

COMPARISON OF EDUCATIONAL FACILITATION APPROACHES FOR GRADE R ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING IN MPUMALANGA

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DECLARATION

I, P Moodley (Student Number: 10359380) declare that:

This is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. This thesis has not been previously submitted by me for any degree at another university.

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ABSTRACT

According to South African Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements, learners' first language should be the language of learning and teaching in Grade R. However, there is a mismatch between policy and practice since English is the language of Grade R learning and teaching in rural schools in Mpumalanga. The ECD manager should provide evidence-based guidance on the best facilitation approach to follow in a particular context.

The study is underpinned by:

- Cummins' distinction between Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency and Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (Cummins, 2000)
- Cummins' interdependence hypothesis (Cummins, 2000)
- Distinction between Implicit versus Explicit learning (Dekeyser, 2003)
- The Mediated Learning Experience Theory within the poverty context of South Africa where the role of the teacher is seen as the mediator (Feuerstein, 1980)

The literature overview focuses on the development of the Grade R curriculum, and two prominent facilitation approaches used in Grade R, the play-based and formal instruction. Research on the effectiveness of each method and language debates both internationally (Wong-Fillmore (1991), Bialystok (2006), Cummins (2000) and nationally (MacDonald (1990), Heugh (2000), Alexander (2005), Balfour (2007) and Jordaan (2011) are provided.

The aim of the study was to determine the effect of facilitation on Grade R performance scores in E-L2 learning in rural schools in Mpumalanga. Teachers' first language, teachers' qualifications, learners' first language, learners' gender, teachers' age and teachers' experience on Grade R learners' performance scores were also tested for interaction effects. Research was conducted in ten randomly selected schools, equally divided between the play-based and formal instruction approaches, and five different languages used in the province. There were 175 Grade R learners and ten teachers in the study sample. The English

Language Proficiency standards assessment tool (ELP) was used to collect data and is reported to have no cultural bias.

A quantitative methodology was followed, using a two-group comparison design. Participants were matched according to learners' age, similar exposure period to E-L2 learning, similar rural upbringing, culture, poverty level and mainstream learners. A one-way and two-way ANOVA was used to analyse the data.

It was found that the formal approach contributes to better E-L2 learner scores when compared to the play-based approach. The differences in participants' performance scores were mostly observed in the listening scores and not so much in the speaking scores. IsiNdebele speaking teachers and younger qualified teachers, who were better trained, achieved better learner E-L2 scores than other teachers. Although learners in formal instruction classrooms achieved better results, they still did not achieve competency in basic interpersonal communicative skills in English after three months in Grade R. There was no interaction effect between the gender of the learners and the facilitation approach that was used.

A hybrid model, i.e. combination of the play-based and the formal instructional approach is proposed to be implemented in rural Grade R classrooms in Mpumalanga. Further recommendations are to train teachers in educational linguistics, teach listening skills to learners and inform parents about the benefits of first language proficiency before a second language is acquired.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ANOVA- Analysis of Variance

BICS- Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills

CALP- Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency

ECD- Early Childhood Development

E-L2 - English second language skills

ELP- English language Proficiency

EMIS- Education Management Information System

Grade R- Reception year

LOLT- Language of learning and teaching

L1- first language

L2-second language

MLET- Mediated Learning Experience Theory

NQF- National Qualifications Framework

OBE- Outcomes Based Education

US- United States of America

SGB- School Governing Body

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The aim of the chapter is to orientate the reader to the research problem and aim, clarify research terminology, provide a rationale, explain the research context briefly and introduce the main theoretical underpinnings of the study. A chapter outline of the full thesis is also provided.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The need to pursue empirical research on language skills was conceived twenty one years ago when the researcher was attending a teacher training institution. The researcher remembered vividly his lecturer asserting that language teaching is the lifeblood of all learning and the support offered by teachers to Grade R learners are like the scaffolds that hold up a building under construction. As the construction progresses, the walls and supporting structures take shape. As the building begins to prop itself, the scaffolds are gradually removed inch by inch until the building is able to stand on its own. Similarly teachers provide activities where learners engage in constant practice developing their language skills with the assistance of the teacher and eventually they are able to communicate fluently without needing much support from their teachers.

There is one picture that is etched in the researcher's mind that has led eventually to the conceptualization of the research study on Grade R learners' English second-language (E-L2) skills. As a Provincial Early Childhood Development Head in Mpumalanga, the researcher is required to support, monitor and report on Grade R curriculum implementation in the Province. A particular observation was documented during a lesson where a teacher facilitated listening and speaking skills by requesting Grade R learners to talk about their favourite food. A confident boy stood up and said in English, "My

favourite food is chicken with rice. I enjoy the food very much. I always ask my mum for more food”. Next, the teacher asked a girl to speak and she simply looked away and remained silent. The teacher requested her again to speak and this time she ran out of the class crying for her mother since she could not understand English. Eventually the girl responded in siSwati, “Ngati siSwati kuphela” which when translated literally in English means, “I only know siSwati.” An intellectual puzzle began to take shape which led to the research question on how to assist those Grade R learners who are encountering difficulties in demonstrating their E-L2 skills in the classroom.

South Africa is a multi-lingual country where there are 11 official languages (Nel & Muller, 2010; Scheckle, 2009). South Africa has nine provinces i.e. Mpumalanga, Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, Western Cape, Northern Cape, Free State, Gauteng and North West Province. According to preliminary Census 2011 language data released on the 30 October 2012, 25% of South Africans speak isiZulu, 16% speak isiXhosa, 13,3% speak Afrikaans and 9,5% are English first language speakers (Statistics South Africa, 2012). Compared to Census 2011, the number of people speaking isiZulu dropped from 26% to 25%, isiXhosa speakers dropped from 16,2% to 16% while Afrikaans increased from 13,3% in 2001 to 13,5% in 2011. The number of English first language speakers in the first democratic census in 1996 was 3,457 million (Statistics South Africa, 1997). It is interesting to note that the number of South Africans who speak English as a first language increased from 3,7 million (8,2%) in 2001 to approximately 4,9 million (9,5%) in 2011. Over the past 15 years (1996 to 2011) the number of English first language speakers increased by 1,443 million. It will appear that some parents prefer to introduce English as a first language to their children which could account for the increase in English first language speakers in South Africa. It should, however, be noted that it was the people in most cases who completed the census form with the assistance of the enumerator who was temporarily employed by Statistics South Africa to visit each household within a demarcated allotted area assigned by their supervisors. It could be that since

there is a high status attached to speaking in English in South Africa, the respondents might have preferred to indicate their first language as English as compared to their first language spoken at home.

There are many languages spoken in South Africa, but English is the only common language spoken in our linguistic diversity (Mesthrie, 2006; Molteno Institute for Language and Literacy, 2009). In South Africa the official language-medium policy for schools rests on what is termed mother tongue-based bilingual education (Mesthrie, 2006). In essence, this policy advocates that learners acquire high levels of proficiency in their first languages as well as in English. The policy is aimed at developing bilingual and multilingual citizens. According to the South African Schools Act (2002) the School Governing Bodies determine the language of learning and teaching in schools. Based on the researcher's experience in rural schools in Mpumalanga, parents prefer their children to learn in English only.

Detailed observations by the researcher and Early Childhood Development (ECD) officials conducted at schools, reveals that Grade R teachers are implementing either a play-based (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009) or a formal instructional approach (Espinosa, 2007) in the classroom. There is a debate in Mpumalanga on whether a play-based or a formal instructional approach contributes best to E-L2 learning, and what could be the reasons for the success of one approach over the other (Mpumalanga Department of Education, 2011) The reasons advanced for one educational facilitation method over the other in Mpumalanga is based on anecdotal teachers' and ECD officials' experiences rather than rigorous social scientific research.

Therefore this research study intends to describe how learners are performing in E-L2 skills in Mpumalanga based on teachers' facilitation, i.e. the play-based and the formal instruction approach employed in Grade R classrooms.

1.2 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

In this research the following key terms will be used frequently in the study. These clarifications are informed by national and international literature reviews.

Assessment- It is a procedure employed by teachers to rate Grade R learners competencies in listening and speaking in an informal manner without placing learners under any undue pressure (Elliot, 2006; Hartgill, 2009). Assessment is a systematic procedure for obtaining information from observation and tests that can be used to make judgements about characteristics of children or programmes (August & Shanahan, 2006; Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). Based on school visit forms compiled by ECD officials, it would appear that teachers assess learners informally by using their own checklists to assess learners E-L2 skills. Teachers also record their observations of learners' demonstration of E-L2 skills in an observation notebook (Wellen, 2010a; Wally, 2007). Teachers used their own designed checklists to assess learners' school readiness skills by documenting learners' demonstrations in the classroom and they provided feedback to parents on their children's performance (August & Shanahan, 2006).

Communicative competence- It is the ability of the child to communicate his feelings and views confidently and fluently to people, able to engage in conversations by listening attentively and responding accordingly (Kruse, 2005). There is no emphasis on the use of grammar in communicative competence.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice- Developmental Appropriate Practice emphasises learning through exploration and interaction with material, and use of play and learning activities that are suited to the developmental level of learners in preparation for Grade 1 learning (Bickford & Woods, 2010; Brock-Utne, 2010). Teachers plan the environment, and schedule daily activities to promote each child's learning and development. Developmentally appropriate practice is based on the play-based approach where teachers choose activities, songs, poems,

rhymes and stories that are age appropriate to young children (Wally, 2007; Weston, 2009). Thus teachers' facilitation of vocabulary, listening and speaking skills in Grade R learners must take learners' age into consideration when teachers plan their lessons and assess learners' skills (Woods, 2010). Learners develop at different rates and their development in three Grade R subjects, i.e. Home language, Mathematics and Life Skills, may be uneven (Wally, 2007). This concept is central to this thesis since the research study is based on child psychology principles where learners acquire skills through repetitive play activities and need constant praise and encouragement to demonstrate their skills in the classroom confidently.

English Second language (E-L2) skills for Grade R- Learners are expected to exhibit English language skills which is not their first language (Kruse, 2005; Maritz, 2010). In the USA learners are required to demonstrate acceptable competency in English listening and speaking skills. Acceptable competency in E-L2 skills is achieved when the Grade R learner scores a minimum six out of a total of 11 points on the English Language Proficiency Assessment used in 25 states in the USA to assess learners proficiency in E-L2 learning (US Department of Education, 2007; Patterson, 2008). E-L2 learners may require focused educational support to assist them in attaining proficiency in English language skills for effective Grade 1 learning (Williams, 2008; Yard, 2009).

First Language- First language is the dominant language that a child is raised in. It is assumed that they are to speak the language (that is spoken at home) fluently when they are enrolled for Grade R (Kruse, 2005; Patterson, 2008). First language is also referred to as the child's mother tongue which will also be explained in the clarification of terminology since this term is sometimes used in the study.

Formal instruction approach to learning- In formal based Grade R classes learners are taught to read and write, the emphasis is on recitation and

memorization of letters of the alphabet and there are limited or no opportunities for learners to play (Stagnitti & Jellie, 2006; Zebron, 2007). Teachers who adopt the formal instructional approach are of the view that learners are not acquiring skills incidentally when engaged in play (Department of Education, 2008). In this approach, the teacher ignores the contributions of learners when introducing new information or skills to be learnt (Stagnitti & Jellie, 2006; Zebron, 2007). The teacher assumes that children have no prior knowledge or experiences of the new topics or skills introduced in the classroom. The learner is seen to be a blank slate that needs to be inundated with knowledge which must be memorised and recited on the teacher's request (Zebron, 2007). The teacher also believes that learners must be silent and follow instructions without posing clarity seeking questions in the classroom (Kruse, 2005; Patterson, 2008).

Grade R- In South Africa Grade R is a yearlong programme where children aged five by 30 June in the year of admission, are provided with skills, competencies and knowledge for preparation to formal schooling (Maritz, 2010; South African Schools' Act, 2002). Admission to Grade R differs internationally and within states in the USA. In the US state of California, learners can enrol in Grade R provided they turn five years of age on or before the 2nd December in the year of admission (US Department of Education, 2007). In the US state of Florida learners need to be five years on or before the 1st of September in the year of admission (US Department of Education, 2007). In United Kingdom (UK) children can be enrolled at Grade R when they are four years, while in Japan children need to be six years to access Grade R (Patterson, 2008; Ramsey, 2006).

Grammatical competence- The child is expected to speak in full sentences in the correct verb tense, use adjectives and use the correct syntax (Chervenak, 2011). Grammar is taught formally in Grade 1 but in Grade R, teachers only repeat sentences which children are required to recite in the classroom. Grammar is usually taught in formal based classrooms

Language of teaching and learning (LOLT)- It is the medium of communication that is used by teachers and learners in the Grade R classroom (Hartgill, 2009; Kruse, 2005). The medium of communication in Mpumalanga rural schools is English, although learners' and teachers' first language is not English. The Department of Basic Education stipulated that learners' first language should be facilitated in Grade R because learners need to build their confidence in first language since this will aid easy acquisition of E-L2 skills in Grade 1 (Department of Basic Education, 2012). If learners are grounded in good first language skills, they will be able to confidently transfer these skills to English learning since they will know the importance of listening attentively in order to learn how to pronounce words correctly, use correct verb tenses and adjectives, be able to communicate their needs fluently, and initiate and promote social interactions (Wood, 2009; Yard, 2009). Good phonological awareness skills, storytelling, singing songs, reciting poems, and listening skills are considered to be best practices in first language and E-L2 learning (Williams, 2008).

Play-based facilitation approach to learning- Learners acquire skills incidentally while interacting in a fun and relaxed manner with resources and their classmates (Ellis, 2008; Lightfoot, 2008). Learners are expected to demonstrate E-L2 skills in the classroom based on teachers' request or instructions. The teacher is a facilitator of learning activities in the classroom where he/she is expected to arrange and supervise class based activities. In the play-based approach the learner is expected to demonstrate skills, invoke real-work applications and show that there is more than one right answer (Mesthrie, 2006; Patterson, 2008). Learners are expected to immerse themselves in activities and demonstrate skills to the teacher verbally (Department of Education, 2008; Department of Basic Education, 2012). A facilitator makes the most of incidental learning opportunities that arise spontaneously through a range of learner-centred play activities (Barbara, 2008; Wood, 2010; Zebron, 2007). The literature review will shed more light on the Grade R play-based approach.

Mother tongue- refers to the language the child is first introduced by his/her mother after being born and is the language usually spoken at home (Patterson, 2008). It is the language the child usually knows best and is comfortable using it in conversations and everyday life (Kruse, 2005). In this thesis mother tongue and first language are synonymous concepts.

Oral language skills- refer to learners displaying speaking and vocabulary skills (Bates, 2007). Oral language is the same as verbal expression or expressive language. Listening is not an oral language skill but a requisite of oral language (Owens, 2012). Grade R learners are expected to pronounce words correctly, use correct verb tenses and adjectives, answer questions based on a story and retell stories in the correct chronological sequence (Dash & Dash, 2007). Learners are not expected to formally read or write but display their competencies verbally (August & Shanahan, 2006).

Rural schools- Rural schools are generally small schools that are located in the outskirts of a town, or normally found on farms and in traditional villages (Hartgill, 2009; Maritz, 2010).

Second language learning- Children learn other languages in addition to their first language (Nel, 2005). A second language is learned formally at a school which is different from a language that is acquired informally without much formal instruction (Miller, 2010). In most cases in South Africa learners' second language learning is the LOLT since the schools do not offer learners' first language as a result of the School Governing Bodies' decision on the LOLT.

1.3 RATIONALE

In 2011 Annual National Assessments (ANA) have been conducted by the Department of Basic Education (2012) to assess Grade 1 learner competency in the LOLT. The LOLT in 90% of schools is English (EMIS Statistics Report, 2012). In Mpumalanga the average Grade 1 learner performance in English was indexed at 27%, well below the projected target of 50% determined by the Department of Basic Education (2012). Anecdotally, Grade 1 teachers are stating that Grade R learners are not fluent in E-L2 skills. The implication is that poor E-L2 learning in Grade R is reflected in poor performance in English in Grade 1. There are 90% of Grade 1 learners in 2011 who attended Grade R in 2010. There is, however, no empirical evidence to either confirm or disagree with Grade 1 teachers' assertions that Grade R learners' lack of proficiency in E-L2 skills may be the reason why Grade 1 learners are performing well below the target. Since there is no Grade R assessment tool used to rate learners' competency in E-L2 skills, the Mpumalanga Department of Education does not have empirical evidence on Grade R learners' level of proficiency in E-L2 skills. These learner ratings are required to prepare learners for formal Grade 1 learning. The proposed study may generate evidence that could be used to design programmes of action to maximise strengths and address weaknesses in Grade R learners' E-L2 skills.

The South African Constitution (1996), South African Schools Act (2002) and the Language in Education Policy (Department of Education, 1997) guarantee learners the right to receive education in the language of their or their parents' choice (Kapp, 2004; Mesthrie, 2006). Learners entering school are able to learn best through their first language, and a second language (such as English) is more easily acquired if learners already have a firm grasp of their first languages (Molteno Institute for Language & Literacy, 2009). Furthermore, the poor throughput rates in South African schools where barely a quarter of African language learners who enter the schooling system are likely to reach Grade 12,

may indicate that the current practice of using English as the initial language of learning and teaching is at least one contributing factor to learners' underperformance in schools (Mesthrie, 2006). For some years now, educationists have proposed that African language learners should be taught in their first language for at least the first three years of school before switching over to English (Department of Education, 2008).

The hegemony of English in South African society has led to many parents and academics questioning the feasibility of African languages to function in a knowledge-based society (Mesthrie, 2006). In some Grade R classes in Mpumalanga there are three first languages spoken by Grade R learners (EMIS Statistics Report, 2012). English becomes the common language that needs to be spoken in the classroom since, in some cases, teachers are unable to speak any of the learners' first languages (Kapp, 2004; Mesthrie, 2006). It is not practically possible to employ more teachers since this will have financial implications as more funds are needed for teachers' stipends.¹ There are limited teaching and learning resources in learners' first language and more English Grade R resources are supplied by the Department of Basic Education to schools with Grade R classes (Anthonissen, 2009; Olivier, 2009).

Thus material development in learners' first language is limited (Moyo, 2008; Nel & Muller, 2010). Departmental policies and curriculum guidelines are written mainly in English. It needs to be noted that Grade R teachers are trained in Basic Child Care qualifications through the medium of English and they do not appear to be comfortable in their first language since they have been exposed to English for most of their lives (Olivier, 2009; Willenberg, 2004).

Although in theory the Language in Education Policy (Department of Education, 1997) is intended to promote multilingualism in schools, English is promoted in practice to the detriment of African languages and Afrikaans (Anthonissen,

¹ It should be noted that teachers receive stipends and not salaries since they do not qualify for medical, housing and pension benefits (Mpumalanga Department of Education, 2011).

2009). Advancing English only does not treat any of the eleven official indigenous languages equally and in effect gives English first language learners a distinct and unequal advantage above all other learners. All learners should enjoy the benefits of education in their own languages as per legislative and policy imperatives in order to master knowledge and skills which they can comprehend and apply easily.

There are numerous gaps in the Language in Education Policy (1997) that have been identified in the literature. The Language in Education Policy omits to prescribe that mother tongue education should be the norm and it fails to pronounce in writing that endangered minority languages should be specially protected (Nel, 2005; Prinsloo, 2007). The other gaps in the Language in Education Policy is that it does not determine how much resource allocation and time would be equitable for the sustained short, medium and long-term development of each language and it does not determine norms or standards to ensure that the Policy most supportive of general conceptual growth among learners, is followed (Mesthrie, 2006).

For schools to implement initial first language instruction (followed later by English) means that schools would have to be divided into particular language groupings and learners would have to attend a school offering their particular first language (Moyo, 2008; Nel & Muller, 2010). While this does happen informally to a certain degree, a formalized policy would in effect return South Africa (at least in the primary schools) to practice linguistic separation which is at odds with promoting multiculturalism as enshrined in the Constitution (1996) (Anthonissen, 2009; Maritz, 2010). Even in the unlikely event of township schools being able to offer parallel-medium education in two or more African languages, there would still effectively exist a language separation between the various classes within the school (Moyo, 2008; Olivier, 2009).

The official policy of the Department of Basic Education is that Grade R learners need to be facilitated and assessed by teachers in their first language (Maritz,

2010; Department of Basic Education, 2012). The policy implies that teachers need to expose learners to their first language, schools will be differentiated according to learners' first language and teachers are conversant in learners' first language.

However, an analysis of 2011 school support visit reports submitted by ECD officials in Mpumalanga attest to Grade R learners being facilitated in English instead of their first language in the rural areas (Mpumalanga Department of Education, 2012) This is at odds with the official policy of the Department of Education (Language in Education Policy, 1997; Mpumalanga Department of Education, 2012). School Governing Bodies held frequent meetings with parents in 2011 to discuss the language of learning and teaching used in schools (Mpumalanga Department of Education, 2012). The researcher was delegated by the Mpumalanga Department in 2011 to sit in some of these meetings as a departmental representative. The researcher was required to take down minutes of the meeting with parents. Many School Governing Bodies decided that English will be the language of learning and teaching based on parents voting on the language issue. When the Mpumalanga Department of Education intervened on the language choice in schools, principals produced copies of signed minutes accompanied by attendance registers of School Governing Bodies motivating the rationale of introducing English in Grade R. ECD officials conducted school visits in the beginning of 2012 and requested teachers to state on a prescribed template their first language. It was found that in 30% of schools teachers' first language differed from that of the learners' first languages (EMIS Statistics Report, 2012).

Although ECD officials advised school principals and teachers on the Department's policy, the practice of English as the primary medium of communication is based on teachers' and parental preferences (Mpumalanga Department of Education, 2012). It appears that parents regard English as a language of prestige and opportunity to access knowledge, good tertiary

institutions and a gateway to high paying employment (EMIS Statistics Report, 2012). Universally, English is the dominant language of communication, academia, business and technology (Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Nel, 2005; Prinsloo, 2005). One consequence of English occupying a high status globally is that many parents believe that English is the best choice of language of learning and teaching for their children (Nel, 2005; Prinsloo, 2005). Universally parents have informed respective departments of education that an early start to English for E-L2 learners is needed for them to becoming competent in the language at an early age and face the outside world with confidence in the future (Patterson, 2008).

Therefore, attention is focused on researching Grade R learners' proficiency in E-L2 skills in departmental schools. In Mpumalanga there is clearly a difference in policy and practice with regards to the language of learning and teaching in Grade R classes. Research conducted by Anthonissen (2009) and Willenberg (2004) also attests that English is introduced in Grade R in the Western Cape and Gauteng respectively.

The problem statement is that there is a discrepancy between policy and practice in Grade R language of learning and teaching in rural schools. The omission of the prescription clause in the Language in Education Policy (1997) has unintentionally allowed the School Governing Bodies to introduce English to Grade R learners. However, the Constitution (1996) allows parents the right to choose English as the language of teaching and learning for their children. The Mpumalanga Department of Education (2012) has conducted advocacy campaigns on the educational benefits of children learning in their language they know best. The Education Management Information System (EMIS) in the Mpumalanga Department of Education has captured the number of schools implementing either the formal or play based approach based on ECD officials' school reports. Grade R learners in rural schools in Mpumalanga are not being facilitated in their first languages and in 283 schools the formal instructional

approach is implemented (EMIS Statistics Report, 2012). Teachers have sufficient resources which were supplied by the Mpumalanga Department of Education to prepare children for Grade 1 English learning. The play-based facilitation approach is recommended by the Department of Basic Education (2012).

Given the situation that E-L2 is taught instead of the child's first language, and that a play-based facilitation is prescribed, research is warranted on E-L2 learning in Grade R. As far as it could be established, there is no research evidence of the effectiveness of the play based practice in South African schools. Some researchers also advocate the formal instruction approach to second language learning (Matterson, 2009; Mbugua, 2004; Menkpin, 2008), thereby adding to the dilemma of language instruction in Grade R. As an ECD manager the researcher is expected to monitor the implementation of learners' first language in a play-based manner for the best outcomes as reflected in the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (Department of Basic Education, 2012). Therefore learners E-L2 skills need to be assessed to ascertain whether the play-based or formal instructional approach contributes to better learners' performance scores.

For learners in the rural areas in South Africa or Mpumalanga, attending Grade R classes is not only about adjusting to school and its routines, but also about doing so in English, which is a largely unfamiliar language (Mhaule, 2011). There appears to be no data on learners' proficiency levels in E-L2 skills in Mpumalanga (EMIS Statistics Report, 2012). The need to collect baseline data on Grade R learners' proficiency in E-L2 skills is crucial to guide improvement in school readiness and learner performance at schools.

As already indicated, some researchers are of the view that an early focus in English in Grade R is not advisable since learners need to be grounded in their first language as this aids easy acquisition of E-L2 skills (Abedi, 2004; Espinosa,

2007). It has been found in the USA that home languages were lost during the Grade R year since English was more highly valued by communities than the language children normally speak at home (Stagnitti & Jellie, 2006; Ward, 2008). In the USA many young learners who, as soon as they learn a little English in the school, put aside the language they already know and speak and choose to communicate exclusively in English at school and at home (Abedi, 2004; Espinosa, 2007). The first language is retained for a while and then slowly learners begin to converse in English. These learners lose some of their cultural heritage when they converse in English and become psychologically alienated from their communities since they are unable to converse with their extended family members and older members of their communities in their mother tongue (Espinosa, 2007).²

The majority of SA Grade 1-6 learners tend to function at very low levels of cognition in international literacy assessments (average results are at 30%) when opposed to other regional and international countries where the average results are at 65%, (Council of Education Ministers, 2011). The overall low results and patterns of performance for 2011 Annual National Assessments in Grade 1-6 are similar to results obtained from the 2007 National Systemic Evaluation and studies conducted by international agencies, such as the Southern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality and Programme for International Reading Literacy Studies (Council of Education Ministers, 2011). International and national assessments undertaken by external examiners focused on Grade 1-6 learners' performance in written and reading tasks. The majority of Grade 1-6 learners could not write grammatically correct sentences and could not read fluently in English (Council of Education Ministers, 2011).

It is noteworthy to mention that 90% of the learners in Grade 1, who wrote the 2011 annual national assessments in English, attended Grade R as part of

² It is important to emphasise that language, although critically important, is not the only bearer of culture (Xu, 2010).

preparation for formal schooling (Council of Education Ministers, 2011). It could be inferred that Grade 1 learners who wrote international and national assessments did not have a solid foundation in English language skills which could be one of the contributory factors accounting for their poor performance in reading and writing assessments, or that they did not have their first language as the medium of instruction. This inference is advanced since researchers assert that language provides a solid infrastructure for the development of writing and reading skills (Arbedi, 2004; Espinosa, 2007). According to Dickson (2009) and Miller (2010), the emphasis on language skills will always be the nucleus of the Grade R curriculum since listening and speaking skills are the precursors for developing writing and reading skills. After a thorough literature review of local publications, there seems to be no empirical studies conducted in South Africa on Grade R E-L2 skills and the facilitation i.e. play and formal instructional based method used by the teacher in the classroom.

According to the school visit reports submitted by ECD officials in the Mpumalanga Province two facilitation methods, i.e. play-based and the formal instructional method is implemented in Grade R (Mpumalanga Department of Education, 2012). The ultimate goal of the Curriculum Assessments Policy Standards, the official national 2012 Grade R curriculum policy, is to assist the learners to become fluent and proficient speakers who can speak in grammatically correct sentences and possess the ability to use the language of learning and teaching appropriately in the academic and social contexts (Department of Basic Education, 2012). Since rural schools have chosen English as the language of learning and teaching learners are expected to communicate fluently and confidently in English. The policy of first language education is not implemented in schools due to parents' apparent insistence that their learners learn English (EMIS Statistics Report, 2012). The dilemma or discrepancy is that there is a disconnection between policy and practice due to parental preference that English should replace learners' first language as the LOLT.

It becomes necessary that the context of the research study be fleshed out to investigate the facilitation approaches used for E-L2 in Grade R classrooms in Mpumalanga rural schools.

1.4 BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

There are 1003 rural schools and 197 urban schools that offer Grade R services to 75 626 learners in Mpumalanga (EMIS Statistics Report, 2012). All schools are ranked into different categories according to the socio-economic levels in a particular community (Mhaule, 2011). Schools are ranked in categories one to five, with category one schools being the most disadvantaged schools in the Mpumalanga Province. All the rural schools are in category one where the income received by households is below R2 000 per month and there is little or no access to tarred roads and municipal services (Mhaule, 2011).

In the Mpumalanga Province mainly five indigenous languages are spoken in the rural areas, i.e. Xitsonga, isiZulu, Sepedi, isiNdebele and siSwati (Mhaule, 2011). The number of schools per Grade R learners' first language, and the implementation of the play-based or the formal instructional approach is depicted in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Linguistic diversity of rural schools with Grade R classes in Mpumalanga and the E-L2 facilitation approach followed (n=1003)

First language of the majority of Grade R learners in a school	Play-based approach	Formal-based instructional approach	Total number of schools per first language group
isiZulu	217	100	317
Sepedi	214	61	275
siSwati	141	53	194
Xitsonga	133	37	170
isiNdebele	115	32	147
Total	720	283	1003

The data was sourced from the database of schools with Grade R classes in the Mpumalanga Province by the Department of Education (Mpumalanga Department of Education, 2012).

In Table 1.1 schools are indicated in descending order of language prevalence: isiZulu, Sepedi, siSwati, Xitsonga and isiNdebele. According to ECD officials, Grade R learners are expected to only communicate in English and are requested not to use their first language during breaks in the schools (Mpumalanga Department of Education, 2012). The rationale for English being spoken in Grade R is attributed partially to the fact that there is a mismatch between teachers' and learners' first language and English becomes the medium of communication without teachers' assessing Grade R learners' English competency. It should be noted that there is a gap in the teacher employment policy in Mpumalanga since practitioners are not appointed according to learners' first language. It appears that some practitioners do not converse in learners' first language, but they will communicate in another language which they know. The unintended consequence of the practitioner employment policy is that English becomes the language of learning and teaching since some practitioners lack proficiency in learners' first language.

According to Table 1.1 the play-based approach is favoured. The reason for many schools adopting the play-based approach is that teachers are continually trained in this approach, principals are advised by circuit managers to implement the facilitation approach in Grade R and it is prescribed by the Department of Basic Education (2012). A circular bearing the signature of the Head of Department advising principals that the play-based curriculum be implemented in Grade R was dispatched to schools in January 2012. The matter is taken seriously as principals are warned about a deviation from policy. Principals who deviate from the policy are issued with warning letters and they are requested to indicate why they should not be charged by the Department of Education. If principals refuse to adhere to the departmental directives and ignore three warning letters, the Head of Department will advise that non-adhering principals be charged formally for transgressing departmental guidelines and procedures (Mpumalanga Department of Education, 2012). It is clear that the department takes the implementation of the play-based facilitation method very seriously.

The geographical distribution of schools is of importance to the study since very little research has been conducted in rural schools that comprise 84% of total schools offering Grade R in Mpumalanga Province. The implications of the wide linguistic diversity in the rural schools suggest that the population of Grade R learners speak five different first languages and there exists probabilities that there could be instances where teachers do not speak learners' first languages. In most of the cases based on the researcher's experiences, teachers chose English as the language of learning and teaching without considering Grade R learners' English proficiency.

Informed by the context and background of the Mpumalanga Province, the question posed by the researcher is as follows: Which facilitation approach should be followed for E-L2 learning in Grade R classrooms in rural Mpumalanga schools? This is the research problem which will be discussed in the next section.

1.5 WHY ARE TWO EDUCATIONAL FACILITATION APPROACHES INVESTIGATED?

Principals instruct teachers to follow Grade R curriculum since they have been directed to improve teaching and learning in Grade 1-3 based on the analysis of the Annual National Assessments (Department of Education, 2012). In Mpumalanga it has been found that children lack decoding and interpretative skills. These difficulties are seen in learners' oral and written work (Department of Education, 2012). Pressure is put on schools to improve results and design school improvement plans. Principals are requested to report on a quarterly basis on the progress made in improving Literacy and Numeracy competencies.

In Grade R Practical Ideas Booklet provided to all Grade R teachers it states that there is evidence in most school based classes teachers prefer to use the 'instructional' approach (Department of Education, 2012). Learners are found

seated at tables doing very formal activities much like a Grade 1 learners. Some teachers think that a Grade R class must look like a Grade 1 class. With reference to Rachel Chervenak's masters' dissertation (2011, 22-23) -"Play in kindergarten perspectives of full and half day kindergarten teacher", she outlines explicably the play based and formal instructional approach as it exists in US schools.

In the US the "accountability movement" sprang up since 2001 when the "No Child Left Behind Act" (2001) made it national policy to hold schools accountable for eliminating persistent gaps in achievement between different groups of children (US Department of Education, 2007). These groups are made up of children from middle class, poor communities and different language categories. The same dividing factors exist in South Africa, although the policies, educational systems and government control are different. The unintended consequences of the legislation resulted in the curriculum becoming formal and tests were used to assess learners' competencies. Curriculum standards as part of the Head Start programme identified learning expectations in eight domains in the US in 2007(US Department of Education, 2007) In the third grade there was mandatory testing which created a downward pressure on Grade R to introduce a formal education setting. The only difference in the national testing in South Africa and US is that in South Africa Grade 1-3 is assessed annually whereas in the US only Grade 3 is mandatory. The formal approach to Grade R became general practice, both in South Africa and in the US.

However, the way we engage with children in learning situations is of utmost importance as this shows how children learn (Patterson, 2008; Kuse, 2005). There are two approaches namely teacher as instructor or facilitator according to the Practical Ideas Booklet (Department of Education, 2008). These terms for the teacher run parallel with the play and formal instructional approach. The term mediator is not used prior to the implementation of CAPS in 2012.

As an instructor, the teacher ignores the contributions of children when introducing new information or skills to be learnt. The teacher assumes that children have no prior knowledge or experiences of the new topics or skills. The teacher also believes that children must be silent and follow instructions. The teacher is more interested in the “end product” rather than the “process” of learning (Feuerstein, 1980; Matthews, 2010).

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTION

It would appear that there are two educational facilitation approaches implemented in Grade R classrooms in Mpumalanga based on detailed findings emanating from school visit reports submitted by ECD officials to their respective supervisors. **The research question to be posed is: What is the effect of facilitation i.e. play and formal instructional based approach on Grade R learners’ E-L2 performance scores?** No empirical evidence could be found in South Africa to determine whether the play-based or the formal instructional approach is the best facilitation approach to be used in Grade R. This research study will attempt to indicate which approach is the best to be adopted to develop Grade R E-L2 skills.

A short introduction to the theoretical underpinnings’ for the study follows in the next section.

1.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Since the research question is how each educational approach (play based and formal instructional) affects E-L2 learning specifically, the role of facilitating language acquisition in each approach will be explored. The applicable theoretical underpinnings pertaining to the research study are Cummins’ (2008) distinction between Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) and Basic Interactive Communication Skills (BICS), Cummins’ Interdependence

Hypothesis (1981), the Mediated Learning Experience Theory (MLET) (Feuerstein, 2008) and the distinction between implicit and explicit learning (Hulstijn, 2005).

The theoretical underpinnings of first and second language learning will be discussed with particular reference to the contextual variables in rural Mpumalanga where most of the learners are from impoverished backgrounds. As indicated in Table 1.1 there is a linguistic mismatch between the majority of learners' first language and the medium of instruction in their Grade R classrooms. The linguistic mismatch may be compounded when learners are not yet proficient in their first languages, or when their first languages are not continuously developing, and they are now expected to learn through the medium of English which is a new language to them. According to Shipley and McAfee (2009) normal acquisition of a second language is dependent on the continued development of the learner's first language.

1.8 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

Chapter One introduces the research problem and the aim of this study, clarifies research terminology, provides a rationale for the study, explains the research context and briefly discusses the main theoretical underpinnings of the study. The primary question, "What is the effect of facilitation i.e. play and formal instructional method on Grade R learners second language English learner performance scores?" is the main driver that determines the terrain and trajectory of the research study.

In Chapter Two the frameworks underpinning the study will be unpacked. The distinction between academic and social language is explained, The MLET is discussed within the rural poverty perspective and the differences between implicit versus explicit learning with particular reference to Grade R are briefly explored. Thus this chapter provides the theoretical underpinnings of the

research study to be undertaken in order to demonstrate their unique applicability to the study. This chapter also elucidates on how children acquire first language skills and the relationship between levels of first language acquisition and second language competence is discussed.

In Chapter Three research on the play-based and the formal instruction method to facilitate E-L2 is discussed. In this chapter language as the medium of instruction debate in South Africa is surveyed. The theoretical underpinnings of the English Language Proficiency (ELP) standards assessment tool are discussed. The ELP standards assessment tool is proposed to be used in the study to rate learner performance in E-L2 skills in the absence of a tool in South Africa.

Chapter Four sheds light on the quantitative research methodology employed in the study, states how ethical considerations were adhered to and gives a description of how the participants were selected. The chapter also elucidates the material and apparatus employed in the study and discusses the research procedures used in the project. The procedures to be used in this research project will be outlined in order to ensure that the data collected is valid and reliable.

In Chapter Five the research findings are presented and interpreted. Descriptive statistics of the effect of each of the influencing factors on Grade R learners' E-L2 scores will be provided. Inferential statistics will be conducted to determine if there is a statistical difference between the different variables.

In Chapter Six the researcher discusses the theoretical and practical implications of the research, critically evaluates the research study, makes recommendations based on the findings and discusses briefly the new knowledge gained from conducting the study.

