



**TEACHING READING IN ISIZULU FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE TO  
NON- MOTHER TONGUE SPEAKERS: A CASE OF THREE PRIVATE  
SCHOOLS IN GAUTENG**

**WRITTEN BY:**

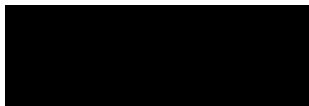
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**SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF EDUCATION IN THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, COLLEGE OF  
HUMANITIES, AT THE UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

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# Declaration

I, Namisile Mhlongo, hereby declare that the *Teaching Reading in isiZulu First Additional Language: A Case of Three Private Schools in Gauteng* is my own work and has not been submitted for any degree or diploma at any other University. All the sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of a complete reference list and in text referencing.



18/07/2024

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Date

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DR Samukelisiwe Khumalo

Date

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## Abstract

The study explored isiZulu First Additional Language (FAL) teachers' experiences in teaching reading skills to non-mother tongue speakers in three selected private schools in Gauteng, South Africa. A case study research methodological design was used to stimulate conversations to gain insight into specific experiences of the Grade 6 isiZulu FAL teachers when teaching reading to non-mother tongue speakers. This study was guided by two theoretical frameworks: Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural theory to explore the experiences of isiZulu FAL teachers in teaching reading to non-mother tongue speakers. The study adopted a qualitative, multiple case study approach located within an interpretive paradigm to gain knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon. Semi-structured interviews and observations were employed to generate data. The three Grade 6 isiZulu FAL teachers were selected purposely and identified as suitable participants because they would provide sufficient information needed to foster understanding of the Grade 6 isiZulu FAL teachers' experience in teaching reading skills to non-mother tongue speakers. A thematic analysis technique was used to analyse the data generated, which allowed for the identification and analysis of patterns from the data set. This also allowed for accurate and trustworthy findings. The findings of the study revealed that the participants' experiences in teaching reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue speakers were influenced by various factors such as stakeholders' attitudes towards the learning of isiZulu FAL, insufficient learning time, and lack of teachers training in teaching of reading in isiZulu FAL. The study recommends that all stakeholders, policymakers, and education providers, take the initiative to improve the teaching of reading in isiZulu FAL.

**Key words:** Grade 6 first additional language teachers, isiZulu first additional language, non-mother tongue speakers, reading skills, teaching

## Abbreviations

The following section provides a detailed description of the abbreviations and acronyms used in this research study.

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Full word</b>
B.Ed.	Bachelor of Education
B.Ed. Hons	Bachelor of Education Honours
CSR	Collaborative Strategic Reading
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
DoE	Department of Education
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
FAL	First Additional Language
FAL T1	First IsiZulu FAL Teacher Participant
FAL T2	Second IsiZulu FAL Teacher Participant
FAL T3	Third IsiZulu FAL Teacher Participant
FP	Foundation Phase
HOD	Head of Department
HL	Home Language
IP	Intermediate Phase
ISASA	Independent Schools Association of Southern Africa
LiEP	Language in Education Policy
LoLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
MEd	Master of Education

NKM	Namisile Kim Mhlongo (Source)
P1	First Participating Private School
P2	Second Participating Private School
P3	Third Participating Private School
PK	Pedagogical Knowledge
SA	South Africa
SL	Second Language
SP	Senior Phase
UKZN	University of KwaZulu Natal
ZDP	Zone of Proximal Development

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# **CHAPTER ONE – ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY**

## **1.1 Introduction**

The study explored Grade 6 isiZulu First Additional Language (FAL) teachers' experiences of teaching reading skills to non-mother tongue learners. It was a case study that involved three Grade 6 isiZulu FAL teachers selected from three private schools in the Gauteng province, South Africa. The objective of this study was to develop a conversation regarding the experiences of isiZulu FAL teachers in teaching reading skills to non-mother tongue learners. This study is grounded in Vygotsky's theory, emphasizing the social and cultural influences on learning. A case study design was employed, using a qualitative approach to explore the research context in depth. Data generation methods included interviews and observations, allowing for rich, detailed insights into the study's focus. This chapter discusses the research topic; background of the study; problem statement; purpose of the study; the rationale of the study; significance of the study; research objectives; research questions; location of study; definition of key concepts; and a brief overview of the chapters that constitute the dissertation.

## **1.2 Background of the Study**

Private schools also known as independent schools in South Africa are educational institutions that operate without funding from the government. According to the Schools Act (SA, 1996) private schools are schools that are registered or are supposed to be registered in terms of section 46. In South Africa, The National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996 makes provision for two types of schools, that is public and independent (private) schools. According to Mompei (2021) the term private commonly suggests non-governmental, non-state or independently funded schools, these schools are operated by corporate entities, individuals or religious denominations.

It is important to gain understanding of the history of private schools, to comprehend the role and place of these schools in the South African education system. The historical development of the South African education system, which was greatly influenced by the British approach to education is the primary factor to the division between public and private schools (Pretorius, 2019). The foundations of South Africa's education were established during the British imperial era in the country and the extensive system of private schools was influenced by the British colonialism (Pretorius, 2019). Nevertheless, the apartheid era nullified some features of

the British education foundations in the South African education system (Mompei, 2021). Squelch (1997) states that the historical development of public education system in SA is well documented, whereas the history of private education is not so much. Both Pretorius (2019) and Squelch (1997) mentioned that the development of private education in SA is woven into the political, economic, social and cultural history of the country.

The concept of non-mother tongue refers to a language that is not the learner's first language or home language, often acquired in education settings or through social interactions outside home (Delbio et al., 2018). Xin (2017) states that non-mother tongue languages are those that individuals acquire in addition to their home language (HL), shaping their engagement with written material. In South Africa, many learners learn languages like isiZulu as a First Additional Language (FAL), meaning they are not mother-tongue speakers but are learning it as a secondary language (Heugh et al., 2020). Understanding this concept is significant in relation to teaching reading skills in isiZulu FAL.

IsiZulu is offered as a first additional language in many private schools, it is a language that learners learn outside their HL in an educational setting. When learning a First Additional Language (FAL), learners' home language can significantly influence their pronunciation, as the phonetic systems of the two languages may differ (Van Rooy, 2010). This difference can ultimately affect the meaning of text. Phonological differences between two languages may also hinder effective communication, due to mispronunciation (Onwochei et al., 2024). A study of (Saher et al., 2024) on mother tongue influence on second language, supports that variations in spelling and phonemes between two languages lead to mispronunciation mistakes. Pretorius and Mampuru (2007) on the other hand discuss how non-mother tongue learners need to be explicitly taught the structural and phonological rules of isiZulu FAL for effective reading. They emphasise the need for direct instructional methods, such as phonemic awareness training and vocabulary development.

In South Africa, English is seen as a highly influential language (Gough, 1996). It holds a significant position in South Africa as a country and the world in general (Crystal, 2003). According to Crystal (2003), English is considered a global language as it is used by different countries as a medium of communication to conduct various activities such as sport, science, tourism, business, and education. Personally, I witnessed the power of the English language during the 2023 Rugby World Cup, where the medium of communication for all national teams

around the world was English. In fact, the Rugby World Cup website is also written in English. Pirs1 and Pirs1 (2014) describe English as an influential language in sports discourses.

Furthermore, Rao (2019) explains that English is the most widely used language in the world and is referred to as the global lingua franca. Hence, it is used as a medium of communication by both native and non-native speakers of English (Rao, 2019). In South Africa, English is also an important language, given the rich history associated with it. On the one hand, English was acknowledged as the sole official language of the Cape colony in 1822, and, on the other hand, it became an official language in the newly formed Union of South Africa in 1910, during which period the former Boer republics of the Transvaal and Orange Free State came to unite with the Cape and Natal colonies (Gough, 1996). Since the first democratic elections in 1994, English has become one of the twelve official languages of South Africa. English also became a compulsory subject, and a preferred medium of instruction in almost all schools in South Africa (Gough, 1996). The prevalence of the English language in South Africa is evident in government, businesses, science, sport, tourism, and education (Crystal, 2003). The language allows the country to maintain its international relations with other countries in such areas as science, technology, business, education, sport, and tourism.

The constitution of the Republic of South Africa promotes and protects learner's rights to multilingualism and the acquisition of an additional language (Heugh, 2013). The Department of Education argues that the ability to speak multiple languages should be one of the defining characteristics of being a South African (Heugh, 2013). As such, schools are charged with the responsibility to sustain the home language while offering access to the acquisition of an additional language (de Wet, 2002). In the context of this study, home language (HL) refers to the first language learned by children; it is the language that they listen to from their birth. First additional language on the other hand, refers to a language that is learned or acquired after the home language is established (Hoque, 2017).

Informed by the constitution of South Africa, a language in education policy (LiEP, 1997) was developed to guide education institutions on the use of various languages in the teaching and learning process. The aim of the Language in Education Policy (LiEP) and National Curriculum Statement (NCS) is to promote and develop multilingualism through all the official languages by ensuring respect for all languages used in South Africa (Thornhill, 2015). The

policy believes and promote that learners benefit cognitively and emotionally from a structured bilingual education.

The LiEP promotes home language education especially in Grades 1 to 3, without restricting the use of HL instruction up to Grade 3. The policy also accentuates the use of HL in Grades 1 to 3 (Thornhill, 2015). The Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) promotes the development and strengthening of the First Additional Language (FAL), alongside the use of the Home Language (HL) (Wildsmith-Cromarty & Balfour, 2019). Learners are therefore expected to learn two languages as early as in Grade 1. The three participating schools in this study were all English-medium schools, which meant that the primary language for teaching and learning was English. The participating schools offer isiZulu as one of the FAL subjects.

IsiZulu is one of the twelve official languages in SA. However, the teaching of reading in isiZulu at private schools has not been extensively studied. Learners in private schools come from diverse language backgrounds. This calls for a need to deliver good reading instruction in isiZulu for the advancement of the language and its culture (Cummins, 2000). Teaching reading in a private school to non-mother tongue learners may come with challenges. Cummins (2000) maintains that lack of teaching isiZulu materials that align with the learner's ability, and insufficient FAL teacher training opportunities are some of the major challenges that come with teaching isiZulu FAL in private schools.

According to Lafon (2011), teaching reading starts at an early age, as learners naturally acquire language through exposure. He further emphasises that learners can excel in languages if they get exposed to them at an early age. The teaching of reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue speakers is important, as isiZulu is the most spoken language in SA (Naidoo et al., 2018). Against the above background, this study sought to explore the experiences of isiZulu FAL teachers when teaching reading to non-mother tongue speakers within the context of private schools in Gauteng.

### **1.3 The Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the experiences of Grade 6 teachers who teach reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue learners in private schools and to comprehend the factors that influence their experiences.

#### **1.4 Problem Statement**

Teaching reading in isiZulu First Additional Language (FAL) in a predominantly white private school with learners from diverse language backgrounds, including Mandarin, Tshivenda, Sesotho, isiXhosa, Setswana, Sepedi, Somali, Amharic, English, Shona, Hausa, Afrikaans and Hindi, to name a few, can pose a unique challenging experience (Nhlapo, 2021). One of the key difficulties is the linguistic diversity, where each learner's home language varies significantly in its phonetic, syntactic, and grammatical structures compared to isiZulu FAL (Nhlapo, 2021). For instance, learners from African languages like isiXhosa or Sesotho may adapt more easily to isiZulu FAL, as these languages share similarities, such as noun class systems and agglutination. In contrast, learners from non-African language backgrounds, such as Mandarin or Amharic, may struggle with the click sounds and tonal qualities of isiZulu FAL, which are absent in their home languages (Nhlapo, 2021). Moreover, in a predominantly white private school, where English is often dominant and most likely the primary medium of instruction and communication (de Wet, 2020). The prominence of English in this environment may limit learners' exposure to isiZulu outside of the FAL classroom, hindering the progress in their reading skills in isiZulu FAL, as learners may have few opportunities to practice and apply their reading skills in real-life contexts (Nhlapo, 2021). The dominance of English also affects learners' motivation and engagement, as they may perceive English as more useful and prestigious, thus limiting their investment in learning of isiZulu FAL (Kaveh & Sandoval, 2020).

The existing literature appears to have limited research on the experiences of teachers who teach reading in isiZulu FAL in the context of private schools, even though this environment presents distinct challenges. Most studies on isiZulu FAL focus on public or ex-Model C schools, where the emphasis tends to be on the lack of resources and policy implementation in multilingual classrooms (Shawe, 2015). However, private schools, with their diverse learners' language backgrounds and dominant use of English, face unique challenges such as cultural disconnect and inadequate exposure to isiZulu outside the FAL classroom (Nhlapo, 2021). These factors make the teaching of reading in isiZulu FAL in private schools particularly complex, yet this area remains underexplored in current academic discussions.

Understanding these experiences and related factors is important for promoting the teaching of reading in isiZulu FAL. A study conducted by McKinney (2007) reveals that, learners in multiracial schools, graduate without attaining proficiency in their chosen second language

(SL). Rudwick (2008) also highlights that teaching a language in schools has become increasingly challenging for educators. Based on my teaching experience, I have observed that some learners struggled with reading isiZulu, which later affected their writing and speaking skills. The shortage of research on teaching reading in isiZulu in private schools exacerbates the issue, and thus emphasise the need for a comprehensive exploration of teachers' experiences within this context. The varied language backgrounds of learners, challenges, and experiences faced by teachers when teaching reading in isiZulu FAL encouraged the researcher to conduct this study. This study aimed to address this research gap, thereby investigating teachers' experiences in teaching isiZulu FAL reading and, in the process, identifying factors that influence their experiences. The findings of this study could benefit isiZulu teachers and learners alike in both private and multiracial schools.

### **1.5 The Rationale**

In my experiences of teaching a language subject, I realised that reading could improve communication skills. I noticed that people who read more tended to be better at expressing themselves, both in speaking and writing. As a language teacher, I believe in the importance of reading (Otabia, 2012). Snow et al. (1998) contend that reading influences a learner's academic success. This study was motivated by my personal and professional experiences.

On a personal level, I recognise the role of isiZulu language plays in preserving the cultural heritage of the Zulu community. Furthermore, my personal experiences and observations motivated me to explore the experiences of isiZulu FAL teachers who taught reading to non-mother tongue speakers within the context of private schools. The study sought to contribute to educational research and practice, thereby providing insights into factors contributing to teachers' experiences in the teaching of isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue speakers. This could improve the teaching of reading strategies, teacher training, and policies aimed at enhancing reading in isiZulu FAL. It could also address gaps in the literature regarding the teaching of reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue speakers.

Reichle et al. (2009) highlight that reading is considered the most complex cognitive activity. They, on the one hand, further posit that teachers often underestimate this complex process, which must be mastered by the learners. On the other hand, Pretorius and Mokhwesana (2009) argue that teachers in South Africa tend to be inadequately skilled in the teaching of reading. This is the result of the little research conducted on reading in isiZulu FAL (Land, 2015).

According to Land (2015), there seems to be an imbalance between training teachers to teach reading at universities, and the actual teaching of reading at schools. Teachers need to understand why some features of isiZulu spelling need special attention when learners learn to read.

Drawing from my eight years of experience teaching isiZulu in the private sector, I realised that many learners have limited reading, writing, and speaking skills in their FAL. Furthermore, previous research highlighted the importance of examining the implementation of language policies and teaching practices in different educational contexts (Heugh, 2010). An exploration of the experiences of teachers who taught reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue speakers in private schools could provide valuable insight into the challenges and opportunities of teaching in a multilingual learning environment. In conducting this study, the researcher sought to fill the research gap and contribute to the scholarly literature by examining current practices, challenges, and possible solutions for teaching reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue speakers in private schools. The results of this study could benefit education policymakers, school administrators, and teachers to develop effective language policies and teaching methods that promote the development of literacy and equity in education.

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The study delved into a key aspect of language education, thereby focusing on the experiences of isiZulu FAL teachers who teach reading to non-mother tongue speakers. The study argues that understanding the factors that influence teachers' experiences in teaching reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue could improve classroom practices. With isiZulu being one of the twelve official languages in SA, promoting fluency is crucial for preserving diversity and inclusion. Through exploring the factors influencing teachers' experiences, this study could provide insight into the teaching of African languages in private schools (Hornberger, 2018). Additionally, given that private schools have learners from diverse language backgrounds, the results emanating from this study could address the needs of diverse learners and promote the significance of linguistic diversity and inclusion. Most importantly, this research could be of benefit to stakeholders such as policymakers and curriculum developers regarding the needs and experiences of teachers and learners in private schools.

## **1.7 Research Objectives**

Viewed against the above background, this study set out the following as its main objectives:

- 1.7.1 To explore the experiences of teachers who teach reading in isiZulu FAL within the context of private schools.
- 1.7.2 To gain insight into teachers' experiences of teaching reading in isiZulu FAL in private schools.

## **1.8 Research Questions**

- 1.8.1 What are teachers' experiences of teaching reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue learners in private schools in Gauteng?
- 1.8.2 Why do teachers have particular experiences of teaching reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue in private schools in Gauteng?

## **1.9 Definition of key terms**

The following section defines four key terms according to how they were used in this study, namely; Teaching, reading, isiZulu FAL, and non-mother tongue.

### **1.9.1 Teaching**

Teaching involves the sharing of knowledge and skills with learners, through different strategies and methods (Westwood & Westwood, 2008). The goal is to help learners understand concepts effectively while also encouraging them to think and develop personally and academically (Westwood & Westwood, 2008). Effective teaching requires adapting to the needs of learners while employing teaching strategies to keep them engaged and facilitate retention of the material recommended by Shulman (1987) who emphasizes the importance of pedagogical content knowledge, in ensuring subjects are easily grasped by learners. Vygotsky (1978) sociocultural theory emphasizes the significance of interaction, in the learning process where teaching is viewed as a method to improve thinking abilities through motivating endeavours and offering frameworks for learners.

### **1.9.2 Reading**

Reading involves interpreting written symbols to understand the meaning behind them, by decoding and comprehending the texts thoroughly. Moreover, it encompasses awareness, vocabulary understanding and fluency to facilitate comprehension (Castles et al., 2018). Recent studies emphasize that reading goes beyond word recognition and entails extracting

significance from text by engaging with knowledge and language abilities (Castles et al., 2018). Furthermore, Castles et al. (2018) highlights that the progression of reading skills is impacted by factors such as environment and teaching methods, which influence literacy development, in settings.

### **1.9.3 IsiZulu First Additional Language (FAL)**

Isizulu First Additional Language (FAL) refers to the teaching and learning of isiZulu, as a second language in a school where isiZulu is not the primary medium of instruction. isiZulu being the most spoken language in South Africa, it is often taught in diverse, multilingual settings (Phungula, 2019). The curriculum, for Isizulu FAL focuses on enhancing learners' ability to communicate effectively through reading, writing, listening and speaking while taking into account their backgrounds (Phungula, 2019).

### **1.9.4 Non-mother tongue**

In language learning contexts a non-mother tongue is a language that individuals learn through educational settings or social engagements rather, than from their upbringing (Dube, 2021). When learners learn a new language as non-mother tongue speakers, difficulties might arise in pronunciation, grammar and cultural differences compared to their home language (Nhlapo,2021). Nhlapo (2021) and Dube (2021) addresses the difficulties of teaching and learning a language that's not one's home language, in varied linguistic settings emphasising the significance of tailored teaching methods to support language acquisition.

### **1.10 Location of the Study**

This study was conducted in three private schools within the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality in Gauteng province. For confidentiality, these schools are referred to as Private School 1 (P1), Private School 2 (P2), and Private School 3 (P3). Each school offers enrolment from Grade R through to Grade 12, with an average of 80 learners in Grade 6 and 25 learners doing isiZulu FAL. There are approximately 16 teachers assigned to the intermediate phase. The focus of this study is on Grade 6 isiZulu First Additional Language (FAL), specifically targeting one isiZulu FAL teacher per school. As private schools are independent, these schools do not receive government assistance and are funded entirely through fees paid by parents. They are situated in suburban areas of the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality. Most learners come from affluent socio-economic backgrounds that enable them to meet the high tuition

costs, with a few scholarship recipients as exceptions. Further details on the study sites and their suitability for this study are discussed in Chapter 3.

### **1.11 Overview of Study**

The following section provides a brief overview of the six chapters that compose this dissertation, such as, Chapter One, Chapter Two, Chapter Three, Chapter Four, Chapter Five, Chapter Five, and Chapter Six.

#### **Chapter One**

The chapter presents the research topic and describes the background of the study, purpose of the study, problem statement, rationale, significance of the study, research objectives, research questions, definition of key concepts, and a brief overview of chapters that constitute this report.

#### **Chapter Two**

This chapter describes the theoretical framework that informs the study. The chapter also provides a review of the literature relevant to this study. It further discusses different arguments presented by various scholars about the teaching and learning of reading in a second language.

#### **Chapter Three**

This chapter explores various methodological procedures employed in this study. These include the research design, paradigm, sampling method, data analysis method and trustworthiness. The chapter also details the ethical considerations observed prior to and during the data collection process and limitations of the study.

#### **Chapter Four**

Chapter four presents an analysis of data generated during interviews and observations. The chapter also demonstrates how data was analysed using the thematic analysis method, which classified data into themes and sub-themes. Semi-structured interviews and observations were utilised to elicit data from the study participants regarding their individual experiences in teaching reading to non-mother tongue speakers in their respective schools.

## **Chapter Five**

The chapter discusses the findings of the study regarding the Grade 6 isiZulu FAL teachers' experiences in teaching reading to non-mother tongue learners in the three selected private schools in Gauteng. The sub-themes were used to provide a comprehensive understanding of isiZulu FAL teachers' experiences in teaching reading skill, as well as the factors contributing to their experiences. The chapter also provides a comparison of responses that were supplied by the participants who teach isiZulu FAL during the Zoom interviews and the lesson observations to enhance the trustworthiness of the study.

## **Chapter Six**

Chapter Six presents the summary and the recommendations of the study. The chapter further shows how the findings of the study could of benefit to various stakeholders such as the Grade 6 isiZulu FAL teachers in both private and public schools, education providers in general, and curriculum developers.

### **1.12 Conclusion**

This chapter offered a comprehensive summary of the sections discussed above. The chapter has introduced the research topic, which was: Teaching reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue speakers: A case of three private schools in Gauteng. The chapter included a discussion of the background of the study, purpose of the study, problem statement as well as the phenomenon under investigation. The chapter provided the rationale and significance of the study, as well as the research objectives the study sought to achieve. The chapter also provided the critical research questions that guided this study. Lastly, the chapter presented a detailed explanation of various concepts used in this research project and, lastly, offered a brief overview of the chapters of the study. The next chapter will present the literature review and the theoretical framework that was employed to guide this study.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The first chapter introduced the research topic, background, problem statement, rationale and significance of the study by outlining the challenges faced in teaching reading in FAL to learners whose home language is not isiZulu, particularly in the context of private schools where linguistic diversity is high. The significance of addressing this issue is highlighted by the increasing emphasis on multilingualism in South Africa's educational system. The current chapter reviews the relevant literature, which seeks to provide an overview of the various arguments rendered by different scholars regarding the teaching of reading skills to first additional language learners. The chapter also provides the theoretical framework that was employed in this study. It explores existing research on language acquisition and challenges in teaching reading to non-mother tongue learners in multilingual settings. This chapter highlights critical gaps, particularly the scarcity of research on teaching reading in isiZulu FAL in private school settings, where English often dominates, and learners come from various linguistic backgrounds such as Mandarin, Somali, Sesotho, and Hindi languages, to name a few. This chapter also provides an overview of the various arguments presented by different scholars regarding the teaching of reading in a second language.

