintain face-to-face contact. There was one instance whereby some pupils felt that they did not express themselves as well as others and they withdrew from the discussion for fear of seeming stupid. Interaction among all participants is a vital part of the focus group process and was, therefore, encouraged in order to maximise the quality of the output from the session. Questions that were not clear were immediately clarified for pupils. In order to gain insight into how teachers provided opportunities for speaking, writing, reading and listening to the target language (English) in the classroom setting, information was collected in the form of pupils' and teachers' questionnaires.

3.5.3.Scheduled Questionnaires for spoken and written English

The questionnaires were distributed in class time to each pupil. I did not receive assistance from teachers as previously arranged. I emphasised that there were no correct or incorrect answers and that they should give the response which best suited their position. As I had requested them to write their names, pupils were told that their answers would remain confidential. In this respect, it was necessary to ensure that confidentiality and anonymity were maintained and respondents were told this, so that they could complete the questionnaires in confidence. I remained in the classroom with the pupils in the event of any queries or clarity sought until every pupil had completed the questionnaire. Twenty-two pupils completed and returned the questionnaires. Pupils took approximately one hour to complete the questionnaire as I had asked them not to hurry through it but go through it very carefully. The teachers' assessment of pupils' language

36

proficiency questionnaire was also divided into three themes: assessment on spoken language, written English, and pupils' oral English skills. These were handed to the teachers during class time and were only returned to the researcher completed, two days later.

3.5.4.Pupils' English competence

As a way of triangulating the questionnaires and lesson observations results, I conducted written and oral English exercises .The oral exercise was administered to the pupils on 14/10/20 and 15/10/02. While the written exercise was administered on 16/10/02, both activities took place in Grade 11B classroom. Interesting information was gathered after carrying out these exercises because focus was more on pupils' spoken and written English. Responses gleaned from these exercises might provide answers to the research question: do popular notions of fluency in English language form a sufficient basis to describe learners as competent in English (L2)? (Please refer to Appendices C and D to view the exercises).

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined the main aspects of the methodology used in my research project and provided a suitable rationale. I have also explained the merits as well as the constraints of the methods used. Investigating an issue as sensitive as the disjunction between spoken and written English among second language (L2) learners in a school setting, as well as being part of that setting, did pose certain difficulties as indicated in the section on implementation in this chapter. I opted for a qualitative orientation towards research in my project. However, since the questions requiring investigation contained a quantitative component, I was obliged to develop a range of instruments that could be triangulated. I considered it relevant to explore pupil-teacher and pupil-pupil interaction in the classroom context through the use of lesson observations. While pupils' oral and written English competence was investigated through locally developed oral and written English exercises. Questionnaires were designed to provide insight into pupils' and teachers' perceptions of English skills. The interview technique was employed because of its capacity for generating issues and engaging pupils in an in-depth discussion of topics related to the investigation. Interviews also ensured that pupils responded to items, which might not be present

in the questionnaire. All four techniques have been employed to collect information that will be analysed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4   PERCEPTIONS OF PROFICIENCY IN ENGLISH

Introduction

The disjunction between spoken and written English is a contemporary phenomenon within a second language learning classroom context and is, therefore, subject to many and various influences; for example: exposure to the target language, pupil-teacher and pupil-pupil interaction. The boundary between spoken and written English is often difficult to distinguish. Although teachers do place much significance on spoken and written English, they simply see these as part of the English language with which pupils ought to perform well. Teachers often ignore pupils who find it difficult to benefit from instruction because of limited proficiency in the language of the classroom. This neglect is reflected in the examination results. However, data reported in this chapter aims to shed light on the disjunction between spoken and written English among second language (L2) learners at St Charles High School.

Josef asserts that when we learn to speak our own language, learning to speak comes before learning to write. In fact, we learn to speak almost automatically. It is natural. But somebody must teach us to write (2001:p1). The difference between spoken and written language is brought about by the fact that oral language is less formal and less structured than written language. We do not always use full sentences and correct grammar in oral language. We usually speak in a spontaneous way, without preparation. However, when we speak, other aspects are present that are not present in writing, such as facial expressions or tone of voice. Written language is more complicated. We write with correct grammar and in a structured way. We organise what we write into sentences and paragraphs. In written language there are no contractions and formal vocabulary is used. Punctuation is used as a symbolic way of representing paralinguistic cues like pauses or tone of voice in speaking.

Information on the disjunction between spoken and written English among second language learners at St Charles was obtained through focus group interviews, questionnaires, lesson observations and short oral and written English exercises. A total of twenty-two questionnaires were handed to pupils and all questionnaires were returned, though not all were completed as the return rate of ninety-two percent indicates. This was because two pupils were unable to participate as a consequence of family commitments. In this chapter, I present the responses of the pupils and teachers under three themes. The themes that I discuss have evolved primarily out

of data emerging from the research instruments used in this project. These themes, each of which will be discussed, include the following: (i) classroom dynamics (ii) pupils' English language skills and (iii) fluency and academic expression. The analysis and interpretation of pupils' classroom activities forms part of this study because data emerging from classroom activities will be corroborated with data from other instruments employed in the project. In sections to follow pupils' classroom experiences are described.

4.1 Classroom dynamics

The two Grade 11 classrooms (Grade 11A and Grade 11B) I observed had to provide instruction in English in order to enable me to describe the quality of interaction in English in comparison to the quality of pupils' writing. In practice, however, the classrooms were multilingual environments in which the home language of pupils (Sesotho) was used to serve different purposes. The use of the L1 was to give pupils access to academic content, and introduce them to new concepts. My intention was not to evaluate the practices of the teachers whose lessons were observed, but rather to explore factors that brought about the disjunction between spoken and written English. The first lesson was observed on 07/10/2002, in Grade 11A. During pupil-teacher interaction, four pupils read the passage for the whole class. The first pupil who read was fluent, with no grammatical mistakes or stammers. The next two pupils' readings of the comprehension passage used by the teacher and based on the story titled: 'Maskakatsi' were punctuated with grammatical mistakes, and pronunciation was a problem with words such as 'disastrous,' 'enormously,' and 'protagonists,' to name a few. As the last pupil could not finish reading the passage because of pronunciation problems, the teacher had to choose another pupil to complete the oral session. As a result of limited pupil-pupil and pupil-teacher interaction, data reported here would mostly be from individual oral and written activities. It was interesting to note that pupils only participated in English while the teacher was involved in the activities. When the reading was completed, it was time for the writing task where pupils had to answer questions to the comprehension. Pupils switched back to their first language to discuss the task to be completed. During the assessment phase of the lesson, when the written exercise was cross-checked in class, sixteen pupils (36%) had performed well, obtaining seventeen out of twenty marks because they had written grammatically correct answers. Eighteen pupils (40%) had

obtained ten out of twenty due to spelling, tense, and grammatical mistakes. Eleven pupils (24%) had scored below nine.

In the Grade 11B lesson, which was observed on 09/10/2002, it was difficult to use a formal observational schedule designed for this purpose because only what the teacher termed 'good pupils', (30%) participated throughout the lesson. It was evident that the teacher only worked with the best pupils. This made it impossible to determine whether pupils were competent or incompetent in their use of English as most pupils sat silently and listened to a lesson discussion between the teacher and few pupils who could express themselves in English. The limited interaction between pupils and teacher suggests that most pupils felt anxiety and loss of confidence when using English. Second language acquisition researcher Krashen developed the concept of an affective filter, consisting of the variables of anxiety, motivation and self-confidence. According to Krashen, these psychological variables may strongly enhance or inhibit second language acquisition by playing a critical mediating role between the linguistic input available in the educational setting and the student's ability to learn (McLaughlin: 1992:p30-32).

In order for pupils to fully engage their innate capacity to acquire language within an input-rich environment, they should ideally be relaxed, motivated and self-confident. Unfortunately, however, this rosy picture is far from typical, especially with second language learners who may often feel anxious, discouraged and embarrassed within the classroom setting. Other studies (reviewed by Pilling and Pringle: 1978), for example, have shown that teachers' expectations and attitudes have an impact on how they behave towards their pupils. However, not all teachers responded in the same way, some gave more attention and praise to those for whom they had high expectations, whereas others gave most encouragement to the low-achievers whom they thought needed it more. During the lessons that were observed, the nature of the interaction between pupils-teacher and pupils was predominantly question-answer exchange in relation to vocabulary, comprehension tasks, and grammatical structures. All the lessons reflected the traditional teacher initiation, pupil response and teacher feedback pattern (Sinclair and Coulthard: 1975). Given that teachers depend so heavily on classroom discussion to facilitate learning, it is not surprising that teachers assume that when pupils are able to converse

comfortably in English, they have developed proficiency in the language. However, pupils who are proficient in social situations may not be prepared for the academic, context-reduced, and literacy demands of the classroom. In the next section further attention is paid to pupils' oral language skills.

