

A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY OF THE  
STRATEGIES USED BY GRADE ONE TEACHERS  
WHO TEACH THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF ENGLISH

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## ABSTRACT

This research project begins by exploring the problems surrounding the implementation of the 1997 Language in Education Policy (LiEP), and offers insight into why some schools, despite the promotion of additive bilingualism, choose English as the primary medium of instruction. It is a comparative case study of two Grade 1 classes in different situational contexts, which highlights the teaching strategies and language practices of teachers who teach predominantly non-English speakers through the medium of English.

Research carried out through this case study illustrates the use of a wide range of teaching strategies, which assist young learners when learning through an additional language. In School A, thematic linking between different learning areas to maximise vocabulary development in both the mother tongue and the additional language, as well as repetition, recycling, scaffolding and contextualisation of content were found to be important. In addition, the use of questioning to elicit understanding, as well as classroom organisation and code-switching were strategies which assisted both the teacher and learners in this multilingual environment. In School B, class size, group work and the inclusion into the timetable of a wide range of diverse activities over and above the main learning areas, which provided opportunities for language development, were important considerations. In addition, routine, predictability and an attention to detail, in keeping with a form-focussed approach, aided the children in understanding the mechanics of literacy and guiding them towards becoming phonologically aware.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

<b>BICS</b>	<b>Basic interpersonal communication skills</b>	<b>LoLT</b>	<b>Language of learning and teaching</b>
<b>CALP</b>	<b>Cognitive academic language proficiency</b>	<b>MoI</b>	<b>Medium of Instruction</b>
<b>CUP</b>	<b>Common underlying proficiency</b>	<b>NCCRD</b>	<b>National Centre for Curriculum Research and Development</b>
<b>DET</b>	<b>Department of Education and Training</b>	<b>NGO</b>	<b>Non-Governmental Organisation</b>
<b>L1</b>	<b>First or primary language</b>	<b>PEI</b>	<b>President's Education Initiative</b>
<b>L2</b>	<b>Second language</b>	<b>SGB</b>	<b>School governing body</b>
<b>LiEP</b>	<b>Language in Education Policy</b>	<b>SUP</b>	<b>Separate underlying proficiency</b>

## CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

This chapter serves to provide an outline of the social and academic context of the study and gives reasons why such a study was deemed appropriate. It goes on to highlight the research goals and give a general overview of the project. Finally, some limitations of case study research are highlighted, particularly those pertaining to the present research, and suggestions for further research are given.

### SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

Language is an issue that is often fraught with underlying tensions and complexities, which, in South Africa, date back to colonisation. From the beginning of this process, language and language planning have been used as a form of social engineering, in which the dominant language, usually the language of the colonial power, has been used and pursued by the elite in order to keep them in positions of superiority, whilst the subordinate languages have been viewed as languages of the oppressed. The legacy of Apartheid and the inherent linguistic separation that its principles enforced has left its mark, and many of the problems regarding language that we face today, more particularly the implementation of the 1997 Language in Education Policy (LiEP), stem from attitudes associated with these oppressive policies. It is in this context that the present research may be found.

### REASONS FOR THE STUDY

In 1997, a new LiEP was announced. Underpinning this new policy was the principle of 'additive bilingualism'. At its most basic, additive bilingualism calls for the maintenance of a child's first language (L1) through the early years of schooling, with a second language (L2) being *added* to the first, once the first has been reasonably established. This means that children entering Grade 1 should learn through the medium of their L1, particularly in the first year of schooling, and only then should a second language be added.

Many educational theories have expounded the cognitive benefits of additive bilingualism (Cummins and Swain 1986; Cummins 1986; Apple and Muysken 1990). In addition, the social and psychological advantages resulting from the maintenance of the associated culture are also well documented (Pattanayk 1986; Skutnabb-Kangas 1985, 1998). Research, both national and international, has highlighted the success of schools in which the primary medium of instruction is the L1 (Skutnabb-Kangas 1985, 1998; Macdonald 1991). Research, particularly that done on education in post-colonial African countries, has also shown the negative aspects of learning through a language other than the L1, too early (Phillipson, Skutnabb-Kangas and Africa 1986; Macdonald 1991).

This, however, poses all sorts of problems, particularly in our South African context, not the least of which are the underlying attitudes towards language prevalent in society, which, in the school context, are reflected by the parents. Despite the call for L1 instruction, most parents seem not to want it (Robb 1995; Vinjevold 1999). In addition to this, the multilingual nature of South African society at large is mirrored in many of its classrooms and, as such, there is often no shared L1 amongst the children, but rather a number of L1's. These are just two of the reasons why, despite being heralded as one of the most progressive education policies in the world (Landon 1999), the LiEP has not, in many instances, been implemented (Brown 1998; Vinjevold 1999).

It is almost ten years since schools have become desegregated and children have been learning, and teachers have been teaching, in multilingual classrooms. The desire for English, whether rightly or wrongly, still dominates (Robb 1995; Desai 1998; Vinjevold 1999; Zinn 2002). Therefore, the need emerges to move beyond acknowledging the benefits of additive bilingualism and lamenting its lack of implementation, to look at what *does* happen in South African classrooms – to look at the language practices and teaching strategies of teachers who are teaching through the medium of English to classes containing both mother tongue and non-mother tongue speakers. It is hoped that by highlighting some successful practices, the difficulties of teaching and learning through the medium of English, especially for those for whom it is a second language, may be eased.

## RESEARCH GOALS

This research sets out to study and compare two Grade 1 classes, in different situational contexts, both of which are taught through the medium of English. As such, the goals of the present research are :

- To gain understanding as to why each school favours English as the medium of instruction;
- To gain insight into the language practices and teaching strategies used by two teachers to assist understanding when teaching through the medium of English to non-English speakers;
- Through this process, to provide a rich description of the teaching strategies and language practices in these two classes.

## GENERAL OVERVIEW

This general overview aims to provide the reader with a synopsis of the research report and to highlight the main themes that run through it.

The present chapter highlights the context in which the project took place, attempts to explain the rationale for the study and lists the goals for the research. No research project can be undertaken without awareness of its limitations and, therefore, the limitations of this project are highlighted. Some suggestions for further research are then given.

Chapter Two provides the theoretical framework for the study. It begins with an overview of language in society and language planning in society, which is usually dominated by a top down approach, which aims at maintaining the prevalent *status quo*. Opposed to this is the bottom up approach, which aims at creating greater social justice and equality through language planning by the promotion of multilingualism – we seem to be moving in this direction today.

Despite this move in the right direction, which is evidenced in the LiEP announced in 1997, acceptance and implementation of this LiEP has been problematic. The reasons for this are many and varied, but some may be found in the attitudes people have towards language, culture and identity, the roots of which go far back into colonial times.

The right to use one's mother tongue and the negative social and psychological impact of mother tongue loss is supported by a number of cognitive theories, which illustrate the benefits of additive bilingualism. Some insights into the LiEP of 1997 are given and reasons for the disparity between policy and practice are discussed. In the light of this, the need to analyse classroom practice becomes clear, and accordingly, some aspects of classroom research in multilingual settings are highlighted.

Chapter Three is concerned with the research methodology underpinning this study. This research is conducted in the interpretive paradigm in that it aims to interpret and understand human action on a small scale. The comparative case study was selected as the most suitable method to analyse the language practices and teaching strategies of teachers in different situational contexts. An overview is then given of the historical backgrounds of the two schools, which provide insight as to why each favours English as the Medium of Instruction (MoI).

Methods of data collection and analysis are then given and their limitations discussed. Issues such as reliability and validity are highlighted and triangulation suggested as a means of reducing reliability and

validity threats. As ethics is recognised as being major concern in research of this nature, it is stated that the data analysis is intended to be descriptive and in no way judgmental of either school.

In Chapter Four the data are analysed and discussed. In an attempt to create a picture of these two classes, there is an analysis of basic classroom organisation, followed by a discussion of the various language uses that emerge. This is followed by a description of learning areas and how they are taught, in which the strategies used to assist learning are highlighted. This process is applied to both schools, after which a comparative analysis is given.

Chapter Five begins by reiterating the primary purpose of the study, which was to highlight the teaching strategies and language practices of teachers teaching through the medium of English to predominately non-English speakers. It goes on to expand upon the two alternatives offered to the government by the PEI report (Vinjevold 1999) and finally, considers the contextual approach to language planning, as suggested by Langhan (1996) as a further alternative.

## LIMITATIONS

The main criticism aimed at case study research is that of generalisability. In the present research, no attempts have been made to generalise about language choice or language use in schools. Such is the complexity of these issues that far greater and far more longitudinal research would have to be done to ascertain the benefits of a 'straight for English' approach as opposed to an additive approach. Even then, no school exists in a vacuum and one context is different from another, and each context also continues to change from year to year.

The limitations of this research are further seen in that the two schools under review are in no way representative of all the schools in South Africa, either nationally or provincially. They are just two of many. However, they were specifically chosen because they appeared to be well-functioning schools in which the 'straight for English' approach was working. Accordingly, it is hoped that by illustrating the teaching practices of these two teachers, as well as the strategies that they use to assist learning, others may be able to apply such strategies within their own similar contexts, which cumulatively, if researched, may give insight into how to deal with the language challenges faced by teachers today.

## CHAPTER TWO – THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Because education is a microcosm of society, and this research is concerned with language in education, this chapter begins by examining the relationship between language and society, as well as language planning within society, and shows how language and power are inextricably linked. Just as language and power are linked, so too are language and culture, and attitudes towards both language and the inherent culture of that language affect the planning and implementation of language policies. Such attitudes directly impact on choice of language instruction in schools, and such choice may be attributed to policies of oppression in the past.

The acceptance and use of one's language may be viewed a fundamental human right. The right to learn in one's mother tongue is supported by the present LiEP through the promotion of additive bilingualism. This, in turn, is supported by research both nationally and internationally, as well as by a number of theories which illustrate the advantages of such for the cognitive, psychological and social development of the child. However, despite these advantages, this chapter proceeds to expand upon the difficulties of implementation in our South African context and highlights a number of reasons why current practice is in conflict with educational theory and research. Accordingly, the need emerges to look at classroom research in multilingual settings to highlight possible practical strategies which may assist both teachers and learners in such situations.

### GENERAL THEORY OF LANGUAGE AND LANGUAGE PLANNING

#### *Language planning in society*

In order to understand the relationship between language and society, it is important to recognise that in any society, power is maintained by groups, or individuals within those groups. The dominant language of those groups invariably becomes the language of power, and language policies formed by the dominant group serve to perpetuate the existing hegemony. Myers-Scotten (1990) sees language, as well as language planning as a means by which society is engineered to create and maintain social elites.

Tollefson (1991) understands language planning as being approached in one of two ways. Firstly, a top-down approach, which implies that language planning is implemented by governments on the basis of neutrality, and which supposedly allows for some form of free choice for the individuals under them. Secondly, a bottom-up approach, in which language planning is determined at grass roots level. This bottom-up approach, supported by Alexander (1992 : 144), aims at creating greater social justice and equity through language planning with the promotion of multilingualism. Accordingly, the struggle for equality of opportunity becomes a struggle for a language policy that moves, in social terms, towards

equity and integration, and in linguistic terms, towards multilingualism. In order for language policies to work, they have to have the support and understanding of the majority of people.

### *Language planning in education*

“Language is one arena for struggle, as groups seem to exercise power through their control of language. ...This aspect of struggle is especially important in education, where dominant and subordinate groups often engage in struggle over recognition of diverse languages and cultures in the school curriculum.” (Tollefson (1991 : 10 – 13)

Educational language planning is always rooted in national language policy. Macdonald (1991 : 71) believes that the most important challenge facing a democratic government is to create an educational system with caters for a variety of needs, and that the implementation of educational policy should concern all communities and not just a core of professionals. A bottom-up approach appears to be the only way of doing this. However, before a bottom-up approach can be successfully implemented, it is necessary to understand the underlying attitudes of the people towards language and language policy and how these attitudes can often work against the implementation thereof.

## **ATTITUDES TOWARDS LANGUAGE**

### *Effects on language planning*

Luckett (1993 : 42) maintains that in planning language, especially in an educational context, language planners need to understand people’s language attitudes and motivations for language learning. The National Centre for Curriculum Research and Development (NCCRD) report (2000 : 49) describes language attitudes as “evaluations people make about a particular dialect and language or languages.” It believes that attitudes are learnt from previous experiences, are fairly enduring and include attitudes towards the speakers of the language. Attitudes towards language also influence the decisions of policy makers, and the attitudes towards language of the people for whom the policies are intended, influence the success or otherwise of the implementation thereof.

In South Africa, the consequences of past language policies need to be taken into account when trying to understand language attitudes. Under the auspices of the National Party, language was a tool used to enforce separate and unequal development, which has resulted in the stigmatisation of African languages as simply symbols of ethnicity. In addition to this, access to English was effectively denied in the wake of the promotion of Afrikaans. Present language planners need to take note of these past imbalances, whilst at the same time promoting policies that are educationally sound.

### *English – a language of emancipation*

Luckett (1995 : 74) notes three dominant attitudes prevalent in South Africa today. Firstly, it is clear that because of the spread of English through globalisation and the fact that it is an international language, it is seen as the language of emancipation and economic mobility, and proficiency in English enables one to get ahead. In addition to English being seen as the language of upward mobility, it is commonly viewed that the best way to gain that elusive proficiency in English is to learn English for as long as possible, starting from as soon as possible, in other words, in Grade 1. This attitude severely affects the implementation of the 1997 LiEP, which calls for additive bilingualism, discussed in greater detail later.

### *The diglossic element of African languages*

Secondly, Luckett (1995 : 74) believes that just as English is valued, so are African languages devalued in people's minds as not being suitable for the higher functions of society, such as education, science, technology, business, law and government. African languages are viewed as simply languages of the home. This introduces the notion of diglossia; the fact that languages are used for different purposes within society. The presence of diglossia suggests an exoglossic language policy, which uses foreign languages as primary media of communication at national level. In South Africa, increasingly English is the language of record, used extensively in public documents, an economically viable and necessary alternative to printing documents in the eleven official languages. Many post-colonial African countries have adopted exoglossic language policies, which are supported by "a tacit Western assumption that associates monolingualism in the metropolitan language with 'civilisation', 'progress' and national development, and multilingualism with ethnicism, traditionalism and at worst 'barbarism.'" (Luckett 1993 : 39). The success of these exoglossic language policies has been bleak, resulting in a trend towards more endoglossic language policies, which involve greater use of the African languages (Hawes 1979 as cited in Luckett 1993). This may be seen in the current South African LiEP, but still, attitudes and assumptions stemming from the past militate against acceptance and implementation thereof.

### *Status and use of different languages*

The third dominant attitude, which is similar in some respects to the second, is the status attached to the use of English. English, viewed as the language of power, is used to separate the educated from the uneducated, the literate from the illiterate. The value of oral literacy, or literacies other than literacy in the dominant mode, appear negligible. Versfeld (1995 : 24) notes that some black children who attend English first language schools may tend to reject their identity and move towards some form of perceived hierarchy. Martin (1996 : 63) found that some African parents and children did not want to adhere to their traditional cultures and specifically wanted to be identified as "white."



### *Language, culture and identity*

Pattanayak (1986 : 7) believes that language is “the expression of the primary identity of a human being,” and, like Ngugi wa Thiong’o (1993 : 30), sees the role of the mother tongue as anchoring a child to its culture. According to Ntshangase (2000 : 33), it is through language that a person perceives the world and identifies him/herself within that world. “Language is a carrier of a person’s culture. It is through language that we experience and express our experiences of the world.” Language is the means whereby the child is socialised into a system of beliefs and practices and the loss of a mother tongue leads to “intellectual impoverishment and emotional sterility.” (Pattanayk 1986:7). Often in educational contexts, however, this happens, particularly when schools fail to accommodate different languages and expect learners to assimilate to the majority culture. The Bullock Report (1975 : 17) expresses the dangers of this :

No child should be expected to cast off the language and culture of the home as he crosses the school threshold, nor to live and act as though school and home represent two totally separate and different cultures which have to be kept firmly apart. The curriculum should reflect many elements of that part of his life, which a child lives outside school.

Mikes (1986 : 18) adds further insight into the relationship between language and culture in her strong support for the inclusion of mother tongues into the education system. Most advocates of mother tongue education believe that it serves to prepare the child socially, emotionally and cognitively for the acquisition of the dominant language at a later stage. Fishman (as quoted by Mikes 1986 : 18) believes that maintenance of mother tongue is additionally important for the maintenance of its associated culture. Not only is the school important in doing this through the inclusion of the language, which assures the continuity of the culture, but so is the larger community which needs to support these endeavours.

### *Language as a fundamental human right*

Szepe (1984 : 69) cited in Mikes (1985 : 18) argues that mother tongue education is a fundamental human right :

“The right to use one’s mother tongue happens to be a fundamental, socially expressed human right applying equally to children.”

This is supported by Skutnabb-Kangas (1985 : 159), who claims that “every child should have the right to positively identify with the mother tongue(s) and have her identification accepted and respected by others.”

Should the curriculum not reflect cultural diversity, and should attitudes towards some languages and cultures continue to be dismissive, the prevailing *status quo* will be perpetuated and moves towards multilingualism will be hampered.

## MOVING TOWARDS BILINGUALISM

For the purposes of the present research, the term bilingualism and multilingualism will be used synonymously.

### *The need for bilingual education*

South Africa is a country with a long history of conflict between different groups of people, which conflicts have manifested themselves into conflicts about language. In an attempt to redress these conflicts, current policy urges South Africans to “discard their old singular identities, rooted in an intimate bonding of race, language and culture, in order to embrace a more complex sense of self.....[to] .....acknowledge and give expression to different languages and cultures.” (Murray 2002 : 434). Agnihotri (1995 : 3) sees language awareness, essentially an aspect of being bilingual, as part of the social struggle for justice and equality, with language at the centre of educational activity.

Given the fact that there are eleven official languages in South Africa, education becomes a multi-faceted, multilingual concept, a reflection of society at large, common throughout the world. In this context, multilingualism, “which challenges the inseparability of language, culture and identity, will play a large part in achieving this new identity.” (Alexander 1996 : 11 in Murray : 2002).

### *The cognitive theories of bilingualism*

There are a number of cognitive theories which support the social and psychological advantages of home language instruction in schools, one of which is the Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) theory. However, before expanding on this, it is important to understand its counter-theory, the Separate Underlying Proficiency (SUP) theory.

#### \* *The Separate Underlying Proficiency (SUP) theory*

Research that was carried out before 1960 was of the opinion that the cognitive development of bilingual people was inferior to that of monolingual people (Laurie 1980 in Baker 1993 : 107). In support of the supposition that bilingualism was disadvantageous, the dominant theory was that which visualized two languages as working independently within the brain. This theory, known as the Separate Underlying Proficiency theory, assumed two things. Firstly, that proficiency in L1 is *separate* from proficiency in the L2, and secondly, that there is a direct relationship between exposure to a language and cognitive

development / academic achievement in that language. This assumption is supported by the *Maximum Exposure Hypothesis*, which advocates that if there is sufficient exposure to the L2, the L2 will develop and vice versa. (Cummins and Swain 1986 : 81).

However, if one teaches a certain concept in the L1, such as how to multiply numbers or use a dictionary, a certain amount of tacit knowledge will be acquired, and such knowledge does not necessarily have to be re-taught if the same concepts were approached through the use of a different language. Instead, it is argued that these concepts may be easily and immediately transferred *provided* both languages are sufficiently well developed. This easy exchange leads to an alternative theory, known as the Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) theory

\* *The Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) theory :*

In opposition to the SUP theory, and in support of bilingual education, Cummins and Swain (1986 : 82) proposed the CUP theory, in which “the literacy related aspects of a bilingual’s proficiency in L1 and L2 are seen as common or interdependent across languages.”

In the case of the CUP theory, tacit knowledge of language, a common underlying proficiency, will make it possible to transfer this tacit knowledge from one language to another. This is supported by the *Developmental Interdependence Hypothesis*, which maintains that a child’s L2 competence is partly dependent on the level of competence already achieved in the L1. Basically, the more developed the L1, the easier it will be to develop the L2 and conversely, when the L1 is at a low stage of development, the more difficult the achievement of bilingualism will be. If a learner is compelled to function almost exclusively in the L2 before the tacit knowledge of the L1 has been developed, progress will be slow, loss of self-confidence and self-esteem will result and both languages, as well as the learner, will be disadvantaged. This leads on to a third theory, in which a *balance* between two languages is envisaged, namely the Threshold Theory.

\* *The Threshold Theory :*

This theory proposes that there are certain thresholds that a child moves along on the continuum between a low level of bilingual competence and a higher, balanced level of bilingual competence. Cummins (1986) proposed that there are thresholds of language ability that either advantage or disadvantage learning, and that a certain level of competency in one language must be reached before another is added, in order to avoid any negative consequences of bilingualism. On the first threshold are those whose current competence in the L1 and L2 is low, such as children who are unable to process information in either language. On the second threshold are those who possess competence in one language but not the other. Here, when one language is developed and the other catching up, there appears to be little

cognitive difference between monolingual and partly bilingual children. On the third level are those who are equally competent in processing information in both languages and it is at this level that cognitive advantages are envisaged.

Basically, this theory advocates that it is important to build a strong base in the first language onto which a second language can be added, whilst at the same time maintaining development in the first language. This is supported by Apple and Muysken (1990 : 105) , who claim that :

Children can reach high levels of competence in their second language if their first language development, especially use of certain functions of language relevant to their schooling and the development of vocabulary and concepts, is strongly promoted by their environment. The high level of proficiency in the first language makes possible a similar level in the second language. On the other hand, when skills in the first language are not well developed and education in the early years is completely in the second language, then the further development of the first language will be delayed. In turn this will have a limiting effect on second language acquisition.

However, the problem with the Threshold Theory (Baker 1993 : 137) is defining of the levels of language proficiency a child must attain in order, firstly, to avoid the negative effects of bilingualism and secondly, to benefit from the positive affects of bilingualism. Despite the neatness of the theory, its approach is somewhat positivist in that it assumes that all levels of bilingualism can be measured and fitted into the appropriate threshold. However, one cannot measure with any accuracy levels of bilingual competence.

\* *Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)*

A more refined theory which developed out of the Threshold Theory was one proposed by Cummins (1986) in which, drawing on Bernstein's notion of restricted and elaborate codes, he distinguished between two kinds of language proficiency. The first kind of proficiency was Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) which he described as everyday language, rooted in the here and now, context embedded and tacit, the kind of language used and understood by very young children or early bilinguals, bilinguals on perhaps the first 'threshold' of learning. The second kind of language proficiency was the Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), which he described as academic language, the language of school, context disembedded, cognitively demanding, often written (textbook) language which is more abstract in nature, mostly used by those proficient in not only speaking and listening, but also in the thinking skills associated with language development, those possibly on the third 'threshold' of learning.

Similar to the differentiation between different levels of language proficiency was Vygotsky's notion of *spontaneous* and *scientific* concepts (Rodseth : 2001). Spontaneous concepts are learned unconsciously through everyday experiences using basic interpersonal communication skills, whilst scientific concepts are schooled concepts, taught or mediated through cognitive academic language proficiency and disembedded from personal experiences. This in turn is similar to Macken-Horarik's (1996 : 236) distinctions between the 'everyday,' 'specialised,' and 'reflexive' domains, each one increasing in complexity as cognitive competence through language develops.

Underlying Cummins', Bernstein's, Vygotsky's, and Macken-Horarik's distinctions between language competencies is one possible reason why learners have difficulties at school, when the classroom language is very different from the everyday language. What is essential is that the 'common underlying proficiency', developed through the use of 'basic interpersonal communication skills' is well developed in the first language or simultaneously with the second, to enable the child to cope with the curriculum processes of the classroom (Baker 1993 : 138). If this happens, bilingual education is likely to impact positively on the child. If it does not, as so often happens in classrooms that do not recognise home languages or mother tongues, the negative affects of bilingual education may be felt.

Despite the advantages of L1 instruction, and despite its support from the 1997 LiEP in its promotion of additive bilingualism, the responsibility of implementation of L1 instruction at school level does not rest with the government, but rather devolves upon School Governing Bodies (SGB's). Accordingly, in many instances, it is not implemented. Such authority has not always been vested in SGB's, as prior to the early nineties, schools could *not* choose to go straight for English instruction, but had to teach through the primary language at least up to Std 3 (Grade 5). However, in 1996 the South African Schools Act gave SGB's primary authority when deciding on a language policy. Accordingly, choice of MoI rests in the hands of these Governing Bodies. On the one hand, this was a positive change in that language planning, once imposed upon the majority by the powerful minority (a top-down approach as described previously), as happened during the Apartheid regime, was replaced by a bottom-up approach in that policy was decided at grass roots level by the SGB's. However, on the other hand, it is precisely in such circumstances that attitudes and assumptions about language, particularly the importance of English as opposed to the relative unimportance of the African languages surface, which makes the task of implementation of educationally sound, bilingual language policies problematic.

## DEVELOPMENTS IN NATIONAL LANGUAGE POLICY SINCE THE 1994 ELECTIONS

Since 1994, South Africa has undergone a process of transformation through policies which have been aimed at benefiting as many of the population as possible (Desai 1999 : 42). Language has been no exception.

The underlying principles of the language policy as outlined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, are fourfold. They are the recognition of eleven official languages, the elevation of the status of indigenous languages, the promotion of a Pan South African Language Board to ensure the promotion of all official languages, including the Khoi, Nama, San and South African sign language, and lastly to promote and ensure respect for all languages commonly used by communities in South Africa for whatever purpose. (Act 108 of 1996 : 4 – 5 as quoted in Desai 1999). This may appear to be positive progress towards multilingualism in South Africa, but, as Desai (1999 : 44) mentions, language policies in Africa in general are notorious for remaining mere statements of intent and effecting change in public attitudes is not as easy as the policy may have us believe. However, the policy provides a framework upon which to build, and it is on this framework that the underlying LiEP is based.

### *The Language in Education Policy (LiEP) of 1997*

In the history of education in South Africa and the language policies inherent therein, tensions, contradictions, insensitivities, racism and linguisticism have abounded. Against such a background, the new LiEP, announced by Minister Bengu in 1997, was heralded as one of the most progressive in the world (Landon 1999) and an example to other African countries. This was because it recognised cultural diversity as a valuable national asset rather than a problem, called for the promotion of multilingualism through the development of all the official languages, through which respect for all languages used in South Africa would be developed (Department of Education 1997).

The main aims of the Ministry of Education's policy for language in education are :

- to promote full participation in society and the economy through equitable and meaningful access to education;
- to pursue the language policy most supportive of general conceptual growth amongst learners, and hence to establish additive bilingualism as an approach to language in education;
- to promote and develop all the official languages;
- to support the teaching and learning of all other languages required by learners or used by communities in South Africa, including languages used for religious purposes, languages which are important for international trade and communication, and South African Sign Language, as well as Alternative and Augmentative Communication;

- to counter disadvantages resulting from different kinds of mismatches between home languages and languages of learning and teaching;
- to develop programmes for the redress of previously disadvantaged languages.

(Department of Education 1998 : 4)

It is abundantly clear from the above that the new LiEP is ‘meant to facilitate communication across the barriers of colour, language and region, while at the same time creating an environment in which respect for languages other than one’s own is encouraged’ (Language in Education Policy Document, 1997 : 1). By redressing the top-down implementation of language policies and giving authority to SGB’s to decide upon language policy, as mentioned earlier, it was hoped that schools would follow the directives as stipulated in the LiEP. In particular, it was hoped that schools would implement of a policy of ‘additive bilingualism’, described by Chick and McKay (2001 : 163) as “the continued educational use of the learners’ first languages coupled with the respect for the cultural assumptions and values implicit in them.”

#### *Additive Bilingualism*

A succinct definition of additive bilingualism is offered by Heugh *et al* as being an educational situation “in which speakers of any language are introduced to a second language *in addition to* (my emphasis) the continued educational use of the primary language as a language of learning. The second language is never intended to replace the primary language, rather it is seen as complementary to the primary language.” (Heugh *et al.*, 1995 : vi).

To make this terminology more concrete, ‘additive bilingualism’ in our South African context would occur if children, on entering school for the first time, were taught through the medium of their mother tongue. That would mean all teaching, including content subjects, would be taught in the primary language of the child. The L2, in most instances English, would be *added to* the L1 initially through language lessons in that particular language and then gradually introduced as a MoI for content subjects until such time as the L1 and L2 were given equal instruction time. At this stage the children should be entering the “balanced bilingual” threshold, where the cognitive advantages of bilingualism should be apparent. The underlying principle of ‘additive bilingualism’ is based on the assumption that skills and knowledge are more easily acquired in the primary language and then transferred into a second language. This is supported by Cummins’ (1986) ‘Developmental Interdependence Hypothesis’, discussed earlier, which advocates that it is preferable for children to first learn concepts through the language in which they are most proficient. Once grasped, knowledge of concepts can be easily transferred into a second language.

### *Subtractive Bilingualism*

However, the principle of 'additive bilingualism' is the complete antithesis of the widely held assumption that the maintenance of the first language is unnecessary and perhaps even undesirable, and that the best way for speakers of other languages to acquire English is to learn it from as early as possible through submersion or a 'subtractive approach'. In many schools in South Africa, for the majority of the children, 'subtractive bilingualism' is the norm in that schools are either opting for the 'straight for English' approach in that they introduce English as the MoI from Grade 1, or an abrupt switch to English as the MoI from either Grade 4 or 5 is enforced.

