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AN ETHNOGRAPHIC ACCOUNT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING OF THE FIRST GRADE R PROGRAMME IN A DEVELOPING SCHOOL IN 2010 IN A BLACK URBAN COMMUNITY

by

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THESIS

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY (DEd)

in

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

in the

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

at the

UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG

SUPERVISOR: DR E FRITZ

SEPTEMBER 2013

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis "An ethnographic account of teaching and learning of the first Grade R programme in a developing school in 2010 in a black urban community" is my own work. I declare that, to the best of my knowledge, this is my own work, all sources have been properly acknowledged and referenced, and it contains no plagiarism.

Catherine Dikeledi Sekhukhune

September 2013

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to give an ethnographic story of the first Grade R programme in a developing school in 2010 in a black urban community and to use my story of the Grade R teaching and learning to contribute to a better understanding of the field of Early Childhood Development (ECD) and education in South Africa.

This research was a response to the Department of Education's concern that the Foundation Phase, Grade R included, does not receive the attention it deserves in South Africa. There appears to be alternative views and perspectives of what constitutes good ECD or Grade R practice. As a result, the conceptualisation of Grade R and ECD as a whole is problematic and inconsistent.

This study is situated in the interpretivist naturalistic paradigm using sociocultural theory as theoretical framework. I studied the participants in a naturally occurring setting using methods of data collection which captured their social meanings and ordinary activities, whilst I participated directly in the setting in order to collect data in a systemic manner. Thutong[1] a primary school established in 2010 in a black urban community, was the research site. Two Grade R classrooms were studied, comprising 60 children and two teachers. The classes were divided according to the children's home languages, Sesotho (South Sotho) and isiZulu. The lens through which I observed the teaching and learning of the Grade R at Thutong had a sociocultural focus.

Data was collected by means of participant-observation; interviews; photographs and photographic data; and artefacts. I used Brewer's steps of analysis but they were not necessarily followed to the letter. As social phenomena were recorded and classified I compared the different data sets across categories. *Atlas.ti* computer software was used for qualitative data analysis and text management.

Findings suggested that the Grade R language *maze* is central to teaching and learning of Grade R children, and this became an overarching theme. The sub-themes that were arrived at include language code switching, translation, dual medium in multilingual context, sound/letter recognition, numeracy teaching, Thutong teachers as *griots*, rhymes and Grade R learning, rote learning in language and numeracy, play in language acquisition, and barriers to learning and support.

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[1] Pseudonym

The diverse population of the black urban community in which the school is situated cautions stakeholders to plan carefully Grade R. In line with the sociocultural theory, a proposal for reform in Thutong would have to consider economic, political, historical, social, and cultural factors because the school is a part of and reflects the larger social system in which it is situated. The story reflects an urgent need to strengthen Early Childhood Development and education in South Africa, thus this study also addresses the need to support and promote local perspectives, questions and issues in order to move beyond the singular image of the global child.

The study highlights the importance of teacher training, intense support to teachers and children by the Department of Education, children's readiness to learn and parental involvement in language acquisition and development.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION, PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RATIONALE

1.1   INTRODUCTION

One of the current priorities of the South African Department of Education (DoE) is the delivery of quality learning programmes to children during the early years of schooling (Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) Annual Report, 2007/2008). Meier and Marais (2007) state that Early Childhood Development (ECD), which includes Grade R, has been a neglected area for many years, with programmes and institutions having received limited government support and funding prior to 1994. At World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in Moscow, Russia in 2010, a strong recommendation was made that adequate attention needs to be paid to the holistic development of children of all early childhood ages, as it builds the very foundation for lifelong learning, well-being and human capital (UNESDOC). So, this study is informed by the developments in the international ECD since the United Nations (UN) adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989 (Pence & Nsamenang, 2008) and also the developments in South Africa.

According to the DoE (2005), learners are to be equipped to use their talents to achieve full social, personal, intellectual, emotional and physical potential for the attainment of learning outcomes and assessment standards for the Foundation Phase. However, despite this stance, approximately 40% (DoE, 2005) of children are still growing up in conditions of abject poverty and neglect, and are most at risk of poor adjustment to school, repetition, school dropout and delayed development. This makes it imperative to put in place relevant intervention programmes that appropriately address the learning opportunities of all learners in the early years of schooling, particularly in Grade R[2].

The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) document currently provides a new framework for the Grade R teaching and learning. The National Curriculum Statement Grades R to 12 (NCS) stipulates policy on curriculum and assessment in the schooling sector. To improve implementation, NCS amendments came into effect in January 2012. Thus a single comprehensive Curriculum and Assessment Policy document (CAPS) was

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[2] Reception Year.

developed for each subject to replace Subject Statements, Learning Programme Guidelines and Subject Assessment Guidelines in Grades R to 12 (DoE, 2011). As a result, both the NCS and CAPS were important for this study.

1.2   BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Opened in 2010, with two Grade R classes for children in the residing area, Thutong Primary School[3] played a role in shaping the research problem of this study. The setting provided an opportunity to investigate the Grade R group and associated problems. As I have a keen interest in ECD research the opening of this school provided me with a chance to study a potentially historical development. During a period of 12 months I was able to engage as a participant observer, acknowledging that "the development of the research problem in ethnographic research is rarely complete before fieldwork begins and the collection of primary data often plays a key role in that process of development" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Thus, the research foci evolved as the research evolved.

This research was a response to the DoE's concern that the Foundation Phase, Grade R included, was not receiving the attention it deserved, hence the need for workshops, guidelines and related interventions. There were alternative views and perspectives of what constituted good ECD or Grade R practice, so the conceptualisation of Grade R and ECD as a whole was problematic and fraught with inconsistencies. Since the formative years of a child, from birth to nine, are characterised by development across all aspects, physical, intellectual, social, emotional, moral and spiritual, a good quality Grade R year involves more than just being prepared for Grade 1. The early years are critical for the acquisition of concepts, skills and attitudes that lay the foundation for lifelong learning. With good ECD provision, educational efficiency should improve, as children acquire basic concepts, skills and attitudes for successful learning and development prior to and shortly after entering the system, thus reducing their chances of failure (DoE, 2001; Excell, 2010).

This study is also within the parameters of educational psychology, and aligned with David's (1998, p.20) assertion that:

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[3] Pseudonym.

throughout the third world or developing world countries, the concepts of childhood development, usually referring to Piaget, are being taken as universal, and (mis)applied with missionary zeal to societies and communities which cannot sustain them.

In South Africa, theories on childhood development and education are applied uncritically to the local context, and there is widespread recognition that the precepts of child development have been derived mainly from the experiences of Anglo-American middle class children. This study also addresses the need to support and promote local perspectives, questions and issues, in order to move beyond the singular image of the global child (Pence & Nsamenang, 2008) and trace the dual heritage of Early Childhood Development (ECD) and education in South African black urban areas. As Pence and Nsamenang argue, childhood is not the same across time or cultural space.

Gordon, Holland and Lahelma (in Atkinson, Coffey, Delamont, Lofland & Lofland, 2007) assert that the *cultural dimension* is important in ethnographic research in education. Cautious in conceptualising culture, Eisenhart (2001) asserts that from a postmodern perspective one can no longer conceive of social groups with a culture that is clearly bounded or determined, internally coherent, or uniformly meaningful. As a result she cautions against the continuous use of the concept of culture as a basis for making school instruction and curriculum 'culturally compatible' or 'multicultural'. Moll (1992, p.21) refers to the essential cultural practices and bodies of knowledge and information that social networks use to survive and thrive as "funds of knowledge". According to Nespor (in Eisenhart, 2001) these funds of knowledge are made available in popular associations that intersect in particular times and spaces. School is one point of intersection, the family, peer group and media are others. Individuals move in and out of intersections and draw strategically on their resources (funds of knowledge and shared value systems), an approach that allowed me to explore the improvisational work of individuals and groups as they took up or manipulated cultural resources. In summary, the ethnographic study described here is grounded in Vygotsky and neo-Vygotskian theory, based on the assumption that children's learning is embedded in a sociocultural process (Walfford, 2001).

Considering a sociocultural perspective, developmental processes are not just within individuals but also within group and community processes (Rogoff, 1997 in Waller, 2009). The relevance of this standpoint is that it places community above the individual;

looks at individual rationality largely as a by-product of the social sphere; and holds cooperative or dialogic processes as central to the process of education (Steffe & Gale, 1995). Glaveanu (2011a, p.109) asserts that culture offers us the lenses through which to look at the world, that with "creativity, through social interaction and processes of education, we also acquire the ability to *decode*, to understand the objects and situations that we encounter".

Therefore, the research question for this study was:

- **What is the story of a developing school in a black urban community, considering the Grade R programme in 2010, from my view as educational psychologist?**

In order to answer the main question, I addressed the following questions:

- **What are the experiences of the teachers, learners and parents or caregivers involved in the Grade R development?**
- **How can the story of the two Grade R classes in the school be used to contribute to a better understanding of how Early Childhood Development (ECD) could be strengthened in South Africa?**

1.3   AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study was to give an ethnographic account of the first Grade R programme in a developing school in a black urban community 2010, and to use it to contribute to a better understanding of the field of Early Childhood Development (ECD) and education in South Africa. In order to realise the aim, the following objectives were set:

- To explore and describe the development of Grade R classes as part of the developing Foundation Phase in 2010.
- To describe my experience as well as the experiences of the teachers, learners, and parents or caregivers at the school involved in Grade R.

1.4   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Here follows a brief outline of the research methodology employed in this study. A more detailed explication of the research design and methodology which has underpinned this ethnographic account and guided the processes of data analysis conducted to arrive at findings is provided in Chapter Three.

1.4.1   Research Paradigm

This study is situated in the interpretivist naturalistic paradigm, with focus on social life in a real, naturally occurring setting, that is: "the experiencing, observing, describing, understanding and analysis of the features of social life in concrete situations as they occur independently of scientific manipulation" (Brewer, 2000, p.33). For Ponterotto (2005), according to the constructivist or interpretivist paradigm, reality is subjective and influenced by the context of the situation, namely the individual's experience and perceptions, the social environment, and the interaction between the individual and the researcher. Having some elements of critical theory, this study acknowledges a reality shaped by ethnic, cultural, gender, social, and political values. The focus is on realities mediated by socially and historically constituted power relations (Ponterotto, 2005).

1.4.2   Ethnographic Design

As my starting point I considered Mouton's (2001) three worlds framework, namely: the world of everyday; the world of science; and the world of meta-science. In this ethnographic research I studied the participants in a naturally occurring setting using methods of data collection which captured their social meanings and ordinary activities, whilst I participated directly in collecting data in a systemic manner, but without imposing meaning on the experiences of the participants (Brewer, 2000). According to Gordon et al. (in Atkinson et al., 2007), ethnographic research with very young children has been sparse, and the lives of children have often been interpreted from adult perspectives. Their concern also applies to this study, because the Grade R had recently been officially introduced by the DoE as the level of entry in the Foundation Phase, after being neglected

for many years. As such, research was needed that could explore the teaching and learning of the Grade R programme as part of the Foundation Phase.

This study was conducted as ethnography with elements of *autoethnography*, to extract meaning from experience rather than depict it exactly as it was lived. The autobiographical and personal were therefore contextualised in conversation with the "cultural and social" (Adams & Jones, in Denzin, Lincoln & Smith, 2008, p.375). As autoethnographer, I was analytically reflexive, presenting a visible narrative while engaging in dialogue with the respective participants beyond the self in order to improve my theoretical understandings of broader social phenomena. This research therefore strived to set a scene, tell a story, and create a text that makes possible witnessing and testifying (Atkinson et al. 2002), as I give a strong personal account of the year at the school regarding the Grade R development.

It is also important to note that this study was aligned to *postmodernist ethnography* (Brewer, 2000, p.23) for the following reasons: "there is no one fixed reality" in the postmodern understanding of nature to capture 'accurately'; "all methods are cultural and personal constructs, collecting partial and selective knowledge"; and, since all knowledge is selective, research can offer only a socially constructed account of the world. Furthermore, this postmodern ethnography involved both my "strong engagement with the participants and strong reflexive engagement with my own self-making as a scholar" (Marcus, in Clair, 2012, p.134).

This ethnographic study assumed that it is not sufficient simply to observe adult's behaviour towards children. It is important also to see Grade R children as "social actors in their own right", to observe and to understand what is it that these children do with one another as well as with their adult caretakers and, most importantly, to canvass their own views and opinions directly (James, in Atkinson et al., 2007, p.250). Their discussions and languages used when interacting with each other is also important.

1.4.3   Data Collection Methods

As indicated above, Thutong, a newly established primary school in a black urban community, was the research site. Two Grade R classrooms were studied, comprising 60 children and two teachers. The classes were divided according to the children's home languages, Sesotho (South Sotho) and isiZulu, the aim was not to contain the study within

the boundaries of the school but to link the school to community and culture. As a result, the teachers, parents or caregivers[4] were also involved. It was necessary to explore the link between the school and home environments as they influence each other as far as the childhood development and education is concerned.

Data was collected[5] by means of participant-observation, interviews, photographs and photographic data, and artefacts. Data consisted of audio tape recordings of the teaching and learning interactions in the two classrooms. Photographs of the school setting were taken during the year, recordings transcribed verbatim into text scripts and verbal production by the participants taken as a baseline for the understanding of teaching and learning.

Ethnographic interviewing in this case included:

> those projects in which the researcher have established respectful, ongoing relationships with interviewees, including enough rapport for there to be a genuine exchange of views and enough time and openness in the interviews for the interviewees to explore purposefully with the researcher the meanings they place on events in their world (Hey in Atkinson, Coffey, Delamont, Lofland & Lofland 2002, p.369).

The collected data from the interviews, unstructured and semi-structured, were used (Hammersley, 2007). The interviewing for the most part took a relatively unstructured form, and more structured interviewing was used towards the end of the fieldwork. Individual and focus interviews were conducted with teachers, children and parents or caregivers on their experiences of the Grade R programme throughout the year. The questions asked were, typically, for Grade R: "Tell me about being in Grade R"? and for teachers: "Tell me about Grade R teaching"? Decisions about who to interview, when, and where, were taken over time. Informal group and individual discussions with the educators were conducted to explore their experiences of teaching and learning.

Participant observation entailed establishing a place in some natural setting on a relatively long-term basis in order to investigate, experience and represent the social life and social processes that occur in that setting (Atkinson et al., 2002), in this case the school, and more specifically the Grade R classes. I engaged with teachers and children for a longer

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[4] There are a high number of orphans in South Africa, hence the need for this distinction.
[5] Although 'data' is the Latin plural of datum it is generally treated as an uncountable 'mass' noun and so takes a singular verb (*Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, 2011, Eds. Stevenson & Waite).

time (February to December) as a participant-observer, a role which in terms of data collection involved participating overtly in Grade R children's and teachers' daily lives for an extended period, watching what was happening, listening to what was said, and asking questions through informal and formal interviews, collecting documents and artefacts (Hammersley, 2007). This entailed gathering whatever data was available to illuminate the issues that were the emerging focus of inquiry. Classroom observations were conducted and the teachers and learners visited frequently on site, during the week, for a minimum of two hours daily and one full day per week. Observation data included the interviews, meetings and teachers' workshops that took place within this school. I visited each classroom on a regular basis to continue gathering data. Field notes of every visit were taken and consisted primarily of data from daily observations and interviews (Fetterman, 2010). Amongst the means used to collect data were a logbook, in which I wrote down factually what I saw and heard, and a research diary in which I wrote my impressions, feelings, and ideas, as reflections of what happened. Artefacts such as weekly preparation sheets, work schedules and report cards were collected and analysed to discover the unfolding of learning and teaching in this school.

I chose these methods because they involved prolonged observations of a group, mostly through participant observation, working closely and intensively with participants and gatekeepers, and interviews (Smit, 2010). The methods enabled me to provide an autoethnographic account of the Grade R programme, as I already had access to the school as part of the Grade R group. In addition, participant observation takes time, and this gave me the chance to settle in and begin to see things differently. The point of participating was to learn things from the point of view of the participants (O'Reilly, 2007).

1.4.4 Data Analysis

According to Brewer (2000, p.105), analysis refers to "the process of bringing order to the data, organising what is there into patterns, categories and descriptive units, and looking for relationships between them". I used Brewer's steps of analysis, but they were not necessarily followed to the letter. As social phenomena were recorded and classified I compared the different data sets across categories. *Atlas.ti* computer software was used for qualitative data analysis and text management.

The process of analysis also drew on previous studies and involved intense reflection, including the critical assessment of competing interpretations. It involved "a significant development of the ordinary modes of making sense of the social world that we all use in our mundane lives, in a manner that is attuned to the specific purposes of producing research knowledge" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p.4). Furthermore, it involves the interpretation of the meanings, functions, and consequences of human actions and institutional practices, and how these are implicated in local and wider contexts. What I produced for the most part were verbal descriptions, explanations and theories.

In line with Ponterotto (2005, p.130), when analysing the data I did not seek other researchers' consensus on identified themes because "there are multiple meanings of a phenomenon in the minds of people who experience it as well as multiple interpretations of the data (multiple realities)". Rather, my role as a researcher was to narrate the ethnography, providing thick descriptions to give the reader the impression that they were in the field with me. As Brewer (2000) suggests, I absented myself from the text, acting as a mere conduit through which the insider's account was simplistically represented as text.

1.5   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Permission to conduct research in the school was obtained from the DoE, parents and teachers. In a meeting, parents were also informed of the research focus of the school prior to enrolling their children. They were given the option not to enrol their children in the school, and those who opted to do so were required to sign a letter of agreement in terms of the research conducted in it. The teachers who were appointed were also informed in advance that research would be conducted there. The potential benefit of all the research was mainly optimal support for the school community. I conducted my research in a manner consistent with the ethical requirements, particularly national and international standards, governing research with participants, i.e., no harm, informed consent, right of privacy and honesty (HPCSA, 2004). To protect the participants I adhered to the ethics pertaining to: informed consent, avoiding harm, maintaining confidentiality and anonymity by allocating pseudonyms, and ensuring that the tapes and related information were kept in a safe place and would only be accessed by myself and my supervisors (see Appendix 1). The ethical considerations are discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three under section 3.4.5.

1.6   TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness refers to the degree to which people can depend on and trust research findings (Shank, 2006). This was verified by means of maintaining the following: *Credibility* was established through maintaining an extended contact with the participants, in order to get to know them and how they acted, and use of *triangulation*, that is cross-checking the various forms of data. According to Shank, Lincoln and Guba (1985), *transferability* is the degree to which the results of a study can be transferred to a different setting, or used with a different population. *Confirmability* deals with the details of the methodologies used, and was determined through a methodological audit trail, which addressed such issues as the type and nature of the raw data, how it was analysed, and how categories and themes were formed. I also applied different methods of analysis as part of a crystallisation process, including multiple perspectives to provide different ways of seeing and understanding it (Merz, 2002).

1.7   A COMPREHENSIVE FRAMEWORK TO ENHANCE LANGUAGE AND MATHEMATICS TEACHING AND LEARNING OF GRADE R CHILDREN IN A BLACK URBAN COMMUNITY SCHOOL

I developed my framework informed by the findings of the story of Thutong, compatible with the sociocultural theory that informed the study and which revealed an overarching theme and ten sub-themes that formed the basis of my approach. It is important to mention that the existing literature and information on childhood development and education also helped me built this framework.

In line with sociocultural theory, this study looked at change at different levels of analysis and organisation, for example, children, teachers, parents, school, community, and the Department of Education. Mouton's (2001) three worlds, examined in Chapters Three and Seven provided a framework for this study, namely everyday life and lay knowledge; the world of science and scientific research; and the world of meta-science. In Chapter Seven I explain how I met the requirements under the contribution of the study section (7.4).

The framework serves three functions: first, to encourage teachers and other professionals to review the environment or condition they set up for young children for language development and mathematics development; second, it aims to engage teachers in

examining the interactions they have with children and knowledge they have about the Grade R children; third, it can guide teachers and other early childhood practitioners to understand the importance of linking everyday concepts with academic concepts to support early language and numeracy development. Thus, the framework is a sociocultural tool for developing teachers' theoretical knowledge of the Grade R language and mathematics development. The practical side of the framework is integrated with the recommendations based on the findings of this study.

1.8   DIVISION OF CHAPTERS

Chapter One has presented the background, purpose and specific aims of the study. In addition, it has provided an overview of the research design, methods of data collection and analysis process, to be examined in greater detail in Chapter Three.

Chapter Two presents the theoretical framework that informed this study, as well as a review of the literature and research related to this ethnographic account.

Chapter Three describes the paradigm, research design, and methodology. In addition the methods of data collection, analysis, interpretation, ethical considerations and trustworthiness will be presented.

Chapter Four focuses on presentation of the data collected during this study.

Chapter Five presents a discussion of the findings under the ten sub-themes and an overarching theme.

Chapter Six provides a comprehensive framework to enhance language and mathematics teaching and learning of Grade R children in a black urban community and the recommendations.

Chapter Seven contains the summary, limitations and contribution of the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a review of relevant literature, to make explicit the theoretical framework in every stage of the study, from the formulation of the problem, through data collection and analysis to interpretation (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). It deals with the current political and operational context and addresses key issues which affect young children, Grade R in particular. I reviewed the material broadly at first but to a minimal extent during the initial stage of data collection, "leaving a more focused search for the end of data analysis when emergent patterns provided guidance" (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p.152). However, since analysis was conducted throughout the research process it was during the collection of data and after returning from the field that I recognised which conceptual or empirical material was relevant. I integrated the literature review throughout the study, working back and forth between the literature and other research tasks, but left an extensive literature review to the end of the study.

The personal life experiences, cultural ideologies, disciplinary training, philosophical commitments, and issues and problems identified by significant others that so clearly affect goals and questions operate far more subtly on choices of research design (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). I drew on Vygotsky and Neo-Vygotskian theories to maintain a conceptual focus throughout the research process.

2.2   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of using theory in this study was to help me explain why things happened as they did and thus sort my world, made sense of it, guide how I behaved in it, and predict what might happen next. I was attracted to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory because it was compatible with conceptual frames and preferences I already had. Knowing and understanding Grade R in the context of Early Childhood Development (ECD) programmes is essential to understanding that contemporary educational practices have

their roots in the past, and providing perspective and new insights (Meier & Marais, 2007). Cultural contexts also affect the formulation of research questions as well as the interpretation of results (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993).