1.9 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Chapter One has provided a comprehensive introduction to the research study. The importance of language learning in Grade R was discussed. The problem statement and the rationale behind this study have been expounded. The problem statement is anchored in the dilemma of the practise of E-L2 teaching in Grade R while the Language in Education Policy (Department of Education, 1997) recommends first language learning, and which Grade R educational facilitation method, i.e. the play-based and the formal instructional method, contributes best to E-L2 learning. The disjuncture between policy and practice with regard to LOLT in Grade R in South Africa was discussed. Chapter two will focus on the theories articulating important principles of E-L2 learning in Grade R.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING IN GRADE R

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The discussion of theory and research findings will form the theoretical underpinnings to guide the planning of the empirical research undertaken to determine which approach to E-L2 would best support Grade R learners in rural Mpumalanga, and which factors contribute to second language learning in that context.

2.2 HOW DOES A CHILD ACQUIRE LANGUAGE?

Language acquisition occurs through an interaction among genes (which hold innate tendencies to communicate and be sociable), environment, and the child's own thinking abilities (Cook, 2008). Adults help children learn primarily by talking with them. Language acquisition is the product of active, repetitive and complex learning (Hadley, 2001). Children do not, however, learn only by imitating those around them since they work through linguistic rules on their own because they use forms that adults never use (Abedi, 2004). Firstly, children learn sounds from their linguistic environment, then they learn words and lastly sentences (Cook, 2008). Children say their first words between 12 and 18 months of age. They begin to use complex sentences by the age of four to 4½ years (Abedi, 2004). By the time they start Grade R, typically developing children know most of the fundamentals of their first language so that they are able to converse easily with someone who speak as they do (Owens, 2004).

There are two poles of thought in the explanation of first language acquisition. At the one pole, there are scholars who claim that language acquisition and

production is a learned behaviour which is not different from the general learning system and that parents teach language to their children (Borg, 2006). At the other pole, there are scholars who assume that language is innate and that there are universal principles that govern language acquisition which are prewired at birth (Borg, 2006). Irrespective of the divergent viewpoints, both perspectives acknowledge the importance of first language acquisition in developing learners to think cognitively in their first language. By the time a child enters pre-school, he/she has acquired first language skills, but the level of proficiency may differ owing to the varying language support offered by parents. Learners acquire first language naturally but need to be taught their second language in the classroom since exposure in many cases to E-L2 is limited outside of the school environment (Ellis, 2008).

It cannot be taken for granted that all Grade R learners have sufficient first language skills when they enter the class. Wong-Fillmore (1991) found that 65% Spanish Grade R speaking learners in 11 schools displayed low listening and speaking skills in their first language in the USA. It was found that parents did not communicate to their children in full grammatically correct sentences or expose them to new words in their first language (Wong-Fillmore, 1991). Most of these learners were unable to speak confidently and teachers in most cases could not understand what learners were communicating to them in the classroom (Wong-Fillmore, 1991). Wong-Fillmore's (1991) findings were similar to Ellis's findings (2008) where 75% of Spanish speaking Grade R learners in seven schools in California could not adequately communicate their thoughts and feelings to their teachers. However, Kruse (2005) found in one private German Grade R classroom in California, 80% of learners could demonstrate competency in their first language confidently. The difference in learners' performance in the German school could be attributed to learners' participation in school concerts and music festivals which was absent in studies conducted by Wong-Fillmore (1991) where learners' exposure to first language was limited. Kruse's (2005) findings could infer that exposure and frequent use of learners' first language in the German

school could have resulted in learners demonstrating competence in their first language.

A child's first language development is dependent on the quality and quantity of parental and teachers' input, the socio-economic context of the home and school environment, the availability of good language models and the interventional support programmes available at schools to mediate language learning (Wong-Fillmore, 1991). Language proficiency in the preschool years is considered the strongest predictor of academic learning (Patterson, 2008). The indicators that predict academic success is the learners' ability to acquire communicative skills and the academic language register in the first language before they transfer these acquired skills to second language learning (Wong-Fillmore, 1991).

2.3 IMPORTANCE OF FIRST LANGUAGE ACQUISITION FOR SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

The rationale for discussing first language acquisition is important in the current research study since scholars assert that Grade R learners' first language skills assist in learning a second language (Attar & Chopra, 2010). In the study context of Mpumalanga, learners are E-L2 speakers who speak a variety of first languages at home (isiNdebele, siSwati, isiZulu, Sepedi and Xitsonga) (Mpumalanga Department of Education, 2012).

Patterson (2008) and Ward (2008) aver that first language acquisition is crucial for effective second language learning. Children are able to transfer their skills easily from the first language to the second language (Ward, 2008). Firstly, Grade R learners need to become fluent first language speakers where they learn to become confident in speaking and listening. As they acquire a second language, they will still draw on the first language when they are unable to express themselves in English (Ward, 2008). It is found that these learners will code-switch as they are acquiring a second language (Shiple & McAfee, 2009).

According to de Bot and Makoni (2005) code switching refers to people using two or more languages in the context of a single conversation. Code-switching is often used by teachers in multilingual classrooms to facilitate learners' understanding of concepts when learners are not fully proficient in a second language (de Bot & Makoni, 2005). What has been happening to some second language learners is their inability to communicate in either their first and second language attributed to learners' limited first and second language vocabulary and language proficiency (Shiple & McAfee, 2009). Teaching learners listening skills in the first language will help the child apply this skill to second language learning and will assist the learner internalising speech patterns which are not familiar (Smithy, 2009).

There are similarities in first language and second language learning. Both languages require a supportive caregiver/teacher in a stimulating environment (Borg, 2006). Language development in both first language and second language is a gradual process and reflects a child's expanding cognitive capabilities (Borg, 2006). Almost all children become fluent in their first language but fluency in second language is not certain (Attar & Chopra, 2010). Children who develop proficiency to communicate, to gain information, solve problems and think analytically in their first language, can easily learn to use a second language in the same way (Borg, 2006). Young children are able to understand words and hear small sound differences that adults often miss which makes understanding new words more difficult for adults (Borg, 2006). Unlike adults, small children will try to learn a second language without worrying if their pronunciation of words or communication is correct or not (Borg, 2006)

Positive reinforcement and corrections play a major role in language acquisition both in first and second language competency (Smithy, 2009). Children imitate adults and repetition of new words and phrases is a basic feature of children's speech. Learning language by imitation represents the behaviorist view made popular in the 1960's and 1970's. This view is now challenged, since imitation

alone cannot possibly account for all language acquisition (August & Shanahan, 2006). Children often make grammatical mistakes that they could not have heard at home or through interactions with friends. The importance of first language learning and similarities between first and second language acquisition is pertinent to this study since learners are required to learn only in English even though they are not proficient in English. In this study learners are not facilitated in their first language although first language proficiency supports second language learning.

There is variation in how well and how quickly individuals acquire a second language. There is no simple way to explain why some people are successful at second language learning and some are not. Social, educational variables, experiential factors and individual differences in attitude, personality, age and motivation all affect language learning (Bialystok, 1994; Wong-Fillmore, 1991).

There is a real concern that if children do not fully acquire their first language, they may have difficulty later in becoming fully literate and academically proficient in the second language (Wong-Fillmore, 1991). There is also a risk for learning difficulties (Owens, 2004). Everything acquired in the first language (academic skills, concepts, subject knowledge) maybe transferred to the second language. Vocabulary size in second language might not be as large as first language (Miller, 2010). As children are learning the second language, they are drawing on the background and experience they have available to them from their first language (Ward, 2008).

When children learn all new information and skills in English, their first language may become stagnant and may not keep pace with their new knowledge (Bialystok, 2006). This may lead to limited bilingualism where children never become truly proficient in either first or second language learning. When first language continues to be supported, it will facilitate full cognitive growth which will lead to cognitive growth in English (Cummins, 2008). The discussion on the

distinction between social and academic language is needed to elucidate the E-L2 expectations of the Grade R curriculum.

2.4 CUMMINS' INTERDEPENDENCE HYPOTHESIS

The difficulties experienced by E-L2 speakers can be explained in terms of the psycholinguistic theory concerning the relationship between first and second language elaborated by Cummins (2008). Cummins (2008) claims that the two languages of a bilingual child can develop independently up to the BICS level, but at the CLAP level they work interdependently. This means that, in a decontextualised and cognitively demanding situation, the level of CALP in the second language depends on its stage of development in the first language. A failure in the development of CALP in the first language inhibits the acquisition of academic language skills in the second language. This is known as the Cummins (1981) interdependence hypothesis.

Castille, Restrepo and Perez-Leroux (2013) investigated the language influence in sequential bilinguals in 49 Spanish speaking children attending an English only Grade R school in Toronto, Canada. Children were assessed in Spanish at the beginning of the year and in English after nine months. It was found first language skills predict the success in second acquisition, not because of linguistic transfer but by virtue of individual differences in learning abilities present in typical populations (Castille et al, 2013).

2.5 Distinction between social and academic language

Cummins' model (1981) identified two broad skill categories in language learning, which are Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) and Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS). CALP describes learners acquiring the academic language while BICS emphasised the importance of acquiring the social conversational language (Cummins, 2008).

There is a developmental perspective in the BICS and CALP categories. BICS is developed first. BICS imply that children are able to speak a language for conversational purposes, articulate their views, request information and respond to questions posed by people (Cummins, 2008). The next category is CALP where emphasis is on learners demonstrating problem solving, analytical thinking and abstract thinking (Cummins, 2008). BICS and CALP are different levels of language use or functioning, and relate to stages of language development as well. Preschoolers and Grade R's are on a BICS level, but should acquire some CALP to prepare them for Grade 1 (Bialystok, 2006). The argument is simple if the children are monolingual and when the language of learning and teaching is the same as the children's BICS language. It becomes complex in a bi- or multilingual situation. Thus there is a big challenge to prepare children for Grade 1 English language learning and teaching (Wong-Fillmore and Snow, 2000).

Researchers differ on the exact definition of academic language (see Bialystok, 2006 and Wong-Fillmore, 2000) but the main tenets of academic language is for learners to be able to think abstractly, to draw comparisons, identify similarities and interpret written text. In short, learners are expected to acquire the academic language register to use their language skills for learning (Cummins, 2008). Grade R teachers in formal based classroom teaches mainly CALP while BICS is mainly facilitated in the play based classroom where teachers use modelling, demonstration and visual cues and gestures to introduce learners to social language (Cummins, 2008). According to Cummins (2008) CALP can also be learnt in the play based classroom While Cummins' model has been criticised for not clearly differentiating the definitions of contextual support and cognitive demand (Scarcella, 2003; Valdes, 2004), it opens up discussions on facilitation approaches to use in teaching BICS and CALP. Learners require support to achieve competency in both skills, especially when learning a second language which may be the medium of instruction in Grade R. The problem is further compounded when learners are coming from poverty backgrounds where textual material is scarce (Matthews, 2010). These children from poverty backgrounds

will most probably encounter challenges in demonstrating BICS or CALP in a second language. According to Jordaan (2011), academic language proficiency in E-L2 learning should receive the necessary attention from teachers in the classroom. Bialystok (2006) and Wong Fillmore & Snow (2000) state a teacher's role in teaching the academic language is crucial and they need to be trained comprehensively on how to teach the academic language register in the classroom. Teachers need to plan their lessons well in advance so that they could design class exercises in which learners will be able to engage in problem solving and abstract thinking. Explicit teaching of language structures and uses is recommended to help learners acquiring the academic language (Wong-Fillmore, 1997). It is assumed that Grade R teachers are proficient in English CALP, but they have not been trained in educational linguistics in South Africa since it was not part of their Level 4 and 5 qualification programme in Basic Child Care (Mpumalanga Department of Education, 2012).

It is not clear whether teachers facilitate all language skill levels in Grade R. Cummins (2008) has cautioned against expecting young learners to achieve competence in academic language in Grade R since it takes five to seven years to achieve proficiency in second language. This view is also shared by Wong-Fillmore and Snow (2000) who state that most children enter Grade R without having the required academic language skills.

The question that needs to be posed is how do learners acquire a second language? There is no definite answer to whether E-L2 is learned implicitly, explicitly or by means of both types of learning. According to Shipley & McAfee (2009) there are six stages of learning a second language, namely transfer, fossilization, interlanguage, silent period, code-switching and language loss. Firstly, communication skills from first language are transferred to second language (Shipley and McAfee, 2009). Fossilisation occurs when some language errors in the second language will still remain even after the child becomes competent in the second language (Shipley & McAfee, 2009). A child develops

own language system, or an interlanguage as competency in second language improves (Shiple & McAfee, 2009). The child does more listening than talking when acquiring a second language. Children will code-switch when experiencing problems in communicating in English (Shiple & McAfee, 2009). Eventually children will forget words in the first language (Shiple & McAfee, 2009). In implicit learning, learners are not thinking out their responses but are responding unconsciously which is unlike explicit learning where learners are using cognition to acquire language (Williams, 2010). Implicit learning is facilitated through repetition and memorisation which occurs in formal based classrooms (Paradis, 2004). Ivady (2007) states that explicit learning is not possible in young children since they are unable to think abstractly. The assertion is disputed by Owens (2004) who states that carefully planned activities and teaching methods can be used to teach explicit learning in young learners. According to Hulstijn (2007) learners acquire listening, speaking and vocabulary skills implicitly while reading and writing is acquired explicitly. It should be noted that formal reading and writing occurs in Grade 1 but the preparation for these activities is reflected in pre-reading and pre-numeracy competencies embedded in the Grade R curriculum. Facilitation approaches (play and formal based) and the nature of the language tasks will may determine whether learners need to use implicit or explicit learning strategies in acquiring language skills.

2.6. Contextual factors impacting on language learning

According to Bialystok (2006) and Berk (2006), poverty does not appear to cause language impairment but poverty may be associated with lower language skills. Fleisch (2008) indicates that language mismatches between learners' first language and language of learning and teaching are exacerbated by poverty since language input from parents and extended family members is low. According to the Mpumalanga Department of Education all schools are ranked into different categories according to the communities' socio-economic levels and the availability of municipal services (Mhaule, 2011). Schools are ranked in

Category one up to Category five with category one schools indexed as being most disadvantaged and category five schools being most advantaged.

Rural schools are classified in the Category one since they are the most disadvantaged schools in Mpumalanga where the rate of unemployment is high, many people are living below the bread line and have limited access to services (Mhaule, 2011). Of immense importance to young children's language development is the quantity and quality of language input received at home. Wong Fillmore (2000) found that by age three children from poor families heard 10 million words, children from working class families 20 million and children from professional families 40 million words in the first language. Thus children in poverty have fewer words spoken to them. Fewer vocabulary words indicated that most probably their first language is not fully developed. They may not display good speaking and listening skills. Listening has a receptive vocabulary while speaking has an expressive vocabulary (Miller, 2010).

According to Xu (2010) the child's community also affects their first language skills. Research was conducted in two schools in Texas to ascertain the influence of the learners' community on their first and second language skills. These schools were situated in Spanish speaking communities where the level of adult illiteracy was 45%. It was found that most Spanish speaking children could not confidently express themselves either in Spanish or English. They displayed low vocabulary and tended to be reserved and withdrawn (Xu, 2010). These findings were similar to Patterson's (2008) research findings amongst Chinese children in four schools in New York. The Chinese immigrants recently arrived in the USA and were either mostly unemployed or worked long hours in factories. Patterson (2008) found that the negative self esteem and low morale of the communities adversely affected children's language development. It was found that community members vented their anger and frustration on children by labelling them in negative terms. As a result the children attempted to stay away from adults and their exposure to language within the community was limited. The

question is what will be the consequences on second language learning if first language development is not optimal because parents provided limited language support to their children?

It was important to describe the differences between the South African and USA language contexts. According to Alexander (2005), in South Africa a whole class would have to learn E-L2 by a teacher who was not a first language English speaker. More than 80% of South African pupils learn in a second language or a language different to their home language (Alexander, 2005). Only 20% of learners in the USA are second language learners (US Department of Education, 2007). In the USA the situation might be that there were only a few E-L2 learners in a class with the majority English first language speakers (US Department of Education, 2007). The E-L2 learners might learn English from the first language speakers resulting in them learning the language faster. In a study conducted by the Florida Department of Education (2010), 40 English first language teachers were requested to teach 400 Grade R learners English at the start of the Grade R academic year. It was found that 60% of Grade R learners improved their speaking and listening competencies by 40% after being exposed to English for six months. According to Wong-Fillmore (1997) it is important for E-L2 learners to receive corrective feedback from first language speakers.

Cummins (2008), Bialystok (2006) and Wong-Fillmore (1997) cite examples of bilingual programmes being implemented in Grade R where first language is still facilitated while a second language is introduced to learners. These programmes entail teachers being bilingual, exposure to first and second language is increased in the curriculum by allocating more time to language teaching and teachers are trained on how to teach second language (Cummins (2008); Bialystok (2006) and Wong-Fillmore (1997). Furthermore, parents are encouraged to expose their children to stories and communicate in the first and second language if they are able to speak the second language. According to Kruse (2005) there is evidence in 14 schools in California that teachers

encourage learners to participate in school concerts and plays where they narrate stories, say poems, rhymes and sing songs both in their first and second language. Kruse found that 70% of these learners in the selected schools could communicate in their first language and could be understood in the second language after such increased exposure to the second language.

Informed by the poverty context of rural Mpumalanga where learners are acquiring E-L2 learning, the Mediated Experience Theory (MLET) will be fleshed out to emphasise the role of the teacher in mediating language experiences for E-L2 learners.

2.7 MEDIATED LEARNING EXPERIENCE THEORY (MLET)

2.7.1 PRINCIPLES OF THE MLET

The MLET is applied in many Grade R curricula universally where the teachers' role in ECD is outlined firstly, by introducing learners to rules and routines and then allowing them to learn through play (Kruse, 2005). Numen (2006) conducted research in five schools in New York to observe teachers' instructional practices in play based classrooms. It was found that teachers used a daily programme that had teacher directed activities, routines and learner centred activities with the major part of the day being spent on free play (Numen, 2006). The play-based approach is associated with mediated learning while the formal instructional approach is underpinned by the direct method. The direct method involved teachers teaching grammar and vocabulary explicitly. (Barbara, 2008). The MLET has been the focus of debate in Grade R facilitation and assessment practices as to whether worksheets or developmentally appropriate resources leads to effective skill acquisition, and whether reading and writing should take precedence over listening and speaking competencies in the classroom (Barbara, 2008). In the USA there is mandatory testing in Grade three and the analysis of the test scores indicate that learners are unable to understand

instructions (US Department of Education, 2007). There has been concerns raised on the Grade R curriculum facilitation and assessment practices as not preparing the learners adequately for formal Grade 1 learning. Mandatory Grade R testing is occurring in 25 states in USA. The MLET was developed by Feuerstein (1980) in response to the question about the teacher's role in the classroom, i.e. whether the teacher should be a mediator or teacher of content. As a mediator, the teacher will organize activities where the children can learn through play. When the teacher focuses on content only, formal learning occurs in the classroom and the child learns to read and write (Feuerstein, 1980).

As indicated, the MLET is underpinned by two divergent learning strategies namely the direct and mediated method (August, 2007). The direct approach refers to the teacher teaching Grade R learners formal reading and writing skills and concentrating on learners mastering content. The teacher is viewed as an instructor and the learner is seen as a passive participant in the learning process (August, 2007). In the mediated approach formal reading and writing is not introduced and the teacher provides resources and learning experiences that facilitate skills acquisition needed for Grade 1 learning. The learner is an active participant in the learning process and the teacher only intervenes when learners are unable to demonstrate competency in E-L2 learning (August, 2007). According to Matthews (2010) the play based approach is recommended to be implemented in the Grade R classroom after conducting a six month research study in three Grade R classes in New Mexico. It was found that since learners engaged in free play with bilingual teachers, their vocabulary improved from 800 words at the start of the Grade R year to 2500 words after six months. The learners displayed confidence in speaking English by frequently communicating to their classmates (Matterson, 2010). These findings were similar to research findings conducted by Lightfoot (2008) where learners improved their speaking competencies in four schools in London after being exposed to English first language teachers for five months and improved their vocabulary from 700 to 2100 words. However, Matterson (2010) and Lightfoot's (2008) findings were in

contrast to Menkpin's (2008) research findings that explicit instruction by English first language speakers in two formal based classrooms in New York assisted learners to speak in grammatically correct sentences.

The Nevada Department of Education (2009) found that in ten schools in Nevada, the formal based approach assisted learners in improving their listening skills after teachers changed their facilitation approach from play based to formal based approach. Initially the Nevada Department of Education (2009) found that learners in play based schools are unable to display good listening skills. The two facilitation approaches (play and formal based approach) could be seen as opposite ends of a continuum. The MLET does not cater for a hybrid approach where both learning strategies could be employed in the classroom since there had been no reported observations that teachers are using both approaches in the classroom (Nevada Department of Education, 2009).

According to supporters of the direct approach, Grade R learners are immersed in reading and writing exercises in Grade R (Espinosa, 2002). The direct approach originates from the audio-lingual and memorization learning strategies that was emphasized universally fifty years ago (Maaranen, 2009). Supporters of the direct approach were of the view that the play-based approach does not contribute to Grade R learners becoming school ready since learners require additional time in Grade 1 to learn reading and writing skills (Matterson, 2010). The 2001 US "No Child Left Behind Act" has placed great pressure on Grade R teachers to teach learners reading and writing competencies in order for learners to become good readers and writers from an early age (Bates, 2007). ECD scholars view the direct approach as hastening learners' foray into academic learning and not providing learners opportunities to learn through play (Arbeau & Coplan, 2007). Therefore the direct approach is at odds with developmentally appropriate principles where self exploration through play contributes to learners' skills and knowledge acquisition.

According to the supporters of the mediated approach, Grade R learners acquire skills and knowledge through their involvement in play-based activities under the close guidance of their teachers (Rueda, 2007). The teacher is seen as a mediator of Grade R learning and only assists whenever the learner encounters challenges in demonstrating skills to the teacher and fellow learners. In the mediated approach, there are no formal based activities learners need to complete, but rather an emphasis on the use of resources and learners' individual demonstration of skills and knowledge (Ward, 2008). MLET does not exclude explicit teaching (Ward, 2008). This theory can also be applied to Grade 1 learning where the curriculum is more formal (Matthews, 2010). The underpinning of the MLET theory is based on constructivism. Constructivist learning (Feuerstein, 1980) is based on learners' active participation in problem solving and critical thinking regarding a learning activity which they find relevant and engaging. Learners are constructing their own knowledge by testing ideas and approaches based on their prior knowledge and experience and applying these to new situations. Most learning is context dependent but there are opportunities to promote cognitive thinking in the classroom (Ellis, 2008). Constructivism is underpinning educational philosophy currently (Ward, 2008). It deals with the transition of the teacher from a transmitter to a mediator and teachers are able to teach higher order skills such as problem-solving, reasoning and reflection if they follow constructive educational philosophy. Constructivism enables learners to learn how to learn and there is much more open-ended evaluation of learning outcomes (Feuerstein, 1980).

The MLET underscores the important role teachers and parents play in the education stimulation of young learners (August & Shanahan, 2006). Feuerstein (1980) referred to both teachers and parents as adult mediators who are responsible for developing skills in learners incidentally. Teachers need to assess learners' skills competency through classroom observation (Feuerstein & Falik, 2009). According to the MLET the role of the teacher as a mediator of Grade R learning through play-based activities is emphasised.

2.7.2 THE ROLE OF TEACHERS, LEARNERS AND RESOURCES IN THE MLET

The MLET is analysed with the purpose of indicating how the theory enhances second language learning. The MLET views teachers as mediators whose main role is to prepare the classroom for effective education stimulation whereby learners acquire skills through play and formal based activities in an incidental manner (Espinosa, 2007). According to the MLET teachers do not formally teach skills but use resources and activities to develop skills in learners through an informal play-based method (Patterson, 2008). The learners engage actively and constructively with each other and their teachers in both play and formal based classrooms. Teachers are expected to support Grade R learners' acquisition of skills and competencies by modeling skills, encouraging learners to participate in classroom activities, assessing learners' demonstration of skills and identifying learners who require special intervention in E-L2 learning (Darling-Hammond & Brandsford, 2005). The MLET is the overall teaching approach for all skills in the Grade R classroom and second language learning may fit within this approach (See Figure 2.1).

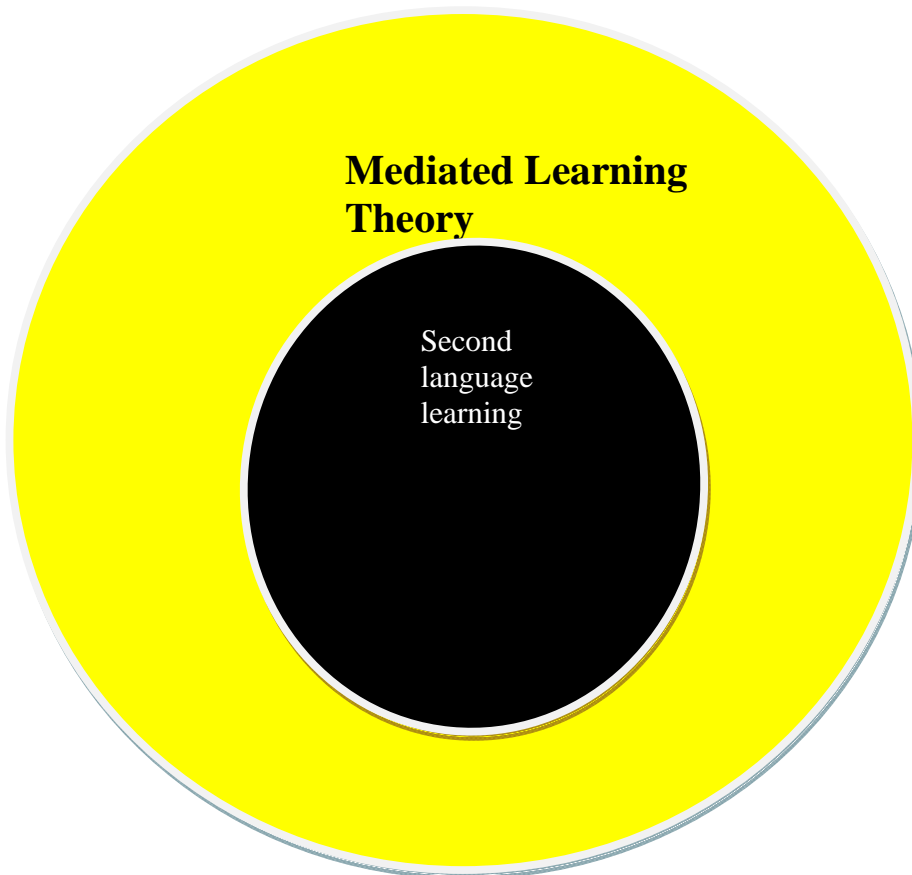


Figure 2.1: How the Mediated Learning Theory (Feuerstein & Falik, 2009) is used in the thesis to provide a broad perspective on second language learning in a poverty context

Feuerstein purported that teachers need to be competent, well trained and caring towards Grade R learners since they acquire skills and competencies through developmentally appropriate principles (Feuerstein, 1980). Teacher competence refers to teachers having the requisite qualifications and knowledge to mediate and assess learners' demonstration of skills in the classroom (Feuerstein, 1980). Teachers' knowledge and skills needed to be upgraded continuously since there is constant proliferation of research on how best to facilitate and assess Grade R learners' competencies (Feuerstein, 1980).

In order for teachers to develop Grade R learners' E-L2 skills, they have to be proficient in English and need to be trained in facilitation and assessment practices (Feuerstein, 1980). To prove this point, Feuerstein (1980) found in a research study conducted in the USA that 40% of unqualified second language English teachers succeeded in imparting skills to Grade R learners. A low number of learners demonstrated E-L2 competency in the classroom when exposed to teachers who were not qualified or proficient in English. These results were also similar to Wong-Fillmore's findings (1991) who found that some US teachers were not trained in Grade R facilitation and were not proficient in English.

Feuerstein did not mention experience as being a contributory factor towards the learning of E-L2 skills in the classroom. According to Matthews (2010) teachers need to use their Grade R facilitation experience in preparing a conducive environment for promoting effective learning. Matthews (2010) found that experienced teachers who are involved in Grade R facilitation for over 10 years were knowledgeable in preparing a learning rich environment for learners. Teachers under ten years encountered difficulties in arranging the Grade R classroom into different learning corners and did not utilise resources as much as experienced teachers in their facilitation in the classroom. A stimulating environment refers to an environment where there are print rich resources, ample opportunities for play, teachers providing a supportive and motivational role and learners encouraged to participate in group and individual activities (Espinosa, 2007). Print rich resources refer to posters, charts, flash cards, story books, blocks and puppets that are used by Grade R learners to develop skills.

The criteria for facilitated Grade R learning through play-based activities are taught in many ECD courses for pre-service and in-service teachers in the USA and South Africa (National Research Council, 2008). The criteria for effective facilitation by teachers (Owens, 2010), which is part of the MLET, are briefly outlined in the next section.

2.8. CRITERIA FOR FACILITATED LEARNING

The process of facilitating skills not only refers to *how* the teacher facilitates but also *what* the teacher facilitates in the Grade R classroom (Clinton, 2010). Feuerstein (1980) outlined six criteria for effective facilitation and assessment in the Grade R classroom. The criteria are interrelated and overlapping in their meaning and application (Fairdom, 2010). The criteria are clearly applicable to an E-L2 Grade R classroom.

2.8.1 Intentionality and Reciprocity

Intentionality refers to the teacher planning beforehand the skills that he/she needs to develop in Grade R learners and using class time to facilitate the planned skills to learners (Bates, 2007). The teacher is supposed to use the Grade R curriculum to identify the skills to be developed in resources and state in lesson preparations how these skills will be developed in classroom based activities. There should be an element of sharing of information and skills in the classroom (Justice, 2009). There should be a supportive environment in the Grade R classroom where teachers and learners learn from each other and there is an element of respect between the participants.

The learner tends to respond positively to the teacher's interaction and assistance once the classroom atmosphere is conducive for them to engage in play-based activities, where they acquire skills and competencies through exploration, listening and observation. The teacher helps the learners to feel at ease by making them feel comfortable and relaxed (Matthews, 2010). Teacher strategies such as repeatedly calling the learner by name, using a range of auditory and visual stimuli and a soft and caring voice can support the learner's involvement and interest in play-based activities (Bates, 2007). If intentionality and reciprocity is not achieved in the Grade R class, mediated learning cannot

occur and the subsequent result may be that learners will not be motivated to participate in classroom activities and will not develop the required skills.

2.8.2 Facilitation of Meaning

When the teacher presents an activity, emphasis should be placed on its meaning and learners should focus their attention on the important features of the task (Matthews, 2010). The emphasis on understanding and completing tasks has been well recognised in the field of facilitation and skills acquisition in Grade R (Xu, 2010). Teachers provide detailed but simple explanations to learners and should encourage learners to pose questions should they require further clarity and information (Reuda, 2007).

Learners should willingly participate in classroom activities once they understand what needs to be done and receive the necessary support and encouragement from their teachers (Owens, 2012). The teacher needs to provide explanations in a simple and non-technical way, appropriate to the developmental level of learners (Scheckle, 2009). All learners' errors should be corrected by the teacher saying the correct word or sentence repeatedly without directly telling learners that their answers are wrong. Feuerstein (1980) holds the view that if teachers told learners their answers were wrong, it would adversely affect their self confidence and will result in them not participating in classroom activities and discussions. The teachers need to model acceptable E-L2 skills which young learners should be encouraged to use in their classroom conversations (Nunan, 2008). The same approach to error correction should be applied to second language facilitation where Grade R learners are expected to commit errors in pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary skills since English is not their first language. Effective facilitation of meaning allows learners to attach meaning to new activities because they apply their learning in new situations. If meaning is not attached to classroom activities, mediated learning cannot be effective since learners will be unable to demonstrate their skills in a variety of contexts.

2.8.3 Facilitation of Transcendence

When teachers impart skills to learners, their intention is for learners to practice skills repetitively to gain mastery of skills and demonstrate skills in classroom based activities (Fairdom, 2010). Constant application of skills will lead to learners improving their proficiency levels in classroom assessments and increase their readiness for higher level activities when learners enrol for Grade 1 learning (Fairdom, 2010). The constant practising of skills can be applied to second language learning since English is not the learners' first language in rural schools. Teachers need to provide class based activities where learners can demonstrate the acquired skills which will lead to improved proficiency in E-L2 learning.

An effective teacher facilitates skills which learners can use in other classroom based contexts (Owens, 2012). Grade R learners acquire skills by constant practicing, by playing with toys and child centred activities across a range of classroom contexts (Fairdom, 2010). Teachers need to assess learners' proficiency in demonstrating the acquired E-L2 skills in the classroom (Matthews, 2009).

If learners do not achieve transcendence of skills, mediated learning cannot occur which will suggest that learners will not have the required skills for Grade R learning.

2.8.4 Facilitation of feeling of competence

The teacher plays an important role in building the learner's confidence so that learners participate in classroom activities either as a part of the class, small group or individually (Clinton, 2010). The teacher can make the situation congenial to learning through providing opportunities for learners to demonstrate

their newly acquired skills in the classroom and the learner's efforts need to be acknowledged by teacher's praise and encouragement (Smithy, 2009). If learners are shy and unwilling to communicate, then the teacher needs to be patient and gently encourage the child to talk by speaking in a kind, friendly soft voice using terms of endearment and encouragement (Clinton, 2010). When the skills of young learners are being facilitated, the first task could be presented at a level well within the learner's competence (Feuerstein, 1980). The learner should be repeatedly praised for effort as well as achievement. Learners should not be consciously aware that they are being assessed when demonstrating their acquired skills in the classroom (Azar, 2008). If learners are not confident in mastering E-L2 skills, then mediated learning will not occur and the learner will not develop good E-L2 skills, or any other Grade R skills.

2.8.5 Facilitation of shared participation

Despite the different roles and positions in the school's hierarchy, the learner and teacher share the goal of the interaction (Justice, 2009). If one participant is not willing or committed to the facilitation process, then learners' acquisition of skills is compromised. The interaction must be a two-way process leading to skills acquisition in young learners (Richards, 2009). Practical activities for young learners to constantly engage with their teachers may include turn-taking in conversations and modeling by the teacher on how to listen and speak actively and confidently in the classroom (Matthews, 2010). If the learner or the teacher is not participating in the lesson, then mediated learning will not occur and learners will not acquire E-L2 skills in the classroom.

2.8.6 Facilitation for the control of behaviour

A successful facilitation exercise is contingent upon how the teacher regulates the learner's behaviour (Justice, 2009). This may be done by reducing impulsivity and encouraging reflective behaviour (Clinton, 2010). A calm approach helps the

learner to concentrate and process information accurately (August & Shanahan, 2006). This can be done by presenting the task in a manageable form, identifying the important components of the task and eliciting from the learner how the task will be demonstrated in the classroom (Owens, 2012). Teachers should encourage learners to participate and complete task based activities (Baywood, 2010).

The key skills reflected in the six criteria for facilitated learning are summarised in Table 2.1 to illustrate that it can be applied to E-L2.

Table 2.1: Summary of criteria for facilitated learning (Feuerstein, 1980)

Criteria	Outcomes	Role of the teacher	Role of the learner
1. Intentionality and Reciprocity	Conducive atmosphere created. Teacher and learner participate in the learning process	Task planner Resource creator	Task participator
2. Meaning	Emphasis is on understanding of tasks instruction and task completion	Learning mediator Task assignor Task supporter	Task completer
3. Transcendence	Learners need to apply skills to other contexts	Task planner Task creator	Skills applier
4. Feeling of competence	Learners gain confidence in completion of tasks	Task planner Task assignor	Task completer
5. Shared participation	Teacher and learners interact with each in the classroom	Mediator Observer Supporter	Participator Communicator
6. Control of behaviour	Teacher regulates learners' behaviour	Discipliner	Acceptor of authority

2.9. APPLICABILITY OF THE MLET THEORY TO THE GRADE R SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

The MLET provides a framework whereby the teacher should facilitate and assess E-L2 competencies in Grade R learners according to specified guidelines reflected in the South African Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (Department of Basic Education, 2012). The MLET aims at promoting skill acquisition in learners in a collaborative interactive manner between the teacher and learner. The teacher is expected to model skills and actions which the learner imitates in the classroom (Fairdom, 2010). Both play based and formal instruction may be derived from the MLET. The teachers' role is one of being a mediator who needs to offer the appropriate language support to an E-L2 learner who is acquiring English skills in most cases for the first time in Grade R. It does not matter on the type of facilitation approach used but rather the teachers' input once a learner is unable to demonstrate skills in E-L2. If a learner performs a skill incorrectly, the teacher will repeat the action many times and will gently encourage the learner to perform the said action without placing undue pressure on them or scolding them harshly for taking their time to respond (Fairdom, 2010). The teacher is viewed as a mediator and the child as an active learner (Department of Basic Education, 2012).

These different roles of the teacher and the learner are embedded within the Grade R Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements framework. In this framework the teacher is seen as the mediator of Grade R learning and learners are expected to engage in individual work (Department of Basic Education, 2012). The Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements differs from the National Curriculum Statement in stressing group work in Grade R. The MLET is applicable in this study since the focus of the theory is on disadvantaged learners who are coming from poverty stricken schools categorised as having no access to tarred roads, inadequate municipal services and a high unemployment rate. MLET takes cognizance of learners coming from disadvantaged backgrounds

who were not exposed to sufficient early stimulation programmes at home. In Mpumalanga 40% of children are living in abject poverty (EMIS Statistics Report, 2012).

