

THE EXPERIENCES OF EDUCATORS WITH ENGLISH AS THE
LANGUAGE OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN THE
INTERMEDIATE PHASE

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by

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Declaration

I, **Goodman Vusumuzi Ntombela**, hereby declare that this dissertation, entitled *The Experiences of Educators with English as the Language of Learning and Teaching in the Intermediate Phase*, is my own original work, and has never been submitted to any University for the award of any degree. All the sources have been acknowledged in the form of references.

CANDIDATE'S SIGNATURE:

CO-SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE:

SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE:

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, my wife Angel (uMaNxumalo), and my children Suko, Nqephu and Amile. Nor am I forgetting to dedicate this work to the memory of my late parents – my father, Israel, and my mother, Constance Ntombela (uMaZulu) – and my late sister Thabi Ntombela. I would not have completed this journey, and other earlier academic achievements, had it not been for your support and encouragement. No words are sufficient to describe your valuable support and love. I will always be grateful to you.

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Abstract

This study aimed to explore the experiences of educators in using English as the language of learning and teaching for Grade 4 learners. It employed an interpretive qualitative approach. A sample of six teachers teaching Grade 4 were purposively selected from a district in the province of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. Data were collected through classroom observations and unstructured interviews. Findings revealed that teachers in rural monolingual community schools find it difficult to meet the policy prescriptions and curriculum demands in terms of the language of learning and teaching. Teachers end up translating into the mother tongue, which is isiZulu, and code-switching to enhance content understanding; this is a strategy that limits both teachers' and learners' exposure to English. In addition, learners transitioning from their Home language to English as the language of learning are not sufficiently supported. The findings also indicate that teachers in rural monolingual community schools in King Cetshwayo district find it difficult to meet the curriculum demands in terms of the language of learning and teaching. Grade 3 moves to Grade 4 with little English vocabulary and competence; this makes teaching very strenuous and challenging to teachers. Teachers were also found to be insufficiently proficient in English. The significance of the study relates to the educational issues of rural schools that are ignored by officialdom, including the fact that teachers are not adequately prepared to teach in English. In addition, learners transitioning to the very unfamiliar language of learning and teaching are not sufficiently supported with regard to improving their command of it. Hence, policies need revision to address the linguistic shortcomings of teachers and learners. New policies ought to be designed and implemented if English is to remain the language of learning and teaching in South African schools.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ANA: Annual national assessment

BICS: Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills

CA: Curriculum advisers

CALP: Cognitive academic linguistics proficiency

CAPS: Curriculum and assessment policy statement

CLIL: Content and language integrated learning

CSM: Code-switching and mixing

DBE: Department of Basic Education

DBST: District-based support team

DET: Department of Education and Training

DNE: Department of National Education

DoE: Department of Education

EAC: English across the curriculum

FAL: First Additional Language

FL: First language

HL: Home Language

ILAL: Incremental introduction of African language policy

ILST: Institution level support team

L1: 1st language

L2: 2nd language

LAC: Language Across the Curriculum

LiEP: Language in Education Policy

LoLT: Language of Learning and Teaching

NEEDU: National Education Evaluation and Development Unit

NLP: National Language Policy

PDE: Provincial Department of Education

RNCS: Revised National Curriculum Statement

SASA: South African Schools Act

SL: Second Language

WCED: Western Cape Education Department

CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Language plays a significant role in the teacher education programmes and in children's learning. According to the Department of Basic Education's (DBE's) 2011 Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) on English as FAL (FAL), language is a tool for thought and communication. It further states that language is also a cultural and aesthetic means commonly shared among people to make better sense of the world in which they live. Learning to use language effectively enables learners to acquire knowledge, to express their identity, feelings and ideas, to interact with others and to manage their world. FAL is a language which is not a mother tongue, but is used as a language of learning and teaching (LoLT) in South African schools. The focus in the first few years of school is on developing learners' ability to understand and speak the language, that is acquire basic interpersonal communication skill (DBE, 2011). In Grades 2 and 3 learners start to build literacy on this oral foundation. In the Intermediate and Senior Phases, learners continue to strengthen their learning, especially with regard to their speaking, reading and writing skills. At this stage the majority of learners are learning through the medium of their FAL, English, and should be getting exposure to it. Greater emphasis is therefore placed on using the FAL for the purpose of thinking and reasoning. This enables the learners to develop their cognitive academic skills, which they need to study their subjects.

In South African schools many children use their additional language, which is English, as their language of learning and teaching (LoLT). This means that they must reach required levels of proficiency in English; they need to be able to read and write well in the language. It is important to note that English is a tool without which no effective learning and teaching can happen. When learners change from the Foundation Phase to the Intermediate Phase, what happens is that since learners have been generally learning in a monolingual context, their daily activities have been carried out through their mother tongue; it then becomes difficult to make the required adjustment from the mother tongue, which is isiZulu, to English as the additional language, which is the common practice in schools located in the deep rural areas. Instruction also becomes

difficult for the teachers in the deep rural when imparting academic content through the medium of English to Grade 4 learners who have been taught in their mother tongue for three years, with limited exposure to English. However, the situation is different for learners in schools in townships or urban areas because of their exposure to valuable resources that make learning the additional language relatively easy. The teachers teaching those learners will have less challenging experiences circumstances as opposed to than those teaching in the rural areas. Sibanda (2017) argues that although the move from Grade 3 to Grade 4 is a global challenge, the transition challenges are considered from within a South African educational landscape, which typifies that of several educational systems, particularly in Africa. The multi-layered transitions at the Grade 3-4 interface are not just horizontal (i.e. individual-specific, unpredictable and subtle, everyday movements). but also vertical (i.e. systemic, predictable movements over time), leading to more discontinuities than continuities of experience, as the Sibanda (2017) paper seeks to show. Hirsch (2003) states that the well-documented decline in learners' academic performance in Grade 4, particularly in their reading scores, which is designated the Fourth Grade slump and speaks to the sensitivity of this transition. Academic decline at this transitional stage, even within the HL- (HL) speaking contexts, suggests the transitional challenges are more marked within the FAL-speaking contexts.

As it must by now have become clear, one of the major changes that disrupt the lives of young Grade 3 learners is the transitioning from mother tongue as the medium of instruction to the use of English as the LoLT in Grade 4. Heugh (2006) has shown that this transition causes challenges for them to master learning content. In view of the many changes that these learners are exposed to when moving to Grade 4, they are in great need of supporting resources such as libraries, and especially books in English, that will require them to read and get used to the unfamiliar language.

Fleisch (2007) makes the important observation that it is very likely that the use of English as the language of instruction is likely to have different effects across different groups of learners, especially in the South African context. The experiences the researcher has gone through as a teacher in the Intermediate Phase prompted him to examine the way teachers interact with learners in this Phase to reinforce English as the LoLT. It is against this background that this study explored the Intermediate Phase

teachers' understanding of the experiences of the when they use English as the LoLT in their classrooms practice. It also sought to ascertain whether the use of English as the LoLT meets the learning needs of Intermediate Phase learners. The results produced by this study may be vital in understanding the complexities that are encountered in the Intermediate Phase using English as the LoLT.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Early literacy has both been influenced and complicated by the emergence of English as a global *lingua franca*. English hegemony is supported by demands of the global economy. In South Africa, the majority of the learners (over 80%) speak an African language, but in Grade 4 they learn through the medium of English, which has less than a 10% native speaker population (Howie, Venter, Van Staden, Zimmerman, Long, Du Toit, Sherman & Archer, 2008). Schooling in the Foundation Phase (Grade R-3) is in the HL before transitioning to English for the majority of learners in Grade 4 (Sibanda, 2017). The Language in Education Policy (LiEP) of 1997 makes provision for learners to elect the LoLT at Grade 4 (DBE; Republic of South Africa, 2010), and in most cases the elected language and the language offered by the school as LoLT is English. According to Pretorius and Mampuru (2007), this is typical of the African continent, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, where, despite the linguistic diversity, most learners school learn through the medium of English, a colonial language. This underscores the need for learner competence in English by the end of Grade 3 to effectively learn in the language at Grade 4. Prinsloo (2007) posits that the sudden transition from using an African language in the Foundation Phase (FP) to using English as the LoLT in Grade 4 sets learners up for failure. The researcher's observation was that English as LoLT, is not used to the fullest extent in some Intermediate Phase schools in King Cetshwayo district. The common practice among learners is the use of the mother tongue, isiZulu, in both the classroom and outside the classrooms. Some teachers switch to the HL when teaching content subjects instead of using English, which is the official LoLT. On the other hand, learners are expected to answer the assessment and examination questions in English (Maphalala, 1988). Some educators opt for code-switching in trying to clarify some concepts, and get into the trap of teaching in isiZulu in violation of the LoLT policy. It is against this background that the researcher conducted the study to understand the experiences of

Intermediate Phase educators in using English as the LoLT, specifically in Grade 4 as the entry grade in the Intermediate Phase.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following questions emanated from the formulation of the problem:

1.3.1 What are the experiences of educators in using English FAL as the LoLT in the Intermediate Phase?

1.3.2. Does the use of English FAL as the LoLT meet the learning needs of the Intermediate Phase learners?

1.3.3 What strategies do Intermediate Phase educators use in their classroom practices to reinforce the use of English FAL as the LoLT?

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives contemplated through this study are to:

1.4.1 Explore the educators' experiences with regard to the use of English as the LoLT in the Intermediate Phase.

1.4.2 Ascertain whether or not the use of English as the LoLT meets the learning needs of Intermediate Phase learners.

1.4.3 Determine the strategies used by Intermediate Phase educators in their classroom practices to reinforce the use of English FAL as the LoLT.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study should benefit the officials responsible for the South African education system in making them aware of an urgent need for new strategies to deal with the issue of the lack of English proficiency in Grade 4 teachers. It might assist the Department of Basic Education in strengthening language policies to deal with the current situation experienced by educators in the Intermediate Phase with the use of English as the LoLT. The researcher will have discussions to share findings and recommendations with Intermediate Phase educators at schools in the Obuka circuit. The following stakeholders are expected to benefit from this project: The Department

of Basic Education, School principals, Intermediate Phase educators and the curriculum. This research topic will also make it possible to publish articles in accredited journals because of its structure and the methodology that will be used.

1.6 DEFINITION OF OPERATIONAL CONCEPTS

1.6.1 Additional language

An additional language refers to a language which is not a mother tongue, but is used for certain communicative functions in a society, for example, as a medium of learning and teaching in education (DoE, 2012).

1.6.2 Intermediate Phase

According to the DoE (2008), the Intermediate Phase is the Phase that involves Grades 4-6, where the emphasis is still on establishing foundations, but learners are led into more abstract thoughts and independent work.

1.6.3 Experiences

The concept experience refers to any interaction, course, programme or other experience in which learning takes place, whether it occurs in traditional academic settings such as school classrooms, or in non-traditional settings (DoE, 2002).

1.6.4 Learning

According to Skinner (2013), learning is a change in behaviour due to punishment and reinforcement. Before one can get into learning, one needs to get over punishment and reinforcement first.

1.6.5 Code-switching

Code-switching is a method described by Bock and Mheta (2014) which entails the use of more than one language during a single communicative event in order to emphasise something, repeat information, clarify information or translate.

1.7 ETHICAL AND SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

The study was conducted in public schools, and as expected, ethical matters required a great deal of attention. The following were taken into consideration as ethical issues:

- The researcher sent a letter to the KwaZulu-Natal provincial Department of Basic Education seeking permission to conduct research using schools.
- Permission was sought from the University of Zululand for ethical clearance, and was granted.
- Letters to principals of schools were sent to ask for permission to access schools selected as the population of the study.

Confidentiality, anonymity, voluntarism and consent issues were discussed with participants before their involvement. Consent forms were explained to participants, who were assured of confidentiality, anonymity and voluntarism. They were also made aware that there were no monetary incentives for their participation and that they were free to withdraw their involvement at any time. All efforts were made not to violate the rights of participants in terms of confidentiality, anonymity, informed consent and voluntarism.

1.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has introduced the field of the study and has also provided the context of the research problem, the objectives, research questions, ethical considerations and elucidation of the key operational concepts. In doing so it is anticipated that there would be a clear understanding of the parameters of the study. The next chapter presents a literature review and the theoretical framework that underpins the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the literature was reviewed in relation to the objectives of the study, which were to explore the educators' experiences with regard to the use of English as the LoLT in the Intermediate Phase; ascertain whether or not the use of English as the LoLT meets the learning needs of Intermediate Phase learners; and determine the strategies used by Intermediate Phase educators in their classroom practice to enforce the use of English FAL as the LoLT. The literature is discussed under the following subtopics: (a) Current LoLT policy for the Intermediate Phase in South Africa; (b) code-switching and code-mixing; (c) advantages of code-switching and code-mixing; (d) disadvantages of code-switching and code-mixing; (e) challenges experienced by learners in English as the LoLT; (f) problems experienced by teachers in using English as the LoLT; (g) resources employed to support learners; (h) support systems to facilitate support to learners; (i) mother-tongue instruction and second language instruction (bilingualism); (j) advantages of bilingualism.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is underpinned by Skutnabb-Kangas and Garcia's theory (1995) on the bilingual education model. Skutnabb-Kangas (1988) and Macdonald (1990) describe models of bilingual education, namely, the transitional model, the plural multilingual model, the two-way bilingual education immersion model, the maintenance model and the submersion model. These models are used by other countries as strategies for implementing bilingual or multilingual policies. In the plural multilingual model learners from different language backgrounds and nationalities use several LoLTs. Learners who were originally monolingual are exposed to many languages. The main aim of this model is to assist learners to become multilingual so that they are able to participate in the different domains. This model is also referred to as the mainstream bilingual model, Skutnabb-Kangas and Garcia (1995) assert that this is a form of additive multilingualism. In the maintenance or development model the minority learners start by using their mother tongues as the LoLT, and shift to the majority language where

both languages are used as the LoLT. For example, some of the subjects are learnt through the learner's first language, and the remaining subjects through the second language.

2.2.1 Translanguaging

Translanguaging fits within the spectrum of work on multilingualism. Included in this range of language activity are code-switching, translation, and translanguaging. Code-switching is usually a relatively short move from the LoLT to the HL of learners, and then a switch back to the LoLT. The other definition of code-switching is that it is the technique of changing from one language to another within the same context. Translation usually entails a repetition of an oral or written text in the more accessible HL of learners (Probyn, 2015). Both of these practices are responsive rather than planned strategies, usually regarded as temporary excursions from the monolingual ideal. In some cases, use of the learner's HL, instead of the LoLT, is viewed as illicit or transgressive (Probyn, 2002, 2008, 2015). Translanguaging, on the other hand, can be used as a pedagogically sensitive tool to systematically promote learning (Heugh, 2015; Lewis, Jones, & Baker, 2012; Probyn, 2015).

2.2.2 Cummins's theories on bilingualism

Cummins (2008) distinguishes between basic interpersonal cognitive skills (BICS) and cognitive academic linguistics proficiency (CALP). According to Cummins, BICS has to do with the ability to speak and understand a language or conversational language skills, in contrast with CALP, which has to do with the ability to use a language in order to attain academic success or cognitive and academic language skills. As stated by Cummins (2008), it is easier for children to acquire BICS than CALP. Cummins argues that the learners' conversational fluency may hide their failure to acquire academic language skills. Most of the learners and their parents are not aware that they have not acquired the required language skills to be academically successful. He stresses that it takes a very long time for learners to attain CALP.