There is a wealth of literature that suggests that children, who are taught in situations where a 'subtractive bilingual' approach is adopted, are severely disadvantaged (The Bullock Report 1975; Skutnabb-Kangas 1985 : 159; Pattanayk 1986 : 7; Mikes 1986 : 18). Macdonald (1991 : 26 – 27) believes that in addition to the fact that there is a wide, cultural gap between the traditional, non-formal systems of education and the formal western-type schooling, which is often reflected through language practices, another important reason why schooling is ineffective for the majority of children is because they have to learn through a language other than their own – subtractive bilingualism.

The Human Sciences Research Council's **Threshold Project** (1990), led by Carol Macdonald and which takes its name from Skutnabb-Kangas and Cummins 'threshold theory', discussed earlier, analyses the threshold or changeover period when English replaces L1 as a medium of instruction (MoI) at the end of Grade 4 in schools which were administered by the Department of Education and Training. This research shows that learning English as an L2 as well as using it as a MoI can only work if it develops from the solid foundation of L1 enliteration and proficiency, after which effective transfer (interdependence hypothesis, also discussed earlier) can take place.

Furthermore, Macdonald (1991 : 27) graphically describes the failure of the 'straight for English' approach chosen by Zambia, and goes on to point out that "research in Zambian schools has shown that the children in the third year of school can barely read because they have had to learn through a language (English), which is not at all related to the language which they speak (Bemba). The learners, educated in English, cannot explain in Bemba what they have learned in English. This means that they do not understand what they are taught in English. They can also not express, in English, ideas that they know in Bemba. They find it difficult to understand new concepts.....when they are taught in the new language. Even though they have supposedly had a lot of English in the classroom, children who leave school cannot use their English in the outside world."



Phillipson, Skutnabb-Kangas and Africa (1986 : 92) highlight the dangers of premature adoption of English as a MoI in Namibian education, and stress the need to strengthen and support the Namibian languages.

It is widely documented, as illustrated above, that subtractive bilingualism does not appear beneficial in any way to the child, whilst additive bilingualism and maintenance of the primary language is. It is advantageous socially, culturally and psychologically for the child, as well as cognitively. Thus the LiEP proposed by the government in 1997 is well on track. However, the problem lies with the fact that it is not being implemented.

### **THE DISPARITY BETWEEN POLICY AND PRACTICE**

Zinn (2002) in the School Language Policy Research Report, reveal that despite directives in the form of the National Language Policy Document, which calls for the recognition of and respect for of all eleven official languages, and the Language in Education Policy Document, which calls the implementation of additive bilingualism, few of these directives are actually being realised, especially in educational settings. Brown (1998), in his study of schools in the KwaZulu Natal area, found that although schools had made “*ad hoc* decisions on language policy, none of these decisions constituted a formal school level language policy as stipulated in the new legislation.” (Brown 1998 : 1).

Taylor and Vinjevoold (1999) reported that out of 24 schools in the Western Cape, Free State and Gauteng, none had language policies based on the State’s LiEP. Similarly, after a survey conducted on schools in the Eastern Cape, Burkett (1999 as quoted in Zinn 2002) found that almost no change had occurred in language policies of these schools since 1994.

Zinn (2002 : 9) expand further by indicating that despite the underlying policy of additive bilingualism proposed by the LiEP, many schools were doing almost the exact opposite of what was envisaged, either by adopting the ‘straight for English’ approach, or by introducing English as the MoI earlier than previously.

#### *Language planning : implementing a ‘bottom-up’ approach*

Vinjevoold (1999 : 205) believes that perhaps the most important reason for the lack of implementation of the LiEP is the fact that it has been left up to school governing bodies. It is somewhat ironic that despite this ‘bottom-up’ approach, as described and supported by Tollefson (1991) and Alexander (1992), nothing much has changed and probably will not change until there is “greater equity of distribution of economic resources...” (Lockett 1993 : 44). Despite a Language in Education Implementation Plan

released by the Department of Education in 1998, as well as a further five-point strategy to support the LiEP entitled '*A review of the implementation of the Language in Education Policy and its relevant norms and standards, and a refocused implementation plan*', approved in February 2002, schools are still seriously under-resourced, in terms of both materials and competent teachers, particularly primary (mother tongue) language teachers.

*The promotion of African languages against the hegemony of English*

Luckett (1993) further believes that in order to facilitate a 'bottom-up' approach to language planning, there needs to be a national language awareness campaign to popularise African languages. The MarkData survey (2000), carried out by Markinor, was one of the few studies that found some parental support for mother tongue instruction. However, the majority of African students and their parents appear *not* to favour a move away from English as the language of learning and teaching. They see their home languages as important only as languages of the home and in assisting them to construct a cultural identity, believing it to be the job of school to teach the languages of wider communication. Mhlanga (1995 as cited in Murray 2002 : 4) quotes one parent in KwaZulu Natal :

“When we send children to school we expect them to acquire new knowledge. By school-going age a child is already a fluent speaker of Zulu ... so there is no need for that child to dance on one spot ... that child must learn English and be taught in English.”

Such parental support for the maintenance of English as a MoI was confirmed by the PEI researchers (Vinjevold 1999). They found that learning through the primary language in the early years of schooling was on the decrease and gave as one of the main reasons the aspirations of parents, manifested in their choice of English as the language of instruction from as early as possible.

This suggests that English is still viewed by many black parents and students alike as the language of aspiration and socio-economic mobility. It is seen as the most widely spoken international language and has a high status as the language of wider communication, in the media, business, trade, science, research and diplomacy. Also, English is viewed by many indigenous people worldwide as the language of modernisation and progress, a language which will transform traditional, underdeveloped societies into modern, educated, technologically advanced and affluent societies (Tollefson 1991 as cited in Young 1995 : 64). The hegemonic power of English, whether rightly or wrongly, is with us.

A purely practical, pragmatic view is offered by Ntshangase (2000) :

“People are not passionate and sentimental about their languages purely because they are the languages of their forefathers. They become passionate about language if they are able to identify the relationship between language and personal collective growth. That is why there has been a radical shift over the past 13 years in language patterns in education in South Africa. Black parents send their children to ‘English-medium schools’ because they are better resourced schools and because the parents want their children to acquire and be proficient in English. Afrikaans parents have also not been left out. Over the past six years, 23% of traditionally Afrikaans schools have shifted to dual-medium schools or to becoming completely English-medium schools.”

Parents are powerful decision makers. Despite being given the right, by the South African Schools Act (1996), to determine their children’s medium of instruction, Luckett (1993) believes that unless campaigns are introduced to popularise African languages and educate parents as to the benefits of the additive approach, English is likely to retain its position of superiority and full implementation of the LiEP will fail.

In addition to this, and as mentioned previously, legacies from the past also haunt the new LiEP. The language policies of the Apartheid government, which deliberately denied black people access to English, were a conscious attempt to keep them subordinate and away from economic privilege. Even as far back as 1955, the dominant power of English was apparent :

“The Bantu are a subject people in a multi-racial and multi-lingual country and they realise that many economic avenues will be forever shut to them if they fail to master fluency and accuracy in the speaking and writing of the official languages, Afrikaans and English...”

(The Federal Council of African Teachers’ Association memorandum, 20 September 1955, quoted in Murray (2000) MEd. lecture notes.)

These sentiments are echoed by Mbatha (1960 : 26) in the following words :

“The African desperately strives for unity, and is strongly opposed to any tendency to division among his people. The multiplicity of African languages has always been regarded as an impediment to unity. In an effort to overcome this, the African has accepted English as the *lingua franca* of the sub-continent and is glad to see the disappearance of tribal barriers. To him, then, the re-tribalisation of the schools and the emphasis it lays on the vernaculars is a retrogressive step.”

Against this background, the promotion and development of the African languages will require substantial political will, and must be fought mainly by the African elite and middle class who are in a position to quell the dominance of English and promote the status of the African languages. However, ironically and paradoxically, it is precisely their ability to speak English which presently ensures them access to employment, and the promotion of African languages at the expense of English will, to some extent, require the black middle classes to “commit suicide as a class.” (Luckett 1993 : 54). Similarly, the maintenance and promotion of English in schools, especially ex-Model C schools, will ensure, for some, future access to employment. This is what Janks (2001) refers to as the ‘access paradox.’ Just as the language policies of the past were “fraught with tensions, contradictions and sensitivities,” (Bengu, Department of Education : 1997), so too, it appears, does the present LiEP.

### *The question of ‘what language?’*

The principle of ‘additive bilingualism’ is that learners should learn through their primary language. One problem with the notion of primary language is that learners cannot always identify easily with a specific language. Makoni (1995) points out that being multilingual, many Africans do not have a single home language, but rather a repertoire of languages used for different functions. He therefore questions the adequacy of concepts such as additive and subtractive bilingualism in that they fail to “capture the complexities of the African multilingual setting” (Makoni 1994 : 22). The fact that many people do not speak one language, but rather an amalgam of regional and community variations, is supported by both Ntshangase (1995) and Slabbert (1994). Neither the Constitution nor the LiEP appear to take into account the fact that a learner’s background may not necessarily be unitary (NCCRD 2000 : 17). Furthermore, many learners have no specific desire to consolidate an identity in any one linguistic group (Pirie 1984, as cited in Brown 1998 : 9).

## **PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS**

### *Implementation where reasonably practicable*

The main principles of the LiEP are reflected in the national language policy, which is in turn built into the Constitution. Section 31 of the Constitution states that “every person shall have the right to use the language of his or her choice.” Section 32 takes this one step further by stating that every person has the right “to instruction in the language of his or her choice *where this is reasonably practicable.*” The words ‘reasonably practicable’, according to Chaskalson (1996 as cited in the NCCRD 2000 : 16) make access to education in the language of choice a ‘qualified right’ which may in practice be restricted by practicality and expense.

Since the democratic elections of 1994 and the opening up of former ‘white’ schools to black learners, many have chosen to attend schools where their language is not on offer as medium of instruction. In

one study, Sigabi (reported by Vinjevold : 1999), found that some schools, situated in peri-urban areas, had to accommodate children from at least five language groups in one grade. In this instance, how is additive bilingualism to work?

Recommendations as to how, exactly, to overcome issues of practicality and expense, which are apparent in many schools including the one cited by Sigabi above, are not offered by the Constitution. Despite calling for the recognition of and respect for of the eleven official languages (Section 6), and the promotion of the official languages in education through additive bilingualism, the Constitution as well as the inherent LiEP as they stand are simply “overarching statement[s] of vision [which do] not ensure the funding, sanction or encouragement that would be necessary to realise [their] aims.” (NCCRD 2000 : 7). It is in this context that the focus for the present research lies, namely, to gain insight as to what *does* happen in classes in which children from different language groups, sent specifically to such a school so that they can receive instruction in English, have to learn through the medium of English.

#### *Learning in a multilingual environment*

Underlying the focus of this research project is the fact that the LiEP and its principle of additive bilingualism, on the one hand, is sound and well supported by research, but on the other hand, in our South African context, difficult to implement. This is explored in detail earlier in this chapter. Out of this, a need emerges to look at ways in which learning in a multilingual environment, in which the use of the L2 is used extensively, may be supported.

### **CLASSROOM RESEARCH IN MULTILINGUAL SETTINGS**

Huizenga (1990), in her review of recent studies on classroom centered research, believes that such research is valuable in enlightening us as to what should happen in classrooms, and highlights a number of practical strategies which appear to assist both teachers and learners in multilingual settings. Such practical strategies stem from what she describes as ‘listening input’, which is similar to what Krashen (1982) refers to as ‘comprehensible input.’

#### *Comprehensible input – a definition*

Krashen (1982) popularized the term ‘comprehensible input’ which refers to the process of meaning and understanding in the target language. He argued that mere exposure to the language was not enough. What was more important was that it was exposure that the learners could understand. He further maintained that without comprehensible input (in other words, what the teacher put in) that contained elements just slightly beyond the learners’ current understanding (his  $1 + i$  hypothesis ((Krashen 1982)), language acquisition and learning could not take place.

This implies that when teaching is in the target language, English as is the case in this research, to a class in which there are non-English speakers, as is also the case in this research, the teacher needs to provide the class with sufficient verbal input which is both understandable, yet at the same time challenging. This would encourage language acquisition in the target language.

*Comprehensible input : teacher talk, classroom organisation and lesson planning*

It is frequently assumed that learners will pick up English simply by being in an environment in which it is spoken, in other words, an environment in which there is enough input. However, research by Wong-Fillmore (1985) shows that it is not simply exposure, or input, that is important, but rather how much input, what kind of input and the quality thereof that count. She found that in some kindergarten (foundation phase) classes in a California school, children were making significant progress, whilst in others they were not, which led her to research whether this discrepancy was related to the way the teachers organised their class time. She found that by and large, the most successful classes for language learning were the ones that made the greatest use of teacher-directed activities and that in the more “progressive” classes, in which there was a lot of time spent on group work activities, language acquisition was largely unsuccessful. She relates this to the lack of good teacher input, combined with the inaccuracy of peer input. This is supported by Pica and Doughty (1985 : 132) who, after studying classes in which a great deal of group work was done, cautioned that “a steady diet of group activities may restrict the amount of grammatical input available to the classroom learner, leading perhaps to a stabilized non-target variety.”

Huizenga (1990) in support of the need for quality comprehensible input, summarises ten features mentioned in second language literature as being beneficial components of input, which should, ideally, be incorporated into lesson planning and classroom organization. Of these ten, the most salient ones for the purposes of the present research appear to be the following :

- Comprehensibility – input should not be too easy, or the children would learn nothing new, nor should it be too difficult, in which case the confidence of the children would be undermined. Input needs to be at a level which is understandable, but contains enough new elements to be challenging. Such a notion is supported by Krashen’s (1982) 1 + i hypothesis, mentioned earlier, as well as Vygotsky’s (Rodseth : 2001) zone of proximal development (ZPD), which illustrates the importance of mediation between children, teachers, parents or more capable peers.
- Contextualisation – in order to make input comprehensible, teachers should attempt to make information relevant to the immediate classroom environment or the learners’ personal

environments. This is supported by research by Krashen and Terrell (1983) and expounded in their book “The Natural Approach”, in which they say that context should be taken from the immediate classroom environment.

- Modification – input may become more comprehensible if the teacher repeats the same information a number of times or in a number of different ways, using paraphrases, simplified vocabulary or body language, as well as appropriate visual aids. Brookes (2001 : 87) found that books, pictures and flashcards are useful in providing visual support for the learners.
- Communication - Cummins (1988), supported by Wong-Fillmore (1985) believes that using English as a medium of instruction through which actual meaningful content is conveyed, works far better than simply trying to learn English as a subject. Malherbe’s (1978) research, particularly pertinent to the present research, confirmed that input was far likely to become intake if English was used as a MoI, rather than simply being taught as an isolated subject.
- Negotiation – learners should be allowed the opportunity to negotiate the meaning of the information given to them. This can only happen if teachers modify their input so as to talk *with* their learners, rather than talk *to* them.
- Repetition and predictability – Wong-Fillmore (1985) recommends, that particularly with respect to young learners, a structured classroom routine, in which clear boundaries are set, and in which the structure of the day as well as activities become predictable and worksheets or book exercises familiar, is more beneficial than a learning environment in which learners are not sure of what is to happen next.
- Positive affective environment – Krashen (1982) believes that if the learning environment is non-threatening and the learners are relaxed and in control of the information, their “affective filter” will be low. As a result, the input is more likely to become intake.

The challenge, thus, is to create a learning environment in which comprehensible input becomes intake. However, in such an endeavour, teachers must not lose sight of the fact that in learning a language, one must use the language, and in this respect, comprehensible output, too, becomes an important factor.

#### *Comprehensible output – a definition*

Swain (1995) emphasizes the importance of comprehensible output, in addition to comprehensible input, to enable learners to become aware of the structure of the target language as well as become competent users of it. In essence, this means that in learning a language, one has to speak and write it. In speaking it, learners may try out their ideas about how the language works and in addition, get feedback from interlocutors as to the correctness or otherwise of their efforts. In such an interchange, negotiation of meaning becomes important and questioning, in the form of clarification requests and confirmation checks, leads to the development of an interlanguage.

### *Comprehensible output and group work*

Although warned by Wong-Fillmore (1985) and Pica and Doughty (1985), about the over-use of group work and “junk” peer input, which can happen in classes where there is not enough teacher input, Huizenga (1990) does not see this as a reason not to do group work, but rather as a caution about the overuse of it. Learning a language through comprehensible input would be pointless if one were not able to practice it in real life situations, and this is where comprehensible output becomes important.

Therefore, for language acquisition to take place effectively, teachers need to include in their classroom organization and lesson planning enough opportunities for both comprehensible input and comprehensible output, which, in turn, would give the learners a wide variety of opportunities for the development of communicative competence.

### *A form-focussed approach*

When learning a language, it has been ascertained that learners not only have to have exposure to enough comprehensible input, but also have to have opportunities to practice the language (comprehensible output). However, it is important that this output, whether verbal or written, should be grammatically accurate, and in this respect attention to detail becomes an important factor in second language acquisition. Swain (1995) as cited in Larson-Freeman (1991 : 139), recognized that despite abundant comprehensible input, children in Canadian French immersion programmes did not fully acquire grammatical competence in French. She hypothesised that this was because they were not forced to focus on language form, something which production (output) forces learners to do. This resulted in a need to analyse the effects of form-focussed instruction on second language acquisition. Form-focussed instruction basically means “any pedagogical effort which is used to draw the learners’ attention to language form either implicitly or explicitly.” (Spada 1997 : 73).

In her review of classroom and laboratory research into form-focussed instruction, which research was done on “school-aged learners”, Spada concludes that form-focussed instruction *is* effective in second language acquisition, particularly in classrooms that are communicatively based. Thus, it appears that for teaching to be effective in second language classes, there needs to be sufficient comprehensible input, specifically in the form of teacher directed input, as well as output in that the teaching environment needs to be one which encourages communicative competence. However, added to this must be an attention to detail, a form-focussed approach, so that sufficient grammatical accuracy may be attained. Whilst this research *may* be directed more to older children, such communicatively based classrooms can be found in the lower levels of schools, in which children are introduced to both the mechanics of literacy as well as phonological awareness.



Classroom research is valuable in enlightening us as to what can and does happen in classrooms. However, as Lightbown (2000 : 431) cautions that it should not serve as a basis for telling teachers what to teach, or how to teach. All schools and all classes are different, depending on their context and composition and accordingly “teachers need to continue to draw on many other kinds of knowledge and experience in determining the teaching practices which are appropriate for their classrooms.”

## CONCLUSION

The historical overview of language planning and language policy, as well as the discussion on inherent attitudes towards language which form part and parcel of our political heritage, are intended to provide insight as to why the two schools under review in this dissertation have chosen the ‘straight for English’ route. The implications of such choice are reflected in the discussion of the cognitive, psychological and social benefits of additive bilingualism, an approach supported by the 1997 LiEP, and yet not implemented by many South African schools. Accordingly, there is a marked disparity between policy and practice and it is in this disparity that the focus of the present research may be found. It is in response to a need for research into what happens in classrooms that have, for whatever reasons, failed to implement the envisaged LiEP. It is research into the teaching strategies used by teachers who are faced with predominately L2 classes and yet teach through the primary medium of English.

## CHAPTER THREE – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter serves to provide the reader with an overview of the research methodology, methods and techniques chosen which frame this particular research project. At its most basic, research is the process of finding out something new, or making sense of something which is not understood or known at this present point in time. However, to be valid, it has to be undertaken in such a way that it can stand up to public scrutiny. It has to be done systematically, in that the steps taken towards the attainment of new knowledge have to have some sort of logical progression in which space has been left for critical thought, enquiry, reflection and interpretation. If this is done in a rigorous and organised way, and is logically presented within a well explained framework, which relates to the method and techniques used, the research can be validated among a “community of peers” (Janse van Rensburg 2001) and make a claim to knowledge. It is this that makes research *scientific*.

### RESEARCH GOALS

The purpose of this research is to study and compare two Grade 1 classes in English medium schools in different situational contexts in order to gain insight into why each school favours English as the medium of instruction. Parallel to this is the search for insight into what strategies the teachers of these classes use to assist communication and enhance understanding when teaching through the medium of English to non-English speakers. It is envisaged that through this process, a rich description of the learning strategies and language practices of these two classes will be provided which will, hopefully, be beneficial to other teachers who are faced with similar situations.

### METHODOLOGY

#### *The Interpretive Paradigm*

There are many different paradigms in educational research all of which provide a framework for the methods and techniques which underpin it. Which paradigm one chooses is largely dependent on what one wants to find out, but also on what views of reality one wants to project.

As its name suggests, the interpretive paradigm, is concerned with interpreting and understanding human action. Interpretive researchers believe that reality is never fixed and questions can never be found ‘out there’ in a static world. Instead, people perceive things differently and what they perceive is directly influenced by what they have experienced. While there may be law-like generalities in social life, it is also necessary to move beyond the hard facts and figures towards an understanding of how teachers and learners are dealing with the fact that such approach has not been adopted. The interpretive paradigm is

concerned with the individual and the “central endeavour in the context of the interpretive paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience” (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001).

Human behaviour is viewed as being influenced by external factors. What we do, to some extent, is based on attitudes and values gleaned from experience. Society, including the language used within it, is a human construct. How we view language and how we use it is largely dependent on the social values implicit therein, and this has direct impact on the individuals within society. There are, in the interpretive paradigm, multiple realities, which are constructed socially by individuals. Individuals may view the world in ways which are similar, but not necessarily the same, so concepts of reality vary from one person to the next.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2001 : 23) believe that interpretive researchers begin with individuals and attempt to understand their interpretations of the world around them. They work directly with experience and understanding, and theory emerges from particular situations and must be ‘grounded’ in the data generated by the research process. The knowledge gained from this understanding is ‘inductive’ in that it is hypothesis- or theory-generating (Merriam 2001 : 4). This means that rather than testing existing theory, it builds concepts, hypotheses or theories, and is often undertaken either because there is a lack of theory, or because existing theory is not adequate in explaining a certain phenomenon (Merriam 2001 : 7).

Bassey (1999 : 40) sees interpretive research as a category of empirical research. He describes the latter as being research which focuses on data collection. Even interpretive research has to have some form of empirical element to it in order to counter threats to validity, and this empirical element is found in clear and structured data collection from which interpretations can be generated. Theoretical research emanating from empirical research (data collection) “has the purpose of trying to describe, interpret or explain what is happening without making value judgements or trying to induce any change. The researchers are trying to portray the topic of their enquiry as it is.” (Bassey 1999 : 40).

Both Bassey’s (1999 : 40) description of theoretical research above as well as Merriam’s (2001 : 7) idea that sometimes, interpretive research is undertaken because existing theory is either lacking or inadequate, seems, in some ways, to be pertinent to the present research in that one of the goals of the present research is to seek clarity as to why the existing LiEP is not supported despite its theoretical value. This leads logically to the second goal of this research, which is to find out how teachers, in such situations where the LiEP is not being supported, cope when teaching in English to non-English speakers. As such, this research sets out to provide a rich description of language practices, in keeping with the descriptive research question of what happens in the classes under review. Because, however,

of the nature of interpretive / qualitative research, some form of grounded theory may become apparent from the data collected. As it appears with all methods and methodologies, they are, to a certain extent, interlinked.

### *Qualitative research*

Qualitative research is an umbrella term used to describe forms of enquiry which will assist us to understand and interpret the meanings of social phenomena, such as language, within a social setting, such as a classroom (Merriam 2001 : 5). The terms qualitative research and interpretive research are often used interchangeably and are based on the same philosophical assumption that reality is ever changing and constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds. Bassey (1999 : 43) believes that the term 'qualitative' can be used to describe the data collected by interpretive researchers, in that it usually consists of detailed observations, field notes, reports and conversations. The quality of such research lies in its detail and depth.

The qualitative aspect of the interpretive paradigm is pertinent to the current research in that its primary goal is to interpret human behaviour in terms of teacher practices pertaining to language use within two classrooms. Its secondary goal is to gain an understanding as to why, in the light of past and present language policies, these two schools have chosen a certain route.

## **METHOD**

### *Case Study*

As with many research concepts, case study is often difficult to define accurately. As Lincoln and Guba (1995 : 360) succinctly put it :

“While the literature is replete with references to case studies and with examples of case study reports, there seems to be little agreement about what a case study is.”

The underlying emphasis in most descriptions of study that it is the study of a particular case, a single unit, a “bounded system” (Smith 1978 as cited in Merriam 2001 : 19 and Stake 1995 : 2). This allows us to see the case as a single thing, an entity, a unit around which there are boundaries. Miles and Huberman (1994, in Merriam 2001 : 27) describe it as a “phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context,” and graphically illustrate it as a circle with a heart at the centre. The heart is the focus of the study, while the circle delineates the case. With the present research in mind, the two classrooms are the cases, and the heart is language.

Several writers have advanced definitions of the case study that are in keeping with this discussion. Stake (1995 : xi) describes case study as “the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances.” He adds that it is an “integrated system” (1995 : 2) with a boundary and working parts. Merriam (2001 : 27) describes a qualitative case study as “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon or social unit.” MacDonald and Walker (1977 : 181, cited in Merriam 2001 : 29) describe it as “the examination of an instance in action.”

In addition to the numerous definitions of case study in general, many writers differentiate particular types of case study. I shall attempt to highlight those which I feel are relevant to the current research project. Stake (1995) sees case study as either intrinsic or instrumental. I feel that the present research incorporates elements of both. Instrumental case study he describes as occurring when “we have a research question, a puzzlement, a need for general understanding, and feel that we may get insight into the question by studying a particular case...This use of case study is to understand something else. Case study here is *instrumental* to accomplishing something other than understanding [the particular case]...and we may call our enquiry *instrumental case study*.” (Stake 1995 : 3). In the case of the present research, the goal is to understand teaching practice – that is the focus, the instrument of the study, and it is through the selection of particular cases that understanding of teaching practice may be achieved. However, it is also in some ways *intrinsic* in that it is intended to be descriptive – there is intrinsic interest in the case itself, in how two particular teachers, in contrasting situations, cope with the different language abilities of the children whilst teaching through the medium of English. Both the *intrinsic* and the *instrumental* aspects of Stake’s definitions encompass the current research goals, to understand why English is used as the MoI despite the theoretical value of the additive approach, and to describe the communication strategies used by teachers in this situation.

Similar to Miles and Huberman’s (1994) graphic description of the circle with the heart at the center, Stake uses the Greek symbol theta ( $\theta$ ) to represent the case, and a second Greek letter, iota ( $\iota$ ) to draw attention to the importance of issues. The issue of concern in the present research is language and, as Stake so eloquently writes and as I have attempted to illustrate in the theoretical framework which precedes this chapter, “issues are not simple and clean, but intricately wired to political, social, historical and especially personal contexts. ...Issues help us expand upon the moment, help us to see the instance in a more historical light, help us recognize the pervasive problems in human interaction. Issue questions or issue statements provide a powerful conceptual structure for organizing the study of a case.” (Stake 1995 : 16 – 17). For instrumental case study, iota (the issue) is dominant and becomes the focus (the heart) of the case. For intrinsic case study, theta (the case) is dominant in that it describes the issues. In the current research, both are important.

Stenhouse (1985, cited in Bassey 1999 : 27), identified four broad styles of case study, of which his description of *educational case study* seems most pertinent. “*Educational case study* [is where] many researchers using case study methods are concerned neither with social theory nor with evaluative judgement, but rather with the understanding of educational action...They are concerned to enrich the thinking and discourse of educators either by the development of educational theory or by refinement of prudence through the systematic and reflective documentation of evidence.” (Stenhouse 1985 : 50 quoted in Bassey 1999 : 28).

Yin (1993) categorized three forms of case study, of which his definition of *descriptive case study* is applicable to the present research : “A *descriptive case study* presents a complete description of a phenomenon within its context.” (Yin 1993 : 5).

Of Bassey’s (1999 : 58) three types of case study, the *story-telling and picture drawing case study* appears to be most apt in describing the current research in that it is intended to provide a rich description of what happens in the two classrooms under review with regard to language use and the strategies that the teachers use to cope with the different language abilities of the children, all learning through the medium of English.

In terms of the above definitions of case study, the present case study then, may be described as a holistic, comparative case study of two ‘bounded units’, which is both intrinsic in that it attempts to further understanding of an issue, and instrumental in that it aims at rich description, to paint a picture with words. It is educational in that it deals with educational theory related to language acquisition, which is in turn influenced by the impact of society on language.

#### *Limitations of case study research*

It is perhaps in the word ‘generalisability’ that the first limitation of case study research can be found. By this I understand that one cannot make grand, sweeping statements about language issues after studying just two classrooms. However, I believe that this is not in the nature of most qualitative research anyway, in that qualitative research is aimed at quality interpretations of single entities, which *cumulatively*, with other similar projects, may lead to illuminating some theoretical aspect of language use. This cumulative process of bringing case studies together has been described by Tripp (1985), cited in Bassey (1999 : 33), as ‘qualitative generalisation’, similar, according to Bassey, to what Stake (1995 : 87) calls ‘naturalistic generalization.’ In order to minimize the negative effects of generalisation, Stake provides a useful list of suggestions one may adopt to guard against threats of validity (discussed in more detail later) which stem from naturalistic generalisation, the most relevant of which, for the present

research, is to “describe the methods of case research used in ordinary language including how the triangulation (discussed in more detail later) was carried out, especially in the confirmation and efforts to disconfirm major assertions.’ (Stake 1995 : 87). I believe that with adequate triangulation and careful, confirmed analysis of the raw data, the limitations of this case study, including validity threats, may be eliminated.