Research was conducted by the Department of Education in 10 rural schools categorised as belonging to category one schools which are the most disadvantaged schools in the Province (Mhaule, 2011). The indicators for poverty was the income threshold received by the household on a monthly basis (below R 2000 is regarded as being poverty stricken), access to tarred roads, clinics and the availability of municipal services in the community where the school is located (Mhaule, 2011).

The use of resources in the Grade R class has been accorded a high prominence in the MLET. In the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements the teacher is expected to use resources to facilitate learning and skills acquisition (Department of Basic Education, 2012). The MLET states that effective skills acquisition in the early years is heavily dependent on the use of resources in the classroom (Patterson, 2008). Therefore teachers need to plan beforehand what resources are required and if resources are not available, teachers should make them irrespective of the teaching approach employed in the classroom. Due to budgetary constraints the Department of Education is unable to provide resources to all rural schools in the short term. However, a bid has been made to treasury requesting more funds to procure resources for rural schools. Moreover the compensation budget allocated to the Department is unable to pay all employees based on the general salary increases and the department will be compelled to shift funds from goods and services to compensation. Many of the rural schools do not have special Grade R classes to accommodate learners and are using Grade 1 classes to house learners.

The MLET advises teachers to be astute observers in assessing young learners in their demonstration of skills (Pugh & Duffy, 2006). The Curriculum Assessment

Policy Statements is underpinned by the notion that the teacher will observe and assess learners in the classroom on a periodic basis (Department of Basic Education, 2012). The MLET asserts that facilitation and assessment processes should occur simultaneously especially with young learners since teachers can quickly support and assist learners who are encountering challenges in appropriating the requisite skills and competencies (Smithy, 2009). In South Africa there is no standardised instrument to assess learners E-L2 skills and teachers rely primarily on documenting learners' progress in a notebook based on their observations.

The hallmark of the MLET is that the teacher models the skills and competencies that learners need to appropriate in the classroom and the efforts of the learner in demonstrating the acquired skills should be accompanied by frequent praise and encouragement (Espinosa, 2002).

Teachers need to provide students with feedback about their language, but they need to do so indirectly and implicitly, avoiding the mere correction and replacement of the student's utterances (Xu, 2010). One useful method is to expand and extend what the student says. This gives the student the correct linguistic model and, as an important corollary, sends the message that the student's attempts at communication are accepted.

2.10. IMPLICATIONS OF THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS TO LOCAL PRACTICE

Firstly the role of first language on second language learning has been underscored and confirmed by research findings emanating from studies conducted by Wong-Fillmore (1991) and Kruse (2005) which was discussed earlier in the chapter. These findings infer that bilingual programmes need to be implemented in schools where learners can acquire a second language while being still instructed in their first language. The child learns in the language that

he/she knows best and once competence is acquired in first language, second language learning becomes easier (Wong-Fillmore, 1991). If learners are only instructed in a second language, a loss of words in the first language could occur (Shiple & McAfee, 2009). Therefore first language instruction should not be disregarded in Grade R curriculum and it will be interesting to analyse the study findings since learners are only learning in a second language in Mpumalanga and is not learning in the language the child knows best.

Cummins model (2008) has indicated that BICS emphasise conversational skills while CALP focuses on higher order abstract thinking which is needed for academic success in schools. Thus there is a need for teachers to facilitate and assess both BICS and CALP skills in the classroom (Cummins, 2008). It was interesting to note that the two education facilitation approaches (play and formal based) facilitates both CALP and BICS but vary in the degree of emphasis of facilitating the above-mentioned skills in the classroom. Formal based classrooms emphasis CALP while some BICS are facilitated. Some CALP does occur in play based classrooms. The Grade R curriculum needs to be critically examined in the next chapter to determine the amount of CLAP and BICS that needs to be facilitated and assessed in the classroom.

The another theoretical underpinning is that explicit teaching may occur in the play based classroom and although the research study does not examine teachers' instructional practices, the quality and quantity of teachers' input may influence E-L2 learning.

The MLET is applicable within the poverty Mpumalanga rural context where teachers need to be mediators of language learning to offer support to learners when intervening in the learning process. Mediation can occur both in play and formal instructional classrooms after teachers observe learners' behaviours and demonstration of skills and devise programmes to assist learners to improve on their language performance. Since research findings associate poverty with poor

language skills (Wong-Fillmore, 1991), the role of teachers as mediators is crucial in facilitating Grade R E-L2 skills. The role of mediator in MLET is in contrast to the role of facilitator that was emphasised in South Africa when the Outcomes Based curriculum was first introduced in South Africa in 1998 (Heugh, 2000). There was a misconception that Outcomes Based Education was constructivist (Heugh, 2000) when in reality it was positivist since it emphasised performance standards and outcomes (Balfour, 2007). Hence the term ‘facilitator’ was used as opposed to ‘mediator’ since the teachers’ role was seen as preparing the environment and activities for learners to engage meaningfully in, while the intervention support was apparently disregarded in schools (Heugh, 2000). There was a misconception that teachers did not have to teach young learners explicitly which could have resulted in low performance scores of learners in 2011 Annual National Assessments and Systemic Evaluation that was discussed in chapter one. However, the Curriculum Assessment Policy Standards refers to the Grade R teacher as a mediator which was implemented in Grade R in 2012.

2.11 SUMMARY

In this chapter the role of first language on second language learning was outlined. Cummins’ model of BICS/CALP, implicit versus explicit learning and MLET provided theoretical underpinnings on how learners acquire a second language and the E-L2 skills they need to demonstrate in the classroom. Learners’ language difficulties in the classroom could be mediated by teachers both in the play and formal instructional classrooms. The theoretical underpinnings were informed by the poverty context of rural Mpumalanga where all rural schools were in Category one, which were the most disadvantaged schools in terms of socio-economic wealth and availability of municipal services.

CHAPTER THREE

EVOLUTION OF THE GRADE R CURRICULUM AND RESEARCH ON CURRENT ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the overview of research on facilitation and assessment methods in Grade R classrooms is presented with a particular reference to English second language learning. The chapter has four focal points, these are: discussion on Grade R educational facilitation approaches, an historical overview of the South African Grade R curriculum, research on the effectiveness of different facilitation methods showing the advantages and disadvantages of each of the methods for E-L2 learning in South Africa, and Grade R assessment practices used by teachers in the classroom. The researcher intends to test out the English Language Proficiency (ELP) standards assessment tool in the empirical study and hence will cite USA studies where the tool is used to determine Grade R learners' second language English skills.

3.2 DISCUSSION ON GRADE R EDUCATIONAL FACILITATION APPROACHES

As mentioned in chapter one, there are two Grade R educational facilitation approaches (play and formal instructional based) that teachers employ in the classroom. A discussion on both educational facilitation approaches will be provided below:

A play-based curriculum is based on the traditional Grade R classroom, which focused on the whole child and the dependence on organizing fun filled activities for children to engage in for teaching and guiding a child during development (Dickson, 2009). Play supports the development of the whole child, especially his

or her ability to communicate, collaborate, negotiate, ask and answer questions, give and act on commands, and otherwise connect with others (Davidson, 2004). It is important, then, for classrooms to provide an atmosphere that encourages risk taking, a structure that provides opportunities for children to interact with one another, and an environment where children can make choices (Xu, 2010). These are the building blocks of independent learning (Xu, 2010).

Most classrooms with play-based instruction have time for free-play, where there are usually learning centres set up that may include: a dramatic play centre, block area, art centre, music centre, book centre, or a writing centre (Day, 2007). In a classroom with a play-based curriculum there is a balance between simple and complex play materials. The simple materials are resources that are easy to use and only have one use, such as a book or a worksheet.

Complex materials are things that have many uses, such as clay or play dough. Furthermore, these materials allow children to learn through play by using open-ended materials or materials that have many uses (Drake, 2003). In a classroom that uses play-based instruction, there is often an hour of the day given to free play that is uninterrupted. From a developmental perspective, an hour of free-play is not that large of an amount; however, it is typically more time designated to play than a formal based programme gives its students for play that is uninterrupted by the teacher and student-led (Numen, 2006).

The play-based kindergarten curricula of the past have in many cases, been supplanted by formal based programmes that focus more on written than spoken language (Patterson, 2008). There are few activities that promote oral language development better than free play. During play-based learning, the teacher's role is to first to observe and then to guide, participating in the play and intervening as appropriate to extend children's thinking or enrich their talk (Menkpin, 2008).

Formal instructional approaches do not include child centred activities, such as free play, and fills this time with direct teaching that attempts to drill skills and knowledge into learners (Xu, 2010). There is an enormous amount of focus put in meeting standards and the emphasis is on writing and reading (Kruse, 2005). In short, learners learn through drill and worksheets (Patterson, 2008). In the US, the formal instructional programmes often cut out recess or allow children to go out for recess only after they finished the teacher assigned activity. In these classrooms a timetable with structured time slots is usually followed by Grade R teachers strictly (Kruse, 2005).

3.3 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE GRADE R CURRICULUM IN SOUTH AFRICA

Firstly, a historical overview of the Grade R curriculum presents an opportunity to trace the evolution of the curriculum over the last twenty years in terms of teachers' facilitation and assessment practices in South Africa. The overview will provide a platform for the researcher to elucidate the following questions that require clarity, for example: Where are we coming from in terms of Grade R curriculum implementation?, Where are we now?, Where do we like to be?, and how do we address gaps after the research is conducted? The last two questions will be clarified further in Chapter Six.

The overview of the Grade R curriculum will illustrate the mismatch between some learners' first language, their language of instruction, and the expected oral communication competencies learners need to demonstrate in the classroom according to the approved South African Grade R curriculum.

Prior to 1994, Grade R was formally facilitated and assessed according to the dictates of Christian National Education. Christian National Education supported the National Party programme of apartheid by calling on educators to reinforce cultural diversity and to rely on "mother-tongue" instruction in the first years of

primary school (Kapp, 2004) This philosophy also espoused the idea that a person's social responsibilities and political opportunities are defined, in large part, by that person's ethnic identity. The government also gave strong management control to the school boards, who were elected by the parents in each district (Makina, 2009). The policy was formulated by the previous South African Government to teach learners content at the expense of skills (Kapp, 2004; Makina, 2009). Learners were passive recipients of knowledge and some learners were retained in Grade R at the end of the year because they could not read and write (Fleisch, 2008). Learners were expected to read fluently and write grammatically correct sentences and copy sentences from the chalkboard when they enrolled for Grade 1 learning.

At that stage they were either 5½ or 6 years old, depending on the month they were born (Fleisch, 2008). All learners aged 5½ turning 6, born before the 30 June in the year of admission, were permitted to register for Grade 1 (Fleisch, 2008). The Grade R class was seen as a “mini Grade 1 class” since learners sat behind desks and completed written exercises in their workbooks (Fleisch, 2008). Thus previously the Grade R class was seen as a watered down Grade 1 class that concentrated solely on formal learning at the expense of children engaging in play based activities that was the norm universally (Fleisch, 2008). The rationale for the formal instructional approach was that learners' competency was determined by their ability to recite letters of the alphabet and copy sentences from the chalkboard (Fleisch, 2008). Knowledge transfer, recitation and rote learning superseded skills acquisition and demonstration. It was assumed that play-based learning had no place in Grade R classrooms since learners had to be formally prepared for Grade 1 learning.

Since there was no official curriculum in Grade R prior to 1994, teachers used the Grade 1 curriculum to facilitate and assess Grade R learning. The previous government emphasized the use of learners' first language in Grade R, although many community based centres instructed learners in English (Fleisch, 2008).

Since Grade R was not subsidised in most of the rural schools, except the former Bophuthatshwana homeland, parents paid for their children to benefit from educational stimulation support in the classroom. The language of instruction was a very emotive issue for many parents because they were denied opportunities by the previous Nationalist government to achieve competency in English and were consequently unable to secure good paying work opportunities (Fleisch, 2008). Therefore they want their children to learn English in Grade R in order for them to become skilful and proficient in reading and writing.

There was, however, a mismatch between learners' first language and the language of teaching and learning in many Grade R classrooms. Learners were facilitated in English based on their parents' language preferences although they spoke another language at home. There were very few schools that accommodated Grade R classes and many children registered for Grade 1 without being prepared for formal schooling. To date no commissioned research could be found to determine the effect of limited exposure to school readiness programmes on learners' proficiency in reading and writing in Grade 1.

The Threshold project by MacDonald (1990) showed that learners had not acquired a sufficient vocabulary to use English as the language of learning and teaching after three years of learning English as a second language. The gap at which African learners switch from learning in their first language to English as the language of learning and teaching is large and can increase with time (MacDonald, 1990). Wright (2012) states that young children need to learn firstly in their mother tongue before being introduced to English. Wright (2012) and MacDonald (1990) state that introducing learners too learn to English is counterproductive to a child's learning in English since he/she has not developed adequate oral communication skills. Heugh (2000) remarked that an early introduction to English serves as an obstacle in the child achieving a social identity and self confidence in the learning process.

Heugh (2002) stated that teachers are not skilled to teach languages across the curriculum. Since learners' cognitive ability is determined by the mother tongue, the learning of a second language depends on the maturity of first language foundation. These learners encounter challenges when they encounter difficulties with language across the curriculum. There is no formal teaching of language in Grade R but incidental learning. Heugh (2000) argues that in the drafting of the outcome-based curriculum, there was always a covert agenda that all children would ultimately learn in English, evidenced by the fact that language issues were reduced to the language and literacy learning area. Development of terminology and materials in all the official languages, and teacher training for multilingual education and the new curriculum were therefore not discussed (Heugh, 2000). The Language-in-Education Policy was announced four months after Curriculum 2005 was finalised and Heugh (2000) maintains that the centrality of language in education was disregarded at a critical point in South African history. The development of the curriculum and the finalisation of the Education-in language policy were separate processes that should have been integrated to ensure plans for successful learning in first and second language. It appears that concepts such as "natural language" and "communicative language teaching" are misunderstood as stated in the Language-in-Education policy. The assumption underlying these concepts is that language acquisition simply happens without attention to the nature of the input provided (Heugh, 2000). Children acquire language (either L1 or L2) both implicitly as a result of exposure to learning contexts and as a result of explicit instruction (Jordaan, 2011). According to Heugh in 2000, there is no indication of an increase in English language proficiency amongst black learners. According to Balfour (2007), language pedagogy should focus on grammatical competence, vocabulary development, syntactic differences, phonological awareness and complex narration. According to 2011 Annual National Assessments and 2007 Systemic Evaluations, learners are still unable to demonstrate English proficiency based on their performance scores in these assessments (Department of Education, 2012). Teachers in the rural areas are against code switching, since the

classroom is the only domain where students are exposed to English and have a chance to practice it (Mpumalanga Department of Education, 2012). Children will code-switch when experiencing problems in communicating in English to the teacher in the classroom when acquiring a second language (Shiple & McAfee, 2009). The child is still acquiring a second language and may not have enough vocabulary to communicate in grammatically correct sentences.

Furthermore, one of the negative effects of OBE has been that teachers were encouraged not to teach language and literacy skills explicitly in the entire schooling system (Heugh, 2009). Learners did not receive the necessary support to develop language and literacy skills. Teacher-training programmes have similarly de-emphasised explicit teaching because they have had to work within the OBE framework (Heugh, 2000). The practice of content- and language-integrated instruction became virtually non-existent, because subject teachers regard language teaching as the responsibility of the language teachers and do not know that they can also teach the language of the subject (Heugh, 2000). Explicit E-L2 teaching should be considered in the teaching of grammar and vocabulary in the early grades (Heugh, 2000).

According to research conducted by Kapp (2004) in pre-primary schools in Johannesburg that admitted black learners in 1993, the majority of learners could not communicate easily in English, were often withdrawn and spoke their first language in the classroom. Kapp (2004) also conducted longitudinal studies tracking learners' achievement over 6 years (Grade R-Grade 5) and found that learners could not comprehend instructions easily and encountered challenges in displaying expressive and receptive English language skills. An interesting observation was made by Kapp (2004) that after six years of English instruction, these learners could speak neither English nor their first language with confidence and fluency. Despite the switch to OBE, some teachers still assumed that Grade R should be formal whereby learners completed written exercises in their workbooks and worksheets (Voice, 2009). The Department of Basic

Education (2012) prescribed that the play-based approach be facilitated in Grade R and the language of teaching and learning should be in learners' first language.

However, some teachers' actual practices contradicted the official Grade R policy since they implemented the formal instructional method and used English as a basis for communication disregarding learners whose first language was not English (Anthonissen, 2009; Willenberg, 2004). At that time, Grade R teaching practices were just a continuation of the pre-1994 approach since teachers resisted the new play-based approach. The possible reasons for teachers resisting the new play-based approach were that they were trained in the formal conventional method and that they already had their prepared lessons and resources used previously for Grade R learners (Fleisch, 2008). Teachers viewed the play-based approach as entailing extra preparation for lesson planning, resource making and designing assessment tasks in the classroom (Willenberg, 2004). Although these teachers were trained to implement the play-based approach, they continued implementing the formal instructional approach in Grade R (Department of Basic Education, 2012).

One of the drawbacks of the training of the National Curriculum Statement in 2003 was that the facilitators used for training were not well prepared to capacitate teachers in Grade R curriculum processes (Fleisch, 2008). Facilitators conveyed their own interpretations on what should be facilitated and assessed in the Grade R classroom instead of disseminating what was reflected in the National Curriculum Statement documents (Fleisch, 2008). Thus in most cases the official departmental curriculum policy was not communicated fully to Grade R teachers since some facilitators did not receive adequate training themselves from master trainers.

To date there are no instruments in place to determine whether Grade R learners are school ready. There is still a gap in departmental assessment planning for

Grade R since learners' competency in Grade R is not prioritized to be assessed in the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (Department of Basic Education, 2012). It was expected that these assessment gaps would have been addressed in the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements since departmental curriculum specialists identified that most Grade R teachers are unable to determine whether their learners are school ready. The Mpumalanga Department of Education submitted inputs on Grade R assessment to the Department of Basic Education, but it would seem that these inputs were not considered for inclusion in the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (Mpumalanga Department of Education, 2011). It appears that assessment addenda needs to be issued by the Department of Basic Education to provide specific guidelines to teachers on Grade R assessment procedures.

Although no assessment instruments were introduced, the Department of Basic Education (2012) introduced Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements in Grade R. Curriculum documents for the three subjects, i.e. Home Language, Mathematics and Life Skills, provided guidelines for content and skills to be facilitated and included topics that should be covered per week in the Grade R classroom (Department of Basic Education, 2012). Teachers were provided with information on the prescribed time allocation for the different subjects, broad guidelines on how assessment should be conducted and a list of recommended educational resources to be used in every Grade R classroom (Department of Basic Education, 2012).

Prior to the implementation of Grade R Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements, there were contradictions in content and repetition of information in the Grade R-3 National Curriculum Statements (Department of Education, 2007). Grade R was clustered with Grades 1 to 3 since it marks the first year of the foundation phase and prepares the learners for Grade 1 learning. These contradictions were evident especially in the learning programme and subject assessment guidelines. One of the contradictions evident in the different National

Curriculum Assessment Statement documents was that some documents distributed to teachers advised them to teach social courtesies formally and to use workbooks, while others stated that social courtesies should be informally introduced.

The other contradiction evident was that written activities should be prioritized over oral activities. The national curriculum resulted in contradictory messages being relayed to Grade R teachers on whether language competencies should be formally or informally introduced. Therefore teachers were confused and had to debate amongst themselves whether the formal or play-based method should be introduced in Grade R. Therefore the evolution of the national curriculum from the pre-1994 curriculum was not a smooth transition as challenges were encountered in teachers deciding on which facilitation method to introduce Grade R E-L2 skills.

As far as it could be ascertained, the Mpumalanga Department of Education has not issued any circulars or directives pertaining to Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements. Further, it seems that national directives issued by Department of Basic Education will be distributed to all schools in order for teachers to have a uniform understanding of what is expected to be implemented in the Grade R curriculum. However, it should be noted that since different ECD officials were used to train teachers, the information disseminated during training sessions could vary in some aspects. There appears to be no research conducted on Grade R teachers' Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements training. The Mpumalanga Department of Education has not conducted a study to assess the impact of the new curriculum on Grade R learners' performance. It should be noted, however, that Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements was only introduced in Grade R in 2012.

The South African Grade R curriculum is similar to the curriculum offered in the USA. The Department of Basic Education used the already existing USA

curriculum to develop the national curriculum. The USA Grade R curriculum underscores the importance of learners achieving grammatical competence where they can speak English fluently and confidently (Xu, 2010; Zaslow, 2005). In South Africa grammatical competence of Grade R learners is also emphasized in E-L2 learning. The Department of Education has recently released information which shows that in the majority of Grade R classrooms the medium of instruction is not English (Department of Education, 2012).

Both in the US and South Africa there is a mismatch between some learners' first language and the language of instruction in schools. About 20% of Grade R learners in the USA are E-L2 learners with 75% Spanish speaking learners, followed by 12% Asian/Pacific Islander languages, 10% Indo-European languages and 3% speaking other languages (US Department of Education, 2007). In Mpumalanga only 10% of Grade R learners are English first language speakers whose first language matches the language of learning and teaching in schools (EMIS Statistics Report, 2012). There are 8% of Afrikaans first language Grade R learners and from this cohort only 5% of learners' first language matches the language of learning and teaching (EMIS Statistics Report, 2012). Therefore in Mpumalanga there are 85% of Grade R learners who are learning in English which is not their first language. The key issues pertaining to English being taught in Grade R are (Mpumalanga Department of Education, 2012):

- a) The preparedness of the teachers to teach effectively through English
- b) the ability of teachers to monitor progress of learners in English
- c) What is the likelihood of exposure to English beyond the classroom?
- d) What is the likelihood of their being sufficient opportunities in the school, but beyond the classroom for children to practice in English?

The main characteristics of the Grade R curriculum are that it is informal and play-based. Thus the evolution of the Grade R curriculum was explicated. Existing research on E-L2 learning in Grade R will be discussed in the next section.

3.4 DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE ENVIRONMENTS

The National Association for the Education of young children in the US coined this phrase (Patterson, 2008). Developmentally appropriate environments help children develop in all areas - physical, social, creative, emotional and cognitive (Kruse, 2005). There is an emphasis on integrated approach to learning. Learning through play enhances development and reduces stress in young children (US Department of Education, 2007). Teachers that do not have the required training, the needed equipment or appropriate curriculum for working with younger children, are likely to use methods and content designed for older children. Children may suffer from stress related illnesses and school failure because of these inappropriate expectations. The criteria for developmentally appropriate learning are (Ward, 2008):

- Warm caregiver-child relationship
- Build child's confidence
- Learning areas- groups of children can work and play
- Teacher needs to have an ECD qualification
- Adults respond quickly to children. Listen carefully and speak at the child's eye level.
- Materials- low shelves and labelled for easy storage
- Daily schedule

The list can also be seen as factors contributing to a developmentally appropriate teaching approach.

3.5 RESEARCH ON E-L2 LEARNING IN GRADE R

Since limited research has been conducted on when to introduce English as a second language in South Africa, the researcher will draw on studies from the USA to determine which facilitation i.e. play-based or formal instructional approach, were found to contribute to effective E-L2 learning.

Grade R learners must comply with certain prerequisites to ensure successful E-L2 learning. Researchers who are in favour of English being taught from Grade R argue that children acquire language more readily at an early age than later. The reason posed for successful early E-L2 acquisition is that little content-subject teaching occurs in Grade R and more time may be devoted to language lessons (Barbara, 2008; Wood, 2009). The following prerequisites have been found to be essential for effective E-L2 learning in a Grade R classroom. Teachers need to be proficient English speakers, teachers must know how to develop appropriate language learning activities and learners need to have much exposure to English at home (Xu, 2010).

Xu (2010) conducted research in one school in the US state of Louisiana where 60 Spanish first language Grade R learners were introduced to English at the start of the academic year. The parents were requested to speak English as often as possible at home and their two teachers were first language English speakers. A vocabulary checklist was used to determine Grade R learners' competency at the start of the Grade R year and at 6 months of Grade R learning. It was found that Grade R learners' competency in English vocabulary increased from 40 English words to 600 words after being introduced to English by English first language teachers and parents speaking to their children frequently in English (Xu, 2010). In a similar study conducted by the Florida Department of Education (2010) 40 English first language teachers were requested to teach 400 Grade R learners English at the start of the Grade R academic year. It was found that 60% of Grade R learners improved their speaking and listening competencies by 40% after being assessed by teachers utilizing the ELP standards assessment tool (Florida Department of Education, 2010). In both studies there were a control group of learners which did not receive a rich exposure to English. It was found that these learners' E-L2 scores did not improve. The findings emanating from the Louisiana and Florida studies suggests that the introduction of English at the start of the year, parents speaking

English to their children at home and if teachers are first language speakers, then learners' E-L2 skills will improve in Grade R.

The contextual factors in certain communities in South Africa, and particularly Mpumalanga may be vastly different. Teachers in the rural areas are English second language speakers and learners speak their first language usually at home (EMIS Statistics Report, 2012) Thus both teachers and learners may have very limited exposure to English. Limited English home exposure affects adversely a child's ability to be confident and fluent in speaking English. According to Wood (2009), parents should communicate with their children whenever possible in English (Wood, 2009). Wood (2009) did not base his recommendation on research evidence, but on his informal observations of his Spanish speaking domestic helpers who spoke English to her children prior to them being enrolled for Grade R learning. Parents may also not be proficient in English and they cannot provide an appropriate E-L2 model for their children. The question is how increased exposure to English may be achieved in Mpumalanga considering the contextual factors. The strategies of expanding English exposure will be outlined in Chapter 6 after interpreting the study's findings within the Mpumalanga context.

Not all researchers recommend E-L2 learning in Grade R. According to Barbara (2008), children's first language should be the language of learning and teaching since they acquire skills and knowledge more easily in their first language, think in the language that they know, and acquire cognitive skills such as sequencing, ordering, comparing and contrasting. Despite the educational advantages of being facilitated in the learners' first language, it appears that non-English speaking parents in the USA prefer their children to be introduced to English in Grade R since English is the language used in government and commerce (US Department of Education, 2010).

It appears that the similar situation occurs in South Africa (Mesthrie, 2006; Moyo, 2008). In the US state of California E-L2 learners' exposure to English at home is limited and does not meet the basic conditions for successful English learning i.e. parents are supposed to introduce English songs, poems, rhymes and stories to their children (US Department of Education, 2007). However, teachers are qualified and well trained in E-L2 learning in the USA. Similar to Mpumalanga, there is a contradiction in California between parental wishes regarding English teaching in Grade R and research on the importance of first language instruction as contributing to effective E-L2 learning. Parents want their children to learn only English while research conducted by Barbara (2008) underscores the importance of first language competency to acquire cognitive skills, which prepares the foundation for learning in a second language. The California Department of Education (2010) allowed school districts to determine the Grade R language policy in schools. Many second language Grade R parents openly resisted attempts to their children receiving instruction in their first language. The parents issued a joint petition to the California Department of Education (2010) with parental signatures and sent a delegation to meet management to voice their concerns about their children's language of instruction.

Arguments posed by Barbara (2008) indicate strongly the benefits of first language learning in Grade R and in other school grades. A question needs to be posed: When should a second language be introduced to learners? Parental preferences on English being the language of learning and teaching in Grade R are strongly communicated to policy makers and departmental officials. The dilemma encountered by policy makers and governmental officials is that parents want their children to learn English in Grade R irrespective of evidence presented by officials that first language learning aids acquisition of a second language.

Different home literacies should be accommodated in the Grade R classroom (Mpumalanga Department of Education, 2012). According to Patterson (2008) teachers in multilingual contexts need to make reference and use of learners' first

language in the classroom when facilitating the meaning and pronunciation of words despite English being the language of learning and teaching. Kruse (2005) acknowledges that most teachers are first language English speakers and their knowledge of learners' first languages in the US is rather limited. There is a call from the US Department of Education (2007) for first language English teachers to attend departmentally paid courses on the learning of basic Spanish since the majority of second language learners (60%) speak Spanish at home. Although there is a debate on code-switching in the early grades (Makin, 2003; Numen, 2006), some authors (Matterson, 2008; Menkpin, 2008) argue that it is a necessity since many children come from homes where English is rarely spoken and are expected to speak exclusively in English without having the required vocabulary knowledge.

Teachers need to make use of resources (pictures, toys, books) to bridge children's literacies in the classroom (Kruse, 2005). By pointing out to a picture and asking children the name of an object in their first language, the child's confidence is raised when the teacher praises the child's response in his/her first language (Patterson, 2008). The teacher subsequently says the word in English and then uses the word in languages frequently, requesting children to sound out both words and then gradually using the English word exclusively. In these cases both teacher and learner are learning words in different languages to a certain degree.

According to Dickson (2009) the term, 'scaffolding' is used to describe the support that helps the learner to complete tasks that would be unattainable without the teachers' assistance. Thus the interaction is two-way, the learner does what he or she can do and the teacher provides assistance whenever the learner encounters challenges in demonstrating skills and competencies.

In the Grade R context, the teacher is expected to ascertain the learners E-L2 skills in the beginning of the year in deciding the level of support that the learner

requires (Drake, 2003). The teacher needs to know whether the learner can accomplish tasks independently. Scaffolding is informed by careful teacher observation and the teacher responding to what they see the child is actually trying to accomplish in the classroom.

According to Davidson (2004) teachers need to know firstly whether learners can demonstrate skills and knowledge by requesting responses from learners and assigning them tasks and activities. Day (2007) states that for effective scaffolding to occur, the teacher need to use an assessment tool to rate learners' competencies individually rather than in a group where at times the teacher only asks the same learner repeatedly questions.

Grade R curricular outcomes are discussed in the next section.

3.6. GRADE R E-L2 COMPETENCIES

In order to assess Grade R learners' E-L2 skills, it is important to describe the expected curriculum outcomes that need to be assessed. The aim of the assessment is to determine whether learners can demonstrate E-L2 skills especially in speaking and listening competencies, but not yet in writing. The discussion on the expected Grade R assessment competencies as reflected in the Grade R curriculum will now become applicable to the research study.

In the USA Grade R learners are expected to respond to social interactions, communicate needs and feelings, respond orally to read-aloud stories, identify basic sequence of events and stories, speak using verb tense and adjectives, and identify by name objects, people and events in the language of learning (Steward, 2009; Xu, 2010). Grade R learners also need to recite rhymes, songs and poems, retell simple stories placing events in sequence, follow oral directions and comprehend words, phrases and short sentences (Steward, 2009; Xu, 2010). Owens (2012) states that the child's potential for success with reading

and writing are oral language and metalinguistic skills. Although some learners in the USA are second language English speakers, they are expected to demonstrate the same level of proficiency as expected from a first language speaker, since the language of instruction in schools is English. There is no special concession awarded to second language English speaking learners in terms of relaxing some of the expected Grade R curriculum outcomes or awarding some extra points to these learners in literacy assessments (Coppie & Bredenkamp, 2009).

There are similarities between the South African and USA curricula. Both curricula emphasise the importance of teachers facilitating speaking, vocabulary and listening skills. It should be also mentioned that speaking, listening and vocabulary skills in Grade R are universal since the objective of Grade R is to prepare the child for formal reading and writing in Grade 1. The difference in the curricula is that the need for assessing learners' competency in language skills is prioritized in the USA and downplayed in South Africa. In South Africa the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements advise teachers to design their own checklists which cannot be valid since it is based on teachers' interpretation of competencies that need to be assessed (Department of Basic Education, 2012). Thus informal assessments are emphasized in South Africa while formal assessments are used in the USA to determine whether learners are competent in E-L2 skills. Formal assessments using standardized instruments that are valid and reliable will provide a composite picture of learners' competency in E-L2 skills.

In South Africa the following language and literacy skills need to be developed in the Grade R learner when the language of instruction is English, i.e. listening and speaking, reading and viewing and writing (Department of Basic Education, 2012). According to the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements, English is only supposed to be introduced as a First Additional Language in Grade 1 and should not be the language of instruction if learners' first language is not English

(Department of Basic Education, 2012). For the purposes of this study, emphasis is placed only on the listening and speaking skills learners need to acquire in the Grade R classroom. In terms of listening and speaking skills, learners are expected to demonstrate the following competencies in the classroom:

- Listen to stories and acts these out;
- Listens and responds to simple questions;
- Listens to and repeats rhythmic patterns, and copies correctly;
- Listens to and recalls simple word sequences in order (e.g. big, beg, bag);
- Names and points to parts of the body;
- Sings simple songs and does action rhymes;
- Talks about pictures in posters, theme charts, books, etc.;
- Participates in discussions and ask questions;
- Speak using an expanded vocabulary; and
- Tells stories and retell stories of others in own words (Department of Basic Education, 2012).

The resources used to facilitate listening, vocabulary and speaking skills are listed as follows: pictures and posters, colour charts, number charts, games, toys, picture books (Department of Basic Education, 2012). The resources are underscored in the MLET (Feuerstein, 1980) discussed in the previous chapter. Grade R learners were expected to use resources with their teachers' assistance to learn new words, communicate with their fellow learners, listen attentively to questions posed by teachers and participate in classroom discussions in their first language only (Department of Basic Education, 2012).

The Department of Basic Education (2012) provided the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements to streamline and strengthen the implementation of the different subjects i.e. Home Language, Mathematics and Life Skills in the Grade R classroom by providing teachers with facilitation strategies and assessment task for utilization in the classroom. Another reason for the Department of Basic Education supplying schools with Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements was

to provide uniform curriculum guidelines and assessment procedures that are free from ambiguity and contradiction which was evident in the National Curriculum Statement.

As Grade R learners need to have an expressive vocabulary of 2,100 to 2,200 words, they should discuss feelings, understand concepts i.e. of, before and after, follows three-step commands and have 90% grammar acquisition (Owens, 2012). Irrespective of learners' Grade R first languages, they are expected to demonstrate these competencies in schools where the language of instruction is English.

According to Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements, teachers need to develop Grade R learners' ability to listen carefully, make sense of what they are listening to, remember the information and provide the necessary feedback to teachers and fellow learners (Department of Basic Education, 2012). Since phonological awareness precedes reading and writing skills, teachers need to teach learners to distinguish between different sounds. Teachers need to teach learners speaking skills, i.e. make eye-contact with the listener, learn that one person speaks at a time, respond appropriately to the other speaker, speak in a clear voice, talk at a good pace (i.e. not too rapidly or too slowly), and use gestures and the appropriate tone (Department of Basic Education, 2012). Although accuracy is important, and oral communication requires fluency and confidence, corrections should be done with sensitivity. Stopping learners' mid-flow can damage self-belief and break fluency of their conversations and narrations (Department of Education, 2008).

According to Batibo (2006), E-L2 skills are universal and reflected in the curricula of at least 80 countries in the world. Batibo (2006) states that the purpose of E-L2 learning is for Grade R learners to be able to communicate fluently and confidently in English. Dutch and Whitehurst (2002) supports Batibo (2006) by stating that curriculum guidelines are underpinned by play-based methodology

and developmentally appropriate principles pertaining to Grade R E-L2 learning. Fairdom (2010) contends that especially in the Australian curriculum it is recommended that teachers should teach learners to differentiate between sounds and learn meanings of words formally.

There is variability of literature findings on the effect of gender on learners E-L2 scores. According to research conducted by Ramsey (2006) in ten schools in New York he found that girls performed better in E-L2 assessments when compared to boys especially in listening competencies but performed more or less the same in speaking skills. Girls were found to be more attentive and willing to adhere to instructions while boys were playful and easily distracted (Ramsey, 2006). In contrast, Reid (2009) conducted research in eight Grade R classrooms in Princeton and found that boys scored better in speaking competencies as compared to girls and performed similarly in listening competencies. It was found that boys spoke confidently and were able to narrate stories, sing songs, say poems and tell rhymes (Reid, 2009).

There is a need to find an assessment tool that will comprehensively assess E-L2 skills in Grade R. The ECD community of scholars assert that Grade R oral communication competencies are universal and occupy a high prominence in the Grade R curriculum (Azar, 2008; Biemiller, 2004; Davidson, 2004). Since there is no standardized tool in South Africa on E-L2 proficiency, the researcher scanned the literature to identify a valid and reliable instrument to assess the Grade R competencies. An important condition was that the instrument should be free from any cultural bias since the research tool will be used on learners who have different first languages and represent different cultures. The instrument should also be valid, reliable and suited to the context of the research study.

3.7 SELECTION CRITERIA FOR A LOCALLY APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT FOR GRADE R E-L2 LEARNING

In order to determine whether learner outcomes in the curriculum have been realized, there is a need to assess learners formally by employing a standardized assessment tool to determine learner competency. Since the research study's focus is on the comparison of educational facilitation approaches, only those assessment studies that included both formal and play-based research will be cited in the chapter to determine which facilitation method contributes best to Grade R E-L2 learning.

In the past, Grade R teachers in the USA conducted assessments to identify and screen learners who are encountering challenges in demonstrating competency in E-L2 skills and were therefore assessing learners' school readiness preparedness (Azar, 2008; Barbara, 2008). There has been a shift from the high-stakes accountability perspective where assessment data was used for progression purposes for Grade 1 placement, to the use of baseline data to devise language support programmes to assist learners acquiring E-L2 skills (Bates, 2007; Hill, 2006). E-L2 learners acquire skills at different developmental rates and by conducting research on a sufficiently representative sample, data can be collected to find valid solutions to assist learners who are encountering challenges in becoming fluent English communicators (Azar, 2008; Barbara, 2008).