I observed the teaching and learning of the Grade R at Thutong from a sociocultural perspective, based on the ideas of Vygotsky. As Van Oers (2010) asserts, Vygotsky's theory of children's early development might provide us with the beginning of an answer. My study of a developing teaching and learning of Grade R programme in a black urban school is explicitly related to social controversies that intrigued me as a researcher, and my questions were lodged within an ideology that reflects personal concern with the teaching, learning and support of the learners. My questions derive from curiosity about the ordinary phenomenon (the unfolding of a Grade R programme) and personal experiences as a teacher, educational psychologist, district official and parent, which had also contributed to the formulation of the research problem.

2.2.1 Sociocultural Theory

According to Fetterman (2010, p.7), typically, "ethnographers do not make a grand theory explicit, because they do not subscribe to one". A grand theory can be instructive, but many ethnographers find it unwieldy and unresponsive to day-to-day research needs. I used a sociocultural perspective as my guide to practice because I agree with Fetterman (2010, p.5) that "no study, including ethnography can be conducted without an underlying theory or model". A theory helped define the problem and how to tackle it. Regarding the cultural aspect of the approach, I was informed by Waller's (2009, p.11) claim that "different cultural communities may expect children to engage in activities at a vastly different times in childhood, and may regard 'timetables' of development in other communities as surprising or even dangerous". The sociocultural perspective has adapted and enhanced the ideas of Vygotsky and provided valuable insights into the collaborative nature of learning and the social construction of knowledge. It takes into account not only the child but also the social, historical, institutional and cultural activities in which the child participates and co-constructs. Learning and development are inseparable from the concerns of families and interpersonal and community processes. This is a dynamic and evolving cultural context, in which it is meaningless to study the child apart from other people. There is a need to consider the wider political, *social,* and *cultural* context of

childhood in the field of early childhood. The child and the child's experiences are placed at the centre of the process of development.

Sociocultural views of learning rest on theories that emphasise the social nature of development. According to the sociocultural perspective, an individual's mental activity can be understood only by investigating it within its cultural, historical and institutional context. Central to this perspective is the claim that "any mental activity should be investigated as an interaction between social agents and physical environment" (Kumpulainen & Wray, 2002, p. 16).

I drew heavily on Vygotsky's cultural theory because it has profound implications for teaching, schooling and education (de Valenzuela, 2006). According to sociocultural theory, people in the child's learning environment are very important, particularly, as Vygotsky posited, parents and teachers and the role they play in their development of thinking and language. School culture and teaching cannot be regarded as separate from the broader South African and community context, therefore teachers and parents should observe children and scaffold their learning by guiding them to higher levels of conceptual development (Meier & Marais, 2007).

Socialisation entails the learning of expectations, habits, skills, values, beliefs, and other skills requirements necessary for effective participation in social living, and to increasingly function as a member of a specific society (Nsamenang, 2005). According to John-Steiner and Mahn (1996, p.192), the acquisition of language provides another example of a "social source of development". This study supports the sociocultural claim that the relationships between individuals form a basis for cognitive and linguistic mastery. This process, particularly in the classroom, includes transmission, construction, transaction, and transformation in a continuing, complex interplay, with learning and development therefore taking place in socially and culturally shaped contexts. Historical conditions are constantly resulting in changed contexts and opportunities for learning (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). According to Vygotsky, the child's mind develops in the course of acquisition of *social experiences*, which are represented in the form of special psychological tools: "language, mnemonic techniques, formulae, concepts, symbols, signs, and so on" (Karpov & Bransford, 1995, p.61). Like tools systems, sign systems (language, writing, number systems) are created by societies over the course of human history and change with the form of society and the level of its cultural development (Vygotsky,

1978b). These tools are presented to the child by an adult or by more capable peers in the course of their joint activity, used first at the external level then internalised and made the internal possession of the child, altering his or her mental functions.

Human development is a biological process that requires protective attention and guidance. It means that the type of human being children grow up to become depends largely on their socialisation, especially parenting and education. Human societies worldwide have organised the care and guidance of the development of their offspring according to their own cultural meaning systems (Nsamenang, 2005, p.4).

The emphasis of this study is strictly on Vygotsky as he helped to focus attention on the *social dimension* of cognitive development. For Vygotsky (1978b) the mechanism of individual developmental change is rooted in society and culture. According to Rose (in Willan, Parker & Savage, 2008), Vygotsky emphasises the importance of *social interactions* and the way in which children's experiences are embedded in the social context. Vygotsky is more concerned with the process of cultural transmission than the role of biology in cognitive development, and his model identifies two dimensions to learning, the *interpersonal* and the *intrapersonal*. He believed that "children internalise external experiences into mental structures via a series of transformations such that an interpersonal activity is reconstructed as an intrapersonal one" (Rose, in Willan et al., 2008, p.49), and conceptualised the assistance of others in this transformational process as the 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD, discussed below).

What makes sociocultural theory distinct and important for this study is that it looks at change at different levels of analysis and organisation. Central to the task of teachers and psychologists is conceiving of our work as a system rather than as a set of isolated activities (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996).

2.2.2   Childhood as a sociocultural construction

Frones (in Waller 2009, p.2) defines childhood as "the life period during which a human being is regarded as a child, and the cultural, social and economic characteristics of that period". As an ethnographer, I was inclined to take this definition because I chose not to confine myself strictly to the traditional definition of childhood, mainly from a developmental psychology point of view. However, a brief overview of this development

is important as the Grade R curriculum was developed with the universal characteristics in mind. The term childhood refers to a "period extending from the end of infancy, from about the second birthday to just before the beginning of adolescence," typically about the onset of puberty that heralds adolescence at about the eleventh or twelve birthday (Nsamenang, 2005, p.247). It is characterised by the domains such as the physical, cognitive, psychosocial and moral development. In making sense of children and childhood, Glaveanu (2011b) cautions that having once been children does not make simple the task for adults of comprehending childhood as it is. Waller (2009, p.3) states that children experience many different and varied childhoods, depending on factors such as class, race, gender, time and geography. To add, this view acknowledges that childhood is not fixed or universal, but rather it is 'mobile and shifting' (Walkerdine, 2004). I agree with Riley (2003, p.8) that the concept of childhood is a social construction. Taking an ethnographic stance helped me to avoid the predictable patterns of development which oversimplify the reality of children's lives and actually hinder greater understanding of childhood.

A postmodern perspective of the child is as an active co-constructor of knowledge, operating within an actively negotiated set of social relations and conditions. Childhood, whilst a biological phase, is socially determined by the time, place and culture. The construction placed upon childhood varies within every society and is affected by class, gender and socio-economic level. The concept of childhood, therefore, means different things to different communities, with no universal concept and diversity being celebrated. The postmodern perspective also sees the child actively participating in the construction of her or his own childhood in order to determine life in a powerful, positive way (Riley, 2003).

Within African societies, childhood has traditionally been regarded as the time to grow up, learn, build character and acquire the social and technical skills necessary for participation in adulthood (Kaime, 2009). According to Pence and Nsamenang (2008), contrary to the indigenous African system of Early Childhood Development and education in Africa, Western approaches of childcare and education alienate Africans from their cultures, particularly their indigenous roots regarding the care and development of children, which are largely muted. The plight of Africa is often presented as "based in (sic) local inadequacies, rather than broader historic geo-political activities that have contributed to the impoverishment of the continent" (Pence & Nsamenang, 2008, p.21). In addition,

international images of children are becoming increasingly homogenous and Western in derivation, with an associated erosion of the diversity of child contexts. Disturbingly, African schools are involved in alienation from and ignorance of their cultural heritage. Africa, with its distinct cultural, political and ethnic variety, has various forms of public education, or ways in which families and societies transfer beliefs, values, knowledge and skills between generations. Nsamenang (2004) argues that indigenous African views on the family and childhood participatory learning can provide a window for understanding African educational thought and praxis. Thus, this study is cautious in conceptualising childhood, considering the South African context.

2.2.3 Learning from a sociocultural perspective

I addressed the issue of school learning from a sociocultural point of view. Rogoff (in Waller & Swann, 2009, p.36) asserts that learning is a process of improving one's participation in systems of activity, particularly social systems. Learning in general is seen as a communal activity, a sharing of the culture (Brunner, in Tsai, 1997), with children's cultural learning taking place, not as the linear progression advocated by traditional developmental psychology but rather as a collective process of reproduction (James, in Atkinson et al., 2007). Human beings are prepared by their biological and cultural heritages to learn from their environments and from one another (Nsamenang, 2004).

Theories of learning define how children make sense of reality and make meaning in a social world. The view of the child as an active *co-constructor* of knowledge by Bruner, Rogoff and Vygotsky (Waller & Swann, 2009) is adopted in this ethnography. Waller and Swann define learning as a process of coming to know something, the acquisition of knowledge and skills, therefore even if learning is generally not in terms of school curricula, the ideas about learning introduced in this research do have implications for learning and teaching in Thutong Primary School curriculum in particular.

Children make sense of their environment within the context of everyday practice, therefore learning is situated. They may act intuitively or enact a particular known routine in these everyday contexts (Fleer & Raban, 2007). This study perceived learning as "a constructive process that takes place in the mind of the learner and also as a process of meaning–making and enculturation into social practices" (Kumpullainen & Wray, 2002,

p.3). Finally, in the total learning event, language is considered to be both a precondition for thought and a bearer of thought, therefore influencing the extent to which the child's intelligence is actualised (Botes & Mji, 2010).

I agree with Lee and Johnson (2007) that overreliance on developmental psychology within the field of Early Childhood Education (ECE) has been limiting, and the field needs to explore diverse frameworks to better serve its work with young children. My intention was therefore to broaden this study with sociocultural theory as one such contemporary developmental framework that provides meaningful implications for the field.

Coming to understand child development as taking place within contexts will require teachers to pay careful attention to the role that culture plays in children's development (Lee & Johnson, 2007). Teaching in the case of this research does not necessarily refer to a direct and didactic transmission of knowledge but rather it includes the considered provision of an effective learning environment with planned opportunities for play and exploration. Enabling young children to learn is a "highly skilled endeavour" (Riley, 2003, p.18). Teachers within a school are the main component of what comprises the organisation, in this case the school. Nsamenang (2004) argues that the world is being homogenised in its belief that children go to school to learn something useful, whilst failing to acknowledge that learning occurs both in and out of school. In addition, the school curriculum describes the content they are expected to learn at school but many fail or do not understand why they are in school because the classroom is not a natural learning setting. As Nsamenang concludes, if teachers do not understand learning they are unlikely to be effective or efficient in promoting it through teaching.

Though drawing insights from different perspectives this study was influenced by Vygotsky's theory to examine teaching and learning of the Grade R programme in a newly established school in black urban area. I concur with Tsai (1997) that development is a process by which children make sense through the mediation of social interaction as well as cultural tools within sociocultural texts. This understanding was important for my research because of the tools used at Thutong, such as stories, pictures and games.

According to Lantolf (n.d., p.1), the most fundamental concept of sociocultural theory is that the human mind is *mediated.* It uses symbolic tools, or signs, to mediate and regulate relationships with others and with ourselves, and thus changes their nature. Physical and symbolic (or psychological) tools are artefacts created by human culture(s) over time and

are made available to succeeding generations, which, whether they are physical or symbolic, can modify them before passing them on to future generations (Lantolf, n.d., p.2). Language, numbers and arithmetic systems, music and art are included among symbolic tools, and humans use symbolic artefacts to establish an indirect, or *mediated*, relationship between themselves and the world. It is important to understand how human social and mental activity is organised through culturally constructed artefacts. Languages are continuously remoulded by users to serve communicative and psychological needs.

Mediation refers to Vygotsky's well-known observation that all higher psychological processes, such as the conscious control of memory and attention, are neither innately specified nor direct responses to the environment, but rather develop indirectly through the mediation action of tools, signs, and the people who wield them (Guk, & Kellogg, 2007). Psychological tools are not invented by the individual in isolation but are products of sociocultural evolution to which individuals have access by being actively engaged in the practices of their communities (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996).

The acquisition of language provides an example of a social source of development, thus this study supports the sociocultural claim that the relationships between individuals form a basis for cognitive and linguistic mastery. This process, in the classroom context, in particular, includes "transmission, construction, transaction, and transformation" in a continuing, complex interplay (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996, p.192). This study places language in a central position.

Through the use of ethnography, I attempted not to indulge in the universalistic accounts of childhood and children's development, especially the Piagetian psychology. It is within this tradition that socialisation was regarded as a more or less one-way process, as what adults do to children, and as a process in which children themselves had little part to play. This study therefore also considered "the cultural specificities of the socialisation process, which make the experience of childhood for children far from a shared universal experience" (James, 2007, p.49). In addition, James asserts that the value of this approach is demonstrable within contemporary developmental psychology, as it is now appreciated for the insight which it can yield into the social aspects of children's development in particular cultural contexts. I have thus employed ethnographic methods to further my social psychological work on child development.

Woodhead (1996, p.10, as cited by James in Atkinson et al., 2007, p.249), in his ethnographic approach, recognises that "children do not grow in vacuum, nor do child care programmes function in isolation. Both are embedded in a dynamic social context of relationships, systems and cultural values". He argues for the initiation of culturally sensitive child development programmes in developing contexts that are appropriate to the context of early development in any particular location.

2.2.4   Zone of Proximal Development

In addition to his emphasis on the cultural and social context of learning and the role of play, one of the most significant aspects of Vygotsky's theory, for adults working with young children, is his notion of the 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD). The zone of proximal development is:

> the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978a, p. 33).

In order to conceptualise the relationship between learning and development, Vygotsky attempted to identify the differences between what children can do at present and what they might be capable of doing in the future. He proposed that two levels of development define the boundaries of the ZPD, the *actual* and the *potential*. Drawing attention to cognitive abilities that are not yet matured but in the process of maturation, the theory also accommodates variation between children and acknowledges that their "potential development could vary independently of their actual development" (Rose in Willan et al. 2008, p.50). Vygotsky saw the guidance provided through a process of collaboration with a more skilled partner as enhancing support of the development of expertise and competencies in children (Gupta, 2009).

According to Waller and Swann (2009), Vygotsky asserted that a group working together can construct knowledge into a higher degree than can individuals working separately. The knowledge is dependent upon the *group interaction*. This view gives much greater recognition to the importance of social interaction and support for the learner and regards the learner as a *social constructor* of knowledge. Glaveanu (2011c) asserts that a cultural

psychological perspective of any phenomenon also looks at the construction of knowledge and self through *social interaction*. Carpendale and Lewis (2004) add that children's correct use of psychological words is tied to their understanding of social situations and human activity. This understanding is facilitated by relationships that help the child understand other points of view. With experience in such *social interaction* concerning the mental world, children's understanding becomes progressively consolidated, that is, children are to think about situations abstracted from their practical contexts of interaction (Carpendale & Lewis, 2004, p.91).

According to Au (2007), the teacher and more capable peers in Vygotsky's conception of learning are important, because having another, more knowledgeable person aid the learner's development is necessary if the learner is going to be able to move into the ZPD. Eun, Knotek and Heining-Boynton (2008) assert that development for Vygotsky meant internalising the psychological tools of one's society to achieve cultural competence. This process may not be accomplished without the human mediation of a more culturally competent being, as stressed in the *collaborative* component of the ZPD. They further assert that the current conceptualisation of the ZPD has identified three key elements: (a) the goal (i.e., cognitive or cultural development), (b) the individual who is going through the cognitive development (e.g., child, novice), and (c) the guide or mediator who is more competent (e.g., adult, more capable peers). They argue that the dialogue that occurs between the mediating person (the tutor) and the child (tutee) becomes the decisive and single most important factor in the child's development. Language also plays a role in Vygotsky's analysis of human psychological functioning as one of the most important mediators in the process of development, by internalising the cultural tools generated over the history of time and place. The basic mechanism is mediation, which is offered through both human and symbolic means (Eun, Knotek & Heining-Boynton, 2008).

A central premise of the ZPD and the sociocultural theory associated with it is Vygotsky's idea that developing mental function depends on learners internalising the performance of the capabilities they are learning (Borthick, Jones & Wakai, 2003).

2.3 PERSPECTIVES ON GRADE R

Early childhood education is receiving more attention globally in the twenty first century. This section takes into account international Early Childhood Development since the United Nations (UN) adoption of the convention on the Rights of the Child on 20 November 1989 in addition to developments in Africa as highlited by Pence and Nsamenang (2008). In March 1990 the World Conference on Education for all (EFA) held in Jomtien, Thailand, the importance of Early Childhood Development was underscored as a crucial part of basic education. A follow-up to the 1990 conference took place in Dakar, Senegal in April 2000, where the delegates committed to expand and improve Early Childhood Care and Education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

Early childhood educators are moving in the direction of sharing information about theory and practice across cultures and countries, preparing teachers to work with diverse populations, and constructing global philosophy of education that will be reflected in their practices. However, there is little literature available on practices in early childhood classroom in developing countries. This information is critical for early childhood educators and teacher educators because society is rapidly becoming more diverse and "classrooms are becoming cauldrons of various cultures, languages, personalities and views on education" (Jambunathan & Caulfield, 2008, p.252). The aim of this ethnographic study is to give the story of Thutong Primary School, considering the Grade R programme in 2010.

Although the importance of Early Childhood Development (ECD) from birth until the age of nine is recognised, the priority in the ECD policy in South Africa is the implementation of Grade R (Reception Year) for five year-olds turning six in the year of admission (Meier & Marais, 2007). According to South African School Act (Act 84 of 1996), a 'Grade' is that part of an educational programme which a learner may complete in one school year, or any other education programme which the Member of the Executive Council may deem equivalent.

The progress made in the first year of school is the greatest that pupils achieve over the entire seven years of primary school. The school and teachers have the greatest influence on the progress made by pupils, therefore Grade R teachers have a serious responsibility in building sensitively and knowledgeably upon the foundations that pre-school and home lay

whilst also acknowledging the wide individual differences in young pupils. Teachers need strong subject knowledge across the curriculum and also to be aware of the appropriate pedagogy for teaching it. Early years teachers have to be skilled assessors of the children's levels of development so that they can offer a close match of teaching considering children's level of understanding (Riley, 2003).

2.3.1   The current policy and plans

Section 29 of the Bill of Rights of the Constitution (South Africa, 1996) states that: everyone has the right to basic education, and elsewhere made all of South Africa's 11 official languages of the country equal. This has informed debates surrounding multilingual education policy (Donald, Lazarus, & Lolwana, 2010), and the rights of indigenous languages having equal status with English for the preservation of the ecological diversity. However, De Klerk (2003, p.7) argues that "despite good intentions and legislation, English is the only language that is significantly represented in all nine provinces, and consequently it is in demand as a lingua franca". In terms of the Grade R learning being researched in this study, it begs the question: To what degree were Thutong children exposed to English, considering the multilingual background from which they came?

Scrutinising South African multilingual education policy there are still substantial hurdles to be overcome practically. For instance, all teachers must develop multilingual competence and fluency if they are to be effective in the teaching and learning process itself. They must be familiar with the different cultural backgrounds represented amongst their students, and "develop a sensitivity to the many ways through which language reflects and validates culturally specific world views" (Donald, Lazarus, & Lolwana, 2010, p.184).

2.3.2   Education White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Development

Education White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Development (DoE, 2001) defined Early Childhood Development as a comprehensive approach to policies and programmes for children from birth to nine years of age with the active participation of their parents and

caregivers. Its purpose is to protect the child's rights to develop to his or her full cognitive, emotional, social and physical potential. The main Early Childhood Development policy priority addressed in this White Paper was the establishment of a national system for the provision of the Reception Year (Grade R) for children aged 5. The medium-term goal for 2010 was for all children entering Grade 1 to have participated in an accredited Reception Year programme.

2.3.3   Grade R Curriculum

Curriculum in this research context is defined as broadly meaning the knowledge, skills and values an educational establishment aims to impart in its pupils. A distinction is made between two curricula, one that is acknowledged and "one that is hidden and which influences the learning of pupils in many subtle and unintentional ways" (Riley, 2003, p.61). For the purpose of this study reference is made both to National Curriculum Statement (NCS) and Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS).

The National Curriculum Statement Grades R to 12 (NCS) stipulates policy on curriculum and assessment in the schooling sector. To improve implementation, NCS amendments came into effect in January 2012. A single comprehensive Curriculum and Assessment Policy document was developed for each subject to replace Subject Statements, Learning Programme Guidelines and Subject Assessment Guidelines in Grades R to 12. It is therefore important to highlight that this study accommodates both, as the introduction of Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) in 2012 came to effect during the final stages of this research. The general aim of this curriculum is to ensure that children acquire and apply knowledge and skills in ways that are meaningful to their own lives, thus promoting knowledge in local contexts, while being sensitive to global imperatives (DoE, 2011). Based on my observation of teaching and learning of the Grade R programme in Thutong, the former NCS informed their curriculum.

2.3.4   The school as an institutionalised centre for education

Hansen (in De Rada, 2007, p.2007) defines a school as providing "institutionalised education in which learners learn vicariously, in roles and in environments defined as distinct from those in which the learning will eventually be applied". The school is a

special educational institution. Built by the modern national state in our historical environment, this institution is special because it introduces a regime of action that belongs to a planned bureaucracy in the ordinary educational processes based on communication between human beings. Any bureaucracy is simultaneously a moral order, an expert system of representative and procedural knowledge, and an organisation of human beings.

According to Eisenhart (2001), the difference now is that everyday life, including in *schools*, seems faster-paced, and more diverse, complicated and entangled than before. Eisenhart asserts that the kinds of personal and social relationships, exchanges, and networks people participate in are taking new forms, tying together otherwise disparate people, and demanding new ways of thinking about what to research and how. Ethnography helps to grasp these new forms, but Eisenhart cautions against being ready to extend or go beyond its conventional methods to meet the challenges these forms, or new ways of looking at them, present. I looked at the school as an intersection in social space. Instead of looking at the school as having clear boundaries and identifiable content I looked at it as extensive in space and time, fluid in form and content. I wanted to treat it as a point of entry to teaching and children's learning.

2.4   CONCLUSION

For the purpose of this research I relied on sociocultural theory. The attempt was to confine myself within the particular framework of functioning, meaning that as an ethnographer I have brought in my educational psychology background. Vygotsky and other exponents of sociocultural theory have contributed greatly to the view of childhood, hence their relevance and application in educational settings, such as the school. The focus of this chapter was on the theoretical framework and the perspectives of Grade R child in the South African context. The next chapter presents the research design and methodology within a theoretical framework.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1   INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methodology, with particular reference to the research paradigm, design, data collection methods, and analysis used in this study. The ethical considerations pertaining to the research are woven into my discussion of the design and presented at the end of this chapter.

