

Geographies of Second Language

Learners In and Out of School:

A Narrative Inquiry

By

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DECLARATION

I, Thabisile Nelisiwe Mngayi (Student No: 213571347) declare that:

- i. The research report in this dissertation, except where otherwise stated, is my original work.
- ii. This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
- iii. This dissertation does not contain any other person's data, pictures, graphs or information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers. Where other sources have been quoted, then:
 - a) Their words have been rewritten but the general information attributed to them has been referenced.
 - b) Where their exact words have been used, their writing has been replaced inside quotation marks, and referenced.
- iv. The work described in this dissertation was carried out at the School of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal, from Jan 2014 to December 2014,
- v. under the supervision of Dr Antoinette D'amant (research supervisor) and
- vi. The Protocol Reference Number: HSS/0250/013 was granted prior to undertaking the fieldwork.

Signed by me:

As the candidate's supervisor, I, Dr Antoinette D'amant, agree to the submission of this dissertation.

Signed:

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work:

Firstly, to my creator who knew me and my capabilities even before I came to this earth.

'Lord, you are my Rock and source of strength'.

And secondly, to the two most important people in my life who supported me throughout this journey; my husband, Vusumuzi and my son, Sambulo. I do not have enough words to express my sincere appreciation for your perseverance in continuing without me during the holidays, weekends and nights I spent completing my research.

'Till death us do part'.

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ABSTRACT

The main focus and motivation for this study was to investigate the geographies of second language learners using a sample of six learners from the township of Umlazi, south of Durban which is a city in Kwazulu Natal.

Second language learners are believed to experience diverse challenges in the spaces they occupy in and out of school. Most research studies have focused more on acquiring findings from adults, (e.g School Management Teams, teachers, parents and other stakeholders), in order to establish their hypothetical opinions on the experiences of second language learners (Christensen, P. and James, A. , 2000). In this research endeavour my foremost concern to allow the authentic voices of these learners (who represent a large population of learners who are voiceless) to be foregrounded.

What emerges strongly from the narratives is the plight of second language learners in schools with poor resources who experience very little tangible and effective support for learning in and through their second language. In addition to this is the huge obstacle they face with intolerance in their communities. Their desire not only to study their second language but to practice communicating in it, evokes negative attitudes and prejudices from their classmates and community groups. Whilst clearly at a disadvantage and often disheartened by the challenges they face, it is evident that the majority of my participants are fixed on the end result and are determined to become proficient in English so as to be able to pursue some form of tertiary education and ultimately find employment.

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FOCUS AND PURPOSE OF STUDY

1.1. Introduction

This study seeks to investigate the experiences and challenges of second language learners with the intention of understanding how these are navigated both in and out of school. The study will be undertaken at a school in the township area of Umlazi, which is situated south of Durban, Kwazulu – Natal, South Africa.

In order for the researcher to understand the geographies of second language learners, this study seeks to answer three research questions:

1. What are the experiences of second language learners?
2. What are the geographies of these second language learners in and out of school?
3. How do the learners navigate these experiences?

1.2. Motivation and rationale for the study

‘Language plays an important and profound role in our lives’ (Wright, 2014).

Once acquired, English as a second language, according to Wright (2014), has the potential to ease interactions among individuals. English second language refers to the language that non-native speakers of the language (such as Zulu speakers) use as a study medium. English as a second language indicates that the English language is a foreign language and not a native or first language. (Tchatchouang, (2014a). As an English second language learner and speaker myself, I was personally interested in investigating the experiences of English second language learners and as I have first-hand experience of the challenges and obstacles it can present. I believe that conducting research into this issue was a worthwhile endeavour. I regularly experienced or observed many of the challenges facing these learners and had always been curious to know their personal stories. A narrative inquiry facilitated the generation of stories from participants which brought a deeper understanding of their experiences of being second language learners, and shed light on the issues and challenges they face on a daily basis.

The basis of language plays an important role in the lives of second language learners and provides a platform for academic success. McLaughlin (1992) regards English as a worldwide language of

communication, a vehicle to pass information, and a means to position individuals favourably in global societies. Its' importance is evident across spheres of economy and everyday life through media use, thus advocating that everyone be fully equipped to understand and converse in the English language. Marcos (1998) states that since 1994 English has played a dominant role in South African government thus reducing the status of other languages. Therefore, it has become vitally important that learners from all backgrounds learn the English language in order to be competitive enough to face any future challenges they may encounter as adults trying to find their places in the world.

The Department of Education (2011) explains English as a necessary vehicle for communication, and as a common language which connects different nations and racial groups. Given the power of English to connect people from diverse backgrounds and enable them to understand one another effectively both in South Africa and in most countries abroad, it follows that rather than as an elective subject, English should be offered as a compulsory subject in all South African schools.

As a second language teacher I was motivated to conduct this study since I have first-hand experience of the challenges that this poses to many of my learners. Cross & Carpentier (2009) believe the fact that it is of utmost importance for learners from black communities to master English as it is a medium of instruction in University and their success is based on English mastery skills. Their argument is further supported by Cui (2011) that English second language learners feel self-conscious when having to speak English because of the fear that they might make mistakes thus resulting into failure. They seem wary of any potentially inappropriate use of English and allow this fear of failure to hinder their progress in the second language. Despite learners' exposure to a variety of learning materials (with libraries in townships and available newspapers and books), there seem to be large gaps in their English second language skills, resulting in a lack of confidence which limits their ability to perform to their maximum ability and freely express their point of view. While most learners are capable, their English language proficiency is limited in relation to writing, speaking, reading, as well as in listening, which results in a failure to keep up with the information being taught. Given that almost all subjects are taught in the second language, when they finish their secondary school education again they enter tertiary level and language becomes a barrier for success in their studies (Cross and Capentier, 2009). This places them at a huge disadvantage and poses very real barriers to their learning, participation and development.

Drawing from my literature survey of existing related studies, it appears that most research studies focus on finding out what can help English second language learners actually learn the language. These have not directly involved the learners themselves, nor have they approached the issue from the

point of view of the second language learners. There are many untold stories around this topic and I was motivated to conduct research which would provide a platform for these learners to share their personal experiences of the challenges of learning in a second language.

1.3. Conceptual framing of the study

A conceptual framework provides an outline and structure as a means of coming to a better understanding of a phenomenon that one has a desire to investigate and understand. In this case, the phenomenon on which my study focuses is the geographies of second language both in and out of school.

My intention through this study was to glean information from children or learners themselves as they spoke of the challenges they faced from their own experience of being second language learners. My commitment was to capture the authentic experiences of a sample of second language learners and to provide them with the opportunity, through this research process, to have their voices foregrounded. I considered it of the utmost importance to capture the authentic voices and experiences of the participants as they are the ones who are experiencing the challenges of a second language learner first hand.

Olsson (2009) defines a child as someone under the age of 18, an individual who is still developing and maturing, and not yet an adult. Many studies have overlooked the importance of affording children a voice in research. Perhaps it is because children, limited to certain stages of development and in a continuous process of growth and maturing, may not be seen as having a voice worth listening to, and the stories they tell not recognised as potential seed beds for learning much that is worthwhile. Hence, researchers may all too often have resorted to conducting research on children and learners, rather than with them. I am of the strong opinion that children and learners are individuals who should be seen as having important things to say about their own lives, situations and experiences. It is for this reason that I wished to foreground children's and learners' voices in my study. I therefore designed this research around the concept that children and learners are individuals in their own right; that they deserve to have an authentic voice in my research; and, that the stories they tell about their lives, situations and experiences are worthy of being listened to and studied.

According to Olsson (2009), constructing a community of inquirers requires that children be listened to and made partners in negotiating and making decisions that affect them and their lives. Children are an important part of the community and are thinkers in their own right with valuable input and opinions in

all matters that include and impact on them. This conceptual framework stands in direct contrast to some traditional perceptions that children are empty vessels and the assumptions that children know very little of value or worth. I therefore intend my research to be a study which seeks to research with children rather than researching on or about children.

1.3.1. New childhood studies

New childhood studies have emerged from the notion that children should be considered as people in their own right who have a voice and need to be given a place in society to be viewed as independent thinkers. Gaskell (2012) suggests that children are individuals with emotional knowledge and experience. This means that children must be given an opportunity to process information on their own and navigate their way towards informed decisions which sometimes may help adults.

Valentine and Holloway (2000) concur that children have an important role to play in society and must be appreciated as active agents in the formation of their social lives, the lives of people around them and in the life of the whole society of which they are a part. Research which is framed by the foundational notions of New Childhood Studies are able to give children an opportunity to share their experiences as they view them, authentically narrate the stories of their lives in relation to specific phenomena, and express their genuine feelings in relation to these.

Gaskell (2012) states that research which is underpinned by New Childhood Studies thinking, has a desire to consider the voices of children since they have been traditionally voiceless, their voices having been ignored by both academics and policy-makers for such a long time, with the focus being on controlling the voices of the children in research studies.

1.3.2. Children's geographies

The conceptual framework of children's geographies is in alignment with the belief that children should be given an opportunity to construct and determine how to live their lives and contribute to the understanding of their own lives and experiences, the lives of those close to them and also to the communities they live in. Mayall (2002) and James & Prout (1997) admit that childhood studies have been able to emphasize the concept of children as capable social actors who could oppose the habitual views of children as passive members of the society. The concept of children's geographies highlights

the spaces and places that children are positioned in in their lives and circumstances, and how children are positioned in the society they form a part of (Kay, Tisdall & Punch, 2012).

The concepts embedded in New Childhood Studies and Children's Geographies are aimed at understanding children's emotional feelings and involving them so that they may have a place in the society. This is done so that children are not simply seen as objects but as active agents who are capable of negotiating and navigating their situations and circumstances, and who can also bring change (Horton & Kraftl, 2005). This is done with the overall aim of understanding their experiences and challenges from their point of view, their subjective understanding and sense making, and ultimately towards improving children's lives.

1.3.3. My epistemological position

Therefore within the New Childhood Studies conceptual framework, new perceptions and knowledge about the valuable positions of children affords learners in my study a platform to tell their stories and express their ideas and feelings. As a researcher I am committed to listening to my participants, thus putting aside any traditional beliefs that children are merely objects; that as adults we should always presume that we are right and children are wrong; and, that as an adult researcher, I should think for them and make sense of their worlds for them. In stark contrast to this traditional framework, I view my participants as active members of the society they live in, with their own views and experiences, and therefore should be given the opportunity to be free to express these. I am of the opinion that we adults can learn a lot from our children and that we researchers can learn a lot from our participants.