According to Woods (2010), Grade R assessments should identify learners' individual needs, distinguish between those who are responding positively to teachers' facilitation and those who are encountering challenges. Wilkinson (2008) and Ward (2008) state that teachers should conduct learner assessments on different components of emergent literacy in separate assessment tools. Since emergent literacy focuses on oral communication, pre-reading and pre-

writing skills, there should be three different standardised assessment tools used by the teacher in the classroom (Azar, 2008; Barbara, 2008).

The first requirement of a locally relevant assessment tool is comprehensiveness. Some of the different tools to assess learners E-L2 skills that could be accessed, are the Kindergarten Phonemic Assessment (Reid, 2008), Language Assessment Scales (Richards, 2009), Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (Ramsay, 2006), Oral Language Proficiency Test (Voice, 2009) and Woodstock Language Proficiency Test - Revised (Abbott, 2005).

The main disadvantage of these assessment instruments is that not all E-L2 skills, as reflected in the US curriculum, are assessed. For example, the Kindergarten Phonemic Assessment instrument does not assess listening and speaking skills but assesses learners' ability to identify similar and different sounds. The Kindergarten Readiness Assessment instrument focuses on reading and viewing, and disregards listening and speaking skills (Berk, 2006). These tests are not comprehensive since they do not assess learners' listening and speaking skills which is the basis of E-L2 learning. Similarly, the language assessment scales assesses learners' reading, writing and speaking proficiency (August & Shanahan, 2006). However, learners' listening skills are not assessed. The above-mentioned tests emphasises that teachers need to assess reading and writing skills which is usually assessed in Grade 1 and contradicts the developmentally appropriate principles pertaining to Grade R. The Oral Language Proficiency Test is partially comprehensive since it assesses learners' vocabulary and speaking skills (Abbott, 2005). This test, however, does not assess learners' listening skills and was not chosen since listening forms an important component of E-L2 learning in the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements. The Woodstock Language Proficiency Battery-Revised assesses learners' listening and speaking skills but it does not include stories in the tool. (Berk, 2006). This tool is unlikely to be culturally applicable in South Africa since Grade R learners learn language skills through stories, poems and rhymes. All

the above-mentioned tests are group tests which the teacher administrates on many learners in the classroom in one class session.

As discussed previously it was found that there were different assessment tools used to rate learners E-L2 skills in the USA and different E-L2 competencies were assessed. Therefore learners' performance scores could not be compared. Research was conducted by Juel (2008) in Texas in 50 schools chosen randomly in the state. He found that there were five different assessment tools used and some tools did not assess learners' vocabulary skills. Therefore there was a need to develop one tool that is standardized across the USA, used specifically to assess learners E-L2 skills.

Thus there is a need to identify an instrument that assesses comprehensively all two E-L2 categories as reflected in the US and South African curriculum, i.e. speaking and listening skills. The ELP assessment tool (US Department of Education, 2007) is the only tool that aims to assess the two components of Grade R E-L2 learning i.e. learners' listening and speaking skills.

The next requirement for a test is user-friendliness. Assessments tools need to be easy and quick to complete, without teachers compromising facilitation support to Grade R learners in the classroom (Carr, 2001; Hill, 2006). The ELP assessment tool is an individual test and could take up to two hours in assessing 8 Grade R learners in one session (Hill, 2006). This is an advantage to the teacher since he or she will be able to assess learners frequently and observe changes in their scores over a period of time. The test is easy to administer and more reliable when compared to another E-L2 assessments (Kindergarten Phonemic Assessment, Kindergarten Readiness Assessment, Oral Language Proficiency Test and Woodstock Language Proficiency Test). Each learner can be assessed when the ELP standards assessment tool is administered which is unlike group tests where one learner may dominate discussions at the expense of a passive learner who remains quiet throughout the testing exercise.

Another consideration for selecting a Grade R assessment tool is the type of outcomes that are obtained after administering a test. According to some researchers test scores are important in Grade R since it provides the teacher with information on how well a learner is able to perform in listening and speaking in the classroom (Tabors, 2008; Zebron, 2007). Learners are not expected to write pencil and paper tests but demonstrate their E-L2 skills according to teachers' requests based on a valid standardized assessment tool. Hence the teacher will be able to improve learner competency in the skills assessed, after generating baseline data to design intervention programmes to assist learners who encounter challenges in oral communication skills (Stagnetti & Jellie, 2006). Without soliciting baseline data, the US Department of Education cannot determine the effectiveness of teachers' educational facilitation approach used in Grade R classrooms (Tabors, 2008; Zebron, 2007).

An assessment instrument's validity should also be considered. There are different types of validity i.e. face validity, concurrent validity, predictive validity, construct validity and content validity (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Face validity refers to the superficial appearance of the test (Silverman, 2005). The ELP test is printed and published which gives the document an official appearance. Concurrent validity refers to how the test compares to a well established older test (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). There is no information in the test manual that this test is based on another test or updated or adjusted to current needs. Predictive validity refers to the test's ability to predict the child's future performance, e.g. can it correctly predict whether a child will or will not have learning difficulties in Grade 1 (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). The test manual does not indicate whether the ELP assessment tool can predict future learner performance, but suggests teachers need to develop strategies to improve E-L2 learning in the classroom. The test is relatively new to give the results of its long-term predictive validity. The test has construct validity since the theoretical construct, E-L2 skills are measured. The construct is measured indirectly, based

on the observable receptive and expressive English language skills that a child in Grade R demonstrates in the class. Content validity is relevant in this study since a test measures or assesses competencies and skills embedded within the curriculum (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). In this study content validity is important since an assessment must measure or assess all competencies and skills embedded within the Grade R Curriculum. The ELP standards assessment tool assesses Grade R learners speaking and listening skills. The Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements emphasises the importance of English language skills i.e. listening and speaking where learners need to display communicative proficiency in the language of learning and teaching.

Another criterion to consider when selecting a test is observing ethical practice when testing young children. According to York (2008), researchers should endeavour to adhere to the key principles of child based assessments in order to respect the rights and dignity of Grade R children in the classroom. Young children should not be stressed during assessment. Learners' scores should not be made known to them or any other person besides their parents (York, 2008). Children should not be traumatised or embarrassed by the testing procedure and the questions asked. These principles conform to the tenets of ethical testing. Assessments should be conducted in a naturalistic setting, without causing learners undue stress and should be sensitive to learners' attention span (Woodhead & Moss, 2007). Tests should not be conducted when learners are tired or hungry since this will adversely affect their results. Tests should be conducted in a relaxed and quiet atmosphere without the child being disturbed and distracted in any way. In order to make sure that these considerations are adhered to, child assent should be obtained from the learners before they are tested, especially if it is an individual test.

Assessments conducted on Grade R learners should be developmentally and culturally appropriate (Samson, 2010). The assessment should be oral and practical rather than a pencil and paper test because Grade R learners are not

expected to formally read and write (Zebron, 2007). Learners should only be assessed on competencies and skills that were facilitated by the teacher and reflected in the Grade R curriculum. Assessments must not favour one culture over the other, and should therefore include items that are free from cultural bias (Patterson, 2008).

Reliability is another criterion that should be considered when selecting a test. According to Patterson (2008) and Yard (2009), reliable data can be obtained from observing learners' actions and noting their responses for a maximum of two hours per session (Patterson, 2008; Yard, 2009). Reliability is the ability of the test to obtain the same score from the same learner at given times under the same conditions (Yard, 2009). If assessments are frequently interrupted or if a child's attention is drawn to other matters, results will not accurately reflect learners' proficiency in E-L2 skills. Therefore tests need to be administered in a quiet area, relatively free from distraction of other learners in the school and in the classroom. Meeting environmental demands of valid assessments is particularly challenging with school-based assessments, since space and privacy are universally at such a premium in schools, but more so in deprived rural schools (Weston, 2009).

Mandated assessments should be conducted in child-friendly and naturalistic environments whenever possible (Yelland & Kilderry, 2005; Xu, 2010). In countries such as Britain, Australia and New Zealand the majority of Grade R teachers employ informal checklists to assess learners' E-L2 competency (Copple & Bredenkamp, 2009; Gullo, 2005). The major criticism leveled against teachers who use checklists is that in most cases these checklists are not measuring all the competencies that are reflected in the Grade R curriculum and not serving the intended purpose of providing a reliable perspective of learners' E-L2 skills (Wood, 2010; Xu, 2010). These checklists are developed in most cases by teachers themselves who base their inclusion of E-L2 competencies in checklists on their interpretations of E-L2 learning (Xu, 2010). These checklists

have little content validity since it is not measuring in most cases learners' E-L2 competencies as reflected in the official Grade R curriculum. Thus checklists are not valid assessments since they are not assessing all the oral communication competencies that learners should demonstrate in the Grade R classroom. Different checklists will measure E-L2 skills on different levels and hence there will be no uniform and reliable results (Wood, 2010). Checklists do not provide detailed information on Grade R learners' proficiency in speaking and listening competencies (Xu, 2010). The key criteria to evaluate test scores are validity and reliability. Therefore there was a need to identify a tool that is able to measure all the universal oral communication competencies learners are expected to demonstrate in the Grade R classroom.

The ELP standards assessment tool is applicable to use in Mpumalanga since it measures the competencies embedded in the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (content validity). Moreover, the tool is reliable, it measures stability of performance, it is culturally and linguistically unbiased and it adheres to ethical testing procedures.

There has been a shift in the Grade R assessments procedures from the sole reliance on informal assessments to formal assessment tasks. When teachers use their own checklists during informal assessment tasks, they inadvertently leave out core E-L2 skills reflected in the Grade R curriculum i.e. listening and speaking skills (de Villiers, 2007; Dornbrack, 2009). However, with the imperative need of teachers informing parents whether their children are school ready, there is a requirement to use a standardised assessment tool to assess learners' E-L2 skills (de Villiers, 2007; Dornbrack, 2009). There is no uniform assessment tool developed in South Africa to assess Grade R learners E-L2 skills (Department of Basic Education, 2012). In the Anglophone countries (Britain, Australia and New Zealand), excluding the USA, there appears to be no freely available or published tools that could be easily sourced. The ELP standards assessment tool as used in the USA is scientifically defensible. It is culturally and linguistically

neutral since it does not favour any linguistic or cultural groups. Furthermore, it is user friendly, reliable, valid and ethically sound.

The researcher selected the ELP standards assessment tool to be used in South Africa since the tool is frequently used to assess learners E-L2 skills and reported to be free from any cultural bias (US Department of Education, 2007). The aim of the assessment tool is to determine whether Grade R learners can demonstrate English listening and speaking skills and are school ready for Grade 1 learning. The test collects multiple baseline data in order to obtain a reliable sample of the child's performance (US Department of Education, 2007). It increases reliability of results. The multiple testing should be done in a short period of time and the researcher takes the average of the multiple scores as the baseline (Kruse, 2005). The rationale of multiple learner assessments is that Grade R learners display inconsistent behaviour at times and an average of three scores provide a more or less accurate picture of learners' competency in E-L2 learning (Patterson, 2008).

The data is collected by teacher observations of an individual child where children are not asked questions directly. Children should be assessed while engaged in the process of learning (Wally, 2007). This will result in two benefits. Firstly, assessments can be used as tools for providing support to children. Secondly, assessment can be used as a measure of curriculum effectiveness since learners' proficiency in E-L2 skills can be assessed (Wally, 2007). The ELP standards assessment tool provides these benefits since teachers would know individual children's competencies and will develop a remedial plan of action to assist learners in areas where they are encountering challenges. The use of the ELP standards assessment tool assists in painting a picture of learner proficiency in E-L2 learning and indicates whether learners are school ready.

The ELP standards assessment tool was developed by the US Department of Education (2007) to assess Grade R learners E-L2 competency. The US

Department of Education (2007) ensured that the ELP standards assessment tool is culturally unbiased and could be used on all US Grade R learners whose first language is not English, without advantaging or disadvantaging any first language learner groups. A discussion on the research basis of the ELP will follow.

3.8 STUDIES CONDUCTED USING THE ELP STANDARDS ASSESSMENT TOOL

There were many studies conducted on the use of the ELP standards assessment tool in the USA, but the researcher focused on those studies that investigated the effect of facilitation i.e. play and formal instructional approach on Grade R E-L2 scores. The rationale of the decision was based on the research focus of comparing the play-based with the formal instructional approach to determine which approach contributes to effective E-L2 learning. The studies are summarized in Table 3.1. The total score in the ELP tool is 11. The maximum speaking score is seven. The maximum listening score is four. A score below six indicates that the learner is not competent in demonstrating E-L2 skills whilst a score above six indicates that a learner is competent (US Department of Education, 2007).

Table 3.1: Summary of USA studies employing the ELP tool

Study	Participants and Design	Research design	Main findings
1. Texas Department of Education, 2008	10 schools randomly selected 10 teachers 300 learners	Two group comparison (quantitative)	65% of learners in formal based classrooms achieved a score of six 35% of learners in play based classrooms achieved a score of six
2. Illinois study (York, 2008)	40 schools randomly selected 10 teachers 1200 learners	Two group comparison (quantitative)	75% of learners in formal based classrooms achieved a score of six and above. 25% of learners in play based classrooms achieved a score of six
3. Nevada Department	100 schools randomly	Two group	70% of learners in formal

Study	Participants and Design	Research design	Main findings
of Education, 2009	selected 100 teachers 3000 learners	comparison (quantitative)	based classrooms achieved a score of six 30% of learners in play based classrooms achieved a score of six
4. New Mexico Study (Matterson, 2009)	100 schools chosen randomly 100 teachers 1200 learners	Two Group comparison (quantitative)	80% of learners in formal based classrooms achieving a score of six and above Only 35% of learners in play based classrooms achieved the minimum score of 6
5. California Department of Education, 2010	10 schools randomly selected 10 teachers 330 learner participants	Two Group comparison (quantitative)	80% of learners achieved a minimum score of 6 in formal instructional classrooms and 30% of play based classrooms achieved a minimum score of 6
6. Florida Department of Education, 2010	100 schools randomly chosen 2800 learners 120 teacher participants	Two group comparison (quantitative)	65% of learners in formal based classrooms achieved a competency of six. 15% of learners in play based classrooms achieved a score of six

A comparison group quantitative research design was employed in the Texas study (See Table 3.1 Nr 1). The effect between learners' scores (dependent variable) and the formal and play-based approach (independent variables) was empirically tested (Texas Department of Education, 2008). A simple one-way ANOVA was conducted. The drawback of this study was that other independent variables (learners' age, learners' gender, learners' first language, teachers' first language, teachers' age and teachers' qualifications) were not considered and it could be that these variables might have influenced learners' scores. Since these variables were not considered, the research findings should be considered with some caution. Furthermore, there was no standardization in teacher elicitations (stories, poems, songs and rhymes) between the different schools. Variability in teacher elicitations is expected in large samples. It could be that some teacher elicitations were beyond the comprehension of Grade R learners or that the same stories were narrated and learnt in Pre-Grade R which could have placed

learners at an advantage when answering questions since they had prior knowledge of stories narrated and questions posed to them.

The research study found that on average, learners who were facilitated formally performed better than learners in play based classrooms in listening and speaking categories. There was a significant difference in learner scores in listening and speaking between the formal based and play based classrooms. In the speaking and listening categories it was found that learners in formal classrooms scored slightly higher than learners in play based classrooms. A deeper analysis is required to explain the better learner performance in formal based classrooms in E-L2 assessments. The Texas Department of Education (2008) officials found that teachers who introduced E-L2 skills formally, praised the learners continuously, modeled listening and speaking skills to learners, told learners many stories, asked frequent questions and explained meaning of words to Grade R learners. Texan education officials found that Grade R teachers in play-based classrooms allowed learners to play independently and in groups without providing them with much E-L2 support in the form of telling stories or explaining meaning of words (Texas Department of Education, 2008).

According to developmentally appropriate principles in Grade R assessments, there should be at least three assessments conducted since learners' behaviour and skills demonstration is inconsistent (Patterson, 2008). Thus valid and multiple baselines were not obtained as required by test instructions.

In a larger study in Illinois, USA, the Department of Education through its curriculum officials conducted research in 40 schools (York, 2008). (See Table 3.1 Nr 2). Only curriculum officials assessed Grade R learners (York, 2008). Learner ratings were compared since two officials assessed all the learners in the classroom and consensus had to be reached when ratings differed. Inter-rater reliability was therefore evident in this study. Since two curriculum officials were used, not all learners in schools were assessed at the same time. This

could have advantaged some learners since they could have benefited from extra teacher facilitation in E-L2 skills. The time difference in learner assessments between the first schools and the 40th school was three months.

However, there was a statistically significant difference in learner scores in the listening and speaking categories of the ELP standards assessment tool in play-based and formal instructional classrooms. Learners performed better in formal based classrooms in the listening and speaking categories. The results once more suggest that the formal based method should be adopted in schools since it contributes to better learner performance (York, 2008).

In a large study conducted in Nevada, 100 schools were purposively chosen by the Nevada Department of Education (2009) implementing either the play-based or the formal instruction approach (See Table 3.1 Nr 3). The aim of the study was to determine which facilitation approach should be used to develop English skills in E-L2 learners. In the Nevada schools the random sampling technique was not considered since the department did not have all the schools categorized as being play or formally based. Only 40% of the schools were categorized as either play or formal based schools.

There were 3,000 learner participants and 100 teacher participants in the study (See Table 3.1 Nr 3). All the teacher participants were female, had over five years of experience and were qualified to teach Grade R. However, teachers of different first languages were included in the sample. Similarly to the Texas study (Table 3.1 Nr 1), other independent variables (learners' age, learners' gender, learners' first language, teachers' first language, teachers' age and teachers' qualifications) were not considered. Teachers were trained by departmental officials for three days on how to use the ELP assessment tool in the classroom. In this study there was no inter-rater reliability since the children's own teachers were assessing the learners' English competency. Departmental officials did not assess learner scores since they viewed the three day training as

being sufficient in preparing the teachers for the assessment process. Hence these study results should also be treated with caution since learners' ratings were assessed only by teachers and there was no way in determining whether teacher ratings were advantaging or disadvantaging Grade R learners in the school.

The study (Nevada Department of Education, 2009) found that most learners in formal based classrooms achieved higher learner ratings than in play based classrooms. There was a significant difference in learner scores in formal based classrooms compared to play based classrooms in the listening category. However, there was a borderline statistical difference between speaking and Grade R learners' E-L2 scores.

This study's findings is similar to the Texas study since learners in the formal instruction classrooms were achieving higher learner scores when compared to learners in play based classrooms. However, in the Nevada study (Nevada Department of Education, 2009) there was no significant difference between learners' speaking scores which suggests that the play based and formal instructional method could be jointly used to develop learners' speaking competency. In other words, the play based method cannot be disregarded completely.

As depicted in table 3.1 Nr 4, Matterson (2009) conducted research in 100 Grade R classrooms in New Mexico. The aim of the study was also to compare learner performance in E-L2 learning in the two educational facilitation methods. Similarly to other studies cited in the literature, other independent variables besides teacher facilitation approaches were not empirically tested to determine whether they have an effect on learner E-L2 performance. The findings indicated that there was a significant difference between learner scores in the formal and play based classrooms. Most learners performed better in formal based classrooms in all two categories i.e. listening and speaking. The results indicate

that the formal based method contributes to better learner performance and should be adopted in schools to facilitate E-L2 learning.

In another study conducted in ten schools in California, chosen randomly by the Department of Education, seven schools adopted the formal instructional approach while the three schools adopted the play based method (California Department of Education, 2010) (See Table 3.1 No 5). Teachers were trained by departmental officials on how to use the ELP standards assessment tool in the classroom. A quantitative two group research design was utilized to analyse the data. The intention of the research was to determine whether there is a statistical difference between facilitation and Grade R learners' E-L2 scores. Similar to the Texas (Texas Department of Education, 2008) and Nevada (Nevada Department of Education, 2009) studies, other independent variables were not considered. Inter-rater reliability was established since teachers' scores were compared with the departmental officials' ratings. The ELP Standards Assessment tool was used twice by teachers and officials, i.e. in November and in January the following year to describe the progress in learners' E-L2 skills (California Department of Education, 2010). The school year commences on the 1 September in the USA. The assessments were therefore performed after a period of learning in the Grade R classroom.

The results suggest that the formal method contributes to better learner scores than the play based approach in the listening and speaking categories.

In another large study conducted in Florida, USA the Department of Education conducted research in 100 schools to assess learners E-L2 skills (Florida Department of Education, 2010) (See Table 3.1 Nr 6). The Department of Education hired and trained trainee teachers to use the ELP standards assessment tool in the Grade R classroom. It could have been that some teacher trainees did not use the ELP standards assessment tool correctly, since these trainees are still studying for their ECD qualifications and may require additional

training. Although inexperienced, the training of the data collectors could have enhanced the inter-rater reliability of the results.

These schools were not divided in the play-based or the formal instructional schools since the Florida Department of Education assumed that all Grade R classes were adopting the play-based method. However, the data collectors indicated the method followed in schools on the assessment tool (Florida Department of Education, 2010). The original aim of the study was to determine the English language proficiency of Grade R learners since it was assumed that all schools are implementing the play-based curriculum as per the directive issued by the Florida Department of Education (2010).

It was found that there was again a significant difference between learners' performance in formal and play-based classrooms. The results of all six different studies suggest that the formal approach contributes to better learner performance in E-L2 learning.

3.9 IMPORTANT TRENDS IDENTIFIED IN THE CITED RESEARCH STUDIES

Based on the overwhelming results of research, it is clear that the formal instructional approach is more effective to enhance competency in E-L2 listening and speaking skills than a play-based facilitation approach.

In all studies cited, multiple baselines were not obtained. Baseline data can only be reliable when multiple data collections are conducted (Lomax, 2007). Three data collections are advised to be conducted in Grade R (Lomax, 2007). There was no standardisation in teacher elicitations used in the classroom which casts doubt on the studies' findings since the aptness of the songs, poems, stories, rhymes and questions cannot be determined. Standardisation is not possible in large studies and variability in implementing a certain method will always be present. In these studies other independent variables besides the teacher

facilitation method were not considered and there could be a possibility that these variables might have impacted on learners' E-L2 proficiency.

3.10 LITERATURE ANALYSIS ON GRADE R E-L2 LEARNING

A synopsis of the emergent issues pertaining to E-L2 learning needs to be discussed to determine the trends in the literature with regards to learners learning a second language and their performance in E-L2 assessments.

Currently there exists a contradiction in Grade R between maintaining developmentally appropriate practice and addressing the academic standards set forth by most states in the USA (Brown, 2009; Goodman, 2008). The contradictions centre on issues related to developmentally appropriate practice, intentional teaching and the need for formal assessments to generate baseline data to design interventional programmes to assist individual learners. Since Grade R prepares a child for formal schooling, learners' competency in listening and speaking skills need to be ascertained in order for Grade 1 teachers to plan their lessons accordingly.

In Grade R the bar has been raised in USA and South Africa regarding curriculum requirements whereby learners need to demonstrate their skills in the classroom and are expected to know some content needed for Grade 1 learning (Arbeau & Coplan, 2007; Azar, 2008). Consequently, formal academic teacher-directed instruction has overshadowed the need for children's active learning based on socialization, imagination and creativity (Bee & Boyd, 2004). The emphasis has become content-oriented, skill-based instruction and learning that teachers assess using conventional measures such as examinations, tests and worksheets (Bee & Boyd, 2004). Worksheets or other paper and pencil teacher-made tests have become customary practice for determining what specific skills and knowledge children have acquired (Abbott, 2005; August, 2007; Barbara, 2008). Therefore there is a need to use both educational facilitation approaches

in the classroom i.e. a combination of play-based and the formal instructional approaches. Research is required to determine if a combined method will be effective under all circumstances.

Grade R learners, while having common developmental attributes, also reflect wide variations in their development (Zaslow, 2005). Part of the variation has to do with characteristic differences in children's developmental trajectories related to differences in their biological maturation and experiential backgrounds (Zaslow, 2005). More than ever, a "one size fits all" facilitation approach for Grade R is no longer appropriate. Today's Grade R classrooms must be able to serve the developmental, social, and academic needs of all children irrespective of their language and culture (Baywood, 2010; Berk, 2006; Brown, 2007).

Generally, teachers use ratings from checklists to determine learners' proficiency in E-L2 skills (Xu, 2010). The checklists are designed by teachers and at times do not reflect all the oral communication competencies reflected in the Grade R curriculum (Xu, 2010). Thus there is a need to use a standardized and valid instrument tool to ascertain learners' E-L2 skills. As discussed previously, the ELP standards assessment tool is only mandatory in 25 states in the USA. Since young children develop and learn rapidly, tests given at only one point in time may not give a complete picture of E- L2 learning (Abbott, 2005; Epstein, 2007; Patterson, 2008). Therefore there is a need to assess Grade R learners at least three times in order to determine the stability of their performance.

3.11 SOUTH AFRICAN LANGUAGE POLICY FOR BASIC EDUCATION

The use of English in contexts is often determined by pragmatic reasons and is indicative of the heterogeneity in home language backgrounds of learners in certain provinces (Heugh, 2009). English as the language of learning and teaching may appear to be the only practical choice, since the complex

multilingual composition of schools makes it difficult to select a particular African language as the LOLT.

Younger children develop languages gradually, and teachers need to be aware of how long it takes for children to become proficient in the additional language if it is to be used as a medium of instruction (MacWhinney, 2005; Paradis, 2004; Ullman, 2001).

However, in the international literature as well as in South African research there is evidence to suggest that language in education is a complex issue (Reagan, 2009). Educational linguistics is a specialised area that has unfortunately been neglected in teacher training programmes and consequently few teachers have sufficient knowledge of the complex, multidimensional nature of language and the implications for language learning and language teaching processes in either L1 or L2 contexts (Wong-Fillmore & Snow, 2000).

According to Jordaan (2011), if agreed that one of the primary goals of education is to develop academic language, so that learners may engage meaningfully with the content and subject matter across the curriculum at all stages of the process, it is irrelevant whether the language of learning is first language or an additional language, and whether the language is taught as a subject or is the medium of instruction. In order to achieve academic language proficiency, language-teaching practices that construct the process of learning needs to be addressed in South Africa.

The fact that there could be many languages represented in a single Grade R class may be disregarded in South Africa. The Department of Education refers to language of learning in documents always in the singular form which suggests that only one language should be used and others should not even be considered (The Department of Basic Education, 2012). The Department of Basic Education and parental preferences appears to disregard the role of first language in developing

learners' cognitive skills by introducing English as the language of teaching and learning in South Africa. Instead of language being a stepping stone to effective learning in South Africa, the Department of Education's language policy more often than not is perceived as a barrier that prevents such learning (Willenberg, 2004).

There is ample South African findings emanating from research commissioned by the Molteno Institute for Language and Literacy (formerly known as the Molteno Project) that learners in Grade 4 and 5 have gaps in mastering English as the language of learning, since they were not suitably grounded in their first language when they were in Grade R (Molteno Institute for Language and Literacy, 2009; Nuttal & Lanhan, 2002). In the Grade R- classes, first language is supposed to be implemented in accordance with the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (Anthonissen, 2009; Department of Basic Education, 2012). The Molteno Institute for Language and Literacy (2009) concluded that some learners, who attend schools where their first language is not spoken, are psychologically detached from the classroom situation and develop a poor self identity. These learners were prone to academic failure since they have not developed basic English communication skills that form a foundation for reading and writing (Molteno Institute for Language and Literacy, 2009).

The Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa (PRAESA) is a University of Cape Town based research and development unit focusing on a broad range of language related issues in education (Bloch, 2005). The goal of PRAESA is to improve literacy and numeracy skills of learners in South African Schools. PRAESA espouses the view that a child learns best if they are taught through their mother tongue but acknowledges the importance of English teaching (ACALAN, 2002). This is reflected by multiple projects that the organisation is currently running such as Reading Clubs, language research projects, supporting organisations developing books for young children (Alexander, 2005). The unit develop early literacy materials for children growing up in bilingual and multilingual environments.

The organisation works with Provincial Departments of Education to ensure that there is a broad range of reading materials available in all languages (Alexander, 2005).

Yet, the development of the African languages for education in South Africa remains relatively limited (Anthonissen, 2009). As further noted by Mesthrie (2006) and Moyo (2008), the official African languages are certainly able to function as communication platforms at such levels as interpersonal conversation, and narrative and cultural practice. The number of suitably qualified teachers in the different official languages, however, does not meet the demands that are required in South Africa (EMIS Statistics Report, 2012). In 2011 only four student teachers from Mpumalanga were studying African languages at universities (EMIS Statistics Report, 2012). There is a shortage of qualified teachers in African languages and even if parents wanted their children to learn their first language, there will not be enough teachers to teach African languages in schools.

The Department of Basic Education wants to make it possible for all learners to perform to their full potential and aims to improve ratings in international and national assessments (Department of Basic Education, 2012). In order to achieve national excellence, equity of opportunity is an imperative for the realization of educational goals. In the quest for excellence in educational outcomes the following questions should be asked: Should we be separating children from each other in different schools, or even in separate streams on the basis of their language group? Without social integration in the classroom, social cohesion will be unattainable (Kapp, 2004). Moreover, an agreed common language with learners' first language used as support provides possibilities that all learners can be taught together in one classroom. This turns language into a unifying force rather than a source of division.

It appears that we treat language in South Africa the way a window is used. We look through the window, and very seldom look at the window. We need to look at the window of language and see how knowledge and skills via language are

transferred. We should accept that the language of learning and teaching used in the classroom could be inappropriate for the developmental needs of young children. The two languages of the learner (first language and LOLT) are in effect two sides of the same coin. While the first language plays the primary role in developing literacy and thinking skills, the language of learning (in particular English) is the one in which children must master educational concepts in order to succeed academically in school (Patterson, 2008). The importance of first language learning was discussed in Chapter Two. It is the School Governing Bodies (SGB's) that are insisting on English being the LOLT despite the Department of Education's policy pronouncements on the matter (Mpumalanga Department of Education, 2012). The South African Schools Act, 2002 confers powers on SGB's to determine the language policy of the school. The SGB's are answerable to the Department of Education in terms of its policy formulation which has to comply with the South African Schools Act and the Constitution. The SGB's do not base their decision on evidence but on parental views on the matter. It is the parents who elect other parents to serve on the SGB. The Department of Education has outsourced research on the Language in Education Policy to Project for the Study of Alternative Education, Human Science and Research Council and universities (Alexander, 2005).

Presently we have the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement, implemented in 2012, which is the official curriculum policy for Grade R (Department of Education, 2012). It is aligned to the Language in Education Policy (Department of Education, 1997) which states that in Grade R to 3 learners should be exposed to their first language before English becomes the medium of instruction in Grade 4 (additive bilingualism). It states that learners' first language or the language the child's knows best should be the medium of instruction at schools. These findings were emphasised in MacDonald Report, 1990, the Alexander's (2005) work at the Project for the Study of Alternative Education for the past 10 years and by Heugh (2000). According to CAPS a second language is introduced only in Grade 1 to address concerns on the switch of English as the medium of instruction in Grade 4 from

learners' first language in Grade 1 to 3. In most cases the second language is English. In Afrikaans medium schools in urban areas, the second language is English. The learner participants in the research are coming from poverty backgrounds where unemployment rate is high and level of adult illiteracy is at 40%. English is hardly spoken and it will be best to develop learners' first language results first before introducing learners to English. According to Cummins (2008) learners transfer their first language skills to learning a second language. However, the South African Schools' Act confers power to SBB's to decide on the medium of instruction. The Department of Education cannot force any school to learn a specific language.

We have a unique situation in South Africa where some children cannot speak any language sufficiently well enough to function in this global economy (Mpumalanga Department of Education, 2012). National and international assessments in Grade 1-12 reveals that many learners are encountering challenges in understanding instructions and content in the LOLT. However, when meetings are held with SGB's, parents insist that the LOLT must be English and request the School Management Team to improve English teaching (Mpumalanga Department of Education, 2012). However, on a positive note the Department of Education (2012) is developing a policy on the introduction of African languages in all schools and each province will be dedicated to develop two languages through advocacy and learners 'competency in reading and writing. In Mpumalanga, the Department of Education is required to develop siSwati and isiNdebele. The Department of Education (2012) has piloted in 2013 the introduction of indigenous languages in selected schools chosen by the Provincial Departments of Education.

3.12 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

It would appear from the cited research studies that learners in formal classrooms performed better than learners in play- based classrooms. The researcher read the literature extensively to identify an assessment tool that is not culture biased since

learners in this study are coming from five different cultures, i.e. siSwati, Xitsonga, isiZulu, Sepedi and isiNdebele. Therefore the ELP standards assessment tool was proposed to be used in the study to rate learner performance in E-L2 skills in the absence of a tool in South Africa.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The literature was reviewed in the previous chapter. In Chapter Three references were made to selected studies on E-L2 learning methods, gaps identified in the literature and the literature was critiqued within the context of the research study. The purpose of this chapter is to orientate the reader to the main aims and objectives of the study, discuss the research design, state how ethical considerations were adhered to and describe how the participants were selected. The chapter also explicates the material and apparatus employed in the study and discusses the research procedures comprehensively. It is important for researchers to use reliable research methods in order to obtain data that is valid and scientifically sound (Babbie, 2007; Creswell, 2009). Therefore this study utilises the English Language Proficiency (ELP) standards assessment instrument, already employed in 25 states in the USA where Grade R E-L2 assessments are mandatory.

4.2 RESEARCH AIMS

The main research aim of the study is to determine the effect of facilitation i.e. play and formal instructional approach on Grade R learners' E-L2 scores. The other sub-aims are listed as follows:

1. To determine the effect of teachers' first language on Grade R learners' E-L2 scores
2. To determine the effect of learners' first language on learners' E-L2 scores?

3. To determine the effect of teachers' qualifications on Grade R learners' E-L2 scores
4. To determine the effect of teachers' age on Grade R learners' E-L2 scores
5. To determine the effect of teachers' experience on Grade R learners' E-L2 scores

4.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following primary and secondary research questions were posed in the study:

1. What is the effect of facilitation i.e. play and formal instructional based approach on Grade R learners' E-L2 scores?
2. What is the effect of teachers' first language on Grade R learners' E-L2 scores?
3. What is the effect of learners' first language on their E-L2 scores?
4. What is the effect of learners' gender on their E-L2 scores?
5. What is the effect of teachers' qualifications on Grade R learners' E-L2 scores?
6. What is the effect of teachers' age on Grade R learners' E-L2 scores?
7. What is the effect of teachers' experience on Grade R learners' E-L2 scores?

The secondary questions, posed to determine whether extraneous variables had any effect on educational facilitation approaches on Grade R learners' performance scores, are depicted in Figure 4.1.

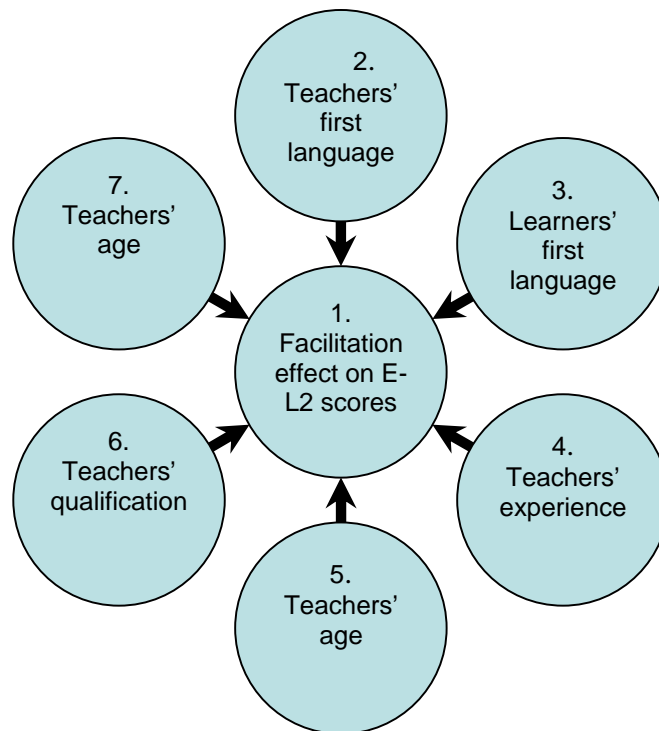


Figure 4.1: The association between one primary aim and six secondary aims

4.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

A two-group quantitative comparison design was used in this study. The purpose of conducting the research was to compare educational facilitation approaches for Grade R E-L2 learning in Mpumalanga in order to determine which facilitation approach i.e. play and formal instructional approach produces the best E-L2 performance scores. There is a need to compare Grade R learners' E-L2 scores between both the play and formal instructional classrooms in order to determine the best facilitation approach for effective E-L2 learning. Another way of explaining the design is to describe it as a static two group comparison method since the two groups were compared, but variables were not manipulated. The

nature, advantages and disadvantages of the research design is briefly discussed below.

The two-group comparison design aims to determine which method/approach is the best one based on data sourced from the two groups i.e. play and the formal instructional classrooms. Firstly, both groups should be heterogeneous and independent from each other, the study's population should be clearly demarcated in terms of categorizing the two different groups, and the same sampling method and the instrument should be used on both groups (Lomax, 2007). The two-group comparison design cannot be used if the groups are homogenous, as there must be one point of difference (Lomax, 2007). A pilot study is very important in a two-group comparison study (McBurney & White, 2004). A pilot study needs to be conducted in both groups in order to determine the user friendliness and feasibility of using the instrument in the main research study. The researcher needs to be knowledgeable about the differences in the two approaches (play and formal instructional) and this need to be underpinned by findings pertaining to the research focus (McBurney & White, 2004). There is a need to have at least two raters in a two-group comparison design in order to ensure reliability of learners' scores.