2.3 STRATEGIES USED BY TEACHERS

A strategy specifically related to the field of language usage is described by Harmer (2007) as a theory about the nature of language and language usage which is the source of the way things are done in the classroom, and which provides the reasons

for doing them. The theory describes how a language is used and offers a model for language competence. Harmer explains the importance of understanding the individual differences in the class. According to this author, the same learning task may not be appropriate for all learners, which means that the teachers need to teach learners according to their individual strengths by means of employing various teaching and learning strategies. Rose (2015), however, refers to a definitional fuzziness of major concepts in the field of language. Macaro (2006) argues that there is a lack of consensus about the following: whether the strategies occur inside or outside the brain; whether the learning strategies consist of knowledge, intention, action or all three; whether strategies survive across all learning situations, tasks and contexts; and whether they are integral or additive to language processing.

Landsberg et al. (2011) refer to the scaffolding techniques such as repetition and individual attention as a means of offering special help, as well as the use of various instructional methods to gradually move learners towards stronger understanding and ultimately greater independence in the learning process. During these methods of instruction, teachers provide successive levels of temporary support that help English-speaking learners to reach higher levels of comprehension and skill acquisition that they would not be able to achieve without individual assistance (Rothenberg & Fischer, 2007). One specific method of scaffolding described by Landsberg et al. (2011:82) is where the teachers give learners a simplified version of a lesson, assignment or reading, and gradually increase the complexity over time. Another method of scaffolding is where teachers describe or illustrate a concept, problem or process in multiple ways to ensure understanding (Landsberg et al. 2011). The audiolingual method refers to support through a gradual process of repetitive instruction in order for the learner to be able to understand the LoLT. The aim of audio-linguicism is to promote mechanical habit formation through repetition of basic patterns (Bock & Mheta, 2014). Code-switching is another method described by Bock and Mheta (2014), and entails the use of more than one language during a single communicative event in order to emphasise something, repeat information, clarify information or translate.

Non-verbal modelling is viewed as a “silent way method” which is used to teach the LoLT to the L2-speaking learner. During this method the teacher says as little as

possible. The learners discover and create language instead of just remembering and repeating what they have been taught (Landsberg et al. 2011). The teacher, for example, points to different sounds on the phonemic charts, models them and then indicates to the learners that they must show sounds. The teacher only uses gestures or actions when they are saying sounds/words correctly by moving to the next item. The use of concrete activities is another strategy that provides learners with experiences that support the learning process. Concrete activities are used to support learners with respect to the viewpoint that L2-speaking learners understand content better in a learning environment where the interaction is more practical in nature. Engelbrecht and Green (2001) argue that the element of good instruction, together with engagement in concrete activities, is effective facilitation, and promotes cognitive and language development. In this regard, the authors continue to stress the importance of exposing learners to an environment where they feel safe enough to have opinions and express their thoughts by means of activity (Engelbrecht & Green, 2001).

Group activities are viewed as a facilitation of cooperative learning, with the emphasis on the integration of academic and social learning experiences (Johnson & Johnson, 2008). Within the South African context, Landsberg et al. (2011) argue that cooperative learning is appropriate for the heterogeneous classrooms typical of current South African schools. Group work can be learner-or teacher-centred. A learner-centred approach intends to address the distinct learning needs, abilities, learning styles, interests and cultural backgrounds of individual learners and groups of learners (Abbott, 2017). In this approach the teacher serves as the facilitator of learning for individuals and groups of learners rather than for the class as a whole. A teacher-centred approach for group activities is employed when the teacher assumes control over the material that learners need to learn, the way in which they learn it, and the pace of learning (Abbot, 2017). One value of group activities is that it fosters a sense of belonging (Landsberg et al., 2011). In addition, learners in specific groups can progress at the pace needed by the specific group. Gibbons (2006) refers to pair work as an effective way of using language in the classroom to assist the L2-speaking learners by encouraging them to use the LoLT as much as possible. Friend and Cook (2009) assert that collaboration is an important strategy of inclusive education. When parents and teachers work together in childhood settings, the impact of the child's

development multiplies. The authors postulate that involving parents in the early education programme ensures long-term impact and sustainability. Landsberg et al. (2011) argue that parents and teachers who both focus on the home learners' language barrier can enrich each other's understanding of the learners' development, and work towards achieving common goals. Collaboration with parents is described by Landsberg et al. (2011) in terms of parents as resources. They assert that contact with parents should assist them to facilitate their child's learning and achievement through homework activities. Homework provides opportunities for learners to practise content being taught to them. By giving frequent homework to the L2-speaking learners, teachers give learners a greater opportunity to develop language fluency through the information being taught (Callahan, Rademacher & Hildreth 1998). Thus homework needs to be clear and well designed in order to assist the parents of the second language learner. For this to happen teachers need culturally relevant understandings of the family (Wong, 2010). These understandings are critical for developing a "funds-of-knowledge" approach in which the cultural and linguistic strengths that learners and their families bring to the learning environment are recognised and supported (Landsberg et al. 2011). Sustained teacher-parent contact allows the learner to grow up in a context of ecological harmony between settings.

Home visits is one way to ensure contact and positive teacher-parent relationships to better meet the needs of the learner and family between settings (Landsberg et al. 2011). Halliburton and Oates (2012), however, warn that there are many ethical issues to be considered when including home visits as strategy, such as ensuring the safety of young female teachers going into undesirable areas of a city. Therefore, schools need to follow correct procedures by adopting a policy in this regard. Chinedu (2014) explains that home visits are an effective means of establishing good home-school relations as they offer valuable opportunities for both parents and teachers to build a relationship where they can work together to address the learner's academic and other learning needs or difficulties. Greater background knowledge of the learners' places teachers in a better position to support the parents on how to assist their children with homework (Pickering, 2003). Wyse and Jones (2008) place emphasis on encouraging the learners to use the LoLT outside the classroom, as a way of assisting them to master the language in which they are being educated. Landsberg et al. (2011) emphasise the value of practising the LoLT in the classroom. They assert that

improving the learners' sentence construction is to encourage the LoLT. They postulate that if a learner often makes the same mistake in sentence construction then the correct way must be discussed. The correct language and sentence structure should be illustrated. However, Haslam, Wilkin and Kellet (2005) argue that concepts and ideas can be developed in any language, and not necessarily in the LoLT (which is English in this case). This means that the appropriate role for parents might be to use the child's HL to explore and develop the concepts that are taught at school in the LoLT. Therefore, in line with the LiEP, learners who share a common language should not be discouraged from using this in the classroom. In peer modelling, a strategy to support learners who speak English as their L2, peers serve as an example of socially acceptable behaviour, while the "buddy" system is an easy, accessible way of providing support or social development. Learners with different abilities are grouped together to share responsibilities, tasks and successes, and peers serve as helpers (Engelbrecht & Green, 2001).

Uys van der Walt, van den Berg and Botha (2007) acknowledge that not all teachers are proficient in the HL of the learners who are being taught at school in English as the LoLT. In order to address this problem, the teacher may make use of the learner who is proficient in his or her HL to translate instructions and content to the peers whose LoLT is English. Reflecting on this strategy, one must, however, take note of Fleisch's (2008) concern that code-switching means that learners never adequately acquire the language of assessment, which ultimately leads to academic failure. In response to Minister Motshekga's concern about the LoLT being a barrier to learning, the DBE has developed two manuals for teaching English across the curriculum: *Manual for Teaching English across the Curriculum 2013* and *Manual for Teaching English across Curriculum: Book 2*. English across curriculum (EAC) is a strategy for integrating the teaching of content subjects with language learning. In South Africa this strategy involves the teaching of language in a content-based manner. In Europe content-based language teaching is referred to as content- and language-integrated learning (CLIL), and in other areas it is referred to as language across the curriculum (LAC), or cross-curriculum language learning (DBE, 2013). In South Africa the majority of the learners are taught through the medium of English as a second additional language and the term EAC has been adopted instead of LAC. With regard to EAC,

learning in all subjects is dependent upon language; as a result, effective language development facilitates the learning of content subjects.

2.4 CURRENT LoLT POLICY FOR THE INTERMEDIATE PHASE CLASSES IN SOUTH AFRICA.

In South Africa, where children are taught in an African language in the Foundation Phase, Grade 4 is particularly challenging because this is when English becomes the LoLT. Not only do learners need to develop adequate oral communication skills in English, they also need to develop the more book-oriented academic literacy skills in the LoLT in order to cope with the increasing literacy challenges of the Intermediate Phase. If they have developed good reading skills in their HL, then this should form a sound basis for developing reading skills in a second language, which in this context is English (Geva & Zadeh, 2006). The researcher concurs with these scholars in the sense that in order for learners to be able to understand a second language there must be a sound foundation in the HL.

Lipka and Siegel (2007) state that bilingual reading research has found that decoding skills can transfer across languages with an alphabetical written code. Reading comprehension skills can also be transferred across languages, such as the ability to identify setting, main characters, problems and resolutions in narratives, or the ability to identify main ideas, make inferences and predictions, and use linguistic or text clues to construct meaning when reading expository texts. The transfer of such skills forms the basis of Cummins's Interdependence Hypothesis, namely: there is a common underlying proficiency relating to academic literacy that is shared across languages (Cummins, 2000). In bilingual education systems it is thus important for learners to develop strong literacy skills in their HL as a basis for building academic literacy proficiency that can be shared across languages.

If Grade 4 is generally recognised as an important transition in schooling systems, the researcher has a strong feeling that this should be reflected in curriculum policy for South African schools. Although CAPS has replaced the former OBE assessment standards since 2011, at the time that the intervention started in 2010, CAPS was not yet in place, and the assessment standards for reading and viewing in Grade 4 in a FAL expected Grade 4 learners to do, inter alia, the following: understand elements of

the story (title, characters, point of view, role of pictures in making meanings); read for information (e.g. in a recipe, map, timetable); understand design and layout of print material; use reference books and develop vocabulary; and demonstrate a reading vocabulary of between 1000 and 2500 words (DoE, 2002; 2011).

The South African Constitution legislates the official and equal status of 11 languages, and the constitutional right of all South Africans to receive education in official languages of their choice in public schools within reasonable practical limitations (RSA, 1996). Informed by this, the South African Schools Act (SASA) (RSA, 1996) prescribes that school governing bodies (SGBs) determine the LoLT policies of school subjects. Language in education policy (LiEP) (DoE, 1997) adds voice to the Constitution and SASA's views on LoLT policy. LiEP requires that schools formulate LoLT policy that promotes multilingualism (the ability to speak two or more languages) in the form of strong dual-medium LoLT implementation by using more than one language when teaching, and or/by offering additional languages as fully-fledged subjects (DoE, 1997). Schools should further assist the provincial education departments to honour the constitutional right of learners to determine their LoLT. LiEP further recommends that schools adopt an "additive approach to bilingualism" (DoE, 1997) as a way of achieving multilingualism, where "the underlying principle is to maintain the HL while providing access to effective acquisition of additional languages" (DoE, 1997). In practice, South African primary schools are obliged to ensure that all learners learn their HL and at least one second language, which must be English, as prescribed by CAPS (DBE, 2011), as subjects from Grade 1. CAPS further stipulates that the HL be taught as a subject for a minimum of three years.

By the end of the General Education band of schooling (Grades R up to Grade 9) the schools must determine all remaining aspects of LoLT policy via decisions made by SGBs (Taylor & Coetzee, 2013). In contrast to the additive approach to bilingualism as the DBE's normal orientation, how LoLT policy pans out for the majority of the disadvantaged primary schools in South Africa is that a transitional approach is taken in the form of a late-exit transitional LoLT model where the first language (L1) is used as the LoLT up to, but not including, Grade 4, while English is taught as a subject in this time. Then, from Grade 4 onwards, a transition occurs, and English is used as the LoLT, while the L1 is taught as a subject. In a minority of disadvantaged SA schools,

a straight-for-English approach is taken, where English is the LoLT from Grade 1, while the L1 is taught only as a subject. This type of approach is submersion LoLT policy. As such, and contrary to the prevailing language in education legislation, the models of LoLT policy prevalent in disadvantaged SA primary schools are subtractive, not additive, in their approach to bilingualism. DBE (2010) data illustrates this trend. In 2007, 70% of Grade 4 African language L1 learners in SA were taught in English (up from less than 30% in Grade 3) (Pluddeman, 2015). Thus a gap in implementation exists between the emphasis placed by the Constitution and LiEP on achieving multilingualism, and how LoLT policy is formulated and implemented by schools. According to Heugh (2013), this is the result of a disjuncture between constitutional and other governmental policies, which results in an assimilatory drive towards English as the LoLT in SA schools. With regard to where responsibility for the implementation of LoLT policy in SA schools' rests, this is only vaguely referred to within government policy documents as "the school". The extent to which LoLT policy is implemented in SA schools is difficult to ascertain, as doing so is reliant on reports from education role players who often share some responsibility for the LoLT implementation, and are therefore unwilling to disclose information on the matter.

The high prevalence of teachers not using the LoLT when code-switching and code-mixing during lessons within second language (L2) LoLT classrooms in South Africa provides an indication of the limited extent to which LoLT policy is implemented in similar South African contexts (de Wet, 2002; Benson, 2005; Brock-Utne & Alidou, 2006; Bush Joubert, Kiggundu, & van Rooyen, et al., 2009).

2.5 CODE-SWITCHING AND CODE-MIXING IN LEARNING AND TEACHING

Code-switching and code-mixing (CSM) are communication strategies frequently found in both L1 and L2 LoLT contexts employed by both teachers and learners in disadvantaged South African classrooms. Switching between L1 and L2 sentences during speaking is referred to as code-switching, while the use of both the L1 and L2 within the same sentence is referred to as code-mixing (Heugh, 2002; 1990). The National Centre for Curriculum and Research Development in SA (DoE, 2000) observes code-switching in SA to be a "main linguistic feature in classrooms where

the teacher and learners have the common language but have to use an additional language for learning; the learner's language is used as a form of scaffolding". CSM are variously employed by teachers, according to their views on the strategies and their own language skills, to help learners understand what is being taught and to increase learner participation during lessons (Probyn et al., 2002), and involve teachers' and learners' mixed use of the LoLT and teachers' and learners' L1 during lessons. These strategies are commonly used by teachers to mitigate their own limited proficiency in using the LoLT (Banda, Mostert, & Wikan, 2012). Generally, however, teachers employ CSM while they teach as they feel they have no choice but to do so in their circumstances, as the following quote from research conducted by Mwinsheikhe (2003:97) illustrates: "I personally was compelled to switch to Kiswahili learners' L1 by a sense of helplessness born of the inability to make students understand the subject matter by using English."