4.2 Pupils' English language skills

This section presents the data collected from both pupil and teacher questionnaires. These were developed primarily to serve as a starting point for exploring the disjunction between spoken and written English. The primary intention of the questionnaires was to ascertain pupils' spoken and written English skills and perceptions about English as a second language. Interwoven in the discussion, in order to develop a rich account, are extracts from pupils' interviews, which were concerned with pupils' attitudes. In the analysis of data from the questionnaires and interviews I looked for patterns, overlapping views and/or comments, differences and similarities in the opinions of the respondents.

When asked about spoken English, (please refer to Questions 1, 3 and 7 in Pupils' Questionnaire: Appendix A), two thirds (68%) revealed that they felt secure about their ability to use English as a second language while one-third (32%) of the participants replied that they sometimes spoke English. This was because in class the teacher favoured discussions only with good English speakers. During lesson observations, the teacher conducted the whole lesson with pupils (less than one third of the group) who could express their opinions in English and those were only (29%) out of a class of forty-five pupils. Of the fourteen (31%) pupils who participated when the lesson first commenced, when interviewed, these pupils said that they withdrew from participating because they felt incompetent, they did not have enough vocabulary to express their opinions. Palesa*(a female in Grade 11B) reported during the interview that:

> Because the teacher thinks of us as slow learners she does not choose us to read because she says we waste time. Only what she calls good readers always read for us in class. I don't think it is good.

42

In response to Questions 4, 5, and 6 (in pupils' questionnaire: Appendix A) on their listening, reading, and writing English skills, nine pupils (41%), reflected that their limited academic expression in English made them feel inadequate and incompetent. This lack of confidence in their written English proficiency appears to account for the minimal participation and withdrawal from the learning process. Second language acquisition researcher John Schumann explores the concept of 'language shock', a fear of appearing comical or making a fool of oneself when attempting to communicate in a second language. The pupil's desire to avoid narcissistic injury, in combination with his or her social inhibitions and fear of criticism, may function to decrease his or her motivation to learn English as a second language and to master course content expressed in English (in McLaughlin: 1992:p382). Two pupils, Lineo* (a female in Grade 11B) and Thabo* (a male in Grade 11A) referred to how their deficiency in the English language limited participation in the classroom.

Lineo:
When a topic is being talked about, in class, you might want to express your opinion but because its in English language you don't want other students to laugh or something like that, so you keep silent.
(*Extract from Pupils' interviews: please see Appendix G*)

Thabo:
I usually have a problem in class; I want to ask something in English Firstly I think, okay how am I going to put the question, you are still busy planning how to ask it in your head. Then someone else asks the same question, asking it in the right way. When you plan to ask a question, you first go over it in your head in your own language and then translate it in English, then while you are still trying to put it right, others are already talking about something else with the teacher. We do have questions we want to ask, just because we are sometimes quiet does not mean we understand or we are being stubborn.
(*Extract from Pupils' interviews: please see Appendix G*)

Here pupils highlight the difficulties they experienced during lessons, which is the important part of learning. Ten (45%) of the twenty-two pupils interviewed showed concern in that as much as they were taught in English, English was very difficult and they were worried that they would not perform well. The interviews also revealed the problems pupils experienced when interpreting comprehension passages, Paleo* (a male in Grade11B) commented that:

Paleo:
Sometimes it is difficult to understand the passage and the questions that follow. The English used in the story is difficult to understand and you are not allowed to ask or discuss.
(Extract from Pupils' interviews: please see Appendix G)

Of the thirteen (59%) pupils who rated themselves average, in the sense that they had no problems with reading and written English, evidence from their written English exercises and writing activities during lesson observations suggested that almost a fifth (18%) of these pupils had overrated their abilities. With regard to their listening skills, when interviewed and also in response to Question 4 in pupil questionnaire, pupils said that they experienced difficulty in recognising specific words, and in most cases such words were vital to their understanding of their English. In terms of identifying where sentences began and ended, pupils said that they experienced difficulty more often. Molibeli* (a male pupil in Grade 11A) commented that:

The problem with this English is that we don't speak it at home. And then here at school we are forced and even punished to speak it. Some of the words are difficult to say or even write. Some times I don't even get the spelling write and that does not make the teacher happy, but what can I do? It is difficult.
(Extract from Pupils' interviews: please see Appendix G)

Another area of concern brought to light through the interview by the pupils was some teachers' language use. In the questionnaire pupils indicated that they had no difficulty understanding their teachers' spoken English language or understanding each other (please see Question 3 in pupils' questionnaire: Appendix A). Nevertheless, pupils revealed during the interview that they experienced difficulties when the teacher spoke fast and also when the accent differed from their accent, which affected their learning especially their vocabulary (please see Question 6 in pupils' questionnaire: Appendix A). It appeared then that their major difficulty had been with pronunciation and even comprehension itself. This was evident in the results of pupils' oral and written English exercises to be disclosed more fully a little later.

44

With regard to the question on whether they thought the way they were taught English prepared them to further their education in the university (see Appendix G: Pupils' interviews), all the interviewed pupils (22) said that their learning of English at high school did not seem to prepare them for university education. They cited the fact that most of their brothers and sisters were at home. They could not go to educational institutions to further their studies because of the poor achievement scores they obtained in English during the final national examination. Pupils at St Charles High School were anticipating the same fate in 2002. Nthabiseng* (a female in Grade 11A) had this to say:

> Many students have finished their high school but they are at home because they did not pass English so they cannot go to the university or even a teacher training college. They have to write English again. That is why I am hoping that I pass because I don't want to write it again.
> *(Extract from Pupils' interviews: please see Appendix G)*

With reference to their attitudes to English, out of the twenty-two pupils who responded, sixteen (73%) claimed that spoken English was easier than written English. When interviewed on the same issue, the reasons they cited were that when one spoke, one was likely to make less mistakes of tense and grammar. However, during the oral exercise, problems that pupils encountered lay with grammar and it was clear that they could not express themselves adequately, frequently lacking the right words to use or appropriate syntax.

> Question: Do you think the person has a baby or does not have a baby?
> **Answer:** The person does has a baby.
>
> Question: Do you think the person is a coffee drinker or not a coffee drinker?
> **Answer:** I think the person do not coffee drinker because there is no things that drinking coffee.
>
> Question: From what you see inside the room, do you think the person is middle class or poor?
> **Answer**: I think the person is poor because the bicycle is broken, there is a box on the floor and does not has much clothes.
> *(Extract from pupils' oral exercise: please see appendix D)*

Only six (27%) pupils were of the opinion that written English was easier. Consequently, these pupils had indicated in the questionnaire that they were shy in using English in front of the teacher and were quiet in class. This suggests that fluency alone cannot be assumed to form a sufficient basis to describe learners as competent speakers and writers of English additional attention is needed in other English skills such as writing, reading and listening skills.

Two teachers taught English language in Grade 11 classes. Both teachers completed the twenty-two questionnaires, representing a return rate of ninety-two percent. The responses gleaned from these questionnaires will be corroborated with data from pupil questionnaires. In response to Question 2 in (teachers' questionnaire) on pupils' ability to understand spoken English, teachers indicated that pupils just under half (41%) experienced difficulty. This is contradictory to what pupils indicated in their responses. With reference to pupils' spoken English, teachers indicated that pupils did not have many problems: just under half (45%) had very little difficulty and under a fifth (14%) had great difficulty. Interviewed pupils said they had no problems with spoken English. However, teachers indicated that pupils did have problems in understanding written English and only half of the pupils who participated in the study were able to write in clear academic English.

Figure 15: Summary of Teachers' overall rating of pupils' English language ability.

	no difficulty	*very little difficulty*	*some difficulty*	*great difficulty*
Ability to understand spoken English	-	27% (6)	32% (7)	41% (9)
Ability to speak English	-	45% (10)	41% (9)	14% (3)
Ability to understand written English	-	23% (5)	41% (9)	36% (8)
Ability to write in English	-	14% (3)	36% (8)	50% (11)

(Extract from Appendix B: Teachers' Questionnaire)

According to data reflected in Figure 15, pupils who had developed conversational English that appeared fluent and adequate for everyday communication, were assumed to be competent in written English by the teachers. Pupils whose speech was frequently hesitant and, who occasionally used inaccurate words, were said to have great difficulty with English. Having analysed data gleaned from questionnaires and interviews in detail, I shall now discuss analysis of oral and written English exercises that reflect pupils' oral and written English competence.