Often cited against case study research are reliability and researcher bias. As Hamel (1993 : 23, cited in Merriam 2001 : 43) states, “the case study has basically been faulted for its lack of representativeness...and its lack of rigor on the collection, construction and analysis of the empirical materials that give rise to this study. This lack of rigor is linked to the problem of bias...introduced by the subjectivity of the researcher.” However, it is impossible for the researcher to go into a situation as a clean slate, as researchers too are human and they construct and interpret reality in terms of their experience. However, the simple awareness of the possibility of bias should lead to a more critical appraisal of the data, and this, combined with triangulation of methods, ought to reduce, if not quite eliminate, researcher bias.

The following quotation from Merriam aptly sums up the value of case study, and in particular the method used for the present research project :

The case study offers a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon. Anchored in real-life situations, the case study results in a rich and holistic account of a phenomenon. It offers insights and illuminates meanings that expand its readers’ experiences. These insights can be construed as tentative hypotheses that help structure future research; hence, case study plays an important role in advancing a field’s knowledge base. (2001 : 41)

## **SAMPLING**

### *Comparative case studies*

A number of terms can be used when researchers conduct a study using more than one case, or sample. Stake (1995 : 4) refers to this as collective case study, whilst Merriam (2001 : 40) calls them multiple case studies, also commonly referred to as cross-case, multicase, multisite studies or comparative case studies. Instead of studying one Grade 1 classroom, the present research intends

studying two Grade 1 classrooms, through which a cross-case analysis will be offered, out of which it is hoped that there will come generalisations about good communication strategies used by the teachers.

“By looking at a range of similar and contrasting cases, we can understand a single-case finding, grounding it by specifying how and where and, if possible, why it carries as it does. We can strengthen the precision, the validity and the stability of the findings” (Miles and Huberman 1994 : 29).

In essence, sampling involves the selection of a research site, a case or a unit. Once again, different strategies of sampling are highlighted by a number of writers. The two most basic types of sampling appear to be probability sampling (random sampling) and non-probability sampling. The latter is usually the method of choice for qualitative research (Merriam 2001 : 61). Patton (1990, cited in Merriam 2001 : 61) has also referred to this as ‘purposeful’ sampling and argues that “the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting *information rich cases* for study in depth. Information rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, hence the term *purposeful* sampling”. Purposeful sampling can be further subdivided. The most relevant subdivision for the present research appears to be ‘maximum variation’ sampling. By the use of this sampling method, findings from “a small sample of great diversity” yield “important shared patterns that cut across cases and derive their significance from having emerged out of heterogeneity” (Patton 1990 as quoted in Merriam 2001 : 63).

It is with these insights in mind that the two schools to be studied for the present research were chosen.

#### *School A*

The first school on the site on which the present School A stands today was opened in November 1885, by the Roman Catholic Bishop of the area, and was housed in the Catholic Church and adjacent Church Hall. It is situated in the central region of the Eastern Cape.

In the 1950’s, under Apartheid Laws, the school, which catered for both African and ‘Coloured’ pupils, was divided into two schools and the ‘Coloured’ school was transferred to another site, whilst the present school continued to serve the African community. The school was a Xhosa medium school, which eventually was closed in the 1970’s owing to lack of resources and personnel, as well as poor facilities.

In April 1993, the Sisters of the Holy Assumption, an order within the Roman Catholic Church, launched a new English medium school with a Sub-B (Grade 2) class of 18 pupils which met in the vestry of the Church. The teacher, the present Grade 3 teacher, was English speaking, and the teacher aid, the present Grade 1 teacher, Ms M, was Xhosa / English bilingual. This was as a direct consequence of the fact that many children from disadvantaged backgrounds were, at the time of integration, unsuccessful in gaining entrance into former Model C schools, primarily because their proficiency in English was limited. The



following excerpt is taken from the minutes of a meeting held to discuss the proposed establishment of an English medium school in February, 1993 :

*We understand from the parents that the children have been turned away in great numbers from the now 'open' public schools because they are unable to converse and participate in English, with sufficient ease at both Senior and Junior level.*

*It is common knowledge that English is scarcely used as a medium of instruction in the township primary schools. And children are either refused admission to open schools through their lack of fluency in English, or are unable to avail of the opportunity of admission to the private schools because of the exorbitant cost of school fees, or remain in the most unsatisfactory DET schools.*

*In the light of this, parents have been appealing, in ever greater numbers, requesting us to provide their children with private coaching in English. Considering the degree of fluency necessary, this has not been at all satisfactory.*

*It seems that the answer to this crying need is to establish an English Medium Primary School in the township. And this is what we hope to do. With the assistance of the Institute for the Study of English in Africa (ISEA) at Rhodes, we plan to base our approach on the MOLTENO programme's 'Breakthrough Xhosa' and 'Bridge to English.'*

In an attempt to secure initial financial aid for this project, correspondence was entered into between the Assumption Sisters and proposed funders, the goals for the project being stated as follows :

*We wish to provide a high quality primary education through the medium of English for black pupils in order to prepare them more effectively for High School where they must study all subjects through the medium of English. This will be the first such school in the area. We also aim to achieve this goal without neglecting the children's own language and culture.*

*Our main objective is to provide for the children a milieu of "total immersion" in the English language, in a township environment.*

Such was the success of this first class, "*Our first little class has made tremendous progress in English since we opened in April.....*" (school funding document), further funding was obtained and in October 1993, work on the new school building began, and the main school building, consisting of seven classrooms, plus a library and administration block, was constructed. The development of the library was considered to be especially important, and this excerpt from a letter requesting financial assistance illustrates the tacit policy of mother tongue maintenance together with the acquisition of English :

*In view of the emphasis in our curriculum on acquiring fluency in English and Xhosa, the media room and library will be especially important resources.*

In 1994, School A consisted of three classes – Sub A, Sub B and Std 1, (Grade 1, 2 and 3), with a total of 94 pupils and three full-time teachers. The then Department of Education and Training, whilst agreeing to register the school, only financed two teachers' salaries, and the Sub B teacher received no salary from

the government. In 1995, another class (Std 2 / Grade 4) was added and the number of pupils in each class was increased to approximately 40. As this was nearer the Department of Education's normal pupil / teacher ratio, it was hoped that the Department would agree to pay two more salaries. However, there was also an urgent need for supplementary staff. The reasons for this, as given in a letter written to secure further funding, appeared to be language related:

*As an English medium school in a Xhosa speaking environment, we feel we must supplement the staff quota to ensure that :*

- a) all the children, especially the late entrants to English medium, progress to a satisfactory standard of English; and that*
- b) the Xhosa mother-tongue is also taught to a satisfactory standard.*

*We therefore employ two part-time teachers :*

- i) a part-time English Language teacher who gives special 'bridging' for children who need extra tuition to bring them up to standard;*
- ii) a part-time Xhosa mother-tongue teacher who gives Xhosa lessons to those classes taught by an English speaking teacher.*

*We are satisfied that these additional members of staff are the very minimum necessary to attain a good academic standard and we trust that you will be able to assist us in meeting the cost involved.....*

From the above, the importance of mother tongue maintenance is appreciated, against the overarching goal of providing English medium instruction so as to allow the pupils to cope more successfully at high school level.

In 1999, another two classrooms were added, funded by an overseas source, and in 2000, as well as the addition of yet a further two classrooms, a school, no longer in use and consisting of pre-fabricated structures, was purchased, moved and erected, all through generous sponsorship.

Also in 2000, a pre-primary class was added. This was considered essential to allow children to gain some proficiency in English before beginning Grade 1. Today, this pre-primary class serves as a feeder to the school, as most of the Grade 1 intake consists of children who have previously attended it.

At present, in 2003, there are 420 learners from Grade 0 (pre-primary) to Grade 9. All these learners are Xhosa speaking. There is one class per grade, with no more than 40 learners in each grade. There are twelve full-time members of staff, of whom four are English speaking, four Afrikaans speaking and four Xhosa speaking. With the exception of the Xhosa speaking teachers and one English only teacher, all the teachers consider themselves to be English / Afrikaans bilingual, whilst the Xhosa speaking staff consider themselves to be English / Xhosa bilingual. Of the English / Afrikaans bilinguals, there is one staff member who is also conversant in Xhosa.

Generally, the school is well resourced. In 1999, further funding enabled the installation of a fully equipped computer centre and technology centre. In addition, there is a well-stocked library, which is supported by READ and The Learning for Living Business Trust Project, both NGO's which promote literacy. The library also houses a video player, and educational videos are sponsored by the Discovery Channel Global Education Fund.

School A also offers a range of sports, including rugby, netball and basketball, in which the learners are extremely successful. Their three choirs have won numerous national awards. Extra-mural activities also include traditional and modern dancing and a debating society, which activities involve many learners.

Although School A has no official School Language Policy, its tacit language policy remains as it was at its inception – to provide English medium instruction to Xhosa speaking children, whilst maintaining development of their L1 and respect for the associated culture.

#### *School B*

School B, like School A, is situated in the central region of the Eastern Cape and is a formerly whites only government school. School B was officially opened in June 1949, but its history stretches far back into the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The land upon which School B is built was acquired originally by one of the 1820 Settlers, a bachelor, who was interested in both educational and church matters. His will, dated 29 November 1858, stated :

*I declare and give and bequeath the lands and buildings belonging to me situated in..... to be held in Trust for the development of a school for poor and destitute children. I declare my Will to be that at my death, the property belonging to me ..... should be sold and after payment of my just debts.....and all legacies .....I declare to give the balance thereof to be held in Trust and the profits thereof to be appropriated in an endowment for the support and maintenance of the School as herein before referred to.*

Shortly afterwards, a school was erected to serve the poorer, white children of the town. The school consisted of two buildings, one of brick and one of corrugated iron. This school was named after its benefactor, although little is known of its early history. By 1896 it was standing empty and the building was then taken over by the Sisters of the Community of the Resurrection, an Anglican Order in charge of the Teacher Training College and of various schools for the poor and orphan children of the district, as well as the children of railway workers. This school provided a very important educational home for many. However, in its Annual Report of 1927, the Community of the Resurrection states :

*".....our numbers are rather low.....due to many people leaving the district in search of work. The poor people are having a very hard time now in this long-continued drought. It is with real sorrow and after much consideration that the Community has decided that it is right to close down the school. It was and has been the only school in the town for poor children and met a very great need. Now, however, the neighbourhood has changed; there are excellent Government Schools in the town and the numbers in the school have been going down steadily."*

When exactly it was demolished is not established, but by 1928 it had gone and the ground once again became overgrown and desolate.

By 1925 it was recognized that another school, serving the southern areas of the town (there was one already established serving the northern areas) needed to be developed. However, nothing further happened until about 1940, when the first principal of School B, at the time teaching at another school in the area, realised the need to build again on the vacant plot, because growing numbers forced the split of the lower classes (Sub A to Std 1) from the main school. Building commenced in 1948, but there were delays because of a lack of building supplies following the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. On Monday 16<sup>th</sup> May 1949, the children moved into the new school buildings of School B, which adopted its present name. The school accommodated both boys and girls from Sub A (Grade 1) to Std 1 (Grade 3). No mention is made of either language or race, but it is known that since its inception, teaching at School B has always been through the medium of English to white children.

The school grew and in the early 1970's a second storey was added to the eastern wing, providing three more classrooms, and in 1974 a pre-primary class was added, and a second pre-primary class in 1984.

In 1994, with the demise of apartheid and the move towards integrated schooling, School B became a Model C school, and admitted children of racial groups other than white. In 1995, Xhosa was introduced as a third language at Standard 1 (Grade 3) level. No mention of any other language is made in any of the documents, but it is known that English has continued to be the medium of instruction.

Following 1995, another storey was added above the two pre-primary classes, which houses the new media centre (library and computers), a book room and another Grade 1 classroom.

Today, School B accommodates 240 children. Of these, approximately 63 are Xhosa speaking, 57 Afrikaans speaking, 117 English speaking and 3 having a foreign L1. There are two Grade 0 pre-primary classes. There are three Grade 1 classes, two Grade 2 classes and two Grade 3 classes. Most of the children are well provided for, but some come from poorer homes and live in the nearby location.

There are nine full time staff members, including the principal, all of whom speak English as a L1. In addition, all the teachers considered themselves to be English / Afrikaans bilinguals. As well as the nine full time staff members, there are three teacher aids of whom two are Xhosa / English bilingual and one English L1 only. Of the English / Afrikaans bilinguals, there is one who is also conversant in Xhosa.

There is no formal language policy at School B. However, the policy statement of the school reads :

*School B is an English speaking school. Although we teach both Afrikaans and Xhosa, our medium of instruction is English.*

Afrikaans is introduced as a second language in the third term of Grade 1, and Xhosa is introduced as a third language in Grade 3.

## **TECHNIQUES AND METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION**

### *Observations*

Essentially, observations are about describing a setting and events that take place within that setting. They form a primary source of data collection in qualitative research. They are important in that they take place in the natural setting and they represent a firsthand encounter with the phenomena under review (Merriam 2001 : 94). There are two types of observation, participant observation and non-participant observation (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2001 : 186), which is also referred to as structured observation. For the purposes of this research, structured observation was used in that the researcher was seated at the back of the class, which allowed her to observe and note relevant observations independently with a pre-determined grid or checklist. There were three main areas of focus, these being classroom organisation, learning areas and how they are taught, and strategies used to assist learning. Within these areas, specific focus was on the following :

- \* strategies used by teachers to assist understanding in children for whom English is not the L1, including, but not necessarily limited to –
- \* how and when languages are used and for what purpose;
- \* interaction between peers and between teacher and children, with a view to understanding language use in both formal and informal settings;
- \* group work – patterns and identities of groups, and how they are formed and for what purpose;
- \* attitudes, both what can be observed and what can be inferred (the latter through non-verbal forms of expression);

- \* atmosphere – contexts of different lessons and how this may influence behaviour, participation and interest.

### *Problems with observation as a research tool*

Observation is a painstaking process! If tape recordings of certain lessons have been made to support the observations, transcribing is lengthy. Yet one should also resist the temptation to collect or record too much data, and thus be in danger of “failing to see the wood for the trees.”

Observation also has its limitations. Participant, non-structured observation in particular has been criticised as being highly subjective and unreliable (Croll 1986 : 1 and Merriam 2001 : 95). Interpretive, qualitative research readily acknowledges that “all human knowledge is fundamentally influenced by the subjective character of the human beings who collect and interpret it.” (Adler and Adler 1987 : 31). Granted, but it should still be possible both to recognise human subjectivity and to impose certain checks on that subjectivity in the form of grids and checklists which make for more structured observation, notwithstanding the need *not* to lose sight of the broader context.

As Merriam (2001 : 111) writes,

“Observation is a major means of collecting data in qualitative research. It offers a firsthand account of the situation under study and, when combined with interviewing and document analysis, allows for a holistic interpretation of the phenomenon being investigated.”

### *Interviews*

“Much of what we cannot observe for ourselves has been or is being observed by others. Two principal uses of case study are to obtain the descriptions and interpretations of others. The case will not be seen the same by everyone. Qualitative researchers take pride in discovering and portraying the multiple views of the case. The interview is the main road to multiple realities.” (Stake 1995 : 64).

The research interview is intended to probe a respondent’s views and perspectives on pertinent issues (Wellington 2000 : 72). It is to elicit information that cannot be observed. It may also be used to substantiate observations, to validate what has been observed as well as the interpretations thereof. Herein lies its strength in the present research, and determines the type of interview to be used.

As it is to be used to substantiate observations, the interview itself will of necessity be ‘semi-structured’. Powney and Watts (1987 : 17) refer to this kind of interview as a ‘respondent interview’, in which the researcher retains control throughout most of the process. However, whilst remaining in control, the

researcher also has considerable flexibility over the range and order of questions to be asked (Wellington 2000 : 74). Questions emerging from previous observations are formatted prior to the interview, yet sufficient flexibility needs to be given both to the researcher over the range and order of the questions and to the informant / interviewee to express his/her own views. Specific information is required, so sections of the interview of necessity have to be structured, but other parts of the interview are to be guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, and neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time. This allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging views of the respondent and to new ideas on the topic (Merriam 2001 : 74).

### *Document analysis*

The first step in the analysis of documents is finding relevant materials. In the case of the present research, this is in the form of documents such as histories of the schools, their various policies including language policies and so on. If such documents exist, they are usually accessible and often contain information that would take much time to gather otherwise. Once the documents have been located, their authenticity must be assessed. I found the most useful framework for interrogating documents in educational research was that given by Wellington (2000 : 117).

*Authorship:* Who wrote it? Who are they? What is their position and their bias?

*Audience:* Who was it written for? Why them? What assumptions does it make including assumptions about its audience?

*Production:* Where was it produced and when? By whom? What were the social, political and cultural conditions in which it was produced?

*Presentation, appearance, image:* How is it presented, eg. Colour or black and white; glossy paper; highly illustrated? What 'image' does it portray?

*Intentions:* Why was it written? With what purpose in mind?

*Style, function, genre:* In what style is it written? How direct is the language? Is it written to inform, to persuade, to convince, to sell?

*Content:* Which words, terms or buzzwords are commonly used? Are values conveyed?

*Context / frame of reference:* When was it written/ What came before and after it? How does it relate to previous documents and later ones?

The limitations that may become apparent from documents of this nature, especially school documents, are that they may not be relevant to the research question, or that the information contained "may not fit present definitions of the concepts under scrutiny; they may lack correspondence with the conceptual model" (Riley 1963, cited in Merriam 2001 : 124).

Document analysis can be a valuable technique for gathering data. Perhaps more importantly, in the case of the present research, document analysis may be used as a means to counter validity threats, as part of the triangulation process.

### *Triangulation*

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2001 : 112) define triangulation as “the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour.” Of the different types of triangulation categorized, ‘methodological triangulation’, also referred to by Denzin 1970, cited in Wellington 2000 : 24) as ‘between method triangulation,’ appeared to be the most appropriate for the present research. This means that the three methods or techniques of data collection - observation, interview and document analysis - are used together to give credibility, objectivity and validity to the interpretation of the data. In the present research, triangulation was also achieved by checking with the two teachers involved that my interpretation matched, and accurately reflected, their views and attitudes.

## **KEY ISSUES IN RESEARCH**

### *Reliability*

In order to have any positive effect on either the practice or the theory of education, studies and research undertaken must be rigorously conducted and present insights and conclusions that ring true to other readers, teachers and researchers alike. A qualitative study must provide the reader with a depiction in enough depth and detail to illustrate that the conclusion makes sense (Firestone 1987, cited in Merriam 2001 : 199). This leads us to the issue of reliability in research.

Reliability refers to the extent to which research findings can be replicated. This poses a problem in qualitative research because the knowledge base or paradigm underpinning such research assumes that human behaviour is never static and cannot be isolated. Since there are many interpretations of what is happening, there is no measurable point, as there may be in quantitative research, from which repeated studies in the interpretive paradigm may be taken to establish validity, in the traditional sense of the word. In fact, because of the multifaceted nature of education and human action within it, achieving reliability is, according to Merriman (2001 : 206), impossible. As an alternative, Lincoln and Guba (1985 : 288), suggest that issues such as “dependability” and “consistency” be used when determining the reliability of qualitative research. The question, then, is not whether the study can be replicated, but whether the conclusions are *consistent* with the data collected. Consistency may be achieved through triangulation – using multiple methods of data collection – and by leaving an *audit trail* (Merriam 2001 : 207) which allows the reader to follow the trail of the researcher. “If we cannot expect others to replicate



our account, the best we can do is explain how we arrived at our results” (Dey 1993 : 251, cited in Merriam 2001 : 207).

### *Validity*

As stated above, reliability is concerned with whether a study may be replicated. Validity, on the other hand, is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be *applied* to other situations. There is a subtle difference. Whilst findings in qualitative research may not be considered reliable in the traditional sense of the word, they may be valid if they are seen to fit with similar situations. This supports Tripp’s call for a *cumulative* process in bringing case studies together (Tripp 1985, cited in Bassey 1999 : 33). He sees this as ‘qualitative generalisation’, what Stake (1995 : 42) called ‘naturalistic generalisation’, in which the reader of a research project, meeting the facts of a new case, applies them to his or her knowledge of similar cases.

To enhance the validity in a qualitative study, Merriam (2001 : 211) suggests the use of “rich, thick description” which will provide enough description to allow readers to determine how closely their situations approximate with that being described. Secondly, there are “multisite designs”, or comparative study, the use of more than one case, especially cases that “maximise diversity in the phenomenon of interest” which allow the findings to be applied by readers to a greater range of other situations. This can be achieved through careful, purposeful sampling, as has been attempted in the present research.

### *Ethics*

Ensuring both reliability and validity in qualitative research involves conducting the investigation in an ethical manner. The standard data collection techniques of observation and interviewing present their own ethical dilemmas. As Stake so eloquently puts it, “Qualitative researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world...” (Stake 1994, cited in Merriam 2001 : 214).

Bassey (1999 : 74) succinctly groups research ethics into three categories which are : respect for democracy, respect for truth and respect for persons.

Firstly, respect for democracy emphasises the fact that whilst researchers in a democratic society can expect certain freedoms, such as the freedom to conduct research and all that goes with it, with this freedom come certain responsibilities insofar as respect for the rights of others are concerned. Provided that these responsibilities are fastidiously honoured, researchers may enjoy the freedom to conduct their investigations within a democratic society.

Secondly, researchers need to ensure their respect for truth, in that the data collection, analysis, and the final reporting of the findings must be done in an open and honest way. No information should be falsified or misconstrued so as to deceive others intentionally, and researchers need to be sure not to deceive themselves in trying to find something in the data to fit with a hypothesis, that simply is not there. Trustworthiness is an important element of truthfulness, and research must be seen to be trustworthy through the triangulation of methods and the evidence of an audit trail, as discussed above. Whilst the purpose of this research is to present a rich description of the communication strategies used by two teachers, it is not intended to be judgmental in any way.

Thirdly, researchers need to ensure a respect for persons. Permission must always be sought before any observations or interviews may be done, or any tape recordings made. Once data has been gathered from either observations or interviews, particularly interviews, the researcher must ensure that the analysis and reporting of the findings is acceptable to the interviewee. Should the interviewee be unhappy about any aspect of the analysis or report, the researcher is obliged to respect this, and adhere to the interviewee's wishes insofar as changes or omissions to the report are concerned. It is only with full permission of the interviewee that a researcher can assume 'ownership' of the data for dissemination. Linked to this is respect for the institutions within which one conducts the research, as well as their and their employees' anonymity.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

Data analysis is the process of making sense out of the data, interpreting what has been seen and what has been said, and creating sense and meaning from this. Data analysis is probably the most important part of the research project. It is the heart of the research project, in that it is through careful and thoughtful analysis that the researcher may make a claim to knowledge – the point of doing the research in the first place. Bassey (1999 : 84) describes data analysis as “an intellectual struggle with an enormous amount of raw data in order to produce a meaningful and trustworthy conclusion which is supported by a concise account of how it was reached.” However, exactly how to go about this is often elusive.

Perhaps the most important point made by writers on data analysis is that it is an integral part of the whole research process (Wellington 2000 : 134), and should start the moment the first data is collected. This is supported by Merriam (2001 : 151) who believes that data collection and analysis involve a *simultaneous* activity in qualitative research. “Analysis begins with the first interview, the first observation, the first document read. Emerging insights, hunches and tentative hypotheses direct the next phase of data collection, which in turn leads to the refinement or reformulation of questions, and so

on. It is an interactive process throughout that allows the investigator to produce believable and trustworthy findings” (Merriam 2001 : 151). If this is not done, one may find oneself faced with an inordinate amount of raw data at the end, pages of transcribed interviews, pages of classroom observations, through which one has to sift for who knows what – even this may be unclear if no analysis or attempt at categorisation has been done up until this point.

### *Data management*

Reid (1992, cited in Merriam 2001 : 167) divides data management into three stages : data preparation, data identification and data manipulation.

Data preparation involves preparing the data for analysis, transcribing the interviews, typing up the observation notes from the day’s observations. It is the very first step, and must be done continuously and rigorously so that the data is fresh in one’s mind. This results in the first set of data, the first clean record from which to work, on which analysis may begin almost immediately in one’s reading and re-reading of it, during which notes or comments may be made in the margin on tentative themes, ideas and things to pursue.

Secondly, data identification involves dividing the data into meaningful segments, perhaps in terms of themes, clusters, or categories (the decision of what categories to use is discussed below).

Thirdly, data manipulation involves the organisation, sorting and rearrangement of categories into a unit or display, which should allow the researcher to begin some sort of interpretation, searching for themes, patterns, regularities and comparing and contrasting units of data.

### *The Constant Comparative Method*

The stages of data management as described above, can be the beginning of, or can lead into, the stage of comparing and contrasting data, a method recognized by Glaser and Strauss (1967, cited in Merriman 2001 : 159, and Wellington 2000 : 136) and Lincoln and Guba (1985, cited in Wellington 2000 : 136). The basic strategy of this method is to do what its name suggests – constantly compare. One may begin with an incident from one lesson, and compare it with a similar incident from another. In so doing, one may look for themes or regularities, but also for contrasts, paradoxes or irregularities. From this, categories may emerge which, with the constant addition of new data, need to be continually refined.

### *Determining categories*

In attempting to determine categories, Wellington (2000 : 142), refers to *a priori* categories and *a posteriori* categories. As the name suggests, *a priori* categories are formulated *prior* to the data analysis,

and stem from the general questions which underpin the study itself. These questions, and the resulting *a priori* categories, can give focus to data collection and help one to organise it as one proceeds. *A posteriori* categories, on the other hand, are categories which emerge from the data as one goes along, in a sense, emerge from 'grounded theory' embedded in the data. In much qualitative research, one is never clear exactly what is going to emerge from the data, and therefore must be open to the possible emergence of these *a posteriori* categories. It is envisaged that in the present study, both *a priori* and *a posteriori* categories will be used, in that the researcher is aware of the problems and questions which underpin the study, and they arose from issues illustrated in the theoretical framework, but is still unsure exactly what is going to emerge. This appears to be the essence of most qualitative research.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter begins by highlighting the essence of research, which is followed by an overview of the goals of the present research project. Such project is a comparative case study conducted within an interpretive framework. The two schools under comparison are then described, and reasons for their selection become apparent in the overview of their histories. Techniques and methods of data collection, as well as data analysis are discussed, with insights into observations, interviews and document analysis. Included in this discussion are potential problems and pitfalls that may exist when using these techniques and analysing the resultant data. After due consideration is given to issues surrounding reliability, validity and ethics as well as some insights into the limitations of the present research, the next phase of the study, the collection of the data and the interpretation of it, can begin.

## CHAPTER FOUR – ANALYSIS OF DATA

The LiEP has suggested that South African schools need to adopt an additive approach to teaching. In effect, this means that all children should be taught in their L1, with a L2 being added at a later stage. This has been supported by research both nationally and internationally, which highlights the cognitive benefits of such an approach. However, what policy has dictated and what research has found to be beneficial has not, in many instances, been put into practice.

From this emerges the need, therefore, to look into the classroom practices of teachers teaching at schools whose histories and language practices have resulted in the failure to implement the LiEP proposed in 1997. Instead of adopting an additive approach, these schools favour a ‘straight for English’ approach, despite the linguistic diversity of the learners and despite the LiEP’s promotion of L1 medium of instruction. Both schools are highly respected and much sought after institutions in which the choice of language instruction, English, appears to be working. The primary goal of the present research project is to illuminate teaching practices and strategies used by teachers teaching through the medium of English to predominantly non-English speaking classes.

In order to do this successfully, three main areas of focus have been identified, these being classroom organisation, learning areas (subjects) and how they are taught and teaching strategies used to assist learning. These areas will be described and discussed in detail, with attempts to link back to theory as expounded in the theoretical framework. School A and School B will be described and discussed separately at first, from which a comparative analysis will emerge.

### SCHOOL A

#### CLASSROOM ORGANISATION

##### *Children and teacher*

This Grade 1 class consists of 40 children, 18 girls and 24 boys, with an average age of six and a half years. All these children speak Xhosa at home. There are two pre-primary classes at School A, a Grade 00 class and a Grade 0 class, both of which are taught by non-Xhosa speaking teachers. Only a handful of children in the Grade 1 class have had no pre-school experience, as most of them come to Grade 1 from the Grade 0 class of School A. When the Grade 1 teacher, Ms M, was asked whether she noticed a difference between the children who have had pre-school experience and those that haven’t, she replied :

*“Yes, there is a big difference. For example, one little girl I have is from..... This pre-school does not use English. She is far behind those from our Grade 0 class as far as understanding and speaking English is concerned. However, there is another one from.....and he is not so far behind because they probably talk more English at his pre-school.”*

On questioning the Grade 0 teacher at School A, I found that she didn't feel that she or the children were at a huge disadvantage because of her inability to speak their language or vice versa. The atmosphere of the pre-school was one of happy activity, similar in fact to the kind of environment in which a child's L1 is learned. To use Krashen's (1982) terminology, the “affective filter” was low. The role of the teacher was more of a caregiver, who encouraged the children to help one another if there was a breakdown of communication between themselves and the teacher. Such use of the mother tongue to assist and enhance communication was encouraged by the teacher. Whereas there was little speaking in English between the children, she felt confident that they understood enough of the language by the time they proceeded to Grade 1.