3.2.1 Interpretivist
Naturalistic Paradigm

3.2.2 Ethnographic Research
Design

3.2.3 Participants

3.3 Data Collection

3.4 Data Analysis

3.4.4
Trustworthiness

3.4.5 Ethical Standards
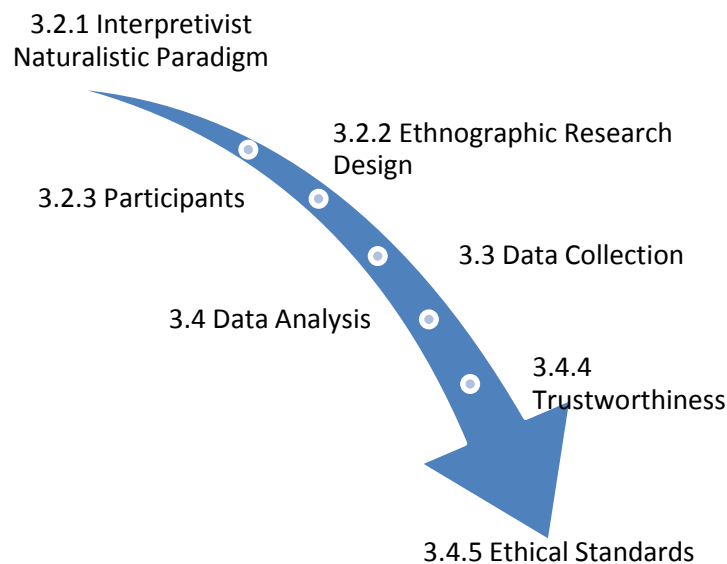
Figure 3.1: Summary of Chapter Three

3.2   RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

According to Mouton's (2001, p.138) "three worlds framework", an object of enquiry can be selected from one of the three worlds, namely: World 1: everyday life and lay knowledge; World 2: science and scientific research; and World 3: meta-science. This study enquired into the world of science by selecting the phenomenon in multiple contexts of school, home and community (World 1) and subjecting it to systemic and rigorous

enquiry in World 2. In line with Mouton, I acknowledged that it is not possible to produce scientific results that are infallible and absolutely true. However, I was motivated to strive for the most truthful and valid results. I constantly subjected my work to critical reflection, for example, considering which theory and research design to select. This turned out to be World 3. The phasing in of compulsory Grade R by the DoE, with no good understanding of this important year of schooling within the South African context, was part of World 1, and offered a real world problem worthy of scientific research.

Pole and Morrison (2003, p.6) define methodology as "the broad theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of the research". Ethnography as a methodology was relevant because it offered me an opportunity to study people in their natural setting. According to Brewer (2000, p.33), the focus on natural situations leads to this orientation being described as 'naturalism' and it is signified by attention to "what human beings feel, perceive, think and do in natural situations". He adds that these naturally occurring situations are sometimes called "face-to-face situations, mundane interaction, micro - interaction or everyday life". Methodologically speaking, engagement in this ethnography refers to my role as the researcher, the perspective I took, how I entered into and enacted with the ongoing cultural phenomenon at Thutong, how I tended to the participants, and how I presented the story to others (Clair, 2012).

3.2.1   Interpretivist naturalistic paradigm

This study was situated in the interpretivist naturalistic paradigm. Brewer (2000) asserts that ethnography is premised on the methodology of naturalism, which is an orientation concerned with the study of social life in real, naturally occurring settings: "the experiencing, observing, describing, understanding and analysis of the features of social life in concrete situations as they occur independently of scientific manipulation" (Brewer, 2000, p.33). Brewer adds that this methodology is also sometimes called the interpretative paradigm whilst Ponterotto (2005) refers to it as the constructivist or interpretivist paradigm. Whatever the name, this paradigm was considered appropriate for my research because naturalism is signified by attention to what human beings feel, perceive, think and do in natural situations that are not experimentally controlled. These naturally occurring situations are face-to-face, involving mundane interaction, micro-interaction or everyday life. I also allude to Ponterotto's (2005, p.130) interpretivist-constructivist notion as I

neither attempted "to unearth a single 'truth' from the realities of participants nor tried to achieve outside verification of my analysis". It is irrelevant whether a different researcher looking at the same type of data or transcripts arrives at different themes. Both may be correct, and the reader should judge the rigour of the study on the basis of its thick description.

3.2.1.1 Ontology, epistemology and axiology

The three philosophical anchors of the constructivist-interpretivist paradigm proposed by Ponterotto (2005) are ontology, epistemology and axiology. *Ontology* concerns the nature of reality and being, in which exist multiple, constructed realities rather than a single true reality. Ontology touches on my theoretical framework and research paradigm. *Epistemology* is concerned with the relationship between the research participant and the researcher. This refers to power relations, especially in ethnography. As a result, I adopted a transactional and subjectivist stance that maintains that reality is socially constructed and therefore the dynamic interaction between me and participants was central to capturing and describing their lived experience. *Axiology* concerns the role of researcher's values in the scientific process, and refers to my ethical approach in conducting this research. Constructivist-interpretivism maintains that the researcher's values and lived experience cannot be divorced from the research process. Accordingly, I acknowledged and described my values through personal reflections and supervision, however, I did not eliminate them, considering the prolonged interpersonal contact with the participants in order to facilitate their construction and expressions of the lived experience being studied (refer to sections 3.2.2.4, 3.2.2.5 and 3.3.1).

In conclusion, the story of a developing black urban school, considering the teaching and learning of the first Grade R programme in 2010, was based on experiencing and observing what was natural rather than hypothesising it beforehand, mostly by achieving firsthand contact with it. Crucial in this regard was understanding the participants' meanings from their own standpoint, that is the feelings, perceptions, emotions, thoughts, moods, ideas, beliefs and interpretative processes as they themselves understood and articulated them (Brewer, 2000).

3.2.2 Ethnographic research design

According to Brewer (2000, p.57), the *research design* is "the strategic plan of the project that sets out the broad structure of the research". When the idea of researching Thutong Primary School arose as a possibility at the start of 2010 I knew as little about how to conduct ethnographic research as I knew about the people I would eventually study. Subsequent advice about gathering data to understand this foreign environment was equally nonspecific, namely to 'hang around', observe, and record my observations (Shaffir, 1999). In other words, I learnt by doing, even including the unspoken difficulties of conducting such research. In the process, as a novice or neophyte ethnographer, I was mentored through my literature review by leading ethnographers such as Brewer, Fetterman, Hammersley and Atkinson, and Pole and Morrison, as shown in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1: Definitions of Ethnography

Authors:	Respective Definitions:
Brewer	Ethnography is the *study of people* in naturally occurring settings or 'fields' by means of *methods* which capture their social meanings and ordinary activities, involving the researcher participating directly in the setting, if not also the activities, in order to collect data in a systematic manner but *without meaning being imposed on them externally* (Brewer, 2000, p.10).
Fetterman	Ethnography is the art and science of describing a social group or culture. This description might include the group's history, religion, politics, economy, and environment (Fetterman, 2010, p.18).
Hammersley and Atkinson	Ethnography refers primarily to a particular method or set of methods. "It usually involves the researcher participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions - in fact gathering whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are emerging focus of inquiry" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p.3).
Pole and Morrison	An approach to social research based on the first-hand experiences of social action within a discrete location, in which the objective is to collect data which will convey the subjective reality of the lived experience of those who inhabit that location (Pole & Morrison,

	2003, p.16).
Delamont and Atkinson (1995)	Ethnography in *education* is regarded as "research on and in educational institutions based on *participant observation* and or permanent recordings of everyday life in naturally occurring settings" (Gordon, Holland & Lahelma, 2007, p.188).
Spindler (1982)	Ethnographic study requires *direct observation*. It requires being immersed in the field situation with the researcher as a major instrument of research (Spindler, in Gordon, Holland & Lahelma, 2007).

I aligned myself with the definition of Brewer (2000) because it seemed to summarise most of the other definitions. For example, to construct the story of a developing Thutong Primary School considering the Grade R programme in 2010, from my view as educational psychologist (the subjective reality) and the experiences of the teachers, learners, parents or caregivers, and community involved, I participated directly (methods) in the setting, and also the activities. This allowed me to collect data in a systematic manner but without meaning being imposed on it externally.

I used participant observation (refer to section 3.3.1) to record teaching and learning of the Grade R programme as it unfolded in and outside the two classrooms at the school. On a daily basis, for the duration of one year, I observed the two classrooms and accompanied teachers and children in the classrooms and playgrounds, and took part in some of the activities. I participated *overtly* as the principal, teachers and parents were informed by the school advisory board of my role as a school researcher. In relation to how I conducted my research, I acknowledge both the benefits of and disadvantages of overt participation as presented by Brewer (2000). Firstly, the gatekeepers may have given permission on other people's behalf, but people in the field were unaware of the full details. Secondly, informed consent associated with overt methods, is often "ambiguous or given on someone else's behalf, and the implications of the research are rarely fully explicated when consent is being sought" (Brewer 2000, p.85). Thirdly, overt research can be invasive and intrude on privacy, and involve varying degrees of truth. As Brewer states, morality is not necessarily always on the side of overt researchers.

Hammersley and Atkinson (1995, p.265) argue that even when operating in an overt manner, "ethnographers rarely tell *all* the people they are studying *everything* about the

research", for various reasons. At the initial point of negotiating access I did not know the course the work would take, and even later there were reasons only limited information could be provided to participants. Divulging some sorts of information might affect people's behaviour in ways that would invalidate the research. For instance, telling the teachers that I was interested in gendered play could produce false results, since they could make an effort to equalise their interactions. Both the benefits and disadvantages related to me as a researcher, in the sense that they helped me understand that there was no absolute overtness, hence my acknowledgement of the degree of overtness and reflexivity.

The above views of overtness in research within educational settings are shared by Poles and Morrison (2003). The challenge for both an ethnographer and for the participants lies in identifying the 'definitive' directions and outcomes for research. In addition, the research participants also bring to educational experiences their own sets of understandings and meanings about the research, as well as about the role that an ethnographer plays. This "multiplicity of meanings, exhibited by a range of actors in educational settings, is part of ethnography's strength. It is also what makes research ethically complex" (Poles & Morrison, 2003, p.150). Moreover, whether the participants are willing to tell their story will be as much about the kind of person they perceive the researcher to be. Part of the ethical problem is about degrees of overtness and reflexivity on the part of the ethnographer. Part of that reflexivity, as indicated above, was recognition and interpretation of the ways in which my identity (for example, gender, ethnicity, profession) affected and was reflected in the collection and analysis of data.

According to Slembrouck (2007, p.628), "ethnography is an epistemology of contact", which means that knowledge is seen to be rooted in and progressively shaped by the course of communicative contact with the researched world over a longer time. It means I actually went 'out there', drew close to people (mainly teachers and children) and events, and wrote about what I learnt in the respective situation. Slembrouck (2007) adds that such an epistemological orientation is often translated methodologically into key techniques such as 'participant observation', 'interviewing' and 'interpretative triangulation', which I applied in this particular school and will discuss in greater detail in sections 3.3 and 3.4.

3.2.2.1 Culture and education

Ethnography refers to the study of the culture, and makes cultural inferences by observing and analysing behaviour and cultural artefacts, recognising that texts only make sense considering the cultural context in which they are embedded (Hansen, 2006). However, "the focus on culture brought new dimensions into ethnographic studies in education, connecting micro-level processes to macro-level structures" (Gordon et al., in Atkinson, 2007, p.193).

I considered Thutong 'culture' as the routine ways of doing things in this school community's approach to teaching and learning of the Grade R programme in 2010. Rather than equating the notion of 'culture' with ethnicity or nationality of individuals, I conceptualised it as "a dynamic process that is continually developing and adapting to changing circumstances" (Rogoff, in Waller & Swann, 2009, p.36). The contemporary cultural world becomes more diverse and changes more rapidly by the day. As Willis claims (2000, p.47), creative cultural practices of the everyday continue but now have "to be ethnographically imagined in a rapidly changing context, the final surge to dominance of the commoditization and electronic mediation of our surrounding culture".

According to Eisenhart (2001), the meaning of the concept of culture has changed across time and varied with the contexts of its use as a result of the changing conditions around the world. Even in schools, there are some corresponding changes: from teachers directing and ordering learners to teachers facilitating and encouraging them; from learners memorising to learners *constructing*; and from an emphasis on one way of knowing or doing (or one right answer) to many. In addition, community life also has changed. As a result, changes like these make conventional fieldwork and thinking about culture difficult. In terms of my research I tended to think in terms of 'black culture' and 'school culture', but this posed challenges for me since in this black urban community in which the school was situated (refer to section 3.2.3.1) there were differences in the way people were socialised. I elaborate on this challenge in my findings. The view of culture as "relatively enduring, coherent and bounded way of living has limitations", especially in situations of group contact, such as schools (Eisenhart, 2001, p.17). As a result the concept of culture can no longer continue to be used as a basis for distinguishing home culture from school culture or for making school instruction and curriculum more culturally compatible or 'multicultural'. In the South African context, and in black urban communities in particular,

diverse cultural groups and backgrounds make it difficult to conceive of culture as a clerly bounded system either for home and school environments.

Eisenhart (2001) asserts that culture, though troubled, is not easy to abandon. It continues to be of practical importance that people act and make sense of their worlds through cultural idioms, intellectual and ideological forms, including those of identity that are produced and circulated in particular social contexts. One way to think about culture is "to focus on cultural productions - the discourses, meanings, materials, practices, and group processes to explore, understand, and creatively occupy particular positions in sets of general possibilities" (Willis, in Eisenhart, 2001, p.20). A cultural psychological perspective of any phenomenon, including creativity, will essentially look at processes of symbolic mediation through cultural artefacts, at the role of activity and social practices, and the co-construction of knowledge and self through social interaction (Glaveanu, 2011c).

The concept 'culture' in a school context may include the way teaching and learning is organised. I could not confine the concept of culture to social groups of people with a culture that is clearly bounded or determined, internally coherent, and uniformly meaningful because of the diverse nature of the community in which the school is situated. As stated in Chapter One, I was cautious in how I conceptualised culture (by confining myself to school culture) as a basis for giving an ethnographic account of the first Grade R programme in Thutong Primary School in 2010. I therefore confined myself to this specific school culture.

Moll (1992, p.21), asserts that the essential function of social networks such as classrooms and households is that they share or exchange "funds of knowledge", which he refers to as the essential cultural practices and bodies of knowledge and information that are used to survive, to get ahead, or to thrive. Nespor (in Eisenhart, (2001) adds that these funds of knowledge are made available in popular associations that intersect in particular times and spaces. School is one point of intersection, as are family, peer group and media. Individuals move in and out of time or space intersections and draw strategically on their resources (funds of knowledge). These networks are "flexible, adaptive, and active, and may involve multiple persons from outside" (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992, p. 133). As far as my research topic is concerned, Thutong was the first school of its kind, so much of it appeared to be new, from management to teaching and learning. In line with

Fetterman (2010, p.23), "a non-judgemental orientation helped me to refrain from making inappropriate and unnecessary value judgements about what I observed". However, I agree with Fetterman that, as an ethnographer, I could not be completely neutral because I am also a product of my culture and hence I shared some of myself and background. I have personal beliefs, biases, and individual tastes that I reflected on. Fetterman cautions against 'ethnocentric behaviour', by which was meant the imposition of one culture's values and standards on those of another, with the assumption that one is superior to the other. However, in the case of Thutong, I was not imposing any foreign culture since I come from the same cultural background.

3.2.2.2 The methodological bases of ethnography

Four salient features of ethnography, according to Brewer (2002), are worth emphasising for the methodological justification of this study. Firstly, ethnography focuses on people's ordinary activities in naturally occurring settings; secondly, it uses unstructured and flexible methods of data collection; thirdly, it requires the researcher to be actively involved in the field or with the people under study; and fourthly, it explores the meanings which this human activity has for the people themselves and the wider society. In order to obtain the story of Thutong in the year 2010, I observed the teaching and learning in the classrooms and playground. I used data collection methods such as field notes, audio recordings, and interviews, and as a fieldworker I conducted participant observation to explore the daily life of teachers and children in and outside the classrooms. This ethnography offered a methodology that aimed "to make cultural knowledge more explicit via contextual description" (Hansen, 2006, p.1055). By examining the context in which the texts were produced, a developing school in 2010 in a black urban community, I made inferences of the role that cultural understandings played in meaning making.

Ethnographic research suggests learning about people's lives or aspects of them from their "own perspective and from within the context of their own lived experiences" (O'Reilly, 2005, p. 85). I looked at Thutong within the context of its unique way of doing things, for example, what Grade R learning meant to them. According to Fetterman (2010, p.8) fieldwork is "the most characteristic element of any ethnographic research design". In addition, it is exploratory in nature and information gathering therefore proceeds inductively. I began with a survey period in February to learn the basics, such as the

structure and function of the culture under study for the months to come. After becoming acquainted I began to draw clearer geographical and conceptual boundaries and identified significant themes and gaps in my basic understanding of the Thutong site and programme.

My aim as an ethnographer was to represent the research context so that the reader might achieve insights into the world of teachers and children in addition to the description of reality in my own understanding. Thus, I made an effort to understand their point of view through participation in their context, producing cultural interpretations through intense research experience, seeking to capture understandings of interpersonal processes, such as negotiation of and the social construction of meaning (Hansen, 2006).

3.2.2.3 Ethnography in the study of children and childhood

According to James (in Atkinson et al., 2007, p.247), in its literal translation, the term 'ethnography' means writing about people. He argues that it is the use of ethnography as a research methodology which "enabled children to be recognized as people who can be studied in their own right" within the social sciences. In this sense, ethnographic methods have permitted children to become seen as research participants. However, Mertens and Ginsberg (2009, p.489) caution that the issue of minors' rights in research continues to generate much debate among researchers, policymakers and child advocates. Among the areas of concern which this study acknowledged were the social value of the research, the minors' ability to consent or assent, the beneficial or non-beneficial aspects of the research, and the importance of sampling varied cultural, social, and situational contexts of minors' lives.

The concept of decision-making in minors must be understood within the context of culturally based beliefs, values, and laws. A society's beliefs, about children's physical, cognitive, moral and social development vary depending on the historical, cultural, and social contexts. I was therefore cautious to universalise the development of Thutong children, especially from the Western conceptualisation of Early Childhood Development (ECD) and education. Based on my experience at Thutong, I agree with Mertens and Ginsberg (2009, p.490) that, "as a society becomes multicultural, legal and ethical decision making becomes ambiguous, fluid, and challenging". I therefore acknowledged that my seemingly clear convictions and ethical standards were challenged by the complexities of

different and even conflicting beliefs, values, and attitudes of the cultures of my research participants, their families and their communities. To deal with this challenge I looked at participants and their experiences from their perspectives, using a reflective journal or diary and discussing it under supervision in terms of the value of reflection in ethnographic research.

Ethnography permits a view of children as competent interpreters of the social world, which involves "a shift from seeing children as simply the raw and uninitiated recruits of the social world to seeing them as making a contribution to it, a changed perspective which has steered researchers towards doing work 'with' children rather than 'on' children" (Alderson, cited in James by Atkinson et al., 2007, p.247). This ethnography attempted to facilitate the desire to engage with children's own views and ideas, so rendering them accessible to adults as well as to other children. With its culturally constructed character, ethnography enables a view of children as social actors who take an active part in shaping the form that their own childhood takes. Based on the above I was interested in the following issues in this research study:

- What is the story of a developing school in black urban community, considering the Grade R programme in 2010, from my view as an educational psychologist?

In order to answer the main question, I had to address the following questions:

- What are the experiences of the teachers, learners and parents or caregivers involved in the Grade R development?
- How can the story of the two Grade R classes in the school be used to gain a better understanding of how Early Childhood Development (ECD) could be strengthened in South Africa?

To answer these questions, the study was designed as an ethnographic account with an element of autoethnography. In addition, it employed the sociocultural theory as indicated in Chapter Two, for purposes of locating teaching and learning from social interaction and culture.

3.2.2.4 Autoethnography

As the study was conducted as ethnography, with elements of *autoethnography*, my own attitudes, fears, anxieties, and social meanings when engaging in and living with the participants formed part of the data. However, I had to be analytically reflexive by reflecting on the contingencies which bore upon and helped to create the data as a partial account (Brewer, 2002), meaning that I had to reflect on biases and judgemental orientations that could impact negatively on my observation of Thutong school community. For example, I guarded against imposing an educational psychologist's interpretation of what constituted Grade R programme as far as the children's learning content was concerned. As much as this issue was problematic I continually reflected on it by also looking at an aspect of learning and development from a sociocultural context instead of through the medical model or developmental psychology lenses. According to Mcilveen (2008, p.3), autoethnography addresses the notion of "lived experience", *subjectivity,* and meaning within relative contexts. As much as I was attempting to provide an impartial account of teaching and learning at this school, my philosophical and educational orientations were part of the account. This could have risked trustworthiness because, as a researcher, I became the instrument of data collection and analysis. To deal with this challenge, measures to increase the research's credibility,dependability, confirmability and the transferability of this ethnographic study were of paramount importance, as indicated in Chapters One and Three.

3.2.2.5 Reflexivity in ethnography

Clair (2012, p.133) asserts that there exists "a school of ethnography that places personal engagement and reflexivity at the forefront without necessarily demanding political involvement". As a vehicle for reflexivity, autoethnography was one way of improving the rigour of the process of generating critical consciousness within me, the researcher (Mcilveen, 2008). Defined by Slembrouck (2007, p.626) "as the fostering of an awareness of one's social-historical positioning vis-a-vis the research one is engaged in", reflexivity entails an engagement with questions such as: where do I come from and why do I do this research? One of the distinctive features of autoethnography is its combination of ethnographic field notes with "headnotes" (Sanjek, in Collinson, 2008, p 41), that is, the researcher's subjective experience of engaging with the phenomenon under study.

Shaffir (1999, p.680) argues that the expectation that ethnographers would study a social world without imposing their own views and taking sides on social and political issues gave way to a view that "such a facade, prevented the researcher from examining his or her own cultural assumptions and from analyzing personal experiences that inevitably shaped the research process and outcome".