2.5.1 Advantages of code-switching and mixing in classrooms

The primary advantages of code-switching within L2 LoLT classrooms are also the main reasons why code-switching is employed by teachers and learners: to be able to understand, and to communicate. As such, within multilingual classrooms, code-switching can be considered a social and linguistic skill (Mesthrie, 2008). Code-switching is used to facilitate communication between people of different cultures (Wolff, 2010) and in school to facilitate learning by improving the communication of the curriculum between teachers and learners (Brock-Utne, 2007). As a pedagogical strategy, code-switching is useful as it allows what research refers to as exploratory talk within classroom conversations, where learners' L1 is used to explore concepts and ideas to a degree greater than would have been possible if they were to have been explored in the L2 LoLT alone (Setati Adler, Reed, & Bapoo et al., 2002). Research on L2 mathematics teaching in SA has found that code-switching, usually to give learners an explanation of concepts and processes in their HLs, is educationally beneficial and necessary for adequate learning to occur (Setati, Chitera & Essien, 2009). In the light of the educational advantages of code-switching and mixing in classrooms, very little training is provided for teachers in SA on how to use code-switching strategies as a linguistic resource in a manner that is planned and strategic (Probyn, 2008).

2.5.2 Limitations of code-switching and code-mixing in classrooms

Despite code-switching as a practice in education being viewed positively as an educational resource (Setati, Chitera & Essien, 2009), its value remains dilemma-filled and an issue of considerable debate as a result of problems surrounding code-switching's impact on education. While most disadvantaged SA schools report on English L2 LoLT, this is largely inaccurate. Within such schools, learners are expected to write and read in English while being taught using L1 or L2 CSM (Heugh, 2013). This difference between official LoLT and unofficial classroom practice has a negative impact consequence for inhibits learners' progress (Probyn et al., 2002). Despite having been often taught in L1 LoLT, when assessed, SA learners are required to answer questions in the LoLT (L2) and will receive zero marks for any answer provided in their L1 even if they are correct (Brock-Utne & Alidou, 2006). By their use of code-switching during lessons, teachers put learners up for failure during assessment in this way. Studies conducted through Africa paint a relative picture (Kalole, 2004), finding learners' incompetence in the L2 LoLT to be the predominant factor negatively influencing learner performance during assessment.

Code-mixing is even more prevalent in South Africa than code-switching as a practice used by teachers during teaching (Heugh, 2002). In consequence, the model of language provided in such schools is often a code-mixing model, the closest that teachers who are teaching in a second language can get to providing L2 learners with education in English. This is problematic in contexts where the goal is to learn a language, as very clear linguistic boundaries between the L1 and L2 need to exist in order to learn either of the two languages well (Murray, 2004). This is because the need to develop a learner's proficiency in a language is one facilitated by expanding the learner's capacity to link an idea associated with a spoken word to text as the form of that word made visible in writing. For this to occur, the learner must be repeatedly provided with a correctly pronounced spoken word. This becomes impossible if a teacher is unable to provide learners with the correct pronunciation of a spoken word because of the teacher's lack of proficiency in that language, or if the teacher frequently switches between words that are pronounced differently in the L1 versus L2. Developmental psycholinguistic research also indicates that learners in the foundation years of schooling are disadvantaged by CSM practices in this way because of the significant confusion that these practices cause for them while

attempting to learn in English, and navigating and comprehending new conceptual understanding (Henning, 2012). The reason attributed to this is that such learners have not yet fully developed the socio-pragmatic skills (Myers-Scotton, 2002) that teachers use when they code-switch or code mix, and are therefore psychologically unprepared (Cantone, 2007) to cope with the demands of learning from teachers who code-switch or code mix.

Research highlights code-switching/mixing in early education as problematic because these practices create barriers to learning, and they undermine the cognitive development of learners because of the intersection that exists where language and conceptual development must meet in order for cognitive growth to occur – but do not meet (Henning, 2012). It is also argued that code-switching in classrooms undermines learners' development in learning a language as they are not challenged by the inputs that they receive during teaching and learning that language further (Gough, 1993). In the process of implementing a transitional model, teachers use code-switching and code-mixing. There are instances when teaching takes place in two languages concurrently, or when one language is used for teaching and another one for assessment. The following example shows how code-switching is used in some former Department of Education and Training (DET) schools. The study revealed that, the teacher was teaching about how learners must play athletics. The teacher taught learners about track events. The finding was that both mother tongue and English are combined during teaching and learning in DET schools.

This finding corresponds with the previous research by Meyer (1998) and Madiba and Mabiletja (2008) by arguing that both teachers and learners in former DET and the new schools use a combination of mother tongue and English. Scholars such as Setati et al (2002), Ferguson (2003) and Brock-Utne (2004) have noted that there are curses and blessings arising from using code-switching. Mabiletja (2008) and Ferguson (2003) note that code-switching is a productive strategy for teaching in a multilingual context but Brock-Utne (2010) sees code-switching as a danger because it is practised illegally. The illegal practice implies that there is no chance of support for this strategy by the DBE. This way of using code-switching may be detrimental to learner performance. Hornberger and McKay (2010), however, maintain that code-switching is not detrimental to the use of the target language. The majority of scholars, including

Creese et al. (2008) and Hornberger and McKay (2010), support the use of code-switching because it is used to meet, among other things, a wide range of classroom needs: help with comprehension, encourage learner participation; clarify concepts and many more. The issue of using code-switching as a strategy needs to be evaluated and researched further in order to give the necessary support and plan the way to deal with the crisis. The use of code-switching also shows that in practice a dual medium instruction section potentially exists in various former DET schools, and this is in contrast with the widely held perception of transition to English as a medium of instruction while maintaining mother tongue only as a subject. This confirms that, however, important English may be regarded, the conditions for using this language as a medium of instruction are affected by the inadequacy of resources, as teachers themselves are not proficient in it. The question should be: why should the country stress itself with the implementation of a transitional model that leads to subtractive bilingualism when it has linguistic resources that will give learners immediate access to knowledge rather than spending years trying to master an L2?

2.6 CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY LEARNERS WHO RECEIVE EDUCATION IN ENGLISH

Landsberg, Kruger, Swart and Maake (2014) assert that learners learn best through their mother tongue, and that a second language such as English is acquired more easily if the learner already has a firm grasp of his/her mother tongue. Building on this viewpoint, Owen-Smith (2014) argues that a learner who cannot access education in his or her HL is disadvantaged, and unlikely to be able to perform to the best of his or her ability, and to reach his or her potential. Consequently, the second and third language-speaking learner is faced with problems in this regard. In terms of not understanding the LoLT, previous research by Taylor and Coetzee (2013) on exposure to the LoLT outside the classroom found that the learners who receive education in a second language are mostly from households where they receive little academic support. It was also found that parents or caregivers are not well educated, and the learners are not frequently exposed to English (the LoLT) on television and in the home. The conclusion was that both school quality and the home environment have a strong impact on the academic performance of learners. This places the focus not only on the household, but also on the environment. Taylor and Coetzee (2013) draw a link between a lack of academic support and learners who receive education in a language

different to their own. However, there appears to be a lack of information regarding the availability of, and accessibility to, community resources, and how they could support these learners. Owen-Smith (2014) refers to a language barrier as one reason for failing and a lack of progress. He argues that a learner who does not understand the basic LoLT is disadvantaged and unlikely to be able to progress across all subjects. Various authors and documents express a concern about the relationship between poor learning outcomes in South African schools and learners who are educated in their own language (Foley, 2010; DBE, 2012; Prinsloo & Heugh, 2013; Spaul, 2013). For instance, it was already highlighted in the literature that about a quarter of African language learners who enter the schooling system (in Grade 1) are struggling to progress to Grade 12 owing to the current practice of using English as the initial LoLT (Foley, 2010). Considering the language barrier experienced by African learners who receive education in a second language and the potential influence on their progression, the influence on the learner's sense of self should also be acknowledged. Research studies have found that the use of the LoLT is not the only aspect within the learning situation that is at stake, and that the learner's self-confidence and sense of himself or herself within the society is also undermined if his or her HL cannot be used for learning. These aspects can be further undermined by the repeated experience of under-achievement (Loftus, 2009; Owen- Smith, 2014).

Landsberg et al. (2011) and Maake (2014) concur that a second language such as English is more easily acquired if the learner already has a firm grasp of his or her HL. It should, however, be considered that it takes between two and four years to converse fluently in an additional language, and a further three years to become proficient as a cognitive and academic user of that language (Birsch, 2005; Landsberg et al., 2011). Furthermore, it is important to be able to distinguish between basic interpersonal communication skill (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). BICS is the ability to communicate about everyday things. This relates to the introduction of the second language in Grade R. The context wherein these conversations take place can provide many clues such as facial expression, pictures and objects which help one understand what is being communicated. CALP refers to the academic language that is needed in Grades 4 to 6 classrooms to enable the learner to construct meaning from tasks and from what he or she is reading (Rothenberg & Fischer, 2007).

2.7 CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY TEACHERS IN USING ENGLISH AS THE LOLT

In the framework of inclusive education, the teacher should not expect L2 learners to give up their HL to achieve academic success in the classroom. Teachers must therefore make use of various teaching strategies and encourage the learner to use English as much as possible, while still acknowledging the HL (Wyse & Jones, 2008). According to Wilderman and Nomdo (2007), the implementation of inclusive education in South Africa is slow, and is overall not being implemented in schools. Those authors identify the National Language Policy (NLP) as causing the dilemma in the South African classroom. The findings of their study highlight the three specific problems experienced by teachers, namely: limited time, the communication between parent and teacher, and the lack of formal support or access to resources. These problems are also addressed in the literature. Regarding having very limited time to be able to support the HL-speaking learners who receive education via an L2, a recent article by Hoadley (2015) asserts that there is no room in the curriculum for an additional subject. The author emphasises the fact that teachers do not have enough time for teaching the existing subjects in the curriculum. In fact, more time needs to be allocated to current subjects in order to deal with the backlog that is evident in the outcomes of multiple tests that assess learners' competency (Hoadley, 2015). When reflecting on the problem of limited time to assist the L2-speaking learner, one must consider that the DoE (2008) accentuated the importance of the central role played by the parent in supporting their child's education, that is, assuming the parent has the education to do so, which in the present context is all too seldom.

Linked to the problem of limited time, as indicated above, the teachers need to reach out to parents for their support. Two additional factors that inhibit communication between teachers and the parents of the HL-speaking learners who receive education in English are: the presence of the language barrier and the lack of parental involvement. Focusing on the language barrier is a challenge for teacher-parent communication. Waterman and Harry (2008) acknowledge that parents of these learners also experience the language barrier in their efforts to communicate with teachers. These authors identify this as one of the most significant barriers to parent-teacher collaboration and communication. This language barrier often prevents or at

least limits both oral and written communication. This in turn has a significant effect on building communication, understanding, and relationship between parents and teachers. Some parents do not understand the various methods used to teach in English as the LoLT, for example, those that incorporate native language instruction (Waterman & Harry, 2005). According to Nick Taylor, the CEO of NEEDU, parental involvement on the one hand has been identified as a key indicator of learner achievement in South African schools (DBE, 2013). A lack of parental involvement in their children's learning process, on the other hand is a challenge for both the teacher and the learner (Lemmer & van Wyk, 2004). Research studies have found that the lack of parental involvement is attributable to deficits in the parents: these parents do not value their children's education, and they or their children's caregivers lack the education and the necessary English skills, for meaningful participation (Waterman & Harry, 2008).

In order to effectively support the HL-speaking learners who receive education in English, the teachers need to be provided with support and must have access to resources. The Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) clearly stipulated that full-service schools will receive support that will include physical and material resources, as well as professional development for teachers, which is essential to accommodate the full range of learning needs. However, there is overwhelming evidence corroborating the fact that provinces are resource-constrained (Hoadley, 2015). Hoadley reports that most of the DBE's budget is dedicated to personnel costs, with very little left for learning resources, training, infrastructure and other programmes. In terms of training support, previous research has shown that teachers lack knowledge and skills regarding the diverse use of languages to be offered as an LoLT in one classroom by one teacher. Subsequently, the teachers make use of the LoLT in a classroom with learners who are being taught in a second language (McKenzie, Swart, & Lyner-Cleophas, 2012). In view of these realities, the importance of support to teachers becomes apparent. On the other hand, In DBE (2013) it is stated that the department of education has committed itself to training and supporting teachers in the use of their "Rainbow workbook" aligned to the current curriculum (CAPS). On the other hand, Hoadley (2015) refers to insufficient budget for training in accordance with the Incremental Introduction of African Language policy (IIAL). However, the DBE places emphasis on the "Rainbow workbooks" with the practical exercises for every

child (Child, 2013). According to Curriculum News (2013), the Department has distributed these workbooks to schools across the country, with one of the aims being to prepare learners for the formats used in assessments.

The experience of teaching learners who are taught using a second language as the medium of instruction is more uncomfortable than that for a learner taught in his or her HL, for various reasons. Learners who are taught in a language that is foreign to them find school intimidating as they are not able to understand what their teachers are saying to them. In such situations, learners become confused, bored and withdrawn (Jhingram, 2005). Further exacerbating the discomfort and frustration experienced by teachers when teaching the learners in L2 is the situation where they are forced to employ coercive measures to force the learners to use L2 (English) as the LoLT, such as their humiliation when they are beaten in public. Teachers who teach in an L2 also experience discomfort using the LoLT when they lack proficiency in the language. When coercive measures are being employed they sometimes result in learners not participating fully in lessons, increased learner anxiety associated with school, and greater educational disaffection among learners.

2.8 RESOURCES EMPLOYED TO SUPPORT LEARNERS WHO RECEIVE EDUCATION IN ENGLISH

The White Paper 6 (2001) stipulated that it is the District Department's responsibility to provide learning support materials (resources) to teachers in order to accommodate a learner who has a language barrier to learning. The importance of this aspect is further highlighted by Landsberg et al. (2011), who assert that an effective inclusive classroom depends on how existing resources are used in new ways, and how resources are increased. Resources should ensure that inferior education is mitigated (Tilestone, 2010). Hoadley (2015) refers to the acknowledgement of the value of resources by the DoE (2000) to meet the necessary proficiency levels, including cognitive academic language skills, to enable the learners to learn effectively across the curriculum. The writer, however, notes that teachers are often not provided with the necessary resources or equal access to a quality education. Resources will be discussed in terms of teaching and learning aids and programmes. Focusing on teaching and learning aids, the Ontario Ministry of Education (2008) asserts that learners who use English as the LoLT are accomplishing two tasks simultaneously: they are learning the curriculum, while also learning the language of instruction. Thus

differentiated teaching and learning aids for the second language learning must meet the needs of these learners. The use of a variety of concrete and visual teaching and learning aids develops the learner's LoLT skills and broadens his/her knowledge. This might include models, toys, maths manipulatives, pictures, charts, flash cards, vocabulary lists, key visuals, posters and banners (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008a:57).

Landsberg et al. (2011) advise that multicultural literature and wordless picture books must be available for the learners who encounter English at school as the LoLT. The authors argue that enough encouragement to use these resources will help learners to read and write in the LoLT. Wyse and Jones (2008) argue that by making use of bilingual texts the second language learners are encouraged to use the LoLT. This builds their confidence for using the LoLT, and is particularly valuable for the learners who are in the early stages of the LoLT. One such example is a word *wall*, which is created with first language translations together with pictures to build vocabulary and to encourage understanding.