### **2.2 Literature Review**

A literature review is a discussion of existing published articles related to the topic being studied (Xiao & Watson, 2019). According to Paul and Criado (2020), it intends to share information and findings developed from previously conducted studies that relate to the current study. A literature review helps in establishing the current state of existing research on the phenomena being studied (Paul & Criado, 2020). It is crucial as it outlines the significance of the current study while identifying gaps that need to be explored within the topic under research (Snyder, 2019). The literature review provides a synthesis of research findings, thereby revealing areas in which more research is required (Snyder, 2019). In the context of this study, the literature review sought to discuss the perceptions held by other scholars on the teaching of reading to non-mother tongue speakers. It also sought to discuss the findings of the studies previously conducted on the experiences of individuals who taught reading to non-mother tongue speakers

### **2.2.1 Private Schools and Reading in a Second Language**

Private schools often have lesser class sizes compared to public schools (Ghimire & Koirala, 2020). This can be beneficial as it allows for more individual attention for learners. In addition, private schools may have more resources such as technology and/or specialised facilities, which can enhance the learning experiences of learners (Ghimire & Koirala, 2020). However, it is important to note that private schools tend to be more expensive than public schools. This makes them less accessible for low-income families (Alderman et al., 2001). Prior to 1994, private schools in South Africa were reserved for white learners only (Pretorius, 2019). During this time, black learners were only allowed to attend under certain circumstances, which included, amongst others, being a foreigner or obtaining special government authorisation to gain access to the schools. However, since the end of apartheid in 1994, (and following the implementation of policies designed to promote racial integration and equality in all schools) private schools in South Africa began to accept black learners. Although white learners still dominate private school attendance due to high tuition fees, there exist opportunities for black learners to attend if they can afford it or obtain scholarships (Fiske & Ladd, 2004).

Furthermore, since the end of apartheid in South Africa in 1994, there have been significant changes in language policies in schools. The Constitution of South Africa identifies 12 official languages. The Language in Education Policy (LiEP) of 1997 aimed to provide equitable access to education in all official languages, while recognising that English would remain the language of teaching and learning in many schools (Beukes, 2009). The policy encouraged the use of the home language (HL) as a medium of instruction in the lower grades of school and supported the development of bilingual and multilingual learners. According to the policy, learners are required to do their HL and choose a first additional language (FAL) as a subject at school. A HL is a language that learners primarily speak at home, and it is taught as a subject at school (Wildsmith-Cromarty & Balfour, 2019).

It should be noted that HL and FAL skills are essential for academic success and personal development (Wildsmith-Cromarty & Balfour, 2019). Schools in South Africa offer a wide range of HL and FAL language options, depending on the region and the language needs of the community (Lafon, 2009). It should also be remembered that the implementation of the LiEP (1997) faced major challenges, including a lack of teachers who are competent in multiple

languages, as well as limited resources necessary to develop teaching materials in all official languages (Madiba & Mabiletja, 2008).

IsiZulu is one of the twelve official languages in South Africa and is offered as an additional first language in most private schools (Nhlapo, 2021). Teaching isiZulu at a private school in South Africa can be both a challenging and rewarding experience. IsiZulu is known as one of the most spoken languages in the country (Zungu & Pillay, 2010). According to the South African census of 2022, around 23% of the population speaks isiZulu as a first language (South Africa Statistics, 2022). However, the language does not always enjoy the same recognition and support as other languages, particularly in private schools where English is often the dominant language of instruction (Nyangiwe, 2004). Teaching reading in isiZulu FAL can be a rewarding experience for teachers as it helps learners develop their language skills and deepen their understanding of the Zulu culture. It also allows them to promote and preserve their language and culture. IsiZulu has a rich history and cultural significance and teaching it in private schools can help pass it on to future generations. Additionally, teaching isiZulu can help promote diversity and inclusion in the school community as it equips learners with valuable lifelong skills (Mbele, 2019).

In the USA, a study conducted on reading in a foreign language examined how an Extensive Reading programme affected second language (SL) Chinese readers' reading attitudes. The findings revealed that extensive reading program significantly improved the confidence of SL Chinese readers in reading Chinese, as well as dedication to learning Chinese (Zhou & Day, 2023). The report further revealed that extensive program enhanced students' fluency in reading, understanding, vocabulary development, grammar, character recognition, skill of writing, as well as speaking and listening skills. The extensive reading programme is an approach to SL teaching and learning where SL learners read a great deal of easy and fascinating material (Zhou & Day, 2023). This approach aims to assist learners in enhancing the learning of second language by urging them to engage with a range of interesting and understandable content. The focus is, on promoting fluency and expanding vocabulary that intricate language analysis (Zhou & Day, 2023). The primary goal of reading is to develop language skills in an enjoyable manner (Park, 2020). The studies indicate that reading extensively, greatly improves second language reading skills, like fluency and vocabulary growth (Park, 2020).

In South Africa the concept of Extensive Reading is becoming more popular as a way to improve literacy, in multilingual settings (Nkomo,2021). While not commonly practiced or researched as in other countries, it shares similarities with initiatives like Sustained Silent Reading (SSR), where learners are encouraged to read quietly for pleasure at specific times (Renandya, 2002). Literature in South Africa often emphasizes the significance of being exposed to a range of texts in order to enhance language skills and cultivate a passion for reading. Activities that encourage leisure reading and improving reading fluency, such, as Sustained Silent Reading (SSD) encourage learners to read. This is typically done as part of initiatives aimed at enhancing literacy skills in languages such as English and isiZulu (Nkomo, 2021).

A study conducted in the UK on the importance of teaching reading and vocabulary in a foreign language suggests that teaching vocabulary is a fundamental part in the process of teaching foreign language, which requires new and more efficient approaches (Addumajidovna, 2019). This highlights the importance of good strategy in teaching reading skills to non-mother tongue speakers to attain positive results.

A study conducted at the University of Columbia, USA, on second language reading and instruction, revealed that second language reading teachers encountered unique challenges in the classroom as they ought to engage learners in new reading practices while reinforcing, reaffirming, and using pre-existing practices that learners bring from the HL experience (Ahmed, 2015). Another study conducted in Nepal on challenges in teaching reading in English Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms reported that the teaching of reading in EFL posed challenges, particularly lack of knowledge of the target culture, hard vocabulary, lack of inspiration to read on the learners' end, and lack of sufficient preparation in teaching (Yadav, 2014). In the context of this study, the above experiences highlighted the importance of teaching reading skills to non-mother tongue speakers.

### **2.2.2 The Importance of Teaching Reading**

Reading skill is a complex process that includes various components such as observing, seeing, viewing, remembering, attaching meaning, synthesising, analysing, and interpreting (Celik, 2019). Since the study is about teaching reading, it is necessary to understand the importance of reading to learners. Celik (2019) reveals that reading enhances the development of language skills such as grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure in learners as it exposes them to

language patterns and a wide variety of words. Furthermore, literature reveals that reading stimulates the brain, thereby allowing learners to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills (McEwan, 2007). It can be noted that reading is fundamental to learning.

Teaching reading is a multifaceted process that involves several key components to help learners become proficient readers (Brown, 2014). The key components include phonics, which is the relationship between letters and sounds and includes teaching how to decode words by sounding out letters and blending them (Ehri, 2020). Phonemic awareness is the skill to hear and manipulate the individual sounds in words (Yopp, 2000). According to Oakhill and Elbro (2014), building vocabulary is another component that is essential for reading comprehension as it allows for understanding the meaning of words and sentences. Elish-Piper (2010) reveals that fluency is also one of the components involved in teaching reading, which is the capability to read with accurateness, haste, and expression. This also allows learners to read fluently and easily, both of which support comprehension and engagement. Furthermore, comprehension is the ability to understand and make meaning from what is read (Elish-Piper, 2010), which involves using prior knowledge and context clues to understand the meaning of words and sentences.

Teaching reading effectively involves addressing each of the above-mentioned components systematically and explicitly. Teachers can use a variety of strategies, such as phonics instruction, read-aloud, vocabulary-building exercises, and comprehension activities to support learners' learning and development (Beers, 2003). As teachers use and implement these strategies, they must tailor instruction to the needs of individual learners. This can involve differentiating instruction, by providing individualised support and using a range of reading materials that are appropriate for the level and interests of each learner (Landrum & McDuffie, 2010). Additionally, teachers can provide constructive feedback to learners to help them improve their reading skills. According to Clapper (2010), it is also significant to create a positive and reassuring learning environment that allows learners to take risks, make mistakes, and ask for help. It is vital that teachers foster a growth mindset and a love of reading in learners as reading can be a challenging skill to learn.

### **2.2.3 IsiZulu as an Agglutinative Language**

IsiZulu is categorised as an agglutinative language. This means that it constructs words by merging a root with prefixes, infixes, and suffixes (Van Rooy & Pretorius 2013). This

morphological structure is important for grasping how isiZulu should be pronounced and interpreted for those who are non-mother tongue speakers (Land 2015).

In isiZulu language, grammar is structured using affixes to show relationships and convey meanings of relying upon standalone auxiliary words like in English. For instance, "Nginendodakazi" means " I have a daughter" in English which demonstrates the merging of morphemes into one word, in isiZulu (Ngema 2023). In this agglutinative structure, compresses expression of complex ideas into a single word, which can be difficult for learners used to the analytic structure of English, where meaning often comes from the word order and auxiliary verbs (Ardington et al., 2020).

This linguistic difference holds importance in teaching reading skills to isiZulu FAL non-mother tongue speakers. Understanding vowels and consonants, along with their combinations is essential for understanding the language, hence, learners need to master these components to decode words with accuracy (Ardington et al., 2020). Studies suggest that a significant number of learners face challenges in reading in isiZulu FAL due to lack of familiarity with complex consonant sequences unique to isiZulu FAL (Ardington et al., 2020). When it comes to English language learning compared to isiZulu language learning, in English there are phonetic cues that can help predict word structures, while in isiZulu FAL learners need to recognise all letter sounds because of its complex morphological patterns (Buckingham et al., 2013).

### **2.2.3.1 Teaching Vowel Sounds to non-mother Tongue Speakers.**

Teaching isiZulu vowels to learners who are non-mother tongue speakers in private schools, presents challenges that require addressing linguistic and pedagogical complications (Kaani, 2023). It is essential to understand the unique features of isiZulu FAL vowels for effective teaching because of the variations compared to languages such, as English (Galanakis, 2010).

In the isiZulu language, words end with a vowel (a, e, i, o, u) and have clicks not found in the English language (Lafon & Mongezi, 2022). Learners need to remember that isiZulu words may sound differently from English, which is their HL. Lafon and Mongezi (2022) explain how isiZulu and English sounds differ, as follows: the letter ‘a’ in the word may, in isiZulu, sounds as in ‘far’, for example, this is observed in the word *lala* (to sleep). The letter ‘e’ in the word east sounds like ‘e’ in isiZulu, as in the English word ‘bed’. An example of this is the

isiZulu word *sebenza* (to work). The letter ‘i’ in the English word ‘kind’, sounds like ‘i’ in isiZulu as in the word ‘rich’. An example of this is seen in the word *siza* (to help). The letter ‘o’ in the English word ‘out’, sounds like ‘o’ in isiZulu, as in the word ‘office’. This is observed in the isiZulu word ‘*bona*’ (to look) and, lastly, the letter ‘u’ in the English word ‘bus’ in isiZulu sounds like the word ‘u’ as in the English word ‘full’. An example of this is the isiZulu word *funda*, which means ‘to read’. A study on skilled reading in isiZulu suggests that the orthography of isiZulu involve characteristics that demand attention from teachers who teach reading if their learners are to profit from the advantages that reading in isiZulu should bring (Land, 2015). She further explains orthography as the art of writing words with proper letters. It can be noted that learners need adequate exposure to isiZulu reading material to master the vowel sounds.

Teaching reading skills in isiZulu FAL requires a grasp of phonemic awareness. Studies have shown that mastering phonics and the relationship between letters and sounds is vital, for comprehension (Castles et al., 2018). For isiZulu FAL learners specifically, it entails identifying sounds and understanding how they interact with consonants to form words (Ardington et al., 2020).

### **2.2.3.2 Teaching Consonants sounds to non-mother Tongue Speakers**

Teaching isiZulu FAL consonants to non-mother tongue speakers, in private schools can be quite challenging because of the distinct phonetic aspects of the language and the varied linguistic backgrounds of the learners (Ngema 2023). IsiZulu FAL has consonants that are not commonly found in many other languages such as sounds and click consonants. These special phonetic elements can present difficulties for learners who are more familiar with different phonetic systems (Ngema 2023). A study conducted by Ardington et al. (2020), highlighted that the lack of familiarity with complex phonetic elements, poses a significant challenge to achieving reading fluency in isiZulu FAL, particularly for non-mother tongue speakers who may find it challenging to accurately decode words without first grasping these sounds proficiently. Moreover, isiZulu FAL comprises consonant sounds that differ considerably from those present in English and other languages used in many South African private schools. Certain sounds like click and aspirated consonants such as: (/c/, /q/ and /x/) pose a challenge, for learners who are non-mother tongue speakers of the language (Zikhali, 2016). As these sounds are typically not found in some of the learners’ home languages, they make it challenging for them to pronounce accurately and often results in them either substituting these

sounds with or avoiding them altogether when reading or speaking (Zikhali, 2016). The limited exposure to isiZulu FAL outside of the classroom setting also acts as a barrier to learning, as learners do not have adequate opportunities to practice these challenging sounds (Mesthrie, 2002).

A study conducted by Ngema (2023) suggested that using methods and supportive approaches such as multisensory, multimodal and scaffolding to teach reading consonants is beneficial to isiZulu FAL non-mother tongue speakers. Research recommends that teachers integrate visual aids and kinaesthetic activities to show the lip and tongue movements needed for click and nasal sounds. Phonetic modelling where teachers emphasise and slow down their pronunciation, can be useful in helping learners with their articulations (Chonco, 2016). In addition, teachers teaching in multilingual settings often use code-switching and translanguaging, encouraging learners to use their home languages as a bridge to understand isiZulu FAL sounds. By comparing the sound systems of English and isiZulu FAL learners can easily grasp the differences and learn how to pronounce unfamiliar sounds (Zikhali, 2016). Integrating words that learners can relate to helps them make sense of challenging sounds, making lessons more engaging (Chonco, 2016). The literature further emphasizes that teacher preparedness and resource availability are critical in teaching reading in isiZulu FAL. Many teachers' express concerns about the lack of training in multilingual pedagogy which affects their ability to teach complex consonants effectively (Makalela, 2017). Additionally, lack of availability of material adds to the difficulty since resources primarily focus on English based teaching techniques that are not as effective, for isiZulu FAL phonics lessons (Makalela, 2016).

### **2.3 Teachers' experiences of teaching an additional language in multilingual context**

Teaching an additional language, mainly in multilingual settings, can present several challenges (Tamanie, 2004). Research offers perspectives on teaching methods and teacher preparation that impacts learning a language.

Teachers often report difficulties associated with the multilingualism in their classrooms (Dube, 2021) and (Tamanie, 2004). In classrooms with linguistic diversity, learners often come from different language background, unrelated to the language taught (Dube, 2021). This diversity requires teachers to adjust their teaching methods to accommodate varying levels of language proficiency. As, teachers face challenges in making an additional language accessible to learners with minimal exposure to the targeted language, beyond the classroom setting

(Heugh, 2007). In this context, teachers frequently utilize code-switching by switching between the learners' home language and the language being taught, to help enhance comprehension (Mesthrie, 2002). Managing this juggling act while keeping the emphasis on the first additional language presents a pedagogical challenge.

Furthermore, literature shows that numerous teachers believe they are not sufficiently equipped to teach a first additional language in settings where learners have diverse linguistic backgrounds (Mtshali & Mashiya, 2022). According to Lenyai (2011) South African teachers often lack the competencies to teach English as a First Additional Language (FAL) resulting in ineffective instructional approaches that fail to foster communication skills among learners.

#### **2.4 Teachers' experiences of teaching reading in an additional language**

Teaching reading in an additional language, as mentioned above, poses a challenge for teachers due to the differences between learners' home language and the language being taught (Hlelethwa, 2013). This discrepancy in learners' home languages can delay the progress of reading skills in the target language, as learners often struggle with grammatical structures, vocabulary, and decoding unfamiliar sounds (Heugh, 2007). According to literature, teachers report that learners often struggle to apply their reading abilities from their home language to the first additional language being taught. This challenge is particularly noted when the phonetic structures of the two languages are quite distinct. Notably observed in the variations, between isiZulu and English (Masteries, 2002).

Access to reading materials in an additional language continues to be a challenge according to Zikhali (2016). Teachers frequently face a shortage of reading material, specifically designed for learners learning a first additional language. In particular, books that are level-appropriate and culturally relevant to non-mother speakers (Brock-Utne, 2001). This lack of reading materials compels teachers to adjust their teaching methods, often relying on outdated or overly complex materials, which can demoralise learners and ultimately hinder their progress (Ngema, 2023). As mentioned earlier, many teachers express concerns, about their readiness to teach reading in an additional language, particularly in multilingual settings (Nhlapo, 2021). A study conducted by Hlatshwayo (2013) indicates that teachers often lack formal training in multilingual pedagogy, which limits their capacity to implement best practices in teaching reading. This gap in teacher-training aggravates existing challenges, making it challenging for

teachers to effectively address the diverse needs of their learners effectively (Hlatshwayo, 2013).

Teachers and learners may also face motivational challenges, as learners may become frustrated with their slow progress in reading an additional language, especially when they are expected to meet the same literacy level as their peers who speak the language natively (Pretorius, 2002). Teachers emphasize the importance of handling this frustration while fostering an encouraging atmosphere in the classroom to keep learners actively participating in the learning process (Pretorius, 2002). Teachers may find themselves struggling to juggle responsibilities such as meeting curriculum objectives and managing language needs while facing constraints on relevant reading material (Chonco, 2016). This emotional strain could affect how well they teach when they lack the support in environments with diverse languages (Chonco, 2016). Teachers themselves may also feel overwhelmed by the multiple challenges of balancing curriculum goals, linguistic diversity, and limited additional language reading material (Chonco, 2016). This emotional toll can impact their teaching effectiveness, especially when they feel unsupported in multilingual settings (Chonco, 2016). This emotional strain could affect how well they teach (Chonco, 2016).

## **2.5 The Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) guidelines with regards to the teaching reading in isiZulu FAL**

The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) provides a detailed guide on how reading should be taught in isiZulu First Additional Language (FAL) as part of the South African language policy (DBE, 2011). The CAPS emphasizes on the need to focus on phonemic awareness as the key component that has to be taught for reading. In isiZulu (FAL) for instance, this means that learners should be taught on the vowel and consonant sounds as well as the click sounds so that they are able to decode words when reading (DBE, 2011). The curriculum also focuses on shared reading, group reading and independent reading to help learners encounter various texts (DBE, 2011). These methods help the learners to practice reading out loud, with emphasis on the aspects of fluency and comprehension (DBE, 2011). Teachers are expected to introduce reading activities and as the learners' progress, they should be able to work with more challenging texts.

CAPS aims at integrating the aspects of listening, speaking, reading and writing in the language learning process. In teaching reading, teachers are expected to focus on both the decoding skills

(identifying sounds and words) and the comprehension strategies (understanding what is written) as stated by Ngema (2023). This ensures that the learners not only read the isiZulu text but also are able to comprehend and respond to what they have read (Pretorius, 2002).

The curriculum also contains the means through which the reading skills in isiZulu FAL can be assessed. It has a number of outcomes for each grade with emphasis on the language proficiency aspects of fluency, accuracy and comprehension (DBE, 2011). Teachers are expected to assess the learners' oral reading, comprehension questions, and written tasks in order to determine the learners' progress in decoding and comprehending texts (DBE, 2011).

Although CAPS offers a systematic way of approaching reading, research indicates that its adoption is not without problems because of issues such as teacher readiness, for instance, lack of material availability, and the multiple linguistic backgrounds of the learners (Chonco, 2016). This is because most of the teachers claimed that they do not have the right knowledge and experience to implement the CAPS reading strategies especially in the multilingual classrooms where some of the learners may have little or no previous exposure to isiZulu FAL (Chonco, 2016).

## **2.6 Theoretical Framework**

According to Chukwuere (2021), a theoretical framework is the foundation and guiding principle for a study (Chun et al., 2019) posit that a theoretical framework establishes a network of interconnected concepts and theories that shape the methodology, research design and interpretation of results. The theoretical framework acts as a lens through which researchers analyse their data to comprehend the phenomena under investigation. It helps in making sense of observations by identifying research gaps and formulating research inquiries (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Moreover, the theoretical framework assists in situating the study within existing knowledge.

To understand the experiences of teachers who teach reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue learners in private school context, this study was guided by The Sociocultural theory, as proposed by Vygotsky (1978), which emphasises the significance of social interactions, cultural contexts, and language usage in learning processes. It stresses the creation of a sociocultural classroom environment, where learners participate actively in language activities and interactions (Vygotsky, 1978).

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory posits that cognitive development is fundamentally shaped by social interactions and cultural context (Daniels, 2016). According to Vygotsky (1978), learning is a collaborative process that occurs through social interaction and the transmission of cultural knowledge from more knowledgeable individuals to learners. This theory emphasizes the role of language and social interaction in shaping thought processes and cognitive development (Eun, 2019).

Vygotsky introduced the concept of the ZPD, which represents the difference between what a learner can achieve independently and what they can achieve with guidance and assistance from a more knowledgeable person (Vygotsky, 1978). This highlights the importance of social interaction in learning, as learners often need support to reach their full potential. Although this term was coined later by (Wood et al., 1976), it is rooted in Vygotsky's ideas. Scaffolding refers to the temporary support provided by a teacher, peer, or mentor to help the learner accomplish a task within their ZPD. As the learner becomes more competent, the support is gradually withdrawn, allowing the learner to become independent (Briner, 1999).

Vygotsky believed that cognitive development is mediated by cultural tools, such as language, symbols, and systems of knowledge, which are passed down through generations. Language is particularly significant as it does not only facilitate communication but also shapes the way individuals think and process information (Vygotsky, 1978).

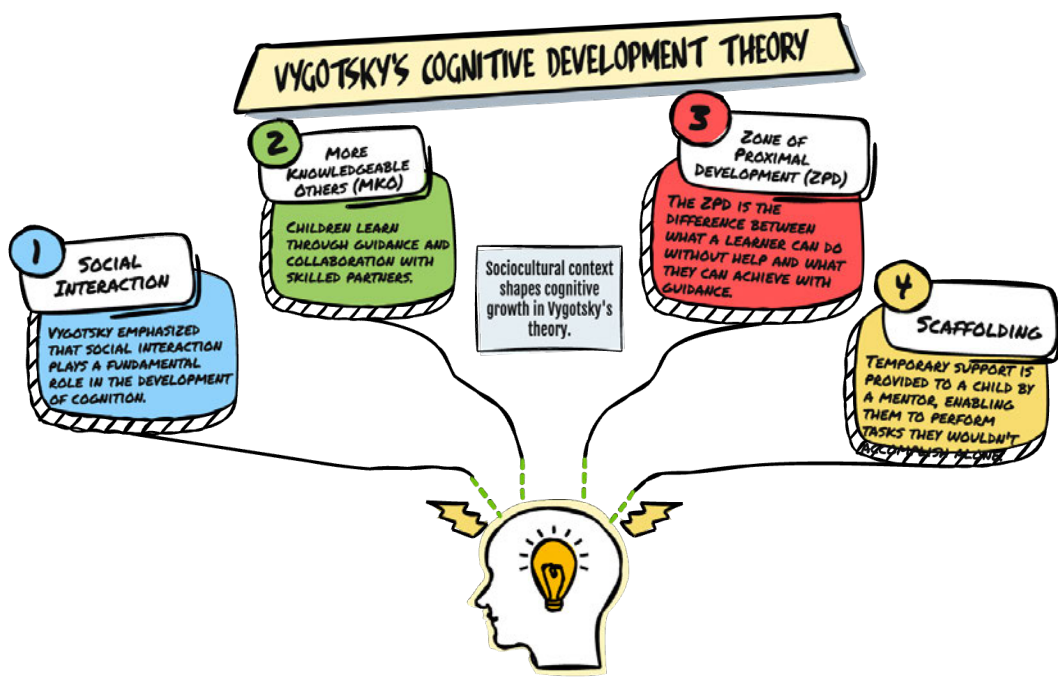
Vygotsky's theory also posits a construct known as More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) (Daniel, 2016). In a multilingual classroom, teachers act as the MKO by providing language expertise, cultural context, and guidance in isiZulu FAL (Daniels, 2016). Also, peers who are more proficient in isiZulu FAL can also become MKOs for their peers, promoting collaborative learning (Daniel, 2016). Teachers' experiences might reveal how they position themselves as MKOs to scaffold reading skills effectively and how they may encourage peer support to strengthen language acquisition (Lantolf, & Poehner, 2014).