In line with Shepherd (2004), this section is an account of how I learnt to keep a reflective journal, preferably called 'diary,' throughout my fieldwork, because it contained personal reflections and my impressions pertaining to my feelings and ideas, to help me better understand my role as a participant observer and the school. My limited experience in reflexive journaling compelled me to keep comprehensive records, especially during the first month, to avoid missing what could be essential information, as demonstrated by the entry below. I wrote my reflections on a weekly basis as shown in two journal entries below.

> When I arrived at Thutong (February 2010), the school opened its doors for the first time. Everything and everyone was new. One of the most significant changes that took place a month after my arrival was the arrival of the new teacher, Mabotse[6] for isiZulu class. Ms Moabi[7], the principal, was their temporary teacher, meaning that meanwhile the children were to be taught until the arrival of Mabotse. Her arrival changed the dynamics of this class because children had to adapt to her teaching style and to her unique way of doing things. As a researcher, I also had to adjust, define my role to the teacher and renegotiate my access to this classroom (Diary 2-5/03/10).

Journal entry 1: Reflexivity in ethnography

This entry shows how events along with my thoughts and feelings became mixed in a single dialogue. Many of my earliest diaries were similar to this one; "events and actions being mixed with emotions and feelings, pointing to a lack of direction and focus in my writing" (Shepherd, 2004, p.200), with the great potential of throwing me off the trail altogether. Consequently, as I continued to reflect on this limitation after supervision meetings I gradually began to separate facts from feeling, emotions and thoughts when it came to documenting and analysing my data. This process, difficult as it was, helped me to

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[6] The pseudonym 'Mabotse' is used for the IsiZulu teacher.
[7] The pseudonym 'Mrs Moabi' is used for the principal.

redefine my focus and to obtain a better structure in compiling my field notes. An extract from my diary below, provides an example of later reflections:

My impressions on my feelings and ideas – my reflections on what happened:

The languages issue is still my concern especially with the Sesotho group. As a researcher, I was wondering what my findings will be like as I find the issue of language to be a complex one especially in the township or black urban area. At the same time I considered the fact that it may be just a few cases that may have deviated from the initial plan. I convinced myself that since I was not part of the admission/recruitment team I may be missing some relevant information. So, the gaps may be filled later when I begin to understand the process better (Diary 1-5/02/10).

Journal entry 2: Reflexivity in ethnography

3.2.3   Participants

Thutong, a primary school established in 2010 in a black urban community, was the research site. The school context, geographical location and its culture are detailed in section 3.2.3.1 below. The two Grade R classrooms were studied, comprising 60 children and two teachers (pseudonyms are used in this research to protect their anonymity). The classes were divided according to the children's home languages, Sesotho (South Sotho) and isiZulu, which in terms of the school's understanding and planning were the primary home languages of the children. Initially, 60 children were involved in the project and later in the year (from July onwards) this number increased to 84, which meant that the new children influenced the culture, dynamics and workload of the teachers.

The expectations, perspectives, educational experiences, and personal circumstances of each individual teacher were deeply embedded in teaching and learning of the Grade R programme, and to a certain degree added to its complexity, ambiguity and contradictory nature. Based on my observations, their differences in terms of their teacher training manifested in the teachers' classroom practices and activities. As such, I took a detailed history of the two teachers, whose profiles are outlined in Table 3.2. For example, teacher

Ratang[8] had Grade 1 teaching experience and was Sesotho speaking, whereas teacher Mabotse was a Grade R practitioner and TshiVenda and isiZulu speaking. Implicitly, I was aware that their "backgrounds had a powerful effect on their knowledge, voices and respective positions" (Fitzgerald, 2004, p.241).

Table 3.2: Demographic information of teachers and learners:

Teachers

	Teacher Ratang (Sesotho Class)	Teacher Mabotse (isiZulu Class)
Age	40	34
Home Language	Sepedi (North Sotho)	TshiVenda
Teaching Experience	3 years Intersen (Grade 5) 11 years Grade 1 1 year (facilitating) South African National Tutors Services (SANTS)	14 years in ECD 2 years Facilitating South African National Tutor Services (SANTS)
Qualifications	Junior Primary Teaching Diploma (JPTD) Advanced Certificate in Early Childhood Development (ACE ECD)	N3 – Educare (ECD) Level 4 ECD Level 5 ECD (All three mostly pre-school)
Institution	Boithuto (Pseudonym) College UNISA	Harmony (Pseudonym) College South African National Tutor Services (SANTS)

Children

	Ages of learners in both Sesotho and isiZulu classes 5 to 6 years	Home languages of learners in the school: Sesotho Sepedi Setswana

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[8] Ratang is a pseudonym for the Sesotho teacher.

IsiZulu

IsiXhosa

TshiVenda

XhiTsonga

Afrikaans

'Township lingo'

3.2.3.1 Black urban community context: Kopanong[9] Township

In this section I provide an overview of the geographical, historical location of the school and its culture. Thutong is situated in Kopanong, a sprawling township over 50 years old, to which blacks were relocated from black neighbourhoods the apartheid government had reserved for whites. Kopanong's growth was rapid but unplanned. Despite government attempts to stop the influx of black workers to the cities, waves of migrant workers moved from rural areas and neighbouring countries to look for employment in the city near this township. One of the largest black urban settlements in Africa, it has a rich political history as one of the centres of political campaigns aimed at the overthrow of the apartheid state. As with other black urban areas it was affected by the 1976 student uprising, which spread to townships across South Africa. Kopanong residents pride themselves on being urbane and 'streetwise', most being rooted in the metropolis and detribalised. It is also a 'melting pot' of South African cultures and has developed its own sub-cultures, especially for the young. Afro-American influence runs deep, but is adapted to local conditions. In their speech, dress and gait, the people of Kopanong exude a sense of cosmopolitan sophistication. They have evolved a local lingo, *tsotsitaal*, an eclectic mix of several local languages, Afrikaans and street slang, constantly evolving and spoken mainly by the young.

Thus, the dominant culture in this specific area and population can be classified as black-urban. My own cultural background is very much aligned with that of the participants, having inlcuded attendance at primary school in the same community, though there was then no Grade R. Instead, I did the 'Sub A' in my first year of formal schooling in 1974, before which I had attended a crèche in my area. I genuinely cannot remember its programme, except for a few rhymes.

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[9] Pseudonym Kopanong is used for the name of the area or suburb in which the school is situated.

Historically, the schools in this area did not offer formal Grade R until 2010, as indicated in Chapter Two, when this grade was phased in as part of formal schooling. According to White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Education, the policy target was that by 2010 all learners entering Grade R would have participated in an accredited Reception Year programme (DoE, 2001). It appeared that the target was not met in some of the schools. My two children were exposed to Grade R in 2009 and 2011 respectively, in an independent school. One reason I enrolled them in an independent school was that I had heard about its good reputation from a colleague. When I visited the school I was attracted by its physical layout, which for me represented an ideal model of an Early Childhood Development centre. A second reason was that it was in close proximity to my home. My experience of the Grade R programme was therefore not the same as that of the one at Thutong, probably because my children's school was white urban in terms of its culture. To a great extent I found them to be worlds apart, in line with my experience of the Grade R programmes in the two schools, Thutong and the independent (private) school attended by my children. Thutong resembled my own personal experience of black township kind of play. I found myself being more familiar with the Grade R programme at Thutong because I could relate to some of their rhymes and games I had learnt in Kopanong streets (outdoor play) during childhood. I however slanted towards my role as a researcher because I was aware that my connection and social identity as a member of this school community and the location placed me in a unique and powerful position (Fitzgerald, 2004).

I visited Thutong site daily for almost 12 months, which allowed me to conduct intensive fieldwork, drawing back and making sense of what I had observed and recorded, before returning to the field to continue gathering more information on teaching and learning. Through this effort I was able to see patterns of behaviour over time, thus enabling me to observe the participants and identify emerging patterns of behaviour. My decision to end the data collection was based on sufficient data having been gathered to describe the culture of this school convincingly, and to say something significant about it in relation to the research question.

The plan was not to contain the study within the boundaries of the school, but to link the school to community and culture. As a result, the parents or caregivers were also involved. It was necessary to explore the link between the school and home or local environments as

they influenced each other in terms of childhood development and education (see section 3.2.3.1).

3.3   DATA COLLECTION
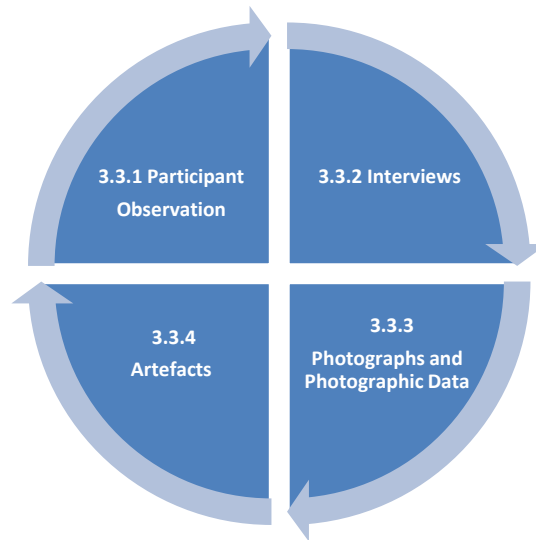
Figure 3.2: Methods of data collection

Geertz (in James 2007, p.247) asserts that "what we call our data are really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to". This interpretive understanding evolved through immersion in the lives of those I wished to understand, over a lengthy period of time and across a range of social contexts. It involved a variety of different kinds and levels of engagement between the researcher and the participants. In this way the 'doing' of ethnography encompassed a range of different qualitative research techniques within its orbit, from unstructured interviews through to casual conversations, from the simple observation of the comings and goings of people in their everyday lives to full participation alongside them in different kinds of work.

When I began to formulate my ideas of how to capture the essence of the first Grade R programme in this developing school I did not have grand ideas of being an ethnographer. However, circumstances called for that and I heeded the call as I also desired to learn new things. In the process of my literature review I described myself as a 'neophyte ethnographer', because everything was new to me.

There are no rules or formulae to determine how much data to collect, from whom to collect it, and what kind of data should be collected. I made these decisions based on my experience, knowledge, and strategy of inquiry from within the philosophical and theoretical framework I had chosen (Walker et al., 2008, p.83). As a result, my data collection methods were extensive. Brewer (2000) asserts that to collect social meanings, observe behaviour and work closely with participants, several methods of data collection are relevant. Five types of data collection were employed throughout my study: participant observation, interviews, photographs and photographic data, and artefacts, as indicated in Figure 3.2 (above). I often thought I had too much data and too many notes to handle and in many instances during my 'talking with the data' I found myself being overwhelmed. I did not miss any week except for school holidays, or when industrial action by taxi drivers or teachers prevented me from conducting research. In total, I made 29 weekly reports (field notes) and kept 27 sets of diaries, compiled from observations and interviews for the year 2010.

3.3.1 Participant observation

I began to accompany the Grade R children in their daily round of activities by stationing myself anywhere in the classrooms, whether the back, sides, middle or teachers' chairs, depending on where their activities were taking place. I used photographs to assist in my observation. Photographs of the two classrooms are added to provide an idea of the environment in Figures 3.3 and 3.4 (below). A detailed explanation of the use of photographs and photographic data is explained in section 3.3.3.

Figure 3.3: isiZulu classroom

Figure 3.4: Sesotho classroom

The two classrooms each had three corners in which teaching and learning took place on a daily basis, namely, 'Literacy corner', 'Numeracy corner', and 'Life Skills corner'. The isiZulu classroom had an additional corner, the 'Art corner', unlike the Sesotho classroom, although it was not used. However, neither class isolated art as a learning area or subject, meaning that it was integrated within the three learning areas, namely, Literacy, Mathematics and Life Skills.

Below are Figures 3.5 and 3.6, representing Numeracy and Literacy corners respectively:
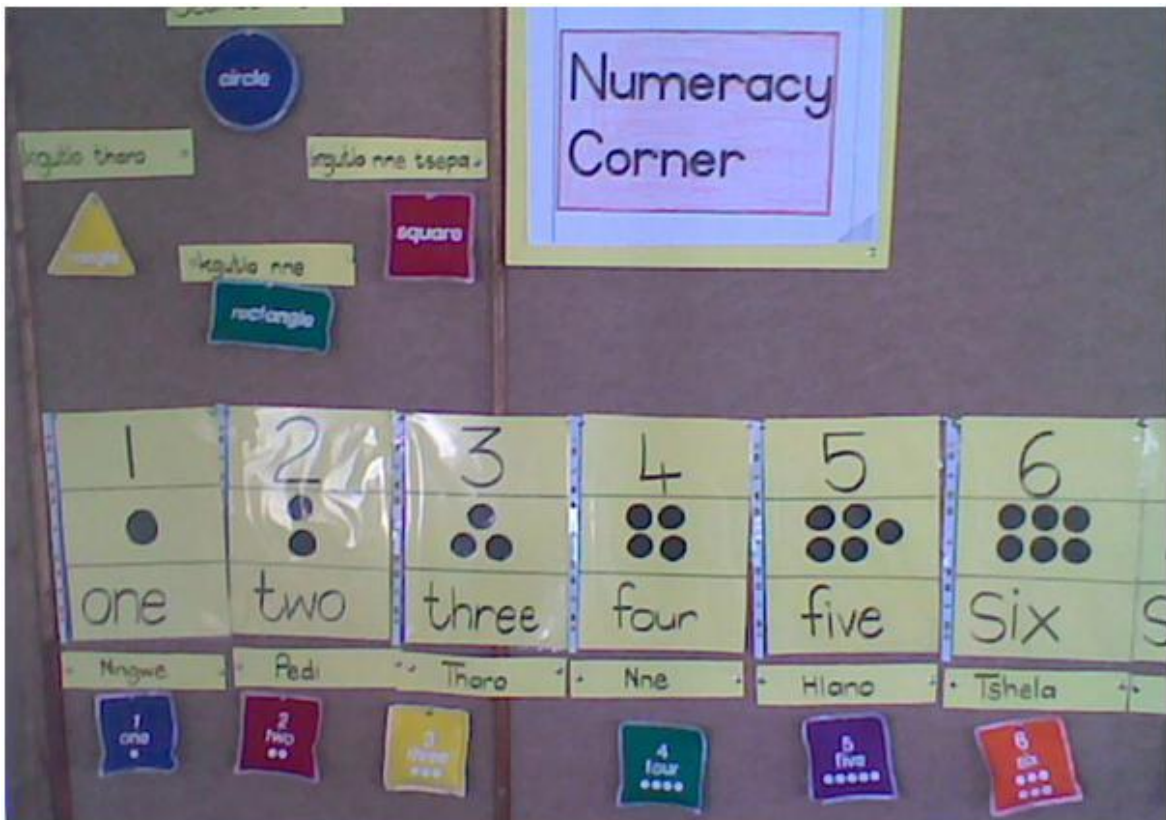
Figure 3.5: Numeracy Corner

Figure 3.6: Literacy Corner

In some instances I sat on children's chairs, stood up or walked around, trying to grasp different viewing points. During this process I considered how moving around and sitting in different positions could influence the children and teachers. To avoid or minimise disruption I made sure that I moved or walked when they also did. I only used the children's chairs when they had left them unoccupied to engage in some activities away from where they would usually sit. I watched and took notes of classroom activities. As the children lined up I watched and walked alongside, sometimes helping the teachers, taking part in some of the activities and observing them as they moved between the two classrooms. In some instances I observed them on the playground or in the school yard where other activities were taking place. I played, talked, walked, and accompanied children during eating, both inside and outside the classrooms, for almost 11 months. This helped me to contextualise my understanding of learning of Grade R children in a newly established school in a black urban community. A day in the life of the Grade R children is provided in Appendix 3.

The main method of this ethnography was participant observation (Pole & Morrison, 2003, p.63), which relies on the researcher seeing and participating in the social action. It was

written in the form of field notes in which a detailed account of what was seen and experienced was provided. In order to engage as participant observer I first had to gain access with the permission of the DoE, parents and teachers. The school principal and the two teachers also eased my access to the school by embracing me as their colleague.

I used participant observation to observe teaching and learning of the first Grade R programme and it was this daily immersion in the everyday lives of the children and teachers that provided rich and detailed documentation of the learning content, language teaching and development, and the provision of learning support as part of the Grade R programme. It is this method that allowed me to argue for cultural shaping of support towards the children.

Participant observation combined participation in the lives of the teachers and children with maintenance of a professional distance that allowed adequate observation and recording of data. This posed a challenge for me because, in an African context, a visitor is usually regarded as a member of the family. Based on my personal experience of growing up in a black community, a visitor in a South African sense, that of Kopanong in particular, is given better treatment even than members of the household or families visited. Family members would wish to get as close to the visitor as possible. In return, a visitor is, to a great extent, regarded as rude if he or she tries to maintain a distance when family members try to embrace them. In the school context I saw this as appropriate as participant observation requires close, long-term contact with the people under study. Therefore, I honoured and embraced their welcome, keeping in mind my role as a researcher. As participant observation is immersion in culture I spent almost a year in the school, seeing patterns of behaviour over time. Long-term residence helped me internalise the basic beliefs, fears, hopes and expectations of the people under study (Fetterman, 2010).

Participant observation involved data gathering by means of daily participation in the lives of teachers and children in their natural setting, watching, observing, and talking to them in order to discover their interpretations, social meanings and activities. The intent behind this close involvement and association was to generate data through watching and listening to what people naturally did and said, and to add the dimension of personal experience of and sharing the same everyday life as those under study. Changes in my own attitude, fears, anxieties, and social meanings when engaging with the teachers and children in the

school formed part of the data. Since data is affected by the intervention of participant observer, my autobiographical experience in the field was a central part of understanding it. I used participant observation in two ways: to understand the world as it is seen by those acting within it, and to reveal the taken-for-granted, common-sense nature of that everyday world itself. Although my role was new as a researcher, the field was not necessarily unfamiliar. Thus, I did not have to undergo an extensive period of re-socialisation or adaptation to the practices and values of this developing school in order to experience the full range of the events and activities in the setting (Brewer, 2002).

I was not only talking to the participants and asking them questions through interviews, but I was also learning from them by observing them, participating in their lives, and asking questions that relate to the daily life experiences of teaching and learning of the Grade R children. I did this over time, taking mental and actual notes as we engaged (O'Reilly, 2005). For example, in some instances I would ask the teachers to help me with the content if I had missed or lacked information pertaining to some of the rhymes.

Willan (in Willan et al., 2008, p.109) asserts that close observation of children helps to link theory and practice and provides a base from which to challenge current theories and orthodoxies about children's development, behaviour and needs. I had to learn to stand back, to suspend judgement, to watch and above all to listen. Children have views of their own and part of any professional observation and assessment should be, whenever possible, to listen to and take account of the children's own evaluation of the situation.

James (in Atkinson et al., 2007) asserts that participant observation can engage children actively with the research. I adopted a more fluid and conventional participatory approach, as an adult who was often at the school. The children addressed me as "teacher" even though I was not behaving like one, according to my adult perspective. I was unsure how they viewed me, considering that it was their first year of school. I suppose children have their own conceptualisation of a teacher and wondered how I could have explained myself to them. My role as a researcher was explained to them by the principal when she introduced me for the first time, simply and briefly telling them that I was there to observe what the teachers and children were doing. I used to wonder around the two classrooms and the playground, watching activities, occasionally talking to teachers and children, asking questions, making comments, and recording their responses and actions in my logbook notes. I noticed that children liked to be listened to and have their views taken

seriously. Being in their company was simple because I could indulge them simply by showing an interest in them.

Spending one year at the school enabled me to observe events that happened at different times of the day, week, month and four school terms. During this time I observed a range of activities, rituals, celebrations, and critical incidents and events that defined the teaching and learning of the Grade R children in Thutong Primary School.

- **Personal reflections on insider-outsider research**

This section explores my dual role as a researcher following an insider-outsider approach, which to a certain extent I equate to my participant-observer role. As my assumed outsider status began to be eroded when I started with classroom observations, I began to slant towards the insider role. As Le Gallais (2008, p.145) puts it, "Sharing past history offers a greater awareness and understanding of the participants' culture, ethos, values, and attitudes". Thus, I benefited from a shared language and collective identity, though not to the detriment of the objectivity required. However, this is what I personally interpreted as a 'yo-yo' kind of experience of insider-outsider roles, as I struggled to maintain professional distance. I concur with Le Gallais (2008), that previous involvement in the DoE had weakened my claim to absolute outsider status at the Thutong site. However, I was cautious of my personal involvement in and proximity to the setting, which could challenge the validity of this research. The elements of autoethnography that I employed served as a reflective tool that helped me in this process. It heightened my awareness of how past experiences, class, values and beliefs and educational background influenced this research.

I occupied an ambivalent role as both an insider and outsider as I attempted to listen to the teachers' stories and helped them to make sense of their lives and experiences in the school. This was a unique opportunity to hear accounts and worldviews in an attempt to re-conceptualise and re-frame knowledge for teaching and learning of the Grade R programme (Fitzgerald, 2004).

- **Access**

Access, as one of the key elements of participant observation (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007), will be discussed as it applied to this research. As a school ethnographer I learnt the importance of this element as I negotiated my long stay at the school. Based on personal

experience at Thutong Primary School, I attest to Hammersley and Atkinson's (2007, p.41) claim that the problem of obtaining access to the data is great in ethnography, and that "it is often at its most acute in initial negotiations to enter a setting and during the 'first days in the field'; but the problem and the issues associated with it, persist, to one degree or another, throughout the data collection process".

In my case I already had overt access, already being part of the group I wished to study by virtue of my link as a DoE employee and researcher. It seemed the teachers did not mind my being around them and asking questions. I gained the impression that they were flattered by my interest in them because they were willing to share their experiences and tell me what happened during my absence, without me asking. In participating I became part of the teachers and children in a way that they became used to me and forgot I was there, which was not difficult. I also noticed from this experience that time allows for greater acceptance, and my attributes of age, gender, race, ethnicity, and even educational background and experience, contributed to my easy access to the school.

Gaining access also involved explaining about my research and settling into a semi-overt role, with participants knowing what I was doing but not always having it exactly in their minds (O'Reilly, 2005). I discovered that even when operating in an overt manner I rarely told the people I was studying everything about the research, for several reasons. At the initial point of negotiating access I did not know what would be involved or the likely consequences. I provided limited information to the participants as I thought that divulging more or a certain kind might affect their behaviour in ways that would invalidate any conclusion from this research (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). For, example, one of the teachers was very inquisitive, repeatedly asking me what I was actually observing in the classrooms. My responses would be "everything to do with teaching and learning".