The use of pictures together with words ensures that the teacher provides learners with key visuals to support themes, and to help bring language to life. This includes the use of magazines, newspapers, posters, flyers and the Internet (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008). English as the LoLT programmes are formal programmes that address the specific language barriers experienced by learners to ensure that education gaps are overcome. These programmes focus on the learning of content and literacy skills (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007:253). The Western Cape Education Department (WCED) Literacy and Numeracy Strategy prioritises the development of literacy and numeracy skills within a system-wide approach. It consists of programmes that provide teachers with resources with a focus on graded readers, text-rich classrooms and the DBE "Rainbow workbook". Brian Schreuder (cited in Curriculum News, 2013) states that the DBE workbooks are intended to assist teachers and learners directly in the classroom. The DBE seeks to ensure that schools that lack learning resources and photocopying facilities are supported by the provision of worksheets with activities to reinforce literacy and mathematical skills. The DBE workbook introduces learners to the language and concepts required for learning and understanding other subjects. It also assists teachers to focus, in a targeted manner,

on the skills that learners should be acquiring in each grade as outlined in the curriculum, and to monitor learners' performance in key activities. The DBE workbook also helps to prepare learners for the formats used in assessments such as the Annual National Assessment (ANA). The DBE indicated that all schools received textbooks and workbooks in languages and mathematics (Curriculum News, 2013:10). A formal programme to address spelling skills is the "Letterland" programme. Gibbons (2002) argues that the most important way of learning to spell is to recognise and reproduce common spelling patterns by collecting and recording words with common patterns that rhyme. Browne (2007) describes an activity to help develop spelling by means of phonemic awareness. Botha and Swart (2013) refer to another formal programme, namely the "Do and Learn Reading Programme". This programme was adapted to the needs of any illiterate learner who would like to learn to read, write and count. It is being used across South Africa by educators that use English as the LoLT.

2.8.1 Support systems to support learners who learn in English as the LoLT

The DoE (2005) pointed out that schools should establish an Institution-Level Support Team (ILST) (DoE, 2005:34). The role and responsibility of the ILST of a school is to liaise with the District-Based Support Team and other relevant support providers to identify and meet the needs of their specific institution. School support systems aimed at supporting learners who receive education in English include items like learning resources classroom assistants and extra language support by professionals. However, although the White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001:10) emphasised the importance of a system that ensures access to resources and the development of facilities, it did not provide specific guidance on how to set up facilities and ensure access to resources in mainstream schools. The Ontario Ministry of Education (2008b) supports access to digital and online learning applications, such as visual simulations or game-based learning, based on its value to support learners visually to grasp difficult concepts. Clarke (2009) continues with this line of thought and explains that access to libraries helps learners to engage with their own language, and also to engage with the LoLT by means of clear and realistic illustrations. In this way they become familiar with the LoLT, and will start to engage in the range of activities involving books, DVDs and CDs. Based on the fact that teachers within the South African context are not always able to speak and understand the HL of the learners who receive their education in the second language (English) (Uys et al., 2007), the use of HL colleagues as a

support system has been acknowledged by the findings in this study. For the teacher, the inability to speak a learner's first language poses particular problems in lessons where difficult concepts need to be dealt with. Thus one way to address learning situations such as these is to provide translations of key terms and concepts (Laufer, 2000) to the HL-speaking learner. For this the teacher will need access to professional persons to assist him or her. In support of this, Clarke (2009) states that teachers who do not have the same cultural and linguistic background as the learner should enhance communication, as noted above, by using interpreters such as colleagues that are competent in the learner's mother tongue, or other bilingual professionals. Within a school system it is important to note that teachers need to participate in different teams in order to effectively support learners who experience difficulties in their learning process (Kirk, Gallagher, Anastasiow & Coleman, 2006). Haslam, Wilkin & Keller (2005) assert that within the South African school system, the classroom assistants should assist with the implementation of National Language Policy (NLP) since he or she is able to speak an HL or is bilingual.

The implementation of language policies should be viewed in terms of the move towards inclusive education in South Africa. Therefore, partnership teaching is needed for developing effective practice (UNESCO, 1994; Dalton, 2012). The use of classroom assistance as a valuable support system has been acknowledged in this study. Landsberg et al. (2011) explain that classroom assistance is a "class support team" consisting of a teacher, classroom assistant and a parent. In the inclusive class, teachers are allowed to use classroom assistants appointed by the school or by the parents. According to Haslam, Wilkin and Kellet (2005), classroom assistants help the learners to get through the lesson by acting as the "whispering radiator" model. However, according to Landsberg et al. (2011), the classroom assistants should receive their instructions from the classroom teacher with the collaboration of the Institution Level Support Team (ILTS). Classroom assistants are not responsible for a specific learner. The authors assert that teachers should not leave a particular learner solely in the hands of classroom assistants. According to Landsberg et al. (2011), extra language support is an informal source of support. In this kind of support, teachers usually access individual parents, parents' groups, the school governing body and the other organisations to provide extra support to learners with language barriers. In terms of systems provided by the DBE, a wide spectrum of opinions exists regarding

viable approaches towards multilingual education within the South African context. Both the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) and the LiEP of the DBE (DoE, 1997) guarantee learners the right to receive education in the language of their choice. On the other hand, the norms and standards of the LiEP published in terms of section 6(1) of the South African Schools Act (No. 27 of 1996) recognise that diversity is a valuable asset, which the state is required to respect. The aim of the norms and standards is to promote, fulfil and extend the individual's language rights and means of communication; to facilitate national and international communication by promoting bi- or multilingualism through cost-efficient and effective mechanisms; and to redress the neglect of the historically disadvantaged languages in school education. Therefore, as stipulated in the LiEP, the rights and duties of the provincial Basic Education Departments must explore ways and means of sharing scarce human resources. They must also explore ways and means of providing alternative language maintenance programmes in schools and school districts which cannot be provided with them, and/or offer additional LoLT in the HL(s) of the learners (Education Labour Relations Council, 2003:31-33). Although resources and manpower influence the ability of the provinces to implement the education policies, the provincial Departments of Basic Education are responsible for supporting schools in this regard in terms of resource development (human and technical), building of schools, distribution of finances and resource material, the employment of educators and the admission of learners who experience barriers to learning in relation to provincial needs (DoE, 2005:7). However, this should be supported and monitored by the department (Landsberg et al. 2011:70).

The Education White Paper 6 made provision for support by means of a systems approach and collaboration between these systems. The national DBE works with provincial departments, and each province is then divided into several districts. Each education district is responsible for the schools within that district to ensure that support is rendered according to the needs of learners who experience barriers to learning (DoE, 2001). This support is aimed at effective inclusive education. Landsberg et al. (2011), however, report that the majority of teachers in South Africa have reservations regarding the implementation of inclusive education. Stofile and Green (2007) and Swart and Pettipher (2007) contend that successful inclusion requires the following: more time for teachers to plan according to the diversity of their learners; training of teachers should be done by competent and experienced people;

classroom assistants should be made available to support the teaching of diverse learners; support from specialised people for advice and guidance should be made available; administrative support should be provided; and adequate teaching and learning aids must be made available for teachers.

Most of the above requirements are addressed in the policy document of the DBE. However, the existence of policy documents does not mean that these policies are being implemented, or that support is available to ensure the implementation thereof. The discussion that follows will focus on training opportunities, curriculum advisers and learning support professionals as forms of support provided by the DBE.

According to the DoE (2008), each education district should possess one special school that acts as a resource centre in order to provide specialised professional support related to curriculum, assessment and instruction to neighbouring schools. This includes training of teachers regarding barriers to learning; management of inclusive classrooms; development of learning support material; guidance to parents and early childhood intervention; and therapeutic support to learners with impairments in mainstream schools. In terms of the training format, Au (2011) refers to types of workshop aimed at the use of language. The writers' workshop is developed to teach the process approach to writing, and the readers' workshop is developed to provide literature-based instruction. These workshops are approaches that incorporate a full range of groupings to equip teachers to promote learners' higher-level thinking with text. According to Curriculum News (2013:7), a curriculum adviser (CA) needs to ensure that effective curriculum implementation takes place. Therefore, CAs should be fully aware of the purpose and content of the current CAPS. This knowledge is needed to use relevant information efficiently to support teachers. Within the context of inclusive education, the HL-speaking learners should be viewed as fully participating member of the school community. Quality education should therefore be provided through effective teaching, and the necessary support should be made available to them. In this regard, it is the role of the District-based Support Team (DBST) to provide a coordinated professional support service that draws on expertise from further and higher education and local communities, especially targeting educational institutions in order to assist schools to meet the special needs of learners who experience any learning difficulty, disability, or other problems (Landsberg et al., 2011).

2.9 MOTHER-TONGUE INSTRUCTION AND SECOND LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION (BILINGUALISM)

Bilingualism has been defined as the knowledge and alternate use of two languages by the same person, or having competence in dual languages (Anderson & Boyer, 1970). The alternative definition of bilingualism is the “native-like control of two languages” (Mchazime, 2001:55). This definition suggests that one is not bilingual in a second language (SL) if one’s performance or competence in the target language does not sound like or is not equal to that of a native speaker. Simultaneous acquisition is the development of two languages before the age of three with the rate and manner of development appearing to be the same (Zaare, 2013). Sequential acquisition occurs where the child develops one language at home and a second language, such as English, with peers in school, usually after the age of three (Zaare, 2013). Proficiency in two or more languages, it is argued, is attainable if the learners are provided with opportunities for active interaction with the language (McLaughlin, 1987). Villegas (2000) and Mgqwashu (2009) found compelling evidence that teachers were not providing learners with such opportunities to speak or listen to English, nor any access to or talk about texts through the medium of English. It is argued that the rationale for learning an SL is to compensate for deficiencies in the first language that may retard the speaker’s communicative needs.

2.9.1 Advantages of bilingualism

While evidence of the effects of bilingualism on the intelligence is still not conclusive, Lambert (1990) posits that there is enough evidence to conclude tentatively that under specified conditions, bilingualism has tremendous advantages, not only in terms of language competencies, but also in terms of cognitive and social development. The condition under which such advantages exist is that the two or more languages involved “have enough social value and worth that both can be permitted to flourish as languages of thought and expression” (Lambert, 1990). It is arguably in view of contention such as this that the language policy of South Africa has been conceived to promote equitable use of all official languages and the right to thrive in the new democracy (Singh, 2009). It is also contended that bilinguals score significantly higher than monolinguals on both verbal and nonverbal measures of intelligence (Pearl & Lambert, 1962), showing the definite cognitive and linguistic advantages of bilingualism, as these are reflected in greater cognitive flexibility, creativity, divergent

thought, and problem solving (Heugh, 2002; Lambert, 1990). Research in South Africa has also revealed another advantage bilingualism displayed, that of separating word meaning from word sound (Lambert, 1990). However, the benefits of bilingualism, being contingent upon the equal status of the languages, are contested by various scholars who claim that English has become the language of power and access, thus creating language imbalances in South Africa (Du Plessis, 2000; Mgqwashu, 2009; Singh, 2009; Sookrajh & Joshua, 2009).

2.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented a literature review which covered the following topics: current LoLT policy in South Africa; code-switching and mixing; advantages and disadvantages of code-switching; challenges experienced by learners; challenges experienced by teachers with regard to English as the LoLT; resources employed for support; support systems to facilitate learning; and the issue of bilingualism. This chapter also discussed the theoretical framework underpinning the study. The next chapter discusses the research methodology and design of the study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the design and procedures used in data collection. It also covers descriptions of the research design, target population, paradigm, sampling technique, research instruments, data analysis and ethical considerations. This study aimed to answer the following research questions:

- (a) What are the experiences of educators in using English as the LoLT in the Intermediate Phase?
- (b) What are the outcomes of using English as the LoLT in the Intermediate Phase?
- (c) What strategies do Intermediate Phase educators use in their classroom practices to enforce the use of English as the LoLT.?

3.2 METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

3.2.1 Research design

This study used the qualitative approach and case study design. The study was aimed at gaining more understanding of the teachers' experiences about the use of English as the LoLT in Grade 4. Qualitative research is a naturalistic inquiry, the use of non-interfering data collection strategies to discover the natural flow of events and processes, and how participants interpret them (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Most qualitative research describes and analyses people's individual and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts and perceptions. The main focus in qualitative research is to understand, explain, explore, discover, and clarify the situations, feelings, perceptions, attitudes, values, beliefs and experiences of a group of people. The study designs are therefore often based on deductive rather than inductive logic, are flexible and emergent in nature, and are often non-linear and non-sequential in the operationalisation. The study designs mainly entail the selection of people from whom

the information, through an open frame of inquiry, is gathered and explored. The parameters of the scope of study and the information gathering methods and processes are often flexible and evolving, hence most qualitative designs are not structured and sequential as quantitative ones. In qualitative studies the distinction between study designs and methods of data collection is far less clear (Kumar, 2014).

3.2.2 Research paradigm

This study was guided by the Interpretivism paradigm. According to Schurink (2001), in Interpretivism the world can be discovered by means of a systematic, interactive, methodological approach. The interpretive approach is based on naturalistic approaches to data collection such as interviews and observations. The researcher was interested in understanding the experiences of educators in using English as the LoLT in the Intermediate Phase, particularly in Grade 4 classes. It is against this background that the interpretive approach was seen as ideal for this study.

3.2.3.1 Population

The population is the larger group that the researcher selects from which she or he makes inferences of the larger group. A research population is generally a large collection of individuals or objects that is the main focus of a scientific query. This is the reason why researchers rely on sampling techniques. A research population is also known as a well-defined collection of individuals or objects known to have similar characteristics (Mills & Gay, 2016).

3.2.3.2 Sampling

Patton (2001) maintains that sampling entails the selection of a subgroup, that is, a representative subsection of the population. A sampling design refers to the procedure or plan through which the researcher selects research participants from a population. The researcher purposively selected the sample of three primary schools with Grades 3 and 4 in the Obuka circuit under the King Cetshwayo district. Four teachers from each school were selected.

3.2.3 Data collection instruments

The data were collected through in-depth interviews and classroom observations. Classroom observations were conducted as verification and strengthening of data collected through the interviews.

3.2.3.1 Interviews

Kumar (2014) states that interviews are considered appropriate for gathering qualitative data because the participants are in a position where they can best describe their experiences and feelings about the situation in their own words. There are various types of interview, namely structured, semi-structured, unstructured and focus group interviews. The researcher in this study employed the semi-structured, in-depth interview method. He was able to combine a predetermined set of open questions that prompted discussion with an opportunity to explore particular responses further. With this technique he was able to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation where English FAL was used as an LoLT in a monolingual society.

3.2.3.2 Advantages of interviews

According to Kumar (2014), interviews are more appropriate for complex situations. Interviews are most appropriate for studying complex and sensitive areas, as the interviewer has the opportunity to prepare a respondent before asking sensitive questions, and to explain complex ones to respondents in person. Interviews are useful for collecting in-depth information. In an interview, it is possible for an investigator to obtain in-depth information by probing. An interview is able to supplement information obtained from responses with that gained from observation of non-verbal reactions. In an interview, questions can be explained. It is likely that a question will be understood as the interviewer can either repeat a question, or put it in a form that is understood by the respondent. An interview has a wider application. It can be used with almost any type of population: children, the handicapped, illiterate or very old.