I questioned Ms M as to why parents sent their children to School A :

*“It's because they want their kids to learn English. And they like the fact that it is English from pre-school. They definitely want their kids to learn English. I don't think they know the seriousness and importance of learning in the mother tongue. They are just concerned about the fact that they want their children to learn English so that they can get jobs.”*

These comments support the research findings of Vinjevold (1999), Desai (1999) and Robb (1995), that parents want their children to speak English from as early on as possible, preferably in pre-school, so that they will be able to cope with the demands of primary and secondary school.

Ms M herself claims to be a Xhosa / English bilingual, whose L1 is Xhosa. She has been teaching at School A since its inception, when she was employed as the teacher aid to the first Grade 2 class, and is currently in her 10<sup>th</sup> year of teaching at the school.

The children are seated in rows, facing each other at right angles to the front, where the blackboard is situated. The fact that they face each other allows for maximum communication between them, which happens frequently. There is a fairly large floor space, commonly referred to by the teacher as ‘the mat’, directly in front, which is used extensively in both the literacy and life skills lessons, as well as for other things such as story telling, songs and religious instruction.

The children are allowed to sit where they choose, and no attempt by the teacher has been made to group them according to ability or any other criterion. Only when disruptions occur or individuals not get

along together, does the teacher intervene. She also moves them when they become too familiar with each other, so as to allow them to get to know other members of the class :

*"I keep changing them. Once I know that they are good friends and they are trying to be naughty, then I change them."*

### *Lesson planning*

In this Grade 1 class, there are three primary learning areas (subject areas) : Numeracy, Literacy and Life Skills. Also, as this is a Catholic school, a certain proportion of each day (which varies from one day to another) is spent on religious education. Numeracy and Life Skills are taught through the medium of English, whilst Literacy is taught through the medium of Xhosa. Religious education is taught in both languages.

Assemblies, although not part of formal lesson planning, form an integral part of the school's timetable and are attended by all classes. I found assemblies important not only from a language point of view, but for the way in which Ms M expounded on the content of the assemblies in her own lessons. The teachers take it in turns to conduct assemblies. These are usually in English, although some teachers use Xhosa. When questioned as to why she uses English, Ms M stated :

*"I do the assemblies in English. I don't really know why I do the assemblies in English. But some teachers do them in Xhosa. Not all the assemblies are in English, but mostly they are English, but not all. I think the kids need to hear more English, but there is no pressure to do it in either language."*

What was particularly memorable to Ms M was when a visiting mother-tongue English teacher conducted the assembly in Xhosa :

*"Yeh, it was nice. The children were so surprised that he could speak Xhosa. They were expecting him to read an English bible. They were surprised that he could understand everything that they had been saying about him! I think they would respect him more, also."*

It was encouraging to note that at this English medium school, Xhosa was used at main gatherings. Verseveld (1995 : 25) believes that if learners were encouraged to value and believe in their home language, there would be less "shying away from their own language", which is a common phenomenon amongst black children who are attending English medium schools. By using Xhosa at assemblies, despite being an English medium institution, School A instills into the children a sense of value for both their language and their culture.

There are three main lessons in the Grade 1 class each day – Numeracy, Literacy and Life Skills. The only extra activity included in the timetable is Religious Education. Although the lessons in the three primary learning areas are approximately an hour each, time was not rigidly kept, and if there was something else of immediate contextual interest, time was allowed to discuss and reflect on this. As my observation period at School A encompassed the time at the beginning of Lent, Ms M used this topic as a basis for her own religious instruction lesson following the assembly. Accordingly, the daily routine shifted to accommodate, reiterate and expand upon what the children had just heard. Such contextualisation is important in making input comprehensible (Huizenga 1990).

Despite the distinction between the three main learning areas, the content between them was strongly linked thematically, further illustrative of the contextual quality of Ms M's teaching. For the duration of my visit, the theme was "Our Homes," which closely followed the previous theme of "Our Families." The first Numeracy lesson I observed was directly linked to the "Our Families" theme in that the worksheet, Appendix 1A, was primarily aimed at reinforcing counting with the question "How many?" However, much of the vocabulary, such as boys, girls, parents, people, mother, father, big and small, had been covered previously in the Life Skills lessons.

Similarly, the first Literacy and Life Skills lessons that I observed were also thematically linked. The Literacy lesson involved the use of a Big Book entitled 'Ndinekhaya', (Appendix 2A), which was all about different animal homes. More about the language and how it was used will follow. Suffice it to say at this stage that this Literacy lesson, taught in Xhosa using the 'Big Book' 'Ndinekhaya', was then linked to the subsequent Life Skills lesson, taught in English. The lesson began with the following words :

*"Listen to me very nicely. Today we are going to talk about our homes. I want you to tell me about your home. First of all, let me ask, has everybody here got a home?"*

Throughout the week of observation, the thematic linking between the three learning areas was strongly in evidence and will be discussed in more detail later. In addition, as illustrated in the above quotation, contextualisation was ever present, in which the background and extra-linguistic context of the learners was recognized and used to support new elements in the input.

#### *Visual aids and resources*

Despite being English medium, the predominant language used in pictures on the walls was Xhosa. There were handmade A3 pictures, which illustrated each letter of the alphabet. In addition to this, there were other posters with other Xhosa words in which one letter was highlighted, so as to emphasise the



'd' or 'b' and so on. These visuals were highly relevant to the teaching of Literacy, and, as Literacy was taught in Xhosa, it was entirely appropriate that they should be in Xhosa.

There were, however, three posters which used English, one illustrating 1 to 20 in numbers and words, one of colours, on which the words 'red', 'blue', 'green', 'yellow', 'black' and 'white' were shown, and one of shapes. Since the Numeracy lessons were taught in English, it was relevant that the accompanying visuals, which Ms M referred to constantly to support her teaching, were in English.

The 'Big Books' used extensively in the Literacy lessons, are provided by a non-Governmental organisation (NGO) called READ. Each Big Book is accompanied by six small books, which can be used as readers. These are all in Xhosa. READ does provide the same Big Books and readers in English, but these are not used at all in Grade 1, but only in Grade 2.

## **DISCUSSION OF DATA RELATING TO CLASSROOM ORGANISATION**

### *Children and teacher*

Although the children were not seated in groups, the fact that they were facing each other enabled each child to interact freely with the children in front, diagonally and to the side of them. Whilst all the worksheets that I observed being done involved individual work, the children interacted amongst themselves, talked about what they were doing, checked their work against one another's work and passed items of stationery around. Thus, despite the work being individual work, the teacher allowed talking between the children. In fact, there was never silence in the classroom, but at the same time never an unruly noise. The talking related specifically to the task at hand, and only when the majority seemed to have completed their work, did the talking and interaction between the children venture towards being disruptive.

Co-operative learning in a class of this size is often difficult. However, despite the fact that there were no obvious groups, and Ms M herself indicated that she felt she did not do enough co-operative work, the children interacted naturally because of the way they were seated. It was strongly evident that the children who worked faster and possibly more competently than the others assisted their peers, who often turned to them for guidance, either by asking questions or looking at their work. This interaction was solely in Xhosa. Ms M considered this to be "*good for me and for them. I encourage them to talk Xhosa to each other if they need to explain. It is a great advantage. They still need to develop their Xhosa.*" In this respect, this class seemed a natural extension of the pre-school class in which the teacher talked in English, and the children interacted in Xhosa, negotiating meaning and developing their metalanguage. The only difference is that in this class, Ms M herself could enhance understanding by using the L1,

which she did to small groups of children at a time. Such negotiation of meaning to enhance second language acquisition is supported by Huizenga (1990 : 151) as well as Vygotsky (Rodseth : 2001), who emphasises the importance of mediation between children, teachers and more capable peers.

Ms M's use of the L1 to enhance understanding to small groups, particularly following Numeracy and Life Skills lessons, was of interest. Whilst she was teaching these lessons to the class as a whole, she used almost exclusively English. However, once the children had their worksheets and were working on them, she would go around to each 'group' of about four children, check what they were doing and talk to them in Xhosa. She would question, explain further, all the time talking in Xhosa. When she spoke in Xhosa to an individual child, the ones around also listened and benefited, as more often than not, the same mistakes were made. Again, the way the children were seated facilitated this kind of small group communication between the teacher and the children. When questioned on this language practice Ms M's commented :

*"If there is a problem amongst them in a group it could be because they did not understand what I was telling them or asking them to do and I feel that I must tell them in their mother tongue."*

In this way the L1 is supported, whilst the L2 is added, conducive to what may be described as an additive bilingual approach.

It was noticed that code-switching, particularly that which used direct translation between one language to the next, was not used. This was confirmed by Ms M :

*"No, I do not do a lot of direct translation code-switching. That would take up too much time and they won't learn English because they will be waiting for me to translate it into Xhosa."*

To conclude : Ms M's classroom organisation facilitated both understanding of concepts and skills as well as language acquisition of both the L1 and L2 in two distinct ways. Firstly, the children were allowed to talk freely amongst themselves, using their L1, despite the fact that the content of the Numeracy and Life Skills lessons, as well as the accompanying worksheets were in English. In this way, they were able to negotiate the meaning of the lesson content, building up their first language whilst adding a second. Secondly, Ms M's teaching as well as her own language use further facilitated language development in that she taught the class as a whole in English, but used Xhosa when she talked to small groups. As such, she made maximum use of both languages. Used in this way, the L1 is a valuable resource used to reinforce what has been taught previously in English (Versveld 1995 : 24).

### *Lesson planning*

The use of the L1 as a resource was further evident in the lesson planning. The primary point of interest in the lesson planning was the strong evidence of thematic linking between the Numeracy, Literacy and Life Skills lessons, both in language and in content. I shall attempt to illustrate this by briefly describing the structure of two days' teaching.

DAY ONE : The Numeracy lesson involved counting the number of people in families (Appendix 1A). This lesson was taught in English, with emphasis on vocabulary to do with families (a theme which had been taught the previous week – repetition, scaffolding and reinforcement of previously learned material will be considered later). The lesson was numerically orientated in that it involved counting and number repetition, the numbers being presented in both numerical notation and words.

Literacy, taught in Xhosa, was based on the Big Book 'Ndinekhaya' – I have a home - and illustrated a number of animal homes (Appendix 2A). In a similar thematic vein, the Life Skills lesson, taught in English, was also on homes. During this lesson, the children, with constant questioning from the teacher, talked about their own homes (contextualisation), where they were situated, their colour, what street number they were, whom they lived with, how many rooms their house had and so on. This line of questioning linked back to Numeracy, in that it forced the children to use previously learned vocabulary, such as numbers and the words for family members, as well as colours. Different homes of the world, such as teepees, wigwams, igloos, caravans and caves were introduced, through use of a book called *Zebra Crossing*.

DAY TWO : Instead of starting with Numeracy, which was usually the way the Grade 1 day began, Ms M used the opportunity to recapitulate on the assembly which the children had just attended, which focussed on Lent. Part of this recapitulation involved talking about attitudes and kindness, which Ms M cleverly linked back to the theme of homes.

*Ms M : How are you going to be kind?*

*Child : Help the house.*

*Ms M : She is going to help mummy at home. What are you going to do, Uh?*

*Child : Help at home.*

*Ms M : By doing what, Terrence?*

*Child (Terrence) : By washing dishes.*

*Ms M : But before you didn't like washing the dishes, hey? But now you are going to stop having an attitude, hey? You are going to start washing dishes and being good. What else are you going to do at home to be good?*

*Child : Help mummy with the shopping.*

*Ms M : To help mummy with the shopping.*

This short recap of the message behind the Lent assembly took approximately ten minutes. However, it was also a valuable ten minutes to recap on and extend the English vocabulary used in the Life Skills lesson done on the previous day. In this way, both English vocabulary and thematic content were reinforced within a context familiar to the children – their own homes.

The subsequent Numeracy lesson revised the previous day's counting. This time the examples were coloured plastic squares, rather than family members. This provided the opportunity to revise the words 'one', 'two', 'three', 'four', 'five' and 'six', as well as colours – 'white', 'blue', 'red', 'yellow' and 'green'. Such vocabulary was also used in the Life Skills lesson, during which the children were asked where they lived, the *number* and *colour* of their house. The worksheet, Appendix 4A, reinforced knowledge of numbers.

Numeracy was followed by Literacy. A daily routine was becoming apparent. The same Big Book, Ndinekhaya, was used to recap what had been learned previously, both in content (animal homes) and language (Xhosa). Whilst the Big Book was used solely for reading (together) previously, now the children attempted to write the words on a worksheet on which the pictures were identical to the ones in the Big Book (Appendix 3A). In addition to this, worksheets from the previous week were returned. On these, in the spaces provided and above the correct words (in Xhosa) they had to draw a mother, a father, a grandparent and a sister. This, done in Literacy, recapped the English vocabulary, 'mother', 'father' and so on, used the previous day in Numeracy when they counted members of a family. Vocabulary was recycled over and over again, context and themes threading between the L1 and the L2.

The above illustrates that on these two days, and (as I observed) continuing throughout the week, the three learning areas were strongly linked. Because of this thematic link, the vocabulary used both in English and Xhosa was similar, which would be likely to build a strong foundation in both languages simultaneously. Such cross-curricular use of language is supported by Wong-Fillmore (1985 : 20) and Malherbe (1978).

#### *Visual Aids and resources*

The visual aids displayed on the walls around the class were immediately relevant to the work covered, and their use not only facilitated word recognition, but allowed the children to see the relationship between the word and number (in Numeracy), its purpose and what it represents. Whilst working on the worksheet (Appendix 4A), Ms M asked the children to look at "the number in the triangle" and referred them to the poster on shapes on the wall. Consistent with the fact that Numeracy was being taught in English, the visual aids were in English.

To support Literacy, the letters of the alphabet were displayed around the walls. However, consistent with the fact that Literacy is taught in Xhosa, the word chosen to illustrate the letter was in Xhosa. For example 'a' – apile (a picture of an apple illustrated this). 'b' – ubuso (a picture of a face was shown). These phonetic letters supported the partly phonetic approach that Ms M adopted when teaching literacy. She confirmed that she did teach them the sounds of the different letters (this was evident in the Literacy lesson on the letter 'd', expanded upon later when methods of teaching literacy are discussed), but referred to this as "word building" rather than phonics. *"I think if they can master the sounds of letters, they can read any word they come across."*

'Colour' was often discussed in Life Skills lessons. In one lesson the children were asked to say what colour their own home was. In another, they were asked to colour in different houses, using certain colours. In a Numeracy lesson, they used coloured dots to form bonds of six. To assist this learning, a poster, in English, on colours was displayed.

The primary purpose of these wall displays was to support learning. As learning took place in both languages, so the wall displays were in both languages. This illustrates a recognition and respect for these languages and their associated cultures (Wong-Fillmore 1991). It eases the way into English medium instruction without superimposing the dominance of English. The teacher's use and proficiency in both languages acted as an example for the children in that it illustrated to them the importance of both languages. Similarly, Delpit (1995 : 163) recommends that "teachers acknowledge and validate students' home language without using it to limit their students' potential. Students' home discourses are vital to their perception of self and sense of community connectedness."

Insofar as other resources are concerned, such as books, all books pertaining to Literacy were in Xhosa. Ms M had been provided, by the READ organization, with 20 Big Books with 6 accompanying little books for each Big Book. I asked Ms M if this was enough. She commented :

*"It would be nice to have more than 6. Even if there could be 20. Maybe they give us such a few because they want us to do this group reading. But the children can't take home a book each day to practise."*

READ provides each class with Big Books and readers. English Big Books and readers are provided in Grade 2. I asked if Xhosa books were provided in Grade 2 as well :

*"No, I'm sorry, no. They don't know that those children still need Xhosa. It would be nice if they could continue with books in Xhosa at a higher level than Grade 1 books for Grade 2. But we are trying."*

School A has a well-equipped library. I asked if the Grade 1's use the library :

*"Not really. I do take them to the library for looking through the books. I have done it once and the reason for this is because I was teaching book education with them. But immediately we go to the library for a video they can't wait to sit next to the shelves and look at the books and turn their backs on me and look at the books. They want to look at those books."*

I asked why, because of this interest, commonly shown by children in the emergent literacy phase, the library was not used more often :

*"There are not enough books of the same series. Let's say if there were a set of books about 20 or 40 of them I would take them there to look at those books and read them. But there are only a few Xhosa books and only a few simple English books. We do need more books in the library – simple Grade 1 books so that they can take them out and practise their reading, practise what they learn in class. I don't think there is enough material available for the Grade 1's to practise their reading."*

However, in other ways Ms M appeared well supported in her teaching by the school. The English book, *Zebra Crossing*, used in Life Skills, was purchased after an OBE workshop. Ms M specifically requested this book because it would serve as a good thematic link between the different learning areas when dealing with the theme "Our Home."

## **LEARNING AREAS AND HOW THEY ARE TAUGHT**

### *Numeracy*

Numeracy is taught in English, and the primary goal of the lessons I observed was firstly to reinforce counting and knowledge of numbers, and secondly to understand the bonds of the number 6. This was achieved in a number of ways.

Three out of the five Numeracy lessons I observed began with the whole class counting in 2's to 100. Mostly, the whole class would chant the even numbers and then the odd numbers, whilst Ms M would point to these numbers on a chart. Only once was an individual child asked to count. He was unable to, which indicated that probably much of the chanting was what Chick (2001) would call "safe talk." However, whereas Chick refers to this kind of behaviour rather negatively, it did not appear as such in this class. In fact, the learning of the numbers in this way seemed similar to the way in which most pre-school children learn nursery rhymes. It was likely that total understanding was lacking, but, as with nursery rhymes, such understanding of the full meaning behind the words comes later. Perhaps it may be seen as similar to a whole language approach in Literacy teaching in that understanding the context in

which the learning takes place is more important than understanding single words. In the Numeracy lesson, the numbers become familiar by chanting them often. Their actual significance is learned later.

To assist understanding of numerical value, in three consecutive lessons bonds of six were discussed. This was introduced initially with counting members of families (Appendix 1A). The repeated question was “How many?” Plastic counters of differing colours were then used.

*Ms M : Okay children. Let us make sure that everybody has got six.*

*C: Lonwabo has two.*

*Ms M : Lonwabo has two? Okay let us count. (All children count their counters). If you have more than six, come and bring them to the front. If you need more, come and get. Okay, now. We are going to play around with six. Now. Tell me, if you put one this side (holds out one counter on one outstretched hand), how many do I need on this side? (holds out the other outstretched, empty hand). Can you count?*

*C: Five (children call out the answers. Ms M does not ask individual children. Rather, anyone in the class who knows the answer calls out. Most of them seem to know).*

*Ms M : Five. So it means one and five is ...*

*C : Six*

*Ms M : Put one this side and five this side (Ms M uses her hands again).Everybody say...everybody say one and five makes six.*

*C : One and five makes six.*

*Ms M : Let's see what happens when you put one and five together? How many do we make?*

*C : Six.*

*Ms M : Good. Now let us do another. How many do you want to put this side?*

*C: Two.*

*Ms M : Okay. You want to put two this side. Put two this side. How many this side?*

*C : Four*

*Ms M : How many this side?*

*C : Four (this time more children answer).*

*Ms M : And how many this side? (She holds up her other hand)*

*C : Two*

*Ms M : Two. Here is two. Is this two?*

*C : Yes.*

*Ms M : And how many are this side?*

*C : Four.*

*Ms M : Okay, is this four? (She holds up three in her hand).*

*C : NO! (very loudly). It is three.*

*Ms M : Okay is this four?*

*C : Yes.*

This interaction includes a lot of repetition as well as contextual support in the use of the counters, which makes the input comprehensible (Krashen 1982; Huizenga 1990).

In this lesson, although there were lots of questions, they were never directed to individual children, but to the whole class. In response, the whole class chanted the answers out. There were a core of children who seemed to be aware of the correct answers, but there were many who did not. Some used their

counters as whistles! However, by the second and third lessons, it was noticeable how these children's understanding had improved. One little boy in particular, I noticed, was, by the third day, joining in.

Occasionally Ms M asked an individual child to explain his answer. This usually happened when she was aware of someone who had answered differently from the rest. She would then prompt the child to try and explain *why* his answer was different :

*Ms M : Why is 1 and 5 different from 5 and 1, Siya? (Siya had previously answered that he thought they were different).*

*Siya : They are not different because they are different.*

*Ms M : They are not different because they are different. What are you saying, Siya? Can you explain in Xhosa? (It is a common feature of Ms M's teaching to invite children to answer in their L1 if they are struggling).*

*Siya : (can't answer)*

*Ms M : I think 1 and 5 are the same as 5 and 1 because they both make 6. It's just that these numbers are changed around, like this (she changes her arms around). Look, let's do it. Put 1 this side and 5 this side. Everybody look at me. Now look. What will happen if we put one this side and five the other? Look. What is the answer?*

*C : Six*

I can only describe the lesson as spirited and dynamic, particularly with Ms M's use of body language (hands and arms) to emphasise the equality of 1, 5 and 5, 1; 3, 3 and so on. The same information was modified in different ways - the bond was repeated over and over again, while the teacher moved the counters between different hands, until the children appeared more confident (Huizenga 1990 : 147).

Workbooks were then handed out in which the children had to draw a certain number of dots on one side of the page, with the correct number of dots on the other side to equal six. Colours were used, too :

*Ms M : Draw two red dots on this side. (She does it on the board). Now how many black dots must I put on this side?*

A visual aid on colours on the wall was used to assist the children. Knowledge of colours threaded through a number of lessons, providing a valuable linking of vocabulary.

The Numeracy lesson on the following day was strongly repetitive, serving as a recap on the previous day's lesson. Ms M went through all the bonds again, this time asking individual children. If they got the answers incorrect, she made them hold up their own fingers and count. Once they appeared clear about the bonds, she progressed to *writing* these bonds :

*Ms M : Okay, Grade 1. Now look carefully. I am going to show you how to write this. Give me one bond of six. (She chooses one child to give her one). Okay, let me show you how to write that. (She does it on the board using the + sign and the = sign). However, she doesn't introduce the words 'plus' and 'equals', but rather continues with 'and' for 'plus' and 'is' for 'equals'.*



A worksheet (Appendix 5A) followed. This worksheet was particularly interesting in that not only was it relevant to the immediate Numeracy lesson, but the pictures represented material covered in Life Skills about different homes, and on the back of the worksheet was material relevant to Literacy, namely 'Ndinekhaya' – I have a home. This was illustrative of the strong thematic linking previously referred to.

The Numeracy lessons were *predominantly* English. Xhosa was only used when the teacher moved amongst the children, talking to small groups, usually to explain a concept that had been misunderstood, particularly when worksheets were being done. This was also a common feature of Ms M's Numeracy lessons – the lesson itself, taught to the class, was presented in English, whilst follow-up, usually to small groups of children, was done in Xhosa. Often the children answered Ms M's questions, asked in English, in Xhosa. This in no way detracted from the thrust of the lesson. In fact, on occasions there was a two-way dialogue between teacher and child, the teacher talking in English and the child responding in Xhosa. In a way, the participants were "moving in and out of language in a seamless way" (Martin 1996 : 14). The different use of the two languages was completely natural as it appeared to go unnoticed by the participants.

Whilst English was the main medium of instruction in Numeracy lessons, Xhosa counting songs reinforced the English numerical vocabulary. Another noteworthy occasion was when Xhosa was used was for discipline, especially if the class verged on becoming too disruptive. Ms M would then interject with a Xhosa sentence or the words "mamela, mamela" (listen, listen). Apart from this, the lessons were in English.

### *Literacy*

Literacy is taught through the medium of Xhosa.

*"In 1993, they (those who started School A) started with a class of Grade 2's from other schools. They didn't start with Grade 1. They chose to introduce English to Grade 2's. They were happy with Grade 1's learning in their mother tongue, but when the new principal came, he was very strong about children getting English as early as possible and so we decided to have a pre-school through the medium of English, but when they come to Grade 1 they must learn to read and write in Xhosa. There (at the pre-school) they learn all the instructions and things in English. They will continue this in Grade 1, but they will learn to read and write in Xhosa, because in Grade 2 they will be introduced to reading and writing in English as well."*

As with Numeracy, one dominant feature of Literacy lessons was constant repetition and revision of previously learned material. For the duration of my observation period, only one Big Book was used – Ndinekhaya (I have a home). (Appendix 2A). The first Literacy lesson appeared to be in four stages. Firstly, Ms M, together with the children, simply looked at the pictures in the book, and talked

extensively about each one. The only language used was Xhosa. Most of the children were seated on 'the mat' in the front of the class, with some on chairs behind them so that they could see. Questions were frequent, stimulating a constant flow of conversation between teacher and children. In this first stage of the lesson, Ms M didn't point to or identify the words underneath each picture at all. It was strongly illustrative of the oral tradition of story telling.

During the second stage of this lesson, Ms M put the book on the shelf behind her and, using a pointer, pointed to each word as she read, linking the words to the accompanying picture as she went along, stopping to explain and question all the time. The transition from simply *telling* the story (orality) to *reading* the story (visual literacy) allowed the children to recognize the link between the story, pictures and words. In this way, she was drawing the children towards a more visual culture of literacy. Cope and Kalantzis (1993 : 63) believe that it is the "role of schooling to make the nature of literacy explicit" and allow all children "access to literate culture and literate ways of thinking." Ms M's approach to literacy teaching was strongly illustrative of this in that she was drawing the children towards an awareness of visual literacy.

In what appeared to be the third stage of the lesson, the children read through the book for the third time, this time more quickly and with less explanation from the teacher. With each reading, more children joined in. Throughout the lesson so far, emphasis had been primarily on making meaning of the pictures shown in the book. Reading was taking place within the context of what was seen and understood. The children were "entering the activity of reading as one of meaning-making in relation to the printed text," (Moll, no date : 3), strongly in keeping with a 'whole language' approach.

In the fourth stage, Ms M, after turning back to the beginning of the book yet again, invited individual children to come out and identify, on the first page, the letter 'd'. All the children were extremely eager to contribute, their eagerness verging on becoming disruptive as they all pushed for a turn to identify the letter. Once all the 'd's had been identified on each page, Ms M wrote the letter on the board, and discussed how it was to be formed. All the children practised writing the letter 'd' in the air, whilst Ms M explained "round and round and up and down." Surprisingly, this explanation as to how to form the letter 'd' was in English – the only English used in the entire lesson! Ms M asked for other words with 'd' in them, and wrote the list on the board. Each child had a turn to practise writing 'd' on the board – with a finger dipped in water, which they greatly enjoyed, after which they were requested to return to their desks and complete a page of 'd's in their books.

The approach Ms M used in this first Literacy lesson seemed to be what has been described as a 'top-down' approach (Moll, no date : 5), in which there was a clear progression from what one might call a 'whole language' approach, in the initial *telling* of the whole story, followed by the *reading* of the whole

story, followed by a focus on an individual letter, 'd'. This was evident in each Literacy lesson I observed. In addition to illustrating this 'top-down' approach, with its emphasis on 'whole language', the Literacy lessons also illustrated a further noticeable feature – that of repetition and scaffolding, which I shall attempt to describe.

The second lesson began with a further reading of the book *Ndinekhaya*. During this reading, Ms M reminded the children of the names for all the animal homes, which she wrote on the board. Once again, the children were asked to identify 'd' in the words and, as in the previous lesson, returned to their places to practise writing 'd's. I noticed that many who had it incorrectly the previous day, now wrote it correctly. Ms M identified some who still had it incorrect and called them to the front to practice on the board. She worked closely with this small group. A worksheet entitled '*Ndinekhaya*' (Appendix 3A) was given out on which the children had to write the names of the animal homes. These words were written on the board as well as on the worksheet to assist the children with this exercise.

The third lesson began in very much the same way, with a reading of *Ndinekhaya*. In this lesson, Ms M had green flash cards onto which different words, pertaining to the book, were written. She held up the cards and invited individual children to come and stick the card onto the picture in the correct place – a 'whole word' exercise. Whilst the class was busy with a drawing exercise, she called groups of six children out. They read together from the small *Ndinekhaya* books. However, she only managed to get through two groups.

At the start of the fourth lesson, Ms M wrote short sentences on the board, from which the children were asked to identify the letter 'd'. From this began a lesson on word building, based on 'd'.

Ms M began with :

- da
- mdala
- umdaka
- dada

She continued with :

- de
- mde
- dela
- deda
- idesika

She did the same with 'do', 'idolo', 'umdoko', 'amadolo' and 'amadoda'. This was followed by 'du', 'dudu', 'duduma', 'duduza'.

In this lesson, the approach was to move from whole sentences (written on the board), to a whole word, to the phonetic sound 'd', and then to build up once more to whole words, sounding out morphemes as they were added.