Fieldwork dilemmas often involved a tension regarding my role as participant-observer (Berg, 2004; Poller & Emerson, in Castellano, 2007), in particular deception and my credibility as a researcher and participant.

- **Deception**

I concur with Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p.211) that "even ethnographers whose research is overt, sometimes engage in active deception. This is integral to the kind of toleration that is probably essential to ethnographic work". I found myself giving

participants false impressions, for example, that I agreed with their views or found their behaviour acceptable when I did not. This was a matter of not mentioning my own views, but sometimes it involved me indicating agreement or acceptance despite my real beliefs. In this instance I was guided by the "do not harm" ethic I alluded to in sections 1.5 and 3.4.5.3.

- **My credibility as a researcher and participant**

As a novice ethnographer, what I also refer to as neophyte (le Gallais, 2008) ethnographer, I was somehow torn between various roles of researcher, educational psychologist, teacher, deputy chief education specialist (DCES), and acting institutional development and support officer (IDSO) in the DoE (District official). I dealt with these challenges by constantly reflecting on my role as a researcher and reminding myself of my primary purpose of being at this school. As an educational psychologist I had very limited experience with this specific age group, Grade R. As a teacher I spent my entire teaching career in a high school teaching Grades 8 to 10. It was also my first encounter working in a newly established school. As deputy chief education specialist and institutional development and support officer I was aware of intervention strategies of the DoE that pertain to legislation, policies, and support programmes, therefore I struggled to restrain myself when tempted to see the school strictly through the lenses of my employer. However, through reflection and supervision I confidently and gradually moved to the researcher role before the end of the first school term and up to the fourth term. An extract from my diary or reflective journal reflecting my feelings and thoughts is provided below:

.... At times I wonder why they always want me to help as I always strive to maintain professional distance. Is it because they know my background as a psychologist, district official, personality or what? … I have to maintain balance, but above all not to lose my integrity as a researcher (Diary 2-5/03/10).

Journal entry 3: Participant observation

I had to consistently think carefully as to what my role was within this school. O'Reilly (2005) states that this choice can affect how people see others and therefore how they act towards them, and it may also affect who they subsequently gain access to. Teachers and the principal found it easier to relate to me as their colleague from DoE. Knowing my other role as a psychologist they trusted me and always opened up to me. I found the latter

to be more challenging as I had to listen to matters that I could not easily address because of my role as a researcher. I had to maintain the distance to avoid contaminating my role by only providing minimal help when I deemed it necessary. Taking care of myself and reflecting on my feelings on a daily basis helped me focus and balance what seemed to be conflicting roles.

There were other issues about how I presented myself in terms of my position or thoughts on different issues. It was useful to me that I had grown up and taught in this specific black urban area, and served it as teacher, district official and psychologist. I was therefore comfortable around the participants. In addition, I knew their languages and it was easy for me to communicate with them. However, as I indicated, I had not been actively involved in Grade R teaching and learning during my entire career path before this research opportunity presented itself, therefore I positioned myself as a Grade R 'learner'. Acknowledging this limitation put me in a position of wanting to immerse myself intensely through participation and observation as I had a quest to experience the unfolding of teaching and learning of the Grade R programme. Despite the challenges, having the two teachers as key informants or gatekeepers to classroom entry was invaluable. They were willing to show me around, telling me things and always helping me when I asked.

Based on my experience as a fieldworker I concur with Shaffir's (1999, p.678) claim that if one is honest with oneself one realises that as the chief instrument of research, "the personal qualities that we bring to our work usually override the professional claims that we present about it".

- **Distancing and anchoring**

The very nature of fieldwork often places the ethnographer in strange, precarious, and unethical positions, which inevitably threaten to disrupt data collection efforts. I was routinely confronted with the tension between getting used to member culture and abiding by professional research protocols. "Distancing" and "anchoring" strategies as suggested by Emerson and Poller (in Castellano, 2007, p.707) were useful techniques that I employed for addressing uneasy moments in the field. *Distancing* is defined as withdrawing from participant activities to avoid over-involvement with members, whereas *anchoring* refers to deepening involvement in participant activities to gain acceptance into member culture (Emerson & Poller in Castellano, 2007). According to Castellano, not only can we anchor and distance ourselves from our participant role, we can also anchor and distance ourselves

from our researcher role. For example, distancing from the researcher role refers to underplaying or minimising data collection activities. Anchoring to the research role refers to openly engaging in research tasks for purposes of collecting data. There were occasions when I had to apply distancing because of the tension that I sometimes sensed between myself and the teachers, or when I could sense tension among the staff members. Thus, distancing helped me to minimise subjectivity and bias.

3.3.1.1 Field notes

Fieldwork is a form of inquiry in which one is immersed personally in the continuing social activities of an individual or group for the purposes of research. It is characterised by personal involvement to achieve some level of understanding that will be shared with others (Wolcott, 1995, p.66). According to Atkinson, Delamont and Housley (2008, p.31), ethnographic fieldwork is predicated on the recognition that "local social organization and the conduct of everyday life are complex, in that they are enacted through multiple modes of social action and representation". They assert that it is also founded on a commitment to understand everyday life in a given social world through sustained engagement with that world.

Field notes were the primary data source in this study, consisting primarily of data from *daily observations* in and outside the classrooms, as well as during the interviews. Field notes were based on recording what was said, what was happening at the time, and what I thought about it at specific times, locations or events. Just after half way through the school year, in the third term, my field notes started to become repetitive, indicating data saturation, "when no additional data are being found which develop the properties of the code or category" (Brewer, 2000, p.153).

Field notes were taken in classrooms, playgrounds, at meetings, in the main office, at staff development workshops and during the interviews, for example 'jungle gym' in Figure 3.7. This photo, for example, assisted me in questioning the role of outdoor play in language acquisition in the multilingual context of Thutong. Observations of specific environments in and around the school building were also completed with field notes taken in two logbooks (Figure 3.8). My attempt was to grasp the story of this developing school

from my view as an educational psychologist engaging as a researcher, as well as to record the experiences of the teachers, learners, and parents or caregivers.

Figure 3.7: Jungle gym

Figure 3.8: Two logbooks used for term one to four

Within my first month (February) at the school I had easy access to the two classrooms and the principal's office. I could sit and write my field notes without attracting much attention. In terms of my experience and understanding of the notion of kinship in an African context I was treated as a 'friend', 'sister', 'confidant' and 'colleague' and warmly welcomed upon countless arrivals. However, I was always cautious that 'I was an outsider, looking in'. I also took cognisance that I did not want to do any harm to teachers or children. According to Hammersley and Atkinson (1995), while ethnographic research rarely involves the sort of damaging consequences that may be involved, it may have unintended results, such as creating anxiety or worsening it.

In my attempt to capture the true essence of what I was observing while taking notes I tried to follow several rules from the field of ethnography, such as: trust; avoiding harm; respect for human dignity; avoiding exploitation; and overt-covert researcher identity; (Fetterman, 2010; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Brewer, 2000; Pole & Morrison, 2003).

3.3.2   Interviews

I interviewed the teachers and parents to understand their '*emic*' perspectives and their view of the Grade R teaching and learning at this particular school. In line with Fetterman, (2010, p.20) the emic perspective, meaning "the insider's perspective of reality", was at the heart of this ethnographic research. The insider's perception of reality was instrumental in understanding and accurately describing situations and behaviour. An emic perspective compels the recognition and acceptance of multiple realities, whilst according to Ponterotto (2005) etic refers to universal laws and types of behaviour that transcend nations and cultures and apply to all humans. For example, the concept that people are biological organisms is an etic concept, in that they all need to eat, drink, and sleep to survive. Ponterotto adds that emic refers to constructs or types of behaviour that are unique to an individual, sociocultural context and not generalisable. For example, the vuvuzela instrument is not universally acknowledged, as this concept is language-specific.

Documenting multiple perspectives of reality in a given study is crucial to understanding why people think and act in the different ways they do. According to Fetterman (2010, p.21), "differing perceptions of reality can be useful clues to individuals' religious, economic, or political status and can help a researcher understand maladaptive behaviour

patterns". For example, in this study, eliciting the emic perspective and acknowledging multiple realities helped me discover that teachers considered their role as Grade R teachers challenging and demanding, hence the metaphor 'they keep you on toes (sic)' (Chapter Four) by teacher Ratang. I learned that by assuming that my (outside professional) expectations of them as professionals might be unfair and judgemental as they were the ones who spent more time with the Grade R children, and hence the emic view was important for this study. An extract from an interview is provided below (see full interview in Appendix 2), as an example of a teacher's own view and understanding of Grade R teaching.

Interviewer: Tell me about Grade R teaching.

Teacher Ratang: It is more of **beefing** up their vocabulary - but mostly you don't have to do it in a formal way. When you talk to them you increase the concepts in them. To them it's more about play than formality - It's about promoting learning through play. When you relate stories, they become more excited and they are excited that they grasp something. That is how they learn. When you formalise they get bored quickly. As they play, you have to incorporate what you want to teach. They get tired quickly – the lessons have to be short and have more play in between. When I started with them I thought that they are just children. When you probe for answerers, they show understanding. They can tell their own stories and sequence them. Children are very creative. If you tell them it is story time, they choose their own stories - when you teach them song they put their own words. They don't want seriousness in whatever they are doing. After few days you will notice that they have grasped the concept you were teaching. Sometimes they create their own language – if they don't remember the right word they put any word… (DS300104 – 07/06/10).

Extract 3.1: Individual interview with Teacher Ratang

i.   **Individual and group interviews**

I conducted both informal and semi-structured individual interviews. The former entailed chats and questions that arose on the spur of the moment, on to one-to-one interviews with the teachers and children. I engaged more regularly in informal interviews or conversations. In addition, I conducted a few informal and impromptu interviews with

parents on school premises. Due to time constraints I used parents' visits to the school as an opportunity to engage with them. I took account of Babbie's (2005) suggestion that researchers remind themselves that they are not having a normal conversation. To capture what he refers to as socially structured activities (conversations) I used the most common tools in ethnography, pen and paper (Fetterman, 2010), as well as audio recording.

Through the use of interviews I learned about teachers, children, parents, teaching, learning, and the Grade R programme at Thutong Primary School. Ten semi-structured interviews were transcribed. However, with parents, I obtained only a small number, six semi-structured interviews with them due to constraints on time and venue. I managed to make six home visits in order to conduct more semi-structured interviews with some of the parents and gather, inter alia, information on matters pertaining to language of the interviewees, as shown in the following interview extract:

Interviewer: What is the main language that your child is exposed to?

Interviewee: Sesotho.

Interviewer: What is your view on English as language to use in the classroom for all subjects?

Interviewee: English is a requirement. Wherever you go is English.

Interviewer: What is your primary language?

Interviewee: Sesotho.

Interviewer: Which language do you use at home most?

Interviewee: Sesotho and English. We mix.

Interviewer: What is the main language of Kopanong?

Interviewee: SeZulu.

Interviewer: What is the main language of the area where you live?

Interviewee: Setswana (Int. 23, 24,25/11/10)

Extract 3.2: Individual interview with a parent

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The criteria for selecting the six families were based on the availability of the twelve parents selected, homes that were very close to this school and the equal number of children from both Sesotho and isiZulu groups. Three children from each class were therefore selected. The interviews were audio-taped and transcribed into text (full transcripts are attached in Appendix 2).

3.3.3 Photos and photographic data

As part of my observations, data was collected by taking photos. Photos are visual representations of my own social experience, whereas photographic data refers to my photographing during fieldwork, thus "representing ethnographic knowledge visually" (Pink, 2007, p.72). Photos were taken to enhance my observations and to add to the data sets, for example, photos of artefacts such as the posters against the walls, were taken and analysed. Ethnographic research is intertwined with visual images and metaphors. So, my production of photographs, as well as the experience of producing and discussing them, became part of my ethnographic knowledge (Pink, 2007). According to Atkinson, Delamont and Housley (2008, p. 43), "many cultural domains and artefacts can only be grasped through their visual representations and the structured properties of their visual codes". They maintain that there are many aspects of culture that are intrinsically visual. In addition, there are many social phenomena that can and should be analysed in terms of their appearances, and performances that may be captured in visual terms. These are not, however, separable from the social settings in which such phenomena are generated and interpreted.

Visual representations assisted in adequately describing the teaching and learning of Grade R at Thutong Primary School. Photographs were taken of objects and events such as display tables and birthday parties that were representative of this phenomenon as shown in Figures 3.9 and 3.10 below. These offered me a different medium with which to represent teaching and learning experiences of the Grade R at this school.

Figure 3.9: Counting activity
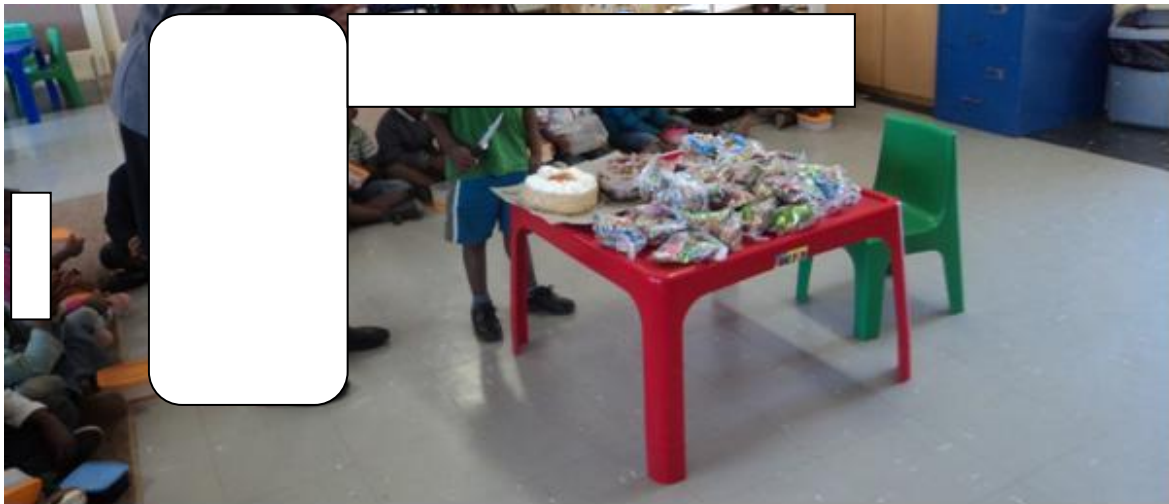
Figure 3.10: Birthday party celebration

Rakic and Chambers (2008, p.256) argue that the most viable position to be adopted within visual ethnography is that of a "subjectivist relativist, both of which are exemplified in constructivism". Adopting their stance I treated the footage as one of many (re)presentations of multiple and parallel realities. A subjective approach allowed the reactions to the presence of the camera to be seen and acknowledged my position within a project. This means that the footage was created out of my subjective context, as I was the

one choosing what, where and when to take photos. I concur with their argument that it is impossible to create an 'objective' visual recording of an external 'reality', thus claiming that subjectivity and reflexivity need to play a central role within such projects. Despite the challenges or limitations involved in capturing photographic data in the field, and subsequently representing this as part of academic research output, these were used for the purposes of analysis and to complement or even partially substitute text, as was the case in this study. I thus adopted this stance in creating, editing and representing the photographic images of Thutong Primary School. How I engaged with this data is shown in section 3.4, under 'data analysis'.

The impact of the camera on the teachers and children could not be disputed, even if I tried to minimise it by using zoom to capture classroom and outdoor activities from a distance. For example, my camera either excited or distracted the children. To minimise this, on a few occasions I also took into account the ethical issues, sometimes asking permission or making teachers aware of my intentions to capture certain activities. On their own initiative teachers would also explain to children that they needed to focus on what they were doing and ignore the camera, which helped me to minimise its impact. In addition, I used a very small palm-held camera, which also minimised its effect on participants. I felt more impact during the outdoor activities, especially during free play, as it was more of an informal setting than the classroom environment. Some of the children, for example Thabile in the Sesotho classroom, saw the camera and would approach me saying: "teacher, shoot me" (*take my photo*). On a few occasions I captured them during lunch time. This day I did not have my camera but Thabile asked me in Sesotho as I was in their company during lunch: "Teacher, are you no longer shooting us whilst we eat". These two examples proved to me that the presence of the camera cannot be disputed. So, as an ethnographer my subjectivity was evident on several instances during the photo shoot, as I would instead "catch what were the fragments of reality as seen by the camera, which was in turn guided by my subjective eye" (Rakic & Chambers, 2008, p.257).

Fetterman (2010, p.80) asserts that "ethnographers usually have a fraction of a second to reflect on a person's gesture, posture, or gait". So, the photographs provided me with the "the ability to stop time". Over time, visual and verbal patterns of communication could therefore become clear when seen repeatedly and in stopped action. For example, capturing the photograph in Figure 3.11 gave me an opportunity to engage repeatedly with what puzzled me the minute I saw it for the first time on teacher Mabotse's table. I was

surprised by the way isiZulu months had been written. Since I did not have time to interrogate the book at that moment because my focus was on other classroom activities, I later engaged thoroughly with the visual and verbal content that was in question in sections 4.3 and 5.2.3.

Figure 3.11: *Ishadi losuku lokuzalwa* - Birthday chart

Photographs offer the ethnographer a source and a form of data which is in many ways very different from other methods of data collection, and which represents reality by oral and written means. Photographs were used "to add a perspective on social life not available via other means" (Pole & Morris, 2003, p.68), prompting me to ask questions about the research participants and revealing the ways in which the participants constructed their own social realities. For example, Figure 3.9 above shows how children count by using the toilet roll holders that teacher Ratang requested they bring from their homes. Photographs can aid memory. During analysis and the writing process they provided me with details that I might not have remembered otherwise (Fetterman, 2010). For example, Figure 3.12 below represents pictures of different letters that were displayed in the Literacy Corner in the Zulu classroom. I took these photographs during the first term of school, when the class was still being monitored by Ms Moabi, before teacher Mabotse took over in March.

During the initial stage of analysis in the first term, these photographs prompted me to ask questions about the role of classroom display boards in teaching and learning in this particular school. I asked myself questions such as the following, in order to understand their construction of teaching and learning of the Grade R programme: What or who was the source of knowledge construction in the Zulu classroom? Are the letter cards displayed to decorate the wall or for learning purposes? Does the teacher engage with the displays during instruction? I therefore was curious to see how the display boards would be used during classroom instruction. I remember one instance when Ms Moabi was engaging children to tell what they saw in the picture, including this one. Her focus was not on the spelling or letter recognition. It was later during the final stage of analysis after 'letter and sound recognition' emerged as one of the themes that I linked to my findings. I found out that even if letter and sound recognition was important for the Grade R programme at Thutong, teachers did not teach this aspect of the curriculum in Isizulu or Sesotho home languages as extensively as in English.

Figure 3.12: Imfene - Monkey

3.3.4 Artefacts

According to Pole and Morris (2003), artefacts entail a wide variety of everyday objects to reveal human behaviour. They have the capacity to tell us something of those who created them. For example, at the institutional level of the school, the possession of certain types of equipment, the state of the decor and furnishings might indicate something about the availability of financial resources or about the priorities given to particular activities by those who make decisions on spending priorities. They further state that, at the level of the institution or organisation, artefacts can provide an "insight into ethos, values, priorities and identity" (Pole & Morris, 2003, p.71). The artefacts include a wide variety of material, such as children's writing samples, drawings, letter to the parents, classroom rules, and displays. For example, Figure 3.13 (below) is a poster of 'my body'.
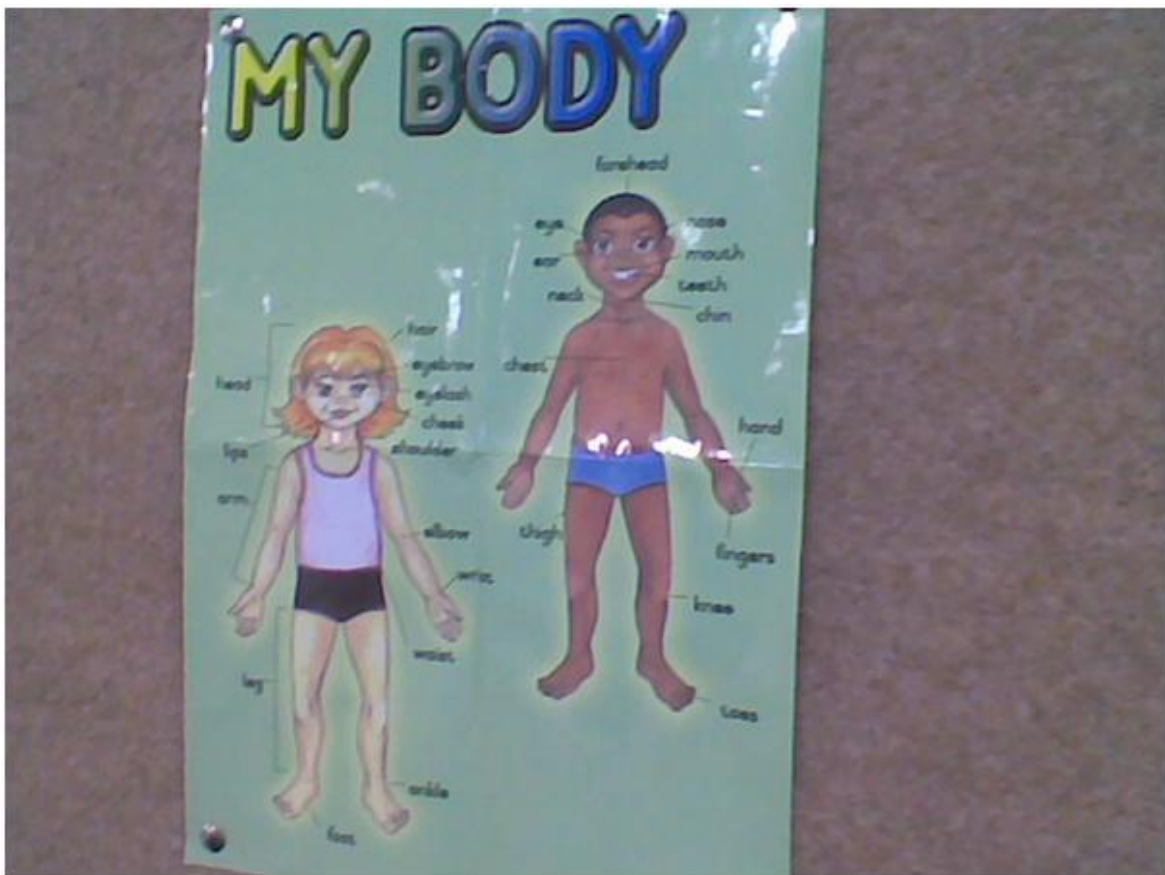
Figure 3.13: Classroom poster: My Body

I collected relevant documents on the site to understand the broad social context. Documents such as weekly preparation sheets, work schedules, report cards and teacher files were collected and analysed to discover the construction of teaching and learning of Grade R in this school (see Appendix 4).