3.2.3.3 Disadvantages of interviews

Kumar (2014) states that interviews are time-consuming and expensive. This is especially so when potential respondents are scattered over a wide geographical area.

However, if you have a site such as an office, a hospital or an agency where potential respondents come to obtain a service, interviewing them in that setting may be less expensive and time-consuming. In an interview the quality of interaction between an interviewer and interviewee is likely to affect the quality of the information obtained. Also, because the interaction in each interview is unique, the quality of the responses obtained from different interviews may vary significantly.

In an interview the quality of the data generated depends on the experience, skills and commitment of the interviewer. Thus, the quality of data may vary when multiple interviewers are used; in fact, using multiple interviewers may magnify the problems identified in the previous two points. During interviews there is the possibility of the researcher being biased. In an interview the researcher may be biased either in the framing of questions, or in the interpretation of responses, or both. If the interviews are conducted by a person or persons, paid or voluntary, other than the researcher, it is also possible that he, she or they may exhibit bias in the way they interpret responses, select response categories, or choose words to summarise a respondent's expressed opinion (Kumar, 2014).

3.3 OBSERVATION

Observation is a purposeful and systematic way of watching and listening to an interaction or phenomenon as it takes place (Kumar, 2014:195). Kumar states that the behavioural patterns of the participants can clarify the insight into and understanding of the responses being observed. The researcher conducted non-participant observation. By conducting a non-participant observation, the purpose and the focus of observation was to link the research questions with the observation process in order to identify the experiences educators had when it came to using English as the LoLT. The researcher used a checklist and a voice recorder during classroom observations. This helped him to fully understand the complexities of the phenomenon being studied, and to overcome discrepancies between what the participants said and what they actually did during their lesson presentation.

3.3.1 Advantages of observations

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), observation captures natural behaviour. Observations are relatively unobtrusive. They are reliable for low-inference

observations. Kumar (2014) states that when one is more interested in the behaviour than in the perception of individuals, or when subjects are so involved in the interaction that they are unable to provide objective information about it, observation is the best approach to collecting the required information. Observation is a purposeful, systematic and selective way of watching and listening to an interaction or phenomenon as it takes place.

3.3.2 Limitations of observation

Kumar (2014) posits that when individuals or groups become aware that they are being observed, they may change their behaviour. Depending on the situation, this change could be positive or negative. It may increase or decrease, for example, their productivity, and may occur for a number of reasons. When a change in the behaviour of persons or groups is attributed to their being observed, it is known as the Hawthorne effect. The use of observation in such a situation may introduce distortion: what is observed may not represent the respondents' normal behaviour. During observation there is a possibility of observer bias. If an observer is not impartial, she or he can easily introduce bias and there is no easy way to verify the observations and the inferences drawn from them. The interpretations drawn from observations may vary from observer to observer. There is a possibility of incomplete observation and/or recording which varies with the method of recording. An observer may watch keenly, but at the expense of detailed recording. The opposite problem may occur when the observer takes detailed notes, but in doing so misses some of the interaction.

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

This study employed a qualitative approach. Data were analysed using the common technique of analysing data from the qualitative perspective, which was to identify main themes using the content of the information gathered in the field. Qualitative data from interviews and observations were analysed using open coding that reflected themes and interconnections among categories. The information was analysed manually: no computer programme was used. The data collected through in-depth interviews were subjected to a qualitative content analysis.

Qualitative approaches are incredibly diverse, complex and nuanced (Holloway & Todres, 2003), and thematic analysis should be seen as a foundational method for

qualitative analysis. It is the first qualitative method of analysis that researchers should learn, as it provides core skills that will be useful for conducting many other forms of qualitative analysis. Indeed, Holloway and Todres (2003) identify “thematizing means” as one of a few shared generic skills across qualitative analysis. On the other hand, Boyatzis (1998) characterises it not as a specific method but as a tool to use across different methods. Similarly, Ryan and Bernard (2000) locate thematic coding as a process performed within “major” analytic traditions (such as grounded theory), rather than a specific approach in its own right. One of the benefits of thematic analysis is flexibility. Qualitative analytic methods can be roughly divided into two camps. In the first, there are those tied to, or stemming from, a particular theoretical or epistemological position. For some of these, such as conversation analysis (CA) (Hutchby & Woffitt, 1998) and interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) (Smith & Osborn, 2003), there is relatively limited variability in how the method is applied within that framework.

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns or themes within data. It minimally organises and describes a data set in detail (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

However, it also often goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic (Boyatzis, 1998). Thematic analysis differs from other analytic methods that seek to describe patterns across qualitative data, such as thematic discourse analysis, thematic decomposition analysis, IPA and grounded theory. Both IPA and grounded theory seek patterns in the data, but are theoretically bounded. In contrast to IPA or grounded theory and other methods like narrative, discourse or CA, thematic analysis is not wed to any pre-existing theoretical framework, and so it can be used within some different theoretical frameworks, and to do different things within them.

Thematic analysis can be an essentialist or realist method, which reports experiences, meanings and the reality of participants, or it can be a constructionist method, which examines the ways in which events, realities, meanings, experiences and so are the effects of a range of discourse operating within society. It can also be a “contextualist” method, sitting between the two poles of essentialism and constructionism, and characterised by theories such as critical realism (Willig, 1999), which acknowledge the ways individuals make meaning of their experience, and, in turn, the ways the

broader social context impinges on those meanings, while retaining focus on material and other limits of reality. Therefore, thematic analysis can be a method which works both to reflect reality, and to unpick or unravel the surface of reality. However, it is important that the theoretical position of a thematic analysis is made clear, as this is all too often left unspoken, and is then typically a realist account.

From the field notes and interview recordings the researcher developed a framework for the write-up, and as he went through the notes the information was directly integrated with the structure developed Kumar (2014).

3.5 ETHICAL AND SAFETY CONSIDERATION IN RESEARCH

The study was conducted in public schools and as expected, ethical matters required a great deal of attention. The following were taken into consideration for ethical issues:

- The researcher sent a letter to the KwaZulu-Natal provincial Department of Basic Education seeking permission to conduct research using schools.
- Permission was sought from the University of Zululand for ethical clearance.
- Letters to principals of schools were sent to ask for permission to access schools selected as the population of the study.
- Confidentiality, anonymity, voluntarism and consent issues were discussed with participants before their involvement. Consent forms were explained to participants, and they were assured of confidentiality, anonymity and voluntarism. They were also made aware that there were no monetary incentives for their participation, and that they were free to withdraw their involvement at any time. All efforts were made not to violate the rights of participants in terms of confidentiality, anonymity, informed consent and voluntarism.

3.6 VALIDITY, RELIABILITY, CREDIBILITY AND TRANSFERABILITY

Before the data collection instruments were to be used by the selected participants, they were discussed with people who were experts in the field to validate their quality and relevance. The pilot participants were used to validate the data collection

instruments. The instruments were found to be reliable because the researcher managed to do class observation; and participants were interviewed thereafter. The reliable voice recording device was used to do class observations and interviews; and these were first transcribed by the researcher, and thereafter given to a professional in preparation for data analysis and discussion of results. Participants were demographically screened to ensure that they were representative of the larger population. The researcher took time to familiarise with participants. Credibility is the first aspect, or criterion, that must be established. It is seen as the most important aspect or criterion in establishing trustworthiness. This is because credibility essentially asks the researcher to clearly link the research study's findings with reality in order to demonstrate the truth of the research study's findings. Credibility also has the most techniques available to establish it, compared to the other three aspects of trustworthiness. Here the study focusses on the two most important techniques (triangulation and member checking), since these are most often in qualitative research. Participants were afforded an opportunity to evaluate research results before publication to cater for member checking. Triangulation involves using multiple methods, data sources, observers, or theories in order to gain a more complete understanding of the phenomenon being studied. It is used to make sure that the research findings are robust, rich, comprehensive, and well-developed. Interviews and classroom observation were used to cater for triangulation. The information provided by participants in the interviews was confirmed by classroom observation.

3.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter the researcher has described and outlined the research design and methodology; which has a framework and specific methods that were used in the research process. The chapter highlighted the strengths and limitations of both interviews and observations, and presented a brief description of thematic analysis. The next chapter provides data analysis and presentation of findings according to research questions.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses and analyses the data collected from the sampled participants. The researcher used interviews and observations to gather data for this study, hence during the analysis of results the collaboration between interview and observation results is discussed under a common theme. However, some of the themes under observations were independent of the interview themes, therefore the findings under them were analysed independently from interviews. The analysis of reactions is very much a narrative since the researcher opted for a qualitative research method. Most qualitative studies contain thick description in an analytical narrative interspersed with brief or lengthy quotations representing participant language. A good narrative is one that may be read and lived vicariously by others. Plausible narratives provide meanings that make sense and shape readers thinking and practice (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997). A narrative is authentic when readers connect to the story by recognising particulars, by, imagining the scenes and reconstructing them from the remembered associations with similar events (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). It is the particular, not the general, that triggers emotions and moves people. Stories stand between the general and particular by mediating the basic demands of research and personal, practical, concrete demands of living (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997)

The following themes emerged from the data collected through in-depth interviews with the sampled groups of teachers and subject advisers.

4.1.1 Teachers' teaching experience in the Intermediate Phase.

4.2 Difficulties teachers experience with English as the LoLT in Grade 4.

4.3 Code-switching and code-mixing in Grade 4.

4.4 Methods used by teachers in Grade 4 when using English as the LoLT.

The following code was used to categorise the participants:

Teacher-T

FINDINGS WITH REGARD TO EACH RESEARCH QUESTION:

4.2 Theme 1: Experiences of Teachers in the use of English as LoLT

4.2.1 Intermediate Phase teachers experience of the LoLT

The participants felt that the LoLT is confusing and challenging to implement in Grade 4 when teaching content subjects. Their experience seems to suggest the continuation of the HL, which contradicts the language policy of the Phase. In essence, the most fundamental purpose of the LoLT is to improve the level of communication vocabulary while ensuring the quality of subject matter and outcomes.

4.2.2 Educators' experiences of teaching using the LoLT in the Intermediate Phase

Most of the participants who participated in this study have been serving the Department of Education as teachers for some time. Interestingly, they are deeply involved with the curriculum implementation process delivered in the Intermediate Phase, in particular for Grades 4 to 6, with the exception of one educator with two years of teaching experience. Their experiences are fascinating in all respects when it comes to English as LoLT.

IT3: In my first three years of service, I was given mathematics and life skills among my subjects, and this presented unique challenges at first as I was being introduced to this Phase. Ten years later, my teaching skills have improved to handle challenges posed by teaching across the Phase.

It is expected that teachers will be uneasy about teaching various subjects, if not all, in the first few years. The difficulty with this mode of curriculum delivery arises from the training teachers have undergone. These participants acknowledged that some of the teachers were trained to teach in the Senior and FET Phases, but they were posted in the Intermediate Phase by default.

The findings also reveal that teachers are to rotate in certain schools to give all teachers the same experience and exposure to the curriculum dynamics in the

Intermediate Phase. In certain schools, teachers teach only subjects in which they specialise. This rotation practice emanated from the need to empower every teacher with the opportunity to teach all subjects regardless of the grade. The exercise of moving from one grade to another and teaching any subject using English tends to counteract their rich experience of teaching English in the Phase. According to **T1**:

..All teachers are given a chance to acquire relevant teaching experience in the Phase in our school. Our principal believes this will afford every teacher equal experience and opportunity in the Phase. Each year is different, and my experience is drawn from the same notion of taking advantage of any opportunity presented to you to teach subjects you never thought of in English. Although this presents challenges, it sometimes gives fresh opportunity to improve your art of teaching.

It is not the official policy of the Department to keep teachers focused and relevant. Participants felt that staff rotation gives everyone a chance to work hard to improve the subject content and conceptual understanding of learners using English as LoLT, but it was not a standard practice in other schools. According to T3, experience has taught the teachers that curriculum in practice requires innovative strategies and approaches for any effective implementation. According to participants, school principals should not be afraid to take decisions that will improve the quality of teaching and learning. The outcome of staff rotation is to bring the best out of every teacher. T3 further stressed that they are encouraged to have healthy competition since teaching subjects in English alone is challenging and complex.

Wyse and Jones (2008) place emphasis on encouraging the learners to use the LoLT outside the classroom, as a way of assisting them to master the language in which they are being taught. For some educators' good experience in the Phase was accompanied by good experience in the subject. That balance helped the researcher a lot in finding out about educators' experience with English as the language of planning and teaching in the Intermediate Phase.

4.2.3 Difficulties experienced by educators using English as the as the LoLT in Grade 4

The general view held by the majority of the participants was that using English as the LoLT in Grade 4 comes with many unintended consequences for teachers and learners. Many of these challenges are well documented in the South African context, while others are more specifically contextual. Most South Africans live in rural areas where the LoLT is very poor because it is not spoken well by many indigenous black South Africans. According to many participants, the transition from Grade 3 to Grade 4 appears challenging for educators and learners alike. In other words, Grade 4 offers surprises that are beyond any comprehension and anybody's experiences; so says T3. English as an LoLT to them is a new experience. Kalole (2014) who maintains that finding learners incompetent in English is the predominant factor negatively influencing learner. The main concern for the participants is that most teachers in this Phase have not majored in English, so their command of the language is very low; and the majority of learners experience the language for the first time.

It was the common belief that educators struggle to teach content subjects in English without code-switching. The participants in the study expressed the view that the majority of the Grade 4 learners lack exposure to English at an early stage of their learning career. These views are in line with Brock-Utne and Alidou (2006) who posits that the learner's vocabulary is minimal, and not enough to communicate information and assimilate knowledge imparted. Their vocabulary is minimal, and not enough to communicate information and assimilate knowledge imparted to them in English. However, time is of the essence, and the programme for the term needs to be covered irrespective of the English capability of Grade 4 learners.

***T3:** Let me try and give you the real solution to our daily struggle: the majority of our learners, if not all in my class are isiZulu language speakers. This can only mean one thing: you must take advantage of the language for teaching and learning to take place.*

From the observation conducted it was not possible for the educators to explain all the concepts in English. There were instances where the teacher had to use the learners' mother tongue to give clarity to learners. Sometimes the teacher was forced to code-

switch to enhance learners' understanding of some concepts of the subject matter. It was observed that the explanation of concepts was not solely done in English

Landsberg et al. (2011) agree with T3 in stating that learners learn best through their mother tongue, and that a second language such as English is acquired more easily if the learner already has a firm grasp of his/her mother tongue. Many participants felt pressured to use their HL, which is well developed, to teach content subjects, especially in the first two years.

One participant who is based in Grade 4 and specialises in teaching mathematics and social science made the following critical observation about the decision of the Department to introduce English in Grade 4:

T1: *The Department's allowing the introduction of English as the LoLT in Grade 4 has a damaging impact because the learners arrive in that grade with little vocabulary, and that makes them struggle with the curriculum.*

The conclusion is that Grade 4 learners bring along with them minimum exposure to the LoLT, which is not helpful to facilitate meaningful teaching and learning. The majority of participants reveal that Grade 4 find it hard to cope with the minimum amount of information that needs to be delivered to them in English. They seem to suggest that lack of exposure automatically gives rise to lack of vocabulary. There was also an overall view from the participants that the context in which the school exists has bad consequences in this case. Most people speak isiZulu, which makes it impossible for teachers to enforce a foreign language on learners. Most of the time the schools in the deep rural areas are under- resourced. The facilities that the teachers need to make the learning of other subjects through English as the LoLT more effective are unavailable.