In her teaching, it was apparent that Ms M did not stick to one approach, but used a combination of the 'whole language,' 'whole word' and 'phonetic' approach to the teaching of literacy. In addition to this, she moved from an initial 'top down' approach in the first lesson, to a 'bottom up' approach, from phoneme to morpheme to whole word in the fourth lesson. Far from being confusing, it seemed to give the children a thorough understanding of the text. Coupled with this was the repetitive element. The same book was used and the same letter, 'd', was discussed every day, the difference being in the activities the children were required to do. By the end of the fourth lesson, it was apparent that most of the children could recognise whole words (as seen from their ability to match word to picture) as well as attempt to identify new words by breaking them into morphemes (as seen in the 'da', 'de' etc. lesson illustrated above).

### *Life Skills*

As with Numeracy, Life Skills was taught in English. Repetition and thematic linking was again strongly evident between the three learning areas. As the children had been learning about different kinds of animal homes in Literacy, through the book *Ndinikhaya*, and the use of the L1, homes became the subject matter for Life Skills, using the L2. The first lesson, strongly in keeping with the oral, story-telling tradition, in which the children sat on 'the mat' with the teacher in the centre, simply involved both the children and teacher talking about their own homes. This strongly grounded context made the use of the L2 easier.

*Ms M : Listen to me very nicely. Today we are going to talk about our homes. I want you to tell me about your home. First of all, let me ask, has everybody here got a home?*

*C : Yes (they all shout out).*

*Ms M : Yes, you've all got homes, yes. Now you will tell us about your homes, where you live, the people you live with.....um.....your address, and the colour of your house. Everything. Okay, whose going to start? (About eight children put up their hands). Okay, Sisanda.*

*C : General mumbling which is indistinguishable on the tape. However, what became noticeable was that when the children spoke in English, they spoke very quietly, whereas when they spoke in Xhosa, it was much louder. When questioned about this, Ms M thought it was because they were not as confident in English).*

*Ms M : Good. That's all about Sisanda's home. She lives in 21 Wood Street, she lives there with her mother and her sister. Her house is yellow and her telephone number is.....(child tells her again).....6222246. You must speak loud so that everybody can hear. (Another common feature of these lessons was that Ms M often repeated what the child had just said.). Soso, it's your turn.*

*C : (Silence – Soso can't answer).*

*Ms M : He doesn't know anything about his home. Can you tell us about yours? (Ms M points to another child).*

*C : (Again, indistinguishable on tape. The children continue to speak very softly. Not the case when they speak Xhosa).*

*Ms M : Yes, what you have just told me is very beautiful, but I think Mrs Jackson over there would like to hear it. Speak loud!*

From what I could hear, their use of English was fair. Prompted by the teacher, who used the same questions over and over, the children managed to say simple sentences such as “I live.....” and “The colour of my house is ....”. They also appeared familiar with vocabulary to do with families, such as mother, father, brother, sister, granny and so on. In fact, there were lots of extended families mentioned. This vocabulary stemmed directly from what had been covered in Numeracy, when they were asked to count family members, (Appendix 1A), and from Literacy, in which they drew these family members (however in Literacy they learned the Xhosa words for mother, father and so on).

This line of questioning continued for approximately half an hour, by which time the children were restless. It was noticeable that during the English lessons, their concentration span was considerably less than in the Xhosa lessons. This inevitably meant that discipline was poorer. However, on sensing that her class was becoming disruptive, Ms M sent those who had contributed to their places to draw a picture of their homes, whilst keeping a smaller group on the mat. She insisted that each of the children left on the mat try to speak. She prompted them and insisted on them answering in full sentences :

*Ms M : I live at.....*

*C : 12 'J' Street*

*Ms M : Say the words “I live at.....*

*C : I live at 12 'J' Street.*

*Ms M : The colour of my house is ... say it...the colour of my house is...*

The same core questions were asked of each child, who could only return to his / her desk once the questions had been answered to Ms M’s satisfaction. It was noticeable that all Literacy and Life Skills lessons took place on the mat. As said previously, both were strongly illustrative of an oral approach to teaching in that visual aids, if used, were to prompt discussion.

Subsequent Life Skills lessons were strongly repetitive in content, each adding a little more new information. With each new concept, there was a noticeable attempt to contextualise new information within the immediate knowledge of the children. For example, one lesson began with the words “Let’s talk about cleaning our homes.” Ms M used a picture to prompt discussion, asking, “Who can tell me something about this picture?” (which picture showed a lot of different people all involved in some sort of cleaning activity). This approach, in which Ms M prompted the children to talk about their homes, in addition to being strongly contextualised, provided the foundation for learning to read and write in English in Grade 2. It involved a constant two way communication between the teacher and children through lots of questions and discussion about what was seen in the picture, which Ms M linked back to

their own lives with further questions such as “Who cleans in your house?” and “Who washes the dishes in your house?”

Songs were often used to illustrate the content of the lessons, as well as linking the two languages. In Numeracy, counting songs in Xhosa were sung, to reinforce numerical vocabulary learned in English. Similarly, in Life Skills, a Xhosa song on tidying was sung to reinforce the concept of keeping houses clean, taught in English. To reinforce both counting and to illustrate the theme of cleanliness and later safety, Ms M introduced the song “10 green bottles”, which was sung firstly with the words “10 bits of litter lying on the ground”, to which Ms M physically threw bits of crumpled up paper on the ground, and then, following an explanation of the harmful, dangerous effects of leaving glass around “10 green bottles lying on the ground” was sung. These songs were repeated three or four times, with actions, each time with more children joining in. Apart from being enjoyable, these songs had considerable educational value for all three learning areas, as well as for language acquisition in both English and Xhosa.

## **STRATEGIES USED TO ASSIST LEARNING**

The following serves to provide an overview of the most strongly illustrative strategies used by Ms M in her teaching :

### *Repetition, recycling, contextualisation and scaffolding*

In all three learning areas, Numeracy, Literacy and Life Skills, consecutive lessons were strongly repetitive in content as well as in vocabulary used. In effect, content was recycled. Words, phrases and information came back time and time again, allowing the children to refamiliarise themselves with it, as well as extend their use alongside new things being learned. All this was done within a context which was familiar to them, this being their own families and their own homes. In effect, each lesson was approached slightly differently, either by counting different things in Numeracy, or emphasizing different aspects of the pictures in ‘Ndinekhaya’ in Literacy. This was illustrative of a scaffolding approach in which previously learned information was built on to. Ms M confirmed this :

*“Yes, I do repeat the content of lessons. It could be that on one day, the way I did it was favourable to some children and then on the next day I do the same lesson differently, trying to get to those who didn’t understand first time around.”*

Certainly in the Literacy lessons involving the formation of the letter ‘d’, this was clearly evident by the number of children I observed who managed to write ‘d’ far better after the second lesson. Similarly, in

the second Life Skills lesson on the different homes, overall concentration was better, children contributed more and fewer children were reprimanded for disruptive behaviour.

### *Thematic linking*

This was probably one of the most noticeable and most positive elements of Ms M's teaching. Not only was content and vocabulary repeated and extended in each lesson, but it was linked to other learning areas as well. This is discussed in detail under *Lesson Planning* above.

### *Questioning – Input and Output*

There was a considerable amount of questioning from the teacher in all lessons. Whereas no lesson was teacher dominated, there was considerable teacher input through this use of questioning. In a sense, the lessons were teacher directed. But, whereas there was a lot of teacher input through discussion and questioning, there was also output from the children as seen in the constant flow of communication between teacher and children, as well as amongst the children themselves, which communication involved both the use of English and Xhosa. Despite often not being able to answer the questions, the children were constantly prompted and, through repetitive and recycled questions, they were all forced to contribute. This was clearly evident in the Life Skills lesson, in which they were only allowed to return to their desks to draw once they had answered certain questions about their home. This type of questioning, used as input from the teacher to elicit output from the children is encouraged by Swain, as cited in Wong-Fillmore (1985 : 33), who believes that it is in their attempts to construct messages which encode their own communicative intentions in speech, that allows children to figure out how language is structured. In learning to speak, they actually have to speak! Wong-Fillmore (1985 : 24) believes that "by and large, the most successful classes for language learning are the ones that make the greatest use of teacher directed activities. In these classes, individual work was assigned mostly as follow-up activities to formal lessons, during which teachers led students through the materials that were being taught and directed them in discussions of that material." This is precisely how Ms M orchestrated her lessons.

### *Use of language, group work and code-switching*

I have chosen to discuss use of language, group work and code-switching together, because it was clearly evident that when group work was being done, only Xhosa was used. Although Numeracy and Life Skills were taught in English, which was the case when the lesson was being given to the whole class, Xhosa was used to explain to individual groups of children whilst follow up activities were being done. It was apparent that very little code-switching happened during formal teaching time. Instead, content and instructions appeared to be repeated in Xhosa during the follow-up activities, which proceeded the formal teaching time, when Ms M would give her attention to no more than four to six children at a time. Used in this way, code-switching is seen as supportive of the primary medium. Adendorff (1993 : 23)

maintains that “switches (should be) viewed as guiding the participants’ interpretation of academic goals and intentions...”. Mixing languages in this way is seen as an educational resource. This is further evident in the use of both English and Xhosa on the walls, as well as the teacher’s own ability to use both languages.

## CONCLUSION

The overarching approach used in this class appeared to be *in keeping with* the additive bilingual approach in that, through the teaching of Literacy in the L1, the L1 was being maintained and developed. However, an L2 was being added to the L1 in that two of the learning areas, Numeracy and Life Skills, were being taught in the L2. It differed from the additive approach as described by Lockett (1993, 1995) in that instruction was *not solely* in the L1.

Research indicates that throughout the country there is increasing pressure from the parents of African children for teaching at school to take place through the medium of English from the beginning of Grade 1. This was the case at School A. There are, however, sound academic grounds for mother tongue education in the early years, and one of the main reasons given is that it ensures sound conceptual development (Macdonald 1991). But, as illustrated in the literature review of this dissertation, arguments for mother tongue education on pedagogical grounds are tainted by a link to apartheid education.

Desai (1999) is not convinced that the additive approach is the best and most appropriate approach for all South African schools, and she recognizes a need “to make language practices [that] facilitate rather than frustrate the learning process” (Desai 1999 : 42). School A appears to be doing just that. In this Grade 1 class, the desire of the parents to provide their children with English medium instruction is being realised. However, the children’s L1 is also being maintained in that Literacy is taught through the L1. Through careful classroom management, lesson planning and overt recognition of the value of both languages in all aspects of teaching, the language practices in this class certainly appear “to facilitate rather than frustrate the learning process.” (Desai 1999 : 42).



## SCHOOL B

### CLASSROOM ORGANISATION

#### *Children and teacher*

There are three Grade 1 classes at School B, one with 20 children and the other two with 24 children each. The class that I observed has 20 children, 10 boys and 10 girls. Of these, 3 are Xhosa speaking, 5 Afrikaans speaking, 1 Urdu (main language of Pakistan – which this family speaks at home) and 11 English speaking. All have had at least a year of pre-school experience and all except three had at least a year of pre-schooling at School B. School B offers two Grade 0 classes, both of which use English as the medium of instruction. However, there are two Xhosa speaking teacher aids. I questioned the Grade 1 teacher, Ms C, as to whether she felt pre-school was necessary, especially with respect to competence in English :

*“Yes, I think so. But the thing is in pre-school they have more play time where they do speak far more Xhosa as they are in a more informal setting. Because I’ve got them with me all the time, I discourage it.”*

She also confirmed that many parents whose mother tongue is not English, specifically send their children to English speaking pre-schools in order for them to acquire English, preferably before starting in Grade 1.

*“I know that a lot of them that are second language learners are sent here because their parents want them to speak English. I think that people have realised that English is the universal language and it is very important in this day and age.”*

This is in line with the views reported in Chapter 2 that parents have a pragmatic attitude towards their children’s education (Robb 1995; Ntshangase 2000).

Ms C, the Grade 1 teacher, claims to be an English / Afrikaans bilingual, whose L1 is English. This is her fourth teaching year at School B. She was employed specifically because it was felt that the Grade 1 classes were too big, and that smaller classes were needed to cope with the demands of Grade 1 children. Consequently, instead of two Grade 1 classes each consisting of 30 and above children, it was decided to employ another teacher (Ms C) and have three Grade 1 classes of between 20 and 24 children. This was a definite strength of School B, in that the smaller classes enabled Ms C to spend far more time individually with each child, particularly during the Literacy lessons.

The children were seated in pairs and all faced the front of the class, where the blackboard was situated. There was a carpeted floor space in front, the mat, which was used fairly extensively, especially at the beginning of the day for “news” and for lesson instruction before written work began.

At the very beginning of the year, the children were allowed to sit where they chose, but fairly soon afterwards, were moved. Ms C remarked that often she put slower workers next to the faster workers. If children were particularly talkative in class, they too were moved. Children were not seated according to linguistic ability or language competence, and talking during work time was actively discouraged. In the actual teaching of the lessons, Ms C involved the children extensively, in that they answered questions and participated in discussions. Follow up work at desks, however, was mostly individual, and whilst there was always some chatter amongst the children, they were requested to work quietly on their own. This was one of the first noticeable differences between follow up work at School A and School B.

### *Lesson planning*

School B had the same three learning areas (subjects) as School A : Numeracy, Literacy and Life Skills. However, the preferred term for Life Skills at School B was Environment Study, which was incorporated in Life Skills, together with a range of diverse activities such as Scripture, Audiblox, computers, singing, physical education and creative writing (this supportive of the Literacy learning area), all of which formed an integral part of the weekly timetable. In addition, assemblies for all children from Grade 1 to Grade 3 were conducted on Monday and Friday mornings. These were entirely in English.

Whilst a daily routine was fairly clearly in evidence at School A, this was not initially as obvious at School B because of the greater diversity of activities included in the timetable. I shall attempt to describe some of them below.

Audiblox develops the ability to listen to and follow sequences, and also helps to develop concentration and listening skills. It involves a verbal instruction given by the teacher, which the children then carry out. In order to do this successfully, they have to be able to listen and concentrate, as well as memorise the instruction long enough to be able to implement it. The use of language for this purpose forces concentration, memory and subsequent application. It involved both input, from the teacher, and output, from the children, both of which are essential in language learning, a notion supported by Swain (1995). In addition, the output is not, in the Audiblox situation, in the form of language, but in physical activity – the children actually had to build their blocks rather than verbalise the answer. This is similar to an L2 learning technique developed by Asher (1977) and advocated by Krashen and Terrell (1983), known as ‘total physical response’ (TPR), which, for those who may be at the stage where talking in the L2 may be intimidating, a more comfortable option of showing understanding without actually speaking.

I observed one creative writing lesson, which revolved around a live rabbit, brought to school by one of the children in the class. The rabbit had been brought to school for two reasons, firstly because it was the Easter season, and secondly, because the letter 'b' (bunny) was being taught at the time and the children were encouraged to bring items to school beginning with 'b'. The lesson involved talking about the rabbit, what it looked like, felt like, smelt like, what noises it made and so on. Each child had a turn to touch the rabbit. The teacher then encouraged the children to make up a story about the rabbit. She started it off, "Once upon a time...". Each child had the opportunity to add to the story as it went along. Some needed a fair amount of prompting, but all contributed one sentence. They were not permitted simply to add a word, and if they were unable to add a full sentence, the teacher would make them say a sentence after her. This was similar to what I observed at School A, when the teacher would not allow the children to return to their desks until they had told her where they lived, the colour of their house and so on. It was also an example of contextualisation – making use of what was available in the classroom, upon which to build a lesson, and thus allowing input to be more comprehensible (Huizenga 1990 : 146).

Computer lessons were taken by the teacher aid (discussed in more detail later). Six computers were housed in a corner of the library. Once a week, a group of six to eight children at a time were taken to the computers, on which there are a variety of educational games pertaining to mathematics and language acquisition. Each group had approximately 20 minutes on the computers, during which time the teacher aid was able to offer them individual attention and assistance.

The atmosphere in these extra activities was relaxed and happy and all the children seemed eager to participate. It was noticeable that all the children were happy to communicate in English, even the children whose primary language was not English, and one English speaking child, who refused to talk in the more formal lessons, was happy to speak to some teachers other than her class teacher. Whilst the children were discouraged from talking to each other during formal class lessons (unlike what happened at School A), these diverse activities gave them an opportunity to communicate and use language in a more informal setting, and one more conducive to language acquisition. To use Krashen's (1982) terminology, the "affective filter" in these lessons was low.

Once only, however, did I witness a language other than English being used. This was during a singing lesson when *Nkosi Sikelel'iAfrika* was being learned in preparation for the school's birthday celebrations. For this, the Xhosa speaking teacher aid instructed the children line by line. No explanation as to the meaning of the words was given, rather, the children simply had to memorise each line as it was dictated to them.

When they were in their own class with their own teacher, an academic routine was strongly in evidence. The day began with time on the 'mat', discussing what the children had brought pertaining to the letter being studied, counting on the abacus or discussing what was on the agenda for the day. This was followed everyday by boardwork – writing on small individual blackboards at the children's desks. Then it was the writing of sentences, followed by a worksheet. Whilst the rest of the class was busy with this, Ms C would do group reading. This was the structure of the daily Literacy lessons (discussed in more detail later), and each day the routine was exactly the same. There is evidence that, particularly with respect to young learners, a structured classroom is more beneficial than one in which the learners are not sure of what is to happen next (Wong-Fillmore 1985).

### *Visual aids and resources*

English was the only language used in the visual aids at School B, whereas both English and Xhosa were used at School A. Letterland, a well established system for teaching children to read and write, was used by School B. In this system, the letters become friendly 'pictogram' characters (Appendix 1B), which characters were displayed around the walls. Numerous other posters lined the walls, including a poster on good habits, the animal ABC, opposites, colours and four pictures of birds – birds being the present theme in Environment Study (part of Life Skills). To assist with Numeracy, the numbers, words and amounts of 1 to 5 were displayed. On one wall there were pictures of things beginning with the some of the letters studied so far this year, items beginning with 'n', 'm', 'f' and 'r'. Whilst at School A, the visual aids were used solely to support formal lesson content, at School B the volume and variety of visual aids indicated that their purpose was also to stimulate incidental learning.

There were numerous educational toys, games and puzzles, with which the children were allowed to play. For reading, the school is extremely well resourced. The Ginn Reading Series is used, and there are enough readers to enable each child to take home a reading book each night. All these books are in English. There is no evidence of any other language being used in the class, either as a visual aid or for reading.

## **DISCUSSION OF DATA RELATING TO CLASSROOM ORGANISATION**

### *Children and teacher*

Whilst there was much interaction between the children during the diverse 'extra' activities as illustrated above, there was very little interaction between the children in the class during formal class time, when they were working at their desks. Ms C's particular style of teaching was to allow for discussion and the asking and answering of questions at the very beginning of the day, on the mat and whilst she was explaining the work, and thereafter the children were requested to work individually on the task. Seating

arrangements are important in multilingual settings and are often used to facilitate language development, as was the case at School A. However, at School B, seating was arranged primarily in order to prevent too much chatting, often with boy / girl combinations, or combinations of focused / less focused children, in which the less focused (or more distracted) ones were encouraged to keep pace with the more focussed ones.

Any other language apart from English was actively discouraged by the teacher :

*"I don't allow other languages in my class. I feel that they are here to learn English. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> term they begin Afrikaans, and then they can talk Afrikaans in the Afrikaans class and in Grade 3 we begin Xhosa. Sometimes they talk Xhosa at breaktime and we can't do anything about it, so in class when I can control it I do."*

Discouraging the use of the home language runs counter to the principle of additive bilingualism (Cummins 1986). The 'straight for English' approach adopted by School B is one in which the use and maintenance of the learners' L1 is neglected, and language is not used as a resource for learning in the classroom. This contrasts directly with the approach adopted by School A, in which the L1 and L2, used together, support and complement each other. Such an approach as used in School B also runs counter to the Threshold Theory, which advocates that a learner must reach a certain level of language competence in order to avoid the negative effects of bilingualism. However, as Baker (1988 : 177) points out, defining levels of language competence in itself is complex and far less straight forward than the Threshold Theory may imply.

To add to the complexities of the Threshold Theory, it could further be argued that these children are reaching a certain level of competence in English, but are unlikely to attain the full benefits of additive bilingualism because the L1 is not being maintained. In this sense, the approach evident at School B where the children have access to the material and cultural resources to support learning in English, is similar to an immersion education approach where parents want their children to learn the 'other' language. As stated previously, the Xhosa speaking parents at School B wanted their children to learn through the medium of English and were supportive of this approach. Similarly, despite not having as much access to material and cultural resources, the parents of the children at School A also specifically requested English instruction, as evidenced in the documentation supporting the inception of School A. Luckett (1995) predicted that additive bilingualism would not work without the support of the black middle class. However, for the many reasons expounded in Chapter 2 this dissertation, under the heading 'Disparity between policy and practice' (page 16), such support is not always forthcoming.

Whilst the use of the L1 (Xhosa) in a co-operative learning environment was a resource for assisting the non-English speakers at School A, at School B Ms C would use individual tuition in an attempt to instill understanding :

*"If a Xhosa child is battling, I would get them individually on the mat, just one or two at a time. Often when we start blending sounds, such as the 'sh' or 'ch' sounds, problems start coming in. Then I would take them to the mat and tell them the story around the sound – for example, to explain the 'sh' sound I would use the story of Sammy Snake and Hairy Hat Man, in which Hairy Hat Man turns around to Sammy Snake and says "SH". This story gets told numerous times to reinforce the concept, at first with lots of physical demonstration and then less and less, until you just tell the story. With the children who are battling, we would do the physical reinforcement more often, show them how a sound actually works and make it very concrete."*

Extra input from the teacher was of primary importance in this Grade 1 class, and made possible because of its size. At School A, on the other hand, additional input from peers was necessary, primarily because the class was simply too big for extra teacher input. Yet in different ways there seemed to be benefits for the children in both schools.

#### *Lesson planning*

Whilst there was evidence of thematic linking between lessons, (this being the strongest feature of lesson planning at School A), the main point of interest with lesson planning at School B was the strong emphasis on listening input, which was enhanced by routine and predictability as well as contextualisation.

Listening input, particularly in the three formal learning areas of Literacy, Numeracy and Life Skills, was provided primarily by the teacher. This was strongly supportive of Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1982). In this Grade 1 class, input appeared to be far more important, in the formal learning areas that is, than output. The children were encouraged to take part in discussions, but this was only during a certain time of the day, after which talking was discouraged and output in the form of book work, including letter formation, colouring, cutting out, sticking and so on, was encouraged.

The organisation of the timetable and the organisation of class time appeared to work well in providing both input, in the form of teacher talk, and output, in which the children had opportunities to use language themselves; these occurred during the more informal, diverse activities. During routine class time in which formal teaching took place, however, input was primarily teacher talk, and classes were more traditional and teacher-centered. This type of classroom organisation is in line with the research findings of Wong Fillmore (1985) and Pica and Doughty (1985 : 132).

Routine, repetition and predictability were also strong features of daily class time. In the planning of routine lessons, the value of repetition and predictability, as outlined by Huizenga (1990 : 152) is supported by the research of Wong-Fillmore (1985). Ms C reinforced this sense of predictability by telling the children, early on in the morning whilst they were still on the mat, exactly what they would be doing that day.

*"Yes, yes, I always do that. Um, I like to have a routine because it's good for the children. Without routine they are absolutely wild. And I like to have them on the mat first thing in the morning and I like to tell them what is on for the day. I like to say you are going to do this today and you are going to do that today and it eases someone like Benjamin who would otherwise ask what are we going to do next and when are we going to do that and so on."*

Contextualisation is another vital component necessary to make listening input comprehensible (Huizenga 1990 : 146; Krashen and Terrell 1983). Such contextualisation was strongly evident at School B, particularly in the creative writing lesson (described in more detail above), but there were also signs of it at School A, when the children talked about their own homes during a Life Skills lesson. However, whilst contextualisation was apparent in the creative writing lesson mentioned above, it was not as evident in the everyday teaching of Literacy, as it was at School A. This will be discussed later under the teaching of Literacy.

Overlapping with contextualisation is thematic linking.

*"Yes, I do try to link things thematically. That's why we juggle around with the Letterland alphabet in that we don't go precisely the way they say we should go. The 'f' sound lent itself because we were looking at tadpoles in Environment Study, which then progressed into frogs. Then we had those frogs outside to make (during art) and then I made the worksheets on frogs after they had seen the whole life cycle of a frog. It's so meaningful to them if it's linked. Then 'b' was so nice to do this week because of the Easter bunny, and now we are starting a theme on birds. I like to do this."*

However, at School B thematic linking appears to be mostly phonetic in that the letter 'b' dominated, whereas at School A, the thematic linking was much stronger, in that lesson content as well as vocabulary were intertwined in all three formal learning areas.

#### *Visual aids and resources*

A further way of ensuring the predictability of input is with the use of relevant visual materials and worksheets to accompany the input. This was evidenced in the worksheets used (for example, Appendix 2B, 3B and 4B) to reinforce the learning of the 'b' and 'p' sounds.

In addition to the worksheets, the visual aids displayed on the walls around the class were also relevant to the input. Brookes (2001) found that the use of appropriate visual aids was an important strategy in supporting language acquisition. The Letterland alphabet was on display as was a poster on numbers, and Ms C regularly referred to these in her teaching. For example, she pointed out all the items beginning with 'b' when the children had to think of words beginning with 'b'. There were also numerous books, games and pictures to provide visual support. It was noticeable that only English texts were displayed and only English books and games were used.

As far as Literacy materials were concerned, School B was extremely well resourced and, unlike School A, each child was able to take home a new reader each day. Such resources, as well as the individual teacher input, made progress in English literacy eminently possible, and the level of competence of the children, even the Xhosa/Afrikaans/Urdu-English speaking child(ren), in my estimation as an experienced primary school teacher, was good.

## **LEARNING AREAS AND HOW THEY ARE TAUGHT**

### *Numeracy*

As at School A, here too the emphasis in Numeracy lessons was to reinforce knowledge of numbers in general, and to understand the bonds of the number 6. To reinforce a general knowledge of numbers, Ms C would use an abacus, often at the beginning of the day when all the children were on the mat. The abacuses, of which there were enough for each child to use one, were well designed, with each line having ten counters, five yellow and five green.

As with School A, understanding of the bonds of 6 dominated the Numeracy lessons at School B. Actual teaching took place on the mat. "If I have..., how many more do I need?" (to make six). Ms C used her fingers to illustrate, after which the children were asked to sit on their hands. She called out bonds again, and this time they had to answer without the help of their fingers. This was very similar to the counters lesson observed at School A. As Xhosa songs were used to reinforce counting at School A, so English songs were used at School B, including one about six little ducks, which was enthusiastically acted out. Each day, written work incorporated practice with writing the numeral, the word, as well as drawing the correct number of something, for example, 2, two, draw two dogs. Again, this was similar to School A, where the children were requested to draw so many coloured dots on one side of their page, and add another number of coloured dots to make up the number six on the other side. At School B, however, stronger emphasis was placed on the correct formation of the numerals and the written words, examples of which were pre-prepared by Ms C in their books. The use of specific items of stationery for specific tasks was important – the pencils for writing (each child was provided with one so that they all use the



same writing instrument) and the “fat wax” crayons for drawing. Attention to detail was noticeable, as also evidenced in the Literacy lessons where there was focus on phonological awareness and knowledge of punctuation, a form-focussed approach. In addition, thematic linking was evident in that the children were asked to draw things beginning with the letter ‘b’ – the ‘b’ sound also dominated the Literacy lessons.

Throughout the week, numbers from one to five were practised in much the same way every day. Repetition, as at School A, was a key element of these lessons. In the last numeracy lesson I observed, the number six was added to their repertoire. As in all the numeracy lessons, explanations as to what was to be done were thorough, duplicating on the blackboard exactly what was in their books or on their worksheets. Appendix 5B is a typical example of a numeracy worksheet, which incorporates practice with writing the numeral, the associated word and the bonds of six. Thematic linking is again evident in that beetles (‘b’ sound) are used to illustrate the worksheet.

### *Literacy*

Two approaches to the teaching of literacy appeared to dominate at School B : a phonetic approach and a whole word approach, both illustrating a more ‘bottom up’ method to literacy instruction, as opposed to the ‘top down’ approach favoured by School A.

For the duration of my visit, the letter ‘b’ was learned, linked contextually to the Easter season and the Easter bunny. The Letterland system was used, each letter having an accompanying book about the character represented by the letter. Worksheets also illustrate this (Appendices 2B, 3B and 4B).

The first lesson began with singing the Letterland song, identifying the new letter, ‘b’ and identifying objects around the class beginning with ‘b’. A reading of the Letterland book about Bouncy Ben followed. What was noticeable was that very little discussion of the pictures in the book preceded the reading, unlike the approach to Literacy at School A in the reading of Ndinekhaya, and only occasionally did Ms C stop to discuss the meaning of vocabulary, such as ‘burrow.’ After discussing and practising (in the air and on each other’s backs) how to form a ‘b’, and after Ms C had verbally told the children what they were doing that day (routine and predictability), the children returned to their desks, where a similar routine each day became evident – board work, followed by sentences, followed by a worksheet, which, on the first and second days, reinforced the phonetic letter ‘b’.

The second literacy lesson began in a similar way, again with the reading of a book, but a different one, entitled My ‘b’ Book. In this series, known as the ‘My first steps to reading’ series, as in the Letterland series, there is a book for each letter of the alphabet. The use of the Letterland books and the ‘My first

steps to reading' books offer some form of continuity and predictability, so important in language acquisition.