Artefacts were used to show individual and collective identity, commitment, enthusiasm and patriotism. The picture below provides a sense of what was happening at the school during the second term (April to June). The learning and teaching content included the preparation for the FIFA World Cup, when the 'vuvuzela' instrument (Figure 3.14) became a common feature displayed inside and blown outside the classrooms.

Figure 3.14: Vuvuzela instruments designed by children

It appeared that it was just used as an instrument to celebrate the forthcoming soccer tournament during the entire second term but not beyond, and included aspects such as knowing its origin. The teachers focused on the design, that is how to make it by using the model in black (displayed on the plastic table above, Figure 3.14). They also gave some of the children an opportunity to blow this black vuvuzela during the children's football matches in the school yard.

A summary of data collection is provided in Table 3.3 (below).

Table 3.3: Summary of the collected data

1. OBSERVATIONS				
TERM 1 13.01 - 26.03	TERM 2 12.04 - 09.06	TERM 3 13.07 – 23.09	TERM 4 4.10 – 10.12	**TOTAL** **(Weeks)**
LOGBOOK NOTES				
9	8	9	3	**29**
DIARY				
9	8	8	2	**27**
Logbook notes: *What I factually saw and heard* **Diary:** *My impressions on my feelings and ideas – my reflections on what happened*				

2. INTERVIEWS
Semi – structured: 7 June: Question: Tell me about Grade R teaching = 2 Teachers (individual)
9 June: Question: How do you see play in Grade = 2 Teachers (individual)
23-25 November: Parents semi - structured interviews – 6 Households
Unstructured: Classrooms activities - Audio: conversations
Term 1 = 17 Term 2 = 18 Term = 0 Term 4 =0
Ongoing conversations or chats with both teachers and children in 4 Terms

This section focused on the research design and motivation for methodological options. In conclusion, all the methods and techniques discussed in this chapter were used together in this ethnographic research. They reinforced one another and acted to limit and constrain the data collection process and shape this ethnography.

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

This section will describe the data analysis procedures and present the preliminary results. Analysis is "the process of bringing order to the data, organizing what is there into *patterns*, *categories* and *descriptive units*, and looking for *relationships* between them" (Brewer, 2000, p.105). Data analysis is a creative and logical process of gathering and arranging data so that the analytical scheme appears obvious (Walker, Cooke & McAllister, 2008).

3.4.1 Ethnographic data analysis

Before explaining the process I followed in analysing my data I first orientate the reader to my understanding of what data analysis in ethnography entails.

Ethnographic data analysis is viewed by LeCompte and Preissle (1993, p.237) as "a staged process by which a whole phenomenon is divided into its components and then reassembled under various new rubrics". It is also important to note that data analysis is a *continuous* process, meaning that it is simultaneous with data collection. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995, p.205) refer to this as "iterative process", asserting that "in ethnography the analysis of data is not a distinct stage of the research". Furthermore, in many ways, it begins in the pre-field phase, in the formulation and clarification of research problems, and continues through to the process of writing reports, articles and books. Thus I analysed data throughout the study instead of relegating analysis to a period following data collection. Fetterman (2010, p.93) also adds that ethnographic analysis as "iterative, building ideas throughout the study". Finally, the preliminary step in the process of analysis was careful weekly reading of data, in order to become familiar with it (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995), until the last day of my fieldwork at Thutong and beyond.

I attest to Pole and Morrison's (2003, p.73) assertion that "the analysis of ethnographic data involves exciting, laborious, painstaking and complex activities that in combination, are rarely unsystematic". I was also faced with the two challenges they refer to: the epistemological and technical challenges of ethnography. The former refers to the sheer volume of data collected and produced as ethnography, mostly in textual form, whilst the

latter refers to the range of approaches available to represent the meanings and interpretations that can be applied to ethnographic analysis.

It is possible to argue that "the earliest stages of analysis come before fieldwork begins because educational ethnography often starts from particular conceptual frameworks that are then tested, refined or qualified in the field" (Pole & Morrison, 2003, p.73). However, in my case, it was a matter of exploration of teaching and learning, considering the Grade R programme. The questions presented in Chapter One under section 1.2 and which prompted the research focused the analysis.

Fundamental to this research process, and in pursuit of understanding more generally, was my conceptualisation of the nature of reality and knowledge, or my ontological and epistemological beliefs (Walker et al., 2008). As a researcher I believe in a socially and mentally constructed reality, which means that I took a more subjective approach and acknowledged my perceptions and experiences as part of the reality under study. Since my study was embedded within postmodernist ethnography I took cognisance of Brewer's (2000, p.108) following points: there is no objective reality that can be captured accurately by either "distancing the analysis from social meanings or immersing the analysis in them; there are competing versions of reality and multiple perspectives that the analysis must address; reflexivity is the critical part of the analysis". Thus, according to Brewer, analysis directs itself to the social phenomenon being analysed, but also looks *inward*. Evidence of reflexivity was provided in section 3.2.2.5 of Chapter Three.

3.4.2 Computer-assisted data analysis

The focus of analysis has been reinforced by computer-assisted qualitative data analysis and management, *Atlas.ti,* because of its ability to manage data and its capacity to assist the actual process of analysis (Pole & Morrison, 2003). My major challenge lay in the management of a vast amount of textual data, so *Atlas.ti* helped me with this process. However, I concur with Fetterman (2010) that computers still require the eyes and the ears of the ethnographer to determine what to collect and how to record it as well as how to interpret the data from a cultural perspective.

As I have indicated, the following types of data collection were employed throughout my study: participant observation, field notes, interviews, photographs and photographic data

and artefacts. I used these through daily observation in and outside the classrooms and throughout my data analysis process. How I engaged with each data set during analysis and integrated the findings in order to determine the themes is discussed extensively in the following section. There are two principal modes of working with *Atlas.ti* that I employed: the textual level and the conceptual level. The former included activities such as segmentation of data files, coding text and images (photograpgs); and writing comments or memos). In line with *Atlas.ti*, I prepared my data manually and set up my project before I began textual-level work. The conceptual level, meanwhile, focused on model-building activities such as linking codes to networks (Friese, 2004, p.25). The textual level included steps 1 to 3 of Figure 3.15, whereas the conceptual level entailed steps 4 to 6.

3.4.3 Steps of analysis
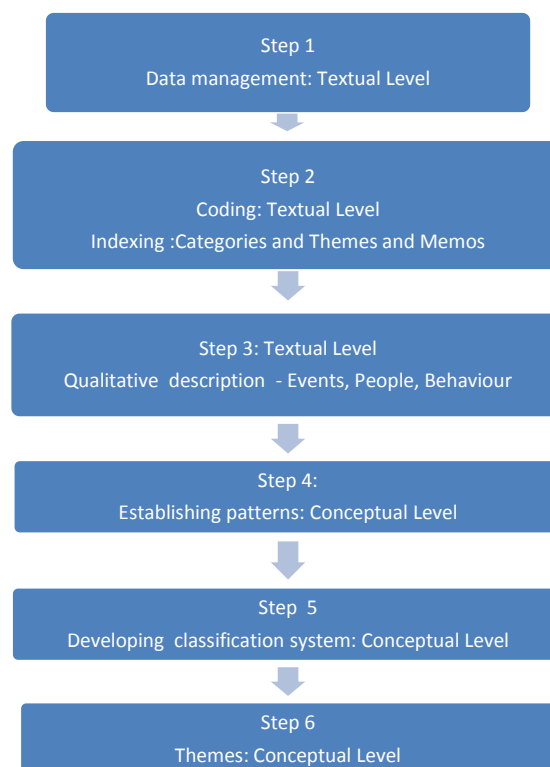
Figure 3.15: Analysis Steps

The steps were mainly taken as prescribed by Brewer (2000), but they were not necessarily followed to the letter. I followed Brewer's steps because I found them to be compatible with the computer assisted qualitative analysis *Atlas.ti* programme that I used. Their steps are compatible in the sense that they conceptualise the analysis steps in a similar way. The only difference I observed is that Brewer's steps are manual whereas Friese's steps enabled me to use the software. These steps gave me the opportunity to engage in "exhaustive and comprehensive analysis, as my analysis entailed a series of processes or steps which were time consuming and laborious" (Brewer 2000, p.109).

Step 1: **Data Management (organising the data into manageable units):**

All analysis began with data management, organising it into manageable units so that it did not appear as an "amorphous mass" (Brewer, 2000, p.110). This began with "index coding", which indexes units for organising and retrieving segments. I read and reread the data in order to code or index it. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995, p.205) refer to this process as "generating concepts", which helped me to make sense of what was going on in the scenes documented by the data. I began by identifying the phrases in the field notes and different data sets that represented the idea that I was pursuing. To get away from thinking that I was imposing my ideas I took an 'emic' approach that used the teachers' and children's language to express the experience. I then took an 'etic' approach to start with the classification of data (Merz, 2002, p.147). An example, is shown in the following extract from my diary (reflective journal). From the etic point of view I then concluded that this could be classified under what I call the 'Teaching and Learning cluster' as the aspect of play has an important role in teaching and learning.

I generated the following classified information (clustered data) based on my classroom observations and as I engaged with field notes: Learning Content; Teaching and Learning; Language Teaching and Development; Numeracy Teaching and Development; Play; Health and Nutrition; Learning Barriers and Support; and Critical Incidents, such as absenteeism or teachers' industrial action, for all the data sets. This approach helped me to cluster or classify my data using the same concepts as the *preliminary* topics. The clustered data emanated from the research question of which the main issue was to elicit the story of Thutong Primary School considering the Grade R programme in 2010, from my view as educational psychologist.

After I arranged all of my field notes, interviews, samples of the teaching and learning of the Grade R programme in chronological order and into typed logbook notes and diary, I used the computer cut and paste method to put under the relevant topic what I considered as falling under the clustered or classified data. The following extract from the *field notes* was classified under **Learning Content** topic:

Teacher Ratang changed the subject and now they are learning about the soap, comb, brush (teeth) and so on. Actually she had brought the samples and displayed them on the table. After that, she divides the children into four groups of 5 or 6 each and gave them the following tasks:

> ➢ 1. Draw things that keep your body clean

> ➢ 2. They were bathing the baby (doll) – they had to help each other

> ➢ 3. Building puzzle of 'My body'

> ➢ 4. They were in a memory corner. The teacher was asking them about the words they had already learnt such as, sedikadikwe, khutlo-tharo, khutlo-nne (circle, triangle, square).

Ratang was monitoring four groups at the time. At about 9h55 (almost 1 hour) she combined group 1 and 3 and continued with body parts lesson. These two groups had successfully completed their previous tasks. They continued with counting 1-10 in English then translate to Sesotho from 'nngwe–leshome. Ratang helps them by showing the chart on the wall. They also use their shoes to count to ten, as well as the head count. Group 2 and 4 were still busy with their first activities as they were not yet finished. The teacher keeps going back to them and helps them. At 10h45: Ratang and Mrs Moabi are outside with the children and are starting some activities. Children are standing in two rows. The instructions are in Sesotho and isiZulu. The children are taught isiZulu game 'Sawubona Madlamini'. They recite Sesotho rhyme, 'Hlogo magetla….' And there after translates to English 'Head, shoulder'. At 11h20, they are back in the classroom. They start with 'Butterfly exercise'. They sing 'a, b, c, d…...' Then followed 'Twinkle-Twinkle Little Star'. Lastly they sing 'My name is ……what's your name'? At about 12h40 the teacher is telling them Sotho folktales and they participate by answering questions and helping her to relate the stories that they

know. The last activity is skipping and they take turns (Log 17/02/10).

Extract 3.3: Learning content

To sum up, I sifted through each data set and sorted the data according to clusters, as shown by the above example. Index coding was carried out in conjunction with content analysis. I analysed written and electronic data in much the same way I analysed the observed behaviour, as shown by the example in Figure 3.16 below:
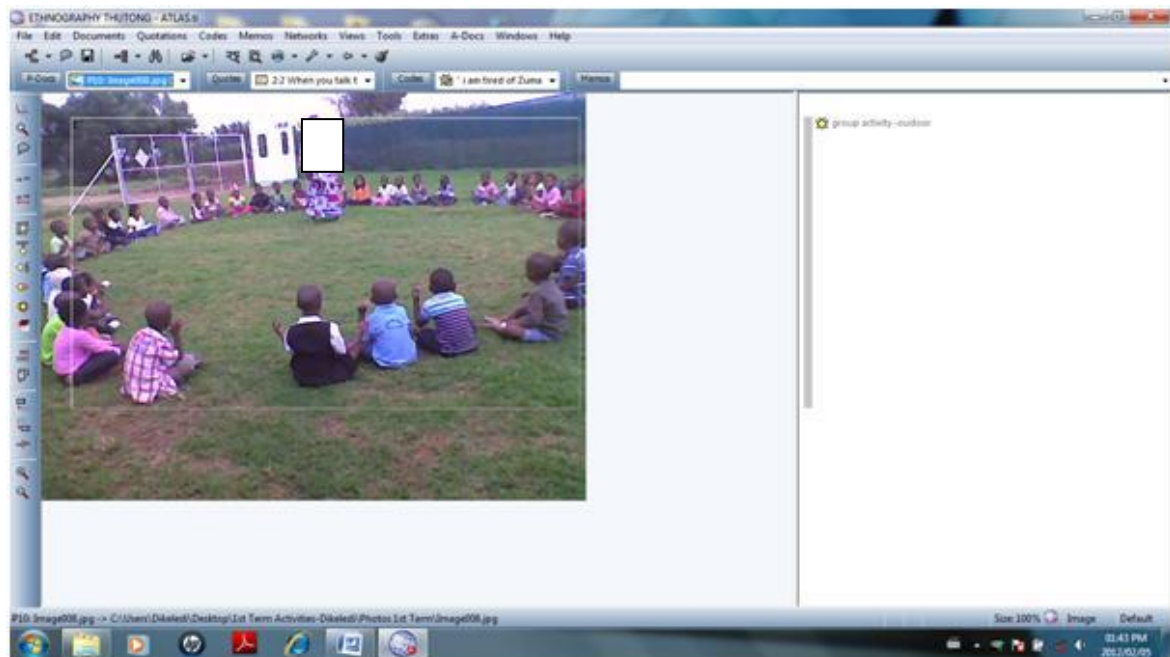
Figure 3.16: Analysis of electronic data

I triangulated information within the documents to test for internal consistency. My attempt was to discover patterns within the text and seek key events recorded and "memorialized in words" (Fetterman, 2010, p.104).

The study of teaching and learning of the first Grade R programme in Thutong Primary School produced volumes of written records to review, such as: marks schedules, teacher files, administrative guides, and report cards. Thus, internal documents received special scrutiny to determine whether they were internally consistent with the Grade R programme according to teachers' conceptualisation of Grade R teaching and learning, as informed by informal and semi-structured interviews as well as my observations. The review revealed significant patterns. For example, it made sense after scrutinising teachers' lesson preparation files as to why English letters q, r, f, c, were taught in the two classrooms. It was part of the stipulated outcomes in line with the DoE's Grade R curriculum. However,

prior to the scrutiny I repeatedly asked myself why the two teachers had been focusing on these letters or sounds in particular, until I received an answer.

Step 2: Coding:

- **Codes**

Coding entailed attaching key words or tags to segments of text (Figures 3.16 and 3.17) and making them available for inspection (Pole & Morrison, 2003). Codes capture meaning in the data and are typically short pieces of text referencing other pieces of text, graphical, audio, or video data. They are used as "classification devices at different levels of abstraction" in order to create sets of related information units for the purpose of comparison (Friese, 2004, p.32).

To organise my data into meaningful chunks I specifically followed *open coding* as applied in the *Atlas.ti* programme, based on the six units (clustered data) referred to under Step 1 of the analysis (section 3.4.3). Babbie (2005, p.395) refers to open coding as the part of analysis that pertains specifically to "the naming and categorizing of phenomena through close examination of data". I read through the data and asked myself what it was that teachers, children, parents and others in the field were saying and doing pertaining to the story of a developing black urban school's Grade R programme in 2010, from my view as educational psychologist and their experiences of the Grade R development.

Below are the examples of open codes I created.
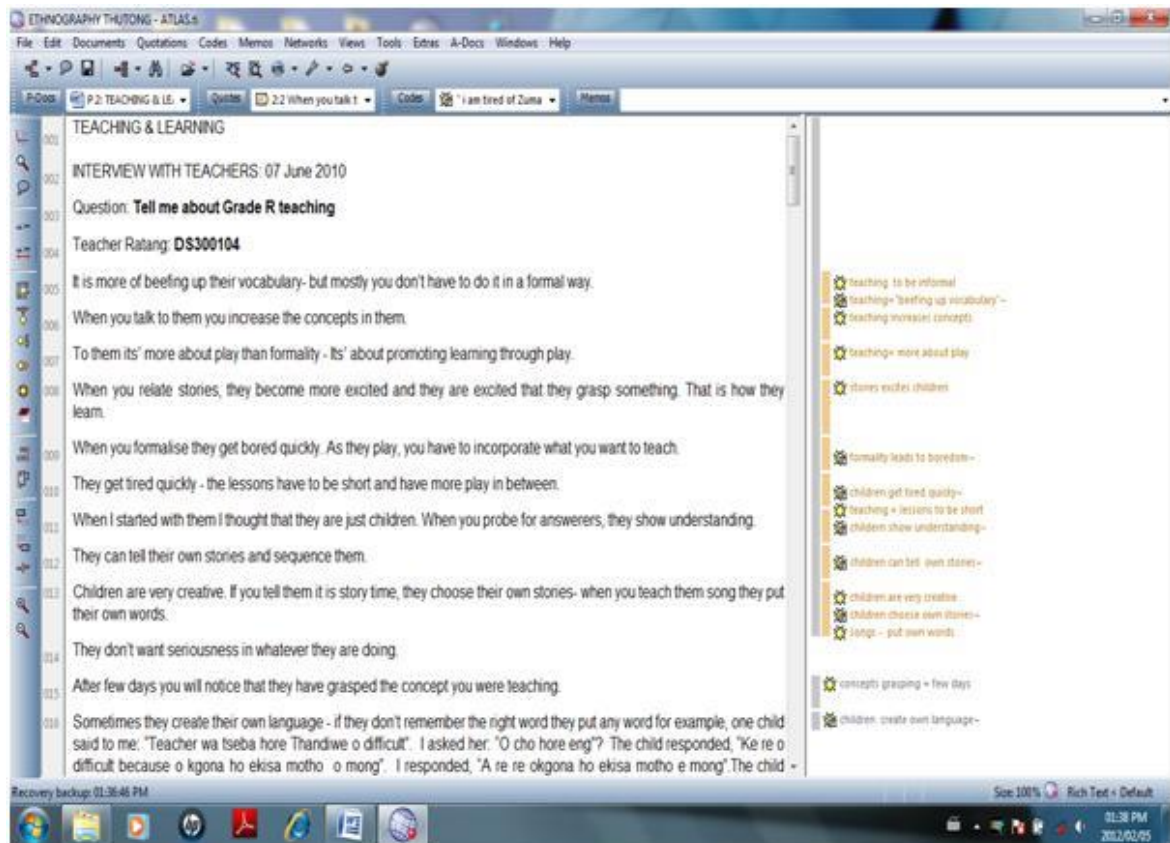
Figure 3.17: Open codes

- **Memos**

Memoing refers to writing reflective commentaries on some aspects of the data for deeper analysis (Pole & Morrison, 2003). Memos captured my thoughts regarding the texts and were "important devices for creating theory" (Friese, 2004, p.32). Creating memos or comments was an important part of the analysis as these accompanied codes. They also assisted in the reflective process in this study.

Example of a comment I created in *Atlas.ti* follows:
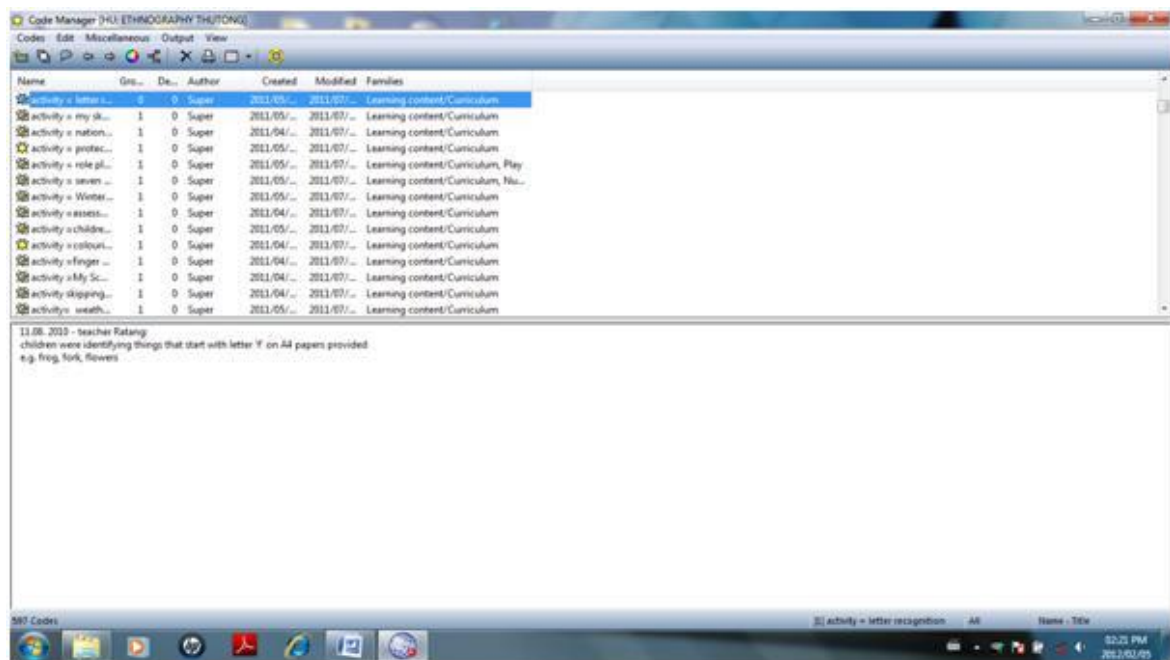
Figure 3.18: A comment created

OR

CO: English for careers {1-0}
I noticed that in both classrooms the names of jobs/careers/occupations were not translated into home language. It was strictly Sotho and Zulu lessons but both teachers named the jobs in English and also allowed children to do likewise, for example, one child said, "*mina ngifuna ukuba librarian*" (I want to be a librarian) or in a case of a teacher, "*Motho ona ke librarian*" (This person is a librarian). The only word or name that I heard being translated was isiZulu word for aeroplane - "*indiza'mshini*". I wondered what could be the reasons for the two teachers not to name careers in home languages.