The general perception of participants was that there were other pressing issues facing educators who teach Grade 4:

T2: *Almost all of my participants concurred that the home background has a negative impact. The learners at home spend most of the time with siblings who converse in their mother tongue. Few learners feel comfortable to maintain conversation in English between school and home.*

The fact that the majority of community members and family circles converse in isiZulu makes informal enforcement impossible. Participants expressed a sense of hopelessness, pointing out that the dominant language is too strong, and few learners try to speak English at home with confidence.

The irony, though, was that teachers as custodians of teaching and learning find it difficult to use English as the LoLT. This was confirmed by all the participants, who stated that educators who are teaching content subjects did not major in English, and this issue was raised as the major concern.

T1: When one monitors the curriculum in Grade 4 where English is used as the LoLT one discovers that the majority of them sometimes do not have proper English skills to fast track the development of proper conceptual understanding. When they are expected to deliver the matter, they resort to the mother tongue in trying to make themselves clear to learners. That alone is not legal, it is against government policy.

The legislated language for teaching and learning is English, a move which was based on the principle of fairness and equality. This policy is always questioned when critical issues are raised about the feasibility of this position in the South African context. With the above views having been said, the teachers do experience difficulties teaching Grade 4 learners through English as LoLT. These difficulties emanate from the number of contextual factors among others, lack of exposure to English, lack of English proficiency from the side of educators, lack of parental support. These indications show that difficulties of using English as LoLT in Grade 4 is still going to persist.

4.2.4 Code-switching and mixing

Most of the participants in the study think that code-switching is the common practice when teaching learners content subjects. The general impression was that communication is not easy as many learners are overwhelmed because they do not have enough vocabulary, which makes the interaction between the teacher and learners very difficult. To enhance good communication and interaction the teachers find themselves code-switching. Mabilietja (2008) notes that code switching is a

productive strategy for teaching in a multilingual context but Brock-Utne (2010) sees code switching as a danger because it is practised against the language policy.

T3: *I code-switch, not because I like to do so, I know it is against the policy, but the circumstances under which we work force us to code-switch. If I were to solely use English when teaching learners, I would find myself moving alone, and the whole exercise of teaching and learning would become a meaningless exercise.*

Learners' level of confidence in English is poor. The home environment for the learners when it comes to English exposure is a serious disadvantage because the school is situated in the deep rural area. Learners for T3 need a lot of attention to help them become more confident in English. They seem to be learners who are exposed to their mother tongue most of the time. This was satisfactory; though code-switching is not an official route to take, but it helps learners to understand.

T1: *Sometimes if I pose a question and they don't understand I have to resort to their HL to make them understand better.*

Most participants indicated that although English is the LoLT, code-switching improves the level of communication. The most problematic subjects for Grade 4 in particular are mathematics, social sciences and life science. The above confirms Heugh's contention (2002) that CSM are communication strategies frequently found employed in both L1 and L2 LoLT contexts by both teachers and learners in disadvantaged SA classrooms. Switching between L1 and L2 sentences during speaking is referred to as code-switching, while the use of both the L1 and L2 within the same sentence is referred to as code-mixing. The above findings reveal that code-switching is still going to exist as one of the teaching strategies in schools to enhance learners understanding of the subject content as to this point learners still find it difficult effectively grasp knowledge when it is solely presented to them in English.

Most of the participants code-switched to the HL most of the time when their learners were struggling to catch up on some information. From what the researcher observed

all participants – T1, T2, T3 and T4 – often used code-switching in order to clarify difficult concepts and terms for learners.

4.2.6 Learners' understanding of the content through English as the LoLT

There were mixed emotions about the use of English as the LoLT in the Intermediate Phase, but government policy supersedes everything. The participants felt that there is no concrete support given to educators to properly deal with the introduction of English in Grade 4. In agreement, Foley (2010) confirms that about a quarter of African language learners who enter the schooling system in Grade 1 are struggling to progress to Grade 12 owing to current practice of using English as the initial LoLT. In practice, there is no consistency and fairness offered to these learners -to build vocabulary, and they have to learn too much content in a foreign language. It causes anxiety for these learners, and this is evident when some of them refuse to learn in English. The following remarks were made by one of the participants:

T3: *Enforcing understanding of content frustrates learners a great deal. Can you imagine having to teach the subject content while you are expected to develop vocabulary? It makes them work extra hard to juggle between these two extremes.*

This effort instead achieves very little, if anything at all, since it leaves learners more confused as to which part is best to focus on.

The subjects in CAPS are clearly demarcated with no option for integration of content across the subjects. What is taught in the English lesson has no direct link to the subject content taught in other lessons. The areas of emphasis differ from educator to educator, with very little guidance on integration.

T3 said: *"I always want to select content that will assist my learners to survive the commercial world, but in these early grades, the language skills should receive my ultimate priority,"*

This suggests that this careful selection of content to be taught and the language to deliver it is sometimes influenced by what the teacher personally values as important (teacher-centred content). His reflection shows that he, as curriculum implementer, puts his identity and experiences at the centre of curriculum development.

T1: *Forcing these learners to master the content with little command of the language is draining their morale and asking too much of young learners. They have to contend with the homework and assessment in the language too foreign to them.*

From the observations, some responses by learners to the teacher were made in English, but the majority of learners struggled to respond in English. That was a clear indication that the class was diversified.

It is evident that there is no support from the parents because the majority of learners do not even want to attempt activities given to them as classwork or homework. Teachers are expected to guide them at every step, and sometimes give them answers to questions meant for their own personal development, as T2 stated. Some learners do understand subject content when delivered to them in English, though not to the expected level. The teachers attribute this positive impact to the experience they have in teaching in the Intermediate Phase in Grade 4.

These participants considered that the methods which they used to teach content subjects through English as the LoLT helped them a lot. However, most of them felt that it is not easy for the learners to understand content subjects through English. They felt (as has already been noted) that they end up resorting to methods like CSM. They had a general view that they enhance learners understanding of the content by making use of the mother tongue to make learning go smoothly. One of the participants confessed by saying:

T1: *Mostly teachers can only enhance the learners' understanding of the subject through code-switching. I have the feeling that multilingualism should not be overlooked in our schools.*

From observation, most participants attempted to present their content lessons in English, but there were instances where they had to resort to code-switching to make themselves clear. Few of the learners' answers were in English. Their deep rural schooling and home background were contributing factors in that situation. These findings confirm that the learners still find it difficult to understand content through English as LoLT.

4.2.7 English and common assessment from the district

The assessment of learners is mandatory, and requires teachers to prepare their learners for this process. Most of the participants hold the view that through these assessments, learners' performances are put under the microscope to determine the overall quality of teaching and learning. Most of these common assessments are prepared by the district and national Annual National Assessments (ANA). It is through these that every teacher gets the opportunity to evaluate the impact of his/her teaching in each subject. The participants' general view is that the LoLT proved to be a barrier during this period.

T3: *As teachers teaching in the rural context, we always expect poor outcomes from our learners in every assessment written*

The learners' performance hardly improves beyond the minimum requirement in mathematics and English. The DoE (2005) report recommended that schools should establish an institution-level support team (ILST) to respond to poor quality outcomes in many schools. The analysis of participants' interviews reveals that most teachers are familiar with this body but it is sometimes not capacitated to deal with fundamental issues to be assessed.

T2: *This structure exists in our cluster, but its impact leaves a lot to be desired. We are called to attend, and ultimately nothing of value ever transpires in these meetings. Teachers try to gauge what will be expected from these assessments, but without using the LoLT, nothing much will be achieved.*

On realising that many participants have been trained through structures like the ILST to improve the level of performance, the researcher asked them to reflect on the competence of these assessors from their perspective. They were unanimous about their level of competence. They thought their approach was too theoretical and abstract to be practically useful in dealing with the realities faced by teachers in the classroom.

T4: *In my years of experience, this body is run by same people who are incompetent and useless to influence any direction. We always assemble in one school to discuss our expectations from these departmental assessments, but*

sadly none of these people sit in the assessment committee, and they always speculate.

The role and the responsibility of the ILST of a school is to liaise with the district-based support team and other relevant support providers to identify and meet the needs of their specific schools. The school support system aimed at supporting learners who receive education in English by including items like infrastructure classroom assistants, and extra language support by professionals. Participants were defensive; one of them said:

T4: *My learners struggle to understand the questions. When they are writing these papers, we need to take them step-by-step through the questions because on their own they cannot manage to understand.*

The outcry about poor performance by learners is evident in these findings. Schools lack support from the very subject advisors who are expected to provide it. These so-called subject advisers are always invited to come and address teachers as part of the preparatory stage before these common tests are written. The majority of participants believe that they are useless: their role is minimal. These findings are in line with Owen-Smith (2014) in that, the language barrier is a reason for lack of progress or failing. He argues that a learner who does not understand the basic LoLT is disadvantaged, and unlikely to be able to progress across all subjects. The above views make it clear that when the learners write common papers from the district where English is used the performance is poor.

4.2.8 The use of English in common assessment papers set at district level

The participants thought that there was nothing wrong with the common paper written in English, but the level of complexity is troubling. Participants confirm that the Department is fully aware of the type of school where these papers should be sent, and the learners that should sit for them. This awareness translates into nothing as the language policy states that all learners are expected to use English as an LoLT in learning content subjects and writing.

The Department of Basic Education always assures teachers that the subject content is the focus of teaching, not the language. Participants always suspect this kind of assurance because it does not always translate into tangible results. The papers written every semester are always complicated:

T3: *My learners always seem to get puzzled as if they were never taught in English during the course of the semester as they sit for these common assessment examinations.*

This was supported by the assessment marks which show a below average level of performance, and participants attributed this to poor command of English. Some learners know the answers, but misinterpret the question. The question worth asking is: how much assistance can you give them? Translating the questions is an immediate and easy solution to the learners.

T4 said: *“I don’t think translation is an answer because these learners get more confused, and you have to further explain and sometimes give them answers.”*

Most participants felt that the assertion that the level of language used is user friendly is farfetched. One participant contradicted the majority when she said: “The level of the language used is absolutely user friendly.” According to her argument, examination question papers are pre-moderated at all levels before they are distributed to schools. The educators need to work with the school SMTs to ascertain that their learners are fully prepared to sit for those papers. If they are written in English at an additional language level it is easier for learners to cope. The subject adviser’s role is to see to it that the schools are assisted in every way during these assessments.

4.2.9 Use of English outside and inside the classroom

The participants thought that the rural context was the impediment which did not allow them to use English outside the classroom. When there are learners that come from homes where English is used, learners from the rural context are disadvantaged when intermingling with their classmates outside the classroom. Participants stated that classmates use their HL when playing during breaks, and tend to mock those learners that speak English during school hours, in spite of their teachers’ encouragement to do so.

With regard to learners using English inside the classroom, participants thought that it is better inside the classroom because in most cases, there is intense monitoring by the teachers of the teaching and learning. Serra (2014) and Colorado (2007) state that educators and parents need to help EFAL learners to improve their use of English if it is mandatory to use it as the LoLT. In agreeing, the researcher believes that without practice in speaking English both at home and at school, learners will inevitably fail to meet the minimum requirements when they sit for the standardised tests.

T2: I find it stressing when working with learners through English as the LoLT. I usually do not allow them a gap for expressing themselves in their mother tongue. But situations vary from teacher to teacher.

These comments by teachers show that teachers themselves lack the motivation to use English during their leisure time, yet they expect learners to develop the language. There seems to be a huge problem with regard to the use of English for communicative purposes by learners inside and outside the classroom. Taylor and Coetzee (2013) found that the learners who receive education in a second language are mostly from households where they receive little academic support, because the parents or caregivers are not well educated, and the learners are not frequently exposed to English.

The above analysis is in line with what the researcher observed, in that most learners lacked confidence in using English. They needed a lot of attention from their teachers to help them raise their confidence. They appeared to be learners who used their mother tongue most of the time.

4.2.10 The role of school visits by subject advisers

Subject advisers' have the responsibility to capacitate teachers on a daily basis should the need arise. The participants had various experiences that were worth interrogating in order to understand why Grade 4 learners are performing badly in almost all subjects. All participant, however, seemed to have a common understanding of the times they were visited by subject advisers for capacity building and general support. Participant 2 said that subject advisers informed them when they wanted to visit to support the curriculum. When participants lacked understanding of the critical pedagogical expertise required to teach a particular subject, such as a content subject

using English as the LoLT they were always willing to attend to you individually or collectively.

While subject advisers are needed for their expert knowledge, some participants found their expert knowledge questionable when needed the most. T3, for instance, was quick to dismiss with contempt the idea that subject advisers are specialists responsible for capacity building. Her argument was that most of the teachers lack crucial pedagogical content knowledge and skills necessary for the empowerment of learners in Grades 4 and 5. Participant 3 indicated this challenge in stating that:

The subject advisers for mathematics and natural science have no clue of what we should do to teach differently in order to raise the quality of teaching and learning for students with low level a poor command of the English language. I feel very discouraged to work in this Phase because our subject adviser is clueless about the needs of the Phase, and he always postpones most of the crucial meetings scheduled with him.

Participant 3 stated: “The Intermediate Phase needs properly educated subject advisers, people of integrity, exceptional public servants who have demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt their capacity in their field of specialisation.” The participants show the common response when it comes to the frequency with which the schools are visited by the subject advisers in a year. About 100% percent of the participants agreed that schools are visited as per schedule according to the policy. At least 30 schools had to be visited by curriculum experts per term. The White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) emphasised the importance of a system that ensures access to resources, support from officials; and the development of facilities, but it did not provide specific guidance on how to set up facilities and ensure access to resources in mainstream schools. From the above findings it is clear that the role of the subject advisors to many educators is still unclear, and their support is not to the expected level.

4.2.11 Support provided by subject advisers to Grade 4 teachers

The interviews revealed that this grade is one of a kind in the entire Phase owing to its transitional nature that links between Phases. The general view of the participants

was that workshops are arranged at different levels: at a provincial level when there is a year plan that should be strictly followed; and at a district level when there is also a year plan that needs to be adhered to. All this detailed planning happened to answer the need for a smooth transition into the Phase and initial conceptual development of content subjects across the Phase. Participant 3 painted a scenario of urgent focus by most educators:

“To me teaching these learners needs a specialised skill coupled with professionalism in addressing some of the fundamentals.”

This underlines the need for subject advisers to offer well thought-out support for Grade 4 educators. **T2** emphasised this perspective by drawing from the complicated nature of this grade in terms of performance and emphasis needed before any assessment can be conducted.