4.3 Fluency and academic expression in writing

The short oral and written English exercises were administered to pupils. The purpose of these exercises as noted in Chapter 3 was to find out, for example, how much difficulty pupils had in expressing clearly what they want to say, writing grammatically correct sentences with correct spelling and punctuation. Although I marked the written exercise, the teachers and I drew up the marking memorandum. The aim was to test pupils' English fluency, vocabulary, structure and comprehensibility. These exercises were not meant to be prescriptive. They were meant to provide concrete instances of possible answers to the factors that cause the disjunction between spoken and written English (please see Appendix C). Figure 16 provides the results of pupils' oral and written English exercises in percentages.

In terms of the assessment of the exercises, I decided to adopt the requirements of the Ministry of Education, (Examinations Department). This was because I had been a marker, (marking pupils' external examination scripts 1992-2001) so I was familiar with the marking procedure. Thus a score below 50% for a written exercise implied that a pupil had not displayed sufficient knowledge of the text (comprehension) in response to the task. Adequate control of language, without addressing a question was not rewarded. Scores above 40% but below 50% indicated that there were discourse errors that interfered with intelligibility. Nonetheless such a score also indicated that there was evidence of some comprehension in the text. Scores closer to 60% and above indicated adequate control of the language and comprehension of the text.

Figure 16: Pupils' oral and written English exercise results in percentage.
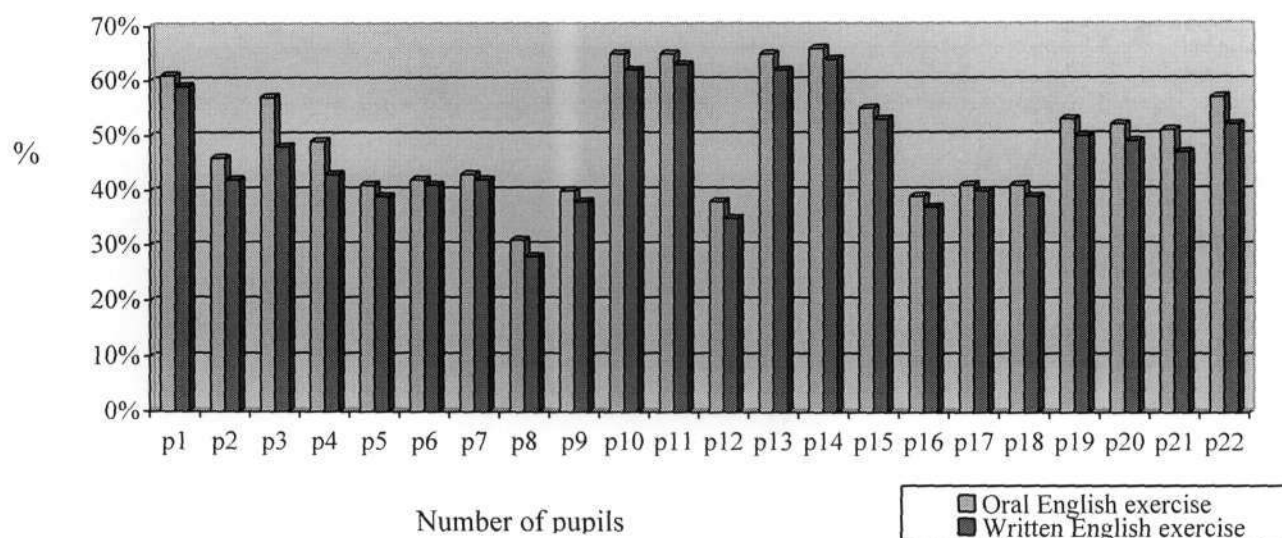
Figure 16 provides some insights into pupils' performance in spoken and written English. The written English exercise examined vocabulary, technical skills (including spelling, punctuation, and capitalization), and grammatical skills (including sentence types and grammatical errors). The first significant feature of this graph is the higher percentages recorded for the oral exercise as opposed to the lower scores registered in the written exercise for the very same skills. The results establish that in comparison to the oral exercise, pupils did not perform well in the written exercise because they had more vocabulary mistakes, made errors in punctuation, capitalization and spelling. The sentences below indicate the nature of pupils' language difficulties in writing: in response to Question 3 in the comprehension passage, these are some of the pupils' written responses:

Question 3: Where are Johannesburg's two power stations?

Pupils' responses:

Palesa: A. in the heart of Johannesburg are two power stations

Thabo: A. visi these power staions and you will be surprised

Molibeli: A. huge machine call turbo generate are in johanesburg.
(Extract from Appendix C: Pupils' written English exercise)

48

The results and analysis of selected pupils' responses confirm the teachers' observations that pupils do encounter problems with academic expression. Despite pupils' claims that spoken English was easier than written English, out of the twenty-two (22) pupils who wrote the exercises, only eleven (50%) pupils managed to obtain 50% or above. These results are consistent with the teacher questionnaire and interview results; teachers had indicated that pupils had problems with written English. In response to the comment on their level of proficiency, sixteen (73%) pupils had indicated that spoken English was easier than written English. The scores on the written exercises suggest otherwise.

Those who obtained 50% and above were mostly from Grade 11A, which is a *Humanities* class. These pupils when interviewed also indicated that they had no problems with reading in English. They also displayed confidence during classroom interactions during lesson observations. With reference to the questions '*do you enjoy reading*' and '*reading carefully to understand the story*', pupils differed in their responses. Pupils from Grade 11A indicated that they read most of the time, as they were required to do extensive reading because literature in English was one of their subjects. Pupils in Grade 11B, on the other hand, indicated that they only read their textbooks in class. Their scores on the written exercise, which I administered and during lesson observations, confirm that this group appeared to read less than Grade 11A.

Figure 17: A summary of the findings.

Pupils' results from the lesson observation schedule in percentages

☐ 24%
☐ 36%
☐ 40%

☐ Pupils who possessed literacy skills.

☐ Pupils who are fluent but reflect problems in written English.

☐ Pupils who are poor in oral and written English.
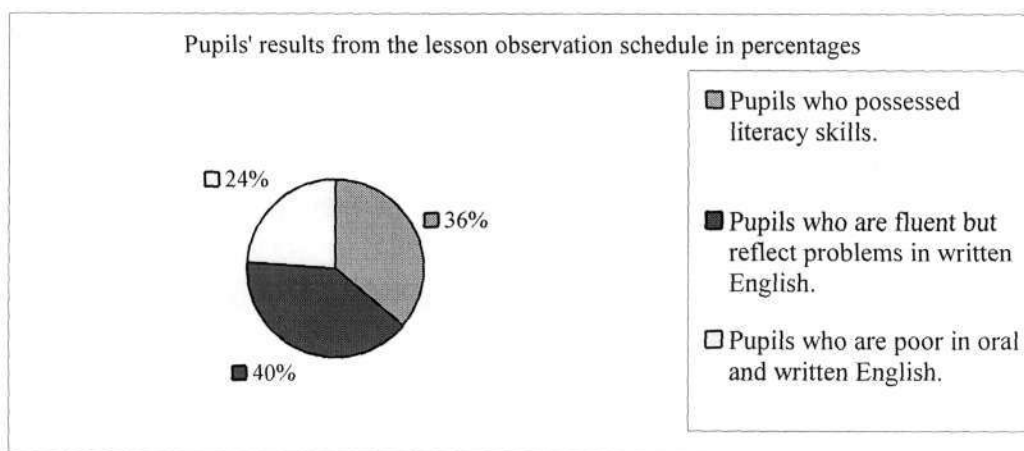
By cross-referencing data from interviews, questionnaires, lesson observations and oral and pupils' written exercises, I determined that the observations in Figure 17 were largely accurate. The results indicate that one third (36%) of the pupils would cope in most situations. Occasional slips and restrictions of oral language would not impede communication and pupils could express their opinions in formal English. Although pupils managed in general to communicate, eighteen (40%) of the pupils used inaccurate or inappropriate language in their written work. While eleven (24%) of the pupils lacked style, fluency and accuracy, they were not easy to communicate with; they lacked the ability to understand and produce increasingly complex oral and written language. In other words the pupils who claimed to be fluent and the pupils who were silent in the lessons constituted the weakest proportion of Grade 11A and Grade 11B. In this research project the effects of streaming have affected pupils negatively in the sense that those pupils who do not have literature in English as one of the subjects do not have much interest in reading.