The advantages of the design is that the researcher can easily identify the best approach based on the available research data and make sound recommendations after analysing the data. This design enables the researcher to identify differences within and across the groups (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006).

A disadvantage of the research design may be difficulty experienced to match the two groups as closely as possible. In order to obtain credible and convincing results, the matching between the groups should be as close as possible (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). The differences in test scores between the groups may then be attributed to the main independent variable (the facilitation

approach) and not other extraneous variables identified in the study. The researcher actually wanted the groups to differ on one variable only which is the facilitation approach (play and formal instructional based) employed by Grade R teachers in schools. However, in this study first languages of teachers and learners were different. There were also differences in teachers' qualifications, teachers' age, teachers' experiences and learners' gender in the study sample. The two groups were matched according to these variables.

Additional disadvantages of the design are that sometimes groups are not clearly divided into different approaches/methods that result in data findings to be treated with caution. Extraneous variables are generally overlooked in these research designs (Lomax, 2007). The researcher identified all possible extraneous variables that might impact on the study by matching the groups as closely as possible.

Thus, this research is comparative, insofar as it examines differences in E-L2 learner performance scores between play and formal instructional classrooms. The researcher compared variances across groups when conducting an ANOVA (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Inferential statistics were used to determine the effect of each of the other influencing factors (facilitation, teachers' first language, learners' first language, learners' gender, teachers' qualifications, teachers' age and teachers' experience) on the Grade R learners' E-L2 scores.

4.4.1 Quantitative research methodology

Quantitative research refers to explaining phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analyzed using statistics (Creswell, 2009; Silverman, 2005). It is the researcher's task to use objective research methods to uncover the facts (Creswell, 2009; Silverman, 2005). This means that the researcher needs to be as detached from the research as possible, use methods that maximize objectivity and minimize bias in the research. The process of measurement

provided the fundamental connection between the empirical rating of learners E-L2 skills and the mathematical expression of the relationship between variables in the study (Babbie, 2007; Creswell, 2009; Silverman, 2005).

The objective of quantitative research is to generalize the research findings found in the sample to the entire population (Creswell, 2009). The main condition for generalization is to obtain a large enough sample size that is representative of the population under study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). In this research study all first language groupings in rural schools were selected randomly in the sample that incorporated both facilitation approaches i.e. play and formal instruction. The randomized sampling of the schools will be discussed in the next section (See 4.5.1). The main advantages of quantitative research are threefold, i.e. it provides estimates of populations at large, provides results which can be condensed to statistics and uses valid and reliable research instruments to collect data from research participants (Babbie, 2007; Silverman, 2005).

4.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The University of Pretoria granted the researcher ethical clearance on 7 February 2011 (See Appendix A). The main participants in the study were the Grade R learners and their teachers in Mpumalanga. In any research, ethical considerations are underscored since participants need to willingly consent to participate in a research study once they know the purpose and their role in the data collection process and are assured of confidentiality of their responses (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). The participants were known to the researcher so anonymity could not be assured. All data were, however, treated confidentially.

Permission was granted by the Mpumalanga Department of Education to conduct research in Mpumalanga (See Appendix B). Permission was also granted by the principals to conduct research at their schools (See Appendix C).

4.5.1 Informed consent

According to Creswell (2009) and Leedy & Ormrod (2005), informed consent is a mechanism for ensuring that participants understand what it means to participate in a particular research study so that they can decide in a conscious, deliberate way whether they want to participate or not. Therefore parents and teachers were provided with written consent forms only after being informed by an interpreter on the rationale of the study, their roles and the study procedures to complete the ELP standards assessment tool (See Appendix D). The reason for using interpreters in the study is because the researcher can speak siSwati and isiZulu but is unable to communicate fluently in Xitsonga, Sepedi and isiNdebele, the other languages spoken in the research sites.

The researcher familiarised the interpreters with the contents of the consent letters and the study procedures. The interpreters volunteered their services to the researcher without charging any fees for their services rendered. Since the principal and the teacher were the gatekeepers of the research study in each school, a discussion on the research aims and role of participants was conducted preceding the data collection process. The principal and the teacher were afforded an opportunity to ask any clarity seeking questions pertaining to the research study.

From an ethics perspective, young learners need the consent of their parents to participate in the research study since parents are their main caregivers (Espinosa, 2007; McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). Parents were given information letters and requested to sign letters of consent (See Appendix D), providing permission to the teacher and the researcher to assess learners E-L2 skills. ³The same principle applied to teachers' consent letters which was also included in Appendix D and principals' consent letters (See Appendix C). The

³ A signed letter of consent from a parent was not included in Appendix D since this would cause a parent to lose confidentiality. Hence an unsigned letter of parental consent was included in Appendix D

parents were also informed that they could withdraw their learners from the research study at any time if they so wish.

The learners' assent to their participation in the classroom was recorded on a class list by the Grade R teacher. Grade R learners were informed by the interpreter in a clear and non-technical way in a manner appropriate to their age level that they need to complete tasks to demonstrate their E-L2 skills. Visits conducted by Early Childhood Development (ECD) officials, appointed by the Mpumalanga Department of Education to support and monitor teachers on the implementation of the Grade R curriculum, indicated from school visit reports that some teachers do not speak all the learners' first language. There were cases cited in the school visit reports that Xitsonga speaking teachers are employed at schools where Grade R learners' first language is siSwati. According to Bryman (2007), an interpreter conveys the purpose and participants' role in the research, answers questions, and builds a rapport between researchers and participants, resulting in reliable data being collected at the research sites. In this study principals were utilised as interpreters since school visit reports compiled by curriculum implementers indicated that principals generally have a good rapport with Grade R learners and their parents. All the principals in the study sample had multi-lingual skills.

If learners were unwilling to participate in the ELP standards assessment tool, they were excluded from the sample with no negative consequences. The researcher and the interpreter asked learners whether they were happy to be in a classroom where they will be watched by someone who will write down notes and ask them questions. All learners, besides those excluded from the study based on low birth weight and learners with barriers, agreed to participate in the study. The learners were also assured that, should they feel uncomfortable during the assessment process, they should inform the teacher and researcher immediately and there will be no negative consequences for their withdrawal from the study.

4.5.2 Right to privacy

The main participants in the study i.e. teachers and Grade R learners were assured that their responses will be treated in a confidential manner. The participants were also assured that their role in the study will not be traced back to them during data collection and analysis. No identifiable information on the schools, principals, teachers and learners were included in the thesis. Individual learner scores were kept strictly confidential, used only for research purposes, and safely stored by the University of Pretoria for 15 years.

4.5.3 Honesty with professional colleagues

Although the researcher is the head of ECD in Mpumalanga, the bureaucratic official role was replaced by a researcher's scientific mindset at the randomly selected schools. Data were collected on the educational facilitation approach used in the Grade R classroom in order to determine which approach, i.e. play based or formal instructional approach contributes best to learners' E-L2 skills. The researcher's official position was not included in letters of consent and the principals and teachers were assured that there will be no negative professional consequences for their participation or non-participation in the research. The data would be honestly reported to the scientific community, in the thesis and subsequent articles.

4.5.4 Protection from harm

Teachers and learners were not subjected to any harm and discomfort during the data collection process. The researcher did not pass any adverse judgements on how teachers assess learners' E-L2 skills. Their participation in the research study was respected and if there were any signs of discomfort encountered, teachers and learners were free to withdraw from the study with no negative consequences. However, no teacher or learner withdrew from the study. Learner

scores on E-L2 skills were only used for research purposes and were not considered for progression requirements.

The principal and teacher of each school were informed that the learners' scores were confidential and should be divulged to parents only. Teachers and principals assured the researcher that learners will not be favoured or belittled based on their scores.

4.6. PARTICIPANTS

4.6.1. Sampling of schools

The geographical distribution of schools is of importance to the study since very little research had been conducted in rural schools that comprise 84% of the total schools offering Grade R in Mpumalanga. The probable reasons advanced for more Grade R teachers implementing the play based method is that they received training on the facilitation approach during workshops and seminars. The formal instructional method represents the outdated teaching practice that was followed pre-1994 and ECD officials advised teachers to disregard the formal method since it was not based on developmentally appropriate principles (Department of Education, 2008; Department of Basic Education, 2012). However, there are SGB's and School Management Teams that insist on formal teaching and learning in Grade R although there is a disjuncture with the national policy determined by the Department of Basic Education (Mpumalanga Department of Education, 2012).

The number of schools per Grade R learners' first language implementing the play based and the formal instructional method is depicted in Table 4.1. These languages represent the majority language spoken by learners in each classroom.

Table 4.1: Description of rural Grade R schools in Mpumalanga (n=1003)

First language of Grade R learners	Play-based approach	Formal instructional approach
isiZulu	217	100
Sepedi	214	61
siSwati	141	53
Xitsonga	133	37
isiNdebele	115	32
Total	720	283

Source: Mpumalanga Department of Education, 2012

According to Table 4.1 there are 1003 schools in the rural areas offering Grade R. Visits by ECD officials in Mpumalanga found that by far, the majority of schools are adopting the play-based approach. The remaining minority of schools are using the formal instructional approach. Their findings were sourced from classroom observations, examination of teachers' lesson plans and completed school visit reports. Classroom observations by ECD officials indicated the organisation and arrangement of the classroom, the type of class activities learners were engaged in, the resources used and the level of learners' participation in the classroom (Mpumalanga Department of Education, 2012). Equal number of schools following the two approaches was selected. Five schools in each category in the different learners' mother language were randomly selected. Thus one school from each language category (See Table 1) in both the play and formal based approach were randomly chosen from the total of 1003 rural schools. Thus five schools with the different language categories in the play based approach were matched with five other schools in the formal instruction approach category.

Research was conducted by the Department of Education in ten rural schools categorised as belonging to category one schools which are the most disadvantaged schools in the Province (Mhaule, 2011). The indicators for poverty was the income threshold received by the household on a monthly basis (below R 2000 is regarded as being poverty stricken), access to tarred roads, clinics and the availability of municipal services in the community where the school is located (Mhaule, 2011).

The randomised sampling method was used in the study. All names of schools within the specific language category (isiZulu, Sepedi, siSwati, Xitsonga and isiNdebele) following the play-based approach were written down and placed in five empty containers. Similarly, all names of schools following the formal instructional approach in each of the five language categories were placed in another five containers. All papers with the names of the schools were folded when placed in the containers. The researcher picked out the name of one school randomly from each of the ten clearly labelled boxes.

Thus each school in the specific language category (IsiZulu, siSwati, Xitsonga, Sepedi and isiNdebele) had the same probability of being selected. Hence the element of research bias was minimised (Creswell, 2009; Silverman, 2005).

4.6.2 Learner participant sampling

Grade R learners from each school were chosen purposively according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Similar inclusion criteria for all child participants ensured that they could be matched across the two groups.

- **Age**

All child participants need to be Grade R learners, i.e. age five by the 30 June in the year of admission at the time of data collection as per the regulations enunciated in the South African Schools Act (2002). Research is conducted only on Grade R learners to describe their competency in E-L2 skills in the classroom.

- **Similar exposure period to E-L2 learning in the school**

All learners were assessed almost at the same time period, having a similar exposure period to E-L2 learning in the school so that reliable conclusions can be made on Grade R learners' competence. There was not much difference in

learners' scores during the three assessments that were undertaken in the ten schools. The average of the three baseline scores were taken when the data was analysed.

- **Similar rural upbringings**

All selected schools are located in rural areas. These schools are the most disadvantaged schools in Mpumalanga since they have little access to municipal services, tarred roads and parental income is often below the basic minimum wage in South Africa (Hartgill, 2009; Maritz, 2010). There is a high rate of unemployment and many homes have child-headed families where both parents have died or abandoned their children for better opportunities in the urban areas (Hartgill, 2009; Willenberg, 2004).

- **Culture**

Participants belonged to the siSwati, isiZulu, isiNdebele, Sepedi and Xitsonga linguistic groups indigenous to the Mpumalanga Province. Although Afrikaans is an indigenous language, it is known from anecdotal evidence, based on researcher's conversations with ECD officials, parent associations and other officials from the Mpumalanga Department of Education, not to be spoken in the rural areas.

- **Poverty level**

According to the Mpumalanga Department of Education all schools are ranked into different categories according to the communities' socio-economic levels and the availability of municipal services (Mhaule, 2011). Schools are ranked in category one up to category five with category one schools indexed as being most disadvantaged with category five schools being most advantaged. Rural schools are classified in the category one since they are the most disadvantaged

schools in Mpumalanga where the rate of unemployment is high, many people are living below the bread line and have limited access to services. Therefore all selected rural schools were chosen from category one schools reflected on the Mpumalanga Department of Education's database.

- **Mainstream learners**

Learners with barriers to learning usually display difficulty in acquiring language skills and knowledge regardless of the E-L2 classroom facilitation approach used (Owens, 2012; Zaslou, 2005). All learners with barriers to learning were excluded from the study. Only mainstream learners from the play-based approach were matched with mainstream learners from the formal instructional approach. School nurses compiled reports documenting findings emanating from their screening of Grade R learners for any barriers to learning namely hearing, eyesight, fine motor and gross motor development challenges. Reports from school nurses were accessed to ensure schools do not include any learners with barriers to learning.

- **Low birth weight and preterm birth**

All schools developed profiles for learners where parents were asked questions about their children's birth weight and whether they were infants born premature. Full term birth refers to the gestation period being 37-42 weeks and average birth weight being between 3.2 to 3.8 kilograms, with low birth weight below 2.5 kilograms (Stagnitti & Jellie, 2006; Ward, 2008). These learners were excluded from the study for the same reason as for children with barriers to learning. All schools also request parents to make a photocopy of their child's clinic card which provides a comprehensive picture of the child's medical history. Children with low birth weight and preterm births are at risk for long term language impairment which includes second language learning as well (Stagnitti & Jellie, 2006; Ward, 2008). In Mpumalanga Province there is an integrated ECD Strategy

Framework that fosters close cooperation and liaison between the Mpumalanga Department of Education, Health and Social Services (Mhaule, 2011). The researcher had access to information, solicited from the Department of Health pertaining to the names of children with low birth weight and preterm births in all the schools in the Province.

- **Gender**

The research study attempted to have an almost equal number of male and female Grade R learners who will be selected purposively from the classroom. The selected learners will be included in the study only after their parents gave informed consent and learners themselves gave assent to participate in the research. ⁴There is a difference in boys and girls regarding language acquisition (Owens, 2012).

The exclusion criteria refers specifically to learners with barriers to learning, low birth weight and preterm births who were not included in the sample since it could impact on the study's findings. According to available departmental records, there are schools that accommodate learners with the above-mentioned characteristics. The researcher wanted the only difference between the two groups of schools to be the education facilitation approach implemented by the teachers in the classroom.

Although learners were selected in a non-randomised way, the element of bias will be reduced since an almost equal number of boys and girls were chosen. Learners were excluded only on evidence of their clinic cards reflecting low birth weight and preterm status, parents not consenting to their children's participation in the study and learners not assenting to be assessed on their E-L2 skills. Randomised sampling was not applicable in the selection of learners in this

⁴ Owen (2012) states that there is variability in learner performance scores between boys and girls. In some cited studies boys perform better while in other studies girls perform better than boys.

study. The exclusion criteria were justifiable based on research findings pertaining to learners with special needs. Children with low birth weight and preterm birth are at risk of delayed language development and at risk of difficulties with second language acquisition (Ward, 2008). Due diligence to ethical considerations was adhered to since priority was placed by the researcher in soliciting parental, teacher and learners' consent to participate in the study.

In summary, participants from the five schools of one facilitation approach were matched with participants from the five schools representing the other approach implemented in schools in Mpumalanga. Participants were matched as close as possible according to the following variables or inclusion criteria i.e. age, similar exposure period to E-L2 learning, similar rural upbringing, culture, poverty level and mainstream learners. Matching was necessary since data was analysed from participants and sites with similar characteristics in order to determine whether another controlled independent variables (learners' gender, learners' first language, teachers' first language, teachers' age, teachers' experience and teachers' qualifications) impacted on the study.

A description of purposive selection of child and adult participants from the randomly selected schools is depicted in Table 4.2 and Table 4.3.

Table 4.2: Characteristics of child participants (n= 175)

Randomly selected schools	First Language	Number of boys	Number of girls	Total number of learners selected
A	isiZulu	10	9	19
B	isiZulu	10	10	20
C	Sepedi	7	8	15
D	Sepedi	9	10	19
E	siSwati	11	11	22
F	siSwati	10	6	16
G	isiNdebele	7	6	13
H	isiNdebele	8	8	16
I	Xitsonga	8	9	17
J	Xitsonga	8	10	18
Total		88	87	175

In Table 4.2 there were 175 child participants who assented to participate in the study and their parents also submitted signed copies of the consent forms to the principal granting permission for their children to be assessed in Grade R E-L2 skills. Gender matching was close though it was not 100%. In this study all first language groupings of learners in Mpumalanga in the selected schools are represented. Learners were matched in pairs according to gender and language grouping in the play based and formal instructional approaches implemented in schools. The main reason for choosing different language and cultural groupings is to obtain a contextually rich dataset that is representative of all the main languages spoken in the Province. Thus matching was successfully achieved in this research study.

4.6.3 Teacher participant sampling

Ten female teachers participated in the research study. There were an equal number of teachers who adopted the play based and formal instruction approach. All the teachers were second language speakers. The teacher participant characteristics are described in table 4.3. Ten female teachers participated in the research study. There were an equal number of teachers who adopted the play based and formal instruction approach. All the teachers were second language speakers. There were no exclusion criteria used in teacher sampling. The teacher participant characteristics are described in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Teacher participant characteristics (n=10)

Characteristic	Value
Gender	10 female
Age in years	Range: 52-27 Mean: 38 years
Teaching experience in years	Range: 20-2 Mean: 7.3
Qualifications	Grade 12: 3 teachers-1 teacher under 35 years and 2 teachers 35 years and above ECD NQF Level 4: 4 teachers- 1 teacher under 35 years and 3 teachers 35 years and above ECD NQF Level 5: 3 teachers-all under 35 years
First language	1 teacher- siSwati 2 teachers- isiZulu 3 teachers- Sepedi 3 teachers- isiNdebele 1 teacher- Xitsonga
Additional language spoken	English
Teaching approach followed	5 formal instruction method 5 play-based method

Key:

- *ECD NQF Level 4- Early Childhood Development National Qualifications Framework Level 4- a certificate in Basic Child Care is obtained after one year of study.*
- *ECD NQF Level 5- Early Childhood Development National Qualifications Framework Level 5- a certificate in advanced Basic Child Care is obtained after one year of study.*

All teachers in the sample were females which is representative of the teacher population in Mpumalanga. The number of males making up the total Grade R teacher population is 0,005% (EMIS Statistics Report, 2012). The minimum qualification that a teacher required is an ECD NQF Level 4 qualification to facilitate in a Grade R classroom. According to Table 4.3, there were seven teachers who are qualified since they have attained the minimum ECD NQF Level 4 qualification. There were three teachers who only possess a Grade 12 matriculation certificate. However, all ten teachers were trained on the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements in 2011 and were supported by ECD officials through periodic classroom visits in 2012.

The criteria for selecting teacher participants were that teachers had to be registered on the Mpumalanga Department of Education's employment records, be trained on the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements, and have at least a Grade 12 matriculation certificate. When the ten schools were randomly selected

according to the two facilitation (play and formal instructional based) methods in the five language groupings (siSwati, isiZulu, isiNdebele, Xitsonga and Sepedi) all teacher participants met the selection criteria.

4.7. MATERIAL AND APPARATUS

4.7.1 The ELP standards assessment tool (See Appendix E)

The ELP standards assessment tool, widely used in the USA to assess learners E-L2 oral communication skills, was used in the research project (US Department of Education, 2007). It should be noted that Grade R assessments are mandatory in only twenty five states in the USA (Dickson, 2009; Espinosa, 2007). In the USA there are over 5 million Grade R learners who are required to learn in English although English is not their first language (Espinosa, 2007; Ward, 2008).

The US Department of Education incorporated standards in their Grade R curriculum to develop communicative competence whereby learners can speak fluently and listen attentively (US Department of Education, 2007). Therefore the ELP standards assessment tool was developed to rate learners' competency in E-L2 skills and used as baseline data to conceptualise programmes that strengthened E-L2 skills acquisition in the classroom (US Department of Education, 2007).

This assessment tool was used in this research study since there is no standardised tool in South Africa to rate learners' E-L2 skills. The assessment standards reflected in the US curriculum are similar to the standards evident in the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements implemented nationally in Grade R in 2012.

The ELP standards assessment tool is a criterion referenced instrument whereby the child's performance is examined against predetermined criteria of what

learners should know and demonstrate in the classroom as reflected in the US Grade R curriculum (Abedi, 2004; Kagan, 2007). The assessment standards in the ELP tool, modelled on the US Grade R policy guidelines, emphasise the importance of learners being communicatively competent and displaying good listening skills (US Department of Education, 2007). The criteria reflected in the ELP standards assessment tool is universal and applicable to the South African context since the Grade R curriculum emphasises the importance of listening and speaking skills for preparing the foundation for formal Grade 1 learning.

The two components (listening and speaking) of the ELP standards assessment tool are as follows: Learners listening actively to ideas of others and expressing orally their own thinking and ideas. The importance of using expanded vocabulary during listening and speaking is universal to first language and second language English speakers who are required to make use of verbs, adjectives and use about five to seven words in their sentences (Espinosa, 2007; Patterson, 2008).

The ELP standards assessment tool is culturally neutral since it does not give preference to any culture in its design format and its implementation in the classroom (US Department of Education, 2007). There are no reported cultural bias concerns being levelled against the use of the tool in the USA based on research conducted (Espinosa, 2007). Since Mpumalanga is multi-cultural, the instrument will be used to assess learners E-L2 skills from different cultural backgrounds since it is reported to be free from culture bias. The aims of the tool are to test learners' E-L2 (listening and speaking) skills, identify learners who are not competent in English and devise an interventional programme to assist learners who are not competent in E-L2 skills.

This tool is used only to assess E-L2 learners in the US in instances where learners' first language differs from the language of learning and teaching in schools. The ELP standards assessment tool provided an indication to the teacher and researcher on the standardised criteria used as per the basic

interactive English communicative skills reflected in the Grade R curriculum which is applicable to the US and South Africa. Basic interactive skills are required for school readiness whereby learners need to acquire listening and speaking competencies in Grade R which forms the foundation of cognitive language proficiency for formal learning in Grade 1 (Owens, 2012). The tool lists the different performance objectives of E-L2 learning, the competencies learners need to demonstrate per standard in order for the teacher and researcher to rate their E-L2 competency and it shows how the assessed standard is linked specifically with the goals of E-L2 learning reflected in the US Grade R curriculum policy. The Grade R Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements handout from the Department of Basic Education on English skills underscores the importance of learners acquiring adequate listening, speaking and vocabulary skills so that they are proficient in using the language confidently and fluently in the classroom conversations (Department of Basic Education, 2010). However, to date the Department of Basic Education has not developed a tool to rate South African learners' E-L2 skills.

4.7.2 Theoretical underpinnings of ELP Standards assessment tool

The ELP standards assessment tool is based on Cummins (2008) distinction of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) and Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS). The tool is made up of questions and teacher requests that assess learners' social and academic language skills. The specific questions on children's ability to speak in verb tenses, use adjectives and comprehend words, phrases and short stories focus primarily on learners' ability to use the academic language in the classroom. There are more questions focused on assessing Grade R learners' academic language skills as compared to assessing their social language skills. The aim of the US curriculum (US Department of Education, 2007) and Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (2012) is that learners need to speak in grammatically correct sentences and respond confidently to questions posed by teachers. The tool could be seen as

based on the dichotomy between the two educational facilitation approaches in the classroom i.e. play based and formal instructional approach since it appears to assess Grade R learners' social and academic language skills.

4.7.3 Advantages of the ELP standards assessment tool

ECD researchers such as Dickson (2009) and Espinosa (2007) state that the ELP standards assessment tool represents the E-L2 skills that teachers and researchers wish to measure in the classroom. The tool operates in a fairly standardised manner with a wide range of learners, but excludes learners with special needs. Thus the ELP standards assessment tool have clearly defined competencies learners need to display in the classroom in agreement with the prescripts of the Grade R curriculum policies in the US and South Africa. These tools need to be completed in a natural context without putting the learner in a “testing” situation and should be used informally in the classroom (Dickson, 2009; Espinosa, 2007).

In Grade R pencil and paper tests are not permitted since the emphasis in the classroom is on play based activities where learners acquire skills incidentally (Dickson, 2009; Espinosa, 2007). The pre-conditions of employing the tool are that all assessors need to be trained on how to use the tool in the classroom without causing learners any discomfort and should be used at least twice to obtain an average baseline of learner performance. In this study the tool was used three times to obtain an average score of learners' performance in E-L2 skills. The ELP standards assessment tool is therefore applicable to the play-based and formal instruction educational approaches advocated by the Department of Basic Education and its content is comprehensive since it assesses all universal listening and speaking skills which is reflected in the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements.

The practical advantages of the ELP standards assessment tool are briefly outlined. The tool is easy to use since the behaviour or skill is either present or absent (Dickson, 2009; Espinosa, 2007). The tool can often be used without the child being overtly aware that he or she is being observed and specifies in detail which behaviours are to be observed by the assessor in the classroom (Dickson, 2009; Espinosa, 2007). The original purpose for developing the ELP standards assessment tool is to test learners' E-L2 skills to identify learners who are at risk of demonstrating competency in English. According to Abedi (2004) and Kagan (2007) the ELP standards assessment tool is appropriate to Grade R learners' ages and developmental levels.

The disadvantage of the ELP standards assessment tool is that it takes time to complete since assessments need to be conducted once learners completed activities or actions requested by assessors (Dickson, 2009; Espinosa, 2009). Learners' assessments through the use of the ELP standards assessment tool can only be conducted by assessors (teachers and researchers) during learners' independent involvement in play and formal instructional based activities (Dickson, 2009; Espinosa, 2007). However, the researcher and teachers rated all selected learners in each of the two standards (learners expressing their thinking and ideas and listening actively to ideas of others) reflected in the assessment tool in a systematic approach before proceeding to the next standard to be assessed. The time taken to complete the assessment tool would not be pertinent in this research since reliable and valid data needs to be collected to determine which educational facilitation approach contributes best to E-L2 learning. The advantage of the ELP standards assessment tool is that teachers can be trained to use the assessment tool to rate Grade R learners' E-L2 skills which contributes to reliability since more than one data collector can be used in the research study. However, inter-rater reliability needs to be controlled by using a standardised score sheet listing the assessment standards and the expected responses and comparing the assessments generated by the observers periodically (Espinosa, 2007; Kagan, 2007).

The performance standards (listening and speaking competencies) reflected in the ELP standards assessment tool are universal, free from any cultural biases and assess learners whose first language is not English (Abedi, 2004; Kagan, 2007).

4.8 PROCEDURES

The ELP standards assessment tool was pre-tested in two rural schools (one school adopting the play based and the other school using the formal instructional approach) that closely resembles the characteristics of the selected sample of schools. Informed consent procedures were followed when the pilot schools were selected with regards to principals granting permission for research to be conducted, teachers and parents signing letters of consent and learners agreeing to participate in the research. This small scale preliminary study was conducted before the main research in order to check the feasibility and user friendliness of the ELP standards assessment tool and teacher training to administer the tool (Creswell, 2009; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). The pilot study assisted the researcher in determining whether the criteria reflected in the ELP standards assessment tool is understood clearly by the Grade R teacher and whether the tool is used correctly in the classroom. The child participants for the pilot study are described in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Description of child participants in two pilot schools (n=27)

School	Play-based (PB) or formal instruction (FI)	First language of learners	Grade R enrolment	Number of exclusions	Number of learners assessed
School 1	PB	isiZulu	24	11	13
School 2	FI	Xitsonga	22	8	14
Total assessed					27

In the first pilot school (school 1) the play-based approach was implemented by the teacher in the classroom. The teacher was teaching Grade R for five years and she had an ECD NQF Level 4 qualification in Basic Child Care. The school

was provided with learner teacher support material at the start of the 2012 academic year which was further augmented by the teacher making her own resources for her learners.

The teacher made maximum use of resources in the classroom and learners were provided with ample opportunity of interacting and utilizing the resources during play based activities. There were twenty four learners in the Grade R classroom. According to medical records affixed to learner profiles three learners had low birth weight and three learners were preterm orphans. Five learners did not participate in the assessment process since three parents did not provide written consent and two learners did not assent to be assessed in the classroom. Therefore in the first pilot study school, thirteen learners were assessed separately by the teacher and researcher in the first assessment test and the ratings of the assessors were compared to determine the inter-rater reliability. The learner ratings of teacher and the researcher are captured in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Learners' ratings in pilot school 1 (play based approach)

Learner Number	Teacher's rating 1	Researcher's rating 1	Teacher's rating 2	Researcher's rating 2
1	3	3	3	3
2	4	4	4	4
3	4	4	4	4
4	3	3	3	3
5	2	2	2	2
6	2	2	2	2
7	1	1	1	1
8	3	3	3	3
9	4	4	4	4
10	3	3	3	3
11	3	4*	3	3
12	4	4	4	4
13	3	3	3	3

As seen in Table 4.5 the learners' ratings by the raters were almost similar except for the scoring of learner 11 in the first assessment (indicated with*). Thereafter learners were assessed for the second time by the teacher and the researcher. The learner ratings were almost similar to the ratings gleaned from

the first test, and there were no differences between the researcher's and the teacher's ratings. Both intra-rater and inter-rater reliability were therefore established. The teacher training to administer the ELP standards assessment tool in the two pilot schools was therefore successful.

The same assessment approach was followed in the second pilot school with Grade R learners. Learners' ratings in pilot school 2 are reflected in Table 4.6

Table 4.6: Learners' ratings in pilot school 2 (formal instruction approach)

Learner Number	Teacher's rating 1	Researcher's rating 1	Teacher's rating 2	Researcher's rating 2
1	6	6	6	6
2	7	7	7	7
3	6	6	6	6
4	5	5	5	5
5	5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6	6
7	8	8	8	8
8	7	7	7	7
9	7	7	7	7
10	7	7	7	7
11	8	8	8	8
12	7	7	7	7
13	6	6	6	6
14	7	7	7	7

In school 2 where the formal instruction approach was adopted, there were twenty two learners in the Grade R class. The teacher was teaching Grade R for ten years and she had an ECD NQF Level 5 qualification on Basic Child Care. The teacher did not use departmental teaching and learning resources that were provided to the school and did not engage in material development of resources. There were two learners with low birth weight, one learner who was a preterm orphan and five learners did not participate in the study since their parents did not provide consent for their participation in the research study. Therefore in the second pilot study school, fourteen learners were assessed.

The duration of the teacher's training on the use of the ELP standards assessment tool in the two pilot schools took about two and half hours, commencing at 13:30 to 15:30 as per agreed prior arrangements conducted with the principals of both schools. The rationale of training teachers in the afternoon was not to interrupt the Grade R programme at the schools unnecessarily and to afford teachers an opportunity to be trained without interruption and concern about learners being unsupervised in the classroom. The training took place in separate venues since the schools were far from each other and the teachers did not have transport to travel to a central venue. The distance between the two pilot schools was about 150 km from each other. Light refreshments were served since teachers normally buy refreshments from the local shops after learners have gone home. Firstly, the researcher reiterated the purpose of the research study to teachers and explained the rationale for using the ELP standards assessment tool to rate Grade R learners' E-L2 skills in the classroom. Informed consent was obtained for the teachers (See Appendix D) and an information brochure on the use of the ELP standards assessment tool was distributed to teachers (See Appendix F).

The two broad performance standards (listening and speaking) of the ELP standards assessment tool were briefly explained and all items within each performance standard were discussed in detail together with the expected assessment standards that needed to be used in rating learners' E-L2 skills. The similarities between Curriculum Assessment Policy Assessments (CAPS) and the assessment standards reflected in the ELP standards assessment tool were brought to the attention of teachers. Teachers were already trained on the CAPS in October 2011. At that time, the researcher afforded teachers an opportunity of posing questions. The researcher explained to teachers in detail what they needed to elicit in the classroom and discussed the stories, rhymes, poems and songs that needed to be facilitated in the classroom. The ELP questions that need to be posed in the classroom were also discussed with the teacher. Each teacher was told to document their observations in their observation book. The

researcher would document findings separately and compare his findings with the teachers' ratings.

Initially, it was envisaged that the ELP assessments will last for one day but it was found that an extra day was needed to complete all assessments in a particular classroom. The learners to be assessed were placed in groups of approximately seven. While these learners were assessed, the other learners engaged in outdoor play under the supervision of the Head of Department and one relief educator assigned by the principal to take care of the learners. The learners' who were assessed, were not disturbed by other learners since they were playing outside which was at least two hundred metres from the Grade R classroom in school 1, and three hundred metres in school 2. The other learners who were outdoors did not have an unfair advantage of being exposed to the teacher. The next morning the learners who were assessed the day earlier were engaged in outdoor play while the other learners were playing indoors. When assessments were conducted on learners who were playing outdoors the day earlier, there was no indication from the analysis of findings that these learners were told about the assessments by their classmates who were previously assessed.

Initially both teachers were rushing through the assessment since they thought that assessments on learners needed to be completed in a day. On the researcher's further engagements with teachers, they indicated that it was for the first time they were using an assessment tool of this nature and were unsure of whether the assessment needed to be completed within one hour on an individual learner teacher basis. The researcher gently reminded them that the purpose of the study was to collect baseline data that will provide valid results of learners, parents and teachers on Grade R learners' E-L2 skills.

Although teachers were informed to read each story four times, in school 1 the teacher read the story twice and in school 2 thrice before posing questions to the

child. In the research sample, the researcher indicated to teachers that the stories, songs, poems and rhymes should be told to learners at least four times before learners answered questions or repeated what was narrated or sung to them. All questions need to be posed slowly, simply and repeated if no initial response was forthcoming from the learner. Teachers were told in the research sample that learners need constant encouragement and praise when requested to demonstrate their speaking and listening skills in the classroom. In the pilot schools the two teachers rarely praised or encouraged each learner after a response was provided or an action performed. Teachers were cautiously reminded that they need to be patient with learners when requesting them to demonstrate skills in the classroom since learners differ in their rates of development according to Grade R developmentally appropriate principles.

Initially, both teachers found it challenging to assess Grade R learners' proficiency in the use of verbs and adjectives in the classroom. They expected learners to construct sentences by using the appropriate verbs and adjectives. The researcher reminded teachers after the first assessment was conducted, to provide examples of sentences where teachers needed to demonstrate the use of verbs and adjectives. Teachers provided learners with examples of verbs and adjectives that they need to use in the classroom. Learners were encouraged to construct their own sentences or repeat sentences that were told by their teacher. Teachers were told to request learners to describe items of their clothing, the classroom, their friends and teacher when assessing learners' use of adjectives. The teachers were told that they had to introduce the concept of yesterday, today and tomorrow to assess learners' understanding and proficiency of employing the correct tense. An example was provided to teachers illustrating how to assess learners' use of past, present and future tense:

"Yesterday I ran on the soccer field."

"Now I am playing with my puppet."

"Tomorrow I will play soccer."

The test was conducted twice on learners in the two pilot schools. The researcher's goal was to determine multiple baselines and take the mean scores in order to compensate for teacher and learner inconsistencies. Both the researcher and the teacher re-assessed the learners and compared their ratings. The ratings of learners by the teacher and the researcher were similar.

The procedures used in the pilot study were similarly employed in the main study. However the ELP standards assessment tool was used three times to assess learners' E-L2 skills in the classroom over a four month period. The stories were read to learners four times and the teacher and researcher encouraged learners to provide responses by complimenting and praising them on a continuous basis.

Five teachers adopted the formal based approach and the other five teachers adopted the play based approach. Information on teachers' facilitation approaches were sourced from school visit reports compiled by ECD officials in 2012. ECD officials, as part of their duty, observed teachers' lessons in the classroom. The instructional practices of the teachers were not observed. The researcher did not videotape and analyse the teachers while they were teaching as the researcher and the ECD manager. The teachers as participants may not have acted naturally if their teaching was evaluated directly as part of the research.

Once the current study has been completed, a copy of the research findings will be forwarded to the pilot schools used in the study. A short presentation on the research findings was made in each of the schools at the conclusion of the research study. The same procedures were used in the main study.

4.8.1 Duration of research study

Researchers recommend that fieldwork should last long enough to get the work done to answer the research questions posed and to fulfil the purpose of the study (Babbie, 2007; Creswell, 2009; Silverman, 2005). In order to obtain credible findings four months was allocated by the researcher to collect data in the ten schools. From personal experiences emanating from the involvement in the ECD field, the ideal time to conduct research in the ten schools was between March to June 2012. Two teachers in the sample had to attend an approved training course in the first week of June 2012 and a third teacher was going on maternity leave on the 1 June 2012. The researcher learnt that the classes will be manned by volunteer parents for the full duration of the teachers' absence from the classroom. It was evident from the researcher's discussion with parents that they were neither trained nor skilled in facilitation and assessment practices in Grade R. However, the parents indicated to the researcher that their communication with the learners will be in English. In order to utilise the services of the three teachers as raters and to maintain consistency in the choice of raters employed, the researcher decided that the research should be conducted at the end of May 2012 and all learners in the sample should be assessed more or less the same time.