There are a lot of unresolved issues around this topic from past research studies. I believe there is a great need for research which affords learners opportunities to tell their stories about issues that hinder their progress and the challenges they encounter (NEA, 2008). Second language learners often face multiple challenges since they come from diverse backgrounds and I believe a narrative inquiry will offer a research platform for these to come to fore and the voices of the learners themselves to be heard. It will also allow my research to work with participants instead of conducting research on them.

1.4 The objectives of my study

Given the conceptual framework of my study and my epistemological position, the objectives of my study are:

- to give English second language learners a voice on this issue and hear the stories they tell about their experiences of being second language learners;
- to investigate the dynamics which affect second language learners' learning and participating in English;
- and to investigate how they navigate and make sense of their experiences.

1.5 Structure of the dissertation

In this chapter I have set out the focus and the intended purpose of this research endeavour, the motivation and rationale behind the research, the conceptual framing of the research, and my epistemological position. This research is set apart from traditional research projects which have silenced the voices of the subjects of research and limited their independence and agency. My research aims to conduct the investigation *with* participants, thus allowing them to express freely and relate authentically their heartfelt experiences and challenges.

Chapter two reviews literature and publications that are related to my research topic and which shed light on the general field of investigation and the phenomenon of second language learning.

Chapter three outlines the methodological choices I have made for the purposes of this research endeavour. The choices to locate the research within a qualitative paradigm and to employ narrative inquiry as the central means of generating authentic data, all relate to the conceptual framing of the research and my epistemological position.

Chapter four presents and analyses the data generated against the objectives and key research questions of the research endeavour.

Chapter five presents an overview of the research findings, some concluding insights and thoughts, and suggests possible recommendations based on these findings.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1. A literature review

A literature review is a logical and also clear method for identifying, evaluating, and blending the already established literature or the research already dealt with and recorded by scholars and practitioners (Fink, 2010). Fink further states that a review bases its conclusions on the original work of scholars and researchers by focusing on high-quality original research rather than interpretations of the findings.

This chapter aims to look at the work of other researchers who have dealt with a similar topic. It consists of the following sections:

- Poor Performance of Second Language Learners
- What is Needed to Develop a Good Command of the Second Language,
- Not all Official Languages are given Equal Importance
- Second Language Learners are Disadvantaged
- Widespread Illiteracy
- Teacher's Inefficiencies
- Unconducive Learning Environments at School and at Home
- Learners have Different Learning Styles... and
- Authentic Voices of the Learners Themselves.

2.2. Poor Performance of Second Language Learners

Basing my concern from the literature I have reviewed research studies have looked at how learners acquire a second language and how the second language is taught but have not investigated learner's experiences when learning the second language. Learners whose home language is IsiZulu normally perform poorly compared to English speakers (Bertram, 2006). Rather than simply concluding that these learners are not on a par academically with English speaking learners, poor performance needs

to be investigated towards developing an understanding of the obstacles to learning with which these learners are challenged. Second language learners clearly experience academic challenges that first language speakers do not encounter. It is my intention through this research to give voice to a sample of second language learners towards developing an understanding of the specific challenges they face.

According to D'amant (1998, p. 20), "Limited English Proficiency learners are at an immediate disadvantage. Limited control over the target language causes the L.E.P. learner to have serious distortions in understanding, thus seriously hampering their ability to learn." To accomplish demanding tasks in their second language requires learners to master specific and often complex language skills. D'amant (1998) explains that two levels of proficiency have been identified: basic interpersonal skills (BICS) which take approximately two years to acquire; and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) which takes five to seven years to achieve. These skills, and this level of language proficiency, especially come into play when learners have to make sense of written texts. With the importance placed on English as the medium of instruction in schools, learners with limited English proficiency will undoubtedly experience challenges understanding academic content (D'amant, 1998).

2.3. What is needed to develop a command of the Second Language

According to Smith (2008), a child needs six to eight years of good substance teaching. This means that a child needs to have learnt English from grade R in order to succeed in higher grades and in order to be able to incorporate that basic knowledge of second language proficiency into his or her learning in all subjects taught in the second language. Caps document English First Additional Language curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement by the Department of Basic Education (2011) concurs that by the time learners enter the senior phase, they should be proficient in the second language. The suggestions of Smith and DoE should afford second language learners ample opportunity to develop a good command of the second language by the time they complete matric.

The national government and also provinces from which learners live in expect learners to excel and eventually matriculate well but these expectations pose a great challenge for second language learners as the preparation in early stages is very limited. DoE (2011) states that second language is generally shared by people to understand the world they live in. This gives rise to questioning how far policy makers are prepared to support second language learners towards achieving their maximum best and towards becoming competent enough to use second language as a tool to interact with the broader world.

2.4. Not All Official Languages are given Equal Importance

Despite the constitutional policy that all official languages be given equal weight and used equally in the education of a child (as stated in the South African language policy set out in Section 6 of the Constitution of South Africa), this is not being realised. Not all languages are given equal importance. Neither are there equal opportunities for teaching and learning. A learner's mother tongue plays a vital role in the child's development and therefore needs to be given high status in the curriculum. However, English supersedes all official languages and is therefore regarded as a priority by learners who are keen to succeed in a broader geographical setting.

Heugh (2012) believes that bilingual and multilingual education in South Africa is merely rhetoric, as in reality, this does not materialise. In reality, English is given the most important role regardless of the language policy stating that all languages are given equal opportunities. The Bill of Rights affords everyone in our multilingual democratic country the opportunity to be taught in his or her language of choice. Heugh (2012) is of the opinion that this policy affords English a better position to function as a medium of instruction. It is evident that English is the dominant medium of teaching and learning in higher education institutions as well as the accepted language currency in the world of employment.

2.5. Second Language Learners are Disadvantaged

It follows then that learners whose first language is not English are somewhat disadvantaged. It is often the case that in primary and secondary school they are taught by teachers who themselves are second language learners and, consequently, may not deliver their lessons fluently and competently in the second language. This presents them with many inconsistencies and distorts their foundational acquisition of the second language. These learners are then further disadvantaged with regard to understanding what is being taught in higher education institutions and encounter continued challenges that prevent them from performing to the best of their abilities.

Heugh (2012) engaged in a study which observed learners in the Western Cape Province. When asked how they delivered their lessons, teachers generally said they used the second language of the learners. When probed further they revealed that they switched codes sometimes when teaching. On observation of these teachers teaching, it was found that they used the learners' mother tongue to deliver their lessons while the exercise books were written in English.

This poses an enormous challenge to second language learners as it does not provide opportunities to develop the kind of language competence necessary at university or in other English-speaking arenas. The argument may arise then, that as learners are expected to be proficient in the second language, they need good English teachers who are themselves able to enrich and prepare learners with the skills needed to succeed in an environment where English is the preferred language of instruction.

2.6. Widespread Illiteracy

In addition to the abovementioned challenges, Bertram (2006) states that most learners are from environments where illiteracy is widespread. If learners are not supported towards literacy, they will more often than not, have no interest in reading. Local communities generally do not encourage learners to immerse themselves in the second language. Typically, English books and newspapers will not be found at home to read and, few have seen their own parents reading any piece of written material. A scarcity of reading material as well as the lack of support from parents and the community pose an enormous threat to the culture of reading and literacy.

Monyai (2010) believes that in the spaces that learners occupy there are few opportunities to improve their command of spoken English. Many members of the community express negative comments about those who attempt to speak the second language within the community, with the result that learners prefer to not speak English outside the classroom. Even in the classroom, mistakes and mispronunciations often lead to laughter and ridicule which results in a lack confidence and a reluctance to speak up.

2.7. Teachers' Inefficiencies

Another challenge lies in the instances where the teacher is either not qualified to teach English or is simply not proficient enough. Asgari & Mustapha (2011) contend that the biggest challenge is that even teachers who teach the second language are also learners of the language themselves. A teacher's mispronunciation of a word or lack of understanding of a phrase corrupts the foundations of language learning and therefore compromises the learner. In such contexts, learners' optimal grasp of English as a second language is doomed to failure.

It stands to reason that if the teacher lacks a sound command of language, the learner will have a limited vocabulary and will be at a disadvantage in the working world when they finish school.

Ntshangase (2011) supports this statement by stating that teachers' knowledge of the second language and its functions impacts greatly on effective use of the language.

2.8. Unfavourable Learning Environments at School

Asgari & Mustapha (2011) further states that "environments which are not conducive to learning also are the cause of language inefficiency". It poses a challenge for learners to have function in an environment which is not conducive to learning. One such challenge is where English is only spoken in the English subject class and all other subjects are taught using the home language. It is unrealistic for teachers to expect learners to become proficient in English despite the fact that they themselves are not providing a platform to develop fluency in the second language.

If the hope is that learners whose home language is not English will become proficient in their second language, they will need a great deal of support. A key issue is that of inadequate learning material in schools, especially those in black areas. Asgari & Mustapha (2011) reports that even books provided are limited and never enough for each learner to have a copy to take home and learn properly. Much needs to be done to help learners achieve the desired expectations and goals. Lessons and materials supportive of the acquisition of a second language and related to their daily lives should be designed. This will help second language learners not view the second language as completely alien (Tchatchouang, 2012b). Of the activities which should be built in to the design of lessons, orals would help demonstrate the practical goal of acquisition.

To elaborate on the issue of inadequate resources, Wright (2014) writes that when dealing with a proper education system there are three issues to be considered, namely: teachers who are well trained and educated to deal with diverse classroom challenges; textbooks which meets the required standards to be produced at the end of the learning phase; and lastly, availability of school facilities which will promote proper and conducive learning. Without these three basic requirements the education of second language learners cannot be considered a quality education, and will not produce competent learners who are able to unlock every educational door.

2.9. Unfavourable learning environments at home

Most second language learners face challenges outside of the school environment. The reality is that there is generally no one able to help them with their homework. This is often because parents are

illiterate themselves. However, it is common for parents to blame the child for weakness, incompetence and failure, when in reality the child has no support and is left alone struggling to make sense of their homework.

Colbert (2008) states that limited language proficiency in learners who come from families that are identified as having low-income or poverty-stricken households, and whose parents have less formal education, hinders their progress in the second language. Learners often take the sole blame for poor performance regardless of the lack of support given them from a range of areas.

Monyai (2010) brings up the issue of less exposure of learners to English. He notes that learners who attempt to speak in English are discouraged by others in their communities, with labels such as “coconut” (meaning black but pretending to be white).

2.10. Learners have Different Learning Styles

Second language learners, who are learning English as the target language, face challenges even in a classroom of their peers who may discourage each other by using negative comments. McLaughlin (1992) believes that learners have different styles of learning which prepares them to be successful in second language learning. Learners who are extroverts learn the second language quickly because they are not afraid to speak and make mistakes. They simply use the second language casually without fear, whereas more introvert learners learn by watching and listening to others talk. Such learners are more afraid of making mistakes.