In this section, using locally developed oral and written English exercises pupils' English skills were explored. The results indicate that although pupils can communicate in English, fifty percent experience a lag in literacy-based language skills such as reading, spelling, and written English in general. At the same time they demonstrate no problems with the interpersonal communication skills of speaking and' listening. However, caution needs to be exercised in relation to information gleaned in general from the instruments used in this study. The data obtained cannot be used for general diagnostic purposes. The reason for this is because the sample of pupils involved in this research project was not large enough for confident generalisations beyond the rural school. Moreover, further trialling and more time would be needed to perfect the instruments. However, information obtained may be used to formulate tentative hypotheses and to give teachers an idea of the skills, language needs, and difficulties experienced by their pupils.

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have reviewed the results of data collected from lesson observations, interviews with pupils, questionnaires and oral and written English exercises. The results from these instruments have been discussed and interpreted. Pupils demonstrated 'average' levels of functional language proficiency in spoken language and they are effective communicators even though there are often linguistic errors in their vocabulary and grammar. However, their evident linguistic deficiencies do appear to be a serious impediment to their effective functional use of English language for writing purposes. The findings provide some light on how one might account for the disjunction between spoken and written English among second language learners. In the final chapter, possible implications of the findings will be discussed, together with recommendations and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER 5   CONCLUSION

5.1 Overview of the research Project

The purpose of this study was to explore the disjunction between spoken and written English among second language learners. While I had worked with a small sample, these pupils can, with some justification, be considered representative of the English second language learners who were struggling with success in English in different schools in Lesotho. I have avoided unwarranted generalisations as my locally developed oral and written English exercises have not been standardised using population from similar schools elsewhere. In lieu of a larger sample I have attempted to ensure that within the sample of Grade 11, that all participants met the selection requirements.

The data reported in the study was collected using four different techniques, namely questionnaires, interviews, oral and written English exercises, and lesson observations. Questionnaires were designed to draw on the pupils' experiences with learning in a second language in order to understand how they perceived English as a subject and how it affected their academic performance. The primary aim of the interview was to solicit pupils' attitudes towards learning in English. This also involved pupils reflecting on their own English skills. Through the use of qualitative research methodology, the data obtained was part pupils' personal reflections and experiences, and part teachers' perceptions and observations. The summary of the findings will be briefly recapitulated in the paragraphs to follow.

In essence, the findings show that although pupils are generally proficient in spoken English and appear to understand the spoken language fairly well. However, my evaluation of their written exercises, together with the collated data from the other instruments, indicates that pupils are still not able to understand expository texts or highly academic material with ease. Nor are they able to express themselves clearly in writing. What is interesting to note is that, while pupils believed that they were performing well in their studies at school, they did acknowledge that there were areas where they experienced a lack of understanding. There is evidence in pupils' written answers that pupils tend to be influenced by the rhythms typical of spoken rather than written

52

English. As a result, a fair number of sentences (in their written exercises) were badly planned and lacking in effective coordination. In addition, some sentences were left incomplete, and others were run together as though they were one sentence. The major errors (in sentence structure) found in eighteen pupils' (40%) answers were as follows: a serious lack of punctuation, spelling and tense errors which together make pupils' writing difficult to comprehend.

In addition, though teachers perceived as competent those pupils who had developed 'fluent' conversational English adequate for everyday communication, teachers also indicated that pupils did have problems with expression in clear academic English. This was evident in the results of pupils' oral and written English exercises and pupils also confirmed this problem during interviews. Pupils indicated that teachers only worked with those pupils they considered to be 'good pupils'. Even those who begin to learn a second language in childhood may always have difficulty with pronunciation, rules of grammar, and vocabulary, and they may never completely master the forms or use of the language. There is no simple way to explain why some people are successful at second-language learning and some are not. Social and educational variables, experiential factors, and individual differences in attitude, personality, age, and motivation all affect language learning (Bialystock & Hakuta: 1994; McLaughlin: 1984; Wong Fillmore: 1991a: Tabors: 1997). Cummins asserts that, "if children are made to operate in the classroom in a poorly developed second language, the quality and quantity of what they learn from complex materials and produce in oral and written form may be relatively weak" (Rivera: 1984:p2-19).

5.2 From research to reality: implications for teachers

It is clear from the discussions in Chapter 3 and 4 that the oral language of second language learners can be described and contrasted with written English language. In this section I explore the implication of my project for pedagogy in contexts such as St Charles. The intention is not to prescribe a best 'method', but to suggest possibilities or areas, which require special attention.

Often, teachers assume that once pupils can converse comfortably in English, they are in full control of the language. Yet for pupils, there is much more involved in learning a second

language than learning how to speak it. A pupil who is proficient in face-to-face communication has not necessarily achieved proficiency in the more abstract and decontextualised academic language needed to engage in many classroom writing activities. For example, a pupil needs to learn what nouns and verbs are and what synonyms and antonyms are and more important, how and where they function in sentence structure. Such activities require pupils to separate language from the context of actual experience and to learn to deal with abstract meanings.

Teachers need to be aware that pupils learning in a second language may be having language problems in reading and writing that are not apparent if the pupils' oral abilities are used as the gauge of English proficiency. It is conceivable that many of the problems pupils experience with English as a second language (reading and writing) at the primary school and high school levels, stem from limitations in vocabulary and syntactic knowledge in the second language. Even pupils who are skilled verbal communicators can have these gaps.

If, for example, the ability of some pupils to write effective sentences is to be improved, then more time than is presenting allocated will have to be devoted to teaching pupils about the different demands made by formal written language, in terms of the elements of sentence structure, and the importance of planning and unity. Lessons should develop both oral and written language, with pupils learning English as a second language. While on the subject of pupils' oral and written English, McLaughlin (1985) states that the traditional view has been that the development of oral language must precede the development of literacy. However, involvement in reading and writing from the start is essential for developing academic competence. Both written and oral language can be developed simultaneously. Effective instruction for pupils who learn in English as a second language requires a variety of instructional activities small group work, cooperative learning, peer tutoring, individualised instruction, and other strategies that take up the learners' diversity of experiences into account.

The disjunction between spoken and written English among learners shows that exposure to second language in a school setting alone will not provide pupils with the full range of language varieties they will need. The learning of English requires multiple 'exposures'. Krashen in his theory argues that other factors that affect the outcome of second language learning relate to the quantity and nature of pupils' exposure to the target language. Exposure to the target language is

a prerequisite for students to succeed in learning a second language (Krashen: 1982 in Sears 1998:p46).

There are also differences in how children react to school and learn. Some pupils are outgoing and sociable and learn the second language quickly because they want to be like their English-speaking peers. They do not worry about mistakes, but use their limited vocabulary. Other pupils are shy and quiet. They learn by listening and by attending to what is happening and being said around them. They say little, for fear of making a mistake. Nonetheless, research shows that both types of learners can be successful second language learners. In classrooms where group work is stressed, a socially active pupil is more likely to be successful. In the traditional, teacher-oriented classroom, learners who are "active listeners" have been found to be more successful than highly sociable learners (Wong Fillmore, Ammon, Ammon, & McLaughlin, 1984).

Teachers need to be aware of differences in learner styles. Many linguistically diverse pupils enter school with cognitive and social norms that differ from those that govern the mainstream classroom. These differences, in turn, affect the teacher's expectations of the pupil's ability and the teacher's response to the pupil.

Research on second language learning has shown that there are many misconceptions about how children learn languages. Teachers need to be aware of these research findings and to unlearn old ways of thinking. For the most part, this means realizing that quick and easy solutions are not appropriate for complex problems. As teachers we need consciously to rethink what our expectations should be.

5.3 Recommendations

Despite the limitations of time affecting the implementation of my study, I am hopeful that the findings will make a modest contribution to the understanding of issues of the disjunction of spoken and written English among second language learners in a country such as Lesotho. It is

evident from the findings that although pupils were more adept at 'conversational management', that is they were better at indicating whether they understood what was said, and were more proficient at changing the topic of conversation, they could not meet the academic demands of an English exercise that was administered to them. In promoting approaches for classroom practice in promoting second language learning, the following might need to be considered more carefully.

In order to change teaching practices and ensuing learning environments, Teachers' attitudes need to change first. Fullan (1982:p176) suggests that educational change depends on what teachers do and think. Teachers should not ignore struggling and incompetent pupils. They should be aware that the opportunities for learning (both inside and outside the classroom), the motivation to learn, and individual differences in aptitude for second language learning are also important determining factors in both rate of learning and eventual success in learning. Only when teachers undergo a 'perception change' will they be able to take pupils' individual personalities and learning styles into account and create a learning environment in which virtually all pupils can be successful in learning English as a second language and subject.