Vygotsky argued that learning is inherently a social process, as knowledge is constructed through social interactions and is deeply embedded in cultural contexts. He further suggests that social constructivism enhances higher mental functions, such as reasoning, problem-solving, and decision-making, which originate from social interactions and are later

internalized by individuals (Daniels, 2016). In Vygotsky's theory, language plays a crucial role in cognitive development. It serves as a primary tool for thought and learning. Through dialogue and interaction, children learn how to think and solve problems, which enhances their cognitive abilities (Eun, 2019).

Vygotsky's theory has been influential in shaping educational practices. It underscores the value of collaborative learning, where learners work together and learn from each other. Teachers are seen as facilitators who provide guidance and support while encouraging peer interaction and problem-solving. Furthermore, the theory suggests that learning activities should be tailored to the learner's ZPD to maximize their development potential (Eun, 2019). While Vygotsky's theory has been widely embraced, some scholars argue that it underestimates the role of individual cognition and overemphasizes social interaction in cognitive development. Others suggest that the theory lacks clarity regarding the mechanisms through which social interactions lead to internalized cognitive functions (Daniels, 2016).

Below is a graphical representation of Vygotsky's theory, illustrating its key components such as social interaction, More Knowledgeable Others, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), and scaffolding.



**Figure 2.1** Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of Cognitive Development

**Source:** Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Harvard University Press.

## **2.7 Linking Vygotsky's theoretical constructs to the study**

Vygotsky's ZPD emphasizes the role of support in bridging the gap between a learner's current capabilities and potential learning achievements (Vygotsky, 1978). In teaching reading in isiZulu FAL, teachers engage learners within their ZPD by providing guided reading exercises and modelling language skills to support learners in advancing their isiZulu FAL literacy gradually. Daniels (2008) emphasizes the importance of ZPD in learning additional languages, where instructional support and guidance are crucial. This aligns with the experience of isiZulu FAL teachers who may be actively scaffolding reading tasks for learners unfamiliar with the language.

The MKO concept is fundamental in language instruction, where teachers and proficient peers provide the expertise needed to guide language learning (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). In isiZulu FAL classes, teachers are typically the MKOs, offering linguistic and cultural knowledge that learners lack, thereby helping learners navigate reading skills. Lantolf and Thorne (2006) work on sociocultural theory in language learning highlights the MKO's role, making it relevant for analysing teachers' strategies in teaching reading in isiZulu FAL classes. It shows how the MKO structure supports language acquisition, especially in multilingual settings (Daniel, 2016).

Vygotsky argued that learning is a socially mediated activity, with peer interactions and group work providing valuable language exposure and practice (Vygotsky, 1978). In isiZulu FAL classes, teachers might use group reading activities and discussions to foster language use in social contexts, allowing learners to learn from peers. (Swain et al., 2011) extend Vygotsky's ideas, showing that social interaction enhances second language comprehension and production. This is especially pertinent for isiZulu FAL classes, where social learning can foster language acquisition in private schools where isiZulu FAL may not be widely spoken outside the classroom.

Vygotsky's theory on language and thought posits that language is foundational to cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1987). For learners learning isiZulu FAL, teachers may encourage "think aloud" strategies and reflective language activities to deepen cognitive engagement with

isiZulu FAL reading. Wertsch (2000) work builds on Vygotsky's concept, showing how language internalization supports cognitive functions. Teachers could facilitate this process by encouraging learners to use isiZulu FAL in cognitive tasks, promoting a deeper integration of language and thought.

Vygotsky's concept of mediation through cultural tools highlights the role of language as a vehicle for cultural transmission (Cole & Wertsch, 1996). In isiZulu FAL classes, teachers may use culturally relevant stories, proverbs, and songs as tools to mediate learning, helping learners to connect the language with its cultural context. Cole and Wertsch (1996) discusses how language learning is embedded in cultural tools and practices, which are essential for effective teaching, especially in multicultural classrooms.

The following Vygotsky constructs were excluded for specific reasons related to the context and practical focus of the study: Dynamic assessment typically involves individualized attention and detailed observations during the learning process. This construct was, therefore, not going to be practical to implement for this study. Vygotsky's emphasis on play is linked to early childhood development. For older learners, structured activities like reading comprehension exercises and vocabulary were prioritized in this study over playful methods.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

In this chapter, existing research relevant to teaching reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother-tongue speakers was reviewed, with a specific focus on private school settings, and theoretical framework employed in this study was also reviewed. Using Vygotsky's sociocultural theory as a foundation, key constructs were explored. These concepts provided a lens to understand how teachers support and scaffold isiZulu FAL reading skills. In the next chapter, we will transition from theoretical and literature-based insights to the methodology, guiding this study. Chapter Three will outline the research design, sampling strategies, data generation methods, and analytical techniques used to understand teachers' experiences and practices in teaching reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue speakers.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter (2) presented a review of literature on the subject of teaching reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue speakers within the private school contexts. It identified some aspects which are of importance in the teaching of reading as the basis of language acquisition; attention is given to problems arising in the teaching of vowel and consonant sounds to learners whom isiZulu FAL is not their home language. It also looked into the challenges related to multilingual classrooms: how different linguistic backgrounds pose a challenge in learning and achieving certain outcomes. The chapter further looked at the experiences of teachers teaching additional languages and reading in multilingual settings as a way to shed light on the pedagogical difficulties they are confronted with. Lastly, the chapter provides clarification of what the curriculum policy says around language instruction, particularly that which shapes the teaching of isiZulu FAL in South African schools. Chapter 3 presents the outline of the qualitative research design and methodology to be used in this study. It highlights how the experiences of teachers teaching reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue speakers in private schools are explored. The subsequent sections of this chapter will, therefore, focus on the research paradigm, the selection of participants, the data generation method, data analysis strategy, ethical considerations, and the limitations of the study.

### **3.2 Research Methodological Design**

Research is a systematic inquiry aimed at generating new knowledge or deepening our understanding of existing knowledge (Simon & Chard, 2014). Mohajan (2018) contends that the role of research is to provide more clarity on the phenomenon being studied and to extend the existing literature. This means that research is essential in providing new knowledge. This study seeks to explore the Grade 6 isiZulu FAL teachers' experiences in teaching reading to non-mother tongue speakers in private schools in the Gauteng province. The study also seeks to increase the body of knowledge in relative to the teaching of reading in isiZulu FAL.

### **3.3 Research Design**

Research design is portrayed as a plan of how a researcher plans to conduct research (Mouton, 2001). Another scholar refers to a research design as distinguishing characteristics employed by the researcher to gather, analyse and interpret data (Cresswell, 2013). This means that the different designs used by qualitative researchers will vary, subject to the purpose of the study,

the nature of the research questions, and the resources available to the researcher (Creswell, 2013).

Experimental Design focuses on determining causation by manipulating variables and using control groups (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018). Quasi-Experimental Design, is like experimental design but lacks random assignment, often applied in educational settings (Creswell, 2013). Correlational Design examines relationships and associations between variables without manipulation (Flick, 2018). Descriptive design aims to describe characteristics of a phenomenon systematically (Doyle et al., 2020). Case Study Design provides an in-depth, contextualized analysis of specific cases or phenomena (Yin, 2018). Phenomenological Design explores individuals' lived experiences to gain insight into specific phenomena (Moustakas, 1994). Ethnographic Design involves long-term immersion to study cultures or social groups (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019). Grounded Theory Design seeks to develop theories based on data gathered during the research (Charmaz, 2014). Mixed-Methods Design combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches for comprehensive analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This study employs a case study design due to its focus on providing an in-depth, contextual understanding of teachers' experiences in teaching reading in isiZulu as FAL to non-mother-tongue speakers in private schools. Case study design is particularly suitable for exploring complex, context-dependent phenomena where in-depth qualitative insights are crucial (Yin, 2018). This design allows for a detailed examination of the unique challenges, instructional strategies, and contextual factors specific to multilingual classrooms in private schools, making it an ideal choice for capturing the complex nature of teachers' experiences.

A case study design is effective when the researcher seeks to comprehend a social phenomenon such as classroom interaction within a real-life context (Schoch, 2020). A case study design involves the detailed investigation of one or multiple cases which, in this study, was private schools that offer isiZulu FAL (Stake, 2013). The use of a case study as a methodology allowed me to examine the unique features, practices, and dynamics within each case of the experiences of teachers who teach reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue speakers in private schools, and to understand the factors that influenced their experience in teaching of reading in isiZulu FAL (Stake, 2013).

### **3.4 Research Paradigm**

A research paradigm is defined as a worldview that describes how a researcher perceives the world (Creswell, 2013). This paradigm models the research questions posed, the methods for generating and analysing data, and the interpretation of the results (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Guba and Lincoln (1994) argue that a paradigm defines the basic ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions that shape research and theory development. Ontology refers to the researcher's beliefs in relation to the nature of reality (Tuli, 2010), while epistemology refers to the researcher's assumptions relative to the nature of knowledge and methodology to the researcher's assumptions about how knowledge is produced (Tuli, 2010).

There are several research paradigms, namely, positivism, interpretivism, critical theory, and postmodernism. Each of the mentioned paradigms has a unique view of the nature of reality, the responsibility of the researcher, and the purpose of research (Cohen et al., 2018). This study utilised an interpretive paradigm to explore the experiences of Grade 6 isiZulu FAL teachers who taught reading to non-mother tongue private school learners. According to Silverman and Patterson (2021), the aim of interpretive research is to gain an in-depth understanding of social phenomena from the point of view of those involved, particularly Grade 6 isiZulu FAL teachers at the three selected private schools. In other words, researchers who use the interpretive paradigm are interested in understanding how individuals interpret meaningfully their experiences, rather than just measuring objective outcomes (Cohen et al., 2018). Thus, an interpretive paradigm was suitable for this study, in exploring Grade 6 teacher's perceptions of their world within context of private school. This, therefore, allowed me to understand the Grade 6 isiZulu FAL teachers' experiences in teaching reading to non-mother tongue private school learners in the Gauteng province.

### **3.5 Research Approach**

Research approach refers to the general framework or methodology such as qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods used to conduct a study (Creswell, 2017). Qualitative research is a methodological approach that focuses on understanding the complexities of human experiences, behaviours, and social phenomena (Creswell, 2017). By doing so, it intends to contribute to a better understanding of social realities and to draw awareness to processes, meanings, patterns, and structural characteristics (Ormston et al., 2014). Denzil and Lincoln (2000) also suggest that qualitative research stresses the socially created nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and the study, and the restraints that shape the

study. It is a methodical effort to generate and use non-quantitative methods that enhances the interpretation of socio-cultural contexts of educational settings. Additionally, Blanche et al. (2006) contend that qualitative researchers seek to make sense of feelings, experiences, and social situations as they occur in the real world, in their natural settings.

To conduct this study, a qualitative approach was employed. A qualitative approach emphasis is on how people understand the world and construct meaning out of their experiences (Janssens et al., 2018). Willis (2007) explains that a qualitative approach provides very rich data that is important for interpretivists to understand contexts fully. Thus, a qualitative approach was employed for this study, as it was interconnected with the interpretive paradigm.

Thanh (2015) confirms that there is a tight link between interpretive paradigm and qualitative methodology as one is a methodological approach and the other a method of generating data. The qualitative approach was well suited for this study as it enhanced the exploration of the experiences, viewpoints, and practices of Grade 6 teachers who teach reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue speakers in private schools (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). This is connected to this study as I interacted with the participants during the semi-structured interviews and observations, both of which allowed for deep understanding of what happens in the classroom.

### **3.6 Data Generation Method**

Data generation is the process of generating data that will be analysed to answer the research question (Creswell, 2018). Clark et al. (2021) argue that data can be generated using a selection of methods such as surveys, interviews, observations, experiments, and document analysis. Each data generation method has its advantages and disadvantages, and researchers should select the most appropriate method for their research questions and research approach (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). To answer the research questions for this study, in-depth interviews and observations were employed as methods for data collection.

#### **3.6.1 Interviews**

Interviews in qualitative research are used as a method of generating data. In daily life, people use conversations as a tool to acquire knowledge about others, they engage in conversations to learn what others think, how they feel, act, and experience the world (Brinkmann, 2014). According to Brinkmann (2014), such knowledge-generating conversations are referred to as qualitative interviews in research. Mohangi (2008) further explains that interviews are one of

the methods of generating data and are mostly used in qualitative research. Allowing the researcher to delve deep into conversations with participants to understand their experiences and perspectives (Finefter-Rosenbluh, 2017).

There are different kinds of interviews in research namely: structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews, each with its own set of advantages and disadvantages (Muthiah et al. 2020). According to Qu and Dumay (2011), structured interviews consist of predetermined questions, which allows for limited responses. The questions are presented from a script in a manner that maintains consistency and minimises deviations during the interview process (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Bertam and Christiansen (2014) further explain that while structured interviews seek to obtain concise responses, there is no room for deep conversation between the researcher and participants. Semi-structured interviews consist of both predetermined and flexible questions that allowed for more responses that explore the participants' personal experiences and insights (Mashuri et al., 2022). In contrast, unstructured interviews have no predetermined questions, they are more flexible and free flowing with questions arising in the conversation (Bihu, 2020). While unstructured interviews promote spontaneous interaction with participants, managing them can be a challenge due to their level of flexibility (Bihu, 2020). Magaldi and Berler (2020) suggest that semi-structured interviews are more powerful than other types of interviews for qualitative research, as they allow for in-depth data generation from participants while maintaining the focus of the study. Thus, semi-structured interviews were well-suited for this research study.

Semi-structured interviews follow a guide centred on the topic to provide a framework (Magaldi & Berler, 2020). Participants have the freedom to answer freely as the interview questions are open-ended (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). This allows for flexibility for the researcher to probe a question and follow up on interesting responses to gain more understanding, while allowing participants to contribute their unique experiences, perspectives, and insights (Liamputtong, 2019). In this study, semi-structured interviews were employed as one of the methods for generating data. The choice was influenced by the effectiveness of this method in interpretive qualitative research as noted by scholars cited earlier. Additionally, Mayer (2015) elaborates on how semi-structured interviews can produce detailed data that can be analysed using different qualitative techniques. In the context of this study, interviews were conducted via Zoom. Participants were able to join from any location, thus reducing travel time and costs. Interviews were held twice with each participant to accommodate any follow-up

questions that emerged during the data analysis phase, thereby enhancing the richness of the generated data. The initial interview sessions lasted 90 minutes while the subsequent sessions were 80 minutes long. I ensured that the videos were on during the zoom meetings to enable me to see visual cues which facilitate observation of non-verbal cues and body language.

The first phase of the interview sessions was aimed at familiarisation and experience, which focused on the participants' life history and their experiences in relation to the research questions. Here, the researchers' objective was to understand the participants' lived experiences and to develop trust between the researcher and the participants (Glegg, 2019). During these interview sessions, the participants were presented with the objectives of this study as well as the ethical clearance certificate obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), and the letter of research permission from the Gauteng Department of Education. The last phase of the interview sessions was the follow-up, which was grounded on permitting the participants to reflect on the meaning of their experiences (Glegg, 2019). These sessions were also aimed at providing the participants with an opportunity to expand and provide clarity on some of their responses from the first session. I conducted the interviews in both English and isiZulu to allow for the flexibility and accurate expression of the participants' lived experiences in teaching reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue speakers in a private school. The entire data generation process took a duration of three months. For answering the interview questions developed for this study, I used an interview guide (see Appendix 3). In conclusion, building rapport, conducting the interview, and following up with the participants provided a conducive atmosphere between the participants and the researcher, thereby letting the participants to freely and accurately articulate their perspectives, experiences and insights on the teaching of reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue speakers in private schools in the Gauteng province.

Interviews present some benefits in research, particularly when they are unstructured. As mentioned earlier, unstructured interviews allow for in-depth exploration through open-ended questions that give the participants the freedom to articulate their thoughts and experiences in their own words (McLeod, 2023). Moreover, both semi-structured and unstructured interviews provide the researcher the opportunity to delve deeper into the responses of participants. This enhances the researcher's understanding of participants' perspectives, insights and experiences (McLeod, 2023). Hence, a semi-structured interview method was employed in this study. It allowed the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences and insights of the

study participants. The researcher had the flexibility to probe follow up questions to better understand the perspectives of the participants. Mcleod (2023) also explains that flexibility is of utmost importance in qualitative research since the goal is to gain insights and comprehend the underlying reasons behind behaviours and attitudes. Based on the above, it can be inferred that the interview method of generating data played a significant role in this research study by offering advantages such as exploration, flexibility, rich data generation, active engagement with participants, and capturing multiple perspectives. These aspects collectively made interviews an invaluable method for data generation in this study.

As mentioned earlier, semi-structured interviews were employed as one of the data generating methods because of the advantages they presented for this study. Allowing me to have flexibility. It provided an interactive and relaxed discussion between the participants and the researcher. Semi-structured interviews also allowed the researcher to take control over the questioning process while ensuring a flexible flow. Lastly, these interviews provided the researcher with a clear picture of what takes place in the participants' classrooms. The teacher participants' responses to interview questions provided an in-depth information about their experiences of teaching reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue speakers in private schools.

### **3.6.2 Classroom Observations**

Observation is a data generation method commonly used in qualitative research. It includes studying and recording behaviours, interactions, and occurrences in a natural setting without manipulating the variables (Cohen et al., 2007). Mulhall (2003) reveals that observations can be structured or unstructured, subject to the research question and the nature of the data to be generated. He further explains that structured observations include a scheduled list of behaviours to be studied while unstructured observations allow the researcher to observe any relevant behaviours and events that may arise (Mulhall, 2003). Unstructured observation method was employed in this study and allowed the researcher to observe events and behaviours as they occurred. Merriam and Grenier (2019) contend that observation can provide rich and detailed data that may not be obtained through other methods such as surveys or interviews.

There are various types of observations in research, here the researcher focuses on those directly affecting this study. According to Katz-Buonincontro and Anderson (2020), participant

observation occurs when the researcher engages actively in activities, behaviours and interactions being studied. In research, non-participant observation involves the researcher who does not participate but watches the activities, behaviours, and interactions being studied from a distance (Ciesielska et al., 2018). Structured observation, as described by Mcilfatrik (2008), is when the researcher observes activities and behaviours in a planned setup. In contrast, unstructured observation occurs when the researcher observes without predetermined elements to observe, with notes or data recording being part of the process (Mcilfatrik, 2008). There is also overt observation which occurs when participants are aware of being observed and have consented to it. In contrast, covert observation takes place without consent or awareness (Cohel et al., 2007). In this study, unstructured and overt observation methods were considered well suited to generate enriched and detailed data while upholding research ethics.

Observations offer several advantages in qualitative research. They allow the researcher to capture a holistic view of participants' behaviours and interactions leading to detailed data generation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Observation can also serve as means to validate information gathered during the interview sessions, thereby enhancing the credibility and reliability of the study findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). As previously mentioned, observations are a valuable data generation method in qualitative research due to their ability to capture detailed insights into participants' behaviours and interactions. Nonetheless, it is crucial to bear in mind that observation methods require careful consideration of ethical issues and the researcher's personal viewpoints to ensure the accuracy and dependability of the data generated (Cohel et al., 2007). In this research study, the researcher used observation as one of the data generation methods, which allowed the researcher to perceive what the participants do rather than trusting on what they say they do, as this method does not rely on the participants' willingness to provide information or the ability to provide information. This data generation method allowed for face-to-face contact with the participants in their different classrooms. The observations in this study are reliable as they provide information about activities and behaviours in relation to teaching reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue speakers. The researcher had an opportunity to witness how the three teachers present their reading lessons to non-mother tongue speakers, and how learners receive and respond to the lessons. The researcher observed two lessons for each participant, on different occasions. Each lesson observed was 60 minutes, giving the research two hours of lesson observation per participant. The researcher took notes and used a camera to take pictures of items such as: whiteboard, projector, bookshelves, and isiZulu table of artifacts.

### **3.7 Sampling Procedure**

Sampling involves selecting a sample from a population (Kumar, 2011). According to Cohen et al. (2007), the sampling process includes making decisions about the participants that will be part of the study. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method which involves the selection of participants by the researcher based on specific criteria related to the purpose of the study (Bell et al., 2019). Campbell et al. (2020) emphasises that purposive sampling aims to identify individuals with knowledge, experience or traits crucial to addressing the research question. Qualitative research often relies on sampling to select participants with characteristics essential for the study. Mareer (2007) also clarifies that sampling choices are made with the goal of generating comprehensive information to answer the research questions.

In this study, purposive sampling was used to select participants. Kumar (2011) notes that during the sampling process, researchers use their judgement to choose participants who can offer information relevant for achieving the study's objectives. The researcher used their discretion to recruit participants who could offer insights into the experiences of isiZulu FAL teachers who teach reading to non-mother tongue speakers in private schools in Gauteng. The decisions regarding sampling involved the setting, incidents, events and activities that would be part of generating data.

### **3.8 Research Study Site**

The research site refers to the location where the study is conducted. I chose to conduct this study in the Gauteng province. Residing in the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality, I identified an opportunity and necessity to conduct a study in this region. This study was conducted in three private schools situated within areas of the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality. The selected schools offer isiZulu as a first additional language, thus making them suitable for this study.



**Fig. 3.1 Map of the East of Johannesburg (Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality)**

**Source:** Naidoo, Calvin. (2023). *Assessing the role of public participation in service delivery: the case of Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality*. South African Journal of Industrial Engineering. 34. 10.7166/34-4-2874.

The above figure demonstrates the map of the east of Johannesburg, where the study was located. The Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality is formed of different suburbs, where the three private schools are located (P1, P2, and P3). In these suburbs, the dominant language spoken in these schools is English, regardless of the race of the learners. The geography of the schools influences how learners were taught, as the isiZulu FAL teachers would need to teach reading to non-mother tongue learners in ways that differ from mother tongue speakers.

The selection of three private schools in the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality serving learners from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds is relevant to this study because the schools represent a broad spectrum of linguistic and cultural diversity: learners from various language groups, such as Mandarin, Somali, Hindi, Shona, Amharic, Afrikaans, Sepedi, Sesotho, and Tshivenda, to name a few. This diversity allows for an in-depth examination of how reading in isiZulu FAL is taught to non-mother tongue speakers who are navigating multiple language influences. Research suggests that multilingual settings, especially in urban

areas, pose unique challenges and opportunities for additional language teaching as learners bring diverse linguistic competencies and cultural experiences to the learning environment (Makalela, 2019; Heugh, 2020).