*I have experienced high a higher failure rate in my experience than in any other grades due to the poorly developed LoLT which is used as the basis of learner attainment, as **T1** stated.*

Notwithstanding the overwhelming number of schools that desperately need support from these subject advisers, some schools are likely to fall by the wayside. At the district level the annual schedule guides the subject advisers as to how many schools they need to visit every term. As teachers we are encouraged to raise our areas of difficulty at the beginning of the term. **T3** draws his solace from the fact that...

as professionals, we face many obstacles which are unique from educator to educator. It is the same with learners, they are unique as well, and sometimes present challenges that has never been seen before.

The work of subject advisers is cut out for them as they have to anticipate learning difficulties and in turn use their experience to respond to these challenges. The overall view is that each Phase must have a workshop arranged per term to develop, assist and capacitate educators. Half the population from whom the data were collected shared the view that sometimes these planned workshops do not occur strictly as planned owing to some added commitments the curriculum experts find themselves with.

T2: *These workshops don't occur according to the schedule all the time in view of the fact that there are a number of things that are in front of the subject advisors throughout the year, including curriculum delivery in other phases.*

T2's reflection indicated that he was no longer paying enough attention to the work of these subject advisors based on their reputations over the years. Participants have many pressing issues to attend to in the course of the year other than attending workshops with no real value for their curriculum delivery. He made it clear that the tendency of these subject advisors was to organise workshops that coincide with the important school internal academic calendar. He personally did not benefit because he and his colleagues are expected to be the ones participating in these workshops, and recently there has been nothing worthwhile to benefit teachers.

The general impression one can draw from these results is that subject advisors do not have a proper strategy to improve outcomes in the Intermediate Phase. Most participants attend workshops organised by these subject advisors as a matter of compliance.

T3: *Subject advisors have a tendency to use workshops by asking educators to discuss in groups how they have dealt with the LoLT so that those who are struggling can learn from the best practice.*

The findings proved that meeting in these workshops becomes a social occasion as opposed to a proper formal gathering where authentic professional matters are addressed.

4.2.12 Educators perspectives on support provided by subject advisors

The participants confirmed that when learners move from Grade 3 to Grade 4 where they are expected to be taught content subjects through English as the LoLT, that on its own creates problems. Some of the educators who teach Grade 4 content subjects struggle to convey the content in English to learners because they don't possess proper skill in that language. However, they revealed that the support which subject advisors provide to educators is aimed at addressing educators' problems encountered in the classroom, thereby strengthening their ability to effectively deliver

curriculum to learners. Mgqwashu (2009) and Villegas (2000) confirm that teachers are not providing learners with such opportunities to speak or listen to English, nor any access opportunity to talk about texts through the medium of English. Hence, there is poor English language command among learners. It is argued that the rationale for learning an SL is to compensate for deficiencies in the first language that may retard the speaker's communicative needs.

4.3 Theme 2: The intervention strategies applied by teachers to facilitate learning using English as the LoLT in the Intermediate Phase

4.3.1 Working with learners to improve their English proficiency

T3: Educators can try hard to expose their learners to English as a means of communication and a medium of teaching and learning only to find that at home it is a problem. Some of these learners are raised by their grandparents, who are illiterate and have had no formal education.

The general view of subject advisers is that most of the teachers who teach Grade 4 using English as the LoLT are not proficient in the language. Hence, they find themselves code-switching in order to clarify difficult terms. The general view was held by many of the curriculum monitoring officials that as English is taught across the curriculum as per government policy, the teachers who are not proficient in it are struggling. Hoadley (2015) laments that there is no room in the curriculum for an additional subject. He states that sometimes teachers themselves are not competent in English. T1's level of English language command was very good. That was reflected in the manner in which she communicated freely and effectively with her learners. By that criterion that the teacher got level 4. The teacher's level of English command was average.

4.3.2 Intervention strategies to support Intermediate Phase educators

Most of the participants agreed that subject advisers always have strategies in place to support struggling teachers. The results reveal that subject advisers always want to be seen as having absolutely successful intervention strategies in the eyes of educators.

T3: *Most of our subject advisors claim to know how to diagnose the problem facing Grade 4. They always remind us how easy and exciting it is to teach these learners without concrete or tangible strategies to emulate. The question of diagnosis has not been an issue because as teachers we fully understand the problem and its magnitude, but the most pressing problem for us is how to improve the quality of teaching and learning that will change the results. As for me, says T2,*

These subject advisors provide similar intervention every year, and when asked what is different, they are quick to defend themselves by telling us how incompetent we are as Intermediate educators. They also confirmed that it is crucial that teachers in schools do need to do analysis that gives subject advisers a framework of the type of strategies and support they need to provide for each school. The reflection given by T1 presented a compelling argument that supports the notion that subject advisers are sometimes clueless when it comes to providing effective intervention to IP: Her argument that educators' should be the ones to collate problems and present them is a farce. One of the participants tried to argue that "a teacher who has a problem should first identify it so that it is passed on to the subject adviser, who will then try by all means to address educators' needs with the necessary tools available."

It is possible that educators may not be assisted in everything they need owing to the nature of needs identification they may have at that time.

4.3.3 Using code-switching when confusion detected

There is a general understanding between teachers and subject advisers that as one of the strategies for Grade 4, code-switching can be used to provide clarity and eliminate confusion when teaching content subjects. Code-switching may be a useful teaching or remedial strategy in the content subjects. Teachers seem to believe that code-switching is the panacea for eliminating many problems besetting the teaching of content subjects.

T2: *It is the available strategy for all Grade 4 and the entire IP teachers if the mind-set has to change.*

In most cases, according to T2, educators refuse to use code-switching, citing the fear of reprisal from their subject advisers who are hell-bent on clamping down on those educators who code-switch.

Although it is acceptable to code-switch, subject advisers at times acknowledge that this strategy poses some problems in the final assessment, when learners are fully dependent on code-switching, and never want to believe they can respond to questions without assistance. The work of Fakeye (2012) reveals that disapproval of code-switching is not warranted. Policy makers and users should critically look at the positive side and ensure that a positive outcome is attainable. The general view held by the participants is that there is nothing wrong with code-switching if it is done correctly. However, they indicated that there is something wrong when CSM are overdone. The following points were highlighted:

4.3.3.1 Code-switching to eliminate misunderstanding

The evidence presented by participants seems to suggest that misunderstanding cannot be prevented in a bilingual classroom. In this study, learners are always using their vernacular to communicate, but during a lesson English is the main official language. Over the past three years, they have been used to learning in their vernacular but now, in Grade 4, this official language is felt to be foreign and abstract because of concepts that learners find it impossible to comprehend. According to T2, it is when learner's express frustration through their facial expression, and in the process are trying very hard to learn. In her interview, she said:

“The main challenge is to give better clarity that will eliminate misunderstanding, and code-switching ended up being the best solution.”

This sentiment was shared by Participant T1, who described the complicated nature of using a language such as English by saying:

“Can you imagine that even educators are the victims of the language, and even more the learners.”

The researcher has learned that how teachers use the language leaves a lot to be desired, compounding the problem already facing learners. The conclusion drawn from these findings is that the participants are the ones creating misunderstanding

when teaching these learners. The use of code-switching is a strategy for them as much as it is for learners when these teachers encounter difficult concepts that learners find hard to understand (Yevudey, 2013).

4.3.3.2 Code-switching as remedial strategy in the teaching of content subjects

In cases when learners are encountering challenges with the LoLT to meet the lesson's objectives educators have the duty to ensure that weak students are prioritised by using language familiar to them. This is in line with the study by Giles (2016), which found that convergence is the strategy which speakers adapt for each other's speech and many nonverbal cues. All the participants held views with regard to remediating struggling learners.

T4: *Can you imagine the teaching and learning climate for Grade 4? I use code-switching to clarify certain points in maths or life skills. They sometimes give you a very innocent look as a sign that they have no idea what you are talking about.*

The researcher supposes that in all classes where greater clarity is required, T4's remedial strategy is to opt for code-switching since she is bilingual, and deems it fit to use this as a strategy. The following are the participants' views:

T3: *Yes, I do code-switch, but I do it because our learners are all isiZulu speakers, and the majority of them are not really good in English.*

Interestingly, the findings from the classroom observations supported the participants' responses from interviews. Most participants were seen to encourage the use of code-switching, as they were most comfortable when these learners were asking questions in isiZulu. They could not hide how they want their learners to learn when a moment of confusion sets in, and they resort to the use of isiZulu. It was also observed that T4 made frequent use of code-switching in order to clarify difficult terms to learners. There were instances where difficult terms needed to be explained, the learners struggled to understand the concepts, and the teacher ended up code-switching. From the above findings teachers do resort to code-switching to enhance learners understanding of the content.

4.4 Theme 3: Strategies used by Intermediate Phase educators to enforce the use of English as the LoLT

4.4.1 Methods used by teachers in Grade 4

Teaching in the Intermediate Phase requires specialised skills and progressive teaching strategies proven to elevate the level of teaching. These were the sentiments shared by the participants, arguing that teachers in this Phase are expected to use suitable teaching methods in order to bridge the gap between English and isiZulu. These experienced participants reiterated the need for all teachers in the Intermediate Phase to take cognisance of soft methods capable of building vocabulary in young learners. According to the participants' responses, their views vary about the methods which they apply when they teach Grade 4 learners using English as the LoLT. The participants' general view was that the methods they use depend on the subject matter being delivered. Some of the participants revealed that they use demonstration and exploration amongst the methods for the purpose of explanation during teaching and learning. Some participants prefer drills to emphasise certain concepts. Others revealed that they use demonstration to show how certain things are done. Some participants revealed that they use response and stimuli methods when delivering matter to learners. Some participants use a combination of methods to explain certain concepts when teaching Grade 4

***T3:** I don't rely on one method of teaching my learners for the sake of providing clarity in my subject, but you can understand the amount of anxiety one has to teach three subjects to learners who are struggling to understand and express their thoughts and communicate them. It is clear to me that one needs to use a combination of explanation, drills, demonstration and other methods.*

This perspective did not provide a clearly defined set of methods needed to teach learners with very low levels of conceptual understanding of the subject matter being taught. Instead, participants were advocating a combination of teaching methods as the solution for effective teaching and learning in the Intermediate Phase. Of particular concern, though, was the use of drills as one of the methods of teaching. This method has been discouraged by many institutions as being too harsh, and promoting rote learning in schools. The views expressed by other participants were consistent with those expressed by Participant 1.

T2: *The use of a different combination of teaching methods is necessary to make me accomplish lesson objectives. However, they sometimes confuse learners. Once you start switching over to the next method, they get distracted very easily.*

Using as many methods of teaching as possible is seen by many as ideal, but practically all participants argued against this practice based on the following observation. At Grade 4, most of these participants can only deal with one aspect of the subject for their learners to master. Adding many different strategies to their learning styles will mean more activities for them to master, leaving them with doubt about their abilities. The official word of advice from subject advisers remains: be creative and assertive as a teacher.

T1: *The instructions we always get from subject advisor's lean towards using a combination of methods, as sometimes putting your view across requires creativity and professionalism. While using a combination of methods, I try to comply with the new policy requirements of EAC, which is teaching in English across the curriculum.*

This suggests that the issue of using English as the LoLT plays a crucial role in the entire process of teaching and learning.

It is only fair to acknowledge the complexities and dilemmas of working with IP learners, because only the educators can best select the most suitable teaching strategies or methods that will enhance learners' experiences with the subject they are teaching. There is no "one size fits all" strategy when it comes to contending with a Grade 4 with very limited command of English. Wessels (2007) who stresses that educators should have the ability to prepare and use activities which will give learners opportunities to understand and use grammatical knowledge, as well as improve their language proficiency.

T3: *The only challenge is to try to use different methods as expected, but if my learners struggle in English that becomes a barrier. It is not easy to compromise with different methods with learners' lack of English proficiency making the whole exercise very challenging.*

The above responses from the participants during interviews are in line with what the researcher observed, in that the participants did make use of different methods and strategies to enhance the learners' understanding of the content. Question and answer, response and stimuli, demonstrations and drills, among others, were used.

The following are the brief observation remarks the researcher made on some of the participants. T2 did make use of different pedagogical methods during the presentation of her lesson by asking learners questions on the work covered in the previous lesson. She explained the new concepts in that lesson, then divided the learners into groups of five to do classwork based on the lesson of the day.

T4 was able to combine different methods to make his lesson effective: group work, demonstrations, drill work, explanations and question and answer. He scored 4. The observation confirmed what emerged from interviews regarding the use of various teaching methods. The presentation was in English, and T2 used a learner-centred approach whereby learners were actively involved in discussion and questioning. However, there were a couple of instances where the educator resorted to code-switching to make himself clear. The fluency of the lesson in English was a good indication that there was positive cooperation between the teacher and the learners. Communication took place, and it was at the learners' level.

Generally, all participants have perceived the use of different teaching strategies as a process which is mandatory, since they have no other way of improving learners' understanding. Although this has been widely seen as a norm, some of the participants are sceptical about the effectiveness of this strategy. The fact that most of these learners come from the same Phase where the LoLT is isiZulu is a clear indication of many more challenges ahead.

Harmer (2007) explains the importance of understanding the individual differences in a class. He points out that the same learning task may not be appropriate for all learners, which means that the teachers need to teach learners according to their individual strengths by employing various teaching and learning strategies. From the above findings it is clear that educators do use different methods and strategies to help learners understand the subject matter effectively. However, it is not to the

expected level as the learners are still struggling even to understand instructions on assessment questions, which leads to poor performance.

Some participants had the following to say:

4.4.2 Mother-tongue instruction and second language instruction (bilingualism)

The participants were of the general view that bilingualism is acceptable in other contexts, but when it comes to English as an LoLT they do not advise teachers to put more focus on it because it would make the whole principle of using English as the LoLT lose its meaning and objectives. They seem to believe that to develop a balanced individual capable of understanding a subject taught in class, bilingualism should be encouraged. Participants have acknowledged that they are the product of a bilingual community, which in turn allows their learners to emulate them. In fact, “in all rural schools, most educators usually come from the community and reside in the community” (Zaare, 2013).

It is easy for these participants to embrace the practice of bilingualism without anyone noticing. Most participants see it as a culture for the community, and this culture extends from the community to school. The ability of participants to speak more than one language can be regarded as an advantage, although some educators consider it a drawback to teaching and learning. One of the participants said:

T4: *If we mean business about instilling the use of English, there is no excuse for us to use our mother tongue in our classrooms. Anyway, it is policy that English should be used as the LoLT in the Intermediate Phase.*

These participants believe the policy imperative supersedes every human preference and ability. Although this was the general sentiment one of the participants felt very strongly about the constant use of policy documents, arguing that they are not cast in stone. They can only answer to the needs of the learners when educators use them according to their strengths. Some of the jargon used in the documents confused educators, and this sometimes exacerbates the difficulties of teaching and learning. The solution can apparently only come from the realisation that rural schools require linguistic skills that will address the lack of English proficiency. The participants reflected on the need to give feedback to these learners, and they believe that can

only be done if educators are bilingual. According to T3, “I sometimes feel my feedback and the little contribution I make always go to waste because learners don’t take my feedback seriously and they don’t learn anything.”

The teacher did make a good effort to give feedback to learners through the use of English as LoLT. There was good interaction between the teacher and the learners, which indicated that the level of understanding was not bad. T3 tried to give learners feedback in English, but the response from the learners were a contrast to what the teacher was giving back to the learners.