The preceding discussion places emphasis on changing teachers' perceptions about pupils' English language competence. But if the school is considered more sensitively, focus ought also be placed on the other integral partner in the school life, namely the pupil. Pupils did indicate during the interview sessions that they lacked self-confidence when using English. Developing self-confidence in English second language pupils is not an easy task. This is so because confidence has to be developed through the use of the target language, as this is a necessary factor in curriculum construction. Thus interactive communication and written tasks should be encouraged simultaneously so as to provide real opportunities for pupils to experiment with the target language.

The foregoing discussion in Chapter 4 and 5 has looked in detail at the factors that bring about the disjunction between spoken and written English among second language (L2) learners. Keeping in mind the different methods of data collection and the fact that case studies may not be completely generalizable to large populations, some tentative concluding remarks can be

made. The effect of instruction was not always readily apparent, and only in several instances the classroom context coupled with instruction may work to promote the acquisition of English language, due to the limited range of language experiences that pupils are exposed to. One fact, which emerges from this research project, is that pupils find it easier to speak English than write in English, that is regardless of learning context.

5.4 Suggestions for further research

In this case study of Grade 11 pupils, at St Charles in Botha-Bothe, Lesotho, I have sought to explore and investigate, in as comprehensive a manner as possible within the time limits, the disjunction between spoken and written English among second language learners.

This research project has implications both for further research on discourse patterns in the classroom. Research on second language learning is another important area in the curriculum, which should be explored in much greater depth A greater emphasis might need to be placed on the provision of adequate resources, and where those do not exist, on the provision of adequate teacher training for the special needs of the rural learning environment. The classroom provides a unique setting in which these issues can be explored and elucidated further to the enrichment, not only of second language teaching, but also learning. This would be a contribution to the areas explored in this study. Documenting other initiatives involving research on second language learning in the country will also provide useful comparative data. Lastly, a comparison with the results of this study, in particular, the themes and critical issues that emerge, might prove valuable for policy on English language instruction and curriculum development in Lesotho.

Bibliography

Addo, G.A. (2002). 'English as a medium of instruction.' in The Accra Mail.2 July 2002.

Agbogah, K. (2002). 'Bad English- a combination of factors' in The Ghanaian Chronicle. Accra. 30 April 2002.

Anderson, G. (1990). *Foundations of Educational Research*. London: The Falmer Press.

Baker, D. (1992). *Language exercising: A critical survey and practical guide*. Hodder & Stoughton: London.

Balfour, R.J. (1995. *An enquiry into classroom Dynamics and teaching methods in the Department of English at the University of Natal*. Masters thesis. University of Natal, Durban.

Balfour, R.J. (2000). *Investigating the integrated teaching of language and literary skills: Trialling a new syllabus for non-native speakers of English in South Africa*. PhD Thesis. University of Cambridge.

Barnes, A.S.V. (1976). *English made easy: A graded course for second language pupils*. (Sixth impression) National commercial printers. Nasou Beperk.

Bell, J. (1991). *Doing Your Research Project*. Milton Keynes: Open University.

Bialystok, E. (1994). *Analysis and control in development of second language proficiency. Studies in second language acquisition*. Oxford. Blackwell.

Bialystok, E., and Hakuta, K. (1994). *In other words*. New York: Basic Books.

Brock-Utne, B. (1996). Reliability and validity in qualitative research within education in Africa. In *International review of education*, 42(6): 605-621.

Cohen, L. and Manion, L. (1980). *Research Methods in Education*. Routledge: Falmer Press. London.

Cohen, L. and Manion, L. and Morrison, L. (2001)(5th ed). *Research Methods in Education*. Routledge: Falmer Press. London.

Collier, V. (1989). *How Long: A synthesis of research on academic achievement in a second language*. TESOL Quarterly, 23,509-531.

Cook, V. (1993). *Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition*. London: Macmillan Press.

Court, S. (1988). *Language proficiency and academic success*. MA Thesis. University of Natal, Durban.

Cummins, J. (1979). Cognitive/academic language proficiency, linguistic interdependence, the optimum age question and some matters. *Working papers on Bilingualism*, no 19,121-129.

Cummins, J. (1984). *Bilingualism and special education: issues in assessment and pedagogy.* Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.

Cummins, J. (1984). Wanted: A theoretical framework for relating language proficiency to academic achievement among bilingual students. In Rivera, C. (ed.). (1984). *Language proficiency and academic achievement.* Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.

Cummins, J. (1989). *Empowering minority students.* Sacramento: California association for Bilingual Education.

Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (eds)(1994). *Handbook of qualitative research.* California: Sage Publications.

Ellis, R. (1994). *The study of second language acquisition.* Oxford:OUP.

Ely, M. (1991). *Doing qualitative research: Circles within circles.* London: Falmer press.

Essberger, J. (2001). "Speaking versus Writing: The pen is mightier than the spoken word. Or is it?" http://magazine.englishclub.com/200108.htm (03/02/26).

Freedman, S.W. (1985). *The acquisition of written language:* response and revision. Ablex Publishing Corporation: Norwood.

Fullan, M. (1982). *The meaning of Educational change.* New York. Teachers college press.

Graddol, D. Cheshire, J., and Swanna, J. (1987). *Describing Language.* Milton Keynes: Open University press.

Green, J.L and Wallat, C. (1981). *Ethnography and language in Educational settings.* Ablex.

Hall, D. R. and Hewings, A. (2001). *Innovation in English language teaching.* Routledge: London.

Hammerly, H. (1991). *Fluency and accuracy: Toward balance in language teaching and learning.* Multilingual matters Ltd: Clevedon.

Harris, T. (2002). Chasing windmills: Why spoken English is not taught in Spanish secondary schools in speaking English. In the *International Journal,* volume35. Number1.

Heath, S.B. (1983). *Ways with words: Language, Life and work in communities and classrooms.* New York: Cambridge.

Hitchcock, G. and Hughes, D. (1995). 'Chapter 5': Designing, planning and evaluating research. In *Research and the teacher: A qualitative approach to school based research.* London: Routledge.

Hymes, D. (1971). 'Communicative Competence'. In Pride, J.B., and Holmes, J. (eds) (1972). *Sociolinguistics.* New Zealand: Penguin.

Kapp, R. (2000). 'With English You Can Go Everywhere': An analysis of the role and status of English at a Former school. In the *Journal of Education.* Number 25.Kenton Special issue.

Krashen, S. (1988). *Second language Acquisition and language learning.* Hemel, Hemstead, Herts: Prentice Hall.

Krashen, S. (1982). In Sears, C (1998). *Second language students in the mainstream classrooms:* Parents and Teachers' guide 2.Multilingual Matters Ltd.

Krueger, R.A. (1988). *Focus Groups: a practical Guide for applied research.* Beverly Hills: Sage publications.

Lado, R. (1957). "Linguistics across cultures. Applied linguistics for language teachers". Michigan: Ann Arbor. In http://iele.au.edu/staff/mtan/sla/lecture1.html (030225).

Larsen-Freeman, D. and Long, M. H. (1991). *An introduction to Second language acquisition research:* Applied linguistic and language study. Longman: London.

Littlewood, W. (1984). *Foreign and second language learning: language acquisition research and its implications for the classroom.* Cambridge university press: London.

Merriam, B. S. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education.* Jossey-Bass publishers: San Francisco.

McKay, S. (1995). TESOL Quarterly: *Teachers of English to speakers of other languages.*Inc.Volume 29, number 3.

McLaughlin, B. (1985). *Second language Acquisition in Childhood: School age Children.*Volume2. LEA publishers: Hillsdale.

McLaughlin, B. (1984). *Second language acquisition in childhood:* vol.1. *Preschool children* (2nd ed). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum. (ERIC Document No.ED154604).

McMillan, J. H. and Schumacher, S. (2001). *Research in Education: A Conceptual Introduction.*NewYork: Longman.

Miles, M and Huberman, M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis* (2nd ed). Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

Miller, J. (1999). *Changing English: Studies in reading and culture*. Volume 6, number1. Institute of education: University of London.

Ministry Of Education. (NCDC)(2002). *Junior Secondary Syllabus* (revised). Government printers.Maseru.Lesotho.

Moletsane, R. (2001). 'Literacy and language in global and local settings: New directions for research and teaching'. *International literacy conference*. Cape-Town.