Private schools in urban areas like Johannesburg's eastern suburbs often reflect the multicultural and multilingual composition of South Africa's urban population (Taylor & Coetzee, 2021). The presence of isiZulu FAL in these schools is significant as it reflects the broader educational policy context that encourages learning African languages as a way to foster cultural inclusion and linguistic diversity (DBE, 2011).

Besides, residing in the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality has made this study more feasible and valid. Proximity to selected schools allows more consistent observations and interactions with participants which is essential in qualitative research. Research has pointed out that geographical proximity is an advantage in case studies because more frequent contact with the research site can yield richer insight and understanding of the research phenomena. According to Yin (2018), the chosen sites of research would thus provide a strong backdrop against which to investigate the complicated issues of isiZulu FAL teaching and learning across different linguistic backgrounds, within an urban South African context characterized by multilingualism and multiculturalism.

### **3.8.1 Gaining Access to the Site**

To gain access to an institution, I wrote a letter to request permission to access the school (site) (Dever & Frankel, 2000). The letter was emailed to the principals of the three selected private schools in the Gauteng province. After receiving the approval from the schools, I then commenced with the process of communicating with the Grade 6 isiZulu teacher participants, who were happy to participate in this study. The ethical clearance was granted by the University of KwaZulu Natal Research Office, which allowed me to commence with this process (see Appendix 1). The ethical clearance certificate permitted for the request for consent from the schools and the teacher participants to conduct research and to record interviews as well as take pictures of the surroundings during observations (Renganathan, 2009).

I was granted permission to conduct the research by the Gauteng Department of Education (DoE) and, thereafter, principals of schools were contacted via emails. One of the principals requested for a meeting in person, while the two granted permission without a meeting. The

intention of the communication was to ask for permission to conduct research at their schools through interviews and lesson observation with their isiZulu FAL Grade 6 teachers. The principals of the respective schools spoke to their teachers to find out if they were willing to participate in the study. I explained the research purpose and procedures to the participants. I also notified the participants of their right to withdraw at any stage of the study. Consent forms were emailed to the participants and interview and lesson observation sessions were then arranged after the consent forms were signed. The parents were also provided with consent forms through which they could give their consent for their children to be observed during their isiZulu FAL lessons. All the parents signed the consent form. The learners were also provided with a chance to consent on being observed in isiZulu FAL lessons for research purposes and all the learners agreed to be observed.

### **3.9 Sample size**

Boddy (2016) explains that a sample refers to the individuals chosen to participate in a research study. He further defines a sample size as an element of research design that can manipulate the validity and reliability of research findings (Boddy, 2016). For this study, three Grade 6 isiZulu FAL teachers from three selected private schools in Gauteng were identified (one teacher per school). These teachers were selected because they were responsible for teaching isiZulu FAL in the intermediate phase, particularly Grade 6, where reading instructions was part of the curriculum. These three selected teachers were expected to offer insights into, and personal experiences, in their teaching of reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue speakers.

I chose to focus this study on Grade 6 isiZulu FAL teachers for developmental, curricular, and practical considerations. Grade 6 is a critical year in the language acquisition of learners who are becoming more proficient in additional languages, including isiZulu FAL (Cummins, 2021). At this stage of learning, learners develop some threshold literacy levels from their mother tongue to render them capable of more independent reading in isiZulu FAL. Teachers at this level therefore often use methods that make positive use of such developmental milestones in increasing reading comprehension and retention capability of the language (Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016). Moreover, Grade 6 is a transition year since learners are expected to get ready for higher expectations in Grades 7 and beyond. It has also been seen as a final year for laying foundational language skills in additional languages (DBE, 2011). By concentrating on Grade 6 teachers, the study can capture how isiZulu reading skills are taught

in alignment with curriculum standards that are significant for preparing learners for subsequent educational levels (Taylor & Coetzee, 2021). Research indicates that upper primary teachers, particularly in Grade 6, often have specialized knowledge of pedagogical strategies that cater to second-language learners' needs in reading (Ithindi, 2019).

The isiZulu FAL teachers of Grade 6 would probably use advanced teaching methods, accounting for both linguistic and cognitive demands of reading, which is imperative for the non-mother tongue learners due to unique challenges experienced by them in additional language acquisition. Limiting the study to Grade 6 will allow for deeper exploration of teaching practices, strategies, and challenges specific to Grade 6. This focused approach is essential for developing actionable insights into effective reading instruction in isiZulu FAL, tailored to the specific needs of non-mother tongue speakers in private school settings (Spaull & Pretorius, 2019).

### **3.10 Inclusion and exclusion criteria**

The inclusion and exclusion criteria are based on identifying qualifying participants for the research study (Hornberger & Rangu, 2020). I used the inclusion and exclusion criteria to select suitable participants for this study, to reach the purpose of the study and generate meaningful data. This study involved three Grade 6 isiZulu FAL teachers from three private schools in Gauteng. This study excludes all teachers who do not teach Grade 6 isiZulu FAL in private schools in Gauteng. Figure 3.2 below outlines the inclusion and exclusion criteria for this research study.

### **3.11 Data Analysis**

Data analysis involves understanding of the data generated during a research study (Creswell, 2017). Creswell (2017) also explains that data analysis involves organising, interpreting and presenting data to answer the research question. In this study a thematic analysis was employed to analyse data generated. Braun and Clarke (2006) describe thematic analysis as a process that involves getting familiar with the data, coming up with initial codes, identifying themes, reviewing and refining them, defining and naming them and, finally, producing a comprehensive report. Guest et al. (2012) further explain that thematic analysis provides the researcher with insights into the experiences, perspectives, and meaning embedded within the data generated. From the above perspectives, it appears that thematic analysis is an efficient method for making sense of data, creating codes and identifying themes. Thematic analysis

was well suited for this study, enabling the researcher to understand her participants' experiences, emotions and perspectives immensely.

For this study, themes were categorised and color-coded in a thematic analysis framework for the purpose of this study. Colour-coding is a broad, generalized qualitative approach used to create visual distinction among themes and sub-themes for further systematic analyses and comparisons (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The data from teacher interviews, observations, and field notes were reviewed first to develop an overall sense of recurring ideas, experiences, and patterns. This initial review assisted in the identification of potential themes relating to teaching isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue speakers.

Distinct colours were assigned to each initial theme. For instance, green was used for teaching strategies, yellow for learner challenges, and blue for cultural engagement. Relevant data segments were then highlighted according to these colour codes, facilitating visual grouping and aiding in the identification of overlapping themes within each category (Saldaña, 2024). Initial themes identified, color-coded data were revisited to refine and consolidate themes into sub-themes where applicable. This was important in organizing findings into cohesive sections that would ensure the data was logically grouped and could be clearly presented in the results. The themes that developed from this process include the following: Exploring teachers' experiences in isiZulu reading education for multilingual learners in Gauteng's private schools and teachers' individual experiences of teaching reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue speakers in private schools. Subthemes in each theme are listed and discussed below in chapter four.

### **3.12 Maintenance of Research Rigour**

In ensuring the authenticity of the findings of this study, a principle identified by Lincoln and Guba (1985) was adopted. The principle that encompasses credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability was employed to establish trustworthiness in this study. Each of these elements of research quality maintenance will be discussed below. When conducting research, it is imperative to ensure trustworthiness to determine the credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability of the findings of the study (Creswell, 2013). Various strategies can be used to enhance trustworthiness in research. The standards for assessing the quality of all research include credibility, dependability and confirmability (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Moser (2018) also emphasises the significance of reflexivity in maintaining the

quality and transparency of research. According to Leung (2015), it is important for the researcher to define the protocols and steps required for a study to be deemed credible. He further states that while most scholars acknowledge the importance of credibility, debates have emerged in literature regarding what defines it. Credibility, on the one hand, looks at whether the findings of the study are truthful and believable, and whether the researcher provides confidence in the truthfulness of the study findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In the context of this study, the researcher achieved the above ensuring the alignment between theory, research questions, data generation, analysis and findings.

Dependability, on the other hand, looks at whether the study can be repeated in similar settings or conditions, and offer similar findings over time (Bitsch, 2005). This study achieved this by providing enough information to enable the future researchers to reproduce the findings of the study in other contexts (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In addition, confirmability is concerned with establishing whether there is a clear link between data and the study findings (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). This was ensured in this study by providing detailed descriptions and making use of quotations to illustrate how the researcher came to my findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Transferability in research refers to the level to which the findings of the study can be transferred to other settings with other participants (Anney, 2014). In this study, this was accomplished by presenting thorough descriptions of the setting in which the study was conducted, and by showing how the context may have influenced the study's findings (Bitsch, 2005). Lastly, reflexivity refers to the researcher's capacity to analyse his/her own reactions, feelings and motives (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). In this study, this was realised through constant introspection and application of peer examination.

It is significant for a researcher to be responsive to ethical concerns in education and understand the grounds on which they are constructed (Cohen et al., 2007). In this study, ethics was maintained by a formal approach and requests for participants. The researcher disclosed and explained fully the purpose of the study and data generation processes to participants. The participants were also notified about their rights to withdraw at any stage of the study. The confidentiality of participants was also observed. Participants were informed that they had a right to access data once the study was completed. Intellectual property was highly respected.

### **3.12.1 Credibility**

Credibility refers to how convincing a study is (Joppe, 2006). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), when readers can relate the findings of the study to their own context, credibility is

achieved. To ensure credibility in this study, two strategies were employed: triangulation and member checking, the details of which are discussed in the next sections. Credibility in this research study was also ensured as the research spent 170 minutes with each of the study participants doing semi-structured interviews. These interviews allowed the researcher to generate significant information from the Grade 6 isiZulu FAL teachers who responded verbally to the interview questions. Allowing the researcher to interpret the participants' perspectives accurately, thereby constructing meaning from their responses. The researcher also observed lessons of all three participants in their different classrooms and schools. Providing evidence of how teachers taught reading and how the learners responded to their teaching. Creswell and Miller (2000) state that credibility is based on the data generated through working closely with the participants during the process.

### **3.12.2 Dependability**

Dependability in research refers to the level to which the generated data is dependable (Creswell, 2013). During the semi-structured interviews conducted on Zoom, all three participants were each asked for consent to record the interview proceedings. Hence, the interview proceedings were recorded to ensure accuracy in capturing questions asked as well as detailed responses from the participants about their individual experiences in teaching reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue speakers in private schools in Gauteng. Additionally, lesson observations as an additional research method were conducted at all three schools. As explained by Flick (2014), studies that rely on a single method for data generation are most likely to produce biased results. During this process of lesson observation, teachers also shared their lesson plans for isiZulu FAL reading instruction, which allowed an opportunity to see the connection between what is recorded on the lesson plans and the responses provided by the participants during semi-structured interviews.

### **3.12.3 Confirmability**

Confirmability concerns the neutrality of the researcher in interpreting findings while minimising the influence of their own biases and perspectives throughout the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Existing literature also reveals that confirmability is established when other researchers can produce similar outcomes, when conducting a similar study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). It is the extent to which the findings of the research could be confirmed by other researchers (Guba, 1981). In this case study, confirmability was ensured by presenting findings that reflected the study participants' perspectives accurately, avoiding those of the

researcher. The use of the participants' direct words in this study increased confirmability and minimised biases. In this study, participants' direct words were used to increase confirmability and eliminate biases.

#### **3.12.4 Transferability**

Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings of a study conducted in one setting can be applied to other settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To increase transferability in this study, the researcher provided a detailed description of the study, methodology, participant characteristics, and the setting in which the study took place was presented (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Research methods employed in this study were thoroughly discussed to enable other researchers to assess the applicability of these methods in their own contexts (Stake, 2005). It is also noted in literature that grounding research within a well-established framework is crucial for ensuring that its findings hold broader significance beyond the specific settings (Chukwuere, 2021). To understand the experiences of teachers who taught reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue learners in private schools, this study drew guidance from the sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) as cited in Scott (2023).

#### **3.13 Crystallization**

Richardson (2000) proclaims that crystallization produces rich and in-depth understanding that aims at providing at multiple perspectives. This kind of understanding is possible because crystallization allows researchers to use various methods to make sense of data ultimately shaping a richer account of a phenomenon. Researchers combine creativity and use novel ways of representing experiences (Neves et al., 2023). Crystallization, which is the use of two lenses for example interviews and observations, gives the research a crystal-like appearance where each face is a different view. Interviews give the participants an opportunity to give personal narratives and subjective explanations while observations afford the me as a researcher an opportunity to capture real time actions of the teachers and the classroom practices. Jointly, they present a holistic image of the phenomenon (Neves et al., 2023).

#### **3.14 Member Checking**

According to McKim (2023), member checking involves sharing the study transcripts with the participants to ensure accuracy and alignment with their experiences and insights. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that returning findings to participants allows them to recognise their

experiences and remove any information they prefer not to include. In this study, raw data transcripts and the findings were shared with the participants to prevent any misinterpretation during the data analysis process (McKim, 2023). I also verified the connection between the findings of the study and the participants' interpretation of the findings in relation to their experience in teaching reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue speakers in private schools, by checking the recordings of the recorded interviews.

### **3.15 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations are pivotal in every phase of research to uphold a balance between possible study risks and the anticipated benefits of the study (Arifin, 2018). These considerations serve as basic principles that guide the study to ensure integrity, respect for participants and credibility of the findings (Vithal & Jansen, 2010). Ethical considerations involve key aspects including voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, potential harm and communication of results (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018). Participants must understand the study's objectives, what will be asked of them, how the data will be used, and the possible consequences associated with their participation (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018).

A research proposal was presented and approved in this study by the University of KwaZulu Natal Research Office. To uphold ethical research standards, an ethical clearance certificate was obtained by the researcher from the University of KwaZulu-Natal to proceed with the study. I also obtained permission from the Gauteng Provincial Department of Basic Education and the three selected private schools in Gauteng. The three principals of the selected private schools corresponded with their respective Heads of Departments in identifying Grade 6 isiZulu FAL teachers who were willing to participate in this study. The three selected isiZulu teachers were then provided with informed consent forms with all the information about the study. These forms were important for protecting the participants' rights and well-being (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018).

#### **3.15.1 Consent Forms**

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) emphasise the significance of informed consent in research. The authors stress the importance of ensuring that participants fully understand the requirements of the study and how the data will be used. According to Devine et al. (2008), autonomy is similar to informed consent because it provides participants with comprehensive details about the

study, allowing them to make informed decisions concerning their participation. All three participants were given consent forms to review and complete to ensure that they understood the study's objectives and agreed to participate. Denscombe et al. (2009) state that researchers are expected to protect the rights and well-being of the participants. Hence, all three participants of this study, parents and learners were given disclosure regarding the nature of the study, the purpose, procedures, and the benefits of thereof.

### **3.15.2 Voluntary Participation**

Voluntary participation is an ethical consideration principle that gives participants a chance to decide whether to participate in a study or not (Arifin, 2018). It also gives them the freedom to withdraw at any stage of the study, should they wish to do so. In this study, all three isiZulu FAL teachers who participated in the study were told that taking part in this research was entirely voluntary (Seidman, 2006). The researcher assured them of their right to decline participation and their freedom to withdraw from the study at any time without facing any consequences. Moreover, the researcher informed the participants that there would be no financial benefits provided for their involvement in this study.

### **3.15.3 Confidentiality**

Confidentiality and anonymity are ethical consideration aspects that were developed to protect the identities of the participants of the study during the process of generation data, analysis and presentation (Drew et al., 2007). Coffelt (2017) also highlights that confidentiality includes eliminating details that discloses participants' identities. To protect the identities of the three participants of this study, anonymity was ensured by means of utilizing pseudonyms. In addition, participants were assured that the data generated would be kept confidential and would not be used for any other purposes beyond this study.

### **3.15.4 Harm**

Harm in research refers to any negative impact that may result from conducting a study, and may be physical, psychological, and social in nature (Sim, 2010). The researcher is responsible for protecting the study's participants from any possible harm. In this study, all three participants were treated with respect and equally. They were assured that their identities would be kept confidential. During the semi-structured interview process, questions that could cause potential harm, distress or discomfort to participants were avoided. The study participants were also assured that the information shared in this study would not at any point be used against

them and that the data generated would be secured in the supervisor's office and would be destroyed after five years. Additionally, participants were notified that should they have any queries or concerns, they are free to contact me or my supervisor, whose contact details were shared on the consent form. Participants were further informed that in the case of concerns about their rights as participants in this study or any other aspect of the research, they could make contact with the University of KwaZulu-Natal Research Office.

### **3.16 Limitations of the Study**

Limitations in research refer to potential weaknesses that are outside the scope of the researcher's control (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). The following limitations were encountered in this case study:

There were last-minute cancellations and pulling out of participants from interview processes. However, the study included five schools in the recruitment phase. This ensured enough participants even when some withdrew. Also, effective communication and patience with participants minimized disruptions and maintained engagement. The study was conducted in private schools in the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality which is the East of Johannesburg. Consequently, limiting its broader applicability. To mitigate this, findings were framed as context-specific insights, contributing to the understanding of similar educational settings rather than universal conclusions. Lastly, to enhance data richness despite using only two methods (lesson observations and semi-structured interviews), the process was split into a familiarisation phase to build rapport and contextual understanding, followed by detailed interviews and a follow-up phase. This structured approach strengthened the depth and reliability of the data.

### **3.17 Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the research design, research approach and methodology that informed the study. It provided an overview of the research paradigm, data generation methods, and data analysis. It also presented an overview of how research rigor was maintained. The chapter included a discussion of ethical considerations that were proceeded to confirm that the research study was conducted ethically. The next chapter presents data generated from the methodological procedures discussed on this chapter.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF DATA AND FINDINGS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter (3) established the methodological framework that guided this study, focusing on the qualitative case study approach, methods of data generation, and the ethical considerations necessary to explore the teaching of reading in isiZulu First Additional Language (FAL) to non-mother tongue speakers. The interviews and observations were used as primary ways of data generation which allowed gaining in-depth descriptions of teachers' experiences and classroom practices. The crystallization also served as a strategy to enhance credibility. The ethical considerations had informed consent and participant confidentiality as principles that reinforced research's commitment to ethical rigor. This chapter presents the data generated from this case study, which involved three purposely selected Intermediate-phase isiZulu FAL teachers in three private schools in the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality, Gauteng province. Semi-structured interviews and lesson observations were used to generate data for the purposes of acquiring a complete understanding of the isiZulu FAL teachers' experiences in teaching reading to non-mother tongue learners in three selected private schools in Gauteng. Cohen et al., (2017) explains that a qualitative study analyses data by organising it into categories based on themes. In this chapter, I present themes and subthemes, which emerged from the data generated. Thematic analysis, which is a qualitative analysis method known for being systematic and flexible, was used to identify and interpret themes and subthemes discovered within the generated data (Braun, 2006). The research data sought to answer the research questions of this study. Responses from the Grade 6 isiZulu FAL teachers participating in this study are presented and some references to relevant literature are made to substantiate their perspectives.

### **4.2 Demographics of Participants**

This research was conducted in three selected private schools located in Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality, Gauteng province. To protect the identities of the participants, pseudonyms were given to both the participants and schools. According to Heaton (2022), pseudonyms are false names given to participants to protect their real identities. This is the ethical practice observed by the research throughout this study. The tables 4.1 and 4.2 below indicate the codes used to represent the participants and schools; gender of the participants;

qualifications; Grade they taught; the number of years teaching isiZulu FAL in public and private schools; and the positions the participants held.

**Table 4.1 Demographic Information of Participants**

Source: NKM

Participant	Gender	Ethnicity	Qualification
FAL T1	Female	African	MEd
FAL T2	Female	African	BEd
FAL T3	Female	African	BEd Hons

**Table 4.2 Participants' Position and School Information**

Source: NKM

Participant	Name of School	Position	Number of years teaching FAL in Public Schools	Number of years teaching FAL in Private Schools	Grade
FAL T1	P1	HOD	4	25	6
FAL T2	P2	Teacher	4	5	6
FAL T3	P3	HOD	3	6	6

The tables above indicate that all three participants were qualified teachers, and two held Bachelor of Education (Honours) as their highest qualifications. They all taught isiZulu FAL in Grade 6, in which the focus of the study is.

### **FAL Teacher 1**

**FAL T1** was the first participant in this study. She held a Bachelor of Education degree, Bachelor of Education (Honours) degree, and a Master of Education degree. In her first degree, she specialised in isiZulu, Geography and History. **FAL T1** was the Head of the isiZulu Department (HoD) at **P1**. She was responsible for coordinating the department and teaching isiZulu to Grades 3, 6 and 9 learners. She had been teaching for 29 years in total, with 4 years

of teaching isiZulu HL in a public school and 25 years of teaching isiZulu FAL in a private school.

### **FAL Teacher 2**

**FAL T2** was the second participant in this study. She held a Bachelor of Education degree in which she specialised in isiZulu, Social Sciences and Life Orientation. **FAL T2** was an isiZulu and Life skills teacher at **P2**. She was a class teacher and responsible for teaching isiZulu FAL to Grades 3 and 7, and Life skills to Grade 4 learners. She had been teaching for 9 years, with 4 years of teaching isiZulu FAL in a public school, and 5 years of teaching isiZulu FAL in a private school.

### **FAL Teacher 3**

**FAL T3** was the last participant in this study. She held both Bachelor of Education and Bachelor of Education (Honours) degrees. In her Bachelor of Education degree, she specialised in isiZulu, Life Orientation and Natural Sciences. In her Bachelor of Education (Honours) degree, she specialised in Management and Leadership. **FAL T3** was an HoD of isiZulu in **P3**. She was responsible for coordinating the isiZulu department and teaching isiZulu FAL from Grade 4 to 7 classes. She has been teaching for 9 years in total, with 3 years of teaching isiZulu FAL and Natural Sciences in a public school, and 6 years of teaching isiZulu FAL in a private school.

## **4.3 Themes and Sub-themes**

This section discusses the themes and sub-themes that emerged during the thematic analysis of data. It also presents findings that resulted from the semi-structured interviews conducted with three selected participants who were isiZulu FAL teachers in three private schools in the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality. The table below presents the themes and subthemes that emerged during the processing of data analysis. These themes were developed and categorised using the colour coding strategy:

**Table 4.3: Themes and Sub-themes from Semi-structured Interviews.**

**Source: NKM**

Number	Research Question	Theme	Sub-theme
1.	What are teachers' experiences of teaching reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue learners in private schools in Gauteng?	Exploring teachers' experiences in isiZulu reading education for multilingual learners in Gauteng's private schools.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Challenges in teaching vowel letter sounds and Consonant pronunciation;</li> <li>2. Stakeholders' attitude towards learning isiZulu FAL;</li> <li>3. Lack of reading in lower grades due to insufficient time for lessons;</li> <li>4. Lack of reading material in lower grade classrooms;</li> <li>5. Addressing the needs of diverse learners;</li> <li>6. Differentiated instruction</li> </ol>
2.	Why do teachers have particular experiences of teaching reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue in private schools in Gauteng?	Teachers' individual experiences of teaching reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue speakers in private schools.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Feeling undervalued as an isiZulu FAL teacher;</li> <li>2. Struggling with enduring criticism;</li> <li>3. Lack of parental support;</li> <li>4. Fostering isiZulu literacy;</li> <li>5. Training on teaching reading;</li> <li>6. Training on teaching reading in isiZulu FAL;</li> <li>7. Collaboration and team teaching;</li> <li>8. Teaching reading strategies;</li> <li>9. Schools' commitment to cultural diversity and inclusion; and</li> <li>10. IsiZulu FAL undervalued by stakeholders</li> </ol>

#### **4.4 Theme One:**

##### **Exploring teachers' experiences in isiZulu reading education for multilingual learners in Gauteng's private schools.**

This section discusses sub-themes, which emerged from the thematic analysis of data, using the colour coding strategy. Theme One consists of six sub-themes, namely, challenges in teaching vowel letter sounds and pronunciation; stakeholders' attitude towards learning isiZulu FAL; lack of reading in lower grades due to insufficient time for lesson; lack of reading material in lower grades classroom; addressing the needs of diverse learners; and differentiated instruction. The participants were asked about their experiences in teaching reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue speakers and the above sub-themes that emerged in the discussion during semi-structured interviews.