Board work, which followed the reading of these books each day, involved practising both letters and numbers on a small blackboard, of which each child had his/her own. It appeared to be a general practice session, in which the children tried out some of the letters and numbers previously learned. Daily writing of sentences followed the board work. This was all pre-prepared in their books, an example of which was as follows :

Let's run here.

hide

play

swim

The first sentence was written for them. Thereafter, the children had to fill in an appropriate word before and after the verb. Careful explanation was given whilst Ms C demonstrated on the blackboard. Detailed explanation was provided on the spacing between each word (two fingers), how to hold the pencil ('three friends'), what pencil to use (they all had the same kind provided by the school) and the need to end with a fullstop ('so that the letters won't run away'). Attention to detail dominated, as unlike School A, where the children were requested to simply write "a page" of 'd's.

A further noticeable feature of the sentence writing was that no context was given for the sentences – they were simply random sentences, which in no way related to the previously learned 'b' sound. The purpose behind the sentence writing appeared to be simply to practise writing. Linked to the attention to detail, as described above, focus on form was also apparent, as was evident in Ms C's explanation of the apostrophe :

*Ms C : How many people do you think we should draw here? (The children were requested to illustrate the sentence 'Let's run here.'*

*Child : two.*

*Ms C : Why do you say two? What tells you that there are two or more people running? Don't shout out! Put your hands up!*

*Child : 'Cause it says let's.*

*Ms C : Yes, let's is short for let us. Us means more than one, doesn't it? Instead of saying let us, we've said let's, but it still means that there is more than one, okay? So you need to draw more than one person in your drawing.*

This, together with the insistence on the fullstop, illustrated the attention to detail and grammatical form, which was not evident at School A.

Another noticeable feature of the literacy lessons was that whilst she was explaining on the board, Ms C requested children to put their hands up if they wished to answer a question. There was no calling out, and no chorused, class responses, as was evident at School A. It appeared that most of the children, both the mother tongue and Xhosa/Afrikaans/Urdu-English speaker(s), were happy to respond to the questions, which were usually closed in nature and did not necessitate long responses.

Each day, a worksheet followed the sentence writing. Appendix 2B and Appendix 3B are examples of worksheets used on two consecutive days. Compared to the worksheets at School A used for the teaching of Literacy (Appendix 3A and 5A (page 107)), School B's worksheets involved simple texts and offered detailed guidance to the children. The theme of the worksheets tended to be phonetic, dealing with the letter currently being learned. On the third day of my observation period, the worksheet, Appendix 6B, involved a revision of the letters learned previously. Their books had been prepared so that each letter, including 'a', 's', 'h', 'c', 'd', 't', 'c' and 'm' was given a large space in which to stick the relevant pictures, such as the cow in the 'c' space.

Whilst the children were busy on their sentences and worksheet, Ms C called out small groups for reading. The class was divided into three ability groups, the largest group consisting of eight children. Each group would spend approximately 20 minutes on the mat, during which time they would read individually, each child one or two sentences in the current reader, which would then be exchanged for the next reader. In addition to this, lists of words were given (Appendix 7B). Only with the weakest group did Ms C discuss the pictures shown :

*"Yes, with the weaker ones and at the beginning of the year, for about the first week or two we would discuss all the pictures and then go back to the beginning and read it. In fact, Damien's mom (Damien is in the third reading group and is Afrikaans speaking) wrote in his diary that she had the feeling that he's guessing what's coming up next, but that he's getting the words right. And I said that that's fine. That's why we discuss it first and then they have more understanding of what's happening. It's not just words on a page. It's a story that they are actually reading. Sometimes they do guess the words and they get them right, but that's the way they learn."*

From this comment, it appeared that Ms C initially paid more attention to the pictures in the books, but from my observations of the group reading sessions, this was minimal. For the most part, the style of teaching was typical of the 'whole word' approach, as little explanation was given of context. If available, the Teacher Aid would assist with the reading. The ability level of each child was carefully monitored, and individual time allocated, more if deemed necessary. It was in the amount of individual attention given that the biggest difference in the Literacy teaching between School A and School B became apparent.

Another feature of the 'whole word' approach was the use of 'box words', a set of which was available to each child. This is a small plastic container into which are placed individual words, written on pieces of coloured cardboard. Whilst on the mat, the children in one group might be asked to look for the words in their boxes and form a sentence, such as 'he can't run fast.' This was merely word recognition, in which meaning and context did not appear to play a part. However, both grammatical knowledge and memory are important in that to form their sentences, the children have to remember word order as well as have some knowledge of sentence construction. This is a challenging exercise, not only for the English children, but even more so for the Xhosa/Afrikaans/Urdu-English speaker(s).

### *Life Skills*

Whilst at School A, a specific Life Skills lesson was included in the daily timetable, this was not the case at School B. Here, instead, the concept of Life Skills appeared to incorporate many of the diverse activities on offer, whilst in the classroom the term Environment Study was preferred:

*"To me life skills is everything, how they sit at their desks, what their chair bag looks like, can they keep quiet, can they carry out an instruction, can they remember words from Environment Study and Bible Study and so on. But Environment Study is under Life Skills because they learn so much about the world around them. Environment study is everything around them – picking up litter, looking after themselves and so on."*

The one lesson pertaining to Life Skills that I observed was one in which a poem about a little bird was learned. This formed the crux of the literacy work for that day, (Appendix 8B) and provided a thematic link between the Literacy and the Life Skills work. Although I did not observe any other Life Skills lessons, it was clear that this worksheet marked the beginning of a theme on birds, so incorporated to correspond with the learning of the phonetic 'b' sound.

*"And you will stick this into your Environment Study book because we are going to learn about all different kinds of birds in Environment Study."*

## **STRATEGIES USED TO ASSIST LEARNING**

The only language of instruction used at School B was English. In the case of home languages other than English, there was neither support for their use in the classroom nor even acknowledgement of their existence. The children were totally immersed in the culture and ethos of the English medium school. Here was evidence of a subtractive approach to bilingualism, in which the second language, used as a medium of instruction, replaces the first. This is contrary to an additive approach to bilingualism, called for in the LiEP, in which a second language is added to the first language. Subtractive bilingualism,

research has indicated, works contrary to the cognitive and sociolinguistic development of the child and, it has been claimed, results in a high drop-out rate in later years.

However, despite adopting an approach contrary to what research has shown to be positive, School B appeared to be flourishing, and the children I observed were happy, well-adjusted and confident both in their immediate environment and with the language used. The reasons for this appeared to be, firstly, in the strong organisational and support strategies in place at School B, all of which assisted the children who were learning through an additional language. Secondly, the quality of immersion that the Xhosa/Afrikaans/Urdu speaker(s) were getting at School B was high in that they were in daily contact with native, mostly monolingual English speaking children. This is very different from the kind of immersion children would get at, for example, at School A, where all the children are Xhosa speaking, but learning through English.

#### *Class size, group work and teacher aid*

The Grade 1 classes at School B are kept deliberately small. The Grade 1 class I observed consisted of 20 children, exactly half the number of children in the Grade 1 class at School A. Three years previously, in 2000, Ms C was employed by School B in a Governing Body position so that a further Grade 1 class could be added to the existing two, the reason being that the demands of the first year of schooling, particularly on children learning through a language other than their mother tongue. It was therefore deemed necessary to have smaller classes in which the teacher could devote quality, individual time to each child.

As a direct result of having smaller classes (the largest Grade 1 class consisted of 24 children), more time was available for group activities, specifically in the Literacy learning area, and more particularly, in learning to read. In the Grade 1 class under review, reading groups consisted of no more than eight children, and time and resources were such that each child's reading was listened to and books exchanged on a daily basis. This strong emphasis on teacher input, as well as peer support for each child within a similar ability group, went far in supporting the L2 speakers, whose progress was commendable. In addition to having individual teacher time, a teacher aid was also available.

This teacher aid was employed, again in a Governing Body position, three years ago when it became evident that the Grade 2 classes, (two, which had to accommodate the three Grade 1 classes from the previous year), were fairly large and needed assistance, again specifically in the Literacy learning area. As well as assisting with Grade 2 and 3, the teacher aid also assists the Grade 1 teachers when necessary.

*"I started off using her (the teacher aid) with my non-English speaking children and I'd give her flash cards and pictures which she used like a big discussion book, and they would discuss and take out words and write them down and see what they looked like and so on. Then I started sending the bottom reading group to her. She's actually pre-primary trained so she used a lot of aids to help these children understand. And they have really come on in leaps and bounds from the first term. It's unbelievable."*

So smaller classes resulted in more focused group work, specifically with respect to reading, and this, combined with maximum teacher input and support, augmented and supplemented by input from a teacher aid, resulted in a strongly individualised emphasis on learning, conducive to language acquisition. With so much individual attention and support, the learning environment was illustrative of an environment in which the L1 is acquired, in that it mirrored the attention a primary caregiver, such as a mother, gives her child in the formative years. The child retains the responsibility for language learning at his or her own pace, within an environment of verbal, functional and communicative language, in which the 'affective filter' (Krashen : 1982) is low.

#### *Diversity of timetable*

The three main learning areas at School B were Literacy, Numeracy and Life Skills. However, as mentioned previously, a large proportion of the daily timetable was given over to instruction in non-formal learning areas. With the exception of Audiblox, all these were non-structured activities, in which the children participated with obvious enjoyment, using the dominant language freely and easily in a non-threatening environment. Once again, the environment was similar to one in which an L1 is normally learned. Audiblox, well known for its supportive, educational qualities, offered valuable, structured language support for the L2 speakers in that it forced concentration and non-verbal output from each child in the manipulation of coloured blocks in specific sequences.

#### *Routine, predictability, contextualisation and thematic linking*

Despite the variety of extra-curricular learning areas, actual class time in which teaching of the three main learning areas occurred, followed exactly the same daily routine – 'mat' time, board work, sentences, a worksheet and group reading, followed after break by either Numeracy or Life Skills. For the children, this routine offered security, in that it was known, with similar, repetitive, predictable activities each day (Wong-Fillmore 1985). The 'affective filter' (Krashen : 1982) was low and as such, provided an environment which was conducive to language learning.

Linked with this was evidence of attempts at contextualisation and use of the 'here and now' to make input comprehensible. This was seen in the creative writing lesson observed and in the choice of phonetic sound, 'b', to link up to the Easter bunny and thematically to the Life Skills theme on birds.

### *Form-focussed approach, simplicity of worksheets and attention to detail*

Whilst the quantity of work covered was not vast, the quality of work produced was of a high standard in its accuracy and correctness. This appeared to be because Ms C paid a great deal of attention to detail in the assessment, preparation and delivery of the lesson content. Such attention to detail was similar, although at a much lower level, with the form-focussed approach as described by Spada (1997 : 75). With her attention to detail, Ms C corrected and assessed each child's book on a daily basis, as well as prepared their books for the following day's teaching. Such time consuming attention to detail was only possible because of the small class size. The sentences the children were expected to write as well as the worksheets covered were simple, but coupled with this simplicity was the expectation that they would be done correctly and accurately.

## **CONCLUSION**

The overarching approach used in this class appeared to be subtractive, in that only one language was used as a medium of instruction and little if anything was done to maintain or develop the home language of the L2 learners. But, the diversity in this class was such that three different mother tongues were represented (excluding the one Urdu speaker) and, maintenance of all three would be difficult. Such diversity is a common feature of South African society at large, as well as common to many classes in South Africa and, as illustrated in the literature review of this dissertation, an often cited, practical reason for the choice of English MoI.

Despite its emphasis on English, for which it could be severely criticised by advocates of additive bilingualism, School B is a fully functional, well-equipped school, with well-qualified, motivated teachers, an abundance of resource materials, excellent facilities and learners from supportive homes. All the children, no matter what their home language, are learning, and their competence in both the reading and writing of English is evident. The parents are supportive of the use of English and, whether rightly or wrongly, send their children to School B specifically because it is English medium. The aspirations of these parents, coupled with the strong support strategies within the school itself, provide an environment conducive to learning. As such, School B appears to have adopted the second alternative suggested to the government in the PEI report, that is to "accept the growing use of English as language of instruction...and promote conditions requisite for effective teaching and learning through English." (Vinjevold 1999 : 225).

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SCHOOL A AND SCHOOL B

### CLASSROOM ORGANISATION

#### *Children and teacher*

School A	School B
<p>40 children, 18 girls and 24 boys. L1 – all Xhosa.</p> <p>Average age – 6,5 years.</p> <p>Parents want English medium schooling. At least one year pre-school experience with English speaking teacher.</p> <p>Teacher – Xhosa / English bilingual. Teacher’s L1 is Xhosa.</p> <p>Children seated so as to facilitate communication at all times. Follow up work after lessons done individually, but talking in L1 permitted. Lots of interaction between the children, mainly in Xhosa. Language used as a resource for teaching.</p> <p>No individual and only a limited amount of small group tuition from the teacher. Irregular (only once observed), incomplete (only two groups done) group work in Literacy due to large class size, time constraints and lack of resources.</p> <p>No support strategies for those struggling. Mainly peer support in that children assist each other in Xhosa. No extra visual aids available.</p>	<p>20 children, 10 boys and 10 girls L1 - 3 Xhosa, 5 Afrikaans, 1 Urdu (main language of Pakistan), 11 English.</p> <p>Average age – 6,5 years.</p> <p>Parents want English medium schooling. At least one year pre-school experience with English speaking teacher and Xhosa speaking teacher aid.</p> <p>Teacher – English / Afrikaans bilingual. Teacher’s L1 is English.</p> <p>Children seated so as not to encourage communication. Follow up work after lessons done individually and talking discouraged. Interaction between children only permitted at specific times, and only in English. No other language other than English used.</p> <p>Much individual and small group tuition, especially in Literacy, from the teacher and teacher aid, made possible because of small class size and plentiful resources.</p> <p>Strong support strategies in place for those struggling. Teacher aid as well as extra visual aids used to support and assist learning, but these only in English.</p>



*Lesson planning*

School A	School B
3 learning areas – Numeracy, Literacy and Life Skills. Religious instruction is the only extra-curricular subject.	3 learning areas – Numeracy, Literacy and Life Skills. Audiblox, Computers, Singing, Physical Education, Creative Writing, Bible Ed. are extra-curricular subjects.
English and Xhosa used for instruction. Literacy taught in Xhosa, Life Skills and Numeracy taught in English, Religious Instruction taught in both languages.	English the only language of instruction.
Class teacher only teaches this class.	3 teachers over and above class teacher teach this class.
No diversity in activities (only the regular learning areas, plus Religious Instruction). Ms M is the only teacher who teaches this class.	Great diversity in activities (Audiblox, Music, Physical Education etc.) and diversity in teaching input (different teachers teach the class for these lessons)
Assemblies in English and Xhosa.	Assemblies only in English.
Routine apparent, but less rigidly kept to.	Strong evidence of routine and predictability, especially with respect to class time.
Strong contextualisation to make input meaningful.	Some evidence of contextualisation.
Very strong thematic linking between three main learning areas.	Some evidence of thematic linking.
Teacher input mainly through questioning. Lessons discursive in nature eliciting verbal output from children. This output in both English and Xhosa.	Strong teacher input, especially in formal learning areas. More emphasis on teacher talk than on questioning. Output from children mainly in the form of written work.
Less written work done, and that which was tended to be imprecise with little attention to detail.	More written work done, which was of a high standard in accuracy and precision.

*Visual aids and resources*

School A	School B
English and Xhosa both used in visual aids.	Only English used in visual aids.
Strong evidence of L1 used as a resource for teaching.	Xhosa and Afrikaans not used at all.
Visual aids immediately relevant to work covered.	Some visual aids relevant to work covered. Others used for only for visual stimulation and incidental learning.
Few puzzles and games available. Not	Many puzzles, books and games available

used regularly.	for the children, which were used regularly.
Under-resourced with respect to Literacy teaching. Not enough readers for each child.	Extremely well resourced with respect to Literacy. Each child able to take home a new book daily.
Books used for Literacy – only Xhosa. English books used (by teacher) for Numeracy and Life Skills.	Books used for Literacy – only English. No other language used in any other subject.
Library available, but not used by Grade 1 as no suitable books. Books (for older children) mainly English, but a number of Xhosa books.	Library available. Predominantly English, few Afrikaans and no Xhosa books.
Video machine available. Used weekly. Computer centre. Not used by Grade 1.	Video machine available. Used weekly. Computers (6). Used regularly by Grade 1.

## LEARNING AREAS AND HOW THEY ARE TAUGHT

### *Numeracy*

School A	School B
Taught in English.	Taught in English.
Main aim to reinforce knowledge of numbers and counting, in particular bonds of 6.	Main aim to reinforce knowledge of numbers and counting, in particular bonds of 6.
Counting in two's using wall chart. Whole class counts together, chants.	Counting in one's and two's using abacus. Whole class works together, but questions asked of individual children. Group work also done.
A great deal of visual demonstration from the teacher to reinforce knowledge of the bonds of six, using plastic counters.	Some visual demonstration from the teacher, using fingers.
Many questions asked, not often directed to individual children, but rather to the class. Chorused responses.	Some questions asked, directed to individual children. No chorused responses.
Repetition used to reinforce learning.	Repetition used to reinforce learning.
Songs used to reinforce learning. Sung in Xhosa. Valuable linking in vocabulary.	Songs used to reinforce learning. Sung in English.

School A	School B
<p>Taught in Xhosa. Taught to whole class. Very little group work done.</p>	<p>Taught in English. 3 reading groups, based on ability.</p>
<p>Much repetition of content. Same book ('Ndinekhaya') used all week.</p>	<p>No repetition of content. Different book daily.</p>
<p>Lack of resources. Only 6 small books to accompany each big book. 20 big books and their equivalent small books available for Grade 1 year. All Xhosa.</p>	<p>Extremely well resourced. Mainly Ginn reading series used. Each child able to have new book daily. All English. Word lists (Appendix 7) and box words also used – whole word approach evident.</p>
<p>Assessment very informal. Not often recorded.</p>	<p>Assessment done daily. Each child carefully monitored and progress recorded.</p>
<p>Approach mainly top down, initially whole language, leading to whole word, leading to phonetic, back to whole word as week progressed.</p>	<p>Approach mainly bottom up, initially phonetic, leading to whole word. Not much whole language in evidence, except with the weaker reading group.</p>
<p>Questions mostly directed to the whole class. Chorused responses, although some individual answering. Appeared more confident to speak in Xhosa than they did in English.</p>	<p>Questions directed to individual children. No chorused responses. Both first and second language speakers confident to speak in English.</p>
<p>Approach very communicative in nature. Very little attention to form given.</p>	<p>Approach communicative, but coupled with strong emphasis on form. Much teacher input in this respect.</p>
<p>Literacy worksheets (Appendix 3 and back of Appendix 5) fairly advanced in that many words used, but contextually supported by pictures identical to those in the Ndinikhaya big book. Whole language and whole word approach evident.</p>	<p>Literacy worksheets (Appendix 1, 2, 3 and 5) very simple in comparison. No words, very phonetic in approach. Short (three / four word) sentences done separately in books. These sentences entirely unrelated and not contextually supported. Whole word approach.</p>

School A	School B
<p>Taught in English.</p> <p>Strong thematic linking with Numeracy and Literacy, both in content and in context, resulting in much overlap of vocabulary in L1 and L2.</p> <p>Formally taught, on a daily basis, as one of the three learning areas.</p>	<p>Taught in English.</p> <p>Some thematic linking, but more incidental. Linking more phonetic rather than in content or context.</p> <p>Formal content based Life Skills or Environment Study not necessarily taught each day. Included under the umbrella of Life Skills, a variety of diverse activities are included in the timetable. Life Skills seen as more than simply one of the three learning areas and therefore, is approached more informally.</p>

### AN OVERVIEW OF SIMILARITIES, DIFFERENCES AND TEACHING STRATEGIES USED TO SUPPORT LEARNING IN THESE TWO CLASSES

School A and School B were, in many ways, very similar, and this similarity appeared to stem primarily from the fact that both schools valued English and used English as the MoI. Both schools were also determined to make English work as the MoI, having consciously decided from their inception on instruction through the medium of English. Both schools have maintained this policy.

This said, at both schools the policy was put into effect in very different ways, with the use of different strategies that were relevant to and supportive of their respective environments and their respective learners.

At School A, *all* the children's L1 was Xhosa. Therefore, at School A, whilst English was recognized as being of vital importance and accordingly, used as the primary MoI, the L2, Xhosa, was also used extensively, particularly in the teaching of Literacy. This was appropriate considering the composition of the class. In effect then, these children were learning to read and write in Xhosa, whilst at the same time learning to communicate in English. This is *in keeping with* an additive approach to bilingualism, although different from Lockett's (1993 : 48) definition, which suggests that *all* learning areas be taught in the mother tongue initially ("I suggest that... successful learning of a second language will best be achieved if it is taught both as a subject and as the medium of instruction.") with a second language being added at a later stage. However, in the context of this particular school, in keeping with what was

perceived to be necessary at its inception and in keeping with the wishes of its parent body, this approach worked.

Various strategies were used by the teacher to support learning in two languages. There was a great deal of repetition, recycling and scaffolding of content, much of which overlapped thematically between the three learning areas. Literacy was taught in Xhosa, whilst Numeracy and Life Skills, taught in English, provided a valuable linking of vocabulary between the L1 and L2. The teaching style was communicative, allowing the children to become orally competent in English before introducing them to a more visual form of English literacy in Grade 2.

School B also used English as the MoI. If School B were to implement the LiEP advanced by the Department of Education, it would need to have either separate classes with instruction (respectively) in Xhosa, English and Afrikaans (excluding the possibility of foreign languages, an occurrence which is becoming more and more frequent in South Africa), or a teacher who is fluent in these languages. Most teachers have some degree of competence in all three, but for the purposes of teaching in the different languages, one would need more than just a passing competence.

Such linguistic diversity as was found in School B is not uncommon in many South African classrooms, and the PEI report (Vinjevold 1999 : 224) suggests the “rapidly changing demography of South Africa” is one of the main reasons why learning through the primary language is on the decrease. In addition to this, South Africa is a country in which there are eleven official languages. As stated previously, finding teachers sufficiently proficient in at least three, if not four of these languages, to allow for competent teaching as well as flexibility of movement within the country, is a rarity.

In a context of such linguistic diversity and supported by its available resources, School B has chosen to maintain English as the MoI and, as at School A, various support strategies are in place to assist those learning in a language other than their L1.

Firstly, the size of the classes, particularly the Grade 1 classes, is deliberately kept small so that work with individuals and smaller groups, particularly in the teaching of Literacy, may become an integral part of the daily timetable. A teacher aid also assists in this respect.

Secondly, there is a range of extra-curricular learning activities, which have been integrated into the timetable, in addition to the three main learning areas. These allow for the target language to be used in a variety of contexts, both formally and informally.

Thirdly, the daily timetable is strongly supported by routine and predictability, which, as supported by research by Wong-Fillmore (1985), goes a long way to easing insecurities often felt by young learners in a school environment, particularly those who are learning through a medium other than their own. The content is, wherever possible, presented within a context which is meaningful, drawing on the 'here and now' and what is available within the immediate classroom environment to make input comprehensible. Again, where possible, learning areas are linked thematically.

Fourthly, particularly in the teaching of the three main learning areas, the approach was both communicative and form-focussed. It was communicative in that there was lots of oral use of language, lots of discussions, questioning and repetition, with a great deal of teacher input, allowing the children to become orally proficient and communicatively competent in English. Coupled with this there was also attention to form, particularly in written literacy work, where phonological awareness, punctuation and attention to detail were of prime importance.

Lastly, the diversity of activities offered by School B gave the children ample opportunity to interact and communicate informally with their peers, such opportunities enabling them to develop their BICS. The more formal classroom routine, the attention to detail and the care taken to ensure understanding of such detail paved the way for the development of CALP, essential in the higher grades.

## **CONCLUSION**

The primary goal of this research project was to illuminate teaching practices of Grade 1 teachers who teach through the medium of English to classes which are predominantly non-English speaking. This was in response to the Department of Education's LiEP, which called for implementation of the principle of additive bilingualism, which essentially means that all children should be taught through the medium of their mother tongue to which a second language should be added. Apart from teaching Literacy in the mother tongue at School A, neither school in which this research took place has done much to implement the LiEP, which supports the principle of additive bilingualism and instruction through the L1 in *all* learning areas in the early years of schooling. Instead, they have chosen to work on what they perceive to be of the utmost importance and that is that their children become competent users of English. They have therefore chosen English as the MoI.

This chapter provides a rich description of the teaching practices of these two Grade 1 teachers. It provides insight into how they organise their classes, how they plan their lessons, what resources they have. It also provides insight into how they actually teach. All of this is discussed and analysed in the light of their language practices, particularly the use of English as the medium of instruction, and is

linked to what strategies they have in place to assist them with the task of teaching through the medium of English to mainly non-English speaking classes in a multilingual society. Both Grade 1 classes are similar in that they use English as the MoI, but they are different in the way in which they use it. These differences are highlighted in the comparative analysis.

## CHAPTER FIVE – CONCLUSION

This research project set out to study and compare two Grade 1 classes, in different situational contexts, both of which are taught through the medium of English. The focus was on teaching strategies and how these were used to enhancing understanding when learning through an additional language.

Such a project stemmed from the fact that language issues in South African society are complex and will remain so largely as a result of our history of political and linguistic repression. As education is a microcosm of society, such complexities are reflected in the language issues prevalent in education. The LiEP was an attempt to redress such issues through its promotion of additive bilingualism, but, although described as one of the most progressive policies in the world (Landon 1999) and an example to other African countries (Alexander 1999), it has received little support insofar as implementation is concerned. The reasons for this are many and varied and have been highlighted in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

### THE WAY FORWARD - SOME ALTERNATIVES

As stated above and as confirmed by the PEI report (Vinjevold 1999), learning through the primary language in the early years of schooling is on the decrease. The two schools highlighted in this dissertation provide insight into why this may be so. In response to this situation, the PEI report suggests that the government is faced with one of two alternatives.

Firstly, it suggests (Vinjevold 1999 : 225) that the government allocate substantial funds towards the promotion of additive bilingualism, in particular, learning through the primary language in the lower primary school. In order for this to take place successfully, books and resources in the indigenous languages of South Africa (nine, excluding English and Afrikaans, which are well resourced at present) would have to be provided. In addition to this, all teachers in the lower primary school would have to be fluent in the primary languages of the learners. This is not so much of a problem in rural areas, but in urban schools, particularly former white and coloured schools, it may be. Ms C, for instance, at School B, would have to be conversant in three languages, as three primary languages are represented in her class. In the more cosmopolitan areas, such as in parts of Gauteng, it is not improbable that more than three primary languages may be present in one class. If teacher fluency in primary languages were to be enforced, a Xhosa/English bilingual teacher, such as Ms M at School A, would find it difficult to teach in an area in which Xhosa was not one of the primary languages, simply because she is not fluent in any other indigenous language. With eleven official languages in South Africa, this would limit her teaching opportunities. Apart from the indigenous languages, no mention has been made either in the LiEP or in the PEI report of foreign languages, the occurrence of which is becoming more and more common as



South Africa's contact with the rest of the world increases. In addition to the provision of textbooks in all the indigenous languages, as well as the assumed availability of multilingual teachers, the PEI report further suggests that in order for additive bilingualism to work there would have to be the establishment of linguistically homogenous schools. In a country in which the legacy of Apartheid is still felt, it is improbable that such establishment would be greeted with much enthusiasm.

The second alternative suggested to the government by the PEI report (Vinjevold 1999 : 225), is to move beyond lamenting the lack of implementation of the LiEP, accept the fact that English is increasingly becoming the favoured language of instruction and promote conditions in which effective learning and teaching through the medium of English may take place. To fulfill this alternative, they suggest that all teachers need to be proficient in the target language, English, as well as be competent language teachers sympathetic to, and able to overcome, problems faced by L2 speakers. This is not easy when one considers the many rural schools staffed by L2 speakers of English. In addition to this, all learners would need to have exposure to the target language outside the classroom. This may be easier to achieve in urban areas, but far less so in deep rural areas. Further, simplified textbooks, specifically for learning in an additional language, would be needed. At present, there are a number of texts available for the teaching of English as an additional language, but comprehensible texts for use in other learning areas, written in English for L2 speakers, need to be developed. Such provision of textbooks may be more manageable and more economically viable, at least, than producing textbooks in all the indigenous languages as suggested by the first alternative.

#### A CONTEXTUAL APPROACH TO EDUCATIONAL LANGUAGE PLANNING

Both alternatives suggested by the PEI report have their merits, yet we appear no closer to solving the myriad of language problems still evident in our schools. Perhaps one of the most useful suggestions comes from Langhan (1996), and that is to adopt a contextual approach when deciding on a school language policy, particularly the LoLT to be used at a particular school. The choice of LoLT would then largely depend on the social context of the school, the demography of the learners, the resources available and the wishes of the parents.

It is precisely this contextual approach that the two schools analysed in this dissertation have taken when deciding on their LoLT. Both have chosen an alternative route from the one suggested by the LiEP, but one that is appropriate to their particular context. School A, in recognising the importance of English and acknowledging the aspirations of its parent body, has chosen a modified form of additive bilingualism, in that not all but one learning area, Literacy, is taught through the primary language, whilst the remaining two learning areas, Numeracy and Life Skills, are taught in English. School B,

more linguistically diverse than School A, has chosen the 'straight for English' route, contextually appropriate because of its linguistic diversity, and again supported by its parent body.