Moloi, F. L. (1996). *The acquisition of English morphosyntactic structures by Sesotho-speaking children in English-medium pre-schools*. Unpublished Dissertation. University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Mopheme/The Survivor (Maseru). 208 Learners pass COSC with first class: Figure higher than that of 2001 by 39 candidates. http://allafrica.com/stories/200302200804.html (03/02/25).

Moru, A.M. (2000). *A comparison of Science Teachers' and students' priorities for improving the teaching and learning of Science in Lesotho high schools in the 21st Century*. Unpublished M Ed Thesis. University of Cape-Town.

Morgan, D.L. (1988). *Focus Groups as Qualitative Research*. Beverly Hills: Sage publications.

Mosoeunyane, M.G. *The relationship between English Language scores and Science scores of 538 junior certificate students in Lesotho*. http://www.pentech.ac.za/pil88/abstract30.htm (11/6/02).

Murphy-Judy, K.A. (1997). NEXUS: *The convergence of language teaching and research using technology*. Calico. Monograph Series, Volume 4.

Neuman, L.W. (1997). *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Nieto, S. (1996). *Affirming Diversity: The socio-political context of multicultural education*. New York: Longman publishers.

Nunan, D. (1993). Introducing Discourse Analysis. In Candlin. N.C. and Mercer, N. (2001). *English language teaching in its social context*. Routledge. London.

Obanya, P.A.I. (1998). Language Education in Africa. In *Fafunwa foundation Internet journal of Education*. http://fafunwafoundation.tripod.com/fafunwafoundation/id7.html. (10/07/2002).

O'Malley, J. and Chamot, A. (1990). *Learning strategies in second language acquisition*. Cambridge: Cambridge university press.

Oppenheim, A. N. (1992). *Questionnaire Design, Interviewing and Attitude Measurement*. London: Pinter Publishers.

61

Powney, J. and Watts, M. (1987). *Interviewing in Educational Research.* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Ralibakha, T. B. (1999. *A study of Lesotho Secondary Teachers' motivation during the period 1990-1997.* MA Dissertation. University of Bath.

Sears, C. (1998). *Second language students in mainstream classrooms:* Parents and Teachers' guide 2.Multilingual Matters Ltd.

Shoebottom, P. (2001). "The language learning theories of professor J.Cummins". http://www.fis.edu/eslweb/index.htm (03/02/21).

Silva, P. "South African English: Oppressor or liberator?" http://www.ru.ac.za/affiliates/dsae/MAVEN.HTML (03/02/25).

Silverman, D. (1993). *Interpreting Qualitative Data.* London: Sage Publications.

Simon, A. (1986). *Field research procedures and techniques for the social sciences and education.* Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University.

Sinclair, J. and Coulthard, M. (1975). *Towards an analysis of discourse.* Oxford, Oxford University press.

Stake, R.E. (1994). Case Studies. In N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (eds) *Handbook of Qualitative Research.* London: Sage publications.

Swan, M. and Walter, C. (2001). *How English works: Grammar practice book.* Oxford university press.

The Education Sector Survey. (1982). *Report of the task force.* Maseru, Lesotho.

Thelejane, T. S. (1990). *Implementing educational policies in Lesotho.* World bank discussion papers: Africa technical Department series.

Underhill, M. (1987). *Exercising spoken language: A handbook of oral exercising techniques.* Cambridge university press. London.

Van Patten, B. and Lee, F. J. (1990). *Second language acquisition-Foreign language learning.* Multilingual matters: Clevedon.

Verma, G. K. and Beard, R. M. (1981). *What is Educational Research?* London: Gower House Company Limited.

Vulliamy, G., Lewin, K., and Stephens, D. (1990). *Doing Educational Research in Developing Countries: Qualitative Strategie.* London: Falmer.

Vygotsky, L. (1986). *Thought and Language* (new edition, A.Kazulin (ed)). Cambridge, Mass: MTI Press.

Walker, R. (1985). *Doing Research. A Handbook for Teachers.* London: Routledge.

Weir, C. and Roberts, J. (1994). *Evaluation In ELT.* Blackwell: Oxford UK.

White, B. (2000). *Dissertation skills for business and management students.* Continuum. London

Yin, R. (1994). *Case study Research: Design and methods* (2nd ed). California: Sage publishers.

APPENDIX A : PUPILS' QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear pupil,

I am a researcher at the University of Natal and am conducting work on the difficulties you experience in writing in English. Please complete the questionnaire. **Please fill in your name.** Your cooperation will be appreciated. **Thank you.**

Name_____

Class: _____ **Gender:** _____ **Age:** _____

1. How often do you talk in class using English language?

Very often.	68%
Sometimes.	32%
Not often.	
Not at all.	

2. What stops you from joining a discussion?

I am a quiet person.	
I am shy about using English in front of the students.	41%
I do not feel good in using English in class.	13%
Other students talk all the time so I do not have a chance.	
I feel that good English speakers are impatient with those who struggle.	12%
The teacher favours discussion with good English speakers.	19%
The teacher does not give me a chance to speak.	
I am shy about using English in front of the teacher.	15%

Please tick the appropriate box.

About spoken English 3. How easy is it to understand spoken English?	very easy	quite easy		quite hard	very hard
3.1 Descriptions by the teacher.	20%	13%		43%	24%
3.2 Descriptions by other students.	32%	64%		4%	
3.3 Instructions by the teacher.	14%	52%		34%	
3.4 Conversation.		45%		38%	17%
3.5 Discussions in class.		68%		18%	14%

About listening and writing in class.
4. How easy is it to do these things in English?

	very easy	quite easy		quite hard	very hard
4.1 Hearing single spoken words.	8%	32%		14%	46%
4.2 Hearing where sentences begin and end.		18%		43%	39%
4.3 Linking spoken words together.		29%		33%	38%
4.4 Hearing what is important.		53%		34%	13%
4.5 Writing quickly and clearly.		17%		56%	27%
4.6 Understanding your notes later.		34%		43%	23%

About your skills in English.
5. How easy is it for you to do these things in English?

	very easy	quite easy		quite hard	very hard
5.1 Reading carefully to understand the story.	18%	12%		45%	25%
5.2 Getting the main points from the story.		28%		49%	23%
5.3 Reading quickly.		14%		57%	29%
5.4 Making notes from textbooks.		48%		27%	25%
5.5 Reading when the story is hard to understand.		12%		49%	39%

6. How easy is it for you to do these things in English?

	very easy	quite easy		quite hard	very hard
6.1 Writing grammatically correct answers.	5%	14%		36%	45%
6.2 Using the right words.	4%	15%		67%	14%
6.3 Saying what you want to say clearly.	18%	33%		23%	26%
6.4 Spelling and punctuation.	12%	28%		42%	18%
6.5 Working together with other students.	10%	43%		32%	15%
6.6 Take part in class discussions involving the class as a whole and the teacher.	5%	33%		26%	36%

About talking in class in English.
7. How easy is it for you to use English in the following

	very easy	quite easy		quite hard	very hard
7.1 Giving oral reports.	23%	45%		17%	15%
7.2 Asking teachers questions.	11%	36%		25%	28%
7.3 Asking students questions.		45%		31%	24%
7.4 Answering Teachers' questions.		33%		26%	41%
7.5 Answering students' questions.		39%		48%	13%
7.6 Expressing opinions.	8%	16%		37%	39%

Any comments:

73% indicated that spoken English was easier than written English.

27% indicated that written English was easier than spoken English.

_____

THANK YOU VERY MUCH **(All information will be treated in the strictest confidence).**

APPENDIX B: TEACHER ASSESSMENT OF PUPILS' LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

Dear Colleague,

I am a researcher at the University of Natal and am conducting research on the performance in spoke versus written English. I would like to get your opinion on specific aspects of the language ability the students. **This information will be treated in the strictest confidence. Thank you.**

Teacher's name: T.M.Lekoetje   **Pupil's name**: Teboho mohloai

Please answer the following questions by putting a tick in the appropriate box.
Tick   -the **H** (high difficulty) box if the pupil has great difficulty.
         -the **M** (medium difficulty) box if the pupil has some difficulty.
         -the **L** (low difficulty) box if the pupil has very little difficulty.
         -the **N** (no difficulty) box if the pupil has no difficulty.
        -the **DK** (don't know) box if you are not sure.