##### **4.4.1 Challenges in Teaching Vowel Letter Sounds and Consonant Pronunciation**

The findings from the in depth-interviews revealed that learners struggled to separate the vowel sounds of isiZulu from English letter sounds. Participants felt that this was due to the lack of enough exposure to isiZulu reading material, as they highlighted that more practice would assist in mastering these vowels, consonants and sound differences between isiZulu and English. The participants expressed that it was hard to find reading material that is on the level of their learners ability for isiZulu FAL, as most isiZulu material is for home language speakers, therefore difficult for their learners. The findings revealed that isiZulu FAL teachers in private schools experienced a challenge in teaching vowel sounds and consonants to non-mother tongue speakers because the English language was dominant in private schools, and learners therefore struggled to separate isiZulu vowel sounds from the English vowel sounds. The participants revealed that when learners were required to spell or pronounce a word such as 'banda', they would write 'banda' but pronounce it as 'banda', when they read the word 'ekilasini', they would pronounce it as 'ikilasini'. This is supported by the following responses from semi-structured interviews. One of the participants highlighted that learners struggled because they were not doing enough reading in isiZulu.

**What are the challenges you have encountered in teaching reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue speakers?**

The first participant (FALT1) expressed that learners confuse isiZulu vowel sounds with English sounds:

*The home language, which is English, affects the pronunciation of some sounds, I'm sure you have seen it especially in our grades where they start writing. Like some of my learners in Grade 6, when they wanted to write the word 'banda', which means cold, they wrote 'bunda', which is a non-existing word in isiZulu. This is because in English the sound 'a' is represented by a vowel 'u' which, in isiZulu, has a completely different sound. So, my students realised it when we were going through the paper. It was written 'bunda' and they were like no, no, I didn't mean bunda it's banda. So yes, sounds, especially vowels, you find learners pronouncing 'u' as 'a', so they confuse vowels with English sounds. You find that if they are reading a word that has ph they will read it with the sound f instead of p. So that is the challenge.*

The third participant (FALT3) also revealed that learners struggle to master vowel sounds and consonants due lack of adequate practice.

*I think the issue is [that] learners are not doing much reading practice in the foundation phase because they get to me in grade 4, still struggling to remember the vowel sounds when reading and writing. They forget that the vowel sounds in Zulu are different from [those of] English. Like 'ekilasini', they [would] sound it as 'ikilasini', they remember the sound for the end of the word but not for the beginning of the word, which doesn't make sense, but they do.*

The second participant (FALT2) indicated that learners needed more practice to master the skill of reading in isiZulu:

*The main challenge I've seen is that my students confuse the vowel sounds of isiZulu. I think with more practice and as they move up the grades it gets better.*

#### **4.4.2 Stakeholders Attitude Towards Learning IsiZulu FAL**

The findings from the in depth-interviews revealed that isiZulu FAL teachers experienced a negative attitude towards the learning of isiZulu from stakeholders. The participants claimed that isiZulu FAL is treated like an additional subject. Therefore, parents and learners expect

the bare minimum of homework, as they feel they are already getting enough homework from other valued subjects. Participants further contend that learners were not given much reading homework because they were already struggling to complete other homework from other subjects. As a result, learners did not get enough practice and exposure to isiZulu reading material. One of the participants highlighted that in the Foundation Phase (FP), learners would get no homework for isiZulu subject as their parents complain, this was a different case with Afrikaans homework, which received a positive support and attitude from the parents. How the school allows parents to decide what happens in the teaching and learning of isiZulu could add to the reasons why isiZulu FAL teachers experienced a negative attitude towards the subject. The following responses from semi-structured interviews help illustrate this point.

### **Do you give reading homework to your learners?**

*Most parents don't show a positive attitude towards isiZulu, the school is predominantly white, so you know. Like when I got to my school, I found that learners were not given isiZulu homework in the foundation phase, but they are getting Afrikaans homework. So, I asked why? I was told that parents were complaining too much, saying it is hard, they are not able to help their kids. So, the school cancelled Zulu homework to please parents and the principal is fine with that. isiZulu and Afrikaans are both first additional languages, so if the school cancels isiZulu homework, it should cancel Afrikaans homework as well, the two subjects must be treated the same, they are both additional languages on the same level (FALT3).*

The first participant (FALT1) indicated that isiZulu was seen as an insignificant subject:

*IsiZulu is treated as an additional subject that is not very much supported, and to add reading on top of the homework that the learners get would cause complaints from learners and parents. Already with the homework we give learners, we get excuses that it was not done because I had to prepare for a maths test, or I had sports and I got home late. I had so much other homework. So, you can see that isiZulu is already not a priority and adding more homework ... I don't know, I really don't know.*

The second participant (FALT2) felt that isiZulu should be compared to other language subjects, “Learners say isiZulu is hard, comparing it to Afrikaans. I don't know what makes them find Afrikaans easier”.

#### 4.4.3 Lack of Reading in Lower Grades Due to Insufficient Time for Lessons

The findings from the in interviews revealed that learners did not receive a strong foundation in reading isiZulu, hence the difficulties they encountered. The participants claimed that this was due to a lack of reading material suitable for their learner's level. They also highlighted that the insufficient time allocated to isiZulu as a subject was also another challenge.

#### **Do you think learners are doing sufficient reading in isiZulu lessons?**

The first participants (FALT1) had this to say:

*I don't think so, you know like isiZulu and Afrikaans are both allocated the same amount of time at my school. However, Afrikaans is taught by the class teachers, which gives them a flexibility of adding more time to Afrikaans as they wish whenever an opportunity arises because they have the learners in their classrooms anyways. So, I honestly don't think that learners in the Foundation Phase are getting the exact same amount of time for isiZulu and Afrikaans. For example, school starts at 8 and, between 7:30 – 8:00, class teachers have the freedom to do anything with the learners and, during that time, I'd hear learners from my next-door classroom reciting an Afrikaans poem. That to me is more time and exposure given to Afrikaans. I can't do the same, because I only see my learners during an isiZulu lesson, which is 30 minutes.*

The participant (FALT2) below revealed that learners 'did not receive sufficient reading due to limited time allocated to isiZulu:

*Not really, so I teach Grades 3 to 6 isiZulu, but I have taught Grades 1 and 2 in the past as well. At my previous school, isiZulu lessons in the foundation phase were only once a week and it was conversational, not academic. So, I did not teach reading at all, I would make them read individual words that we use in our simple conversation. There really was no time to do more. At my current school, I teach Grade 3 isiZulu, and I don't think I am doing enough reading compared to other languages taught in the school. This is because I don't have reading material that is suitable for Grade 3s. Also, I don't think I have time as I see them 1 hour 30 minutes per week. Maybe I need to find out from other teachers in other schools how they do it, that's if they do it, I don't know.*

Another participant (FALT3) indicated that isiZulu lesson time was not consistent with what was stated in the CAPS document:

*I teach from Grade 4 and from what I see it's either learners forget what they are taught, or they don't really do much reading in the foundation phase. I also am aware that the time allocated to isiZulu is not what is stated in the CAPS document.*

#### **4.4.4 Lack of Reading Material in Lower-Grade Classrooms**

The findings revealed that isiZulu FAL teachers experienced a lack of reading materials in lower grade classrooms. Participants mentioned that it was quite difficult to find isiZulu reading materials suitable for the lower grades. Teachers, therefore, resorted to creating their reading material, which was time-consuming. This was supported by the following responses from the semi-structured interviews:

##### **Does your school have enough isiZulu FAL reading materials for all grades?**

The first participant (FALT1) stated that learners in lower grades do not get enough reading.

*When I used to teach from Grades 1 to 7, I noticed that learners preferred to read individual words, once they see a paragraph then it's a problem, and they freaked out. So, to answer the question, I personally feel that they don't do enough reading because they also don't have enough reading material, and it takes so much time to create. It is very difficult to find suitable isiZulu reading materials. Remember this is FAL, so it's not easy to find.*

The participant (FALT2) below also highlighted the difficulty in finding reading material suited for their learners.

*No. I teach Grade 3 isiZulu as well and I can tell you I struggled to find reading material that was at their level, so I had to create my own reading material that would be easy for them to read and enjoy. The challenge is it takes so much of my ... time to create material. So, maybe when I get to a point where I have created enough then I'll do more reading lessons.*

Another participant (FALT3) mentioned that the reading material she had was not the level suitable for the lower grades:

*Not really. The African story website readers start at level 1, and I use level 1 for my Grade 4s, which they struggle with. I don't know then what the teacher in Grades 1-3 uses for reading because the level 1 available on that website cannot be used in the Foundation Phase. So, I don't know if she creates her own readers or if she doesn't teach reading at all.*

#### **4.4.5 Addressing the Needs of Diverse Learners**

The findings from the semi-structured interviews revealed a lack of practice in addressing the needs of diverse learners. The participants indicated that they were unsure of how to address the needs of diverse learners in their isiZulu FAL classrooms. This may be due to lack of teacher training. It is important that isiZulu FAL teachers receive training that equips them to address all needs of their learners, and to equip them with the skills necessary to teach reading to non-mother tongue speakers.

#### **How do you address the needs of diverse learners with different language backgrounds in your teaching?**

In response to this, FALT2 bemoaned:

*Aah, to be honest I have not heard of that, but I can understand what it means. It's just that this is something I have not considered, I have not been exposed to, and I'm not sure how I would do it.*

Similarly, FALT3 indicated that they did not necessary address the needs of their diverse learners, but taught about culture during the month of May and September:

*Not really, like we learn about culture during the month of May because it is Africa month, and then also during the heritage month we do different activities. Like last year, I made them work in groups to do research on different cultures they chose, and they had to present their findings and show pictures of clothing, food and dances that were within a particular culture.*

The participant below (FALT1) indicated that addressing the needs of diverse learners required time for research, which they did not have:

*Amm, I try although it is difficult to do these things because they require a lot of research and that takes time. Also remember we are also trying to cover the syllabus because assessments are approaching, and you are supposed to have covered so much. So, in my lessons culture is mostly involved in September, the heritage month, where we learn about different cultures in South Africa. I then ask those who are from other countries to ask their parents certain questions and come back to educate the class about their culture.*

#### **4.4.6 Differentiated Instruction**

The findings revealed that only one participant used differentiation in the lessons. The other participants indicated that they did not use it and, if they did, they did not know it was differentiation. This may be due to a lack of training of isiZulu FAL teachers.

#### **Do you use differentiation strategy in your lessons?**

The participant below (FALT1) revealed that she did not know what ‘differentiated learning was’:

*No. But now that you are explaining it. I think I have used it, but I just didn’t know what it was. It helps to put learners in groups and make sure you put one of the understanding learners in a group.*

The third participant (FALT3), however, knew what differentiation was and expressed that she used it in her lessons:

*Since it’s a mixed ability class, I do a lot of differentiation instructions and strategies. Paired reading, where I pair a weaker learner with a stronger, learner for paired reading. And level readers, so because you know the ability of the class, certain readers you give to certain kids based on their level.*

The second participant (FALT2) indicated that she used differentiation in her lessons, although she was not familiar with the term,

*I do use differentiation; I just never gave it that term. But I do group learners based on their abilities.*

#### **4.5 Theme Two: Teachers' Individual Experiences of Teaching Reading in isiZulu FAL to Non-mother Tongue Speakers in Private Schools**

This section discusses sub-themes in theme two, which emerged from thematic analysis of the data. Theme two consisted of eleven sub-themes: feeling undervalued as an isiZulu FAL teacher; struggling with enduring criticism; lack of parental support; fostering isiZulu literacy; training on teaching reading; training on teaching reading in isiZulu FAL; collaboration and team teaching; teaching reading strategies; schools' commitment to cultural diversity and inclusion; and societal attitudes towards the language.

##### **4.5.1 Feeling Undervalued as an IsiZulu FAL Teacher**

The participants revealed that the school management and colleagues in their respective schools did not value isiZulu as a subject, and they also did not value isiZulu teachers. They further expressed that priority was given to other subjects. As a result, all participants had to develop the isiZulu departments from scratch. This process also included the development of the culture of reading. The findings revealed that isiZulu FAL teachers experienced lack of support from their schools, and this was due to the school managements and colleagues' attitude towards isiZulu FAL teachers and the subject alike.

##### **Do you receive support from your school?**

The participant below expressed that she as isiZulu teacher and the subject are not taken seriously:

*You find that isiZulu is not supported by the Heads and the colleagues. So, if it's isiZulu, it's like something that they don't take seriously, ... and they also don't take you seriously as a teacher. So, yeah those are the challenges we experience, and some parents don't really take you seriously and so, some learners will tell you no I was busy*

*or I didn't do your homework because I was busy with maths, isiZulu is not taken seriously (FALT1)*

The second participant also indicated that she did not feel valued as a professional teacher, and this made her lose confidence as a teacher:

*No. At a public school, I felt like a teacher. I was respected. Parents and colleagues would approach me with respect despite my age; they treated me as a qualified professional in my field. However, when I came to the private space, I became a black teacher, I lost a sense of being a teacher and I became a black teacher. I even lost my identity here in the private space as a teacher, I became a Zulu teacher. Even the Head when they introduced me, they'd say this is Mrs Mlambo, our Zulu teacher, but with other teachers, they never said this was Mrs Barnet, our Natural science teacher. They introduce them with their name. So, I fail to understand why that is in this community. Is it the subject itself? or the colour of my skin? I really don't know. Also, when I started teaching isiZulu at a private school, the department was not well established. There was literally nothing! I had to develop and grow the department to be where it is now. At the school I am at now, I was given a register class, which is something I did not do at my previous school. I felt so anxious thinking, my parents would complain every day because that is why I got into [teaching] isiZulu. I mean being a register class teacher is something that I can do as a teacher. I have done it in the past, and it is part of what I do. But how I felt, just shows how much confidence I have lost in myself as a teacher (FALT2).*

The third participant also complained that she did not feel valued as isiZulu as a subject:

*The isiZulu department was not well established when I got here, so I had to start from scratch. IsiZulu was conversational in Grades 4 to 7, imagine! Also, they were just taking any teacher here who could speak isiZulu but not necessarily trained to teach a language, a sport coach here used to teach isiZulu. I think all that is because the subject is not valued, and you, as a teacher, don't feel valued here (FALT3)*

#### **4.5.2 Struggling with Enduring Criticism**

The findings from the in depth-interviews revealed that parents did not recognise isiZulu teachers as teachers in the school. One participant claimed that parents were not interested in isiZulu as a subject, and this was because they believed that their children were not going to need isiZulu anywhere in the future as all important events of life were mostly held in English. Participants also pointed out that there was excessive negative involvement that did not promote the subject but aimed at belittling the isiZulu teacher. Participants also felt that colleagues and the school also did not treat isiZulu teachers the same way they did to other teachers. These points were supported by the following responses:

### **What are the challenges you face as an isiZulu FAL teacher?**

The second participant indicated that as an isiZulu FAL teacher she was treated differently from other teachers and that parents did not seem to trust her as a teacher:

*Parents' involvement in private schools is just too much. Parents tend to compare isiZulu with Afrikaans, and they feel they can tell you what to do and how to do things. Parents question you as an isiZulu teacher a lot. I feel like they don't do that with other subject teachers, which means they don't trust me as a teacher. I hold the same qualification as other teachers, but I feel like parents want to question everything I do for some reason. Unfortunately, this is a challenge I have experienced in both private schools that I have taught in. It is almost like I must prove myself to parents that I am also a qualified teacher, and I know what I am doing. I honestly feel that I wouldn't have the same pressure if I was not a person of colour. This has made me question myself a lot. I, personally, am a very confident person, but I think this has affected my confidence as a teacher so much. Another thing is that during parent consultations, the isiZulu teacher has fewer parents coming to see them as compared to other subjects. It's like they are not interested yet they send complaints via emails almost every day (FALT2).*

The first participant indicated that learners and parents had a negative attitude towards isiZulu because they felt that they would not need it anywhere in their future:

*I think the reason for that could be because they know they're going to drop isiZulu at the end of whatever grade. Some parents still have discrimination and so they don't see*

*isiZulu as important. They don't feel they will need isiZulu anywhere in the future. You know, interviews, presentations and communications are all conducted in English, so they feel that they will not benefit from learning this language. Some of the black parents will even say aah you can speak English, you know it very well because out there in the world, English is a must. The interview will be in English, and most things will be in English. As a result, almost all my learners are not exposed to any isiZulu reading material at home (FALT1).*

The third participant (FALT3) complained that Afrikaans is treated better than isiZulu:

*It seems like parents are not interested in the subject; they don't really care how their child performs in isiZulu. I think because of previous experience yabo (you see) isiZulu was not well established. It was a conversational thing. I think from the start, just having it as a conversational subject started the issue. This also include the perception that is created by the school itself that it's just another thing we have, not really a serious subject. It was like an addition, but you find that some teachers that are teaching the subject are not really isiZulu specialists. It is like if you can speak isiZulu, you can jump right in and teach it. I feel that Afrikaans is treated differently from isiZulu by both parents and the school, ... it's made a priority.*

#### **4.5.3 Lack of Parental Support**

The findings from the in-depth interviews revealed that Zulu parents were more supportive as isiZulu was their home language, and they were desperate for their children to learn to speak it. The participant intimated that isiZulu was not supported by most parents such that learners needed to convince their parents if they wanted to continue with isiZulu FAL.

#### **Do you find parents as supportive in the learning of isiZulu FAL?**

The participant below indicated that isiZulu speaking parents were more supportive than other parents:

*Zulu parents seem to be very supportive in a way that even when the learner has not done homework, they will personally come to you or send you an email apologising and reassuring you that it is not because it's isiZulu homework, it is because maybe they*

*had gone somewhere and got home late. They also always seek advice on how they can better support their child to do better in isiZulu. But other parents don't really care (FALT1).*

The second participant claimed that she did not feel parents supported the teaching of isiZulu:

*I don't feel the support of parents in the learning of isiZulu. To tell you the truth, most of my learners must beg their parents if they want to choose/continue with isiZulu FAL. [P]arents feel that because they can't help [their children], they will perform poorly. So, it's about grades and not really about the subject (FALT2).*

The third participant also revealed that parents were not supportive towards the learning of isiZulu:

*No, as I mentioned earlier, they don't take isiZulu seriously, it's just another subject they must do. Like, learners only encounter isiZulu reading material in the isiZulu classroom at school. As a result, almost all my learners are not exposed to any isiZulu reading material at home. So, to answer your question, I find that there's less parental involvement (FALT3).*

#### **4.5.4 Fostering IsiZulu Literacy**

The findings from the semi-structured interviews revealed that all three private schools had libraries on school property. However, two of the libraries in all three schools had isiZulu reading material that was not suitable for primary school learners. One teacher tried to order isiZulu readers at the beginning of the year 2023 to place them in the school's library. However, the school did not have the budget for that. The teacher also did not follow up on the matter. The isiZulu FAL teachers pointed out that they could now see the importance of having isiZulu reading material in their school libraries, as that would enhance the courage and love for reading isiZulu. This is a conversation they considered having in their departmental meetings. These points were supported by the following responses from the semi-structured interviews:

#### **Does your school provide isiZulu reading material to you and your learners?**

*At the beginning of the year, I ordered readers, and they were about R16 000, and I still haven't received readers because the school didn't pay. So, from the school's point of view, I don't know what to say because ya I don't know what to say there. I think the*

*school does not prioritise getting readers or resources for us, I don't know why. But then again, I also didn't follow up to get answers there. Our library does have isiZulu books but at the level of high school learners, not primary (FALT3)*

The first participant indicated that their school library did not have isiZulu books except for just a dictionary:

*I think what I have seen there in the library is the isiZulu dictionary that translates English to Zulu and Zulu to English. Also, as the isiZulu teachers, that is something we have not actually spoken about, you know, the importance of having isiZulu reading material at our library. I think that is the conversation we need to [have] if really, we want to grow the reading [culture] of isiZulu (FALT1).*

The second participant revealed that she was not sure if her school library had isiZulu books, “I am not sure if our library does have isiZulu books or not. But I doubt [they do], maybe if they do have them, they are probably not relevant for my learners, I'll have to check” (FALT2).

#### **4.5.5 Training on Teaching Reading**

The findings of the study revealed that the participants received training that focused on English home language, and they had to take the information and transform it to try to design their own lessons. The participants' responses also illustrated that the schools did not provide any form of professional development for isiZulu teachers. The professional development that the school provided was broad to cover different teaching strategies in the classroom and was not specifically for reading lessons.