## TOWARDS MULTICULTURALISM

Although the contextual approach to language planning in these two schools appears to be working, and although such an approach may well work in many similar schools in South Africa, such success does not absolve the government from its responsibility in providing continual and ongoing support for the promotion of multilingualism. One cannot ignore the fact that research has shown the advantages of multilingualism. English may well gain top priority as a language of instruction, but maintenance of and respect for other primary languages together with the creation of a multicultural learning environment are issues that many schools still need to address.

As such, the government needs to provide funds for the employment of teachers fluent in an indigenous language, particularly in former white, coloured and Indian schools, so that additive multilingualism may become a reality. In addition, teacher training institutions need to ensure that multilingual training becomes part of their curriculum. It may appear that the LiEP and the promotion of additive bilingualism in the South African context are idealistic, but the reality still remains that South Africa is a multilingual nation, and respect, support, promotion and maintenance of the indigenous languages within our schools should be a priority.

It is hoped that this research project has illuminated ways in which use of English as a language of instruction may be made to work. Ultimately, schools need to provide opportunities for their learners to acquire the desired competence in English to facilitate learning as well as develop a healthy respect for other languages by maintaining and encouraging multilingualism. Only this will, in effect, redress the imbalances of the past and lead towards a more harmonious future.

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How many?



parents

children

parents

children



3

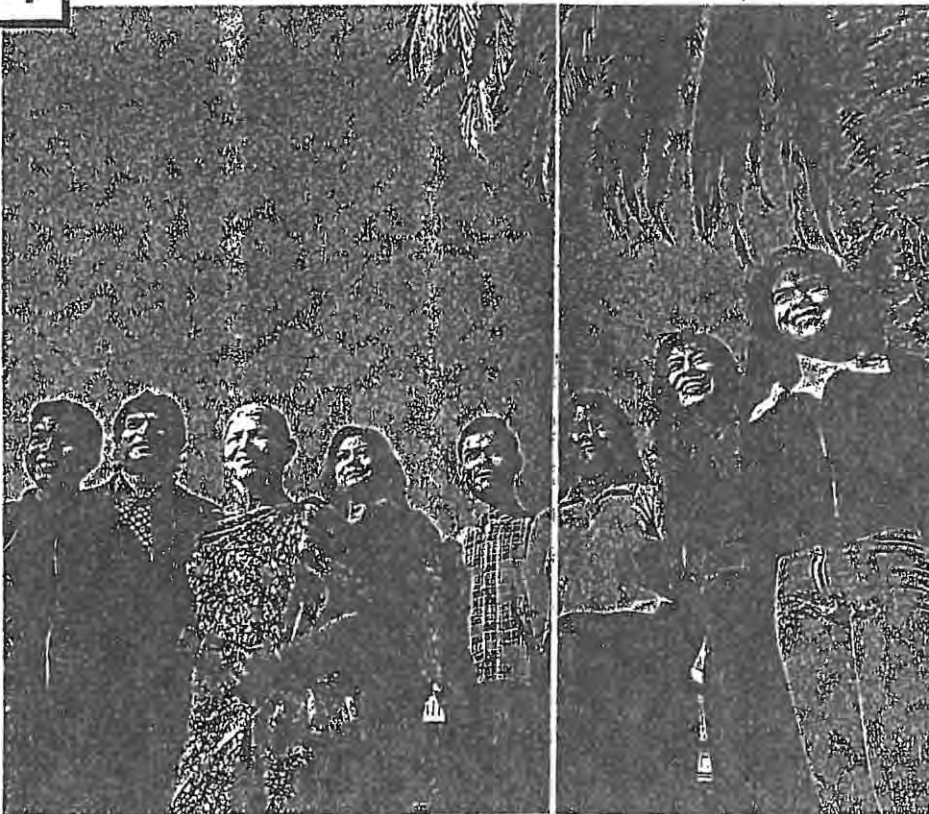


parents

children

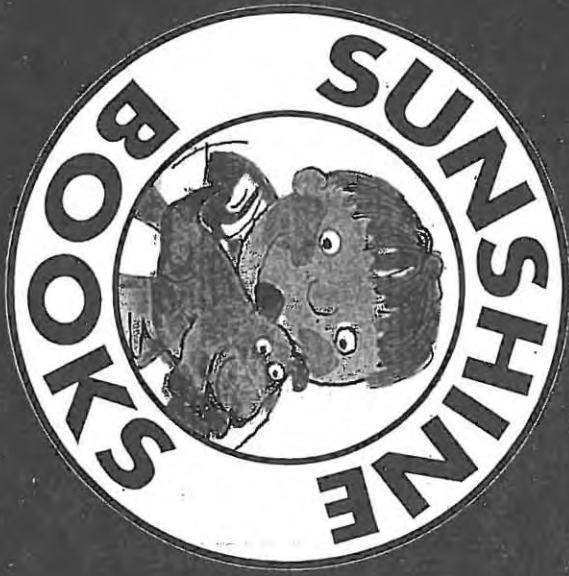
How many?

4



parents

children



SUNSHINE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Illustration: Muzo



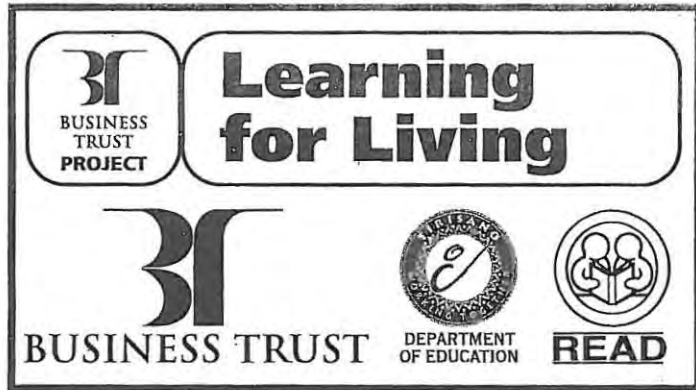
# Ndinekhaya

NguJudy Ling

Imizobo nguAstrid Matijasevic

Wamkelakile  
ekhaya





Ndinekhaya

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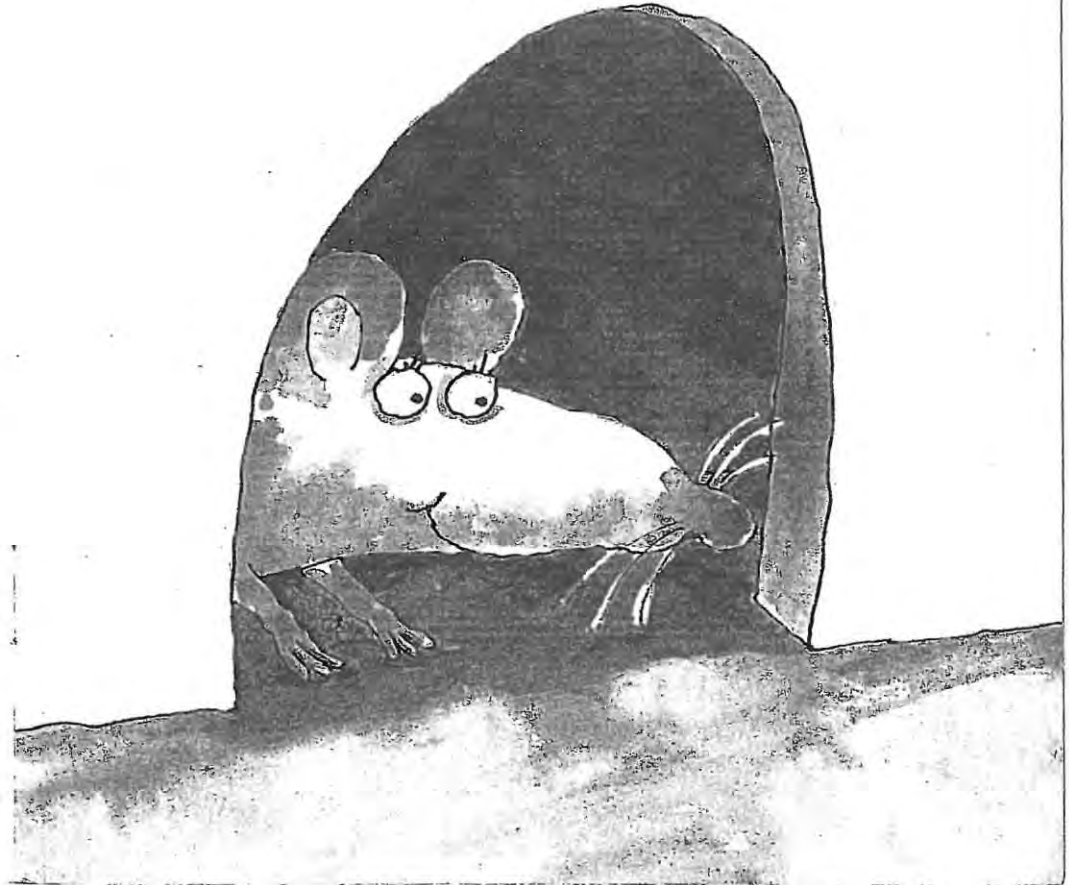
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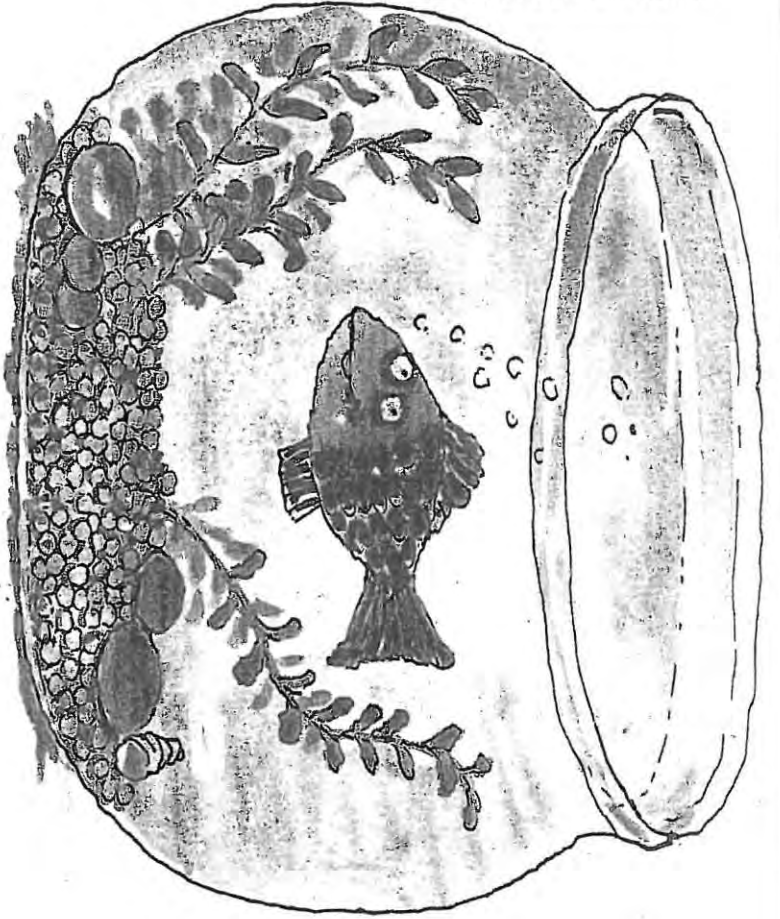
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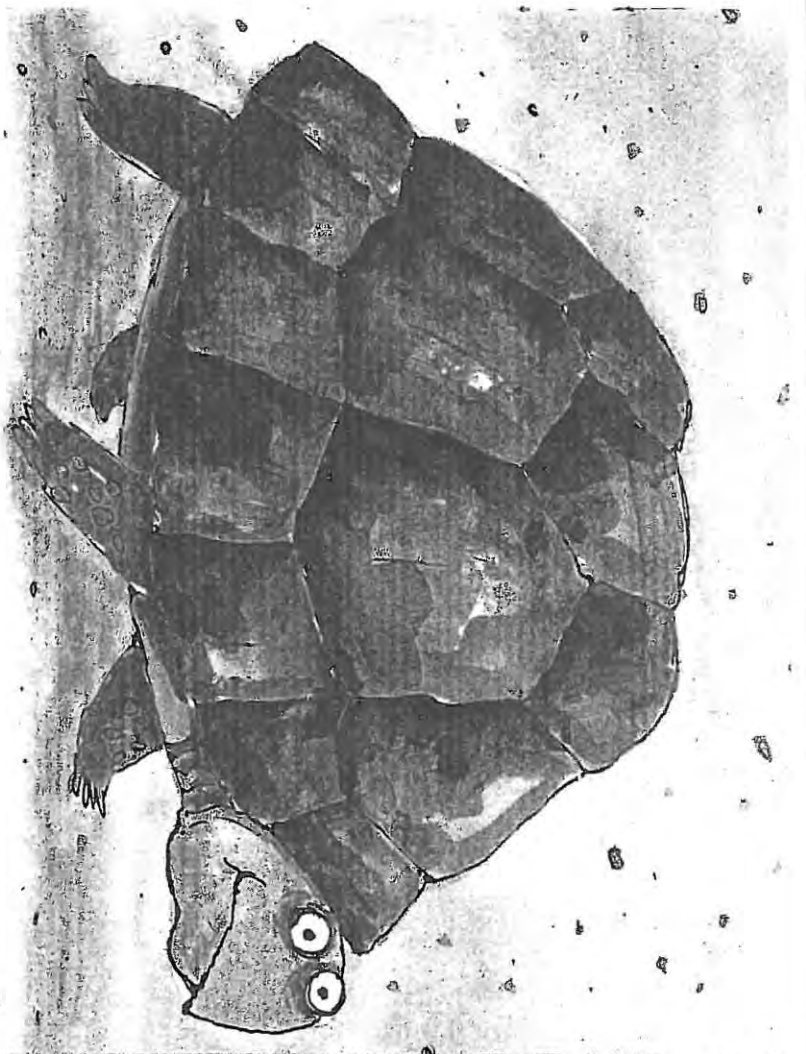
# Ndinekhaya





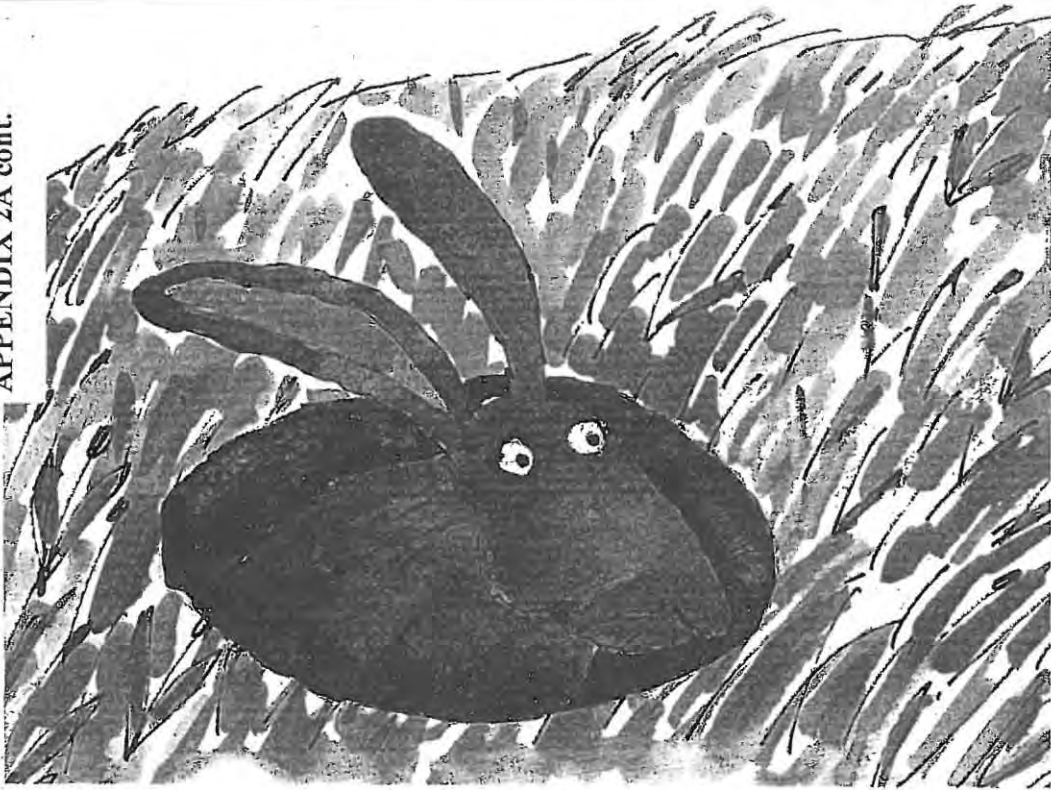
"Ndinekhaya,"  
yatsho intlanzi.  
"Ndihlala engqayini yam."

2



"Ndinekhaya,"  
watsho ufudwazana.  
"Ndihlala eqokobheni lam."

3



“Ndinekhaya,”  
 watsho umvundlana.  
 “Ndihlala emngxunyeni wam.”

4



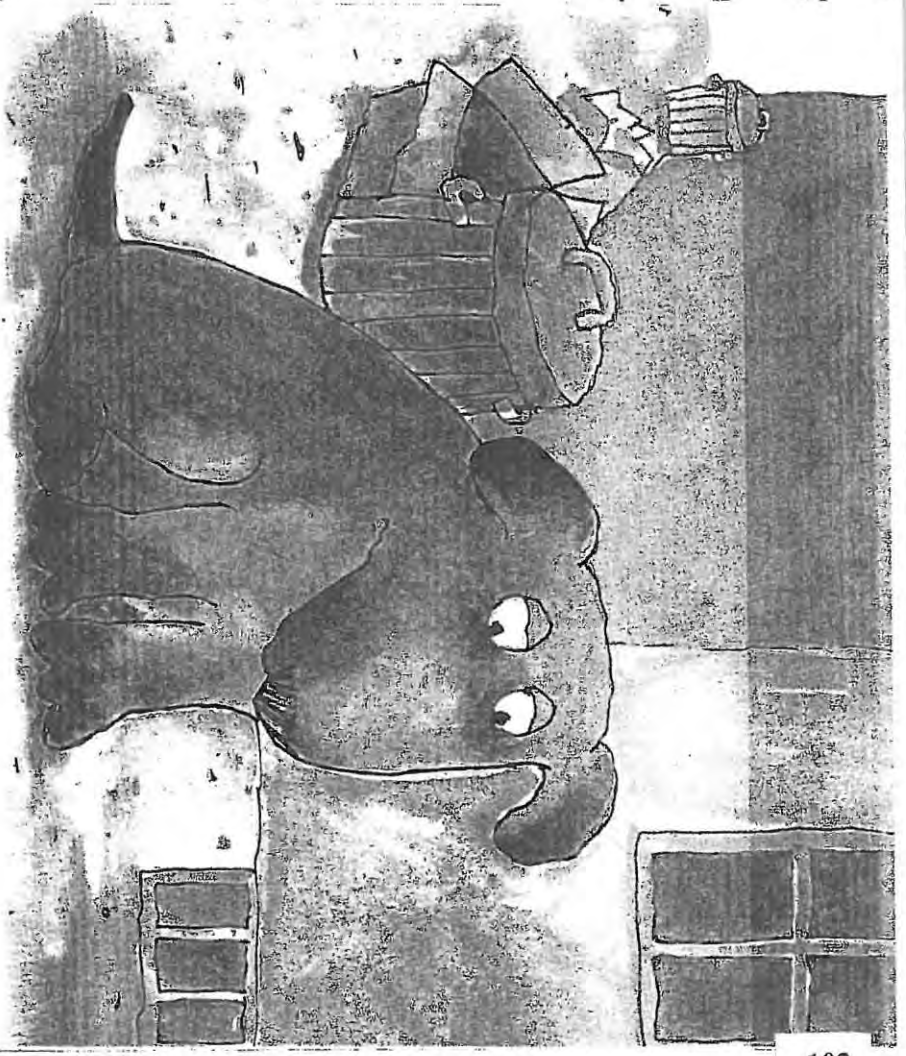
“Ndinekhaya,”  
 yatsho intakana.  
 “Ndihlala endlwaneni yam.”

5



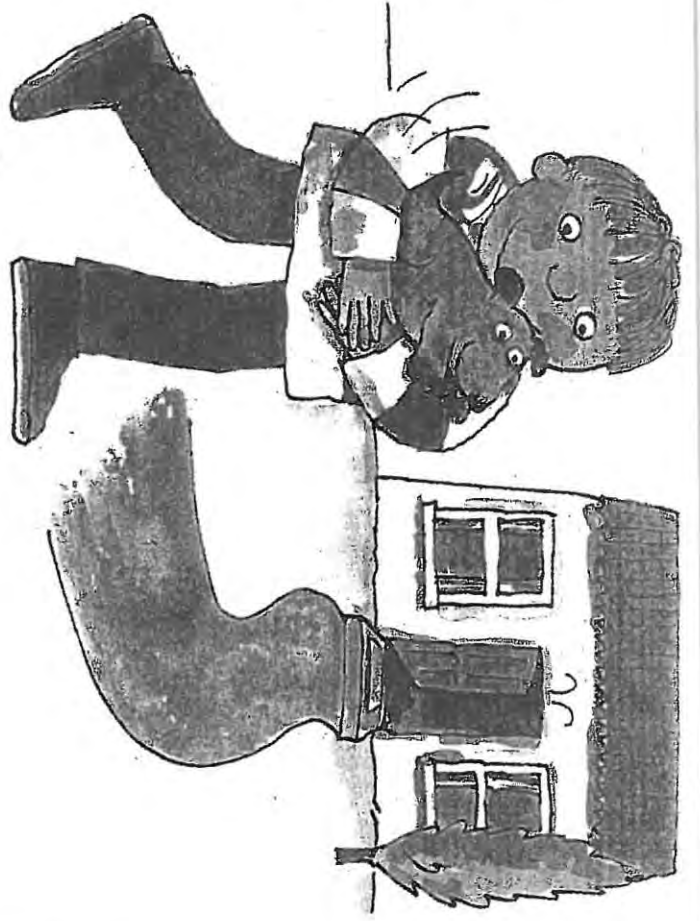
"Ndinekhaya nam,"  
yatsho inkwenkwana.  
"Ndihlala ekhaya."

6



"Andinakhaya,"  
yatsho injanana.

7



"Ewe, unalo,"  
yatsho inkwenkwana.  
"Yiza uze kuhlala nam!"



# Ndinekhaya

## Umsebenzi 1

### A. Funda amagama.



ingqayi



iqokobhe

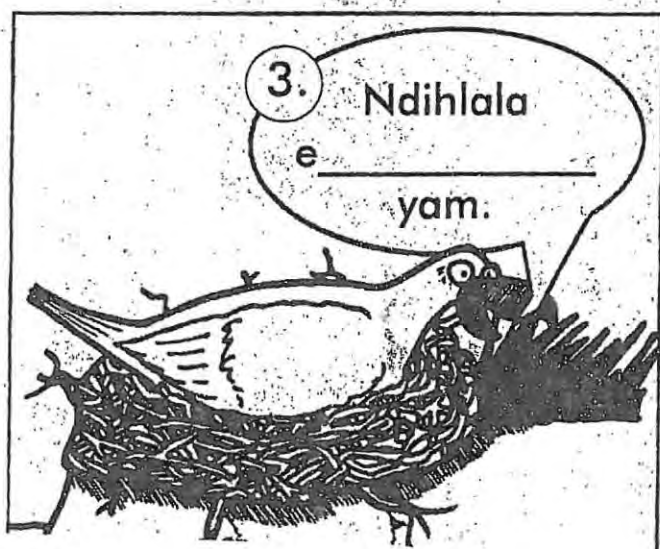
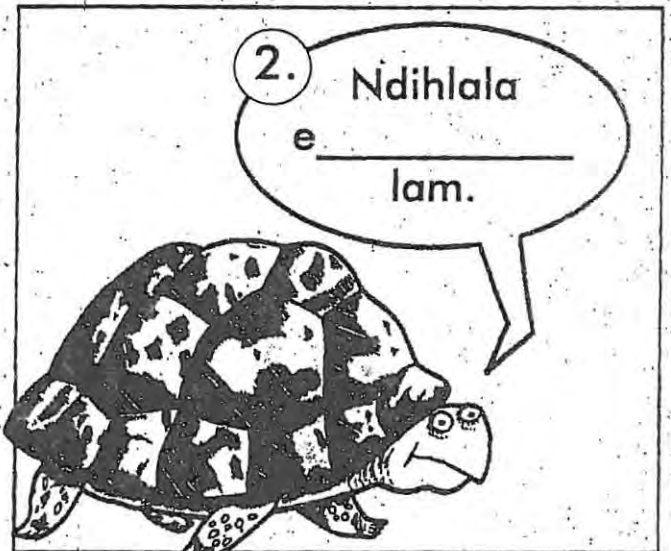
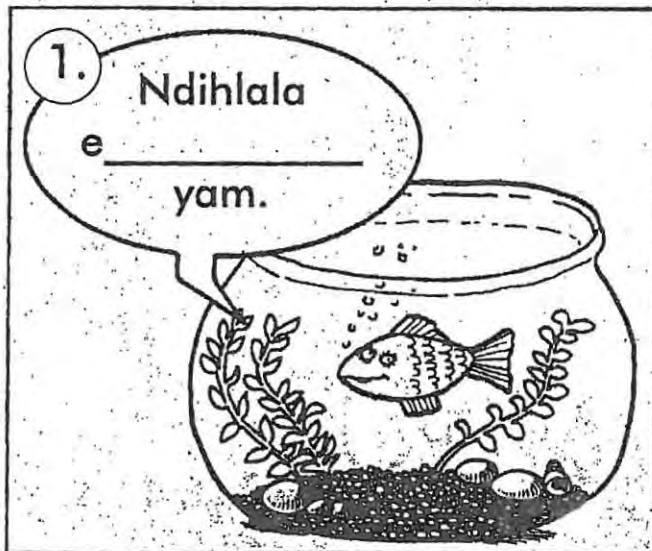


indlwane









ekhaya




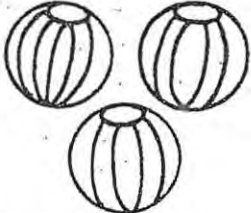



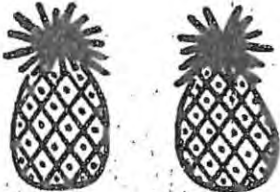
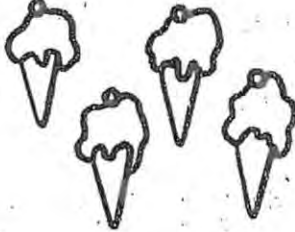
Bhala amagama encwadini yakho yokusebenza.



Circle the right word

 <p>four one two six</p>	 <p>two three five one</p>	 <p>one six four three</p>
 <p>five four six three</p>	 <p>two one five four</p>	 <p>four six one two</p>

Count and write number and word

		
<p>1 one</p>		
		
	<p>f</p>	
		

My name is \_\_\_\_\_

Write the number sentence.

$\square + \square = \square$

$\square + \square = \square$

$\square + \square = \square$

$\square + \square = \square$

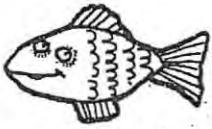
$\square + \square = \square$

$\square + \square + \square = \square$

$\square + \square + \square = \square$

$\square + \square + \square = \square$

### A. Funda amagama.



intlanzi



ufudwazana



umvundla



intaka



inkwenkwe



inja



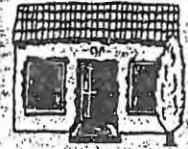
ingqayi



iqokobhe

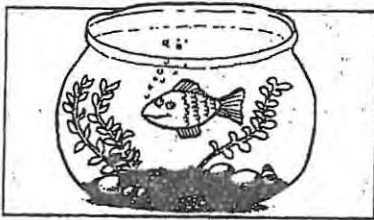


indlwane



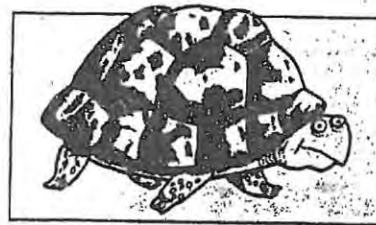
ekhaya

Bhala izivakalisi kwincwadi yakho yokusebenza.