Most of the learners’ responses to the teacher were in English, but most of the learners struggled to respond. That was a clear indication that the class was diverse in terms of background, that is, rural and semi-urban. The teacher explained to the researcher that the rural context and the home background were contributing factors in this situation. Explaining concepts solely in English was a serious problem for learners as per the researcher’s observation. Sometimes the teacher was forced to code-switch to enhance learners’ understanding of some concepts of the subject matter.

4.4.3 The use of English as the LoLT in the classroom

Some concerted efforts were made by T2 to deliver her subject matter through English as the LoLT. The lesson did flow smoothly in English, which was a good indication that there was positive cooperation between the teacher and the learners. From the observation conducted, most of the presentations were in English but there were some instances where the educator resorted to code-switching, using isiZulu for clarity purposes.

4.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter the researcher discussed and analysed data collected from the sampled groups of educators in the Intermediate Phase. The results were discussed according to themes that emerged from the data collected through in-depth interviews and classroom observations. The participants’ responses were quoted verbatim as proof of what really transpired during the interaction between the researcher and the

participants. The next chapter presents the limitations of the study, a summary of the findings, the conclusions, and recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter summarises the research findings as per the study objectives, pays brief attention to the study limitations, draws overall conclusions, makes some recommendations to the Department of Basic Education, and others for further research.

5.2 THE SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS IS PRESENTED UNDER EACH STUDY OBJECTIVE

5.2.1 To explore educators' experiences with the use of English as the LoLT in Grade 4

The study intended to explore the experiences of educators with the use of English in Grade 4 as the LoLT. It managed to discover that educators' perspectives about English as the LoLT in Grade 4 varies from educator to educator, but the bigger population from which the data were collected indicated that the learners experience curriculum-related challenges when they are expected to interact and learn in English.

5.2.2 To ascertain whether or not the use of English as the LoLT meets the needs of learners in the Intermediate Phase

The study revealed that the majority of the recipients of the current curriculum in Grade 4 do manage to have their need to understand the learning content satisfied through code-switching by educators. However, their needs satisfaction is not as complete as it should be because when they come to Grade 4, they are far from sufficiently competent in English language usage and vocabulary to help them meet the curriculum needs of their grade.

5.2.3 To determine the strategies used by educators in their class practices to reinforce the use of English as the LoLT in Grade 4

Through this study the researcher came to the realisation that educators do not have the innovative strategies necessary to counteract the poor level of English usage in the Intermediate Phase, and its effect on the use of English as the LoLT in Grade 4. Hence, the researcher has proposed a few strategies in the recommendations which

may be considered by the Department of Basic Education in order to counteract the current challenges facing Intermediate Phase educators.

5.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study undertaken had some limitations based on the collection of the data, which involved the sampling of the population. Since there are 11 districts in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, the researcher opted to choose King Cetshwayo district, which was convenient for the researcher in terms of accessibility and other logistics. Furthermore, the researcher limited the sample size to three schools in the Obuka ward within the King Cetshwayo district, where the researcher is employed. Hence, the findings presented cannot be generalised since they are based on a small section of the population in the province.

5.4 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS IN AGREEMENT WITH THE RESEARCH TOPIC

The aim of this study was to find out about the experiences of the educators with the use of English as the LoLT in Grade 4 in the Intermediate Phase. The statement of the problem presented in Chapter 1 was based on the experiences and challenges facing Grade 4 educators in using English as the LoLT. Chapter 2 provided a literature review in line with the objectives of the study. The theoretical framework provided for the data collection and the qualitative study was presented in Chapter 3. The analysis of data and interpretation of findings presented in Chapter 4 gave answers to the research questions of the study.

The following conclusions were arrived at following the summary of findings as presented in this chapter, pertaining to the educators' experiences with the use of English as the LoLT in Grade 4:

- Intermediate Phase learners lack English proficiency.
- Educators resort to code-switching as a solution to the current situation of learners' lacking an adequate command of the English language.
- Learners face challenges in understanding the content subjects through English as the LOLT.

- The LiEP needs review with regard to the use of English as the LoLT in Grade 4.
- Through language policy as implemented by the DBE, English as the LoLT begins in Grade 4. This has had a bad impact since in Grades 1, 2 and 3 the learners are used to being taught in their HL, which is isiZulu. When they get to Grade 4 it is far too early for them to be competent in using English as the LoLT to enhance satisfaction of their learning needs.
- The curriculum demands make it impossible for the educators to work with learners who lack proficiency in English when they are expected to meet curriculum requirements and expectations.

5.5 CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions are drawn from the experiences of educators in the three categories concerned with the use of English as the LoLT, which are: personal experience, context-based experiences, and their experiences based on the kind of learners they teach in the Intermediate Phase. The personal experience of educators, as revealed by the findings, is that they find themselves code-switching and code-mixing during teaching and learning in order to enhance learners' understanding of the subject content. The school's location also contributes to learners' poor knowledge of English as they come from illiterate communities, where parents do not play any role in helping their children to develop competence in the English language. The learners themselves are not motivated to do extra reading with the aim of improving their English, one of the main reasons being that there are no libraries in their schools, nor in their communities. Hence, they perform poorly when they sit for the common tests set by the district.

The findings of this research reveal ill-timing on the part of the DBE for allowing English to begin in Grade 4 as the LoLT. Nothing is put in place during the Foundation Phase to equip learners with sufficient command of the English language so that by the time they arrive in Grade 4, they are well prepared in terms of vocabulary, sentence construction and sound awareness, among other facets of the language. Nothing has been done by the government in terms of giving educators sufficient English language skills to be able to face this challenge when learners arrive in Grade 4. The South African government does not treat the education system of the country fairly in terms

of resource provision. Resources are not equally distributed to schools to support educators in their curriculum implementation. That forces teachers to be creative at all times in trying to come up with ways to raise the level of English proficiency among themselves and the learners. Private schools are privileged to implement their own policies to the benefit of the learners who come from the well-to-do sectors of society, whereas public schools tend to be affected by these types of language in education policy at the expense of learners from disadvantaged societies.

5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION

- The government needs to revisit language policy issues. English as the LoLT should not to be introduced in Grade 4, but at the Foundation Phase.
- The Department of Basic Education (DBE) needs to provide sufficient resources like libraries, media centres and laboratories.
- The Department of Basic Education needs to arrange teacher training workshops on how to tackle teaching in the Intermediate Phase as English becomes the LoLT for the first time in Grade 4.
- The DBE should put programmes in place to promote the use of English in schools.
- Examiners setting the common papers need to consider the context from which the learners come, and use both English and the HL for questions, although learners will be answering in English.
- Translanguaging can be made official in South African schools, as it represents an approach to language pedagogy that affirms and leverages learners' diverse and dynamic language practices in teaching and learning.
- Lastly, it is recommended that English should be taught as a subject, as richly and intensively as possible, at least twice a day, with much audio and video assistance, until the end of Grade 8, and only then should it be made the main LoLT in the last four grades of schooling.

5.7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Further research should look at the ways in which government policies need to address the situation. Research on the same topic is also recommended for other districts in the province of KwaZulu-Natal in order to check whether or not the issue of using English as the LoLT in Grade 4 is a common problem across the province. Researchers also need to look at the role that translanguaging, code-switching and code-mixing can play in enhancing understanding of learning content among Intermediate Phase learners.

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ANNEXURE A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

UNIVERSITY OF ZULULAND

RESEARCH & INNOVATION

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE



(Reg No: UZREC 171110-030)

P/Bag x1001 KwaDlangezwa 3886 Tel: 035 902 6731 Fax: 035 902 222

Email: DlaminiA@unizulu.ac.za

ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

Certificate Number	UZREC	171110-030	PGM	2018/502
Project Title	THE EXPERIENCE OF EDUCATORS WITH ENGLISH AS A LANGUAGE OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN THE INTERMEDIATE PHASE			
Principal Researcher/ Investigator	GV Ntombela			
Supervisor and Cosupervisor	Dr HR Mhlongo		Dr P Pillay	
Department	Curriculum and Instructional Studies			
Faculty	EDUCATION			
Type of Risk	Med Risk- Data collection from people			
Nature of Project	Honours/4 th Year		Master's x	Doctoral
				Departmental

ANNEXURE B: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

TEACHERS' INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. How long have you been teaching in the Intermediate Phase?
2. What difficulties do you experience with English used as LoLT in grade 4?
3. Do you code switch when teaching your subjects?
4. Do you have any specific method when using English as LoLT?
5. What is your perspective about the use of English as LoLT?
6. Do you think Grade 4 learners understand the learning content that you deliver to them in English?
7. Do you think using English as LoLT has a positive impact on learner performance during district common assessments?
8. How well do your grade 4 learners understand English and speak it inside and outside the classroom?

INTERVIEWS ABOUT THE ROLE OF ADVISORS IN LOLT

1. How often do you visit schools in a year?
2. What kind of support do you provide to the Intermediate Phase educators in relation to the use of English in grade 4 as an entry level class?
3. How often do you arrange professional development workshops and in-service trainings for teachers?

4. What challenges do Intermediate Phase educators encounter when teaching grade 4 learners in English as LoLT?
5. What kind of strategies can you provide as support in addressing teachers' challenges with English used as LoLT in the Intermediate Phase?
6. Do you think code switching can be a solution for content mastering to the challenges experienced by educators and learners in grade 4?

ANNEXURE C: LETTERS TO BDE OFFICIALS

P.O. Box 793

Melmoth

3835

5 February 2018

The HoD -Dr Nzama

Department of Basic Education

Pietermaritzburg

3200

Dear Dr Nzama

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH WITH INTERMEDIATEPHASE EDUCATORS AS RESPONDENTS

I am an educator employed at the school under King Cetshwayo district. I am currently registered for a Master of Education degree (M.Ed.) in the department of Curriculum and Instructional Studies at the University of Zululand. The topic of my research is: **The experiences of educators with English as the Language of Learning and Teaching in the Intermediate Phase.** The focus of my study is in the Intermediate Phase educators.

I wish to seek permission to conduct research in Obuka ward; three schools will be selected from this ward. Interviews will be conducted among Intermediate Phase educators. Classroom observations of their teaching will also be done as part of data collection. I hope the results of this study will be used by the Department of Basic Education to enhance the improvement of the use of English as LoLT in the Intermediate Phase.

Your positive response in this request will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

Signature:



Mr Vusumuzi G. Ntombela

Contact number: 072 263 2904(mobile) Email: ntombelagv15@gmail.com

ANNEXURE D: LETTER TO THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR

P.O. Box 793

Melmoth

3835

5 February 2018

The District Director

King Cetshwayo District

Department of Basic Education

Empangeni

3880

Dear Sir

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH WITH INTERMEDIATEPHASE EDUCATORS AS RESPONDENTS

I am an educator employed at the school under King Cetshwayo district. I am currently registered for a Master of Education degree (M.Ed.) in the department of Curriculum and Instructional Studies at the University of Zululand. The topic of my research is: **The experiences of educators with English as the Language of Learning and Teaching in the Intermediate Phase.** The focus of my study is in the Intermediate Phase educators.

I wish to seek permission to conduct research in Obuka ward; three schools will be selected from this ward. Interviews will be conducted among Intermediate Phase educators. Classroom observations of their teaching will also be done as part of data collection. I hope the results of this study will be used by the Department of Basic Education to enhance the improvement of the use of English as LoLT in the Intermediate Phase. Your positive response in this request will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

Signature:



Mr Vusumuzi G. Ntombela

Contact number: 072 263 2904(mobile) Email: ntombelagv15@gmail.com

ANNEXURE E: LETTER TO THE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

P.O. Box 793

Melmoth

3835

5 February 2018

The Principal

Department of Basic Education

King Cetshwayo District Schools

Empangeni

3880

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH WITH INTERMEDIATEPHASE EDUCATORS AS RESPONDENTS

I am an educator employed at the school under King Cetshwayo district. I am currently registered for a Master of Education degree (M.Ed.) in the department of Curriculum and Instructional Studies at the University of Zululand. The topic of my research is: **The experiences of educators with English as the Language of Learning and Teaching in the Intermediate Phase.** The focus of my study is in the Intermediate Phase educators in Obuka ward. I wish to seek permission to conduct research with teachers in your school as participants in this research project. Interviews will be conducted among Intermediate Phase educators. Classroom observations of their teaching will also be done as part of data collection. I hope the results of this study will be used by the Department of Basic Education to enhance the improvement of the use of English as LoLT in the Intermediate Phase.

Your positive response in this request will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

Signature:



Mr Vusumuzi G. Ntombela

Contact number: 072 263 2904(mobile) Email: ntombelagv15@gmail.com

Discussion and analysis of data collected through classroom observation

Introduction

The following observation criteria and ratings were used to collect data during the classroom observation, hence the discussion and analysis of data is based on the findings as per criteria versus the rating listed on this observation sheet for each individual participant used in the data collection of this nature.

The following observation items and ratings were used to observe the participants in the classroom:

1. Needs urgent attention
2. Average attention required
3. Satisfactory
4. Good
5. Excellent

Observation items	1	2	3	3	4	5
1.The teacher uses various teaching strategies during lesson presentation						
2.The language of teaching and learning in the classroom is English						
3.Learners give their answers in English						

4. Teachers give feedback to learners in English						
5. The teachers code switch for clarity purposes						
6. Teacher's level of confidence in English language command						
7. Learners' level of confidence in English usage is satisfactory.						
8. Explanation of concepts is solely in English.						
9. The understanding of the concept through LOLT by the learners is high.						
10. The teacher and learner English proficiency is high.						
11. Learning and teaching support material is efficiently used during teaching.						
12. Level of learner participation is high.						
13. Logical sequencing of the lesson presentation.						

Mr G.V. Ntombela

M.Ed. dissertation entitled: ***The Experiences of Educators with English as the Language of Learning and Teaching in the Intermediate Phase.***

As I read through it, the conviction grew on me that Mr Ntombela had chosen a vitally important subject, in that it drew attention to the apparent neglect by the Department of Basic Education of educators and learners in deep rural schools in KwaZulu-Natal. What to me was particularly shocking was Mr Ntombela's finding on the lack of libraries, both in these schools and in their surrounding communities—and this after 24 years of democratic government by a party supposedly dedicated to the upliftment of the formerly oppressed black majority of South Africans. How is it possible for learners to receive an education in English if they never have the chance to read or listen to English outside the classroom? Those, for what they are worth from a mere *umlungu*, are my conclusions as to the substance of Mr Ntombela's dissertation, and I believe he has done very well to draw the DBE's attention to what appears to be the government's continuing and inexcusable neglect of deep rural communities and their schools. As for his execution of the work, his argument was cogent and his evidence, in the form of testimony from his educator participants, compelling. There was some loosening of Mr Ntombela's grip on his expression in his difficult Chapter 4, and I would have liked to have been informed of his criteria for assessing the contributions of his participants, and the rationale behind his awarding of scores. But on the whole I judge Mr Ntombela's dissertation to be a most worthwhile piece of work, and I hope it receives the attention and action from the DBE that it deserves.

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Research Associate, University of Zululand
Consulting Editor, Echoing Green Press (Fish Hoek)
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Email: alannigelbell123@gmail.com