- **Categories**

Knowledge and meaning of all kinds are produced, understood, and communicated through categories (Bergman & Coxon, 2005). According to Brunner, Goodnow and Austin (in Dye et. al., 2000, p.2) to categorise is "to render discriminately different things equivalent, to group the objects and events and people around us into classes, and to respond to them in terms of their class membership rather than their uniqueness". Categorising enabled me to reduce the complexity of the environment, and became the basis for the organisation and conceptualisation of data. Bergman and Coxon (2005, p.8) assert that categories are produced by "the interpretation of the salient features of the things or events and pre-existing interpretations that set conditions and limitations for subsequent interpretations of certain features of things and events". In addition, categorisation is a function of how meaning is constructed and thus related to, inter alia, sociocultural norms, values, customs, ideology and practices.

In line with *Atlas.ti* software, categories are referred to as 'families', and are a way of forming clusters of primary document, codes, and memos for easier handling of groups of codes, memos, and primary documents (Friese, 2004, p.33). Data linking is about connecting relevant data segments and forming categories, clusters or networks of information (Pole & Morrison, 2003, p.99).

Below is an example of a category (family) I created:

Code Family: Health and Nutrition

_____

HU: ETHNOGRAPHY THUTONG
File: [C:\Users\Dikeledi\Documents\Scientific
Software\ATLASti\TextBank\ETHNOGRAPHY THUTONG.hpr6]
Edited by: Super
Date/Time: 2011/07/24 10:27:40 PM

_____

Created: 2011/07/08 04:22:56 PM (Super)
Codes (24):   [carpet = health challenge] [children prayed for food] [drawing - what keeps body clean] [drawing and colouring fruit] [group=bathing a doll] [hygiene = cleaning of hands] [lunch = anything] [lunch = bringing own food] [lunch = challenge for some] [lunch = no restrictions] [lunch = own provision] [lunch = sharing food] [lunch = unbalanced] [lunch = unbalanced diet] [lunch =various food groups] [lunch = sharing food] [rash - body] [rash on the face] [ringworms] [sick notes] [sickness led to death] [sickness = absenteeism] [sinus] [untidy-running noses]
Quotation(s): 21

_____

P 1: LEARNING CONTENT.docx - 1:20 [They were bathing the baby (do..] (22:22) (Super)
Codes: [group=bathing a doll - Families (2): Group activity, Health and Nutrition]
No memos

 They were bathing the baby (doll) - they had to help each other

P 1: LEARNING CONTENT.docx - 1:183 [Teacher R shows me the drawing…] (460:460) (Super)
Codes: [drawing and colouring fruit - Families (2): Health and Nutrition, Learning content/Curriculum]
No memos

An overview of all the preliminary categories and sub-categories is provided below in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4: Preliminary categories and sub-categories

Category	Sub-category
Learning content-Curriculum	Learning content
	Implicit curriculum
Language teaching and development	Collaborative teaching and Group activity
	Not tightened muscles
	Tracking learner progress
Rhymes	We underestimate the Grade R level of thinking
Stories and storytelling	Rhymes; Stories; Code switching; Translation
	Rote learning and Entertainment
	Circle time for interactional skills
	Language acquisition
	Cultural heritage
	Auditory memory
	Thinking
	Props
	Rote learning and Retelling
	Performance and Role play
Language code switching	Code switching versus Translation
	Code switching and Multiple languages
	Compensatory strategy
Language Translation	Translation through artefacts
	Borrowing from Afrikaans and English languages
Multilingualism and Bilingualism	Combined classes
English sound and letter recognition	Perceptual development and letter recognition
Numeracy teaching and learning	Manipulative tools
Play in language acquisition and	Benchmarks of 5 and 10

development	Multiple operations
Learning barriers and support	Sensory integration and Bodily engagement
	Perceptual development
	Objects and Visual integration
	Rote learning and Revision
	Life world experiences
	Grade R learning
	Structured Group play
	Free play
	Outdoor play
	Gendered play
	Indigenous games
	Puppet excited children
	Language acquisition
	Childhood development: emotional; social; physical; moral.
	Language barrier
	Writing, Spelling and Speech difficulties
	Absenteeism
	It is not for us to identify
Health and Nutrition of Grade R children	Runny nose; Ringworms
	Anything goes
	Prayer
	Value of sharing
Critical incidents	Registration; Absenteeism; Industrial action; FIFA World Cup; Birthday; Human Rights day; Parents meeting

Step 3: **Qualitative description (identifying the key events, people, behaviour, providing vignettes and appropriate forms of counting):**

Figure 3.19: Thutong key events or critical incidents during the year 2010

I used critical incidents or key events to analyse the culture of Thutong as shown in Figure 3.19 (above). I picked out these key or focal events for the participants in Thutong as another focus for the qualitative description. For example, the field notes Extract 3.4 (Birthday Celebration) below was used by teacher Ratang in the Sesotho classroom as part of teaching and learning. A full extract and the subsequent discussion including other events are provided in field notes Extract 4.41 and section 5.3.

…Teacher: *Ra re Osiame o na le dilemo tse kae* (We say Osiame is how old)?

Children: 6

Teacher: *Osiame, e re today I am 6 years old* (Osiame say today I am 6 years old).

Teacher tells the whole class to say the same

Children (group): Osiame today you are 6 years old.

Teacher: *So, Osiame ka jeko o na le dilemo tse tshelela. A re e bone tshelela ka menwana ya hao. Re re happy birthday Osiame. Ke maong chomi ya Osiame* (So, Osiame today you are 6 years old. Let us see six with your fingers. Who is your friend)?

Children (group): *Ke nna* (It's me).

Teacher: *Osiame o supa two boys - Legae and Kagiso. Ke batla o mo lakaletse mahlohonolo. O re ke ho lakaletsa mahlohonolo ka letsatsi la hao la matswalo. Re mo*

opella eng? Ke mang a tlo re ntshetsang yona (Osiame you point two boys, Legae and Kagiso? I want you to wish him the blessings on his birthday. What do we sing for him? Who will start the song?)….. (Log 17/8/10)

Extract 3.4: Birth celebration

Step 4: Establishing patterns in the data (looking for recurring themes, relationships between the data):

- **Patterns**

Observation of teaching and learning of the Grade R programme in Thutong Primary School revealed several patterns. Analysis in this study entailed searching for patterns within the data and explaining the relationships between segments of data (Brewer, 2000). Fetterman (2010, p.97) describes this step as "searching for patterns of thought and action repeated in various situations and with various players, comparing, contrasting, and sorting gross categories and minutiae until a discernible thought or behaviour becomes identifiable". A theme finally emerges and consists of a collection of such matches between the model (abstracted from reality) and the ongoing observed reality.

Since this study was situated within postmodern ethnography there were several competing patterns of the same thing, so that they had to be compared and perhaps placed within a broader matrix of an overarching pattern (Brewer, 2000). Any cultural group's patterns of thought and behaviour are interwoven strands. As soon as the ethnographer finishes analysing and identifying one pattern another emerges for analysis and identification. From these patterns came the classification system that I used to conceptualise.

By assessing the patterning of social events under different circumstances I could test the scope and strength of the *relationships* posited by a theory (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). The process of identifying and matching was facilitated through the use of *Atlas.ti*. A computer screen snapshot of the results of *Atlas.ti* data pertaining to numeracy teaching of the Grade R programme is shown in Figure 3.20. This software helped me manage a large database with visual clarity and to track the categories that emerged during this phase and throughout the project (Fetterman, 2010).
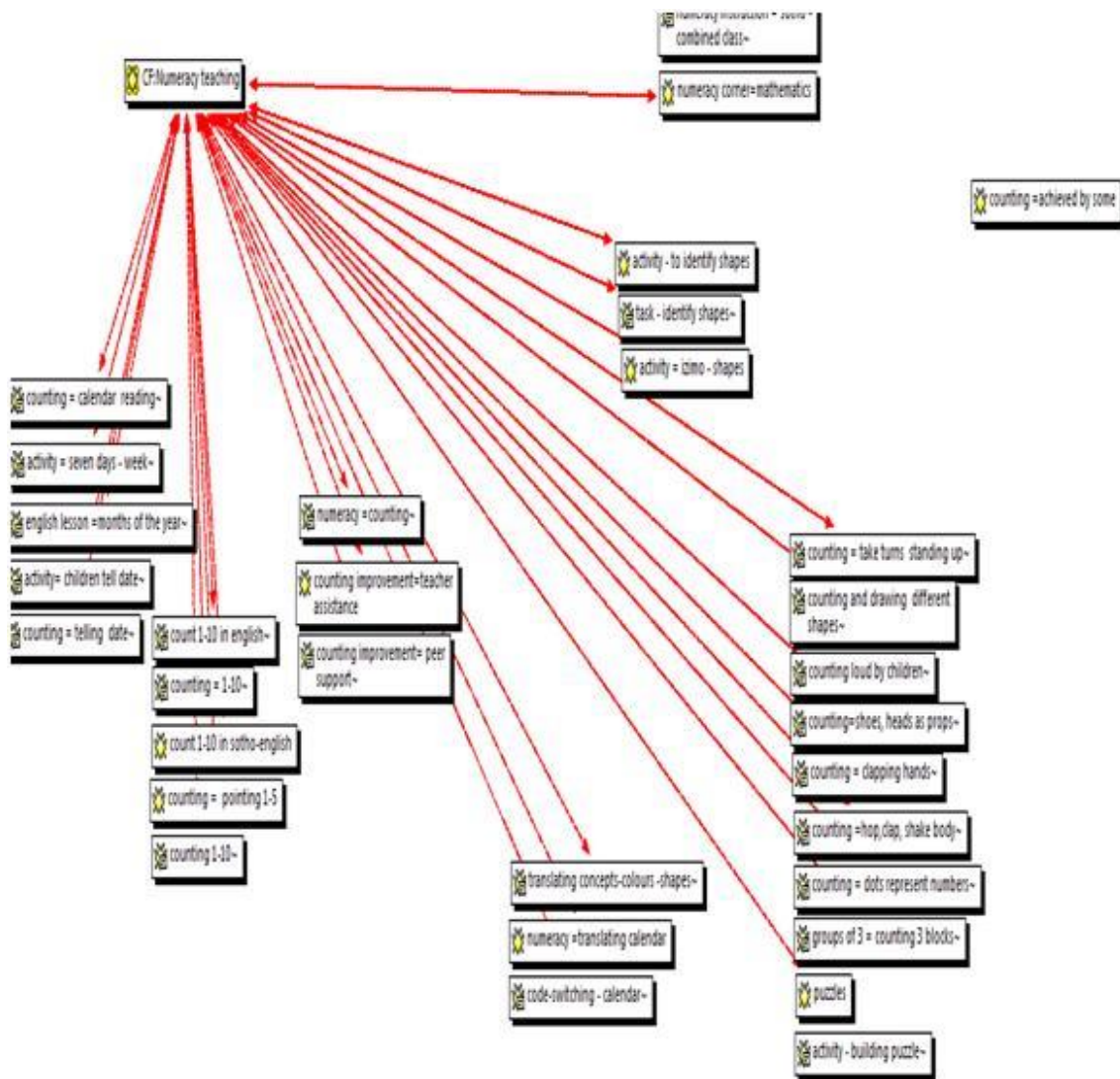
Figure 3.20: Numeracy teaching as an example of a category

Step 5: Developing a classification system of 'open codes' (looking for *typologies*, taxonomies and classification schemata which order and explain the data):

From the patterns emerged the classification system to conceptualise. Brewer (2000, p.114) asserts that "the development of typologies and taxonomies is a more common result of ethnographic data analysis than theory generation". Within taxonomies, sub-groups are delineated within a general category or different categories are related under a general classification schema. *Atlas.ti* Network Views allowed me to conceptualise the structure by connecting sets of similar elements together (Friese, 2004), as shown in example below in Figure 3.21 and Network View of Critical incidents below in Table 3.5.
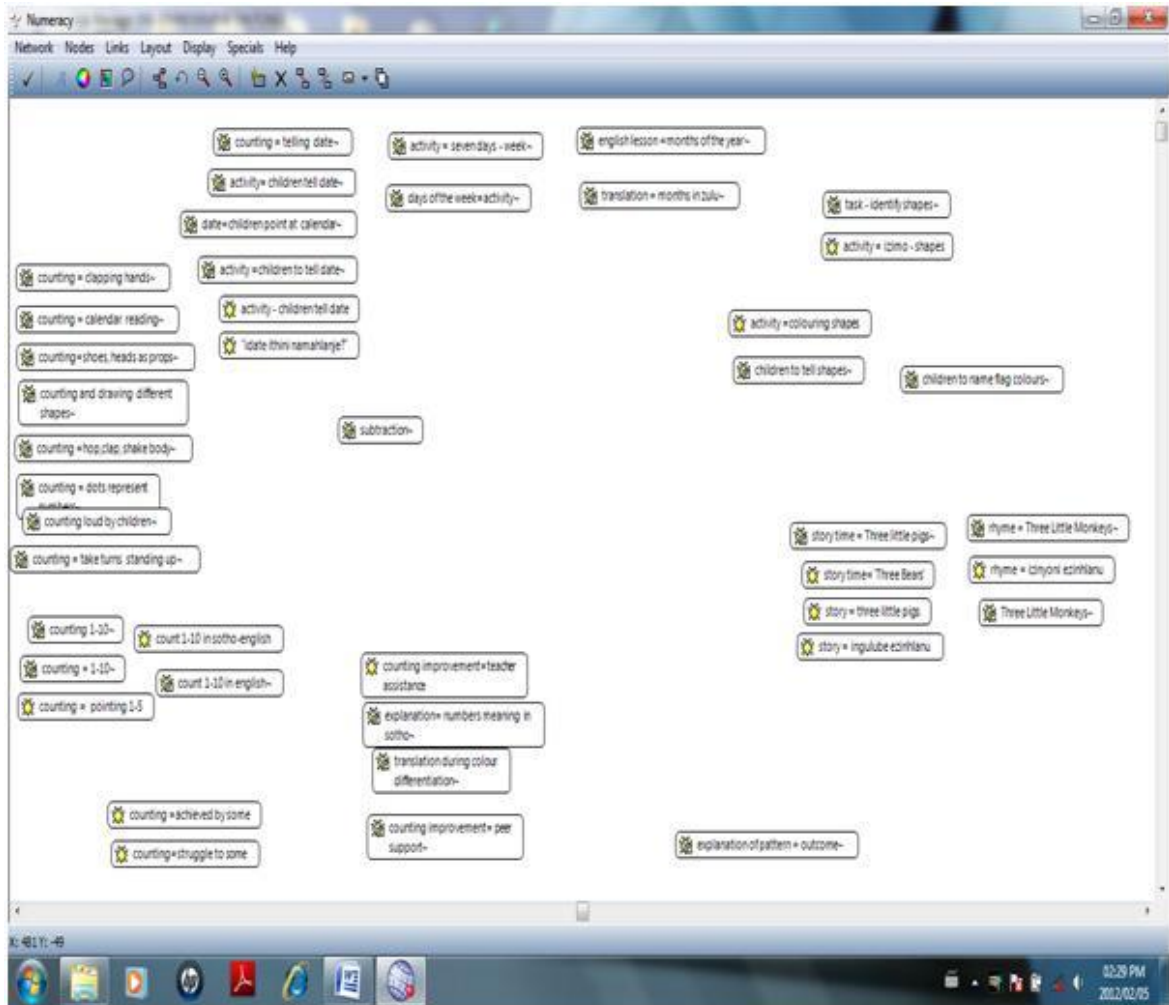
Figure 3.21: Connection of sets of similar elements

Table 3.5: Network View of Critical incidents
Network View: Critical incidents

Created by: Super 2011-07-11T12:15:22

_____

Nodes count: 28

Codes (28):

activity - drawing birthday cake {1-0}~

celebrating birthday = learning opportunity {1-0}~

celebration = birthday {1-0}~

celebration of birthdays {1-0}

Desire = high absenteeism {1-0}

Goodwill = "he has to go to grade 1" {1-0}~

Goodwill =wrong placement in Grade R {1-0}~

holiday May Day = president speech {1-0}~

parents addressed by IDSO {1-0}~

parents meeting {1-0}~

parents meeting = school rules {1-0}~

registration = 36 Zulu {0-0}

registration = 20 Sotho {1-0}~

registration = 20 Sotho learners {0-0}

registration = 3 coloureds {1-0}~

registration = 36 Zulu {1-0}

registration = language problem {1-0}~

registration = Sotho and Zulu {1-0}~

registration =language challenges {1-0}~

registration =placement problem {1-0}~

registration continuing =February {1-0}~

registration forms bungle {1-0}~

registration process ongoing {0-0}

registration process ongoing {1-0}~

registration process explained {1-0}~

school rules explained to parents {0-0}

sickness = absenteeism {3-0}~

soccer tournament = guided activity {1-0}

Step 6: **Themes:**

The most important step in this process was chunking the information into logical themes based on the reoccurrence of repetitive information (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). According to Bernard and Ryan (2010, p.54), in every culture there are a limited number of dynamic affirmations, called *themes*, which control behaviour or stimulate activity. They assert that in 1945 an anthropologist, Morris Opler, established three principles for analysing themes: **First,** themes are only visible (and thus discoverable) through the manifestation of expressions in data. **Second,** some expressions of a theme are obvious and culturally agreed on, but others are subtler, symbolic, and even idiosyncratic. **Third,** cultural systems comprise sets of interrelated themes. They add that the importance of any theme, according to Opler, is related to: how often it appears; how pervasive it is across different types of cultural ideas and practices; how people react when the theme is violated; and the degree to which the force and variety of a theme's expression are controlled by specific contexts. The categories allowed me to translate text by attributing a *class or theme* to segments based on their content, as shown in the diagram below:
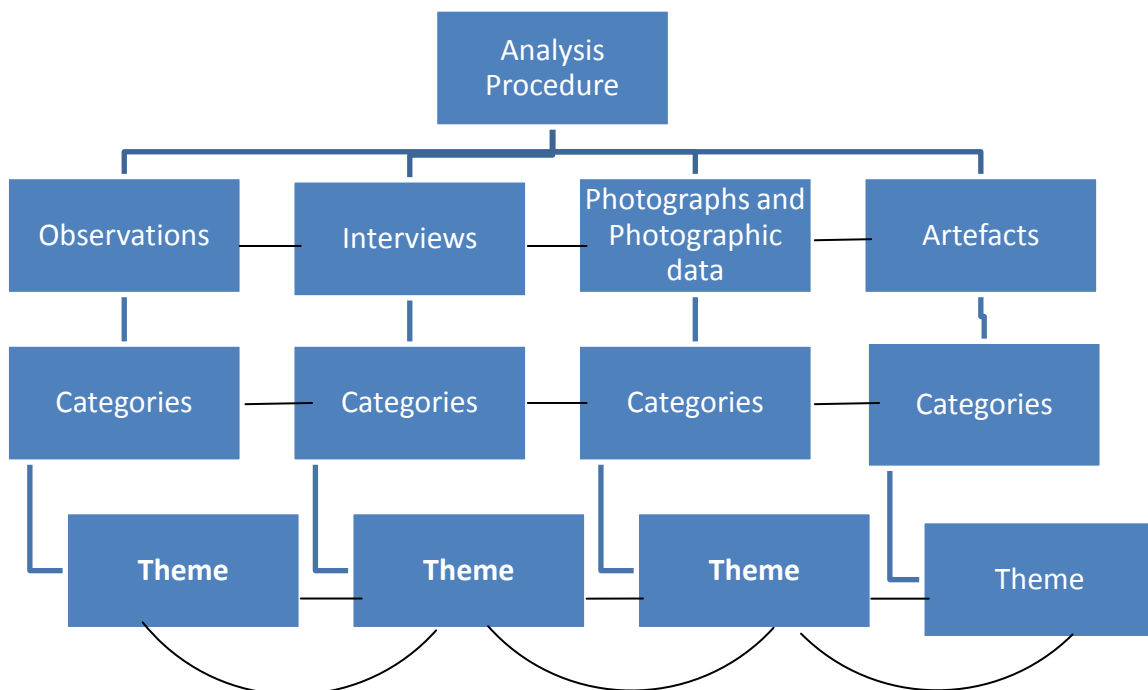
Figure 3.22: Diagrammatic presentation of the analysis procedure

Themes came both from data (an inductive approach) and from my theoretical understanding of a phenomenon I was studying (a priori, or deductive approach). A "priori

themes" also came from professional definitions found in literature reviews; from local, common sense constructs; and from my values, theoretical orientations, and personal experiences (Bernard & Ryan, 2010, p.56). African proverbs or quotes were also used as headings for themes as well as in vivo quotes from the data.

I also identified some strong metaphors in the data when looking for themes (Bernard & Ryan, 2010), which also involved going through texts and marking them up. According to Byrne, Jolliffe and Mabaso (2006, p.2), metaphors can be seen as first, "a symbol, a figure of speech, a simile, an image or an allegory". Second, they are also a way of knowing "the principle ways in which people endow experience with meaning". Furthermore, metaphors are used in everyday life to facilitate meaning. They help make sense of situations, and in understanding new concepts or existing situations.

In an attempt to grasp the story of a developing school in a black urban community, I searched for key words, phrases and themes that I observed as accurately describing the teaching and learning of the Grade R programme in 2010. I concur with Bernard and Ryan (2010, p.57) that "people often represent their *thoughts, behaviours*, and *experiences* with metaphors". For example, the underlying preliminary metaphor for the topic or classified data, of Teaching and Learning of the Grade R children is "They keep you on [your] toes" according to teacher Ratang (Int. 9/6/10). According to my understanding, this metaphor means that teaching Grade R learners is a very challenging and demanding task. Thus, analysis then became the search for metaphors in rhetoric and deducing the schemas, or broad, underlying themes that might produce those metaphors (Bernard & Ryan, 2010).