#### **Have you received any professional training in teaching reading?**

The second participant indicated that never received any training on teaching reading:

*Honestly speaking, I have never received training to teach reading. From when I was still studying, doing my undergraduate degree, my Zulu modules never taught us how to teach reading. In fact, the modules had nothing to do with teaching or like they didn't teach you how to teach this or that, they were just content that you had to learn and be able to deliver during the exam, and of course if it is part of school curriculum then you can use the knowledge to teach. Yes, some of the things that I learned as part of the content are helping me teach but reading is not one of those things. Here at school and*

*even in the cluster meetings that I attend, we have never had training on how to teach reading in isiZulu FAL (FALT2).*

The third participant also revealed that she had not received any training on how to teach reading:

*I have not been on any training that specifically trained me on how to teach reading. Most of the training I attended was designed for English teachers, but the focus was on different things, not just reading. The school trains us on different things, such as how to deal with children with autism, how to integrate technology in lessons etc. So, because there's not much development for isiZulu teachers out there, what I do is, I attend workshops or training that are for English, and then I take what I learn from there and change it to what I can apply in my own lessons (FALT3).*

The first participants revealed that she received training for teaching languages:

*No, I have not received any form of training teaching me how to teach reading in isiZulu FAL. The school has had some training in the past, but it was focused on the English language. It was for teaching reading to English home language teachers. What I did was, I attended the training, and I just took what I thought could work for me in isiZulu, so I had to change some of the things ... to make them relevant to isiZulu FAL. Remember that the level is not the same, since the training was for the home language, the level was higher which would be difficult for my FAL learners (FAL T1).*

#### **4.5.6 Training on Teaching Reading in isiZulu FAL**

According to the responses of the study participants, it can be noted that most isiZulu FAL teachers in private schools have not received any form of training that specifically equips them to teach reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue speakers. They do not have the necessary skills to teach reading in isiZulu FAL. All three isiZulu teachers from the three different schools are part of the ISASA cluster group, which hosts meetings and workshops for isiZulu FAL teachers in Gauteng private schools. It was highlighted that from these meetings they learn about different things, tools, teaching strategies, and websites where they can find teaching materials. Participants mentioned that in these workshops, they share ideas and information amongst themselves, they have not really received external training on teaching reading in

isiZulu FAL. These points are supported by the following responses from the semi-structured interviews:

**When they were asked a follow up question about the professional development related to teaching reading in isiZulu, they gave the following responses during the semi-structured interviews:**

The participant below indicated that they have not had a training that focuses on teaching reading in isiZulu FAL:

*The school itself does not provide training on teaching isiZulu FAL or reading in isiZulu, but I am part of an isiZulu cluster in Gauteng, and we normally have meetings and one workshop a year. This is where all isiZulu FAL teachers in the province meet and share ideas. We have speakers and people who sell books, a lot of different activities, especially in a workshop because a meeting is just discussing whatever is on the agenda. So, there we learn a lot from each other on different things. There's never been training specifically on teaching reading, but they touch on different things on the curriculum including reading sometimes. (FALT1)*

The second participant mentioned that they learn from other isiZulu teachers, they have not really had training on teaching reading in isiZulu FAL:

*Professional development conducted by the school is never focused on isiZulu. But mina(me), I'm part of the committee of the isiZulu cluster in Gauteng. I'm sure you know about it. We host meetings and a workshop/conference every year. Like right now we are busy planning for the conference for next year. I find these very helpful because I get to learn from other people what they are doing, what works for them you know, I always come back feeling encouraged. (FALT2)*

The third participant indicated that they attend ISASA conferences, but they are not necessarily focused on reading:

*Since I've been here the school hasn't tried to give opportunities for professional development yesiZulu (for), in most cases, I must go and find those courses and then motivate why I want to attend those courses. Like currently I'm part of the ISASA cluster of the Zulu teachers and then for example we had a conference, I had to motivate why,*

*like how it would benefit me, to go to that conference. So, at the conference, you get to meet up with other Zulu FAL teachers and share some ideas. The meetings are not specifically on reading, but they focus on different things, games, technology, etc. but we do talk about reading and share materials that work. (FALT3)*

#### **4.5.7 Collaboration and Team Teaching**

The findings from the semi-structured interviews revealed that isiZulu FAL teachers in private schools' experience isolation, as they are the only isiZulu teacher in the whole Phase, the only colleague they have is isiZulu teacher teaching the other phase. Most isiZulu teachers do not have a colleague to bounce ideas off with and make decisions with. Additionally, they all found the isiZulu department at their schools, not well established and they had to build and grow it from scratch to get to the level it is at now. These points are supported by the following responses from the semi-structured interviews:

##### **Do you do any team teaching or collaboration in your teaching?**

The second participant indicated that they have not done team teaching before, but are willing to try:

*No, we have never done that. Maybe it is something we can look into; I will actually mention it to my HOD and see how she feels about that idea. At my previous school I taught isiZulu from grade 1 to grade 7 and had no one, so, I wouldn't mind team teaching, I just don't know if my colleague has taught intermediate Phase before and if she will be willing to swap. (FALT2)*

The first participant expressed that it is hard to do team teaching and isiZulu teachers teach different grades:

*It's hard to do that because we don't teach the same grades. At my school, there is an isiZulu teacher from grade 1, 2, 4 and 5, and then myself teaching grade 3, 6 to grade 9 and the third teacher does grade 10 to grade 12. So, we are all qualified to teach different phases which makes it hard to collaborate and do team teaching. (FALT1)*

The third participant revealed that they have not considered team teaching as their colleagues are in different sections of the school:

*We have not considered that. I think the challenge would be the fact that we are all in different sections of the school. My school has a Junior preparatory which is Foundation Phase grade 0 to grade 3, then we have a Preparatory School, which is intermediate and Senior Phase grade 4 to grade 7, where I'm teaching, and then College, which is Senior and FET Phase grade 8 to grade 12. It is difficult to make arrangements with our timetables because we are in different sections of the school, and we also teach different age groups which would make it difficult to adjust. I personally don't see myself teaching the little ones in Junior Prep, they are just too small for me, hence, I chose Preparatory. (FALT3)*

#### **4.5.8 Teaching Reading Strategies**

The findings from the semi-structured interviews revealed that participants use different types of strategies in their reading instructions. Strategies that emanate from the interviews are prepared reading (according to the participant, reading pre-selected and prepared text to align with lesson objectives), unprepared reading (explained as spontaneous reading activities that test learners' decoding and fluency), paired/shared reading (collaborative methods where learners read together, promoting peer support), and differentiation (customizing reading tasks based on individual learner abilities, addressing varied skill levels). The findings revealed that it is important to use different types of approaches to meet learners' individual needs. These strategies can allow teachers to create a more inclusive and effective learning environment that caters to the diverse needs of their learners.

#### **What strategies do you use to teach reading in isiZulu FAL?**

The first participant (FALT1) indicated that they use prepared and unprepared reading:

*You know what I try to include all the skills which are listening, speaking, reading and viewing, writing and all of that. For reading, we do prepared reading and unprepared reading. and ya, but this year what I've done. This book impilo yasemadolobheni is for both grade 6 and 7. But again I don't like to follow the book as it is, it also depends on what we are doing especially with the grade 7. When I was doing numbers, I had to find a story that had numbers in Zulu. There was a story about a spaza where the person is paying, and the amount is said in Zulu. There is also another story which is about stokvel again there are a lot of numbers there. So, for all the grades we do prepared and unprepared reading.*

The second participant (FALT2) mentioned that they use shared reading:

*I use shared reading, they read better with a friend you know, helping each other. They also love that I think because they are not so confident to read on their own yet. I also use reading groups and individual reading. I think it is important to use different strategies, because learners prefer or learn better in different ways. It also allows me to reflect on what works best and improve my lessons based on that.*

The third participant (FALT3) revealed that they use differentiation:

*Since it's a mixed ability class, I do a lot of differentiation, differentiation instructions and strategies. Paired reading, where I pair a weaker learner with a stronger learner for paired reading. And level readers, so because you know the ability of the class, certain readers you give to certain kids based on their level.*

#### **4.5.9 Schools' Commitment to Cultural Diversity and Inclusion**

The findings of this research study revealed that the participating private schools are not actively practising cultural and linguistic diversity. The participants revealed that it is something they only talk about but do not really practise. One participant felt that the fact that private schools now offer isiZulu as a first additional language, shows that they are starting to embrace inclusion and diversity.

#### **Do you think your school is aware of cultural and language diversity?**

The participant below (FALT1) expressed that their school policy supports cultural diversity and inclusion, however there is no execution:

*At my school, I don't know how they are doing or ensuring this cultural language and diversity. But the school policy and even the website states that our learners are taught to embrace culturally diverse backgrounds, respect other cultures and learn how to effectively communicate with isiZulu speakers.*

The third participant (FALT3) indicated that their school is not actively practising cultural diversity and inclusion they talk about:

*They always talk about inclusion, cultural and language diversity and that it is important to embrace. But to be honest I don't see execution.*

The second participant (FALT2) felt that private schools who offer isiZulu FAL as a subject, do embrace cultural diversity and inclusion:

*I think now that private schools offer isiZulu as a learning subject it shows their understanding of the importance of cultural and linguistic diversity in our education. I mean isiZulu is the most spoken language in the country, so it really didn't make sense for them to only offer Afrikaans as a first additional language.*

#### **4.5.10 IsiZulu FAL Undervalued by Stakeholders**

The findings from the in depth-interviews revealed that the private schools' community at large does not value isiZulu as a language, however, some parents who believe in the beauty of diversity understands that isiZulu is a dominant language in the country, SA, especially in the Gauteng province. The participants revealed that most parents do not really understand why their children have to learn isiZulu, this is mostly white parents. However, participants also highlighted that the minority that sees the importance of learning the language includes mostly black parents and a few white. These points are supported by the responses below:

#### **What are the attitudes of the entire school community towards the language, isiZulu FAL?**

The first participant (FALT1) indicated that Zulu native parents value the subject more than other parents:

*Zulu parents love and value the subject as they feel it is important for their culture and identity. So, they really want their kids to learn the language. Some of them even ask for extension, they ask for things that their kids can do at home to enhance their knowledge of the subject, and I always tell them that they also need to speak the language at home with their kids because Zulu lessons are limited to time and syllabus. But as I mentioned before, some parents and even colleagues don't take isiZulu seriously, they don't even take you as an isiZulu teacher seriously.*

The second participant (FALT2) revealed that the private school community does not support the learning of isiZulu FAL:

*I don't think the private school community at large is in full support of the language, you see that when learners must choose between Afrikaans and isiZulu. More learners choose Afrikaans, even some black learners, you'll find that they choose Afrikaans and when I ask them why, they say Zulu is hard, so it is not really about the language but marks. And I must mention one of the parents once said to me directly "let's be honest, where are they going to use Zulu in their lives? How will this subject benefit their future?" Her son had performed badly, and she was angry that his average will be affected by his Zulu mark being low.*

The third participant (FALT3) expressed that the school management does not prioritise isiZulu FAL:

*I think the school itself; the management does not prioritise isiZulu as they do Afrikaans, I mention Afrikaans because it is also a first additional language. Unfortunately, that impacts on the parents and the learners. That being said I have to mention that some of my parents and other people in the community do value the language, some even ask me to start a programme to teach isiZulu to adults and say they would love to join and learn because they feel bad when their communication breakdown with their helpers and other people in the community who are fluent in English. They feel that in their lives they should have invested in learning isiZulu because it is dominant, almost everyone understands it in Gauteng.*

#### **4.6 Lesson Observations**

In addition to the two semi-structured interviews, lesson observations were conducted in three private schools' Grade 6 isiZulu classrooms. Each teacher was observed twice on different days and each lesson was 60 minutes long. Observation in research involves watching and recording the phenomena as they occur in their natural settings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Lesson observations were conducted in this study, for me to gain insights into the experiences of isiZulu FAL teachers when teaching reading to non-mother tongue speakers. I wanted to understand the teachers' experiences and the factors contributing to those experiences within

the classroom setting. Through this method, the researcher could observe what was happening in the classroom when reading was taught, strategies teachers used for reading, and books were used for teaching isiZulu reading skills. This method helped to see if what happens in the classroom aligns with what was said during the semi-structured interviews. As a non-participant observer, the researcher had a chance to observe the interactions during the reading instruction freely without influencing the data.

**Table 4.4: Classroom and Book Observation During the Teaching of Reading**

Source: NKM

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Participating School</b>	<b>IsiZulu books at the school Library</b>	<b>Reading words appear on walls</b>	<b>Learners supplied with reading books</b>	<b>Classroom conducive for teaching and learning</b>	<b>Varying teaching strategies</b>	<b>Projector in classroom</b>
<b>FALT1</b>	<b>P1</b>	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>FALT2</b>	<b>P2</b>	Yes (Suitable for high school learners)	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
<b>FALT3</b>	<b>P3</b>	Yes (Suitable for high school learners)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

I observed and took note of the schools' library, classroom and learners' books. The researcher did this to confirm what was narrated by the participants during the interview sessions, and to ensure trustworthiness of the research study. The first private school (P1) had no isiZulu books, they only had isiZulu dictionaries, while P2 and P3 had isiZulu books, but not on the level of primary school learners. All the classroom walls had some reading words. Some learners in P2

did not have the book that was read during the lesson. However, the teacher projected the book on the board. All teaching strategies employed by participants are mentioned below.

#### 4.6.1 Lesson Observation in P1 with FAL T1

FAL T1's classroom was neat and conducive for learning. The walls had some content posters and pictures. The school also had animal art produced by the isiZulu learners during a fun lesson after reading about different animals. At the back of the classroom, there was a table with isiZulu artefacts such as a Zulu shield and the Zulu cultural attire. None of these were used during the lesson observations. However, the teacher mentioned that during the Africa month, May, they read about different African cultures and these artefacts were used for demonstration. The researcher observed a Grade 6 reading lesson. Each table had two learners sharing a desk, learners chose where they sat, and this was based on their preferences. The class had mixed races, namely, black, white, Indian and Chinese. Each learner had their own reading book. A copy of a book that was read during the first and second observation is shown below. From *Impilo yasemadolobheni*, the learners read a short story about *iSpaza*. The teacher used the smart board to write new words on the board with their definitions. FAL T1 used guided reading to enhance learners' comprehension of the text by constantly checking their understanding. She also used the read-aloud strategy, which encouraged learners to read. The confusion of vowel sounds emanated during the reading lessons; the teachers had to re-emphasise the vowel sounds. One of the confusions was the word '*esitolo*', which the learner pronounced as '*isitolo*'. Learners also struggled to read big words such as '*ushintshi*', where they had to blend letters.

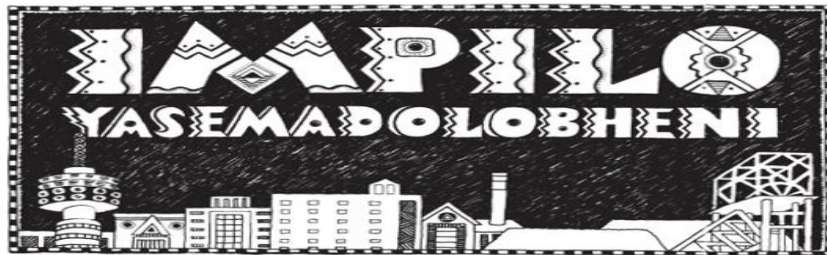
FAL T1 asked the learners to name the five vowels and she wrote them on the board. She made them chorally read the vowels. She then added letter sounds to make up consonants, they revised consonants and then blended letters for different words, and blended sounds to make syllables as presented on table 4.3 below:

**Table 4.5 Blending Sounds in Words at P1**

**Source: NKM**

u/sh/i/ntsh/i	=	ushintshi
mkh/u/l/u	=	mkhulu

th/a/th/a	=	thatha
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**Fig 4.1:** Copy of *Impilo Yasemadolobheni*, book read at P1.



**Fig 4.2:** Smart board at P1 isiZulu Classroom

The researcher also observed the interaction of learners during the lessons, to gain an insight of the teachers' experiences when teaching reading to non-mother tongue speakers. Tables 4.6, 4.8 and 4.10 below present learners' involvement during lesson observations at P1, P2 and P3, respectively.

Indicator: Learner's involvement in the lessons

Criteria Question: Are learners actively involved in lessons?

**Table 4.6: Learners' Participation During Lesson Observation at P1, FALT1**

**Source: NKM**

	1	2	3	4
Were learners participating actively in the lessons?			✓	
Did learners follow instruction?			✓	
Did they show understanding of text when asked questions?		✓		
Could they pronounce words?		✓		
Were they fluent in their reading?		✓		

### **Coding**

1 = not at all

2 = some of the times

3 = most of the times

4 = all the time

The findings from lesson observations of FALT1 revealed that learners were actively participating in lessons. Some did not show an understanding of the text when asked questions. These learners were mostly from other races and a few black learners, who were probably not isiZulu speakers. Most learners of all races seemed to struggle with pronunciation and reading fluency. FAL T1 employed the read-aloud, guided reading, and multimodal literacy teaching approach during her lessons.

### **4.6.2 Lesson Observation at P2 with FAL T2**

FAL T2's classroom was also neat with displays on the wall. She had the school's ethos and prayer, isiZulu content, and decorations with letter sounds and alphabet frieze, which she used

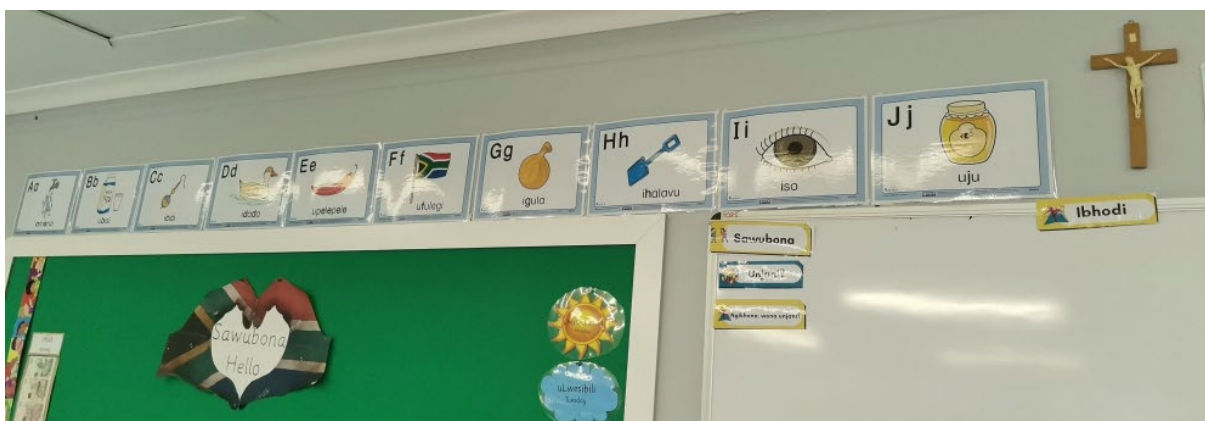
when she taught vowels and sounds during reading lessons. There were also Zulu artifacts in the corner of the classroom, which she used to demonstrate when they read about different cultures and traditions in SA. The researcher observed a Grade 6 reading lesson. Two learners on each table, learners chose where to sit, and they changed seats every term. However, the teacher did move learners around if they misbehaved. The class had mixed races, namely, white, black, and Indian. FAL T2 used guided reading to enhance learners' understanding of the text. She also used collaborative learning, which encouraged learners to work together in a small group, where everyone participated and learned from one another. She also used read-aloud and multimodal literacy. Learners did ask for assistance in pronouncing some words, and it turned out learners were struggling with similar types of words and vowel sounds. One of the words was 'ingwenya'. FALT2 then stopped all learners to remind them of the vowel sounds and how to blend letter sounds to make words.

The new sounds are ngw, thw and nhlw, which the teacher and learners blended as presented on table 4.7 below:

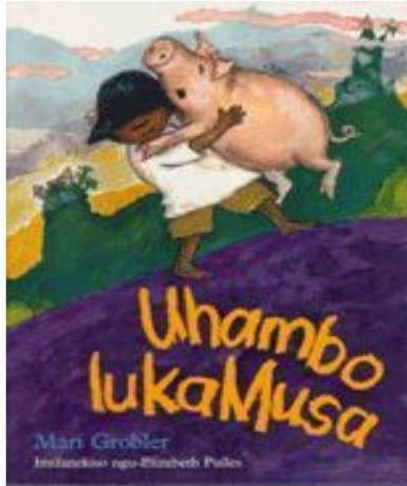
**Table 4.7 Blending sounds in words at P2**

**Source: NKM**

i/ngw/e/ny/a	=	ingwenya
i/si/thw/a/thw/a	=	isithwathwa
i/nhlw/a/th/i	=	inhlwathi



**Fig 4.3:** Sounds with pictures of isiZulu words matching the sound at P2.



**Fig 4.4:** Copy of book read at P2.



**Fig 4.5:** Projector used to display the reading for learners who did not have the book at P2.

Indicator: Learner's involvement in the lessons

Criteria Question: Are learners involved actively in lessons?

**Table 4.8: Learners' participation during lesson observation at P2**

**Source: NKM**

	1	2	3	4
Were learners participating actively in lessons?			✓	
Did learners follow instruction?				✓
Did they show understanding of text when asked questions?			✓	
Could they pronounce words?		✓		
Were they fluent in their reading?		✓		

### **Coding**

1 = not at all

2 = some of the times

3 = most of the times

4 = all the time

The findings from lesson observations revealed that learners at P2 participated actively in the lessons; they were not afraid to try. They well behaved and followed instructions well. Learners struggled with pronunciation and reading with fluency. Learners who showed some understandings of the text were black learners in the classroom. FAL T2 employed collaborative learning, guided reading, read-aloud, and multimodal teaching approaches in her lessons.

### **4.6.3 Lesson Observation at P3 with FAL T3**

AFL T3's classroom was neat and conducive to teaching and learning. The classroom had a normal whiteboard, and the teacher had a teacher's desktop, which was connected to a

projector. The walls had some content posters and pictures which she used to remind the learners of some of the vocabulary they drew from the story. The researcher observed a Grade 6 reading lesson. Each desk had two learners sharing. Learners choose where they sat, and this is based on their preferences. However, the teacher moved them around when she did a differentiation teaching strategy. The class had mixed races: black, white, coloured, and Chinese. FAL T3 used guided reading, read-aloud, multimodal literacy, and differentiation teaching strategies during the lessons to meet learners' different needs. Learners were in groups based on ability level; weaker learners had more inquiries than the strong group. However, common struggle again was vowel sounds, it was noted that the stronger group had better mastery than the weaker ones. The teacher wrote vowels on the board and made learners read the vowels out loud. She then reminded them how the vowel affects the sound, and how to blend letter sounds to make up words. She took words from what the learners were reading and added a few examples, as illustrated in table 4.9 below.

**Table 4.9 Blending Sounds in Words at P3**

**Source: NKM**

ph/a/th/a	=	phatha
i/nsw/e/mp/e	=	inswempe
Ntsh/a/ng/a/s/e	=	ntshangase



**Figure 4.6: IsiZulu reading words on the wall at P3.**



**Fig 4.7:** Bookshelf at P3.



**Fig 4.8:** Projector used to display the reading material in P3.

Indicator: Learner's involvement in the lessons

Criteria Question: Are learners involved actively in lessons?

**Table 4.10: Learners’ participation during lesson observation at P3**

**Source: NKM**

	1	2	3	4
Were learners participating actively in lessons?			✓	
Did learners follow instruction?			✓	
Did they show understanding of text when asked questions?			✓	
Could they pronounce words?		✓		
Were they fluent in their reading?		✓		

### **Coding**

1 = not at all

2 = some of the times

3 = most of the times

4 = all the time

The findings from lesson observations at P3 revealed that learners participated actively in lessons. Most learners did not show an understanding of the text when asked questions. These learners were mostly black and a few of other races. However, most learners of all races seemed to struggle with pronunciation and reading with fluency. FAL T3 applied differentiation, guided reading, and multimodal literacy teaching strategies in her lessons.

#### **4.6.4 Indicator: Teacher’s Concentration on Teaching Reading**

Teacher participants focused on reading text more than teaching reading itself. It was upon realising the difficulties in pronunciation that they then reinforced vowels and blending sounds in words. They also explained new vocabulary and their meaning.

### **Observing Documents**

The findings of document observation in this research study revealed that the number of teaching hours per week for isiZulu FAL at two private schools (P1 and P2) was not aligned

with the CAPS document, which recommended for 5 hours per week. While two schools did 4 hours per week, the other school did 4.5 hours per week. It was also noted that all three private schools did not provide reading homework to learners, which was consistent with what the participants stated during the semi-structured interviews. The findings also revealed that teachers' lesson plans showed reading lesson plans. FALT1 did not do prepared or unprepared reading, which was mentioned during interviews. However, she did employ other teaching strategies (guided reading, read-aloud, and multimodal literacy). FALT2 also did not employ the same teaching strategy mentioned during the interview (shared reading), she employed other strategies (collaborative learning, guided reading, read-aloud, and multimodal literacy). However, FALT3 did use the same strategy (differentiation) mentioned during interviews with other new strategies (guided reading, read-aloud, and multimodal literacy). Timetables, learners' books, and term plans were observed for all participants as indicated below. Document observation findings are presented in tables 4.11, 4.12 and 4.13 below.