2.11. Authentic Voices of the Learners Themselves

These are some of the challenges facing second language learners, extracted from studies on the phenomenon of second language acquisition and drawing from my own experiences with second language learners. Pereira & Gentry (2013) comment that learners do not need to be represented by researchers who often bring to their research their own assumptions of how second language learners feel and experience learning. Instead, they should be allowed the opportunity to speak for themselves and represent how they feel and experience learning through their second language. Capturing the authentic voices of the learners was my intention throughout this research. I wanted to afford learners the opportunity to talk about their own experiences and challenges, both in and out of school.

2.12. Conclusion

It is an issue of some concern that second language learners are expected to perform well in the face of the many factors which hinder their progress. These learners so often become victims of their circumstances. The spaces which they occupy, both in and out of school, often present them with many difficulties and even hindrances to reaching their full potential. They clearly need maximum, relevant support from those acting as their mentors, such as their teachers, their parents, siblings and other community members.

The next chapter will outline the methods used to generate data for this study, and is committed to accessing and foregrounding the actual authentic voices and stories of the learners themselves with regard to how they experience being second language learners and how they navigate this phenomenon in their individual lives.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Locating the study within a qualitative research paradigm

This study is a qualitative research study which will make use of the narrative inquiry. The rationale for locating my study within a qualitative research methodology links to what McMillan and Schumacher (2006) affirm with regard to qualitative research - that it is concerned more with trying to reach a better understanding of the world that participants inhabit. Furthermore McMillan and Schumacher (2006) suggest that qualitative research seeks to find the truth using numerous truths which revolve around individuals undergoing the same situation. This notion highlights the fact that diverse individuals might very well experience their circumstances, make sense of their worlds, and even negotiate these differently. A qualitative research paradigm aligns to the notion of individualisation which allows for diversity among participants. Such diversity does not render the data generated from qualitative research endeavours untrustworthy, but instead, speaks to the notion that all experiences and processes of negotiating and making sense of these experiences, despite being diverse, are all a truthful and trustworthy reflection of the narratives of each individual participant. Hence the aim of my research which is to generate narrative information from my participants while respecting the possibility that the challenges they face from their individual experiences of being a second language learner may be diverse. The possibility of diverse narratives renders the study more valid and trustworthy in that it will capture the true experiences as told by the individual participants who are the ones undergoing their own individual challenges and experiences. This also enables me as the researcher to generate rich data which originates from the authentic experiences of individual participants.

This study intends to shed light on the world of second language learners by allowing these learners the opportunity to express their emotions, thoughts and feelings on how they see and interpret their world. D'amant (2010) refers to this process as that which investigates the existing experiences of participants, and the researcher investigates the participants' experiences from their own individual perspectives.

Qualitative research will also allow flexibility which will allow me as the researcher to employ a variety of data generation strategies, and will enable me to adapt and adjust these methods to each individual situation during the research process (D'amant, 2010).

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), qualitative research offers an in-depth, detailed understanding of the meanings individuals attach to their experience of various phenomena in their lives. Selecting to work within a qualitative research paradigm is therefore best suited to my particular research interest and my research questions, which are:

1. What are the experiences of second language learners?
2. What are the geographies of second language learners in and out of school?
3. How do they navigate these experiences?

3.2. Narratives as a Strategy of Inquiry

Narrative inquiry seeks to gain insight into people's lives and experiences of various phenomena through the telling of their stories and how they experience and make sense of their world. Patton (2002) asserts that narrative inquiry is a method which enables the researcher to capture the essence of a person's life story, drawing from their own experiences, which in turn makes it easier for the researcher listening to those stories, to collect data. Such a strategy of inquiry is perfectly aligned to my intentions and the purpose of this study, which is to find out from the participants themselves their experiences of second language learning in formal and informal settings (in and out of school).

In keeping with the New Childhood Studies conceptual framework, which suggests that it is worthwhile to find out specific experiences from the actual individuals who experience the phenomenon being researched (Kramp, 2003), a narrative inquiry allows the researcher to delve into the lives of the participants in order to hear what really concerns or interests them. Gathering information from a primary source is often information which is raw and may consist of feelings and emotions. The researcher is thus able to obtain first hand quality data.

A narrative strategy of inquiry will enable me as the researcher to foreground my participants' authentic voices as they relate their stories of the challenges they face as second language learners and how they make sense of these and negotiate them. Participants will be allowed to narrate their stories and experiences freely and show feelings and emotions which might have been hidden before (Bell, 2002). Being afforded the opportunity to speak freely about their everyday experiences of being second language learners and the challenges they face regarding this phenomenon, participants may very well be the voice of perhaps many that may not have the opportunity to share their experiences and challenges or have their voices heard.

3.3. Sampling and Participants

It is both unreasonable and nigh impossible to conduct research on *all* second language learners in South Africa or even in KwaZulu-Natal, hence the need for researchers to select a sample of participants with whom the researcher will work to generate the intended data. My sample comprised six learners who are learning in their second language, namely: English. Only a small group of learners from the larger population group of second language learners was needed for the intended study. (Mac Millan & Schumacher 2006). When designing and conducting a research study researchers need to give thought to how they are going to select their participants (Fink, 2010).

The school where I currently teach has a population of 973 learners and is, partly due to convenience and accessibility, the place from where I chose to select my participants. I also purposefully planned to select from my Grade 11 learners who I felt would be ideal contributors to this study, as they are mature enough to provide the investigation with reliable information regarding second language learning, and have fewer commitments than the busy Grade 12 learners. This meant that I was not put in the position where I was placing undue pressure on any learner.

This process of selecting my own Grade 11 students falls under the convenience sampling method. According to Given and Saumure (2008), convenience sampling is used when participants are selected because of their availability, therefore enabling a researcher relatively easy access to them. Farrokhi and Hamidabad (2012) further maintain that convenience sampling is commonly used in second language studies.

At the school where I teach, the entire Grade 11 level includes 187 learners, divided into five classes A to E. My sample comprised of six learners selected from the A, B, and C classes, three of who were male and three female. A purposive sampling method was used to select these six participants from the overall grade 11 learners. Patton (2002) asserts that purposive sampling means that researchers choose information-rich participants which are chosen non-randomly for the purposes of the study. Information rich cases allow the researcher to learn a considerable amount about issues of utmost importance to the purpose of the study being conducted.

The criteria I used in selecting participants included:

- Learners had to be second language learners, therefore familiar with the experiences and challenges of second language learning and able to understand first-hand the feelings and encounters of being a second language learner.

- Learners had to be in Grade 11. At this point in learner's school life, they are preparing for the final year of secondary school and it is assumed that by this stage they should have acquired adequate skill in the use of their second language. I specifically did not select my sample of participants from Grade 12 due to this being the final year of their secondary school education with the result that they are extremely busy and under pressure with extensive school work. Grade 11 is also the grade that I teach, thus making it easier to communicate arrangements with them regarding times to meet and so on. In addition Grade 11 learners are relatively mature and more able to identify and articulate the issues which present challenges to second language learners.

3.4. The Context

For a researcher to understand human actions she or he first needs to understand the contexts of participants in which they foreground their thoughts, feelings and actions (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006).

This study was conducted at a secondary school in an area of Umlazi which is situated in the south of Durban. Umlazi was established as a black township in 1967 and is one of the largest townships after Soweto with 26 sections labelled from A – Z and extended to AA – CC; Umlazi is about 17 kilometres from the Central Business District and had been demarcated to host black labourers (SAHO, 2013). This Township residents and learners' first language is isiZulu. Selecting learners from a school in Umlazi affords me the opportunity to elicit authentic stories from their own experiences as they are directly affected by the challenges which accompany being second language learners and having English as their target language.

The school was established in 1970 to serve the community which had no higher primary school at that time. There were two lower primary schools in the area which were then to become feeder schools to the newly established school to help learners avoid having to travel the long distance to another higher primary.

In 1987, there was a demand for the school to transition into a secondary school since a nearby secondary school already had a high volume of learners. The new secondary school opened its doors to the first Grade 8s in 1988 and in 1997 produced its first matriculants.

The school is located in a poverty-stricken area and is surrounded by many informal settlements. This alone has financial implications on the school since most parents are unemployed and cannot pay school fees. Furthermore, any efforts made by the school to renovate or upgrade the facilities are fruitless as the school is consequently burglarised by the surrounding economically-challenged community. Stolen materials and damaged facilities hinder the smooth progress of learning.

Social issues provide ongoing challenges for the school. As well as the above mentioned crime and 'gangsterism', AIDS also contributes to absenteeism as learners are often absent from school to look after infected parents or take them to hospital.

The school has a population of 973 learners, 1 Principal, 2 Deputy Principals, 35 Level 1 educators, and 5 Department Heads, namely: Human and Social Science; Language and Communication; Commerce; Science; and Technology. As the school is located in a black township in KZN, the commonly spoken language is IsiZulu which is the language of the teachers, learners and the surrounding community. Believing that learners will understand the content of their subject better, teachers are tempted to teach in their home language. The result is that learners have little exposure to the target language which is English and therefore struggle to express themselves in an uninhibited manner.

There are several projects which support and develop second language learners. An example is the Mangosuthu University of Technology which offers free English lessons from 16h00 to 18h00 given by competent teachers and sponsored by Engen. The teachers elaborate on what is taught in schools with a more flexible curriculum to suit learners from diverse educational backgrounds. However, the fact that the school is located in an economically challenged area with a high unemployment rate means that few people can afford the bus fare to transport their children to these projects.

3.5. Ethical Considerations

Ethical consideration refers to issues where the researcher respects and protects the participants, taking care to avoid any harm coming to them as a result of the research. I have therefore been committed to respecting my participants throughout the process of my research and ensuring that all steps were taken to avoid physical or psychological trauma (Goddard and Melville, 2001).

Participants were fully informed about the study being conducted so that they were clear about the reasons, purposes and aims of my study Gillespie (1994) explains that informed consent provides

participants with knowledge that the study is voluntary as participants may pull out of the study anytime. Participants were then given the chance to decide whether they wished to participate in this study or not. Gaining participants' informed consent to participate in my study was an important ethical consideration. All participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Transparency existed at all stages of the research process where no truth was concealed or hidden from my participants or gatekeepers. Participants were clear that at any stage of the research they had the right to withdraw from the study without any negative impact or consequences. Every measure was taken to ensure that participants were not exposed to harm in any manner or form.

These ethical considerations are in line with the theoretical underpinning of the study by New childhood studies, which insists on the notion that children should be considered as people in their own right who have a voice and need to be acknowledged as independent thinkers and appreciated as active agents in the formation of their social lives.