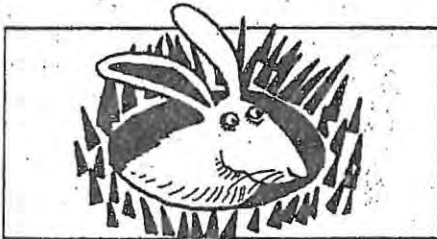
1. Intlanzi ihlala

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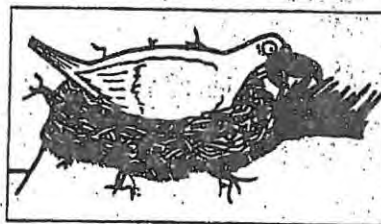
2. Ufudwazana uhlala

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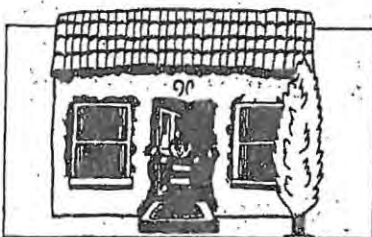
3. Umvundla uhlala

---



4. Intaka ihlala

---



5. Inkwenkwe ihlala

---



6. Injana ayinakhaya.

# The Letterlanders



Annie Apple



Bouncy Ben



Clever Cat



Dippy Duck



Eddy Elephant



Fireman Fred



Golden Girl



Hairy Hat Man



Impy Ink



Jumping Jim



Kicking King



Lucy Lamp Lady



Munching Mike



Naughty Nick



Oscar Orange



Poor Peter



Quarrelsome Queen



Robber Red



Sammy Snake



Ticking Tess



Uppy Umbrella



Vase of Violets



Wicked Water Witch



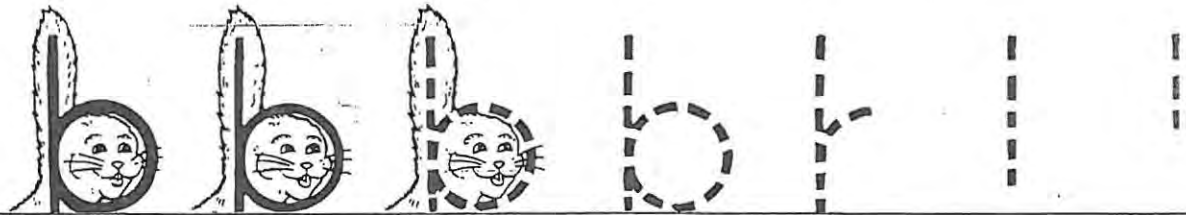
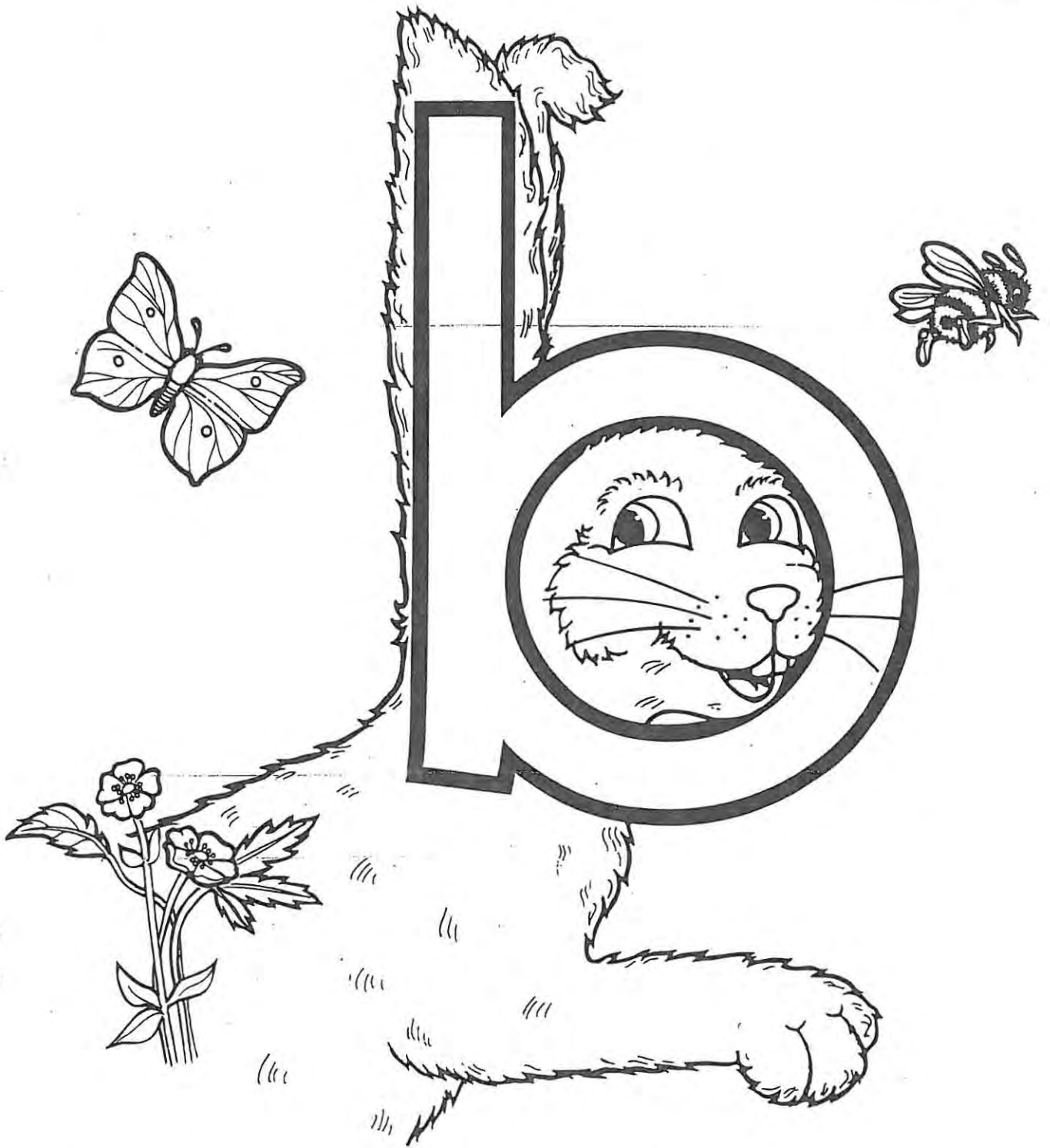
Max and Maxine

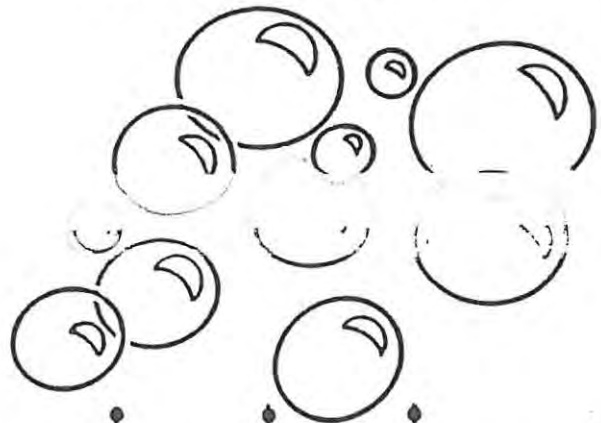
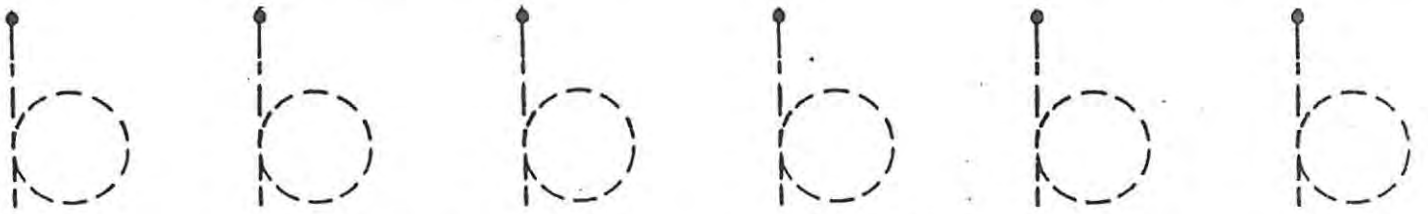
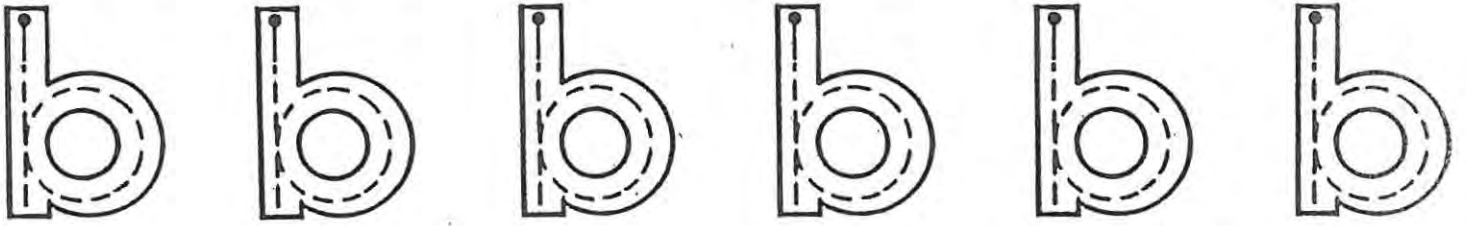
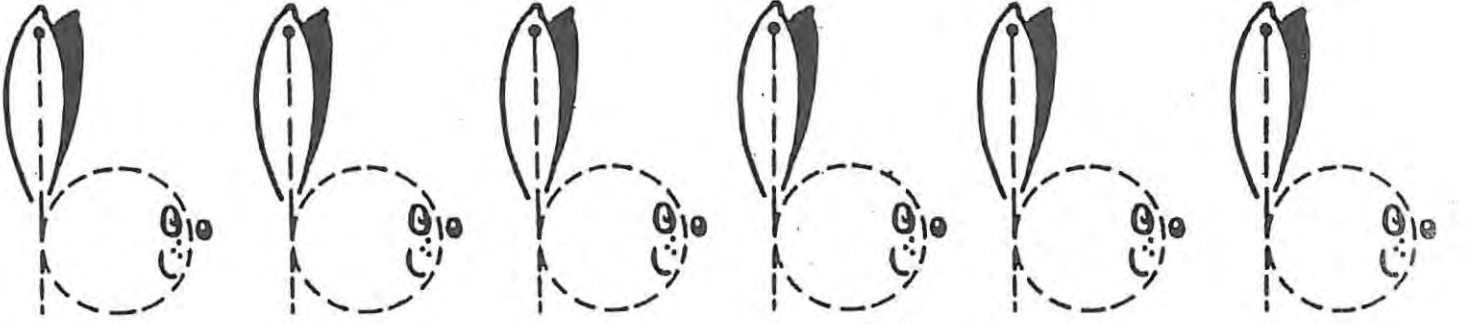
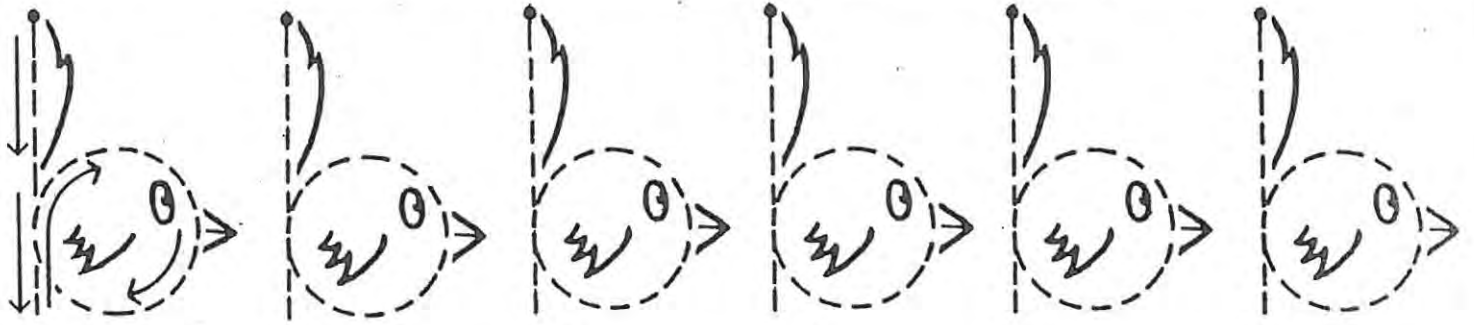


Yellow Yo-yo Man



Zig Zag Zebra

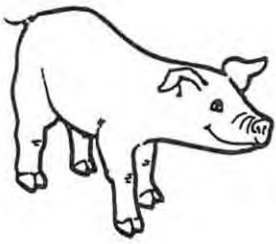
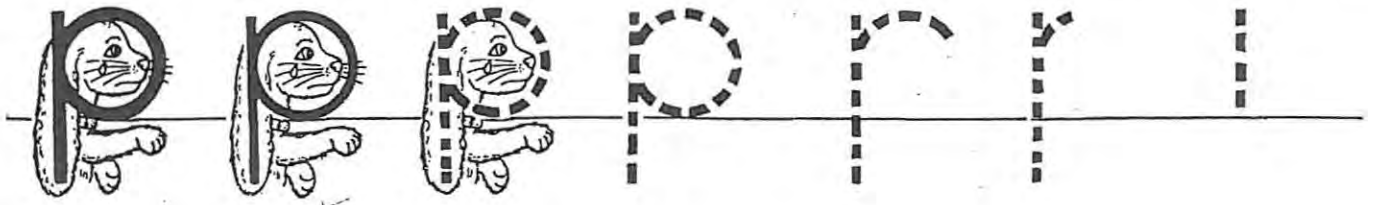




bib bubbles

b b b b b b b b b b

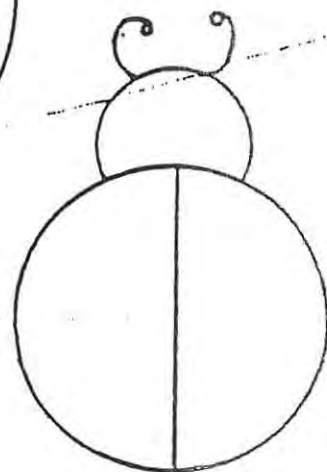
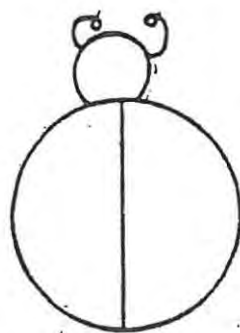
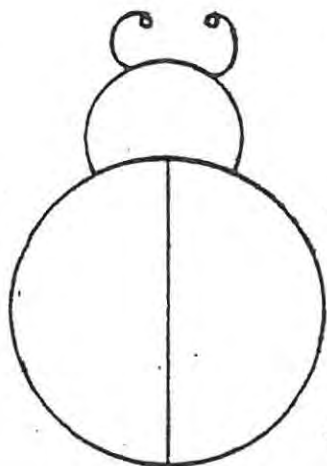
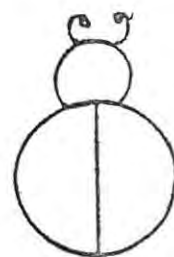
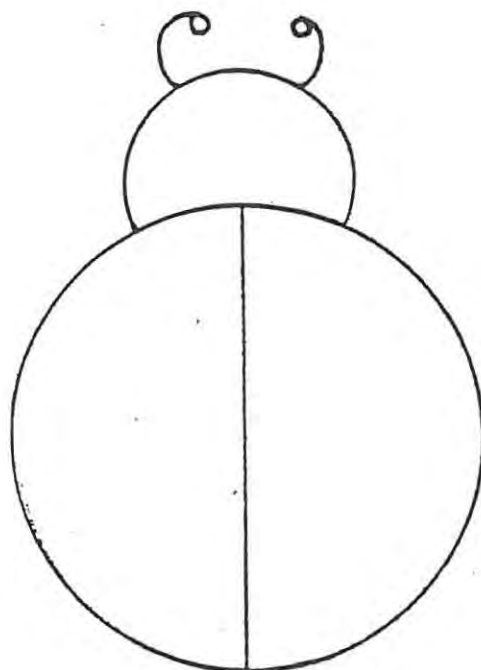
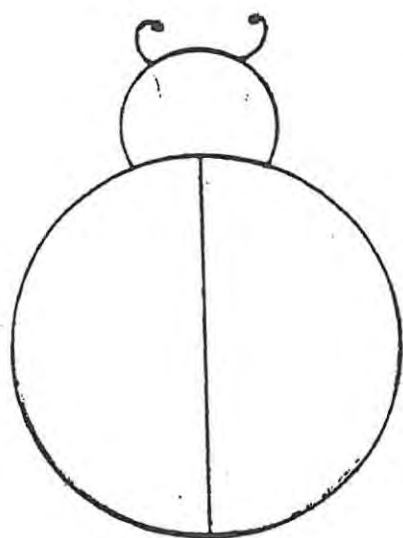




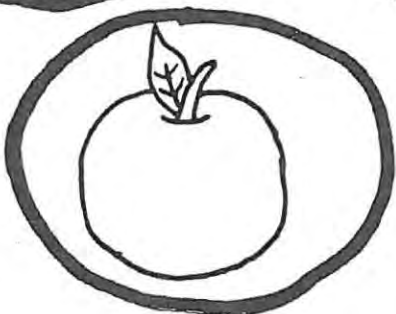
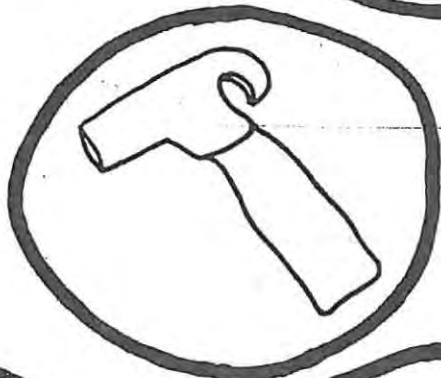
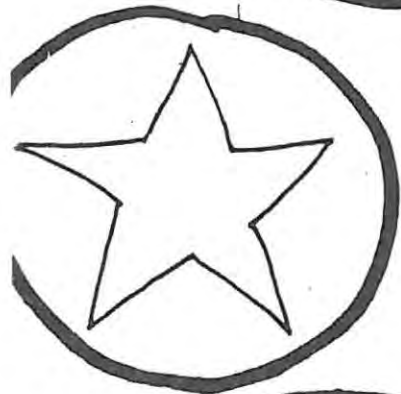
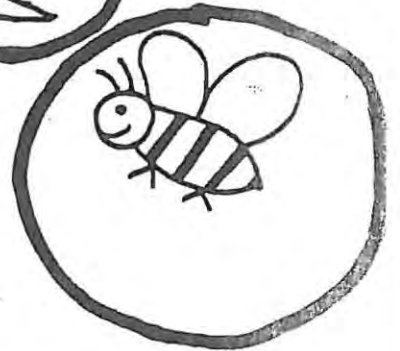
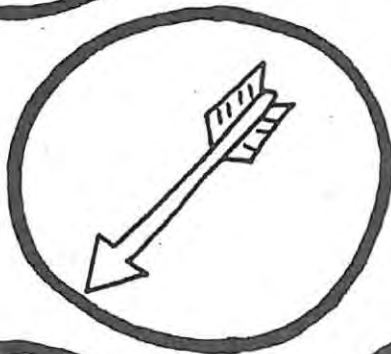
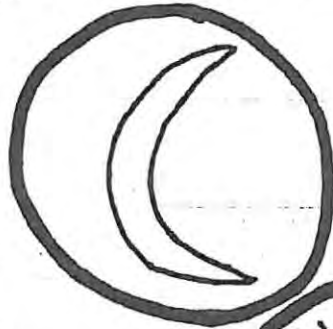
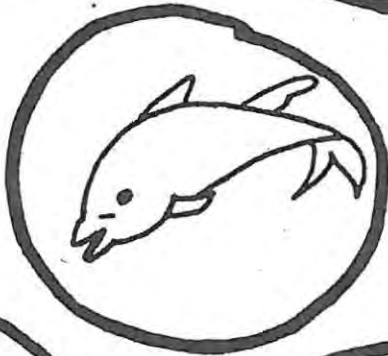
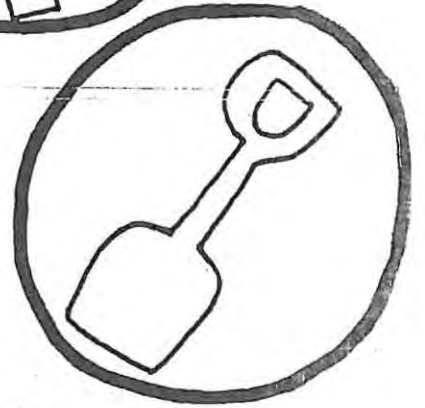
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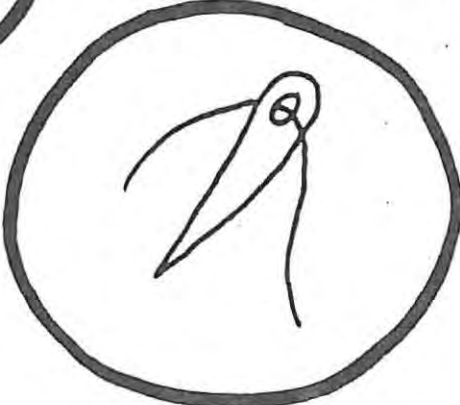
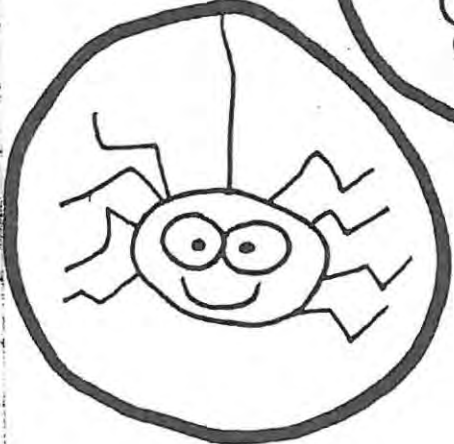
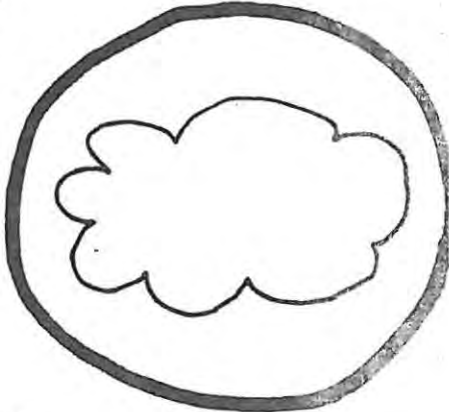
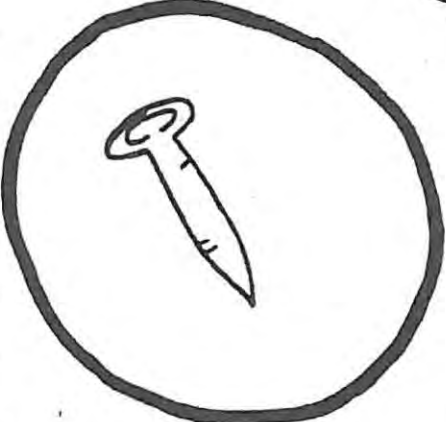
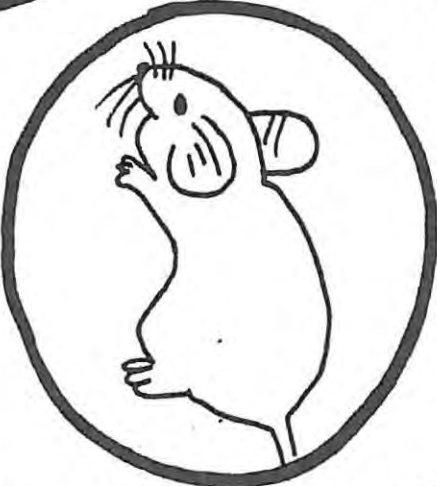
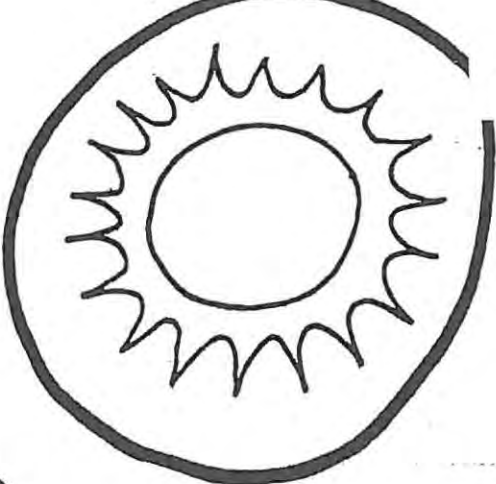
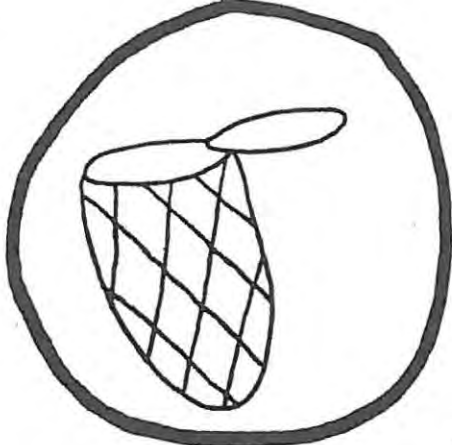
6

Six



Give each beetle six legs  
and six dots.





Ben  
can  
come  
Dad  
help  
here  
home  
I  
in  
is  
it  
Lad  
look  
my  
no

not  
stop  
we  
where  
yes  
you  
and  
but  
fast  
like  
run  
this  
can't  
he  
me  
Mum

out  
play  
down  
for  
get  
go  
hide  
Jill  
Tom  
us  
up  
will  
at  
duck.  
hop.  
let's  
on.

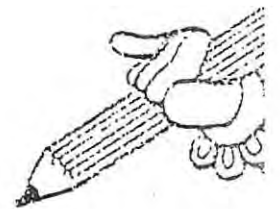
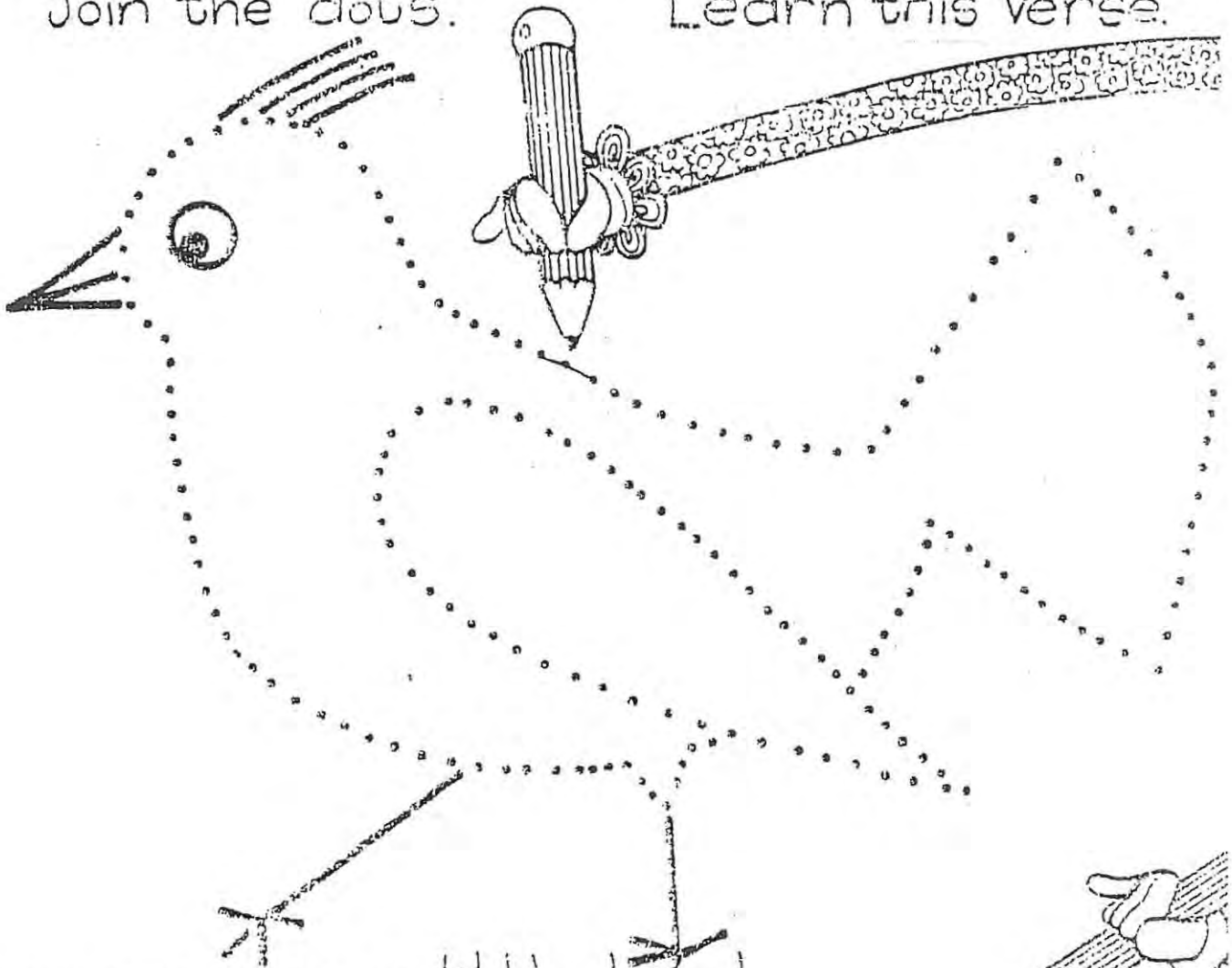
Sparky  
comes  
likes  
said  
with  
a  
don't  
fun  
park  
ride  
the  
to.

Once we saw a little bird  
 Come hop, hop, hop,  
 So we cried, 'Little bird,  
 Will you stop, stop, stop?'



Join the dots.

Learn this verse.



Once we saw a little bird  
 Come hop, \_\_\_\_\_,  
 So we cried, 'Little \_\_\_\_\_,  
 Will you stop, \_\_\_\_\_?'