**P1 FALT1**

**Table 4.11:** Document Observation for the First Participating School P1

**Source:** NKM

Questions	Yes	No
Is the number of teaching hours in line with CAPS for isiZulu FAL?		✓
Do learners' books show any reading homework?		✓
Does the term plan show reading lessons?	✓	
Did the teacher use the teaching strategies mentioned during interviews		✓

## P2 FALT2

**Table 4.12:** Document Observation for the Second Participating School P2

**Source:** NKM

Questions	Yes	No
Is the number of teaching hours in line with CAPS for isiZulu FAL?		✓
Do learners' books show any reading homework?		✓
Does the term plan show reading lessons?	✓	
Did the teacher use the teaching reading strategies mentioned during interviews		✓

## P3 FALT3

**Table 4.13:** Document Observation for the Third Participant School P3

**Source:** NKM

Questions	Yes	No
Is the number of teaching hours in line with CAPS for isiZulu FAL?	✓	
Do learners' books show any reading homework?		✓
Does the term plan show reading lessons?	✓	
Did the teacher use the teaching reading strategies mentioned during interviews	✓	

### **4.7 Discussion of Teachers' Experiences and the Factors Contributing to their Experiences in Teaching Reading to Non-mother Tongue Speakers.**

This section discusses the experiences of teachers when teaching reading in isiZulu FAL, during the lesson observations. This is to address the two-research question mentioned below:

What are teachers' experiences of teaching reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue speakers in private schools in Gauteng?

Why do teachers have particular experiences of teaching reading in isiZulu First Additional Language to non-mother tongue in private schools in Gauteng?

#### **4.7.1 Enhancing Learners' Comprehension and Development Through Guided Reading**

FALT1, FALT2, and FALT3

The findings from lesson observations revealed that all participant teachers practised guided reading in their reading instruction lessons. This helped to actively enhance the learners' comprehension of the text by testing and checking their understanding during and after the text had been read by the learner. Nicholas et al. (2021) describe this as scaffolding literacy learning. Guided reading is known to be embedded within the theory of ZPD (Nicholas et al., 2021). Teachers witnessed their learners' difficulty in pronunciation due to a lack of mastery of vowel sounds and blending letter sounds to pronounce words correctly. They then employed the guided reading teaching strategy to support their learners.

#### **4.7.2 Collaborative Learning**

Collaborative strategic reading (CSR) is a research-based strategy that helps in teaching reading understanding to enhance content area learning (Abuhansnah, 2015). This instructional practice is also suggested to teach learners reading comprehension while they work in small cooperative groups. Collaborative learning requires learners to work in mixed-ability groups, and the members must be willing to adapt collaborative learning practices and be provided with the opportunity to choose their roles (Suwantharathip, 2015).

FALT2 used collaborative learning in her lessons. Learners had already been divided into mixed-ability groups. She gave them books to read in their groups and then asked questions related to the story. She also asked that each group select a member to tell the story to the whole class. She said that *"this strategy helps learners who are weak, as they work with stronger ones. So, everyone gets to understand and enjoy the story. I have noticed that learners who are usually chosen to tell the story are those who have some isiZulu background from home. I guess others are not confident enough"*. Participant teachers in the study all had mixed-ability

learners with different language backgrounds. As a result, they experienced slow progress in reading as they had to explain the meaning of most words in the text. FALT2 used collaborative learning to speed the process while allowing learners to discover the meaning of words on their own, as they had isiZulu dictionaries with them. She helped them with the pronunciations of difficult words by re-enforcing the vowel sounds. This method also helped when they were discussing the story. At this point, learners, including the weaker ones, understood the story, as they worked collaboratively with the stronger ones.

#### **4.7.3 Teacher Beliefs and Practices**

The read-aloud practice focuses on fluency, pronunciation, and appropriate use of punctuation (Stoffelsma & Van Charldorp, 2020). FALT1 and FALT2 asked their learners to read aloud to the entire class, while FALT3 made them read to their peers in the small groups to which they belonged. The teachers themselves also read aloud some parts of the text. Liswaniso (2021) suggests that reading aloud involves accurate pronunciation, fluency, and appropriate use of tone. Lesson observations revealed that all three participants used the read-aloud as a strategy for teaching reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue speakers. They all used it in different ways and had trouble with pronunciation of some of the words as well as comprehension of the text. This was due to the lack of mastery in vowel sounds and blending of letter sounds, as well as short knowledge of vocabulary.

FALT1 read aloud to the learners and then asked for volunteers to read, and a few learners read to the entire class. The teacher corrected some pronunciation, thereby reminding learners of the use of vowels when reading, by reinforcing the concept. She wrote some vocabulary on the smartboard and stated that *“it was new vocabulary to my learners, and explaining new vocabulary helps my learners to understand and enjoy the story”*. FALT1 also mentioned that *“reading aloud strategy helps in reinforcing confidence in my learners’ pronunciation”*. This strategy was captured in the participants’ lesson plan and was observed in their teaching instruction.

FALT2 grouped learners into mixed-ability groups and instructed them to take turns in reading to ensure that everyone participated. She also told learners to raise their hands when they struggled with pronunciation or could not find the word in a dictionary. She gave corrections and emphasis on vowel and phonic sounds on the board. FLAT2 also wrote new vocabulary on the whiteboard and had learners read the vocabulary aloud. In the process of doing this, the

teacher also provides learners with a correct pronunciation of the difficult vocabulary. FAL T2 mentioned that “*reading aloud is a good strategy to encourage learners to read. I learnt it while I was doing my undergraduate degree, and it was also mentioned at one of the workshops*”. She also mentioned that she had to diverge from the original lesson plan when she realised that learners did not understand the meaning of the words by making them read the words aloud as a class. This helped in improving their understanding and their reading, as some words came up again later in the text. This practice was important as it addressed the learners’ needs. Oo and Habok (2020) suggest the importance of flexibility in modifying teaching methods to address the learners’ needs. The participants deviated from their original lesson plan, which was to select a few individual learners to read aloud, to make the whole class read aloud new vocabulary from the whiteboard. The teacher participant made a quick decision and adjusted her lesson plan to meet her learners’ needs (Farrell & Kennedy, 2019).

FAL T3 also used the read-aloud strategy in her differentiated groups. She instructed learners to all participate in reading and to alert her when they needed help. She reminded learners of the importance of the vowel sounds when reading and writing. She took some time to teach them about vowels and blending letter sounds by using a few examples that emerged from the story and the new words she added.

#### **4.7.4 Multimodal Literacy**

Multimodal literacy refers to the knowledge on making meaning through various text types, including texts represented with images, audio, videos, and other depiction. According to Mills and Unsworth (2017), increasing communication is integrating a multitude of methods, thereby having raised the importance of their literacies in educational settings. It brings into view the idea that reading and writing are not merely about alphabetic texts but involve complex interplay in varying semiotic resources (Mills & Unsworth, 2017).

According to Walsh (2010), new descriptors of language and literacy criteria are embedded within the framework of multimodal literacy, the literacy that is essential in teaching this modern generation reading, viewing, responding, and generating multimodal and digital texts. He further describes multimodal literacy as a process of making meaning through reading, viewing, understanding, responding to, and interacting with multimedia and digital texts (Walsh, 2010). Siyothula (2019) as cited in Lauwrens (2022) argues that visualising in reading is part of multimodal literacy, as it involves the use of visuals such as pictures and contextual

clues to enhance learners' understanding of vocabulary and, ultimately, understanding the text. Visualising according to Lair (2019) involves creating mental images while reading, which enhances comprehension and retention. Liar (2019) further highlights that competent readers often make movies in their minds when they read, picture characters and events vividly. This cognitive process is crucial for decoding text and understanding its meaning. Visualizing does not only aid in comprehension but also supports the phonemic awareness necessary for recognizing words, linking visual images to their corresponding sounds (Liar, 2019).

FALT2 used cartoon strips during her second reading instruction lesson. She projected them on her whiteboard for learners to see. FALT2 had mentioned the use of cartoon strips in her lesson plan, and this was observed during her reading instruction. FALT1 and FALT3, also incorporated multimodal literacy in the sense that they projected the text being read on their smart and whiteboards, respectively. The texts had some pictures to enhance the learners' understanding. All participants acknowledged the advantages of using visuals to activate learners' prior knowledge and increase their understanding.

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

Chapter four presented and analysed the data that was gathered from the lesson observations and the semi-structured interviews, using thematic analysis with the aim of identifying common themes and sub-themes found within the data set, using colour-coding strategy. Under theme one, six sub-themes were analysed, while ten sub-themes were analysed under theme two, with the intention of answering the two research questions that were developed in this study. The findings of this research study revealed that the isiZulu FAL teachers' experiences in private schools have a significant impact on how they teach reading to non-mother tongue speakers. Teachers are experiencing that learners struggle to master isiZulu FAL vowel sounds and consonants, as they confuse them with English letter sounds. They are also experiencing a negative attitude from the stakeholders towards the learning and teaching of isiZulu FAL, as a result isiZulu FAL teachers feel undervalued and have to endure criticism from parents, who tend to give excessive negative involvement. IsiZulu FAL teachers also experience lack of reading material and insufficient reading time. They also seem to lack in practice of addressing the needs of diverse learners, due to lack of teacher training in this context. All these experiences affect the efficient teaching of reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue speakers in private schools in Gauteng.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory has proven instrumental in analysing the data presented in Chapter 4, offering a strong framework for understanding the ways in which social interaction, cultural tools, and guided support influence the teaching of reading in isiZulu FAL among non-mother tongue speakers. Central constructs, such as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) was essential in interpreting teachers' strategies to scaffold language learning, where learners progressively acquire reading skills with appropriate support (Daniels, 2016). By observing how teachers facilitated reading comprehension and language use within learners' ZPD, this study connected instructional practices to Vygotsky's concept of learning as a socially mediated process (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014).

In the next chapter, the discussion and interpretation of these findings will take centre stage. The next chapter will connect the results to the theoretical framework and existing literature reviewed earlier in the dissertation, examining how this study's findings align with or diverge from previous research. Thus, it serves as a critical synthesis of the study, tying together key insights and situating them within the larger educational context.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter presented the findings of the study, as key themes are identified from the interview and observational data generated with the Grade 6 isiZulu FAL teachers. With this, nuanced insights will be provided in this chapter, in regard to the teachers' experiences of their instructional practices and unique challenges met in teaching reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue speakers in the private school setting. This chapter is an extension of the previous chapter in the sense that it presents my understanding of the experiences of teachers who teach reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue speakers in three Gauteng private schools. Sub-themes were utilised to provide a comprehensive understanding of the experiences and factors that these teachers encounter. This chapter also provides a comparison between the responses of teachers during the semi-structured interviews and the lesson observation. Lesson plans and learner books were also observed to ensure the trustworthiness of this research study.

### **5.2 Discussion of the Findings from Theme One: Exploring teachers' experiences in isiZulu FAL reading education for multilingual learners in Gauteng's private schools.**

The subsequent section discusses the findings from theme one: Teachers' experiences of teaching reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue speakers in three Gauteng private schools. Ten sub-themes developed from this theme, namely: challenges in teaching vowel letter sounds and pronunciation; attitude towards the learning of isiZulu FAL from parents and learners; learners' lack of reading in lower grades due to lesson time; lack of reading material in lower grades classrooms; addressing the needs of diverse learners; differentiated instruction; enhancing learners' comprehension and development through guided reading; collaborative reading; teacher beliefs and practice; and multimodal literacy.

#### **5.2.1 Challenges in Teaching Vowel Letter Sounds and Pronunciation**

The study's findings revealed that learners struggled to master the vowel sounds in their pronunciation when reading. When vowels were paired with consonants to make sounds, they struggled to remember the correct pronunciation. Participants stated that this was due to a lack of exposure to adequate reading, since learners only do isiZulu reading in class and never at

home. These findings were consistent with related literature. According to Cronje (2021), most learners struggle to recall the unique sounds of the five vowel letters. She further highlights that learners may find it easier to shout out a e i o u. Nonetheless, they may find it difficult to read and pronounce a constructed word. Cronje (2021) argues that the challenge in teaching vowel letter sounds stems from the fact that in isiZulu, there are differences in phoneme to grapheme mapping compared to English. Learners are expected to cope with two, three, or four letters representing one sound, as in th, nhl, and ntsh (Ntshangase, 2023). Land (2015) also highlights the complexity of some isiZulu words containing complex consonants with diaphragms (two letters representing one sound) and trigraphs (three letters representing one sound). Learners are then required to recognise these letter combinations and match them with correct sounds. The use of read-aloud and guided reading strategies by the participants during lesson observation, allowed the learners to work together. This approach concurred with the Sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), which emphasises the significance of social interactions and language usage.

### **5.2.2 Stakeholders Attitude Towards Learning of IsiZulu FAL**

The research findings revealed that there were both positive and negative attitudes towards the learning of isiZulu. The participants suggested that some parents and learners whom their native language is isiZulu, illustrated a positive attitude toward the learning of the language. In fact, isiZulu speaking parents seemed to be desperate for their children to learn and be fluent in isiZulu, their home language. Unfortunately, this was a very small number of learners as Gauteng is a province that consists of all 12 South African official languages as well as international languages. In an isiZulu classroom in private schools in Gauteng, one finds learners coming from different language backgrounds. This was consistent with available related literature (Bhengu, 2015). Bhengu (2015) reveals in her study conducted in KwaZulu Natal that most learners responded positively to learning isiZulu, and many advocated for the promotion of African languages in private schools. It was important to note that most learners in KZN isiZulu classrooms come from the Zulu cultural background and thus lack the variety found in a Gauteng isiZulu Classroom. Pillay (2017) suggests that non-isiZulu speakers tend to learn isiZulu for instrumental reasons only. Such reasons include economic benefits, rather than integrative reasons, such as cultural connection. Also, a survey of undergraduate students' attitudes towards studying isiZulu at a university, as conducted by Mbatha et al. (2018), reveals that respondents generally held positive attitudes towards learning isiZulu at a university level.

Most of them support multilingualism in South Africa, with many opposing English being the only official language of teaching and learning. The respondents also believed that there were adequate job opportunities for those who studied isiZulu. According to Nxumalo (2018), while some learners had negative attitudes towards learning the language, others were positive and expressed interest in learning it. The author, further states that learners with negative attitudes regard English as a better language. According to Kaplan and Norton (2004), as cited in Zikhali (2016), African languages are perceived as unimportant in the wider international field where English is dominant. Zikhali (2016) also highlights that isiZulu is not treated like other languages in model C schools, and this contributes to the learners' attitudes towards the language. The studies, therefore, highlight a mix of positive and negative attitudes towards the teaching and learning of isiZulu. The positive attitudes towards the learning of isiZulu FAL in private schools, where learners coming from diverse language backgrounds, concurred with the Sociocultural theory's belief that learners in a multilingual classroom context need to actively participate in language activities and interact with one another to bridge the existing language gaps.

### **5.2.3 Lack of Reading in Lower Grades Due to Lesson Time**

The participants pointed out that learners did not receive a strong foundation in reading in isiZulu FAL. This was due to a lack of reading material suitable for their level, as well as insufficient time allocated to isiZulu FAL as a subject. According to the participants, their schools design their own timetable which does not necessarily align with the DBE timetable, especially for isiZulu FAL. It was important that enough time was invested in teaching reading in lower grades. In relation to this, Ntshangase (2023) points out that effective reading instruction in lower grades (Grade 1-3) is significant in laying down the basic reading skills required for learners. Krashen (1981) suggests that for learners to reach a level of fluency in reading, they require a great deal of exposure to the targeted language. According to Ntshangase (2023), automaticity, which is accuracy and speed in reading, can only be attained after several opportunities of practice.

#### **5.2.4 Lack of Reading Material in Lower Grade Classrooms and Fostering IsiZulu Literacy**

The findings of the study revealed that there was a lack of reading materials for isiZulu FAL, especially in lower grades (1-4). The participants in this study pointed out that it was difficult to find reading material which were at their learners' reading level. Hence, they resorted to creating their own reading material, which was time-consuming and required adequate creativity. This is consistent with related literature. Shozi-Kunene (2023) reveals in her study that one of the challenges teachers face in teaching reading in isiZulu is the scarcity of isiZulu reading material, which appears to be the same challenge that isiZulu FAL teacher face, according to the participants. Zikhali (2016) also highlights that teacher teaching isiZulu FAL in Model C schools struggle to find suitable resources such as readers, textbooks, and study guides.

Reading can allow for exploration of different cultures, places, and times that one may not experience in life. The findings from this research study revealed that all three private schools that participated in this study had libraries on school property. However, none of the libraries in all three participating schools had isiZulu reading materials. This was consistent with Mthembu's (2009) observation that one of the challenges that isiZulu FAL teachers face is the development of suitable resources such as readers, textbooks, and study guides. Mthembu (2009) further reveals that most isiZulu FAL teachers use isiZulu home language books and choose content relevant to isiZulu FAL learners. According to Street (2004), isiNdebele teachers face the same challenge of insufficient teaching resources, which affects the progress of implementing the curriculum.

#### **5.2.5 Commitment to Cultural Diversity and Inclusion, in Addressing the Needs of Diverse Learners**

Cultural and linguistic diversity is crucial in South African schools, where learners come from diverse linguistic backgrounds. It is therefore significant that the school creates an inclusive and effective learning environment. It is also important that isiZulu FAL teachers consider the linguistic backgrounds of their learners provide support for phonemic awareness development and create a conducive environment that addresses the unique phonetic features of the isiZulu language. Participants in this research study revealed that they were not sure of any inclusivity

taking place in their schools.

The findings of the study revealed that teachers were unsure of how to address the needs of diverse learners in their isiZulu classrooms. It was important, according to the findings, to train teachers during their years of study and when they practised teaching to avoid a lack of knowledge on important things that affected learners' performance. The findings of this study also revealed that the participating isiZulu teachers did not show an understanding of the theory of culturally relevant pedagogy, what it meant, and how it could be employed in teaching reading in isiZulu. Related literature shows the following about this theory: culturally relevant pedagogy involves teaching that caters to the learners' cultural background and experiences (Mzila, 2016). This theory allows learners to connect with the material and better comprehend it, and it helps them develop a deeper understanding of the language and its cultural relevance. Mbele (2019) highlights that the cultural context in which teaching occurs is quite significant, teachers, therefore, must be aware of the learners' cultural background and include it in their teaching instruction.

#### **5.2.6 Differentiated Instruction**

The findings of this study revealed that only one teacher talked about differentiation strategy in the teaching of reading in isiZulu. Ngema (2010) highlights the importance of this teaching strategy in addressing the individual needs of learners and in enhancing reading comprehension in isiZulu.

The lesson observation that employed differentiation strategy, where more gifted learners were allowed to support less gifted learners-directly relates to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, particularly the constructs of the Zone of Proximal Development and the More Knowledgeable Other. Vygotsky postulated that learning occurs best within a learner's Zone of Proximal Development, where they are able to complete tasks with the help of an MKO, which could be a teacher, peer, or more skilled individual (Daniels, 2016). In this instance, more gifted learners acted as MKOs, providing assistance to less gifted learners, thus helping them bridge their current abilities to achieve new understanding and skills in isiZulu FAL reading.

This peer-assisted learning also embodies Vygotsky's belief in the importance of social interaction for cognitive development, where knowledge is co-constructed through collaborative activities (Johnson & Golombek, 2020).

### **5.3 Discussion of Findings from Theme Two: Teachers' Experiences of Teaching Reading in isiZulu FAL to Non-mother Tongue Speakers in Private Schools.**

#### **5.3.1 Feeling Undervalued as an isiZulu Teacher**

The devaluation of teachers' roles may impact on the teaching of reading skills in IsiZulu FAL. As indicated, research shows that motivation of teachers, morale, and their self-efficacy as professionals are correlated with outcomes and participation in the classroom (Day & Gu, 2019). When teachers do not feel appreciated, they may develop lack of enthusiasm and commitment in teaching, and this may translate into the effort that they put in the teaching of reading skills in IsiZulu FAL.

The findings of this research study revealed that isiZulu teachers felt undervalued by their school management and colleagues. They also felt that the subject itself was undervalued. This was consistent with Mbatha's (2012) observation that the isiZulu teachers' perceptions of the Foundations of Learning Literacy programme, where the teachers often felt undervalued in their role, which affected their motivation. The author further emphasises that isiZulu teachers feel that their role is not recognised by the whole education system, thus making them feel isolated and disconnected. It appeared that cultural differences were not valued, and this contradicts a key concept of Sociocultural Theory by Vygotsky (1978), which highlights the importance of cultural context in the learning processes. Vygotsky indicated that learning is intrinsic to social interaction and cultural setting and thus culture plays a pivotal role in shaping the learning process of students especially when learning a language (Daniels, 2016). As per this theory, it is crucial to include cultural and personal background of the learners in teaching and learning process since learning is enhanced and facilitated when cultural significance of the learners' experiences is incorporated (Johnson & Golombek, 2020).

#### **5.3.2 Struggling with Enduring Criticism**

The research findings revealed that priority was given to other subjects. This was evident in that all participants had to develop the isiZulu department from scratch in their respective schools. This is consistent with a study conducted by Ngcobo (2014) in Phoenix, where it was revealed that learners were keen on choosing isiZulu as a FAL, however, the schools were not ready to introduce isiZulu as they did not have qualified isiZulu teachers. Zikhali (2016) also highlights that isiZulu is not treated like other languages in schools and contributes to a negative attitude towards isiZulu from both learners and teachers alike. The author also

emphasises that support from the school management is imperative in promoting and enhancing the teaching and learning of isiZulu FAL.

### **5.3.3 Lack of Parental Support**

The findings revealed that some parents did not take isiZulu teachers seriously. One participant claimed that parents were not interested in isiZulu as a subject, and this was because they believed that their children were not going to need isiZulu anywhere in the future as all important events of life were mostly held and conducted in English. This belief hurt the promotion of the subject and created learners' and parents' negative attitudes towards the subject. Parents may prioritise English over isiZulu FAL as an African language, believing that English offers better opportunities for their children's future. This attitude may potentially affect the learners' attitudes towards, and experiences of, the subject (Govindasamy, 2008). Govender (2010) mentions that parental involvement and support are crucial in the academic success of learners, especially in the learning of a first additional language. Govindasamy (2008) also highlights that there is a need for more support from the Department of Education to be more actively involved in the promotion of isiZulu in schools. However, as stated earlier, isiZulu native parents seem to value isiZulu both as a language and a subject due to its cultural significance. While literature highlights the importance of parental involvement in the learning of the first additional language, it does not address the level of support from isiZulu native parents in the learning of isiZulu in private schools. It is therefore impossible at this point to determine the extent of support Zulu parents show towards the teaching and learning of isiZulu in private schools.

### **5.3.4 Training on Teaching Reading**

Teachers require support in developing their pedagogical content knowledge to teach reading effectively in isiZulu. This can be attained through training and professional development (Ngema, 2023). According to Lu et al. (2022), teachers should have adequate skills to teach literacy comprehension and language acquisition, regardless of the subject they teach. Ntshangase (2023) highlights that it is important for teachers to be trained thoroughly on how to implement strategies recommended by the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS). It appeared that the participants required extensive knowledge and specialised skills which were not offered during their pre-service training.

The fact that all three teacher participants used different strategies to teach reading in isiZulu FAL, with no assessment of the effectiveness of any of these, points to a serious gap in support for teacher development and strategy assessment. Without such structured feedback and external expertise, it is unlikely that good practices in reading instruction will be optimized.

To address this gap, school management should be supportive of and mentor the teachers. Mentorship by expert educators and literacy coaches could help give feedback on refinement and the implementation of reading strategies with greater confidence and effectiveness. Research has shown that frequent supportive feedback is important to helping teachers develop better instructional techniques, particularly for introducing language skills in a non-native language (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Furthermore, while sharing ideas during cluster meetings fosters collaboration among teachers, the absence of external experts' limits exposure to updated, evidence-based practices that could enhance isiZulu FAL reading instruction. External literacy specialists and language experts could offer specialized training in culturally responsive and pedagogically sound methods, ensuring that teachers are equipped with effective, research-based strategies (Desimone & Pak, 2017). This would also be a step toward developing some sort of continuous assessment and feedback structure whereby teachers can assess, through this system, the degree to which their teaching is impacting learners' learning achievements. Eventually, an integrated approach of mentorship from within, external expertise, and continuous evaluation will effectively support teachers in providing good-quality reading instruction in the subject of isiZulu FAL.