In addition, permission was sought from the parents or guardians of the learners as well as the school principal, for the learners to participate in my research. Permission was also sought from the Department of Education to conduct this research at this specific school. The intentions and purposes of the study were explained to these gatekeepers, thus keeping the process of participation in my study as open and transparent as possible. Seeking permission and consent from participants and gatekeepers also indicates an ethos of respect which I have sought to adopt in all aspects of this research.

3.6. Data Generation

3.6.1. Participatory Methods of Data Generation

Participatory methods of generating data sanction and reinforce the notion of participants as active agents, experts on their own lives and experiences, and therefore worthy of being given a voice. These methods ensure that research is done *with* participants rather than *on* them. As well as highlighting the importance of research, they afford participants the space as active agents to express their feelings by telling their own stories from their unique perspectives.

3.6.2. Photo voice

I have used photo voice as an initial participatory method to begin the process of generating narratives and gathering data. Photo voice is a fun, non-threatening method whereby people are able to identify, represent and put into perspective the way they experience certain phenomena through the use of photographs (Burriss, 1997). Participants use photographs to reflect and tell stories related to the research questions. They are required to take photographs of staged incidents, simulated or actual situations or places which reveal their experiences and challenges. These photographs are then used as visual prompts in the interviews that follow. These prompts provide a creative stimulus to jump start the process of reflection and encourage the narrative of what happens in the spaces they occupy on an everyday basis with regard to being second language learners. Burriss (1997) states that Photo Voice encourages well thought about dialogues which bring about fruitful discussions.

The photographs themselves may not necessarily tell stories. The participants, the voices behind the photographs, speak to these visual images in order to make sense of them in relation to the research focus and then explain them. The exercise of taking photographs may also trigger reflection on the part of the participant often bringing to mind forgotten memories and experiences. It is the interviews then, which follow the photograph exercise, that give meaning to the photographs.

Photo voice is seen as an effective method of collecting data. Kuratani and Lai (2011) refer to this method as one which by encouraging participants to take pictures of their choice allows them to decide what is of interest or concern. They further state that it is a tool for change both personally and in the group, as it encourages participants to reflect on the picture, talk openly about its personal significance and recount the story behind the picture.

The process of generating participants' narratives through their individual photographs is effective in prompting individuals to relate their experiences and challenges attached to being second language learners. Because photo voice is a tool designed to access the authentic voices of participants, this provides my study with credible data which enhances the reliability of my study.

The photo voice exercise was the first stage of generating data. Kuratani and Lai (2011) confirm that the photo voice exercise allows participants to take photographs of scenarios they consider to be of personal significance regarding their experiences and challenges as second language learners as well as importance to the phenomenon as a whole. Each participant was asked to take a few photographs which were to be used in the focus group and in the individual interviews.

3.6.3. Interviews

Data was further generated through the use of both individual and focus group interviews.

The second stage of data generation involved a focus group interview with all six participants. In this interview each participant provided narrative background to their photographs which generated group discussion, shared ideas and experiences. The open-ended questions I used as prompts included the following:

- Tell me about this photograph...
- What story do you want to tell through this photograph?
- What is happening in this picture?
- Why did you take this picture?
- Why did you think it was important to take this picture?

Cohen et al (2011) affirm that focus group interviews are useful as they encourage participants to interact informally with one another in a group. They also afford the opportunity for participants to open up and speak honestly about their experiences as opposed to in a one-on-one interview with an adult which can be more formal and, therefore, more intimidating. This method was useful to my study as it generated free group discussion which provided me with reliable data for my study.

The third stage of data generation consisted of individual interviews in which each participant was interviewed separately. These interviews were conducted by sitting face-to-face with each individual. Again, individual participants answered questions relating to the photographs they had taken. The rationale for including these individual interviews was to allow those participants who may have felt shy or apprehensive about speaking in a group situation the opportunity to express themselves in a more intimate environment. There was also the chance that the focus group interview might have opened up new areas of reflection for each individual participant in their experience of being a second language learner.

Both focus group and individual interviews were semi-structured, flexible and informal. The use of open-ended questions allowed me to ask participants to expand on any statements that were initially unclear. This allowed them to qualify their responses and provided me with clear and focused information which was hugely helpful during the process of data analysis (Cohen et al, 2011).

Semi-structured interviews are advantageous as they allow the researcher some degree of flexibility when asking probe questions. Some spontaneous questions are necessary for the sake of clarity or to re-direct the focus of a conversation back to the specific research questions.

The following questions may serve as probes if participants do not naturally engage with these issues:

- What are your perceptions about second language learning?
- What do you think teachers' perceptions about second language learning are?
- Why do you think teachers have these perceptions?
- How are second language learners treated in a language class in the school?
- How do you feel about the ways in which second language learners are treated?
- What support do you get from your family as a second language learner?
- How could they better support you as a second language learner?
- What are the challenges that your family experiences when trying to support your schooling as a second language learner?
- What kind of support do you receive from your peers as a second language learner?
- How could they better support you as a second language learner?
- What challenges do you think your peers face in terms of offering you support?
- What kind of support do you get from your teachers, the school principal and the School Governing Body?
- How could they better support you as a second language learner?
- What challenges do you think the school faces when trying to support you as a second language learner?
- How could they better support you as a second language learner?
- How does the fact that you are a second language learner impact on your liking school and it being a positive experience in your life?
- How does being a second language learner impact on your understanding the content of the subjects you learn?
- How does being a second language learner impact on or affect your social life?

Participants were given the opportunity to be flexible and code switch i.e. to speak in either their first or second language as they preferred, throughout all interviews. They therefore did not feel obliged to speak in English if they felt they could not adequately express themselves. Giving each participant the

free choice to code switch if and when they felt they wanted or needed to, was in order to guarantee that they would have the freedom to speak their minds. This was directly beneficial to my core purpose which was to gather authentic data.

3.7. Data analysis

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006) data analysis refers to the process that takes place after the data has been collected when the researcher begins to interpret and draw meanings from the body of data. Such a process allows the researcher to select, analyse and interpret the data for the study.

Data generated through participatory methods were recorded and transcribed. D'amant (2010) asserts that the process of listening to the voices of participants repeatedly and transcribing their narratives allows the researcher to become immersed in the data and be familiar with it. For this reason, I transcribed my participants' narratives myself. These transcriptions then became the narratives which I used for analysis.

In order to highlight certain themes, similarities and differences in the individual narratives, I analysed the data paying particular attention to the themes that emerged. D'amant (2010) says that at this stage of data analysis, a list is compiled of the themes and categories which emerge from the narratives. When the various themes are presented and discussed, direct quotes from the participants' narratives can be used to illustrate these themes.

Data analysis then leads to the interpretation of the various themes which emerged from the narratives, which links the findings of the research to the literature review.

3.8. Validity and trustworthiness

If this were a quantitative research study, 'validity, reliability and trustworthiness' would refer to the extent to which the research measures what it purposed to measure (Fink, 2010). Reliability would then refer to the logical representation of data such as when an instrument used yields the same results using the same object and does not change the results (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). However, as a qualitative research study, the validity of this study refers to whether valid data has been generated in order to examine, interpret and better understand individual experiences of the phenomenon being

investigated. As my investigation was into the experiences and challenges of second language learners, the validity and reliability of my research study is measured by its trustworthiness.

The trustworthiness of my research requires me to ask whether the findings or conclusions of my study can be generalised to other situations and contexts. If similar studies are conducted by other researchers the question is posed, “will the data be the same or yield the same results?” If so, then the study is considered valid and reliable.

To ensure validity, reliability and trustworthiness in my study I included the voices of my participants by allowing them to express themselves through feelings, experiences and personal encounters (D’amant, 2010). Readers of these narratives will sense that these experiences are real and genuine. The authentic participation of, and reliance on, the voices of my participants ensures that this research achieves validity and trustworthiness (D’amant, 2010).

Validity, reliability and trustworthiness was reinforced through the use of triangulation where a variety of methods of data collection were used such as Photo Voice, Individual and Focus Group Interviews).

3.9. Limitations of the study

A possible limitation of the study might have been the fact that I am the participants’ teacher. It is reasonable to assume that because of my position of authority in the school, they may not have felt as free to speak honestly and openly to me about their experiences and challenges. A fear of offending me by criticising the school and its teachers may have caused them to dilute some of their negative feelings. It is possible that they may even have been concerned that I might share some of their confidences with the Principal or other teachers. These fears may have caused participants to share only what they think I might have wanted to hear and only say that which would have avoided getting them into trouble. In the effort to ensure reliable data, I assured learners that all information would remain between the participant and me and that they were free to voice all their challenges regardless of who would be implicated. I explained the importance of anonymity and assured them that under no circumstances would I reveal their identities. Participants were also assured that the information they gave was, and would continue to be, solely for the purposes of my study which relied on understanding their authentic experiences of being second language learners. I encouraged my participants to speak as freely as possible, safe in the knowledge of their anonymity, in order to enrich my data and fulfil my research questions. I was vigilant about maintaining a safe, positive and honest rapport with my participants in order to protect the reliability of the information.

In preparation for interviews where sensitive issues might be tackled, I resolved to remain as neutral as possible and to listen with genuine interest to everything the participants shared. I realised that as a teacher in the system that was presenting the participants with many of the challenges, there were bound to be issues I might find offensive. I recognised the need for an objectivity that would be apparent to the participant, and was therefore careful to avoid filtering any information through my subjective conscience. This made it possible for me to remain impartial during interviews without feeling the need to 'correct' the participant. I was careful to avoid any facial expressions or comments that may be construed as accusatory or judgemental.

An obvious limitation of the study could have presented itself in the form of language itself. The project of examining the experiences and challenges of second language learners could very well have been limited if English (the participants' second language) was the only language used during the process of data generation. For this reason, I ensured that participants knew that they were free to use whichever language they were more comfortable using and could code switch if they wished. The narratives were audiotaped and these recordings were transcribed into English.

3.10. The role of the researcher

The role of the researcher entails developing trust with participants. D'amant (2010) stresses that in order to generate reliable data a researcher needs to ensure that participants are not harmed in any way by the study and that what they have shared with the researcher will remain confidential and their identities anonymous. So it is the researcher's responsibility to establish and maintain this safe, secure environment and relationship, in order that participants are not anxious or fearful, but feel safe and comfortable enough to share their authentic experiences and honest thoughts and feelings.

As a researcher I could not be in any way biased as this would have jeopardised the chances of generating credible data. D'amant (2010) states that as a researcher one needs both a good mastery of interpersonal skills, and to always be self-reflective. The researcher should not impose his/her ideas and assumptions onto the participants and therefore cause them to say things they did not mean to or withhold stories that they feel will be judged. The researcher should not push or lead participants, (directly or indirectly) to say what the researcher wants to hear but, instead, allow them the freedom to share their own experiences in the way they perceive them. It is imperative for a researcher not to manipulate participants and direct their responses in any way. It is of utmost importance that the

researcher keeps an open mind, remains as neutral as possible, and respects the voices of participants.