1. Please indicate how much difficulty the pupil has in each of the following: **Please tick the appropriate box**

	H	M	L	N	DK
1.1 Reading carefully to understand *all* the information in a text.	32%	59%	9%		
1.2 Reading to get the *main* idea from a text.	41%	45%	14%		
1.3 Reading quickly.	50%	32%	9%	9%	
1.4 Making notes from written sources.	50%	41%	9%		

2. Please indicate how much difficulty the pupil has in each of the following:

	H	M	L	N	DK
2.1 Understanding spoken description or instructions, when one person is talking.	18%	55%	27%		
2.2 Understanding people when their accents or pronunciation is different from what they are used to.	32%	43%	25%		
2.3 Making notes from spoken language.	36%	59%	5%		

3. Please indicate how much difficulty the pupil has in each of the following in written work. **Please tick the appropriate box.**

	H	M	L	N	DK
3.1 Organising the content.	54%	32%	14%		
3.2 Expressing clearly, what they want to say.	32%	50%	18%		
3.3 Using the appropriate language.	32%	41%	27%		
3.4 Writing grammatically correct sentences.	18%	68%	14%		
3.5 Spelling correctly all the words they want to use.	23%	68%	9%		
3.6 Punctuating correctly, what they have written.	36%	64%			

OVERALL RATING OF PUPILS' ENGLISH LANGUAGE ABILITY. Please tick the appropriate box.

	No difficulty	Very little difficulty	Some difficulty	Great difficul
a) Ability to understand spoken English.		27%(6)	32%(7)	41%(9)
b) Ability to speak English.		45%(10)	41%(9)	14%(3)
c) Ability to understand written English.		23%(5)	41%(9)	36%(8)
d) Ability to write in English.		14%	36%	50%

APPENDIX C: PUPILS' WRITTEN ENGLISH EXERCISE

Date: _____ **Class:** _____ **Gender:** _____

Name: _____ **Age:** _____

Read the following passage carefully. Then answer the questions that follow.

People who live in towns and cities are used to electricity. You start an electric bell ringing by the touch of a finger. You flick on a switch and flood a room with light. Electric motors are started by touching a lever; and in a lift a dozen people are carried swiftly to the top of a high building by pressing a button.

Let us take a look at Johannesburg, where enough power is generated to light about 8,000 million lamps. If you could follow the electric wires from any particular house into the underground cables which run along the street you would end up at one of Johannesburg's two power stations, either in the heart of the city or at Orlando. Visit these stations and you will be surprised to see how clean and well kept they are. The huge machines called turbo-generators, which generate the electricity are so large that when a man sits on the back of one he looks like a child riding an elephant. The generators are driven by steam, and all one can hear is the buzzing and whirring noise made by the giant machines, which produce the electricity.

Electricity is cheap. With one unit of electricity, which costs you only half a cent, you can either toast 60 slices of bread, make 40 cups of tea, iron for two hours, run a refrigerator for 18 hours, work a vacuum-cleaner for six hours, listen to a radio for 18 hours or operate a washing machine for four hours.

1. a) How can one flood a room with electricity? (2)

b) How can one set a lift in motion? (2)

c) How can huge electric motors be started? (2)

2. Which word tells us:

a) That generators are big machines. (1)

b) That electricity can be 'made'. (1)

c) That lifts move quickly. (1)

3. Where are Johannesburg's two power stations? (2)

4. What do we call the machines, which generate electricity? (1)

5. Name 5 of the things that one can do with a single unit of electricity. (5)

6. What drives the generators? (1)

7. According to the passage, where is electricity mostly found? (2)

[20]

APPENDIX D: PUPILS' ORAL EXERCISE

Look at the picture. Whose apartment is this? Make guesses about the person who lives here. Circle your guesses and then explain them by circling the clues in the picture.
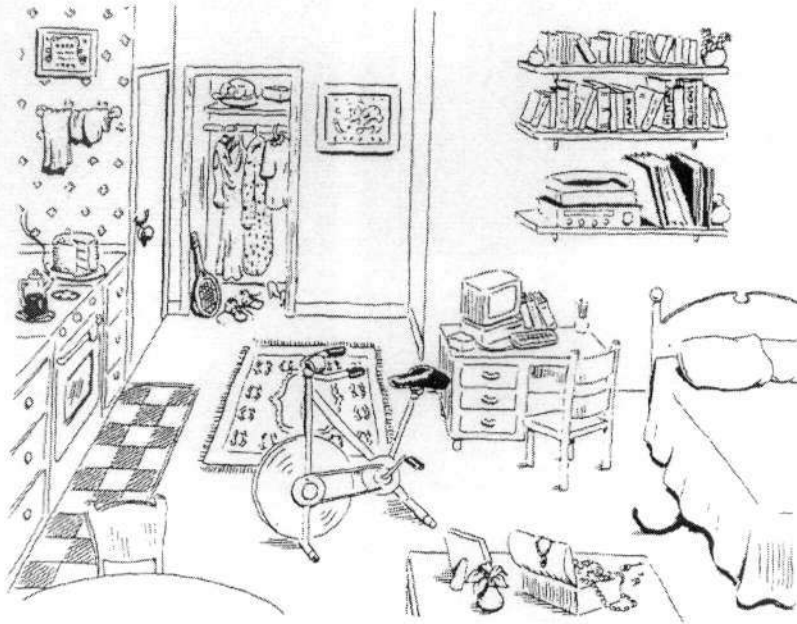
Pupils were expected to answer in full sentences and give reasons for their answers.

1) Is the person staying in this room a man or a woman?

2) Do you think this person has a baby or does not have a baby?

3 Does this person has a pet or does not have a pet?

4) Is the person athletic or not athletic?

5) Do you think the person is a coffee drinker or not a coffee drinker?

6) Do you think the person is well educated or not well educated?

7) Is the person a smoker or not a smoker?

8) From what you see inside the room, do you think the person is middle class or poor?

9) Is the person a music lover or not a music lover?

10) Do you think the person is on diet or not diet?

11) As you look at the picture do you think the house has electricity?

(Source: adapted from: Nunan, D: 1993).

71

Class: _____ Date: _____ Lesson: _____

Number of pupils: _____ Time: _____

Language skills that were observed and assessed by the researcher.	Spoken English	Reading in English	Written English	Write in English
1. Clearly has a very competent command of the language and may approach native speaker ability in some areas.				
2. .Not a native speaker because of minor faults in English usage, this does not handicap his studies.				
3. Makes a number of mistakes in English, this may constitute a handicap for studies.				
4.There are many weaknesses in English usage and ability is below standard of studies.				
5. There are considerable deficiencies in English usage, which constitute a serious handicap for studies.				
6. Shows very little ability in English and is well below a satisfactory level.				

*Key: **4.**=Outstanding: Speech natural and continuous; no unnatural pauses.
                uses vocabulary very accurately and extensively.
                utterances almost always correct.
                entirely comprehensible.

3. =Above average: Speech generally naturally and continuous; only slight stumbling
                or unnatural pauses.
                uses range of vocabulary accurately.
                most utterances correct; some minor structural errors.
                almost entirely comprehensible; no misunderstandings.

2. =Average: Definite stumbling, but manages to rephrase or continue.
                occasionally lack needed words; predominantly accurate usage.
                many utterances correct; some significant structural errors.
                some errors, but mostly comprehensible; occasional misunderstanding.

1. =Below average: Speech frequently hesitant and sentences may be left uncompleted.
                frequently lacks needed words; frequent inaccurate usage.
                some utterances correct; definite structural problems.
                many errors, about half incomprehensible.

Teacher activity:

	Teacher explained grammar mainly in Sesotho.		The lesson was conducted in English up to the end.
	Teacher practised language in situations mainly in English.		
	Teacher gave models in English (word or sentence)		.
	Oral drills used, in English (more than 1 student).		
	Comprehension Questions were conducted orally in English.		
	Class discussion done in English.		
	Pupils asked questions and expressed their opinions in English.		

Comments: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

(Source: Malamah-Thomas: 1978.in Weir and Roberts: 1994).

73

APPENDIX F: LESSON PLAN.

Date :07/10/2002   **Class:** Grade 11A

Subject: English Language.

Time: 40min.

Topic: Comprehension 11

Objectives: Exercise pupils' vocabulary skill.

Exercise pupils' reading skill.

At the end pupils will have an idea on how to answer comprehension questions.

Introduction:

When you are confronted with a comprehension you have to show certain skills. After reading a passage, you may be given a word or phrase and asked which word in the passage has the same meaning. This is easier than being asked to give the meaning of the word but;

(i)   Read the question carefully; you may have to find the word in a particular section or paragraph.

(ii)   Make sure that word you choose is the grammatical equivalent; if it is not, it will not be the correct word.

Oral exercise. (Pupils were given copies of this passage to read and familiarise themselves before it could be read in class).