4.8.2 Data collection

The transient state of participants (i.e. fatigue and hunger) could result in measurement error in this research study (August & Shanahan, 2006; Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). It is best to conduct research at schools after learners are fed through the national school nutrition programme. Grade R learners are fed in most schools at 10:00. It was best to conduct assessments on learners at about 10:30. Many learners are staying in impoverished homes where in most cases they do not eat breakfast (Mhaule, 2011). Assessments were not recommended

to be conducted in the afternoons (after 12.00) since learners were often tired and sleepy (Heroman & Copple, 2006).

The ELP standards assessment tool was used to assess learners E-L2 skills in the classroom. The teacher and researcher rated learners' E-L2 competency independently based on learners' demonstration of listening and speaking skills in English. The teacher and researcher indicated with a tick or cross whether child participants were able to demonstrate the specific E-L2 skill as reflected in the ELP standards assessment tool. All scoring was conducted confidentially and the child was not overtly aware that they are being assessed.

The names of learners were included on the scoring sheets in order to capture each learner's E-L2 scores. Thereafter the researcher calculated each learner's average score from the three scores recorded against each learner's name. All data sheets were securely stored in the principal's safe before it was collected by the researcher. The researcher personally supervised the participant learner selection process by constantly checking the inclusion and exclusion criteria discussed earlier in this chapter. All consent forms were collected from parents before the commencement of the data collection process.

4.8.3 Data analysis

Descriptive statistics were performed to indicate means and frequency counts of the participant characteristics.

Analysis of variance (ANOVA)

ANOVA is an inferential statistical method to determine whether an independent variable had a statistically effect on the dependent variable (Lomax, 2007). Data that is normally distributed can be analysed by means of ANOVA (Lomax, 2007). ANOVA is used when there are more than two groups of data, the variances

between groups are equal, groups are independent of each other, and have almost similar sample sizes (Silverman, 2005). The two groups were almost equal, as there were 86 learners in the sample that were exposed to the play-based approach while 89 learners were subjected to the formal instructional approach. Learners were included according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria that were discussed earlier in this chapter.

When planning any study, extraneous and contributing variables need to be considered. An ANOVA is a way to control these types of undesirable variables. In this study the researcher determined if there was a statistical difference between the different variables (facilitation, teachers' first language, learners' first language, learners' gender, teachers' qualifications, teachers' age and teachers' experience) on Grade R learners E-L2 scores. Firstly, the main effect (facilitation i.e. play and formal instructional based approach) on E-L2 scores was determined.

As already indicated the ANOVA assists researchers to determine if there are significant differences between groups of data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). In this research study there were more than two groups of data. An example to illustrate the presence of the different groups of data in the study is when the impact of the main effect (facilitation) on Grade R E-L2 scores is determined. In this research data from play and formal based classrooms was obtained by using the ELP tool. However, listening, speaking and the total performance scores in each of the facilitation approaches were obtained and compared between groups. Datasets were converted to an Excel file, which was compatible with SPSS version 2011. There were three groups of data available in both play and formal approaches, namely listening, speaking and total performance scores. Thus t-tests could not be employed in this study since t-tests compares means between two groups of data (Lomax, 2007). ANOVA was used since the data is parametric (Lomax, 2007). The power of parametric tests is that it can be calculated from formula, tables and graphs based on underlying distribution of data (Bryman, 2007). In

this research study the collected data was in the form of learner scores. The statistical conclusion after conducting data analysis should be whether the group scores are homogenous or whether they differ significantly from each other (Lomax, 2007). In the context of a one-way ANOVA only a few comparisons in the dataset is executed in order to increase the statistical power of each comparison. In this study the data was divided mostly into groups according to one factor (independent variable), which were the facilitation and teachers' first language. A two-way ANOVA was also used to test the effect of facilitation on learners' gender, learners' first language, teachers' qualifications, teachers' experience and teachers' age on Grade R learner performance scores. A two-way ANOVA therefore determined the interaction effect of each of the above-mentioned independent variables with the main effect (facilitation) on Grade R learners' performance scores (Lomax, 2007).

The sample sizes needed to be almost similar and the groups of data in different categories needed to be reduced when post hoc testing was conducted. Post hoc testing could determine which groups of data differed from each other. The data was analysed by using the 2011 Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software programme which was loaded on the researcher's laptop by the information technology technician based at the University of Pretoria prior to the commencement of data collection.

Post-hoc testing

Post-hoc testing involves making multiple comparisons after the data is collected (Lomax, 2007). A post-hoc test is needed after an ANOVA is completed in order to determine which groups differ from each other (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). In theory post-hoc tests are tests that were decided upon after the data have been collected (Bryman, 2007). Generally, a researcher look at the set of means and uses a post-hoc test to determine whether the means are significantly different from each other (Lomax, 2007). A post-hoc test is used in situations where the researcher can decide which comparisons he/she wants to make after

looking at the data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Means of groups were compared by using the Tukey Honesty Significance Difference (HSD) multiple range test.

4.8.4 Validity and reliability

The ELP standards assessment tool was selected based on its proven validity in the USA which was discussed in Chapter Three (see 3.5). The rationale for using the ELP standards assessment tool is that the tool has content validity since it measures the listening and speaking competencies reflected in the USA Grade R curriculum (US Department of Education, 2007) which is similar to the South African Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005), a measurement instrument has high validity if it includes all competencies reflected in the content that needs to be assessed and includes skills that should also be demonstrated by participants during the assessment process.

There were six studies that were cited in Chapter Three where the ELP standards assessment tool was successfully used to assess Grade R learners' E-L2 skills in both play and formal instructional classrooms. Studies that were cited in the literature review since 2008 to 2010 include the Texan study (Texas Department of Education, 2008), Illinois study (Illinois Department of Education, 2008), Nevada study (Nevada Department of Education, 2009), New Mexico study (Matterson, 2009; California study (Californian Department of Education, 2010) and the Florida study (Florida Department of Education, 2010). The ELP standards assessment tool has been used for the past eight years and has not been revised and amended to date (US Department of Education, 2011). The performance standards and criteria embedded within the tool are universal since it focuses specially on all listening and speaking skills that learners should demonstrate in the Grade R year. The ELP assessment tool is predicated on the universal understanding that listening and speaking skills are seen as precursors

for formal reading and writing (Espinosa, 2007; US Department of Education, 2007).

These US competencies and standards are similar to the standards reflected in the national Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements in South Africa. The CAPS documents are re-packaged and are user friendly versions of the National Curriculum Statement, mainly modelled on the US Grade R curriculum framework (Department of Basic Education, 2012). The tool is fit-for-purpose since it is used to obtain reliable baseline data on learners E-L2 skills to determine which approach used in schools contribute best to E-L2 learning and recommend to the Department of Basic Education the best facilitation approach that should be followed.

Validity and reliability indicates the degree of error in the measurements of a research study (Leedy &Ormrod, 2005). External validity are important in this project so that the results can be interpreted, analysed and generalised to a wider sample (Babbie, 2007). The three criteria for external validity is the real-life setting, a representative sample and replication in a different context (Bryman, 2007; Leedy & Omrod, 2005). The research was conducted in a natural setting, i.e. the classroom and an equal number of schools were selected in the two categories of facilitation approaches, and thus ensuring the number of selected schools was generally representative of the rural schools in the Mpumalanga Province.

The researcher aimed to achieve inter-rater reliability when the ELP standards assessment tool was employed in the ten schools. Inter-rater reliability is a measure of reliability used to assess the degree to which different raters agree on their assessment decisions (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Inter-rater reliability was important in this research project since raters sometimes have proven (based on the researcher's work experiences) to interpret responses differently and sometimes disagree as to how well a skill is demonstrated.

Teachers were trained in the use of the tool prior to the commencement of the study and were afforded opportunities of asking clarity seeking questions. The same training procedures that were used in pilot schools were used in the study sample. Based on the researcher's observations during the pilot studies, teachers were told in the main study to spread learner assessments over two days, stories need to be told four times and teachers need to be patient with learner responses by using praise and encouragement constantly. According to Lomax (2007), rater training modifies raters' expectations of task demands and clarifies their rating criteria, thereby reducing rater variability.

An information brochure on the purpose of the study and on the different components (listening and speaking) was provided to the teachers (See Appendix F). Inter-rater reliability was assured when another rater was used when there was a difference in scores in the research study. After populating the score sheet, the data was checked and rechecked by two ECD officials who have experience and qualifications in educational research and statistics. Both ECD officials have a masters' degree in Educational Management. Teachers and the researcher assessed learners E-L2 skills separately and then met to finalize learners' assessments.

Firstly, assessors put all similar score sheets in one folder and then identified all score-sheets where the scores were different. If there was a discrepancy of learner ratings in the two score sheets, then a Grade 1 teacher was requested to assist in rating learners E-L2 skills after obtaining the required permission of the principal and the Head of Department. In the main study there were only two instances in two different schools where the Head of Department was used to assess Grade R learners E-L2 skills. In the first instance in school A there was a disagreement in scoring over two learners' demonstration of rhymes, songs and poems. In the second instance there was no consensus amongst the raters on one learner's use of verb tenses in his sentences. It should be noted that there

were only three disagreements out of 525 assessments conducted in the study (175 learners were assessed three times). The researcher was able to monitor intra-rater reliability by checking on inter-rater reliability because any agreement amongst raters will be limited by the internal consistency of each rater. It appeared that rater training assisted raters to maintain internal consistency and consistency in scoring across raters.

Thus in this study there were three baseline assessments conducted in order to obtain the average baseline score on Grade R learners' E-L2 performance scores with due diligence to inter and intra-reliability issues discussed in this section. The average multiple baseline scores for each school is reflected in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7: Average multiple baseline scores for each school

School	Average score for learners across three baseline data collections			
	Baseline 1	Baseline 2	Baseline 3	Average baseline score
A	2	2	2	2
B	8	8	8	8
C	3	3	3	3
D	7	7	7	7
E	2	2	2	2
F	7	7	7	7
G	3	3	3	3
H	7	7	7	7
I	2	2	2	2
J	7	7	7	7

The averages of the three scores were used as learner scores for all calculations in the study.

4.9. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The reader was orientated to the main aims and objectives of the study, the research design, ethical considerations and the ELP standards assessment tool which was used in the study to describe learners' competency in E-L2 skills. The procedures used in this research project were outlined in order to ensure that the

data collected is valid and reliable. In the next chapter the findings of the research will be presented.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the impact of the facilitation method will be described by evaluating whether there is a significant difference between two facilitation methods (play or formal instructional approach) and their differential impact on Grade R learners' E-L2 scores. The influence of other variables (teachers' first language, learners' first language, learners' gender, teachers' qualifications, teachers' age and teachers' experience) will also be discussed.

The chapter will be structured firstly by providing the descriptive statistics on the effect of each of the influencing factors on the Grade R learners' E-L2 scores and then inferential statistics will be conducted to determine if there is a statistical difference between the different variables.

5.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were posed in the study

1. What is the effect of facilitation i.e. play-based and formal instructional method on Grade R learners' E-L2 scores? (Facilitation is the main effect to be determined in this research study)

In order to determine whether additional factors contributed to participants' E-L2 scores on the ELP standards assessment tool (Florida Department of Education, 2010), the following questions were posed:

2. What is the effect of teachers' first language on Grade R learners E-L2 scores?
3. What is the effect of learners' first language on their E-L2 scores?
4. What is the effect of learners' gender on their E-L2 scores?
5. What is the effect of teachers' qualifications on Grade R learners' E-L2 scores?
6. What is the effect of teachers' age on Grade R learners' E-L2 scores?
7. What is the effect of teachers' experience on Grade R learners' E-L2 scores?

5.2.1 What is the effect of the facilitation method i.e. play and formal instructional based method on Grade R learners' E-L2 scores?

The effect of two types of facilitation methods (play and formal instructional approach) on the Grade R learners' scores were evaluated in 175 learners in ten schools. Five schools adopted the play based method and five schools implemented the formal instructional method.

Five teachers were therefore employing the play-based approach while the other five teachers were using the formal instruction method. Schools in Mpumalanga were already categorised as play-based and formal instruction, based on school visit reports compiled by ECD officials. These officials had to indicate whether the teacher was using a daily programme or a formal timetable and whether written or play-based activities were organized by the teacher. In the researcher's interactions with the principal and teachers, the categorization of schools as per ECD officials' reports was found to be correct.

The breakdown of the number of learners in each of the facilitation methods and language groupings was discussed in chapter four (see Table 4.2) The mean scores, standard deviations and standard errors of the participants on the ELP standards assessment tool for E-L2 proficiency after three months of exposure to English in their rural Grade R classroom, are provided in Table 5.1.

Standard deviation is the measure of the dispersion of a set of data from its means (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). The more spread apart the data, the higher the deviation. Conversely, a low standard deviation shows that the data are clustered closely around the mean (more reliable). Standard deviation is calculated as the square root of variance (Lomax, 2007). The ideal standard deviation should be 0.6. In parametric statistics roughly 68% of the data will lie within +/- 1 standard deviation (Silverman, 2005).

The standard error is a measure of the variability of a sample means (Lomax, 2007), and is the estimate of the standard deviation of a sampling distribution. The sampling error depends on three factors i.e. number of observations in the population, the number of observations in the sample and the way the random sample is chosen (Silverman, 2005). The smaller the standard error, the less the spread and the more likely it is that any sample mean is close to the population mean. The small standards error also indicates that the sample is representative (Lomax, 2007). Thus 68% of all sample means will be within one standard error of the population mean and 95% within two standard errors. A standard error can be estimated as the standard deviation of the sample divided by the square root of the sample size ($n=175$). The ideal standard error is 0.045.

Table 5.1: Mean scores of learners in formal and play based classrooms and variability in terms of standard deviation and standard error

ELP standards assessment tool components		Number of Learners	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Standard Error
Total Score Maximum score (11)	<i>Play-based</i>	90	2.52	.738	.078
	<i>Formal</i>	85	7.46	.682	.074
	<i>Total</i>	175	4.92	2.574	.195
Speaking Score Maximum score (7)	<i>Play-based</i>	90	2.16	.517	.055
	<i>Formal</i>	85	2.79	.439	.048
	<i>Total</i>	175	2.46	.575	.043
Listening Score Maximum score (4)	<i>Play-based</i>	90	.37	.507	.053
	<i>Formal</i>	85	2.68	.711	.077
	<i>Total</i>	175	1.49	1.312	.099

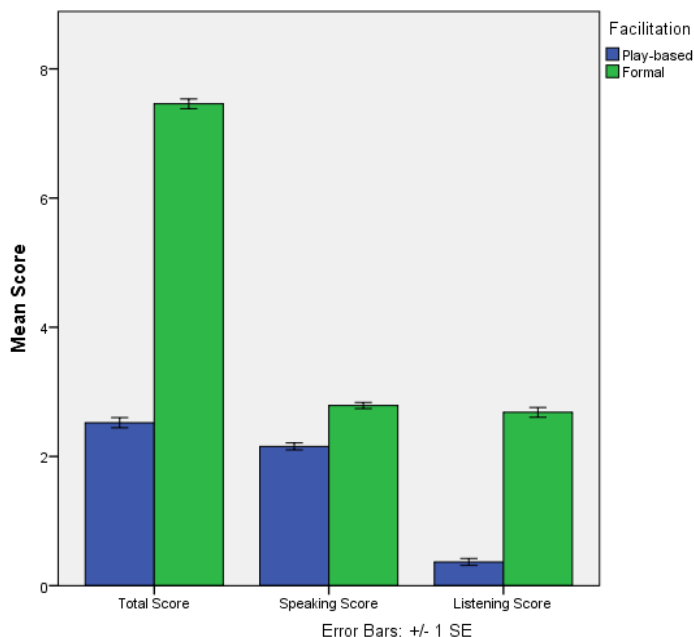


Figure 5.1: Average learners’ scores in play based and formal instructional method. Error bars indicate the observed variability using the standard error parameter.

Table 5.1 demonstrates that performance scores are systematically higher in the formal based groups than the play-based groups. As reflected in Figure 5.1 the highest difference between the two facilitation methods is observed in the total and listening scores. Error bars are a graphical representation of the variability of the data and is used to indicate the uncertainty in a reported measurement (Lomax, 2007). Figure 5.1 indicates that the level of error or uncertainty in the reported data is low. An example of the difference in the two facilitation methods is in the formal based classrooms where the average total score was 7.46 while the mean total score in play-based classrooms was 2.52.

Table 5.1 and Figure 5.1 indicate that there is a small standard deviation and standard error in the study sample. The small standard deviation indicated that the data was not widely spread from its means. The sample error is indicative of a low variability of the sampling means. Apart from the differences between the two groups, the individual participant scores in each group were not widely spread, indicating that they had very similar scores. The average learners’ scores

of the three assessments were taken and the researcher used the average to make all calculations in the study.

The differences in participants' performance scores were mostly observed in the listening scores and not so much in the speaking scores. In the play-based classrooms, the participants obtained very poor scores for listening skills in English, i.e. listening and understanding a story in order to retell it and answer questions about it.

Based on the initial observation of higher scores in formal based as opposed to play-based classrooms, there is a need to determine whether the difference is statistically significant. A one-way ANOVA was carried out with the facilitation method (play based and formal instructional approach) as the independent variable and the three different scores (total, speaking and listening scores) as the dependent variables. According to Lomax (2007), a one-way ANOVA compares group of data according to only one factor (in this case facilitation approach i.e. play and formal instructional approach).

In Table 5.2 the degrees of freedom, mean square and the sum of squares were determined. The degrees of freedom refer to the number of independent observations in a sample minus the number of population parameters that should be estimated from the sample data (Lomax, 2007). The mean square refers to the average of the square of a set of numbers (McMillian & Schumacher, 2006). The sum of square refers to the cumulative total of the squared deviations in a study sample (Lomax, 2007). An ANOVA compares the variances both within and across groups by generating a result known as the F score (Lomax, 2007). Before a one-way ANOVA can be carried out, a check on the normality of the data must be conducted. For this a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (Field, 2009) was used to demonstrate the normality of the data. The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test demonstrated that the data is normally distributed and is arranged like a bell curve. The distribution has a central high point and data is not skewed (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Table 5.2 describes the results of the one-way ANOVA

for each of the three scores (total score, speaking and listening sub scores) of the ELP standards assessment tool.

Table 5.2: The effect of facilitation (play and formal based instructional method) on performance scores of learners

ELP standards assessment tool components		Sum of Squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean Square	ANOVA result (F)	Significant t
Total Scores	Between Groups	1065.319	1	1065.319	2104.809	.000
	Within Groups	87.561	173	.506		
	Total	1152.880	174			
Speaking Scores	Between Groups	17.498	1	17.498	75.660	.000
	Within Groups	40.010	173	.231		
	Total	57.509	174			
Listening Scores	Between Groups	234.414	1	234.414	620.811	.000
	Within Groups	65.324	173	.378		
	Total	299.737	174			

As seen in Table 5.2 highly significant differences ($p < 0.000$) were observed between the two facilitation methods (play based and formal instructional method). Learners in a formal based environment have significantly higher total, speaking and listening scores than learners in play based classrooms.

The research results confirm that learners in formal instructional based classrooms perform better than learners in play-based classrooms in E-L2 skills. This performance of learners in formal instructional classrooms is consistently higher than in play-based classrooms. It is interesting to remark that learners are performing better in the formal instructional based approach which the Mpumalanga Department of Education is not advocating to be implemented in the Grade R classrooms. The recommended facilitation approach (play-based) has achieved poor Grade R learners' E-L2 scores as reflected in Table 5.1 and Figure 5.1.

Table 4.1 reflects the number of schools that are play-based and formal instructional based in Mpumalanga (see Chapter 4). The percentage of schools that are play-based is 72% and 28% are formal instructional based schools in the

Province (See table 4.1). More schools in the Province are play-based because school principals were encouraged to implement department’s policy on play-based learning in Grade R.

The other contributing factors on Grade R learners’ scores will be discussed in the next section.

5.2.2 What is the effect of teachers’ first language on Grade R learners E-L2 scores?

None of the teachers had English as a first language which would clearly have benefitted their facilitation of E-L2 skills in Grade R learners (See table 4.3). So, the five languages spoken by teachers in rural Mpumalanga were considered for their effect on Grade R learners’ scores. The effect of teachers’ first language was evaluated on the Grade R learners’ total, speaking and listening scores. The teacher first language profile across the two facilitation methods is illustrated in Figure 5.2.

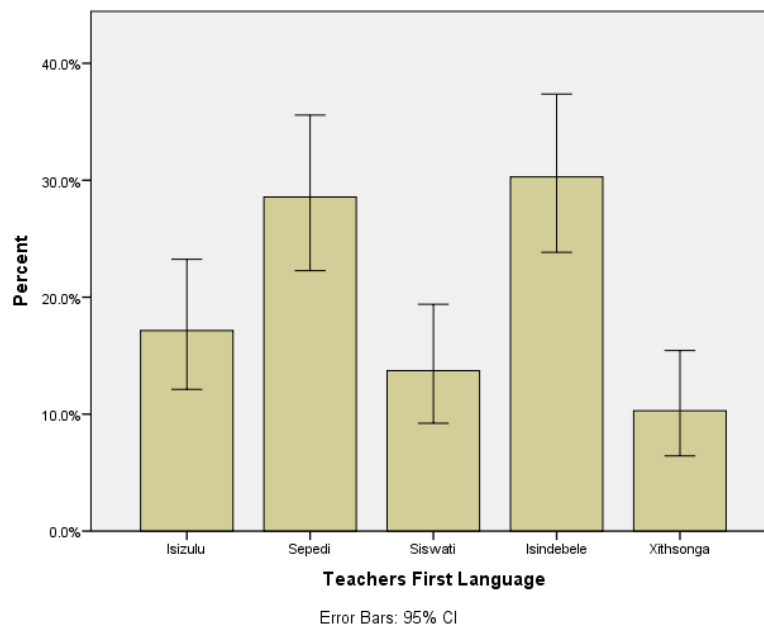


Figure 5.2: Percentages of teachers’ first language in the study sample (n=10)

Most teachers in the study population have isiNdebele and Sepedi as their first language. In this study sample isiZulu, siSwati and Xitsonga are less prevalent amongst teachers. The schools were randomly selected, so every teacher in Grade R rural schools in Mpumalanga had an equal opportunity to have been included in the study. Figure 5.2 indicates that there is a 95% certainty in the reported measurement of the data obtained in the research sample.

Since the focus of this research is on the difference between the two facilitation methods, distribution of the different teachers' first language is illustrated in the histogram in Figure 5.3.

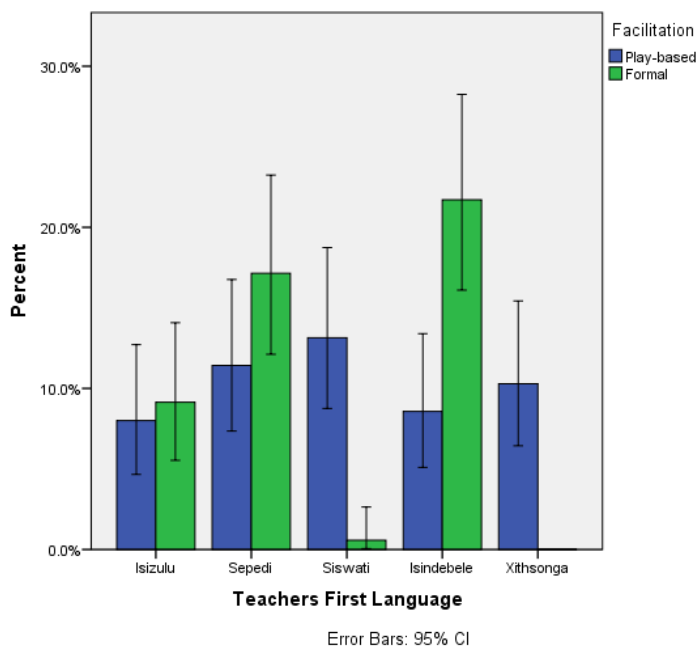


Figure 5.3: Percentage of teachers' first language on facilitation (play and formal based)

The same teachers' first language profile is observed between the two facilitation methods except for the higher prevalence amongst isiNdebele teachers' first language in the formal based group and higher prevalence amongst siSwati teachers' first language in play-based classrooms. IsiNdebele teachers live

predominantly in the Nkangala District in the former KwaNdebele bantustan⁵. siSwati teachers live predominantly in the Ehlanzeni district in Mpumalanga. Most of the isiNdebele and siSwati teachers live in the urban areas but work in schools in the rural areas. Thus most of these teachers are staying far away from families who have isiNdebele and siSwati as their first languages.

The difference in performance scores across the different teachers' first languages for both facilitation methods together is described in Table 5.2 and Figure 5.3.

Table 5.3 provides the mean performance scores (total, speaking and listening scores) of learners and their variability in terms of standard deviation and standard errors. Table 5.3 differed from the scores indicated in Table 5.1 since the learner scores were rearranged according to the teachers' first language.

⁵ A bantustan (also known as Bantu homeland, black homeland, black state or simply homeland) was a territory set aside for black inhabitants of South Africa as part of the policy of apartheid. Ten bantustans were established in South Africa for the purpose of concentrating the members of designated ethnic groups, thus making each of those territories ethnically homogeneous as the basis for creating "autonomous" nation states for South Africa's different black ethnic groups.

Table 5.3: Mean performance scores of learners receiving facilitation from teachers' different first languages and their variability of standard deviation and standard errors

ELP standards assessment tool components		Total number of learners	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error
Total Score	isiZulu	30	5.00	2.913	.532
	Sepedi	50	5.32	2.386	.337
	siSwati	24	2.50	1.351	.276
	isiNdebele	53	6.30	2.180	.299
	Xitsonga	18	2.83	.786	.185
	Total	175	4.92	2.574	.195
Speaking Score	isiZulu	30	2.37	.669	.122
	Sepedi	50	2.54	.579	.082
	siSwati	24	2.17	.482	.098
	isiNdebele	53	2.66	.478	.066
	Xitsonga	18	2.22	.548	.129
	Total	175	2.46	.575	.043
Listening Score	isiZulu	30	1.07	.980	.179
	Sepedi	50	1.64	1.139	.161
	siSwati	24	.25	.676	.138
	isiNdebele	53	2.45	1.294	.178
	Xitsonga	18	.61	.502	.118
	Total	175	1.49	1.312	.099

It can be seen that learners who have teachers with isiNdebele as their first language perform the best in E-L2 scores. Learners who have teachers with siSwati as their first language are performing the worst in E-L2 scores. This observation is further illustrated in Figure 5.4.

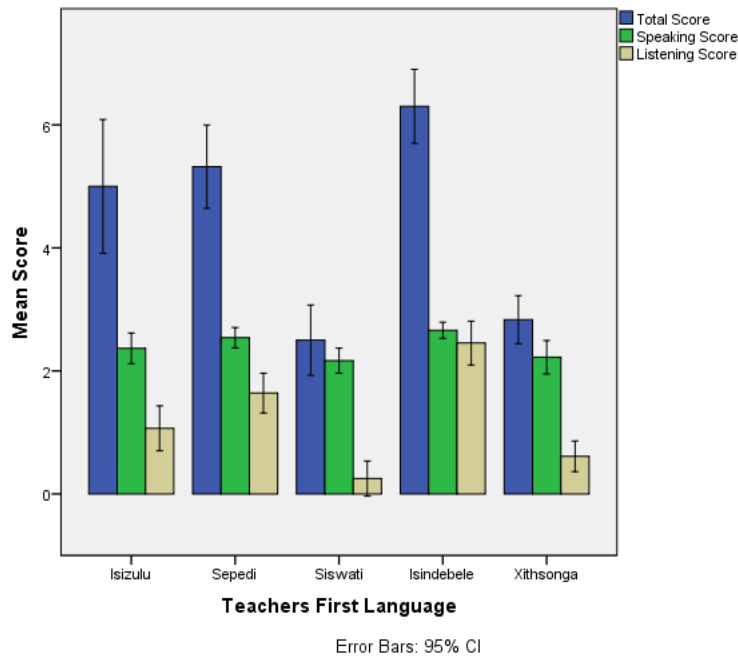


Figure 5.4: Learner mean scores (total, speaking and listening scores) obtained from exposure to teachers' different first languages

A one-way ANOVA was carried out to evaluate if this language effect on the performance scores of the learners was statistically significant. The effect of the slightly more isiNdebele speaking teachers will be controlled by the ANOVA procedure. Table 5.4 shows the results of this analysis.

Table 5.4: Effect of teachers' first language on performance scores of learners

ELP standards assessment tool components		Sum of Squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean Square	F ratio	Significance
Total Score	Between Groups	328.330	4	82.083	16.923	.000
	Within Groups	824.550	170	4.850		
	Total	1152.880	174			
Speaking score	Between Groups	5.791	4	1.448	4.759	.001
	Within Groups	51.718	170	.304		
	Total	57.509	174			
Listening score	Between Groups	106.441	4	26.610	23.403	.000
	Within Groups	193.297	170	1.137		
	Total	299.737	174			

Based on data in Table 5.4 highly significant statistical differences are observed between the learners' performance scores for different teachers' first languages. In order to determine which languages are significantly different from each other, a post hoc Tukey analysis (Field, 2009) was carried out.

Table 5.5 illustrates the results of the post hoc analysis, showing that the performance scores between several teachers' first languages are either significant or not significant from each other.

Table 5.5: Post-hoc Tukey analysis of teachers' first language on learners' performance scores

Teachers' first languages	isiZulu	Sepedi	siSwati	isiNdebele	Xitsonga
isiZulu	-	NS	P<0.05	NS	P<0.05
Sepedi	NS	-	P<0.05	NS	P<0.05
siSwati	P<0.05	P<0.05	-	P<0.05	NS
isiNdebele	NS	NS	NS	P<0.05	P<0.05
Xitsonga	P<0.05	P<0.05	NS	P<0.05	P<0.05

Key:

NS- not significant

P<0.05- significant

The results in Table 5.5 indicate that teachers who have isiZulu as their first language achieve significantly higher learner performance scores than teachers with siSwati and Xitsonga as first languages. Teachers who have Sepedi as their first language achieve higher learner performance scores than teachers who

have siSwati and Xitsonga as first languages. Teachers who have isiNdebele as their first language achieve higher learner performance scores than teachers with Xitsonga as their first language.

In summary, the results indicate that the scores of learners based on the first language of the teachers can be organized in two groups: Group 1: isiZulu, Sepedi, and isiNdebele first language teachers having significantly better performance scores than Group 2: siSwati and Xitsonga first language teachers.

To see whether these observations are present in both facilitation approaches, Figure 5.5 compares the listening performance scores of learners' from the two facilitation approaches.

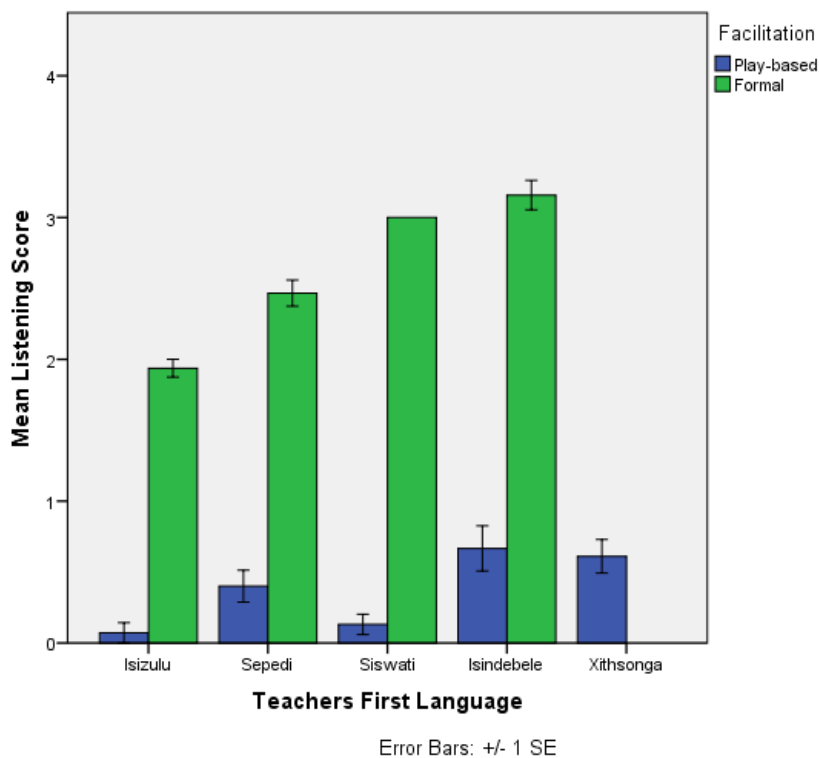


Figure 5.5: Mean listening scores of learners receiving facilitation according to their teachers' first language

Figure 5.5 confirms the earlier findings that teachers with isiNdebele as first language produced the highest performance scores in both approaches. There were not enough data in the Xitsonga group for the formal facilitation method. Similar findings were consistently observed in learners' E-L2 totals and speaking scores.

These large differences should be explained further, e.g. the formal facilitation approach appears to produce higher learner scores, irrespective of the teachers' first language, but isiNdebele speaking teachers' classes have even higher scores.

It appears that isiNdebele teachers produce better Grade R learners' performance scores especially in formal instructional classrooms. The reasons for isiNdebele learners achieving consistently good E-L2 scores will be discussed in Chapter 6. The above-mentioned results will become clearer with the presentation of the results of the learner's first languages.

The next possible effect to be determined on the superior scores of learners in formal instruction classes and inferior scores on learners in play-based E-L2 facilitated classes, were the learners' own first language.

5.2.3 What is the effect of learners' first language on their E-L2 scores?

The effect of learners' first language was evaluated on their total, but also on speaking and listening scores respectively. The learners' first language profile across the two facilitation methods is illustrated in Figure 5.5.

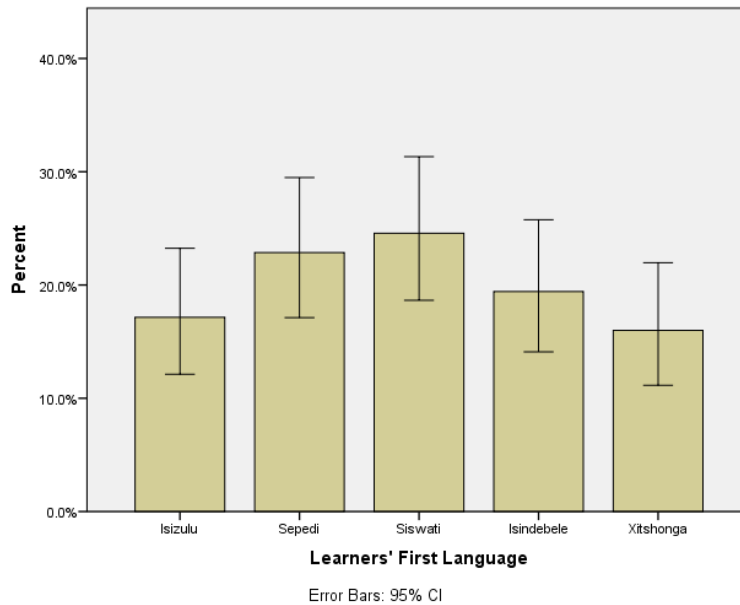


Figure 5.6: Percentage of learners' first language in the study sample (n=175)

Figure 5.6 illustrates that most learners in the study population have siSwati and Sepedi as their first languages. In this study sample isiZulu, isiNdebele and Xitsonga are less prevalent amongst learners. The first language profile of the learners did not correspond with the first languages of the ten teachers (Refer to Figure 5.2). There were differences between the learners' and teachers' first language profiles. The learners were mostly Sepedi and siSwati speaking while the teachers were mostly Sepedi and IsiNdebele speaking.

In Mpumalanga there are four districts i.e. Gert Sibande, Nkangala, Bohlabela and Ehlanzeni. The language profile in each of the four districts is depicted in Figure 5.3. Two schools were selected randomly from each language group i.e. one play based and the other formal instructional based school.



Figure 5.7: Language profile of rural schools in Mpumalanga

To evaluate the impact of the different learners' first languages on the three different performance scores, Table 5.6 presents the distribution of the different performance scores for each of the different learners' first languages.

Table 5.6: Distribution of the different performance scores for each of the different learners' first language

ELP standards assessment tool components		Total number in sample	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error
Total Score	isiZulu	30	5.00	2.913	.532
	Sepedi	40	4.73	2.287	.362
	siSwati	43	4.70	2.739	.418
	isiNdebele	34	5.65	2.436	.418
	Xitsonga	28	4.57	2.486	.470
	Total	175	4.92	2.574	.195
Speaking Score	isiZulu	30	2.37	.669	.122
	Sepedi	40	2.50	.599	.095
	siSwati	43	2.47	.550	.084
	isiNdebele	34	2.56	.504	.086
	Xitsonga	28	2.39	.567	.107
	Total	175	2.46	.575	.043
Listening Score	isiZulu	30	1.07	.980	.179
	Sepedi	40	1.35	1.075	.170
	siSwati	43	1.58	1.694	.258
	isiNdebele	34	2.00	1.279	.219
	Xitsonga	28	1.39	1.166	.220
	Total	175	1.49	1.312	.099

As can be seen in Table 5.6 learners with isiNdebele as their first language appear to perform systematically better for all types of performance scores (total, speaking and listening scores).

To evaluate if this observation is statistically significant, and thus relevant, a two-way ANOVA was carried out, with the facilitation method (formal versus play-based) and the different learner's first languages (five languages) as independent variables and the three different performances scores (total, speaking and listening scores) as the dependent variables. In short, a one-way ANOVA is when only the effect of one independent variable on the dependent variable is determined. In this case the main effect is the facilitation (play and the formal instructional approach) on Grade R learners' performance scores.