3.11. Conclusion

As far as was possible while conducting my research, I took heed of all the methodological theorists' warnings and teachings outlined in this chapter. The following chapter comprises the presentation and the analysis of the data generated through the specific methodological tools I selected for the purposes of this research.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

Participatory data generation methods such as photo voice, focus group and individual interviews have helped to elicit important information relating to my research questions. D'amant (2010) points out that photo voice is able to capture significant experiences with regard to the specific phenomenon under research – in this case, the experiences and geographies of second language learners. The interviews were recorded and transcribed and it was these transcriptions that made up the raw narrative data. Analysis and interpretation of these narratives then took place, where themes which emerged from the narratives, were identified. These themes are presented and analysed in this chapter.

4.2. Suffering humiliation at the hands of classmates

Through their narratives, most participants recounted repeated incidents of being humiliated and demoralised in the classroom situation by their classmates who were all too ready to laugh at them when, in their attempts to communicate in English, they made mistakes or mispronounced certain English words.

We are made to feel that we should just run away from school and never come back since we are humiliated when learning in English - mostly by our classmates. (Musa)

They are making unnecessary corrections and making jokes about us when we make small mistakes. Other classmates can even end up calling us names drawn from such mistakes. (Simpfiwe)

I was doing grade 9 where I had to deliver a speech in class, and when I was busy there were comments like: "Here is this boy with a nagging attitude of thinking that he knows too much." They made noise and disturbed me in such a way that even the teacher was angry at them and left the class. I really felt very bad and the next day I did not come to school because I felt humiliated. (Musa)

Most participants shared similar challenges describing negative treatment by their peers including humiliatingly judgemental comments passed even in front of the teachers.

The picture below was taken by a participant to illustrate the issue of discrimination and humiliation from peers which takes place in the classroom.



Image 1: The classroom space

One of my participants related never feeling humiliated or judged in the classroom by other classmates and always looks forward to coming to school every day.

I don't have many problems like them. I love school. I have never felt that way. (Simphiwe).

It may be relevant to note that the participant who is comfortable and feels no threat is the same participant who said that he enjoys it when teachers employ code switching when teaching content subjects. One could assume that he does not experience the same challenges as the other participants because he does not use second language in an effort to learn the language. It might be highly possible that he takes a back seat in the classroom situation and doesn't respond to questions or discussions.

4.3. Community perceptions of second language learners

It is clear that second language learners are most challenged by speaking English in public places. We have established that they face huge challenges with their peers, but they are even more challenged in the community where adults tend to criticize and embarrass them.

Learners often have to navigate social environments where English is spoken. They attend social gatherings where they are forced to converse in English in order to communicate. The majority of my participants related that they do not encounter problems in these social situations as they are able to speak and understand their second language well enough to both understand and be understood. Their challenge arises when they speak their second language in the presence of people who have negative attitudes about English and who then pass spiteful comments which the participant finds undermining.

One of my participants highlighted a significant moment when he felt ill-treated at the gym by his coach for talking in English.

I took this picture because this is where I was ill-treated by my soccer coach; he insulted me for speaking in English. (Simphiwe)

In the gym at one point our coach called me a fool because I spoke English and he said I had a big mouth. Why can't I say whatever I need to say in our language? (Simphiwe).

The following picture was taken at the gym's changing room where this participant's negative encounter with the coach took place.



Image 2: The gym's changing room.

Another participant identified with this participant's experience and shared that she also suffered mistreatment from adults when travelling in a taxi with her friends.

There was a time when I was travelling with my friends in a taxi and we started to speak English and people in the taxi passed nasty comments on us about why were we speaking in English since we are all Zulu speakers. (Mbali).

Below is the picture which this participant took as a reminder of this significantly negative experience she had while using public transport.



Image 3: Taxi rank.

During the focus group discussion where these experiences were shared, another participant remembered a similar situation where she was on a taxi and speaking English with her friends, and an adult travelling on the taxi made negative comments about her use of English.

As the researcher, I find there is substantial evidence therefore that second language learners are experiencing ridicule and subsequent humiliation from adults in public places when attempting to practise their second language. Monyai (2010) alluded to this challenge when stating that in the spaces that learners occupy there are less opportunities for growth in second language acquisition since people in the community have negative attitudes towards the use of the second language within the community.

Despite being eager to explore the language, second language learners find this negative attitude discouraging. They are not only directly affected but also indirectly affected by the negative and discriminatory behaviours towards others attempting to express themselves in a second language. (Tchatchouang, 2014b) These learners are attempting to find their identity within the broader context of the working world which requires confidence and fluency in English. Their future aspirations will place

them in situations where they will be competing for positions in the work place either with second language learners who are fluent, or, indeed, first language speakers. From the perspective of second language learners, it is difficult to retaliate when being snapped at by adults since they have been brought up to respect adults and believe that respectful behaviour towards adults does not include answering back and entering into a dispute, particularly in a public place.

It is clear from the participants' responses that they feel powerless when they are in a position where they cannot defend themselves, and disappointed when they receive discouragement from those they regard as their superiors, the adults they are encouraged to respect.

Many of the participants responded with comments such as:

It is hard. (Mbali).

I feel bad. (Simpfiwe)

Drawing from these geographies one wonders how these second language learners reconcile being encouraged to practise speaking in English as much as they can in their everyday lives, while the community's negative attitude clearly negates and destroys any attempt that these learners make to use their second language.

From the participants' responses, it emerges quite clearly that public places are the spaces where they are mostly experiencing being undermined when speaking their second language. In trying to make sense of such negative experiences and negotiating these as best they can, participants came up with different possible reasons for this occurrence. One participant felt that it might be that those elders are illiterate and don't understand English. Another participant responded that the adults who don't understand English perhaps think that the learners are gossiping about them. Other participants offered the following as a means of making sense of this challenge:

Some other people perceive that maybe you are speaking English because you think you are better than others and elders in the community.

They think that you are being rude to speak English, and sometimes as we speak we also laugh and the elders feel offended just because they do not understand they think that we are gossiping about them.

People with low self-esteem feel inferior when you speak English. (Mbali) and (Enhle).

Some participants shared that even in church they are criticised and made to feel inferior for speaking in English. The participants' concern is particularly disheartening as it is a general understanding that *all* people are supposed to feel comfortable in the house of God. For the participant to voice her concern and as she wishes to express herself in a second language as many times as she like, would encourage learners to speak confidently in English in different settings.

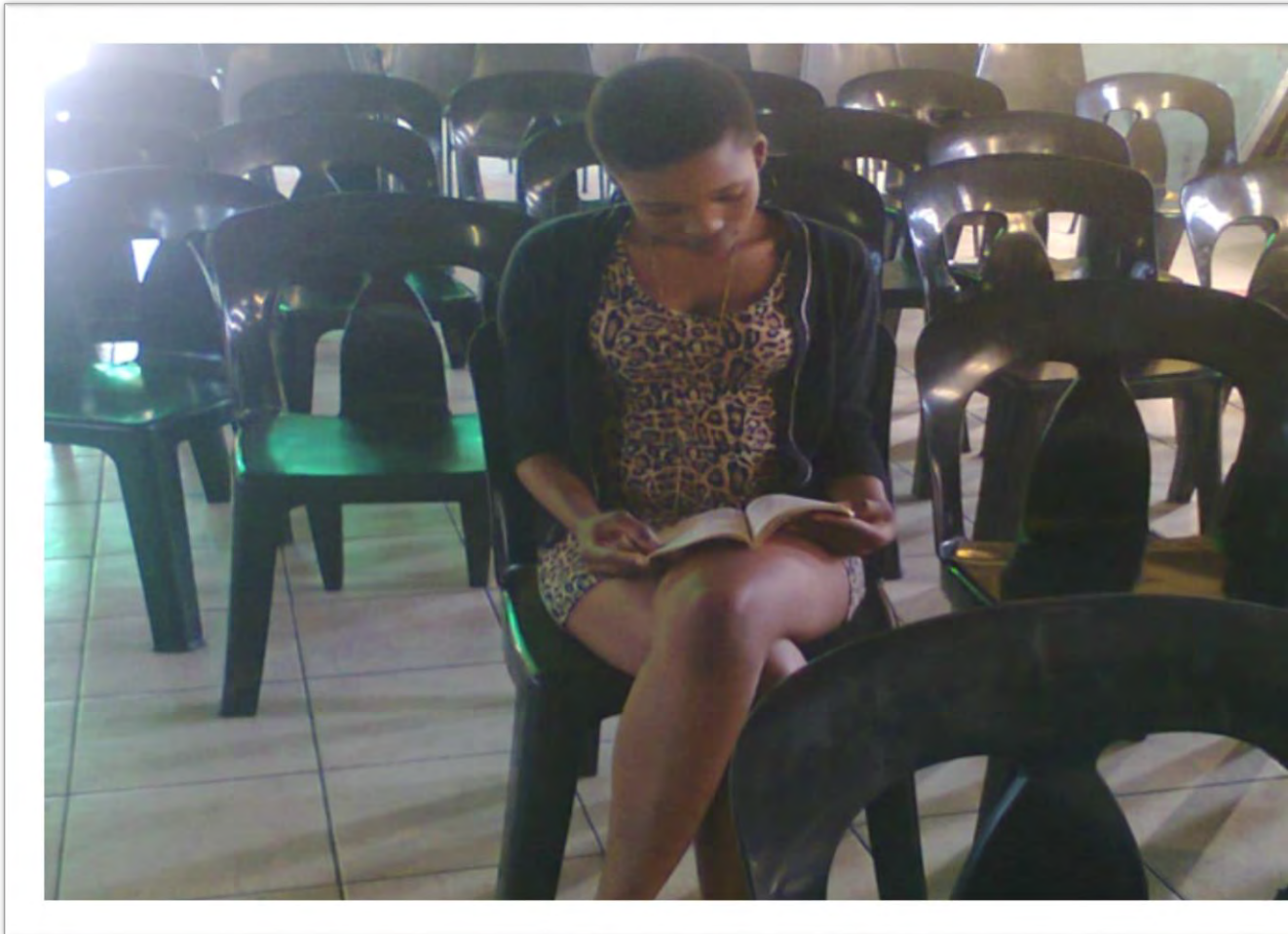


Image 4. in church

The majority of the participants agreed that in places of worship where one can expect elders to be tolerant, considerate and supportive, people are mistreated because of speaking in their second language.

Especially when we are asked to read the Bible, I carry an English Bible so when I try to read my Bible then they tell me to stop and ask someone with a Zulu version. (Enhle).