Read the following passage. Then answer the questions that follow.

The abolition of capital punishment has had disastrous consequences. Serious crime has increased enormously. The thief who once armed himself with nothing more than the tools of the trade now carries a firearm. The armed robber was rare enough in England and rarer still were the occasions when he actually used his arms intending to kill. Now firearms are the rule rather than the exception and without the deterrent of the hangman there is nothing to cause the armed robber to hesitate to use his gun.

So speak the protagonists of capital punishment. Their opponents retaliate by saying that statistics utterly disprove these arguments. Cold-blooded murder has not increased; robbers are

not 'trigger-happy'; the criminal intent on killing was not deterred by the threat of his own death if caught. Conversely, the criminal of today is not induced to kill because he can suffer only imprisonment and not hanging if caught.

If one is called upon to cast one's vote on one side or the other on the basis of these arguments alone, the choice seems impossible.

Development of the lesson:

-In questions that follow a passage, you may be asked questions about different attitudes towards

or feelings about or opinions of the same thing. Always take care to answer the question

-At times there are straightforward vocabulary questions in some passages. You are usually asked to give in a word or a brief phrase the meaning of words or phrase *as they are used in the passage* (this is the vocabulary). Many words have no definite meaning in isolation; they derive their meaning from the context in which they are used. For example, the word *'Look'* can have many meanings, depending on its context; it could mean:

-To use one's sight, to contemplate or examine, to express or threaten, to seem, to have a certain appearance and so on. Here are points to help in answering the vocabulary questions;

If you do not know the meaning of a particular word, look elsewhere in the passage. It may be explained or closed by the writer. Try to guess its meaning from the context by substituting possible words or phrases until you find one that seems to make sense. Now let us answer the questions to the passage you have just read.

Evaluation exercises: (written in Exercise books)

1) Which words in the passage mean the same as the following:

    a) Bringing to an end.

    b) Results.

    c) Discouragement

    d) Supporters.

    e) Collected facts.

    f) Persuaded.

2) What form of capital punishment is mentioned in the passage?

3) Briefly, using your own words, summarise the two contrasting arguments expressed in the passage.

4) What is the writer's opinion of capital punishment?

APPENDIX G: PUPILS' INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Date: 17/10/2002.

Number of pupils per group: 12

Time: 1hour 45min.

Boys: 6

Girls: 6

Let us talk about English today. I am interested in your views because English is your second language.

The researcher in oral form presented the following questions to pupils. Answers and comments were noted down.

1. Which language do you speak best? How many languages can you read in? Please identify them. Which language do you read in most often?

2. Which language do you speak socially?

3) Which language do you use when discussing schoolwork?

4) Do you like speaking English?

5) Do you think it is important to learn English language?

6) Do you enjoy reading?

8) Do you think that the way you are taught English prepares you for further education (at University or other educational institutions)?

9) Do you encounter any problem in writing English compositions? Yes or no

- If yes, explain.

APPENDIX H: ORAL EXERCISE GUIDELINES

Oral Exercise Grade Sheet

Student_____   Researcher_____

Class _____   Date _____

Grading: 100 points   Composite Grade: _____%

          Symbol: _____

The following guidelines are based on a testing exercise worth 100 points

Letter grade	D-	C-	C	B-	B	A-	A	A+
Fluency	12	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Vocabulary	12	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Structure	12	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Comprehensibility	24	28	30	32	34	36	38	40
Percentage	60	70	75	80	85	90	95	100

Fluency: 20: Speech natural and continuous; no unnatural pauses.
              18: Speech generally natural and continuous; only slight stumbling or unnatural pauses.
              16: Definite stumbling, but manages to rephrase or continue.
              12: Speech frequently hesitant and jerky; sentences may be left uncompleted.

Vocabulary: 20: Uses vocabulary very accurately and extensively (for given level).
              18: Uses range of vocabulary accurately.
              16: Occasionally lacks needed words; predominantly accurate usage.
              12: Frequently lacks needed words; frequent inaccurate usage.

Structure: 20: Utterances almost always correct.
              18: Most utterances correct; some minor structural errors.
              16: Many utterances correct; some significant structural errors.
              12: Some utterances correct; definite structural problems.

Comprehensibility:
              40: Entirely Comprehensible.
              36: Almost entirely comprehensible; no misunderstandings.
              32: Some errors, but mostly comprehensible; occasionally misunderstands examiner's ques
              24: Many errors, about half incomprehensible.

(Source: adapted from: Murphy-Judy: 1997)

APPENDIX I: PUPILS' RAW SCORES FROM THEIR ORAL AND WRITTEN

ENGLISH EXERCISES

Pupils' raw scores from the written and oral English exercises		
Pupils	Oral exercise	Written exercise
P1	61%	59%
P2	46%	42%
P3	57%	48%
P4	49%	43%
P5	41%	39%
P6	42%	41%
P7	43%	42%
P8	31%	28%
P9	40%	38%
P10	65%	62%
P11	65%	63%
P12	38%	35%
P13	65%	62%
P14	66%	64%
P15	55%	53%
P16	39%	37%
P17	41%	40%
P18	41%	39%
P19	53%	50%
P20	52%	49%
P21	51%	47%
P22	57%	52%

APPENDIX J: LESSON OBSERVATION NOTES

Teacher: Mr Thomas   **Number of pupils: 45**

Observer. M. Molapo

Date:07/10/2002

Time: 40min.

Class: Grade 11A

Field Notes:

1) Teacher first greets pupils and introduces the topic (with explanations of the key concepts).

2) Pupils are given copies of the comprehension passage that they are going to work with.

3) The teacher informs pupils that before they attempt the passage individually, volunteers have to read for the whole class (four pupils read the passage).

4) The first reader is fluent and everybody listens attentively.

5) The second reader takes longer to finish and pupils are becoming impatient they correct the reader's pronunciation mistakes while he reads.

6) The last reader has problems with reading the passage so much that there is a buzz of impatient pupils, some are whispering. The teacher takes over.

7) The teacher selects one of the fluent pupils to finish off the passage.

8)The teacher emphasises the importance of following instructions.

9) Then pupils read the passage one more time (this time they read silently).

10) Then they attend to the questions that follow.

(Source: adapted from Balfour: 1995).

Teacher: Ms Lineo   **Number of pupils: 45**

Observer. M. Molapo

Date:07/10/2002

Time: 40min.

Class: Grade 11B

Field Notes:

1) Teacher reads passage from a text, pupils follow.

2) Since not all the pupils have textbooks, pupils have formed groups of three in order to share the textbooks and be able to follow what is being read.

3) After reading there is discussion of what was read. The discussion is mainly centred on questions that followed the passage.

4) Proficient language users dominate the discussion.

5) Attempts to get silent pupils to participate are not successful.

6) During group work, there is evidence that pupils are not really prepared.

7) During evaluation of the work done, some groups' answers were used as model answers, while other groups were ignored (this were groups of pupils who seemed to struggle during group work session).

(Source: adapted from Balfour: 1995).

Teacher: Mr Thomas   **Number of pupils: 45**

Observer. M. Molapo

Date:09/10/2002

Time: 40min.

Class: Grade 11A

Field notes:

1) Pupils are taught about conjunctions.

2) The teacher writes several sentences on the chalkboard using conjunctions.

3) Then explains when and where they are used in sentences.

4) Since pupils do not all have textbooks, the teacher writes several sentences on the chalkboard again for pupils to correct.

5) Individuals go to the board to write, when the sentence is correct, there is a chorus of approval. When the sentence is wrong, another pupil goes to the board to correct it.

6) There is more pupil participation.

7) The teacher writes several sentences to evaluate the lesson before pupils are given an exercise to attempt.

(Source: adapted from Balfour: 1995).

Teacher: Ms Lineo   **Number of pupils: 45**

Observer. M. Molapo

Date: 11/10/2002

Time: 40min.

Class: Grade 11B

Field notes:

1) Pupils were supposed to have read books that they borrowed from the library.

2) Today they were going to each give an oral presentation of what they read.

3) Each pupil was supposed to have written a summary of the book.

4) There was evidence of pupils being poorly prepared for the activity.

5) However, the teacher continues with the exercise.

6) First, proficient pupils, who through jerky and hesitant sentences narrate what the story is about. Only a third of the class participates (give the report).

7) The teacher is not very happy with the results.

8) Through a long process of probing and prompting pupils summarise the books they have read.

9) The teacher explains the importance of the exercise that pupils ought to have carried out.

(Source: adapted from Balfour: 1995).