### **5.3.5 Collaboration and Team Teaching**

The findings of this research study revealed that isiZulu teachers experience isolation in private schools as they were mostly the only isiZulu teachers in the phase. The cultural difference with their other colleagues could also cause isolation. Zikhali (2016), explains that isolation can be particularly challenging for isiZulu teachers in private schools, where they may not receive the same level of support as their peers in public schools.

The isolation that the isiZulu FAL teachers in private schools' face, as pointed out in this study, can best be understood through Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, emphasizing social interaction and collaborative learning in professional and cognitive development. According to Vygotsky, learning is essentially a social activity enabled by interaction with more informed peers, cultural tools, and collaborative environments (Daniels, 2016). Isolation from other teachers,

either by being the only one teaching isiZulu FAL in the phase or by cultural disconnection from colleagues, denies them opportunities to learn from and grow with their peers in a supportive community. According to Vygotsky's construct of the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO), teachers learn well from peers who are better at handling the very pedagogical skills that they seek to develop. However, when isiZulu FAL teachers are in isolation, as Zikhali (2016) points out, they forfeit these crucial interactions among peers that refine their pedagogical techniques and uplift them. Without such supportive collaboration, they will find it very challenging to actually apply and adjust new approaches to teaching, thus ultimately impeding their professional development and the realization of effective learning outcomes throughout the process (Johnson & Golombek, 2020).

### **5.3.6 Teaching Reading Strategies**

The findings in this study revealed that isiZulu teachers use different strategies in teaching reading, and they did not illustrate an understanding of the efficiency of the strategies. According to Ntshangase (2023), isiZulu teachers find it difficult to organise significant and cohesive reading strategies. He further elaborates that the strategies they use are not structured to address specific reading challenges. There are a few effective reading strategies suggested for developing reading skills. Verbeek (2010), on the one hand, recommends the Mastery Learning Movement Approach, which focuses on breaking difficult processes of reading into their sub-components and having them taught separately. This strategy allows the teacher to use skill-based worksheets to assess comprehension, vocabulary skills and phonics. Ahmadi (2017), on the other hand, recommends the top-down reading strategy to promote a connection between reading and meaning, thereby emphasising that learners should first be introduced to the entire sentence and paragraph, and then learn about smaller units of language such as words. Cortez (2017) emphasises the importance of teachers' knowledge of reading pedagogical practice in developing learners' reading skills. Teaching strategies revealed by data generated in this study are discussed below, as each of these strategies supports language acquisition by engaging learners in interactive, scaffolded, and culturally relevant ways that align with best practices in isiZulu FAL instruction.

## **5.4 Discussions from Lesson Observation Findings**

### **5.4.1 Enhancing Learners' Comprehension and Development Through Guided Reading**

The findings in this research study revealed that all three participant teachers employed guided

reading instruction in their teaching of reading, which was embedded in the Vygotsky' theoretical construct Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Guided reading involves reading in small, teacher-led groups where learners read texts at their reading level with support and feedback. According to Fountas and Pinnell (2017), the data indicated that guided reading allowed the teachers to differentiate instruction according to each learner's reading level, thus offering effective scaffolding within learners' Zone of Proximal Development, as theorized by Vygotsky (Nicholas et al., 2021). It was particularly helpful in helping learners develop confidence in decoding and comprehending isiZulu FAL texts through structured practice.

#### **5.4.2 Collaborative Learning**

The findings in this study revealed that collaborative learning helped less gifted learners, as they worked with more gifted ones in various activities. According to Gamede (2019), social constructivist approaches are important in teaching and learning, as the role of peer learning and group collaboration enhances educational outcomes. Collaborative learning is thus a significant aspect of effective practices, particularly in the context of teaching isiZulu in private schools in South Africa. Teachers used collaborative learning activities where more gifted readers supported their peers to establish peer-assisted learning environments. Collaborative learning reflected Vygotsky's concept of the More Knowledgeable Other because learners gained benefits through social interaction with more proficient class members that helped enhance comprehension and develop language skills (Gillies, 2016). This agrees with evidence showing that peer learning facilitates language acquisition in terms of the exposure of learners to varied linguistic participations, thus promoting cooperative engagement (Johnson & Johnson, 2019).

#### **5.4.3 Teacher Beliefs and Practices**

The findings of this study revealed that the read-aloud strategy was a crucial component of teaching reading in isiZulu. According to Ntshangase (2023), the read-aloud strategy is a significant tool for teaching reading in isiZulu, as it involves the teacher reading aloud to the learners, which also helps reinforce confidence in pronunciations. Mzila (2016) emphasises the importance of an interactive read-aloud strategy as it involves the teacher reading aloud and engaging learners in discussions related to the text. This strategy allows learners to understand how to interact actively with a text and improve their language proficiency and comprehension. In addition, Read-aloud puts the learner in contact with the correct language structure as well as with the correct pronunciation in a non-aggressive way, and this should lead to the learner

being able to take the desired linguistic structure (Rasinski et al., 2017). It serves to there also to vocabulary development and knowledge, when the teacher may be forced to pause and explain certain words or expressions, thus offering expanded insights to the students on the isiZulu FAL texts.

#### **5.4.4 Multimodal Literacy**

According to Ngema (2023), multimodal literacy includes using several modes of communication, including visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic, to convey meaning and enhance teaching and learning. The findings of this study revealed that all participants acknowledged the importance and the advantages of using visuals to activate learners' prior knowledge and increase their understanding. According to Walsh (2010), multimodal literacy in teaching reading in isiZulu FAL includes utilising different sensory modes to engage learners and enhance a deeper understanding of the language. This also helps learners make connections between language and meaning (Serafini, 2014).

#### **5.5 Conclusion**

Chapter five discussed the research findings on teaching reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue speakers in three selected private schools in the Gauteng province. Sub-themes were used to provide a comprehensive understanding of teachers' experiences of teaching reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue speakers in private schools, and the factors that contribute to their experiences. The chapter also provided a comparison of responses offered by teachers during semi-structured interviews and what they practiced in their lesson observations. The findings indicate that teachers' experiences are influenced by various factors, such as negative attitude towards the learning of isiZulu FAL, resulting in lack of parental support, lack of teacher training in teaching reading in isiZulu FAL, enduring criticism, and feeling undervalued as isiZulu FAL teacher. Which ultimately affects the teaching and learning of isiZulu FAL in private schools. The subsequent chapter presents the summary, recommendations, and conclusion developed from the findings of this study on teaching reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue speakers in private schools. This chapter synthesizes all the main insights from data analysis back to the research questions and objectives set in earlier chapters.

## CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

### 6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided a discussion and interpretation of the study's findings on teaching reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue speakers in private schools. The chapter focused on linking findings to both theory and practice, and set the stage for summary, recommendations and conclusions, which is the culmination of the study, discussed in the current chapter. These recommendations are aimed at assisting isiZulu FAL teachers, education providers, curriculum developers and stakeholders in gaining insight into the experiences of isiZulu FAL teachers who teach reading to non-mother tongue learners in private schools.

The research title for this study was *“Teaching reading in isiZulu First Additional Language to non-mother tongue speakers: A case of three private schools in Gauteng”*.

The purpose of this study was to gain understanding of the experiences of teachers who teach reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue in private schools and to comprehend the factors that influence their experiences.

### 6.2 Research Questions

The aim of the study was to respond to the following question:

1. What are teachers' experiences of teaching reading in isiZulu First Additional Language to non-mother tongue speakers in private schools in Gauteng?
2. Why do teachers have particular experience of teaching reading in isiZulu First Additional Language to non-mother tongue speakers in private schools in Gauteng?

The first research question, *“What are teachers' experiences of teaching reading in isiZulu First Additional Language to non-mother tongue speakers in private schools in Gauteng?”*, had several important implications for educational practice, policy, and teacher support systems.

### **6.2.1 Curriculum Development and Instructional Strategies**

Understanding teachers' experiences also draws attention to a curricular approach that is sensitive to the specific linguistic and cultural demands of the classroom, namely, the multilingual class context. Teachers may require culturally sensitive, and adaptable, teaching materials and strategies to assist non-mother tongue isiZulu FAL learners with learning to read (Cummins, 2021). This may create pressure for curriculum designers to develop materials and reading resources which are of greater utility to a wider range of learners.

### **6.2.2 Policy Implications for Language Education in Private Schools**

Private schools generally, are better in terms of freedom of action in the methodology of teaching and language teaching, but teachers in these schools do not have structured support and guidance for teaching reading in isiZulu FAL. Findings may issue in policy recommendations to favour equitable access to resources and equipment for language teachers in the public and private sectors, providing continuous quality in isiZulu FAL education (Heugh, 2020).

### **6.2.3 Support Systems and Collaborative Learning**

The experiences of isolation among isiZulu FAL teachers, at times being the only one teaching isiZulu FAL in a phase or school, calls for more collaborative structures of peer networks and mentorship programs. Such support structures may develop aspects of teachers' pedagogies and create ways through which strategies and resources are shared that cater for the specific needs of isiZulu FAL learners (Desimone & Pak, 2017).

### **6.2.4 Teacher Training and Professional Development**

The findings may suggest a lack in the teachers' preparation and training undertaken toward teaching reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue speakers within a multilingual setting at schools, in particular private ones. This type of training on additional language instruction, culturally responsive teaching, and specific literacy strategies in isiZulu FAL reading could, therefore, be useful. According to research, targeted training on these areas allows teachers to realize more effective and confidence, promoting strategies in isiZulu FAL contexts (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

### **6.2.5 Further Research in Language Acquisition for Diverse Learners**

This study points out the language acquisition problems and challenges confronting non-mother tongue isiZulu FAL learners in private schools that require investigation with regard to multilingual education in South Africa (Makalela, 2022). Future studies might investigate which reading and writing and teaching methods would be most effective for language learning among multi language learners.

The research question, “*Why do teachers have particular experiences of teaching reading in isiZulu First Additional Language (FAL) to non-mother tongue speakers in private schools in Gauteng?*”, explores the underlying factors shaping teachers' experiences. This inquiry has several implications for teaching practice, professional development, policy, and further research.

### **6.2.6 Professional Support and Collaboration**

Teachers' experiences were, in many cases, dependent on access to support networks and spaces for collaboration. Isolation, often mentioned by isiZulu FAL teachers in private schools, indicates a need for systematic mechanisms, such as peer mentoring and regional networks, to mitigate isolation and support both resource sharing and strategy exchange (Desimone & Pak, 2017). Schools and policy makers might take into consider the establishment of professional communities for isiZulu FAL teachers, to support their continued learning, training and support.

### **6.2.7 Teacher Preparation and Language-Specific Training Needs**

The study shall be able to show whether pre-service training or the lack of it in teaching isiZulu FAL influences the experiences of teachers. Most of these teachers may have not been adequately prepared or trained with either multilingualism or first additional language pedagogical strategies, which are necessary for multilingual contexts such as private schools (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Based on such findings, it may encourage teacher training institutions to introduce modules that focus on first additional language instruction and even specific to isiZulu FAL to equip future teachers with the capacity to address the diverse learning needs of learners.

### **6.2.8 Cultural Relevance and Linguistic Diversity**

Teachers' experiences also depend on cultural differences between the language, isiZulu FAL, and the learners' mother tongues (home language). These insights can create a positive prospect for the development of culturally sensitive teaching methods that appreciate the linguistic diversity of the learners within the classroom (Cummins, 2021). Policy frameworks can be improved accordingly to promote training on aspects of cultural competence and multilingual pedagogies so as to adequately prepare teachers in dealing with unique needs present within multilingual classrooms.

### **6.2.9 Policy Revisions and Equity in Language Education**

This study has the potential to guide policy recommendations to address the disaggregated support provided to isiZulu FAL teachers in public and private schools. Changes to the policy may lead to a fair distribution of resources, training and support for isiZulu FAL teachers in different types of schools, thus improving language provision for non-mother tongue speakers in private school learning environments (Makalela, 2019).

## **6.3 Research Summary**

The study's findings revealed that isiZulu First Additional Language (FAL) teachers' experiences had a significant influence on how they taught reading to non-mother tongue learners in private schools. The data indicated that the teachers' experiences were influenced by various factors. The findings revealed that isiZulu FAL teachers experienced a challenge in teaching vowel sounds, as learners struggled to consolidate the concept due to various factors such as having English as their home language (HL). Other factors included a lack of adequate exposure to isiZulu reading material; inadequate reading practice due to insufficient lesson time; lack of parental support; and inadequate teacher training. The findings indicated that stakeholders, parents and learners all reflected a negative attitude towards the learning of isiZulu FAL. As a result, isiZulu FAL teachers felt undervalued, became demotivated as they had to endure constant criticism from various stakeholders.

To develop the rationale for this study, a qualitative, multiple case study located within an interpretivist paradigm was used to explore the experiences of isiZulu FAL teachers, who taught reading to non-mother tongue speakers. The objective was to gain insight on the research topic. Interviews and observations were employed to generate data from the participants.

Thematic analysis technique was used to identify and analyse themes and sub-themes that imaged from the collected data.

#### **6.4 Recommendations**

The findings showed that the schools' commitment to addressing diversity and inclusion held the basic principle that could effectively promote and support the teaching and learning of isiZulu. Therefore, the study recommends the following:

- School management should encourage parents to support their children in learning isiZulu FAL;
- The management of the schools should ensure that adequate material for teaching and learning isiZulu FAL for various grade levels are made available for both teachers and learners;
- School libraries should be equipped with African language resource to encourage learners to read to improve their understanding of the languages;
- The Department of Education should offer more training to teachers of African language;
- Teachers should be allowed to make recommendations for books relevant to the current generation of learners; and
- Most importantly, the study recommends that more research should be conducted on parents' attitude towards learning African languages in private schools.

#### **6.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has presented the summary and recommendations based on the findings of the study. The rationale for conducting this study was to acquire a holistic and comprehensive understanding of the Grade 6 isiZulu FAL teachers' experiences in teaching reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue speakers in private schools located in the Gauteng province. The findings underscore the importance of a supportive learning environment that values both teacher and learner backgrounds, advocating for greater investment in resources and policies that promote effective isiZulu FAL instruction across diverse educational contexts. The recommendations provided aim to address these gaps, offering actionable steps for teachers, school administrators, and policymakers to improve isiZulu FAL literacy instruction for non-mother tongue learners, ultimately contributing to South Africa's broader goals for multilingual education. I am confident that the findings and the recommendations that were presented in

this study will assist Grade 6 isiZulu FAL teachers to reflect on their instructional practice and influence an improvement in the teaching of reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue speakers. I am convinced that this study will initiate discussions and debates amongst curriculum developers and education providers. Ultimately, it is hoped that this research will contribute to advancing South Africa's multilingual education objectives and support meaningful, inclusive language learning experiences for all learners.

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## APPENDIX 1: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



14 September 2023

Namisile Kim Mhlongo  
(207502383) School of  
Education

### Edgewood Campus

Dear NK Mhlongo,

**Protocol reference number:** HSSREC/00005955/2023

**Project title:** Teaching reading in isiZulu First Additional Language: A case of three private schools in Gauteng

**Degree:** Masters

### Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 07 August 2023 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

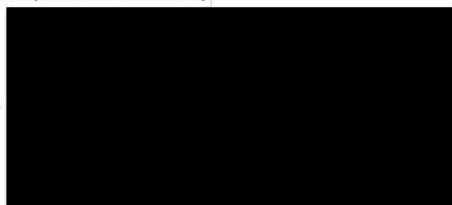
**Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have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

This approval is valid until 14 September 2024.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Health Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-

040). Yours sincerely,



/dd

### Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 8350/4557/3587 Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics>

Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

**INSPIRING GREATNESS**

## APPENDIX 2: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM



University of KwaZulu Natal  
School of Education, College of Humanities, Edgewood Campus  
Masters in Curriculum Studies Research Project  
**Research:** Ms Namisile Mhlongo ( [REDACTED] / [REDACTED] )  
**Supervisor:** Samukelisiwe Khumalo (PhD) ([KhumaloS13@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:KhumaloS13@ukzn.ac.za))

### Teacher Consent Form

I..... (Full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project: titled "Teaching reading in isiZulu First Additional Language: A case of three private schools in Gauteng" I consent to participating in the research project.

I have been given an opportunity to ask questions about the study and I have had answers to my satisfaction.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary.

I am fully aware that I will not receive any financial benefits from being part of this research study.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study, I understand that I may contact the researcher or the supervisor using the contact details provided above.

I understand that if I have any questions about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about any aspect of the study or the researcher, I may contact the research office.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM



University of KwaZulu Natal  
School of Education, College of Humanities, Edgewood Campus  
Masters in Curriculum Studies Research Project  
**Research:** Ms Namisile Mhlongo ( [REDACTED] / [REDACTED] )  
**Supervisor:** Samukelisiwe Khumalo (PhD) ([KhumaloS13@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:KhumaloS13@ukzn.ac.za))

### Parent/Guardian Consent Form

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (Full names of parent/guardian), hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project titled: "Teaching reading in isiZulu First Additional Language: A case of three private schools in Gauteng."

I consent to my child, \_\_\_\_\_ (Full names of child), being observed as part of this research project.

I have been given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and I have received answers to my satisfaction.

I understand that participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw my consent for my child's participation in the study at any time without any negative consequences.

I understand that my child's participation in this study is for research purposes only and that no financial benefits will be provided for participation.

I also understand that all information related to my child's participation will remain confidential, and no identifying details will be shared in any reports or publications arising from the study.

If I have any further questions, concerns, or queries related to the study, I may contact the researcher, the supervisor or the research office using the contact details provided above.

Signature of Parent/Guardian:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM



University of KwaZulu Natal  
School of Education, College of Humanities, Edgewood Campus  
Masters in Curriculum Studies Research Project  
**Research:** Ms Namisile Mhlongo ( [REDACTED] / [REDACTED] )  
**Supervisor:** Samukelisiwe Khumalo (PhD) ([KhumaloS13@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:KhumaloS13@ukzn.ac.za))

### Learner Consent Form

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (Full names of learner), hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project titled: **“Teaching reading in isiZulu First Additional Language: A case of three private schools in Gauteng.”**

I consent to being observed as part of this research project.

I have been given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and I have received answers to my satisfaction.

I understand that I can choose to stop participating in this study at any time without any negative consequences.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary.

I am fully aware that I will not receive any financial benefits from being part of this research study.

If I have any further questions, concerns, or queries related to the study, I understand that I together with my parents may contact the researcher, the supervisor or the research office using the contact details provided above.

### Signature of Learner:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## APPENDIX 3: RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS



### RESEARCH INSTRUMENT SCHEDULE

#### Section A

##### Interview Guide

Interviews with the study participants were held twice with each participant to accommodate any follow-up questions that emerged during the data analysis phase thereby enhancing the richness of the generated data. The initial interview sessions lasted 90 minutes while the subsequent sessions were 80 minutes long.

##### Interview Questions

1. What are the challenges you have encountered in teaching reading in isiZulu FAL to non-mother tongue speakers?
2. Do you give reading homework to your learners
3. Do you think learners are doing sufficient reading in isiZulu FAL lessons?
4. Does your school have enough isiZulu FAL reading materials for all grades?
5. How do you address the needs of diverse learners with different language backgrounds in your teaching?
6. Do you use a differentiation strategy in your lesson?
7. Do you receive support from your school?
8. What are the challenges you face as an isiZulu FAL teacher?
9. Do you find parents to be supportive of learning about isiZulu FAL?
10. Does your school provide isiZulu FAL reading material to you and your learners?
11. Have you received any professional training in teaching reading?
12. Do you do any team teaching or collaboration in your teaching?
13. What strategies do you use to teach reading in isiZulu FAL?
14. Do you think your school is aware of cultural and language diversity?
15. What are the attitudes of the entire school community towards the language isiZulu FAL?

## Section B

The researcher had an opportunity to witness how the three teachers present their reading lessons to non-mother tongue speakers, and how learners receive and respond to the lessons. Thus, learning the experience of teaching reading to non-mother tongue speakers and the factors affecting those experiences.

### Lesson Observation Schedule

**Lesson Information**                      Grade level and class being observed: Grade 6 IsiZulu FAL

Duration of the lesson: 60 minutes

#### **Classroom Environment**

Note the physical setup of the classroom, including seating arrangements, displays, and resources related to reading instruction. Observe the overall classroom atmosphere and the level of engagement among students.

#### **Lesson Introduction**

Observe how the teacher introduces the lesson and captures learners' attention. Note any techniques or strategies used to create interest and establish the purpose of the lesson.

#### **Lesson Objectives**

Identify the specific objectives of the lesson related to reading in isiZulu First Additional Language. Note any additional objectives, if applicable (e.g., language skills integration, comprehension strategies).

#### **Instructional Strategies**

Note the instructional strategies employed by the teacher to teach reading in isiZulu FAL. Observe the use of visual aids, manipulatives, technology, or other resources to support reading instruction. Pay attention to any differentiation strategies used to address the diverse needs of learners.

#### **Reading Activities**

Observe the types of reading activities incorporated into the lesson (e.g., shared reading, guided reading, independent reading). Note the use of appropriate reading materials, such as books, texts, or worksheets.

Pay attention to the level of learner engagement and participation during the reading activities.

#### **Vocabulary and Comprehension Instruction**

Observe how the teacher addresses vocabulary development and comprehension skills during the lesson. Note the strategies used to introduce and reinforce vocabulary.

Pay attention to how the teacher supports learners' comprehension through questioning, discussions, or other techniques.

#### **Assessment and Feedback**

Note any formative assessment strategies used by the teacher to gauge learners' reading progress during the lesson. Observe how the teacher provides feedback and support to individual students during reading activities. Pay attention to any strategies used to monitor and track students' reading performance.

**Materials and Resource**

List the reading materials and resources used in the lesson (e.g., textbooks, storybooks, worksheets). Note any multimedia or technological resources utilised, if applicable.

**Integration of Literacy Skills**

Identify any integration of other literacy skills (writing, speaking, listening) during the reading lesson. Note how the teacher facilitates connections between reading and other language skills.

**IsiZulu FAL Workbooks**

Look at the types of activities the learners do, specifically reading activities and homework.

**Challenges and difficulties**

Notice any difficulties and challenges that both the teacher and learners' encounter.

**Reflection and Post-Observation Interview**

Conduct a post-observation interview with the teacher to discuss their reflections on the lesson.

Ask about their thoughts on the effectiveness of the instructional strategies and activities used.

Inquire about any challenges or areas for improvement identified during the observation.

**Conclusion**

Summarise your observations and key takeaways from the lesson. Thank the teacher for allowing you to observe their class and gather valuable data for the research. Offer the opportunity for the teacher to ask any questions or provide additional insights.

## APPENDIX 4: LANGUAGE EDITORS REPORT



### EDITING CERTIFICATE

Dr Mabunda MT

PhD (English)

Language practitioner: editing and proofreading

---

Cell: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

This is to certify that the following document has been language edited through track-changes. The Editor also hereby acknowledges and stresses that the author of the original document reserves the right to accept and/or reject all track-changes, suggestions and language recommendations made on the original document.

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Topic:

*Teaching reading in isiZulu First Additional Language to non- mother tongue speakers: A case of three private schools in Gauteng*

Author: Namisile Mhlongo

Date of this statement: 17 July 2024

Signed:

DocuSigned by: [REDACTED]

## APPENDIX 5: TURNITIN REPORT

### ORIGINALITY REPORT

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