My church is a Zulu congregational church, so they emphasize that we speak isiZulu only as it is also written in our church logo that this is a Zulu church, so when I stand up to preach as a chairperson of the youth I have to preach in isiZulu, so sometimes English slip on my tongue.

One day our church elder called me and asked me never to use English while preaching as this is strictly a Zulu church. I did not like the way she approached me as she said if I think I know too much English I must rather stop preaching than to preach in English. (Mbali).

Participants clearly feel excluded by the older generation a gap exists in terms of understanding one another adults should settle for a compromise so to boost confidence and develop the love of second language to the learners. Their efforts to be fluent speakers of English are not appreciated and encouraged in the community spaces they occupy, but instead their efforts to communicate in the second language are undermined and discouraged.

One participant shared his story of going to the tuck-shop where he had to make sure that he didn't utter a single word in English for fear of not being served by the owner of the tuck-shop. Another participant complained about a similar challenge. Even if she enquired as to how much an item was in English, the other customers would speak unpleasant words to her.

Just for speaking simple words like that, saying which school do you go to and since when do school Z learners know English? So we are labelled and judged by the school we go to, this simply say that just because you belong to school Z then you don't, you shouldn't familiarise yourself with second language.(Musa) and (Nontokozi).

Other participants agreed that in tuck-shops they had also been mistreated for speaking in their second language. One participant became quite emotional when telling his story about a tuck-shop owner who threatened to chase him out of the shop if he was to speak in his second language.

I took this picture because this is a place where I felt small because I spoke an English word to an old woman selling in her tuck shop. I greeted her in English and she gave me a scornful look showing that what I said angered her and she said "listen here my boy, in this tuck shop only isiZulu is allowed!" She even said she won't even sell to me and that I must rather leave if I come with this attitude of speaking English. She is known in the area to be a rude woman and she doesn't care about anyone, she speaks anyhow and can chase anyone out of her tuck-shop though what she did was unbelievable to me. (Musa).

This is the shop and it happens when I go to the shop and I ask the price in English like asking how much?, if there are other people around they utter statements like we know you and you go to school Z how come do you speak English since it is not too much spoken in your school, so they tell me that I am showing off by speaking English. (Nontokozi).



Image 5: Local shop

What emerges from these narratives is that practising speaking English in community spaces in their efforts to familiarise themselves with, and ultimately master, their second language, learners are putting themselves at risk of being the target of prejudice and the inevitable barrage of negative comments.

When degrading statements are uttered by adults it serves to demotivate second language learners. Drawing from their narratives there is an indication that second language learners expect adults to be more tolerant, accommodating and understanding of the obvious challenges that second language learners encounter while they are trying to become proficient in English.

4.4. Teachers' positive attitudes towards enthusiastic learners

Despite the negative attitudes of adults in the community and classmates at school, a welcome finding which emerged from the narratives is that the learners have experienced positive encouragement to master their second language, from teachers and the school principal. They feel supported whenever they practise English, even to the point where teachers scold other learners who pass negative

comments or display bad attitudes towards learners trying to speak English. Participants report that this support is a strong motivator for them to continue speaking English.

Asgari & Mustapha (2011) holds the belief that English must be spoken in and outside the classroom by the teachers so as to encourage learners to use their second language. He further states that learners should be encouraged to construct short sentences of their own and practise speaking as much as they can. He especially recommends using practical activities like oral presentations in order to improve their skills in their second language and underlines the importance of all their efforts being appreciated, supported and encouraged by teachers.

Participants agreed that teachers are their inspiration. In contrast with certain classmates and adults in the community, their teachers encourage them by praising their efforts and making them feel valued. They feel that their teachers welcome their efforts and the school principal appreciates and encourages them to always speak English so as to be able to meet economic, political and social challenges which require a proficiency in English.

I took this picture of the staffroom because it makes me happy to know that my teachers are so supportive when I speak English, so I went to the staffroom and spoke English and all the teachers in there said "Wow! This is so interesting to find a learner speaking English!" They asked me to even teach others to use English every time, and that made me so happy to hear that that there are people who are still positive after a lot of discouraging words from adults. So I felt really happy and over the moon because in school we come from different backgrounds - some are not open to speak English and they accuse the one speaking English and say nasty words like you think that you better. Just because they are not exposed to English, most people criticise me. (Musa).

The following is a picture of the staffroom where participants feel at ease to speak English without being judged negatively or teased for making mistakes.



Image 6: Teachers' staffroom

Participants feel that teachers see them as young people with dreams who need to be nurtured, supported and encouraged. It is pleasing to note that while these learners experience negativity and discouragement from others, their teachers and their school principal provide them with a support system which is hugely beneficial to them as participants suggest.

As I was at the office the principal encourages me to talk English. He makes me proud of attempting to speak English even though the sentence I used when speaking to him was not perfect. But the principal was able to correct me calmly and complimented me for speaking English. Hence he said most learners when they come to his office they don't speak English. Those words encouraged me a lot. (Musa).



Image 7: The Principal's office

Participants echo their voices of contentment when they are shown support. Their argument shows that second language learners are willing and enthusiastic about learning and communicating in their second language when given opportunity, support and positive encouragement. Their concern is based on those who fail to accept that they are trying therefore they need to practice by speaking so to arm themselves for the outside world.

Participant's responses reveal a positive attitude towards their teachers and the school principal who, they say, are their inspiration. The expressions of appreciation of the learners' efforts as well as their encouragement that the learners continue to speak their second language, gives these young people confidence to persevere in their second language acquisition and to ignore those who pass negative, discouraging comments. They are thus encouraged and supported to strive for further mastery of their second language, knowing this will empower them in their future endeavours. Knowing that their teachers and school principal are supportive and appreciative of their second language efforts brings hope to second language learners.

4.5. Teachers' perceptions of second language learners

Participants in this study in one way or other do highlight that teachers code switch in the classroom. This means that teachers, in the attempt to help learners understand what is being taught, will speak both English and isiZulu while teaching, through the findings it has emerged that participants mostly feel that this code-switching compromises their learning of their second language. Participants reported that they are not happy with such code switching and would rather be taught in the second language all the time although they understand that teachers are doing this because they think that learners do not understand and want to make it easier for them to grasp certain concepts. However, the learners believe that they would be more effectively supported towards a better acquisition of their second language, if code switching was avoided and English became the sole medium of instruction.

“And with the teachers sometimes they try to accommodate all of us by switching codes and speaking in IsiZulu which then I don't like. I wish that it could be English one way. They shouldn't think that we do not understand. They should train us to speak English. When they mix I feel that they are spoiling us in that way whereas we need to be equipped to face the world.” (Mbali)

One participant disagreed with this sentiment, claiming that he enjoys being taught in both languages because he is not fluent enough to master the content subjects when taught in the second language only.

Teachers sometimes think that we don't understand English and they teach us in IsiZulu, which I think it is good because we are second language learners and we don't understand English.(Sipho).

Not all the participants, therefore, agree with using English as the only medium of teaching and learning. Although it is important to note that the majority were very clear that they felt the exclusive use of English at school would benefit them more than code switching. These participants further underlined this belief by reporting that they would face the challenge of writing exams without receiving any help from their teachers as exam questions would all be written and would have to be answered exclusively in English. They felt that code switching in the classroom would eventually present them with more of a struggle not only in trying to make sense of English exam questions on their own but also in written expression. While teaching in both isiZulu and English is commonly employed as a teaching strategy to support second language learners and help them to better understand subject content, these findings encourage us to reconsider whether this is indeed the best way of supporting all learners. From my

sample of learners, the majority were clearly in support of being taught in English only and feel that use of code switching by teachers in the classroom ultimately places the learner at a disadvantage. Only one participant recognised the advantage of code switching in the classroom situation. It would seem that this strategy, whilst providing an advantage for a few learners, is considered a disadvantage by the majority. This warrants serious consideration by teachers if they are committed to providing support for all their learners.

4.6. Learners' perceptions of second language learning

Sears (1998) admits that there is a great need to learn the English language since it is related to economic, political and social advancement. Learners are therefore compelled to learn this globally dominant language which opens many doors towards a successful future.

Marcos (1998) agrees that the English language is associated with powerful positions. Many second language learners believe, as Sears and Marcos do, that they need to become proficient in this language so as to be able to unlock future opportunities.

However, what emerges from the findings is that many of the learners are discouraged when they hear others speaking English because they perceive English as a difficult language to learn. What adds to the challenge of this perception is the belief that in order for anyone to speak in English, they should be fluent. With the experiences of widespread criticism and teasing of those who attempt to speak English in class, no room is left for the practices of the language and the inevitable mistakes and mispronunciations that necessarily occur in the acquisition stage of any language (including a first language).

"Learners don't like English they say it is difficult, and they discourage me and my friend when we speak English in class they talk negatively." (Simphiwe).

4.7. Attitudes of families to second language learners

One of my participants reported that he does not receive much support from his family with regard to acquiring English as a second language.

Not much support I get from them. Nobody cares whether I need support or whether I am able to cope with everything. All is upon me to see how to solve problems I encounter and enrich myself by borrowing books from the library. (Sipho)

This pattern of disinterest and lack of support from families does not bode well for the success of second language learners who need continued support and encouragement in their endeavours outside of the school environment. Asgari & Mustapha (2011) is of the opinion that if parents take an active role in the education of their children then learners will improve their level of target language acquisition. Asgari & Mustapha (2011) clearly believes that parents are important figures in the process of their children's learning in general, and that if this is not forthcoming will present as a major challenge to second language learning.

Other participants report that their families provide a good support system for their learning and for their acquisition of English as their second language. The support they get from home may come from different members of the family depending on the individual learner and may come in different ways, as is illustrated by the following narrative excerpts.

It is not everybody at home who offers support but we do get support and encouragement from some people in our families. (Mbali).

My parents support me by buying books or reading material. (Simphiwe).

My parents allow me time to go to libraries or join extra classes. (Enhle)

I do get support from my family, but not from all of them. For example my mother is not educated so she doesn't help me. But when I ask her to buy something concerning my learning she buys it for me, and others in the family are encouraging as well. (Nontokozo).

These narratives reveal that the way parents or family members offer constructive and positive support for second language learners with regard to boosting fluency in their second language is most often through the supply of the materials they need rather than actively conversing with them in English. Most parents seem to be prepared to go the extra mile to have their children educated and to see them improve at their second language acquisition. Second language learners are encouraged to spend a lot of time reading English as well as speaking the language both in and out of school. It is important, therefore, that the family provide an environment conducive to this. Asgari & Mustapha (2011) admits that when parents have a positive attitude towards the learning of the second language and are able to

provide their children with proper and relevant material then learners have more of an opportunity to succeed.