For each of the three different scores the impact of first language will be discussed separately.

Impact of learners' first language on total scores

Table 5.7 shows the output of the two-way ANOVA, indicating that there is a significant difference between the learners' total performance scores for the different first languages.

Table 5.7: Total score output of two-way ANOVA

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean Square	F	Significance
Corrected Model	1084.661 ^a	9	120.518	291.494	.000
Intercept	4168.653	1	4168.653	10082.643	.000
Facilitation	1022.672	1	1022.672	2473.518	.000
Learners' First Language	11.030	4	2.757	6.669	.000
Facilitation * Learners' First Language	8.321	4	2.080	5.031	.001
Error	68.219	165	.413		
Total	5389.000	175			
Corrected Total	1152.880	174			

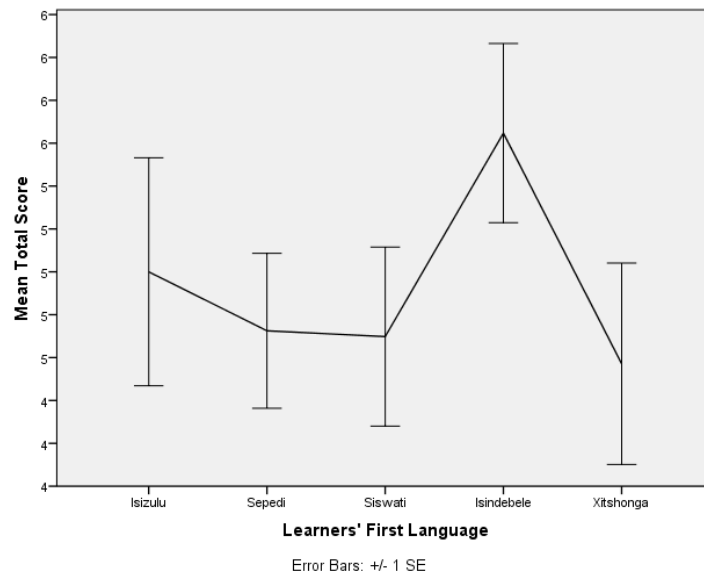


Figure 5.8: Mean total scores of learners' first language

Figure 5.8 illustrates the distribution of the total scores for the different learner's first languages. Standard errors are indicated by error bars on the line graph.

As can be seen on the graph, isiNdebele performed better than the other first languages. Post-hoc Tukey testing revealed that a significant ($p < 0.05$) better total performance scores were observed between isiNdebele and Xitsonga, siSwati, and Sepedi. However, learners with isiNdebele as first language did not show significantly better total performance scores than learners with isiZulu as their first language.

Impact of learners' first language on speaking scores

Table 5.8 shows the output of the two-way ANOVA, indicating that there is no significant difference between the learners' speaking performance scores for the different first languages.

Table 5.8: Speaking score output of learners' first language

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean Square	F	Significance
Corrected Model	19.093 ^a	9	2.121	9.112	.000
Intercept	1009.018	1	1009.018	4333.826	.000
Facilitation	16.187	1	16.187	69.524	.000
Learners' First Language	.708	4	.177	.760	.553
Facilitation * Learners' First Language	.986	4	.247	1.059	.379
Error	38.416	165	.233		
Total	1119.000	175			
Corrected Total	57.509	174			

Impact of learner's first language on listening scores

Table 5.9 shows the output of the two-way ANOVA, indicating that there is a significant difference between the learners' listening performance scores for the different first languages, similar to the results of the total performance scores.

Table 5.9: Listening score output of learners' first languages

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean Square	F	Significance
Corrected Model	260.354 ^a	9	28.928	121.198	.000
Intercept	384.620	1	384.620	1611.403	.000
Facilitation	218.083	1	218.083	913.681	.000
Learners' First Language	15.078	4	3.770	15.793	.000
Facilitation * Learners' First Language	10.278	4	2.569	10.765	.000
Error	39.383	165	.239		
Total	689.000	175			
Corrected Total	299.737	174			

Figure 5.9 illustrates the distribution of the listening scores for the different learners' first languages. Standard errors are indicated by error bars on the line graph. As can be seen in the graph (Figure 5.9), isiNdebele speaking children are performing better than the other first languages spoken by learners in Mpumalanga.

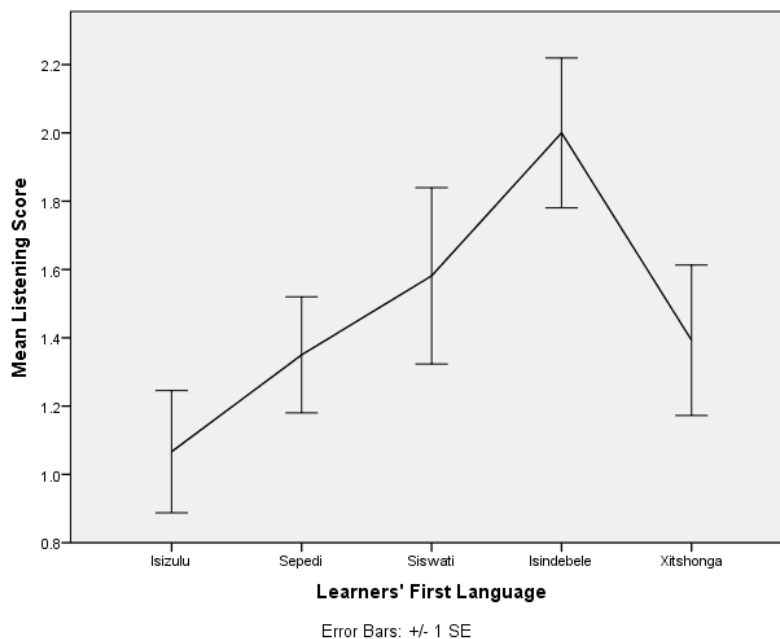


Figure 5.9: Mean listening scores of learners' first languages

Post-hoc Tukey testing revealed that a significant ($p < 0.05$) better total performance scores were observed between isiNdebele and Xitsonga, isiZulu,

and Sepedi. However, learners with isiNdebele as first language did not show significantly better total performance scores than learners with siSwati as their first language.

To see whether these same observations are present in both facilitation methods, Table 5.10 illustrates the distribution of the different performances of learners for the two facilitation methods (formal versus play-based) across the different learners' first languages.

Table 5.10: Distribution of total scores (a), speaking scores (b) and listening scores (c)

a. Total score

Facilitation	Learners' First Language	Mean	Standard Deviation	Total number in sample
Play-based	isiZulu	2.00	.555	14
	Sepedi	2.55	.686	20
	siSwati	2.26	.689	23
	isiNdebele	3.00	.535	15
	Xitsonga	2.83	.786	18
Formal	isiZulu	7.63	.619	16
	Sepedi	6.90	.553	20
	siSwati	7.50	.761	20
	isiNdebele	7.74	.452	19
	Xitsonga	7.70	.675	10

b. Speaking score

Facilitation	Learners' First Language	Mean	Standard Deviation	Total number in sample
Play-based	isiZulu	1.93	.475	14
	Sepedi	2.15	.587	20
	siSwati	2.13	.458	23
	isiNdebele	2.33	.488	15
	Xitsonga	2.22	.548	18
	Total	2.16	.517	90
Formal	isiZulu	2.75	.577	16
	Sepedi	2.85	.366	20
	siSwati	2.85	.366	20
	isiNdebele	2.74	.452	19
	Xitsonga	2.70	.483	10
	Total	2.79	.439	85

c. Listening score

Facilitation	Learners' First Language	Mean	Standard Deviation	Total number in sample
Play-based	isiZulu (5)	.07	.267	14
	Sepedi (3)	.40	.503	20
	siSwati (4)	.13	.344	23
	isiNdebele (1)	.67	.617	15
	Xitsonga (2)	.61	.502	18
	Total	.37	.507	90
Formal	isiZulu (5)	1.94	.250	16
	Sepedi (4)	2.30	.470	20
	siSwati (1)	3.25	.851	20
	isiNdebele (2)	3.05	.229	19
	Xitsonga (3)	2.80	.422	10
	Total	2.68	.711	85

To evaluate the performance profiles of the different learners' first languages between the two facilitation methods, the interaction effect "*facilitation * learners' first language*" was analysed during the two-way ANOVA.

As can be seen in Tables 5.10 (a), (b) and (c) a significant different distribution of both the total and listening scores between the two facilitation methods and across the different learners' first languages was obtained. However, this significant difference was not observed for the speaking performance scores.

For the total scores, learners with isiNdebele and Xitsonga as first languages performed significantly better in both facilitation methods. However, the profile for the other languages within each facilitation group differs. Within the play-based group learners with Sepedi as their first language have better total performance scores than learners with siSwati and isiZulu (Figure 5.9), while in the formal instruction group learners with Sepedi as their first language performed the worst (Figure 5.10).

It is important to remark that all learners still performed better in a formal based approach (see section 5.1).

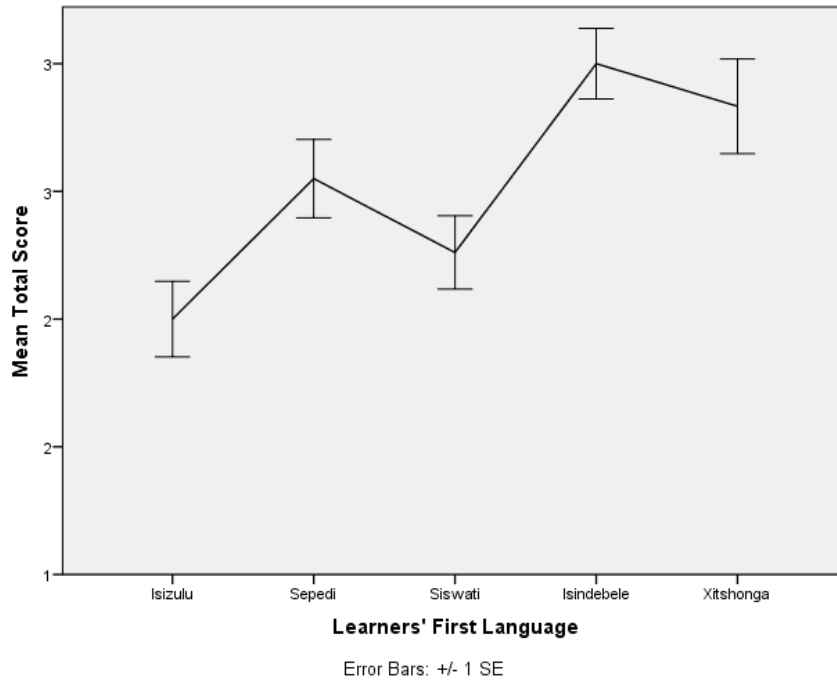


Figure 5.10: Mean total scores of learners' first languages in play-based classrooms

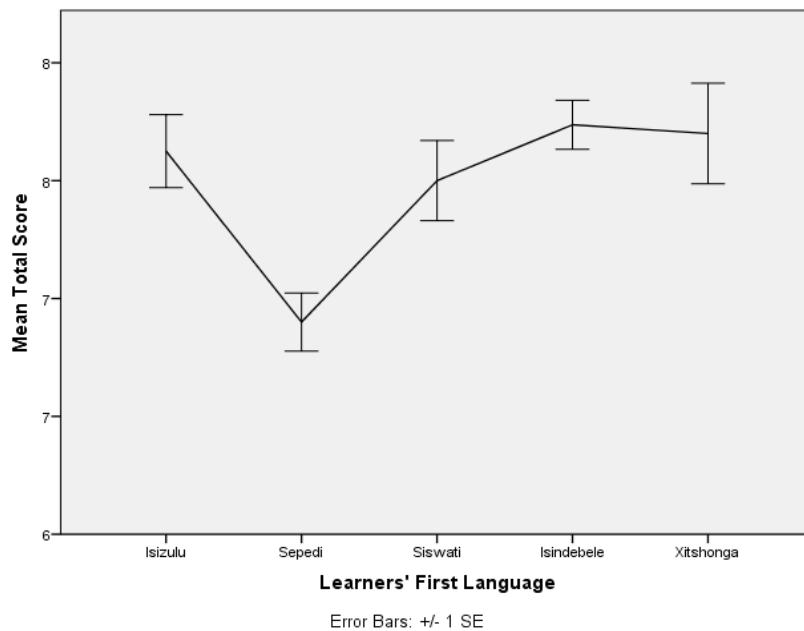


Figure 5.11: Mean total scores of learners' first languages in formal instruction classrooms

For the listening scores, the profile is completely different.

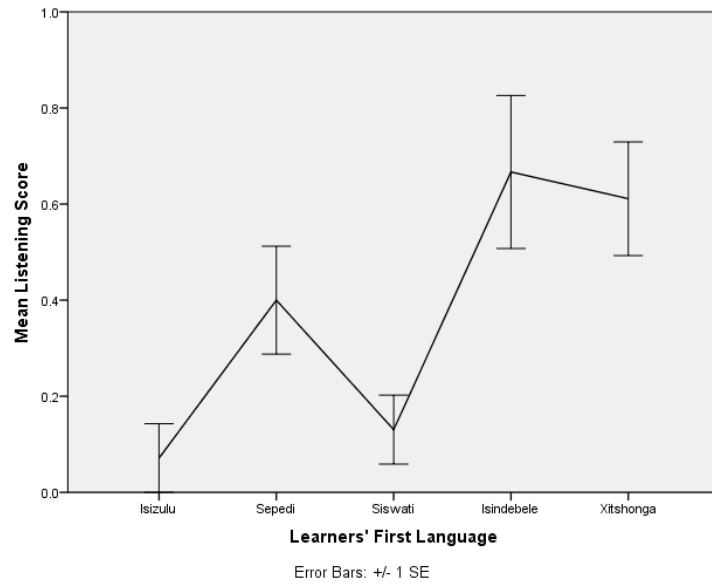


Figure 5.12: Mean listening score of learners' first language in play-based classrooms

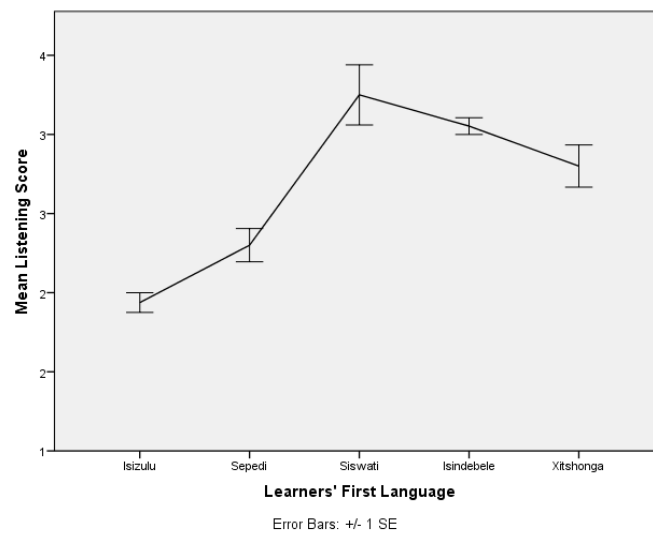


Figure 5.13: Mean listening score of learners' first languages in formal based classrooms

As can be seen in Figures 5.12 and 5.13, the best scores in the formal based approach are obtained by learners having siSwati as their first language, followed by learners who have isiNdebele as their first language, while in the play-based group learners with siSwati as their first language perform much worse in both approaches. Learners with isiZulu as their first languages performed the worst. Different learner scores across languages may be a natural phenomenon, but the best predictor of learner scores appears to be the facilitation method (play and the formal instructional approach) in the classroom.

The next variable to be tested for an effect on learners' E-L2 scores was gender.

5.2.4 What is the effect of learners' gender on their E-L2 scores?

The effect of learners' gender was evaluated on their total, speaking and listening scores. As reflected in Table 4.3 there were almost the same number of boys (88) and girls (87) in the study sample. The distribution of the different performance scores according to gender is described in Table 5.11 and illustrated in Figure 5.14.

Table 5.11: Distribution of the different performance scores according to gender

ELP standards assessment tool components		Total number in sample	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error
Total Score	Male	88	4.98	2.622	.279
	Female	87	4.86	2.539	.272
	Total	175	4.92	2.574	.195
Speaking Score	Male	88	2.47	.546	.058
	Female	87	2.46	.606	.065
	Total	175	2.46	.575	.043
Listening Score	Male	88	1.49	1.330	.142
	Female	87	1.49	1.302	.140
	Total	175	1.49	1.312	.099

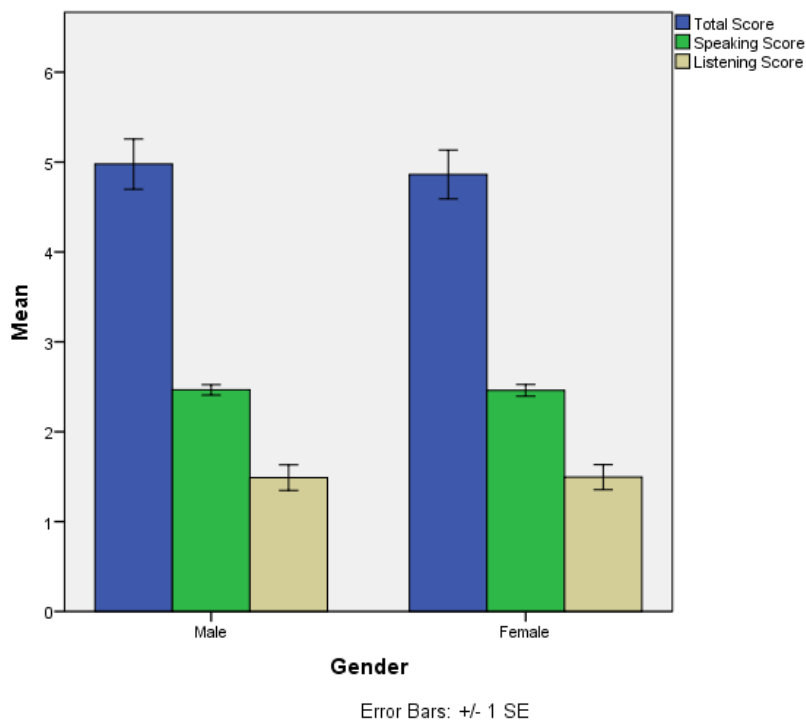


Figure 5.14: Performance scores of males and females in the study sample

A one-way ANOVA was carried out to evaluate if the observed differences between the two gender groups were statistically significant. The means of the samples (total score, speaking score and listening scores) for females and males were compared statistically. A one-way ANOVA was carried out with gender (females and males) as the independent variable and the three different scores (total, speaking and listening scores) as the dependent variables. The degrees of freedom, mean square and sum of squares were determined. A two-way ANOVA was carried out to determine whether facilitation and gender (independent variables) had a statistical effect on learners' E-L2 performance scores (dependent variables). The results are provided in Table 5.12.

Table 5.12: Gender score output of learners between groups

ELP standards assessment tool components		Sum of Squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean Square	F	Significance
Total Score	Between Groups	.581	1	.581	.087	.768
	Within Groups	1152.299	173	6.661		
	Total	1152.880	174			
Speaking Score	Between Groups	.002	1	.002	.005	.944
	Within Groups	57.507	173	.332		
	Total	57.509	174			
Listening Score	Between Groups	.001	1	.001	.001	.978
	Within Groups	299.736	173	1.733		
	Total	299.737	174			

As can be seen in Table 5.12 no statistically significant differences can be observed. This implies that in the total group, gender has no significant impact on the different performance scores.

To evaluate if this statement is also valid for both facilitation methods separately, a two-ANOVA was carried out, showing that for all three scores no significant differences was observed ($p > 0.05$).

Another variable to be tested for an effect on learner E=L2 scores, were the teachers' qualification levels.

5.2.5 What is the effect of teachers' qualifications on Grade R learners E-L2 scores?

The effect of teachers' qualification was evaluated on their total speaking and listening scores. The distribution of the learners' scores according to their teachers' qualification and the facilitation method is described in Table 5.13: total scores (a), speaking scores (b) and listening scores (c).

Table 5.13: Distribution of the learners' scores according to their teachers' qualification and facilitation method according to total score (a), speaking score (b) and listening score (c).

a. Total ELP score

Facilitation	Teachers' qualifications	Mean	Standard Deviation	Total number in sample
Play-based	Grade 12	2.00	.555	14
	ECD Qualification	2.62	.730	76
	Total	2.52	.738	90
Formal	Grade 12	7.17	.699	30
	ECD Qualification	7.62	.623	55
	Total	7.46	.682	85
Total	Grade 12	5.52	2.520	44
	ECD Qualification	4.72	2.570	131
	Total	4.92	2.574	175

b. Speaking score

Facilitation	Teachers' qualifications	Mean	Standard Deviation	Total number in sample
Play-based	Grade 12	1.93	.475	14
	ECD Qualification	2.20	.517	76
	Total	2.16	.517	90
Formal	Grade 12	2.80	.407	30
	ECD Qualification	2.78	.459	55
	Total	2.79	.439	85
Total	Grade 12	2.52	.590	44
	ECD Qualification	2.44	.571	131
	Total	2.46	.575	175

c. Listening score

Facilitation	Teachers' qualifications	Mean	Standard Deviation	Total number in sample
Play-based	Grade 12	.07	.267	14
	ECD Qualification	.42	.523	76
	Total	.37	.507	90
Formal	Grade 12	2.47	.507	30
	ECD Qualification	2.80	.779	55
	Total	2.68	.711	85
Total	Grade 12	1.70	1.212	44
	ECD Qualification	1.42	1.341	131
	Total	1.49	1.312	175

As can be seen in Table 5.13 very similar performance scores were obtained for both Grade 12 and an ECD qualification, except for the total scores, where higher scores were observed for teachers having only a Grade 12 qualification.

A two-way ANOVA was carried out (Table 5.14) to evaluate if the observed differences between the two qualifications groups were statistically significant according to total score (a), speaking score (b) and listening score (c).

Table 5.14: Observed differences between the two qualifications groups according to total score (a) and listening score (b).

a. Total score

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean Square	F	Significance
Corrected Model	1073.797 ^a	3	357.932	773.955	.000
Intercept	2766.219	1	2766.219	5981.377	.000
Facilitation	759.405	1	759.405	1642.056	.000
Teachers' qualifications	8.411	1	8.411	18.187	.000
Facilitation * Teachers' qualifications	.205	1	.205	.443	.507
Error	79.083	171	.462		
Total	5389.000	175			
Corrected Total	1152.880	174			

b. Listening score

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean Square	F ratio	Significance
Corrected Model	238.016 ^a	3	79.339	219.808	.000
Intercept	243.699	1	243.699	675.169	.000
Facilitation	167.469	1	167.469	463.975	.000
Teachers' qualifications	3.427	1	3.427	9.495	.002
Facilitation * Teachers' qualifications	.002	1	.002	.005	.941
Error	61.722	171	.361		
Total	689.000	175			
Corrected Total	299.737	174			

As can be seen in Table 5.14 significantly higher scores were obtained for both listening scores and total scores, when learners have teachers with an ECD qualification. This, however, could not be demonstrated for the speaking scores ($p > 0.05$).

The two-way ANOVA further demonstrated that this observation is also true for both facilitation methods separately.

Figure 5.15 illustrates this effect graphically.

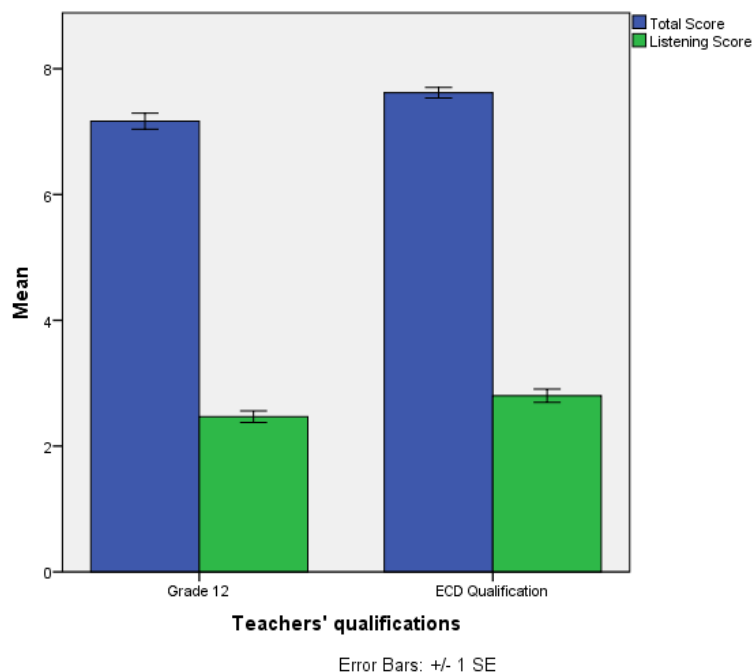


Figure 5.15: Total mean scores of learners exposed to teachers' qualifications in play and formal instructional approaches

The next variable to be tested for an effect on learner E-L2 scores was the teachers' age.

5.2.6 What is the effect of teachers' age on Grade R learners E-L2 scores?

The categorisation of schools either into the formal and play based curriculum was based on the analysis of school visit reports compiled by ECD officials. The categorisation was based on the organisation of the Grade R classroom, the use of a daily programme/timetable, assigned class activities, observation of teachers' lessons and the use of resources in the classroom. It should be noted that the database of school visit reports is updated on a yearly basis and while replacements may occur during the year owing to attrition and movement of

teachers into the mainstream, the facilitation approach adopted in schools rarely change. It has been found that even if teachers are replaced, the facilitation method (either play or formal instructional) remains the same since it is jointly decided by the School Management Team and School Governing Body. The effect of teachers' age was evaluated on their total, speaking and listening scores. The distribution of the learners' scores according to their teachers' age and the facilitation method is described in Table 5.15.

Table 5.15: Distribution of the learners' scores according to their teachers' age and the facilitation method

a) Dependent Variable teachers' age: Total Score

Facilitation	Teachers' Age	Mean	Standard Deviation	Total number in sample
Play-based	35 years and above	1.00	.	1
	below 35 years	2.54	.724	89
	Total	2.52	.738	90
Formal	35 years and above	7.45	.684	84
	below 35 years	8.00	.	1
	Total	7.46	.682	85
Total	35 years and above	7.38	.976	85
	below 35 years	2.60	.922	90
	Total	4.92	2.574	175

b) Dependent Variable teachers' age: Speaking Score

Facilitation	Teachers' Age	Mean	Std. Deviation	Total number in sample
Play-based	35 years and above	1.00	.	1
	below 35 years	2.17	.505	89
	Total	2.16	.517	90
Formal	35 years and above	2.79	.441	84
	below 35 years	3.00	.	1
	Total	2.79	.439	85
Total	35 years and above	2.76	.479	85
	below 35 years	2.18	.510	90
	Total	2.46	.575	175

c) Dependent Variable teachers' age: Listening Score

Facilitation	Teachers' Age	Mean	Standard Deviation	Total number in sample
Play-based	35 years and above	.00	.	1
	below 35 years	.37	.509	89
	Total	.37	.507	90
Formal	35 years and above	2.68	.714	84
	below 35 years	3.00	.	1
	Total	2.68	.711	85
Total	35 years and above	2.65	.767	85
	below 35 years	.40	.577	90
	Total	1.49	1.312	175

As can be seen in Table 5.15 higher performance scores for learners' E-L2 skills were obtained for younger teachers. As seen in Table 4.3 younger teachers (below 35 years) are more qualified than older teachers (35 years and above). A two-way ANOVA was carried out (Table 5.16) to evaluate if the observed differences between the age groups were statistically significant.

Table 5.16: Learner output according to teachers' age: total score (a) and speaking score (b)

a. Total score teachers' age

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean Square	F	Significance
Corrected Model	1067.958 ^a	3	355.986	716.819	.000
Intercept	178.280	1	178.280	358.987	.000
Facilitation	70.149	1	70.149	141.253	.000
Teachers' Age	2.153	1	2.153	4.335	.039
Facilitation * Teachers' Age	.486	1	.486	.979	.324
Error	84.922	171	.497		
Total	5389.000	175			
Corrected Total	1152.880	174			

b. Speaking score

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean Square	F	Significance
Corrected Model	18.894 ^a	3	6.298	27.890	.000
Intercept	39.631	1	39.631	175.499	.000
Facilitation	3.386	1	3.386	14.993	.000
Teachers' Age	.945	1	.945	4.186	.042
Facilitation * Teachers' Age	.450	1	.450	1.993	.160
Error	38.615	171	.226		
Total	1119.000	175			
Corrected Total	57.509	174			

As can be seen in Table 5.16 significantly higher scores were obtained for both speaking and total scores, when learners have younger teachers. This, however, could not be demonstrated for the listening scores ($p > 0.05$).

The two-way ANOVA further demonstrated that this observation is also true for both facilitation methods separately.

Figure 5.16 illustrates this effect graphically.

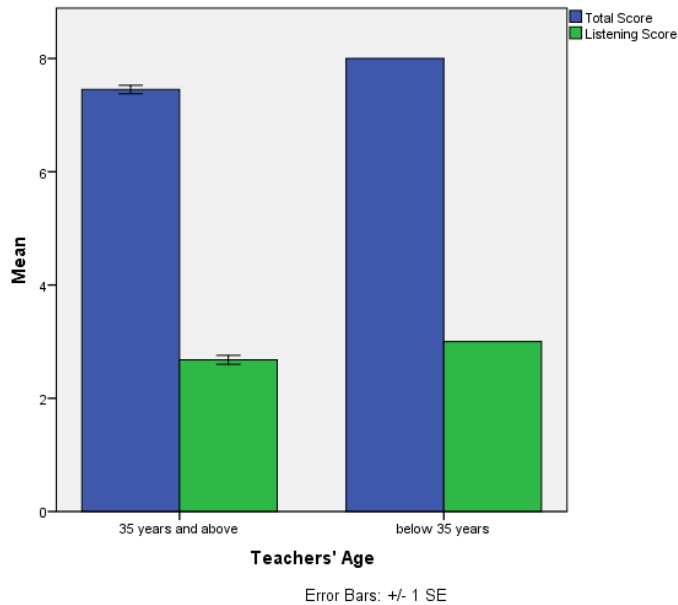


Figure 5.16: Total and listening learners' scores according to teachers' age

5.2.7 What is the effect of teachers' experience on Grade R learners' E-L2 scores?

The effect of teachers' experience was evaluated on their learners' total, speaking and listening scores. The distribution of the learners' scores according to their teachers' age and the facilitation method is described in Table 5.17: total score (a), speaking score (b) and listening score (c).

Table 5.17: Distribution of the learners' scores according to their teachers' age and the facilitation approach: total (a), speaking (b) and listening (c) scores

a. Total score

Facilitation	Teachers' Experience	Mean	Standard Deviation	Total number in sample
Play-based	Under five years	2.30	.680	57
	Above 5 years	2.91	.678	33
	Total	2.52	.738	90
Formal	Under five years	7.62	.633	39
	Above 5 years	7.33	.701	46
	Total	7.46	.682	85
Total	Under five years	4.46	2.706	96
	Above 5 years	5.48	2.297	79
	Total	4.92	2.574	175

b. Speaking score

Facilitation	Teachers' Experience	Mean	Standard Deviation	Total number in sample
Play-based	Under five years	2.09	.510	57
	Above 5 years	2.27	.517	33
	Total	2.16	.517	90
Formal	Under five years	2.79	.409	39
	Above 5 years	2.78	.467	46
	Total	2.79	.439	85
Total	Under five years	2.38	.585	96
	Above 5 years	2.57	.547	79
	Total	2.46	.575	175

c. Listening scores

Facilitation	Teachers' Experience	Mean	Standard Deviation	Total number in sample
	Above 5 years	.64	.549	33
	Total	.37	.507	90
Formal	Under five years	3.15	.630	39
	Above 5 years	2.28	.502	46
	Total	2.68	.711	85
Total	Under five years	1.41	1.540	96
	Above 5 years	1.59	.968	79
	Total	1.49	1.312	175

As can be seen in Table 5.17 higher performances scores were obtained for less experienced teachers. A two-way ANOVA was carried out (Table 5.18) to

evaluate if the observed differences between the experience groups were statistically significant.

Table 5.18: Listening scores of learners according to teachers' experience

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean Square	F	Significance
Corrected Model	254.224 ^a	3	84.741	318.387	.000
Intercept	414.593	1	414.593	1557.692	.000
Facilitation	221.199	1	221.199	831.080	.000
Teachers' Experience	2.083	1	2.083	7.827	.006
Facilitation * Teachers' Experience	17.667	1	17.667	66.379	.000
Error	45.513	171	.266		
Total	689.000	175			
Corrected Total	299.737	174			

As can be seen in Table 5.18 significantly higher scores were obtained for listening scores when learners have less experienced teachers. This, however, could not be demonstrated for the listening scores ($p < 0.05$).

The two-way ANOVA further demonstrated that this observation is also true for both facilitation methods separately. Less experienced teachers achieved higher learner performance scores in listening in both facilitation methods (play and formal instructional methods). Figure 5.17 illustrates this effect graphically.

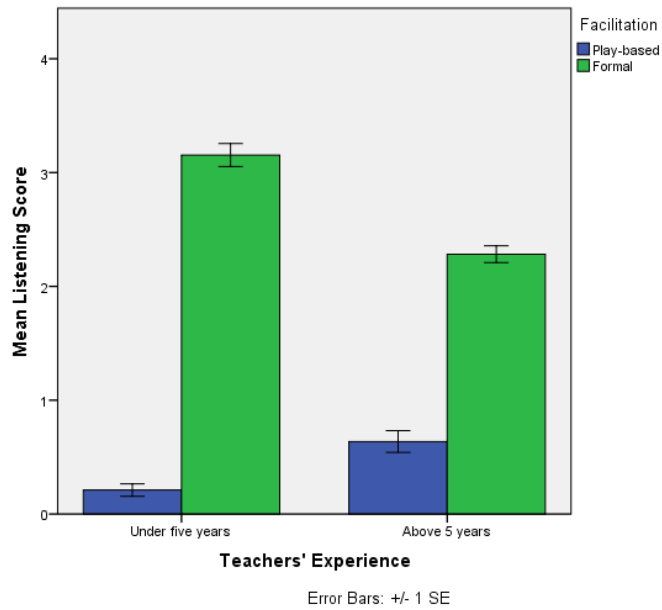


Figure 5.17: Mean listening learner scores according to teachers' experience

The results of the two variables, i.e. teachers' age and experience, correspond. It could be concluded that younger teachers are therefore less experienced, yet their learners performed better on the ELP standards assessment tool.

5.2.8 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In chapter five the results of the study was presented. Descriptive statistics of the effect of each of the influencing factors on Grade R learners' E-L2 scores was provided. Inferential statistics was conducted to determine if there is a statistical difference between the different variables. The study's findings will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

6.1 RESEARCH SUMMARY

In this chapter the researcher will briefly re-focus on the research questions, summarise and critically discuss the research findings, discuss research implications, identify the research limitations, critically evaluate the research study, propose areas for further research and explain briefly the contribution to new knowledge.

The research questions were the main drivers that underpinned the study. The results indicated that there is a significant difference between the facilitation approach used and Grade R learners E-L2 performance scores. **Learners achieved higher mean scores in formal based than in play-based classrooms.** This is in agreement with the majority of research studies found in the major literature findings.

In Chapter Three the researcher cited literature findings in the USA that confirmed this study's findings that learners in the formal instructional classrooms perform better than in the play based classrooms. The Texas study (Texas Department of Education, 2009), Illinois study (York, 2008), Nevada study (Nevada Department of Education, 2009), New Mexico study (Matterson, 2009), Californian study (California Department of Education, 2010) and Florida study (Florida Department of Education, 2010) revealed that learners in formal instructional based classrooms attained higher performance scores when compared to learners in play-based classrooms. The results of these studies were discussed in chapter three. The ELP standards assessment tool was used to rate Grade R learners' scores in the USA and now in South Africa. Learners' competency in listening and speaking skills were assessed. There was a

consistent high performance of learners in formal instructional as compared to play-based classrooms in the total, listening and speaking scores.

After four months of E-L2 exposure, the play-based group only scored a mean of 2.52 out of eleven, whereas the formal instructional group scored a mean of 7.46 out of eleven. It is clear that the play-based group did not learn much English and could not respond adequately to questions and teacher requests. This tool tests both BICS and CALP in English. In play-based classrooms, teachers are developing learners' social language use in contrast to formal instructional classrooms where learners' academic language is being developed. Based on the results of the study, it appears that learners in play based classrooms were unable to demonstrate competency on questions assessing learners' academic language skills.

It appears that the participants' listening skills were much more advanced in formal instruction classrooms. Limited opportunities to learn to listen and noise interference could have contributed to the participants' very poor performance on EAL listening tasks in the play based classrooms. According to Donovan (2010) research globally reports that children's listening skills in the early grades were found to be under developed and the recommendation is that attention be given to improving listening competencies in Grade R children by providing them practical exercises.

The results of the study should be seen within the context of facilitation approaches (play-based or formal instruction) employed in the classroom and its emphasis on either the social or academic language. The aim of formal instruction classrooms, in contrast to play-based classrooms, is that learners acquire the academic language, focusing on the ability to comprehend meaning of sentences and communicate in grammatically correct sentences with the ability to use the correct verb tenses and adjectives (Kruse, 2005). The play-based classrooms are concentrating mainly on singing of songs, reciting poems,

stories and rhymes and little attention is given to teaching learners the academic language (Patterson, 2008). The ELP assessment tool was designed to determine learners' E-L2 skills (US Department of Education, 2007). Xu (2010) stated that the three pre-requisites for effective EAL Grade R learning are that teachers are proficient in English, appropriate language activities are presented and that learners are provided with much exposure to English. Based on the results of the present study, it appears that formal instruction may have promoted listening, provided more language exposure and appropriate activities than the play-based approach.