4.8. Support from the teachers, Principal and SGB

In order for them to learn effectively, every learner in the schooling system needs solid scholastic support from the school. A lack of teaching aids and other relevant materials to support learning can contribute to a learner's difficulties. Libraries, textbooks (or copies thereof), computer and internet access are all vitally important in order for learners to broaden their knowledge of subjects as well as to source information for assignments and other academic tasks.

Through their narratives, my participants revealed their awareness of the school principal's endeavours to make more learning materials available to them despite the fact that the school does not have a computer laboratory or a library for learners to use. His intention to service the photocopying machines and the occasions when he invests his own money in a teaching aid motivates the learners to use whatever is available to them to study.

When it comes to the School Governing Body, however, it is a different story. Some participants said they were not aware of the presence of the School Governing Body or its' function in their school. One participant stated that members of the School Governing Board make an appearance at the beginning of the year to announce their presence but thereafter the role they play in the everyday running of the school is unclear. This could either mean that information about the various functions of the School Governing Board has not been made available to learners or that the School Governing Board plays a minimal role in the management or day-to-day running of the school.

The teachers being in class trying to make me understand. The principal having machines fixed and in working order so that we get learning material. Also the principal tries to get us books, newspapers to read, etc. though not often. The SGB as the school they don't help much in learning. (Musa).

One participant pointed out that there was a time when teachers were continually absent resulting in the neglect of the learners. This issue lead the participant to believe that the Principal was passive on this issue and did not do enough to encourage teachers to come and teach. He therefore believed that the Principal was not committed to supporting the learners at the school.

Concerning the school principal, sometimes I feel that we do not get enough support because at one time (I think in June there) was a time when teachers did not come to class and I felt that the principal should have done something or at least let us know what is going on. (Simphiwe).

4.9. The challenges of learning content in school subjects

In the South African school system, English is the language of instruction. In the township where my study was conducted, the majority of people are first language Zulu speakers. This means that, other than their home language subject, learners have to study all subjects through the medium of English, their second language. The majority of my participants consistently related through their narratives that they are happy to be taught in English since this helps familiarise them even more with their second language.

A quote from one of my participants regarding the comprehension of content subjects follows:

Most of the time I am able to understand because I dedicate myself into learning English. (Nontokozo).

However, there was one participant who seemed to be alone in his experience of challenges in understanding some of the questions posed in the second language. Based on the narrative evidence, this participant said repeatedly that he enjoys the lessons if they are delivered bilingually because he is then able to understand. He related how he felt about being questioned in a second language.

I really have a problem there. Many are the times when I don't understand what is being taught or asked because I am still lacking in English. (Sipho).

Another participant clearly admitted that she experiences some gaps in understanding the whole question but tries her best to make sense of the content even though it is challenging. She related:

"I have a challenge, not that I understand everything but I try hard to learn but am not fluent." (Nontokozo).

While parents prefer their children to be taught in English as English is associated with greater economic opportunities and success (Braam, 2004), my study shows that second language learners do experience challenges in this regard. It is therefore not surprising that, when their second language skills are limited, second language learners want teachers to explain content in their first language. However whether the use of code-switching acts as a disadvantage in the learners' acquisition of their

second language is still unclear. It may very well create further gaps in the learners' full comprehension and effective mastery of the target language.

Based on what the majority of my second language participants have related, it seems that they believe that consistent and ongoing exposure to their second language contributes considerably towards the acquisition and fluency of the second language. They believe that although they do not yet consider themselves to be fluent in English, they are happy to persevere in the hope that ultimately being able to both understand and articulate English will mean a brighter future for them.

4.10. Supporting and enhancing second language learning

Through their narratives, all participants expressed their belief that a library containing a sufficient number of relevant text books, magazines and a computer laboratory (amongst other learning materials) would boost their acquisition of the target language. They also felt that, in a community where the school has received much negative publicity due to its lack of resources, these additions would enhance the school's image. In terms of other areas of support in enhancing their English acquisition, participants' related the following:

I would like the school to set up learner organisations which will promote the speaking of English, like debate clubs.

If the school can provide us with reading material like free for all magazines, newspapers and books to take home and read. In terms of textbooks for each and every subject to have our own take home textbooks instead of relying on copies, this would be good for us. This sharing habit I don't like because sometimes we sit in threes in one desk, sharing one copy. (Mbali).

I would like the school to have a library so to get access to reading material and also to complete tasks and do school projects, to have access to internet. (Enhle).

I would like the school to keep dictionaries in the library, and for teachers to provide us with textbooks so to see the next sections to follow so to read by myself. (Musa).

I would like the school to get lot of dictionaries and textbooks so to get to read for ourselves. (Sipho).

I would be happy if we can have a physical science and also library, I would like the school to have free for all magazines for us to read as well. (Enhle)

Participants expressed their very real need for more adequate learning support material. The school is clearly not a well-resourced school, and learning is reliant on photocopies of the few available textbooks. Even then, there are not enough copies to go around which means that learners have to share.

In general, participants believe that they need to be exposed to a variety of reading materials to enhance their learning of their second language. Furthermore, they believe that participation in activities that require the use of English will further develop their command of the language.

There is no doubt that proper facilities and relevant material support would definitely go a long way towards preparing and equipping learners to navigate the challenges they encounter in being second language learners.

4.11. Conclusion

Listening to the stories of my participants has highlighted the very real challenges that second language learners face. What emerges strongly from the narratives is that a poorly resourced school offers very little effective support for a second language learner who not only has to learn their second language as a subject but also study all other subjects in that second language. In addition to this, the challenge of negative attitudes and prejudices from their classmates and members of the community is a huge obstacle which participants constantly have to navigate.

It is evident that the majority of my participants, while clearly disadvantaged and, at times, disheartened by the challenges they face, remain committed to acquiring a speaking and writing knowledge of English. With their eyes on the end result, they are becoming proficient enough in English to be able to engage in some form of tertiary education with a view to ultimately finding employment.

What has also emerged from my findings is that the education of second language learners is being compromised by the different stakeholders who ideally should be working together firstly to provide the best possible education for learners and secondly to provide practical solutions to some of the challenges they face. The eradication (or at least the minimisation) of barriers which are preventing these young people from effective acquisition of their second language should be the primary focus of the entire support team

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. FOREGROUNDING AUTHENTIC NARRATIVE VOICES

The main purpose of the study was to find out the stories that second language learners have to tell about their geographies in and out of school. The study was centred round the following three questions:

1. What are the experiences of second language learners?
2. What are the geographies of these second language learners in and out of school?
3. How do they navigate these experiences?

This research was prompted by the fact that learners attending school in black townships are mostly Zulu speaking but have to learn all their content subjects in English which is their second language. It stands to reason, therefore, that they experience challenges in learning new content through the medium of their second language, rather than in their first language which is comfortable and familiar. This research has endeavoured to investigate and gather the authentic stories that these learners have to tell about the challenges of learning subjects in their second language and about how they navigate these challenges. This research has been committed to the foregrounding of the voices of the participants in relation to the key research questions.

As a teacher, my working day is often dominated by the sheer volume of content which has to be taught and understood within limited time periods. This often leaves very little time to talk to learners and gain genuine insights into how they are experiencing and dealing with the multitude of challenges with which they are presented. It has been a long-standing desire of mine to find out more about the challenges that face my second language learners. Being a Masters students at UKZN and conducting a research project as part- fulfilment of this qualification, afforded me the opportunity to pursue this desire.

5.2. Possible limitations of the study

The most obvious limitation to my study involved the fact that I was conducting research with my own students and that they could very well have been reluctant to be completely transparent about certain challenges and barriers, particularly if I, as their teacher, had played a part in any of these challenges. Their possible desire to remain in my good books and not appear to be criticising or blaming me for the challenges and barriers they were experiencing had the potential to colour the results of the study. They could also have been concerned about confidentiality issues especially if their comments implicated other staff members in a negative way.

From the outset, I was transparent about my motives for conducting this research project, and continually reminded them of my ethical commitment to keep their identities and comments confidential. I encouraged them to express their real feelings and to talk about their experiences without fear of recourse or judgement on my part. Based on the data collected it is clear that, despite the fact that I am their teacher, the participants felt they could trust me and were willing to tell their stories without fear of offending me.

Another potential limitation to my research could have presented itself through the choice of language spoken during the interviews. As a second language educator, there was a risk that in order to please me the participants would feel obliged to speak in English. I attempted to overcome this limitation, by encouraging them to feel free to use their home language during the interviews. In this way, they were better able to express and share their authentic stories without the meaning and depth of these being possibly diluted or misunderstood because of limited English proficiency or vocabulary.

5.3. A summary of the research findings

It was noted that teachers often operate under the misconception that learners do not understand when being taught subject content in English, their second language, and consequently repeatedly switch between English and isiZulu. Believing this to be a major obstacle towards progress in understanding and conversing in their second language, learners were not happy about this code switching, and, except in their isiZulu lesson, expressed the desire for teachers to use English only. Learners were enthusiastic about becoming proficient in the second language, believing it to be the key to future success in the work place. In order to achieve this, however, they expressed the need of support from their teachers and the school.

Learners also highlighted the need for support from their families. Some are more fortunate than others in this regard and it is clear that having that support helps them in learning the second language. Although many parents do allow learners opportunities to visit libraries to read and study, the learners would appreciate more support in the form English being spoken at home.

The study showed that learners encounter problems in the community in that they are afforded less opportunities to speak English. Participants stated that they liked to practise speaking their second language in social situations. However, in many of the social spaces where these interactions take place such as on public transport, in church, at shops, and at gym these learners are often criticised and ridiculed by the public for speaking English. They find this extremely discouraging and, as a result, they limit themselves to speaking English in selected spaces where they feel supported such as the principal's office and the school staff room. With the use of English considered somewhat of a taboo to others in their community, second language learners are in a sense 'imprisoned' by their home language. When participants were asked how they cope with being marginalised by the community and other learners, they responded by saying that they have learnt to persist in practising their second language even though it evokes criticism. Their goal to become fluent in their second language remains despite the blatant opposition.

Second language learners also suggested that inadequate school resources were a major obstacle to effective learning and that it was their desire to have a suitably stocked school library that would assist them with research and study. Learners have a distinct need for sufficient school textbooks to enable each learner to possess his or her own complete book instead of having to rely on receiving piecemeal photocopied material which ultimately gives them limited information.

5.4. Recommendations

- Taking these findings into account, The Department of Education could develop a campaign to de-stigmatise the use of the second language as well as counteract the negative publicity in black communities that acquiring an effective use of the second language is too difficult.
- Although English is an international language and necessary for success in a broader context, all official languages should enjoy equal status.

- Schools can support learners by forming and monitoring debate clubs where English is spoken exclusively. Participating in inter-school debate competitions will develop their second language skills
- Schools can establish programmes for educating parents on the importance of second language support in preparation for their children's future careers. Parents should also be encouraged to take an active interest in their child's academic progress by asking to see homework and workbooks as well as attending parent-teacher evenings.
- Whether through fund-raising by school management team, or finding sponsorship, a lot more needs to be done to provide the basic educational material required by each learner.
- Similarly a library will help enhance the young learners' acquisition of a second language.

5.5. Future related studies

Second language learners need relevant interventions that will assist them to become proficient in their second language. Future studies related to this field of research should investigate the support structures needed by second language learners, such as parental and societal support. There remains a need for interventions of any kind to explore avenues that will have a positive impact on second language learning in and out of the school context and in both formal and informal settings.

5.6 Conclusion

Throughout this research journey - from engaging with the literature review, through selecting methodologies, to generating data - I have gained more insight and regret my earlier conclusions that learners were just lazy and wanted to be spoon-fed the required information by their teachers. I have realised that the challenges second language learners encounter should not be taken lightly as those challenges all too often become barriers that prevent learners from reaching their full potential. Becoming aware of the extent to which these learners are challenged has contributed considerably to my own enlightenment and I hope, from now on, to be a far more sensitive educator. My personal growth through the journey of embarking on this dissertation, I owe to my participants, as it was their voices and their insights that brought me to this awareness.

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APPENDIX 1

CONSENT LETTER TO PRINCIPAL

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
Faculty of Education



School of Education
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Edgewood campus
P. Bag X03
Ashwood 3605
Durban

__/__/2014

The Principal

Mziwamandla Secondary School
M660
Umlazi
4031

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY

Dear Sir

My name is Thabisile Nelisiwe Mngayi and I am a Masters student at the School of Education, University of Kwa-Zulu Natal. I plan to undertake a study titled: ***The geographies of second language learners in and out of schooling.***

I hereby request permission to conduct a study at Mziwamandla Secondary School. The participants in the study will be learners from the above mentioned school. They will be required to participate in individual interviews and focus group interviews that are expected to last between 90 and 120 minutes in approximately two sessions. Please note that:

- The school and its participants will not receive any material gains for their participation in this research.

- The learners will be expected to respond to each question in a manner that will reflect their own personal opinions.
- The schools or the participant's identities will not be divulged under any circumstances.
- All learners' responses will be treated with strict confidentiality.
- Pseudonyms will be used (real names of the participants and the institution will not be used throughout the research process).
- Participation is voluntary; therefore participants will be free to withdraw at any time without negative or undesirable consequences to them.
- The participants will not, under any circumstances, be forced to disclose what they do not want to reveal.
- Audio-recordings of interviews will only be done if the permission of the participants is obtained.
- Data will be stored in the University locked cupboard for a maximum period of five years thereafter it will be destroyed.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact my supervisor or myself.

Thank you

Yours sincerely,
Mrs T N Mngayi.
Tel: 083 693 9791
Email: thabsilemngayi@gmail.com

Dr Antoinette D'amant
Tel: 082 735 9084
Email: damant@ukzn.ac.za

Consent letter

If permission is granted to conduct the research at your school, please fill in and sign the form below.

I (Full Name) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document as well as the nature of the research project that will be conducted at the school.

I hereby grant permission for the researcher (T.N Mngayi) to conduct the research project at Mziwamandla Secondary School. I understand that learners are free to withdraw from the project at any time, should they so desire.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

APPENDIX 2

CONSENT LETTER TO LEARNERS

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Faculty of Education



School of Education

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Edgewood campus

P. Bag X03

Ashwood 3605

Durban

__/__/2014

Dear learners

I am a Masters student at the School of Education, University of Kwa-Zulu Natal. I am doing a project on second language learners as my area of interest. I would like to involve you to my study as participants, my topic is: ***The geographies of second language learners in and out of schooling.***

The participants in the study will be learners from this school. I am interested in knowing how you experience schooling, as well as how you navigate the geographies at your school. In order for me to obtain the required information from you, I will have to interview you individually and then thereafter in a focus group. The interview will be approximately 90 minutes long. We will meet in the Music classroom, about 2 sessions on different days that are convenient for you. I will also be requesting permission from your parents/caregivers.

Please note that:

- The school and learners will not receive material gains for participation in this research project.
- You will be expected to respond to each question in a manner that will reflect your own personal opinion.
- The schools or your identities will not be divulged under any circumstances.
- All learners' responses will be treated with strict confidentiality.
- Pseudonyms will be used (your real name and the name of the school will not be used throughout the research process.
- Participation is voluntary; therefore, you will be free to withdraw at any time without negative or undesirable consequences to them.
- You will not, under any circumstances, be forced to disclose what you do not want to tell me.
- Audio-recording of interviews will only be done if you give me permission.

- All data will be stored in the University locked cupboard for a maximum period of five years thereafter it will be destroyed.

Thank you

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact my supervisor or myself.

Yours sincerely

T.N Mngayi

Tel: 083 693 9791

Email: thabsilemngayi@gmail.com

Dr Antoinette D'amant

Tel: 082 735 9084

Email: damant@ukzn.ac.za

Consent form for learners

If you agree to take part in this project, please fill in your name and sign the form below.

I,, (Full Name) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project. I hereby agree to take part in the project at my school. I understanding that I can withdraw from the project at any time I want to.

Name

Signature

Date

T.N Mngayi

Tel: 083 693 9791

Email: thabsilemngayi@gmail.com

APPENDIX 3

CONSENT LETTER TO PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
Faculty of Education



School of Education
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Edgewood campus
P. Bag X03
Ashwood 3605
Durban

__/__/2014

RE: REQUEST YOUR CHILD'S PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

Dear parent/caregiver

My name is Thabisile Mngayi and I am a Masters Student at the School of Education, University of Kwa-Zulu Natal. I plan to undertake a study titled: ***The geographies of second language learners in and out of schooling.***

I kindly ask your permission for your child to participate in the project. The participants in the study will be learners from the school. I value what your child thinks about his/her schooling. We will meet in the Music room, on 2 sessions conducted on different days that are convenient for your child. I will be requesting permission from your child to work with me on the project. Please note that:

- The school and learners will not receive material gains for participation in this research project.
- Your child is expected to respond to each question in a manner that will reflect his/her own personal opinion.
- The school's or your child's identities will not be divulged under any circumstances.
- All your child's responses will be treated with strict confidentiality.
- Pseudonyms will be used (your child's real name and the name of the school will not be used throughout the research process).
- Participation is voluntary; therefore, your child will be free to withdraw at any time without negative or undesirable consequences to him/her.
- Your child will not, under any circumstances, be forced to disclose what he/she does not want to tell us.
- Audio-recording of interviews will only be done if you and your child give us permission.

- Data will be stored in the University locked cupboard for a maximum period of five years thereafter it will be destroyed.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact my supervisor or myself.

Thank you

Yours sincerely
Mrs T.N Mnqayi
Tel: 083 693 9791
Email: thabsilemnqayi@gmail.com

Dr Antoinette D'amant
Tel: 082 735 9084
Email: damant@ukzn.ac.z

APPENDIX 4

ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF KWA-ZULU NATAL



26 April 2013

Professor A Muthukrishna B45
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Protocol reference number: HSS/0250/013

Project title: The geographies of children's schooling in six Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries: Narratives of children, parents/caregivers and teachers

Dear Professor Muthukrishna

Expedited approval

I wish to inform you that your application has been granted Full Approval through an expedited review process.

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

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

Yours faithfully

Professor Steven Collings (Chair)

/px

cc Dr P Morojele
cc Academic leader researcher Dr MN Davids
cc School administrator Ms B Bhengu

Humanities & Social Sc Research Ethics Committee
Professor S Collings (Chair)

Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

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

Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 3587/8350/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0)31 260 4609 Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za /
snymanm@ukzn.ac.za / mahunp@ukzn.ac.za

Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS



APPENDIX 5
ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE FROM THE KZN DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION



education

Department:
Education
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Sibusiso Alwar

Tel: 033 341 8610

Ref.:2/4/8

Prof. N Muthukrishna & Dr P Morojele
P O Box X03
ASHWOOD
3605

Dear Prof. Muthukrishna and Dr Morojele

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **THE GEOGRAPHIES OF CHILDREN'S SCHOOLING IN KWAZULU-NATAL: NARRATIVES OF CHILDREN, PARENTS/CAREGIVERS AND TEACHERS**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 01 May 2013 to 31 March 2014.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Mr. Alwar at the contact numbers below.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report / dissertation / thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Director-Resources Planning, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education:

Umlazi District
Sisonke District
Zululand District

Othukela District
Pinetown District
Illembe District

Nkosinathi S.P. Sishi, PhD
Head of Department: Education
Date: 19 November 2013

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

POSTAL: Private Bag X 9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200, KwaZulu-Natal, Republic of South Africa

PHYSICAL: 247 Burger Street, Anton Lembede House, Pietermaritzburg, 3201. Tel. 033 392 1004 Fax: 033 392 1203

EMAIL ADDRESS: kehologile.connie@kzndoe.gov.za; CALL CENTRE: 0860 596 363;

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

WEBSITE: www.kzneducation.gov.za

APPENDIX 6

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

The following questions may serve as probes if participants do not naturally engage with these issues:

- What do you think other learners' perceptions about second language learning are?
- Why do you think other learners have these perceptions?
- What do you think teachers' perceptions about second language learning are?
- Why do you think teachers have these perceptions?
- How are second language learners treated in a language class in the school?
- How do you feel about the ways in which second language learners are treated?
- What support do you get from your family as a second language learner?
- How could they better support you as a second language learner?
- What are the challenges that your family experiences when trying to support your schooling as a second language learner?
- What kind of support do you receive from your peers as a second language learner?
- How could they better support you as a second language learner?
- What challenges do you think your peers face in terms of offering you support?
- What kind of support do you get from your teachers, the school principal and the School Governing Body?
- How could they better support you as a second language learner?
- What challenges do you think the school faces when trying to support you as a second language learner?
- How could they better support you as a second language learner?
- How does the fact that you are a second language learner impact on your liking school and it being a positive experience in your life?
- How does being a second language learner impact on your understanding the content of the subjects you learn?
- How does being a second language learner impact on or affect your social life?

APPENDIX 7
LETTER FROM LANGUAGE EDITOR

This is to certify that I read and edited the Masters Dissertation

Geographies of Second Language Learners In and Out of School:

A Narrative Inquiry

by

Thabisile Nelisiwe Mngayi

On 14TH February 2015

Charon Williams-Ros
Glenwood, Durban 4001
Email: charon@wragency.co.za