It appears that the participants' listening skills were so much more advanced in formal instruction classrooms. Limited opportunities to learn to listen and noise interference could have contributed to the participants' very poor performance on EAL listening tasks in the play based classrooms. According to Donovan (2010), research globally reports that children's listening skills in the early grades were found to be under developed.

According to Bialystok (2006) and Berk (2006), poverty may be associated with lower language skills in the classroom. As discussed in Chapter Four, all rural schools are located in impoverished communities where access to municipal services is limited and the socio-economic wealth of communities is low (Mhaule, 2011). Based on the results of the study, the formal based approach achieved higher performance scores as compared to play-based approach in E-L2 learning. In the study, learners in formal based classrooms achieved some CALP and BICS while learners in play-based classrooms achieved some BICS only. Learners are required to demonstrate both CALP and BICS in Grade 1 learning (Mpumalanga Department of Education, 2012). Formal instruction in E-L2 learning may offer a solution to the poor results of E-L2 skills demonstrated by learners in play-based classrooms. A comprehensive approach may be required to increase E-L2 readiness for Grade R. There will be a need to train teachers in educational linguistics so that they can use the appropriate teaching methods to

facilitate E-L2 learning in the classroom. There is to develop the children's first language as much as possible so that they can have a better linguistic foundation for E-L2 learning.

The researcher did not observe and analyse the teachers' instructional approaches, so it is not clear to what extent their facilitation approaches are underpinned by theory. The research also did not examine how teachers interpret and use the facilitation (play-based or formal instructional approach) in the classroom. It is likely that teachers would interpret the play-based or formal instructional approach differently when they receive training or read departmental guidelines on Grade R facilitation and assessment. Teachers' interpretations would determine the E-L2 strategies they would use in the classroom. It is likely that teachers could implement the play-based or formal instructional approach but use a spectrum of different E-L2 strategies in one classroom.

The two-group comparative quantitative research was the most apt research design for this study since it compared the play-based schools with the formal based schools in the different language groupings. The researcher aimed to keep the facilitation approach as the only difference but the other extraneous variables (teachers' first language, learners' first language, learners' gender, teachers' qualifications, teachers' age and teachers' experience) were also determined. This research was able to identify the best facilitation approach and the differences within and between groups of data for the other variables. Groups had to be matched as close as possible in order to obtain valid results. The ANOVA proved to an effective statistical method since variances between more than two groups of data were compared and the effect of the variables on Grade R learners' scores was determined. The post-hoc analysis determined the differences between the teachers' first language in the study sample.

6.1.1 What is the effect of facilitation on Grade R learners' E-L2 scores?

- What could be the reasons for learners performing better in formal based classrooms?;
- Why is the Department of Basic Education directing that the play-based approach should be implemented despite US research findings revealing that the formal based approach works well in developing learners E-L2 skills?;
- Why are teachers in the study sample implementing the formal based approach which is not the recommended Grade R curriculum policy in South Africa?;
- Are they adopting the formal based approach because they know that it works or have read literature on the benefits of this approach to Grade R learning?; and
- Why are the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements silent on E-L2 learning in Grade R since many Grade R children in South Africa are not receiving instruction in their first language?

The analysis of the results of the study could be seen within the context of facilitation approaches (play based or formal instructional) employed in the classroom and its emphasis on either the social or academic language. As mentioned previously the formal instructional classroom, in contrast to play based classrooms, teaches learners the academic language, focusing on the ability to comprehend meaning of sentences and communicate in grammatically correct sentences with the ability to use the correct verb tenses and adjectives. The play based classrooms are concentrating mainly on singing of songs, saying poems, stories and rhymes and little attention is given to teaching learners the academic language. The ELP assessment tool was designed to determine learners' E-L2 skills (US Department of Education, 2007). Xu (2010) stated that the three pre-requisites for effective EAL Grade R learning are that teachers are proficient in English, appropriate language activities are presented and that

learners are provided with much exposure to English. Based on the results of the present study, it appears that formal instruction may have promoted listening, provided more language exposure and appropriate activities than the play-based approach.

6.1.2 What is the effect of teachers' first language on Grade R learners' E-L2 scores?

Unlike the United States of America, South Africa has 11 official languages and teachers' first language could be one of the 11 languages (Mesthrie, 2006). South Africa, however, trails India and Bolivia insofar as India has 19 official languages and Bolivia has 30 official languages (Azar, 2008). While on the surface it is advantageous to recognise people's first languages, there is a pragmatic need to have a common language to facilitate dialogue and cooperation between the different language groupings. Historically, English has become a common language in South Africa.

In the current study, isiNdebele learners who have isiNdebele speaking teachers performed systematically higher than other first language groupings. The probable reasons for better E-L2 performance in learners whose teacher's first language is isiNdebele could be accounted for by the large number of English loan words present in isiNdebele as compared to other language groupings in Mpumalanga. According to Mahlangu (2007), words, phonemes, vowels, verbs, adjectives and nouns have been introduced to isiNdebele vocabulary by borrowing from the English language. When the researcher and the teacher assessed E-L2 scores by using the ELP standards assessment tool, it was found that isiNdebele first language speakers performed particularly better in speaking competencies when learners were asked to identify objects and use verbs and adjectives in sentences. Three examples will be used to denote the closeness of the vowel /a/ in English with the same vowel /a/ in isiNdebele illustrated below:

English

isiNdebele

Carpet

ikaphethe

Half

uhafu

Scarf

isikhafu

Learners having teachers with siSwati as their first language are systematically performing the worst in E-L2 performance scores when compared to other language groups. The probable reasons for poor performance in siSwati is due to the few words loaned from the English language and the phonemes, verbs, adjectives, nouns and vowels being completely different from English (Mahlangu, 2007). Thus siSwati learners will probably have few English words, phonemes, verbs and nouns to draw from when acquiring English skills as compared to isiNdebele learners.

6.1.3 What is the effect of learners' first language on Grade R learners'E-L2 scores?

Most of the E-L2 learners in the USA are Spanish first language speakers (Xu, 2010). In most of the cases E-L2 learners are facilitated by teachers who are bilingual i.e. speaking English and Spanish. If learners do not understand English words, the teacher can comfortably explain the meaning of words in Spanish. Thus teachers can code switch to facilitate meaning making although the US department does not recommend code switching (Reid, 2008). According to Kamwangamulu (2001) young learners do not acquire a second language effortlessly and teachers need to switch from one language to another over phrases and sentences. de Bot and Makoni (2005) criticises the Department of Education for disapproving code-switching by not referring to research studies conducted in South Africa on the benefits of code-switching in E-L2 learning. Kamwangamulu (2001) state that code-switching increases communication standards and highlighted its potential in the teaching and learning process

especially for younger children. Xu (2010) advises teachers to use peer-tutoring to facilitate learners' acquisition of second language learning in cases where they do not have sufficient knowledge of learners' first language. It is advantageous that the teacher and learners share at least one language in a multilingual classroom in the USA. This advantageous situation was not found in the current study sample since some teachers could not speak the learners' first languages.

The learners should have faced additional challenges when teachers could not speak the learners' home languages. This assumption was based on Wong-Fillmore's research in California when she found that English language speakers who could not speak Spanish achieved low performance scores in E-L2. In this study, however (see Table 4.7) the average baseline score in School D and School J was seven. Both schools adopted the formal based approach. It would then seem that the mismatch between learners' and teachers' first language did not impact on the performance scores of E-L2 learners. It could be that the formal based approach compensated for the linguistic mismatch in the classroom.

Although learners in the USA and South Africa perform better in formal based classrooms, the key difference lies in the cognates between Spanish (spoken by 75% of Grade R E-L2 learners in the USA) and English. Cognates are words in two languages that have a common etymology (origin) and are similar in meaning and pronunciation (Xu, 2010). The following examples will illustrate the similarity between some Spanish and English words:

English	Spanish
bicycle	bicicleta
family	familia
map	mapa

Spanish speaking learners acquire English faster as compared to the other language groups in the USA since there is a similarity between English and Spanish words (US Department of Education, 2007). The similarity between Spanish and English is different between English and the official languages in South Africa since English words are incorporated into learners' first language without having a common origin, similar meaning and pronunciation. Thus these loan words are not considered cognates since they do not have a common origin.

The research guidelines for an ideal Grade R classroom will be briefly explained. The learner should be situated in a print and resource rich environment, be stress free, be exposed to teachers who model and demonstrate good E-L2 skills and be patient and demonstrate understanding of children's E-L2 needs (Reid, 2008). Thus in School 4 and School 10 the teachers are unable to code switch or explain instructions in learners' first language since they do not speak learners' first language. They communicate totally in English to second language learners which in all probability poses challenges for learners since most learners are only acquiring English skills in Grade R.

For the total scores, learners with isiNdebele and Xitsonga as first languages performed significantly better in both facilitation methods. isiNdebele learners were performing systematically better than the other first language groupings. In IsiNdebele there are more borrowed/loaned English words as compared to Sepedi, Xitsonga, isiZulu and siSwati (Mahlangu, 2007). Although isiNdebele has also borrowed Afrikaans words, isiNdebele learners achieved better E-L2 scores. The adaptation of English words into isiNdebele occurs on the phonological (letter sound correspondence) and semantic (meaning) level (Mahlangu, 2007). The following examples will illustrate how English words are incorporated in the IsiNdebele language phonologically:

- Grease (English)- Igrisi (isiNdebele); and

- Drain (English)- Idreyini (isiNdebele).

Most of isiNdebele speaking people live in the former KwaNdebele homeland which is very close to Pretoria (Mahlangu, 2007). Research indicates that some isiNdebele parents expose their children to English at home and often speak to their children in English (Mahlangu, 2007).

There should be no language attrition in Grade R where learners lose touch with their first language and completely immerse themselves in English learning (Richard, 2009). As mentioned in Chapter Two learners' first language competency determines the success of second language acquisition (Patterson, 2008; Ward, 2008). If learners acquired the ability to differentiate sounds, speak in sentences confidently and listen attentively, then these skills could easily be transferred to second language learning.

Learners whose first language is Xitsonga attained good E-L2 results because there is also loaning or borrowing of English words in the vocabulary and phonology. It needs to be mentioned that isiNdebele has more borrowed words than Xitsonga. Examples of borrowed English words into the Xitsonga language are listed below:

English

Xitsonga

Book

buku

stove

Xitofu

bed

Mubedo

6.1.4 What is the effect of learner gender on their E-L2 performance scores?

There is a variability of literature findings on the effect of gender on learners E-L2 scores. According to research conducted by Ramsey (2006), in ten schools in New York he found that girls performed better in E-L2 assessments when compared to boys especially in listening competencies but performed more or less the same in speaking skills. Girls were found to be more attentive and willing to adhere to instructions while boys were playful and easily distracted (Ramsey, 2006). In contrast, Reid (2009) conducted research in eight Grade R classrooms in Princeton and found that boys scored better in speaking competencies as compared to girls and performed similarly in listening competencies. It was found that boys spoke confidently and were able to narrate stories, sing songs, say poems and tell rhymes (Reid, 2009). It may appear that some instruments may be more sensitive to identify small differences, such as differences in E-L2 language learning between boys and girls. In this research study there was no significant difference between boys and girls in learners' E-L2 performance. There were an almost equal number of boys (88) and girls (87) in the study sample, thereby strengthening the research findings. The implication may be that the ELP tool is not such a sensitive instrument to identify difference in E-L2 language learning between boys and girls. Further research is required on the influence of gender on E-L2 learning in Grade R.

6.1.5 What is the effect of teachers' qualifications on Grade R learners' E-L2 scores?

Literature findings attest that teachers with higher qualifications achieve better E-L2 performance scores when compared to teachers with lower qualifications. Barbara (2008) found that teachers who had postgraduate qualifications in ten schools attained higher E-L2 scores as compared to undergraduate qualifications. The research findings indicate that postgraduate teachers were

more knowledgeable on facilitation techniques that could be employed in the classroom and were better versed in assessment practices as compared to teachers with only an undergraduate degree. Bates (2007) found that teachers in 20 schools with undergraduate qualifications achieved lower E-L2 scores as compared to teachers with postgraduate qualifications.

It was found that postgraduate teachers demonstrated greater understanding of facilitation and assessment practices and were more patient and understanding with their learners (Bates, 2007). In contrast, teachers with a Grade 12 certificate in the current study achieved lower performance scores than teachers with only an ECD qualification in both the play and formal based instructional approach. It should be noted that an ECD qualification is a higher qualification than Grade 12. The Mpumalanga Department of Education used the Further Education and Training Colleges to train teachers in Level 4 and Level 5 qualifications on Basic Child Care. The course content in Level 4 and Level 5 qualification placed emphasis on first and second language learning and the various strategies/methods to promote language learning in the Grade R classroom. It would appear that qualifications have a significant effect on Grade R learners' E-L2 skills in this study. It should also be pointed out that in South Africa the minimum qualifications to be a Grade R teacher is an ECD NQF Level 4 qualification (Department of Basic Education, 2012), while the minimum qualification in most states in the USA is an undergraduate degree in ECD (US Department of Education, 2007).

6.1.6 What is the effect of teachers' age on Grade R learners' E-L2 scores?

The major factors impacting on teachers' success in developing learners E-L2 scores are mainly on qualifications, teachers' first language and experience (Berk, 2006). Age does not seem to be a factor determining teachers' success in second language learning in the USA. However, in the current study significantly higher scores were obtained for both speaking scores and total scores, when

learners have younger teachers. These teachers in the study sample are more highly qualified than older Grade R teachers and are implementing the formal based method. The Mpumalanga Department of Education developed a database on Grade R teachers' biographical details (age, first language, experience and qualifications) including the facilitation approaches implemented in the classroom (Mpumalanga Department of Education, 2012).

In this research study teachers over 35 years of age achieved lower Grade R E-L2 scores than teachers with less than 35 years of age. In this study sample younger and inexperienced teachers had higher ECD qualifications than older teachers. The Department has trained ECD teachers since 2007 to date by using the FET Colleges as service providers and paying all their tuition fees. Better learner performance can be attributed to some inexperienced teachers benefiting from numerous training sessions and received more advice from officials over the past year since the department prioritised the training of new teachers in classroom practices. The training of new teachers should be seen in the context of increasing Grade R coverage by encouraging schools to accommodate Grade R classes and employing more practitioners for the new Grade R classes. In this research study teachers with five or more years of experience achieved lower learner scores than teachers with less than five years of experience. After analysing attendance training registers, the researcher concluded from his past training sessions with Grade R teachers that older teachers generally do not attend departmental training sessions. The Department should prioritise the training of older teachers on Grade R facilitation practices and take the appropriate corrective action against those who do not honour invitations to attend curriculum capacitating workshops. Since the research has shown that teacher training has an effect on learner performance, this important tool to increase success in Grade R cannot be ignored.

6.1.7 What is the effect of teachers' experience in Grade R learners' E-L2 scores?

Teachers' experience plays a major contributory factor in E-L2 learning in the USA. Xu (2010) found that teachers with more than ten years of teaching produced better E-L2 scores as compared to teachers with less than ten years teaching experience. It was found that older teachers were better qualified and planned their lessons in detail as compared to younger teachers who had less training and rarely pre-planned their lessons. York (2008) found that teachers who were more experienced attained better E-L2 scores because they provided more learning opportunities in the classroom and interacted more closely with parents, with the intention of providing expert advice and guidance to improve their children's E-L2 learning.

In this study less experienced teachers achieved higher learner performance scores in listening in both facilitation methods (play and formal instructional approach). Less experienced teachers achieved better Grade R E-L2 scores since they have received more training. There have been many training sessions conducted over the past two years by the Mpumalanga Department of Education on E-L2 learning where less experienced Grade R teachers were invited to attend and had an opportunity for asking clarity seeking questions. The rationale for selecting less experienced teachers for training was based on budgetary constraints.

6.2 RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

The implications of the research findings on educational facilitation in the Grade R class will be explored. As stated in Chapter One, the play based approach is prescribed by Bredekamp (1987) and Smreker and Hanson (1998) on it being developmentally appropriate. While the 720 schools are implementing the play based approach, there are 283 schools adopting the formal based approach. The

current study indicated that learners in formal based classrooms achieved higher performance scores than learners in play based classrooms. Therefore there is a need to consider reviewing the prescribed play based approach in E-L2 learning based on the study findings since low performance scores across all language groups in rural Mpumalanga was recorded in these classrooms. In this case it may not be advisable to completely disregard the play based approach since learners' speaking scores in both approaches were almost similar.

It was not only the facilitation approach that mattered but it was also the following variables that affected learners E-L2 scores:

- 1) Teachers' first language affected their children's scores highly significantly
- 2) Children's own first languages affected their scores
- 3) Less experienced, better qualified and younger teachers' children performed better.

It appears that the participants' listening skills were much more advanced in formal instruction classrooms. Limited opportunities to learn to listen and noise interference could have contributed to the participants' very poor performance on E-L2 listening tasks in the play based classrooms. According to Donovan (2010) research globally reports that children's listening skills in the early grades were found to be under developed and the recommendation is that attention be given to improving listening competencies in Grade R children by providing them practical exercises.

The research study focuses on Grade R learners learning through the medium of English which is their second language and being assessed on their listening and speaking competencies. When the child's first language is different from the school language medium, the same level of language proficiency is still expected of the learner, but now in the child's second language. The question that arises is whether the child has reached the expected language functioning in the second

language and what will happen to learning when it is not the case. In this study learners in the play based classroom have not achieved E-L2 competency since they have attained scores less than six, which has been indicated as the minimum competency score. What E-L2 scores can be expected at the end of the Grade R year? Will they reach a score of 11? Good BICS and some CALP? Additional assistance can be provided by speech-language therapists. There is a need to train teachers more, as better trained teachers' children were already performing better. The low performance of learners in the ELP assessments necessitates the appointment of specialised speech-language therapists to provide support to learners in improving their E-L2 competency.

The Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements, which were explicated in detail in Chapter 3, prescribe the E-L2 skills learners need to demonstrate in the classroom. Learners need to speak in grammatically correct sentences fluently, listen attentively with understanding and respond to questions confidently. In this study learners were expected to demonstrate their listening and speaking competencies as prescribed in the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements. The assessment standards do not provide information on the complex processes underlying the acquisition of language skills (Reagan, 2009) and the child is judged on displaying superficial behaviours. The curriculum does not prescribe methods of teaching and teachers may not know how to facilitate the acquisition of language (O'Connor & Geiger, 2009). There is little acknowledgement in the Grade R curriculum on the difference between conversational and academic language.

The research implication emanating from the study is a need to develop the academic language in Grade R learners. Attention should be placed on educational linguistics, part of which is an application of the relevant theory on additional language acquisition and learning. After all, the field of second language acquisition (SLA) originated out of the need to understand how additional languages are learnt in different contexts so that those experiences

found to be facilitative of the process could be incorporated into language teaching practices (Ellis, 2010).

The question emanating from the study is whether E-L2 learning in the Grade R classroom is occurring implicitly or explicitly or both. It should be noted that each mechanism draws on different cognitive processes. The problem is further compounded since there is a lack of clarity in the literature as to whether young children learn an additional language implicitly, explicitly or both. Children acquire language (either L1 or L2) both incidentally as a result of exposure to learning contexts and as a result of explicit instruction. This issue lies at the heart of the dichotomy between play based and formal approaches. They are based on ill-informed language policies and practices discussed in Chapter Three. Language learning tasks and methods of teaching should determine whether implicit or explicit learning mechanisms are used (Ellis, 2008). Explicit teaching in a formal way by well trained teachers may produce good results in E-L2 learning at the end of Grade R. isiNdebele teachers and children may have an advantage as a result of the many loan words from English. Much attention should be given to children and teachers from other languages.

According to Scarcella (2011) the role of the teachers is to scaffold Grade R language learning in order to improve learners' competence in E-L2 language learning. Scarcella (2011) maintains that through scaffolded oral language activities, children in Grade R learn vocabulary, listening and speaking skills. Teachers' support should be seen within the mismatch between learners' first language and the medium of instruction. IsiNdebele teachers produced better learner scores than the other language groups. In isiNdebele there are more words borrowed from English. The role of the teacher as the mediator of language learning, as discussed in the explanation of the MLET in chapter two, should be underscored in Grade R teaching. It should be noted that even if learners' first language was the medium of instruction, the language skills of

learners especially from poverty backgrounds is poor since parental language input is low.

Parents need to be made aware of developing their children's first language very well. Research indicates that the better the first language, the better the second language learning. Parents must also be informed of the importance of first language development.

The current research findings indicate that teachers who are more qualified and attend more curriculum training workshops produced better learner E-L2 scores. These findings have major implications in terms of departmental professional development and capacitation programmes for Grade R teachers in rural Mpumalanga. There is a need to accelerate the teacher capacitation programmes for Grade R teachers who are required to provide the requisite language support to learners in the classroom. The professional and capacitation programmes should focus mainly on E-L2 facilitation, assessment and teacher language support strategies to be implemented in the Grade R classroom.

There are complexities around E-L2 learning in South Africa. Firstly there is an absence of English models in rural schools. The child's exposure to English beyond the classroom is limited (Alexander, 2005; Macdonald, 1990). The problem is further compounded that there was a misconception on language teaching that there was no need for explicit instruction. Teachers in South Africa have not been trained in educational linguistics and parents are not providing enough language input either in first and second language.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON THE STUDY

Recommendation 1: Hybrid model (combination of play based and formal instructional approach) to be implemented in Grade R

In this study it was found that the play-based approach produced lower learner performance scores than the formal based approach. The analysis of the learner performance scores in both approaches indicate that learners' achieved higher listening scores in the formal based approach and achieved almost the same speaking scores. Considering that learners are second language English speakers who are attending Grade R at schools, it will be recommended that the hybrid model (combination of play based and formal instructional approach) be implemented in the classroom. This recommendation is based since children acquire language (either first language or second language) both incidentally as a result of exposure to learning contexts and as a result of explicit instruction (Heugh, 2002). Based on learners' performance scores in formal based classrooms, learners do not perform well in BICS questions of the ELP standards assessment tool. The average total score in formal based classroom was 7.46. This could be the basis for the hybrid (mixture of play and formal instructional) modality to be adopted in schools.

The average total score in play based classrooms was 2.52. It may appear that most learners are unable to demonstrate social language skills since five questions in the ELP tool assessed BICS skills (respond to social interactions, communicate needs, respond to stories, recite rhymes and say poems). According to Cummins (2008) it takes two years for a young child to acquire BICS which could possibly explain why some learners in play based classroom did not achieve higher scores in BICS questions. It could be that teachers' instructional practices could have impacted on learners' performance in play or formal instructional classrooms which could be the basis for further research on educational facilitation approaches on E-L2 learning. This issue lies at the heart

of the dichotomy between play and formal based approaches in Grade R classrooms.

This recommendation is based since Grade R serves as a bridge between preschools which are play based and schools which are formal based. It should be noted that Grade R marks the first year of the Foundation Phase in the schooling system. It is recommended that at national meetings where other Departments of Education are in attendance, the hybrid model is explicated and inputs from stakeholders considered.

In the Nevada study (Nevada Department of Education, 2009) there was no significant difference between learners' speaking scores which suggests that the play-based and formal instructional method could be jointly used to develop learners' speaking competency. In other words, the play-based method cannot be disregarded completely.

Recommendation 2: Training Grade R teachers on the proposed hybrid model

In this study it was found that the younger teachers who attended frequent training sessions on curriculum facilitation produced higher scores than older teachers who were not prioritised by the Mpumalanga Department of Education for curriculum training. The trainings should focus on methodologies that could be used by teachers to implement the proposed hybrid model. Trainings should be conducted on a quarterly basis and ECD officials need to distribute hand-outs to Grade R teachers.

Recommendation 3: Improving the qualifications of Grade R teachers

In the study it was found that Grade R teachers with an ECD qualification produced better learner performance scores in both play and formal based

classrooms. It is proposed that the Mpumalanga Department of Education upgrade Grade R teachers' qualifications to ensure that the ECD sector is professionalised. The Department should also consider enrolling teachers for the ECD diploma or the Bachelor of Education Degree with a focus on educational linguistics in order to further professionalise the sector.

Recommendation 4: Use the ELP standard assessment tool to assess learners E-L2 skills

Currently there is no standardised assessment tool to assess Grade R learners' E-L2 competency in Mpumalanga. Since ELP standard assessment tool has proven its validity and reliability in the current study, it is proposed that it be used to assess learners' E-L2 skills in rural Mpumalanga. The ELP tool tests both BICS and CALP which are also reflected language skills in the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements. It is recommended that teachers assess Grade R learners' E-L2 competency on a quarterly basis. The Early Childhood Education officials need to capacitate Grade R teachers on how to use the ELP standard assessment tool in assessing learners' E-L2 competency.

Recommendation 5: Appointment of speech-language therapists for Grade R classes

The current study indicated that learners in play based classrooms achieved lower performance scores when compared to learners in formal based classrooms. The analysis of the ELP standard assessment tool indicated that most learners in the play based classrooms were not competent in E-L2 skills since they achieved scores below the competency threshold (a score of 6 out of 11 was considered to be competent). It is recommended that speech-language therapists be appointed in each school to work with Grade R teachers in providing support to learners who are encountering challenges in achieving E-L2 competency.

Recommendation 6: Emphasis placed on improving Grade R children's listening skills

In this study it was found that Grade R learners' listening skills in the play based curriculum is under developed. Attention should be given to improving listening competencies in Grade R children by providing them with frequent practical exercises. Resources (story books, charts, pictures and posters) should be provided by the Department of Education to assist learners in developing good listening skills. Teachers will be advised that they need to exposure learners to story-telling, asking learners questions, requesting them to follow oral directions and exposing them to new words to improve their receptive vocabulary. The Department of Education needs to conduct workshops with teachers on how to develop listening skills in learners and as part of co-operative working relations with the Department of Health should request their assistance in having learners screened against hearing imbalances/defects and provided with hearing aids if required especially within the poverty context of rural Mpumalanga.

6.4 CRITICAL EVALUATION OF STUDY

In hindsight the researcher should have observed and analysed the teachers' instructional approaches in order to determine whether their facilitation approaches were underpinned by theory. The researcher should have observed how teachers interpret and use facilitation in the classroom to develop and promote E-L2 learning. However, these unintended omissions could form the basis of future research on Grade R E-L2 learning.

The research design was carefully selected. Data was collected from the children and their performance after three months exposure to E-L2 was tested. In data collection, the researcher did not videotape and analyse the teachers while they were teaching. The researcher had to be independent in the research. The teachers, as participants may not have acted naturally if their teaching was evaluated directly as part of the research. It has to do with ethics in research by

recognising the teacher participants' autonomy and not making them feel uncomfortable. The research ethical principles of 'autonomy' and "do no harm" apply here.

The researcher chose to investigate the outcomes in the children after 3 months of E-L2 teaching according to the two approaches. The results showed differences between the two methods, so even though the researcher did not investigate the two approaches as practiced by teacher participants, the results in the children's performance on the ELP show that these two approaches were real.

Since some of the Grade R learners attended Pre-Grade R centres prior to the admission to Grade R, the influence of Pre-Grade R E-L2 skills on Grade R learners E-L2 proficiency should also have been examined. The researcher should have tested all children in the beginning of the year. This notwithstanding, the standard deviation for learner scores illustrated in Table 5.1 was very small which indicated that the children were mostly on the same level of the E-L2 proficiency.

The actual scores children received was not evaluated, but could have provided valuable information on the level of E-L2 development in each context, irrespective of whether the children scored significantly higher in the formal instructional than the play based context.

The findings from the study cannot be generalised to urban contexts. The rationale of excluding urban schools is ascribed to a dearth of research conducted in rural areas and to empirically investigate Grade 1, 2 and 3 teachers' anecdotal assertions that Grade R learners especially in the rural areas are not prepared for Grade 1 literacy learning. Research on Grade R learners' competency in E-L2 learning could form the basis for another research study, comparing results of urban and rural learners.

Most of EL-2 learners in rural Mpumalanga are living in poverty and their exposure to language resources and English is limited. In this current study, learners are coming from low socio-economic backgrounds and further research is needed on how facilitation skills could be used to address the effects of a child's poverty levels in the Grade R class.

It would have been interesting to assess Grade R learners' first language skills before rating their E-L2 skills to ascertain their level of language development in the language they know best, bearing in mind learners' poverty background.

6.5 LIMITATIONS

One crucial aspect of research often disregarded in the literature is the role of the researcher in the study (Silverman, 2005). The researcher can affect the results of the investigation in four ways i.e. selection of topic, design of the study, the interaction between the researcher and participants and interpretation of results. Although the researcher chose the topic from a personal and professional perspective, the issue of learners E-L2 skills throughout the schooling system is debated since the language of teaching and learning in most of the schools in Mpumalanga is English. Initially, the researcher contemplated conducting a qualitative study. After discussion with his supervisors, the purely qualitative study was disregarded because it was deemed to be too subjective. The researcher subsequently conceptualized a quantitative study where results can be reported and analyzed objectively.

The researcher acknowledges that his presence could have led to some learners in the study sample feeling uncomfortable. However, the researcher interacted with Grade R learners on the playfield prior to assessing them, playing numerous games and interacting frequently with their parents in the children's presence. By the researcher using a standardized instrument to assess Grade R learners'

proficiency in English and using the teacher to also rate learners' proficiency, the objectivity of the data collection was enhanced. In cases where the researcher and the teacher's scoring differed, the Head of Department in the Foundation Phase was also utilised to rate learners on their E-L2 skills. There were only one case in the research project where the teachers' and the researcher's ratings differed. The case in point was when the teacher was assessing learners' ability to respond to oral directions which was ascribed to teacher's misunderstanding of the learners' demonstration of their skill.

The possible tensions that arose but the role of the researcher took precedence not to venture a policy pronouncement, is the medium of instruction in schools is English which is at odds with Curriculum Assessment Policy (approved legislated policy), the formal based curriculum implemented in the classroom which went against the play based policy and the disregard of the learners' first language in schools considering the poverty context and language input received from learners at home.

In this study listening and speaking E-L2 skills is emphasized while the other skills, i.e. pre-reading, pre-writing and language use is not discussed in the study. The rationale of excluding the above-mentioned skills is that the ELP standards assessment tool only focuses on listening and speaking skills in Grade R and is based on the premise that listening and speaking skills provides a firm foundation for formal reading and writing in Grade 1.

The results of the study can be generalised to other rural contexts since the five learners' first languages spoken in Mpumalanga are reflected in the study sample. The schools were chosen randomly from each language category and the two facilitation approaches ensuring that each school had an equal chance of being selected in the sample. These findings cannot be generalised to urban contexts. Urban schools are well resourced with English material and are located in relatively affluent areas when compared to rural contexts (EMIS Statistics

Report, 2012). The rationale of excluding urban schools is ascribed to a dearth of research conducted in rural areas and to empirically investigate Grade 1, 2 and 3 teachers' anecdotal assertions that Grade R learners especially in the rural areas are not prepared for Grade 1 literacy learning. Research on Grade R learners' competency in E-L2 learning could form the basis for another research study.

Grade R learners accommodated in community based centres were not included in the sample since these centres are not registered with the Mpumalanga Department of Education. The community based centres are privately owned and based on reports compiled by curriculum implementers mostly follow the Montessori approach that underscores experiential learning with teaching of formal content that is not in agreement with the official Grade R curriculum. Therefore these study results cannot be generalised to private community based centres.

In this research study the role of families in developing learners E-L2 skills were not considered. It was assumed that learners' families were not able to speak English which could not be the case in some families especially the isiNdebele parents who may be speaking English to their children.

Generalization of results in this study is limited within the national context since schools were selected in Mpumalanga Province and only 5 of the eleven official languages (siSwati, Xitsonga, Sepedi, isiZulu, isiNdebele) in South Africa were included. US research only reports on bilingual situations. Thus, while external validity may be limited on grounds of geographical area and languages involved, the clearly defined methodology used in the study, as well as the use of the ELP standards assessment tool may facilitate replication of this study in alternative contexts and with different language groups in South Africa.

6.6 FUTURE RESEARCH AREAS

Possible research areas to be explored in the future are discussed below.

Grade R learners' first language proficiency should be determined. Patterson (2008) and Ward (2008) aver that first language acquisition is crucial for effective second language learning. The importance on first language proficiency on second language development was emphasised in the study. Thus the influences of first language development on second language development in the South African context should be determined. It should, however, be noted that there are no standardised instruments in South Africa to assess learners' first language competency.

The competency of Grade R teachers in E-L2 should be assessed since learners are learning English, which is a new language to them and generally tend to imitate their teachers' oral communication skills. According to Patterson (2008) and Kruse (2005), the quality of teachers' input has an influence on Grade R E-L2 learning most profoundly when learners are coming from poverty backgrounds where parental input in first language is limited. In many cases in South Africa, learners' exposure to English, prior to being enrolled in Grade R is non-existent.

There is a need to conduct longitudinal studies to track the E-L2 progress of Grade R learners in the early grades. Longitudinal studies will most probably assist in determining Grade R learners' progress in listening and speaking competencies and the influence of teachers' instructional methods on E-L2 performance scores in the early grades.

The effect of Pre-Grade R learning on Grade R learners E-L2 performance scores needs to be established. In 2011 20% of children attended crechés before their parents registered them for Grade R and it will be interesting to determine

whether exposure to crechés had a beneficial or adverse effect on children E-L2 performance scores (EMIS Statistics Report, 2012).

The effect of the hybrid model (combination of the play based and the formal instructional approach) on Grade R learners' performance scores in selected schools in Mpumalanga should be researched.

This research study should be replicated in an urban context to determine whether the play based or formal instructional approach is the best educational method to facilitate E-L2 skills in Grade R.

6.7 NEW KNOWLEDGE

This study provided empirical data to compare the educational facilitation approaches (play-based and formal instructional approach) employed in rural Mpumalanga. The study findings revealed that Grade R learners in formal based classrooms produced better E-L2 performance scores when compared to learners in the play based classrooms across all learners' first language groupings in rural Mpumalanga. These findings should be seen within the Grade R curriculum context that prescribes that the play based approach should be implemented in the classroom.

In the study, isiNdebele learners who have isiNdebele speaking teachers performed systematically higher than the other first language groupings. Learners having teachers with siSwati as their first language are systematically performing the worst in E-L2 performance scores when compared to other language groups. Gender did not have an effect on learner performance scores in both educational facilitation approaches. Teachers with a Grade 12 certificate in the current study achieved lower performance scores than teachers with only an ECD qualification in both the play and formal based instructional approach. In the current study significantly higher scores were obtained for both speaking

scores and total performance scores, when learners have younger teachers. Less experienced teachers achieved higher learner performance scores in listening in both facilitation methods (play and formal instructional approach).

It was observed from the findings that the biggest difference in the performance scores between formal and play based approaches was in learners' listening scores. Learners in formal based classrooms attained higher listening scores when compared to learners in the play-based classrooms. It was noted that learners performed relatively the same in speaking performance scores. This study proposed a hybrid model which is the combination of the play based and the formal instructional approach to be used in the Grade R classroom.

6.8 REFLECTIONS

This study draws attention to the complexities of E-L2 learning in Grade R. Overall this research study added new insights and enriched the knowledge base of Grade R E-L2 learning in Mpumalanga. The data can now be used to find valid solutions to support teachers, parents and learners in E-L2 learning. This study also generated the need to conduct further research on E-L2 learning in order to promote Grade R learners' proficiency in English and improve teachers' knowledge on facilitation and assessment practices in E-L2 learning. As mentioned in Chapter One, the researcher mentioned that his lecturer stated that language teaching is the lifeblood of all learning.

Since English is introduced in Grade R, E-L2 learning will extend our thinking, research and practice in language acquisition. In understanding how the school system can better serve E-L2 learners, the lessons we will learn in our various research practices will be of immense benefit for all children.

Oral communication skills in any language are the basic building blocks that learners need to possess in order to ascend the schooling academic ladder

confidently and successfully (Patterson, 2008). Thus language learning is a lifelong process and one of the most reliable predictors of scholastic success is learners' language and literacy development prior to Grade 1. Spoken and written language should be viewed on a continuum, with written language being developed on a foundation of spoken language, and phonological awareness acting as the mediating bridge between the two domains.

The South African language complexity also affected on the researcher during his formative years. English was the researcher's third language. His parents spoke different languages (Tamil and Telegu) to him when he was growing up and was expected to have a good command of English when he enrolled for Grade 1 learning. The researcher was fortunate that English was introduced when he was a toddler. The language quandary has impacted on the majority of citizens in South Africa since they are expected to communicate verbally and in writing in English although their first/primary language is not English. According to Language Census only 8% of the population are first language English speakers (Nel & Muller, 2010).

The language of learning and teaching is not the only factor that has a bearing on educational outcomes but, with knowledgeable, disciplined and caring teachers, it is probably the most significant variable. Although the research study was conducted in Mpumalanga, it has nationwide implications: it seeks to address systematically a national dilemma of language-medium practices in schooling. More concretely, working towards education based on the mother tongue-bilingual model is essentially a nation-building task in that it seeks to build a society that develops linguistic confidence and competence in the majority of the population.

An early investment in the gift of literacy is not only the key to a country's future; it is the master-key to unlock a world of social cohesion, knowledge, innovation and creative potential.

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