Table 3.6 (below) is an example of how I analysed everything mentioned based on Figure 3.21 (above). Different colours were allocated to data sets, for example, blue for observations, brown for interviews, green for artefacts, and yellow for documents.

Table 3.6: A Sample of Formation of the Analysis Process

DATA SETS	Codes	Categories	Themes	Sub-themes
Observations	[story ='Ginger Bread Man'] [story = performance by children] [story = children to retell] [story = Cinderella translated in Zulu] [story = *Ingulube*] [story = *ingulube ezinhlanu*] [story = telling own story] [story = three little	**Stories**	Thutong teachers as *griots*	Story history and meaning

	pigs] [story content grasped by children] [story drawing by children][story pictures=pasted on the wall] [story telling - Sotho=children participates] [story telling = children take turns] [story telling = three languages] [story telling = Zulu story] [story telling=children participating] [story time- children retelling] [story time = Three little pigs] [story time='Three Bears']	Identification through stories
		Context and Culture
	[teacher Ratang reads story] [Three Little Monkeys]	Story tools usage
Interviews	[stories = enjoyed by children] [stories excites children]	
Photographs and Photographic data	[Storybook = grade 2]	
	[storybook = Three Little Pigs]	
	[storybook very small]	
	[Story performance -Three Bear story] [performance during graduation]	
	[Story performance -Three Little Bears] [story performance during parents meeting]	
	[story time]	
	[story time = group activity]	
	[storytelling time - children pay attention]	
Artefacts	[story pictures = pasted on the wall]	
	[Storybook Three Little Pigs][Storybook Grade 2]	
	Documents:	
	Term 1 Schedule: Know first letter of own name; Recognise own name; **Retell told story**	

Documents
etc.

In summary, "the *patterns, themes*, and *categories* of analysis emerged out of the data rather than being imposed on it prior to data collection and analysis" (Patton, in Dye et al., 2000, p.3). Inferences from the data, research question, theoretical issues, imagination, intuition and previous knowledge were particularly useful to the process of category generation.

Interpretation involved attaching meaning and significance to the analysis, explaining the patterns, categories and relationships (Brewer, 2000). I aligned myself with the postmodern argument that there is no single truth, but rather a range of polyvocal stories told in and about educational settings, although Pole and Morris (2003, p.101) argue that "all ethnographers are engaged in one of more readings of truths that are derived from analysis".

Since my intent was to find meaning, I grappled with questioning myself on whether I had found the *right* meanings. *Atlas.ti* computer software assisted me in dealing with this by addressing a range of questions as I engaged with the data, for example, using data patterning, thematising and clustering to answer the question, what goes with what (Pole & Morris, 2003).

Thus, this section focused on an analysis process of the transcripts of data collected through participant observation, interviews, photographs and photographic data, and artefacts.

3.4.4   Trustworthiness

Since research findings should be as trustworthy as possible, this study was evaluated in relation to the procedures used to generate the findings. Trustworthiness refers to the degree to which people can depend on and trust given research findings (Shank, 2006). The trustworthiness of the data was verified by means of maintaining credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability. These included acknowledging my personal biases and beliefs in the context of the research (O' Conner & Geiger, 2009) and constant supervision. Lastly, the teachers reviewed the results and confirmed the summary in relation to the accuracy of the depiction of the experience shared during the data collection process.

3.4.4.1 Credibility

Credibility was established through maintaining an extended contact with the respondents, in order to get to really know them and how they acted. Credibility involves "an assessment of whether any truth claim is likely to be accurate given the nature of the phenomenon", the circumstances of the research and the characteristics of the researcher (Brewer, 2000, p.189). In addition, the computer-aided analysis allowed my findings to become credible (Pole & Morris, 2003). In assessing credibility I took into account the process by which the evidential claims had been produced. The two most substantial types of evidence were extracts from observational reports and extracts from participants' accounts (Hammersley, 1998).

3.4.4.2 Dependability

Dependability is another aspect of trustworthiness. According to Babbie (2007), reliability is a matter of dependability. According to Lincon and Guba (in Graneheim & Lundman, 2004, p.110), dependability "seeks means for taking into account both factors of instability and factors of phenomenal or design induced changes". Thus, Graneheim and Lundman (2004) refer to dependability as the degree to which data changes over time and alterations made in the researcher's decisions during the analysis process. They further caution that when data is extensive and the collection extends over time, there is a risk of inconsistency. I acknowledge that this can pose problems of dependability, however, I was conscious of this issue and addressed it through reflexivity and constant supervision. I sorted out my own biases and points of view. In accord with Babbie's (2007, p.314) "communal nature of science", I was guided by my supervisor in that regard.

3.4.4.3 Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of a given study can be transferred to a different setting, or used with a different population (Shank, 2006). To facilitate transferability, I gave a clear and distinct description of culture and context, selection and characteristics of participants, data collection and process of analysis. Furthermore, a rich

and vigorous presentation of the findings together with appropriate quotations also enhanced transferability in this study (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004).

3.4.4.4 Confirmability

Confirmability deals with the details of the methodologies used. It was determined through a methodological audit trail, which addresses such issues as the type and nature of the raw data, how the data was analysed, and how categories and themes were formed (Shank, 2006). As a researcher, I became the instrument of data collection and analysis, and measures to increase the research's credibility, transferability and confirmability of this ethnographic study were of paramount importance to me during data analysis.

3.4.4.5 Triangulation

According to Fetterman (2010, p.94), triangulation is the heart of *ethnographic validity*, in which the ethnographer compares information sources "to test the quality of the information (and the person sharing it) to understand more completely the part an actor plays in the social drama", and ultimately to put the whole situation into perspective. The triangulation was adhered to by merging all forms of data in order to improve credibility (Figure 3.22). Triangulation of the methods explained in Chapter Three enhanced trustworthiness. *Atlas.ti* software provided a systematic form of triangulation, which helped provide direct access to the raw data in context. I noted the frequency of the item almost instantly.

3.4.4.6 Crystallisation

Crystallisation is typically the result of "a convergence of similarities that spontaneously strike the ethnographer as relevant or important to the study" (Fetterman, 2010, p.109). I crystallised my thoughts at various stages throughout ethnographic endeavour. During the data analysis phase I explored different pieces of data, applying different methods. This was part of a crystallisation process which included multiple perspectives in a way that was different from the idea of triangulation. This crystallisation of perspectives was meant

to provide different ways of seeing and understanding the data. The following "metaphor of shining a light on an object" (Merz, 2002, p.145) assisted me in a crystallisation process:

> By using different kinds of lights, it may be possible to highlight different aspects of the object so that different kinds of detail could be seen… when a light is shown on one aspect of an object, you see more detail in that one highlighted area. Similarly, when the light is moved around the object, you see different things; however, it is still the same object that is being viewed. With each viewing, you understand the object differently because of what is highlighted, rather than strictly confirming that it is the same object.

Supervision and reflection assisted in this process. During supervision meetings I repeatedly discussed codes, categories, and themes with my supervisor by discussing hard copies created through data patterning, thematising and clustering from *Atlas.ti*. In the case of reflection I frequently asked myself, in line with Merz's (2002) metaphor, why my focus was on a particular aspect. For example, I saw more detail in one highlighted area of *letter recognition* when a light was shone on it. However, when I moved around the letter recognition aspect I saw different things, for example, sound recognition, English letter recognition, perceptual development, language acquisition, and second language learning, yet it was still the same object being viewed. Thus, with each viewing I understood letter recognition differently, because of what was highlighted rather than merely confirming that it was the same object, letter recognition.

In summary, I analysed field notes, interviews, photographs and photographic data, and artefacts of teaching and learning of the Grade R programme at this particular school. The process of data analysis described in section 3.4 was followed throughout. After the process of analysis had been finalised it became apparent that the thirteen preliminary categories and their sub-categories (Table 3.4), that were previously alluded to in section 3.4.3 were mutually exclusive. These categories were later collapsed into each other to form an overarching theme and the ten sub-themes that are discussed in Chapter Five. Thus, these themes were collapsed to form one final distinctive theme, which has subsequently emanated as an empirical finding of this research.

3.4.5   Compliance with ethical standards

The research was conducted with a vulnerable population, children in particular, which is why I paid specific attention to ethics in this study. More so, it is typical of research in general. Ethnographers are unique in a sharing the lives of the people they study, which means I did not work in a vacuum but with people. I agree with Fetterman (2010, p.133) that I "pried into their innermost secrets, sacred rites, achievements and failures". Thus, in pursuing this ethnography I had to subscribe to a code of ethics that preserves the participants' rights, facilitates communication in the field, and leaves room for further research.

Most of the ethical issues I discuss apply to social research generally, but the particular characteristics of ethnography give them a distinctive accent (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). The standard of behaviour to which I adhered included respect for human dignity, aspects of privacy and confidentiality, and avoidance of deception (Brewer, 2000). I align myself with Fetterman (2010), when he asserts that deception is not useful in the long-term relationships that fieldwork requires.

3.4.5.1 Permission to conduct research at Thutong site

Permission to conduct research in the school was obtained from the DoE, parents and teachers. In a parents' meeting, parents were also informed prior to enrolling their children of the research focus of the school. They were given the option not to enrol their children in the school, but those who did were required to sign a letter of agreement in terms of research conducted there. The teachers who were appointed were also informed in advance that research would be conducted at the school. Potential benefit of all the research conducted at the school is mainly the optimal support for the school community.

3.4.5.2 Informed consent

According to Pole and Morrison (2003, p.147), "respect for personhood" in educational ethnography is often associated with the importance of informed consent. The participants were informed about the research in a comprehensive and accurate way, and gave their consent. Since the children were also the participants, permission was obtained from their

parents through the school. To adhere to this principle in the context of ethnographic work, I applied overt participant observation, that is I carried out this research with the participants being aware that research was taking place (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995).

3.4.5.3 Avoiding harm

According to Babbie (2007), the fundamental ethical rule of social research is that it must bring no harm to research subjects. While ethnographic research rarely involves serious damage it can sometimes have important consequences, both for the participants and for others, arising out of the actual process of conducting the research and/or through publication of the findings (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p.268). Therfore, I carefully considered the likely effects of this study on teachers, children and the community involved at Thutong. I took many precautions to protect the participants (Fettterman, 1998), by attending to misperceptions, misunderstandings, and factual inaccuracies. My intention to publish this ethnographic account was not to tarnish public reputations of individuals or their material circumstances. I was aware that publicity can damage the reputations of individuals, organisations, and location, as well as hurting the feelings of those involved. The following statement by Pole and Morisson (2003, p.150) was also applicable and relevant to Thutong:

> Meanwhile, while what counts as 'public or private in educational settings is open to a variety of interpretations, for example, children's private spaces have been more likely to be seen as legitimate targets for public scrutiny than those of adults, and those of less powerful adults more than those of establishment figures of power and influence.

To deal with findings that may be seen as criticism I applied reflexivity because it carries an important message in the field of ethics, as in other aspects of ethnography. Reflexivity implies that my orientation in this study was "shaped by my socio-historical locations, including the values and interests that these locations confer upon them" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p.16). Part of reflexivity on my part as an ethnographer was the recognition and interpretation of the ways in which my identity as outsider, coupled with my gender and my maturity level, had affected and were reflected in the collection and analysis of data (Pole & Morrison, 2003). Reflexivity was discussed in section 3.2.2.5 of

this chapter. Lastly, the teachers were given an opportunity to review the results and confirm or dispute the summary in relation to the accuracy of the depiction of the experience shared during the data collection process.

3.4.5.4 Maintaining confidentiality and privacy

The clearest concern in the protection of the participants' interests and wellbeing is the protection of their identity (Babbie, 2007). According to Hammersley and Atkinson (1995), the concept of privacy is complex. A frequent concern about ethnographic research is that it involves making public things said and done for private consumption and it is sometimes feared that this may have long-term consequences. Therefore, to protect the participants I adhered to maintaining confidentiality and anonymity by allocating a pseudonym to every name mentioned in this study. I acknowledge that people may still be able to identify themselves. Evidence of forms are added in Appendix 1. Ethical measures when working with children are already discussed under a heading: Ethnography in the study of children and childhood, in section 3.2.2.3. Finally, the safekeeping of data at the completion of the research was adhered to.

3.4.5.5 The value of Ubuntu (Botho)

For indigenous African communities, "circular, back and forth movements allow indigenous researcher to go back into the past and invoke metaphors from our culture" (Chilisa in Mertens & Ginsberg, 2009, p.408). This, as Chilisa asserts, helped me build ethical protocols that promoted social justice and respect for postcolonial or indigenous community of Thutong. For example, in my interpersonal relation with the teachers and children, I adhered to the value of 'ubuntu' (botho), that is humanity or humanness, which informs how people should relate with others. Ubuntu underscores an I/we relationship in which there is brotherhood, sisterhood, guesthood, and community togetherness. In recognition of myself as a cultural being, I used reflection to locate the Afro-centric place from where my study was conducted. I thus adhered to the following six ethical principles proposed by Chilisa (in Mertens & Ginsberg, 2009, p.408) and the value of ubuntu:

- The responsibility of researcher as a transformative healer

- Ethics built on a deep respect for spirituality, religious beliefs, and the practice of others

- Ethics that underscore the importance of agreement and consensus

- Ethics built on dialogue, particularity, individuality, and historicity

- Ethics built on an iterative process that involves many circles of dialogue and negotiation, cooperation and solidarity

- Ethics that promote self-determination and rebirth.

In summary, there were ethical issues surrounding this study with which I had to comply. In addition, I also presented my own views because there were personal and professional issues with which I grappled as a researcher. The professional side refers to being an educational psychologist, district educational specialist and a school teacher. However, reflexivity and supervision helped me to deal with such challenges. As Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) argue, reflexivity carries an important message in the field of ethics as in other aspects of ethnography.

3.5   CONCLUSION

In summary, Chapter Three has described the methodology, referring to the research paradigm, design, data collection methods, analysis used in this study as well as compliance with ethical standards.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF DATA FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter Four focuses on the presentation of the data collected from the two Grade R groups of Thutong Primary School in 2010, thus eliciting the story of this school. Figure 4.1 (below) provides a schematic representation of different stories leading up to the full story. The extracts of data in Chapter Three section 3.3 (Data collection) add to data presentation in this chapter. The research question for this study was: What is the story of a developing school in a black urban community, considering the Grade R programme in 2010, from my view as an educational psychologist? In order to answer the main question, I addressed the following question: What are the experiences of the teachers, learners and parents or caregivers involved in the Grade R development? Thus, the data presented has been collected from the teachers, learners and parents or caregivers through the use of different data collection methods discussed in the previous chapter. Full transcripts appear in Appendix 2.

Figure 4.1: Thutong story made up of stories

4.2   THE STORY OF DUAL MEDIUM IN MULTILINGUAL CONTEXT

From the onset, Thutong was a dual medium school for the two Grade R classes: Sesotho and English and isiZulu and English. Since the school had not yet formulated a language policy, the plan was verbally communicated by the principal to the parents in 2010, as in the following field note extract:

> The principal, Mrs Moabi, set the scene for the beginning of teaching and learning of the first Grade R programme in Thutong primary school. The issue of language of learning and teaching (LOLT) was clarified to parents on the 1st of February 2010, the same day when the school opened its doors for the first time, during the parents meeting. The registration process was still open and some of the parents asked for clarity on the language to be used as the medium of instruction during 2010. Mrs Moabi emphasised that isiZulu and Sesotho were the languages for teaching and learning. In addition, English language will be used concurrently with these two home languages. This emanated from a question that was asked by one coloured parent who seemed to be concerned about the medium of instruction (Log 01/02/10).

Extract 4.1: Parents meeting

An artefact of dual medium is provided below in Sesotho class to provide more evidence (Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2: Dual medium artefact

The issues around dual medium evoked in me a feeling of disappointment with regard to the full acknowledgement of African languages such as Sesotho and isiZulu in South Africa. My past experiences and observations at Thutong confirmed the challenges posed by English language considering its global influence, South Africa included. The promotion of dual medium was not new in the specific context of Thutong, because the children in this community had already been exposed to English on starting formal education. Television, radio and newspapers are a few examples of media that play a role in giving preference to English language. Growing up in the township I know how other members of the community used to look down upon many township schools because of their stronghold on African languages. The education standard is generally regarded as inferior when English is not the main medium of instruction or is mixed with other languages.

Nor was I surprised to see some of the parents recommending English to promote the dual medium. This reminded me of my youth in Kopanong Township, when we used to hold peers who were eloquent in speaking English in high esteem. We even equated English

speaking with high level of intelligence, so the parents might want to put their children on equal par with those who learn strictly in English. I recall the impact of the 1976 Soweto uprising, when I was ten years old and attending a primary school at Kopanong. The immediate cause of the 16 June 1976 march was students' opposition to a decree issued by the Bantu Education Department that imposed Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in higher primary and high schools. Kopanong, like other black urban areas, was affected and English became the medium of instruction with African languages offered as additional subjects. Thinking about this past also helped me to remember and understand why the school and parents saw the importance of acquiring English language, and why language preference had to be considered in a political context.

Given the rich historical multilingual context of Kopanong and its geographical position it was difficult for me to accept that Thutong was a dual medium school, thus the pure dual medium was not easily attainable, as in schools in other areas (especially rural schools) in South Africa. For example, in KwaZulu-Natal province an entire community in a specific village may speak one home language, isiZulu, while the children learn the second language, English, at school. In addition to English there was an influence from African languages weaving the story of dual medium in multilingual context in Thutong, as shown in field note Extract 4.2 below.

> ……… At 10h45: Teacher Ratang and Mrs Moabi are outside with the children and are starting some activities. Children are standing in two rows. The instructions are in Sesotho and isiZulu. The children are taught isiZulu game '*Sawubona Madlamini*'. They recite Sesotho rhyme, '*Hlogo-magetla*'…. And thereafter translate to English 'Head, shoulders'… (Log 17/02/10).

Extract 4.2: Rhyme '*Hlogo-magetla*'

This field note extract shows the closeness of Sesotho, Sepedi and Setswana languages. From what I think I heard during the lesson there was a combination of the two languages when the children articulated the phrase '*hlogo-magetla*' (head-shoulders), which suggested that they mixed Sesotho and Setswana. Historically, in South Africa, indigenous African languages are grouped into two clusters, namely Nguni and Sotho, which means that they are grouped according to their similarities and closeness to each other. Under Nguni languages there are isiZulu, isiXhosa, siSwati, isiNdebele, TshiVenda, and

XiTsonga. Sotho languages include Setswana, Sepedi/Sesotho saLebowa/Northen Sotho, and Sesotho/South Sotho. Therefore, from the way the rhyme '*hlogo-magetla*' is spelled in the extract, based on what I heard during my observation, it is clear that it falls under three Sotho languages:

Sesotho: *Hloho mahetla*

Sepedi: *Hlogo magetla*

Setswana: *Tlhogo magetla*

My observation made me ponder the challenges that the teachers in early childhood education such as the Grade R may face in a black urban community school. I also wondered what could be appropriate to help Grade R children focus strictly on learning of the prescribed language(s) during this developmental phase. On the contrary, it seems dual medium thrives in such an environment and it thus appeared that the attempt to embrace it in a multiple language context thrived during the combined classes.

Combined Grade R classes seemed to be standard practice at Thutong. I observed how the teachers tended to mix the three languages in the classrooms, as shown in the extract below. I refer to this as a 'mixed language', meaning it contains the vocabulary or linguistic characteristics borrowed from two or more languages. I interchangeably use the term 'mixed language' and 'multilingual language' as they appear to be similar. Even if the school declared itself to be dual medium in the classrooms, meaning isiZulu and English; and Sesotho and English, multilingualism appeared to be promoted through the combining of the two classes on many occasions, as indicated by the following data vignette:

Story telling at 12h25: **Children (isiZulu and Sesotho combined)** sat on the floor outside the two classrooms at the assembly area. Teacher Mabotse was relating the same story she has been telling on many occasions since March: 'Three Bears' in English. She was dramatising as usual. After that she asked children questions in English. The children found it difficult to answer. In fact, her attempt to make them to relate the story in English failed. The child, Thandeka who always related stories in isiZulu language successfully, also struggled to express herself in English. In the process, teacher Mabotse used three languages (English, isiZulu and Sesotho) simultaneously:

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Some of teacher Mabotse's questions, comments or statements:

"*Why ne go se na karabo*?" (Why there was no answer?) <u>Sesotho and English</u>

"*Mama bear le baby bear ba tsamaile*." <u>Sesotho and English</u>

(Mother bear and baby bear went away)

"*Goreng ba fanele ba hambe*?" <u>Sesotho and IsiZulu</u>

(Why they had to leave?)

"*Kodwa ntho tse ke ne ke di bua go tla tla motho a tlo kenya musk wa ntate bear, mme, ngwana.*" *isiZulu,* <u>Sesotho and English</u>

(One person has to come and wear musk for father bear, mother, and child).

Utheni father bear sukuma usitshele said. <u>isiZulu and English</u>

(What did father bear say? Stand up and tell us).

If you were a Sotho child, you got the Sesotho question but you had to give an English answer. As the children answered either in isiZulu or Sesotho, the two teachers would remind them, "No, English"........Throughout the story activity, teacher Mabotse talked a lot more than the children. When the child answered in isiZulu he or she was reminded that the teacher was relating the **story** in English – the child was then told to say it in English. Some of the children, Mpumi, Bathabile, Ayanda and Nomonde (pseudonyms), who were already 'proficient' in English when they joined the school in February, could give a sentence response, such as, "Mama Bear said, who ate my porridge" (Log 07/10/10).

Extract 4.3: Combined class

I tried to make sense by looking mainly at the teachers' questions, comments and statements during the combined class when it was storytelling time ('Three Bears'). I further asked myself which languages I was hearing when I listened to the utterance. I also observed that the teachers asked the questions randomly mixing the three languages. I tried to make sense of this by looking at the wider context of Kopanong, where the speakers, once they realised that their group comprised various languages, switched to multiple or mixed language. This was mainly to accommodate everyone in the group, however, I

wondered about the influence of this practice on literacy acquisition in the Grade R classroom environment.

In the field notes extract below I provide more evidence of dual medium, based on observations and children–teacher interaction:

Numeracy: *Re tlo tlola. O tlo bala ho fihla ko hlano (We are going to jump. You are going to count up to five).* **This applied to all including the isiZulu group. Some of the Zulu children are quiet, not responding to what the teacher is saying.** Others are taking part jumping and counting until five as instructed by Ratang. They also do the following **counting** activity:

1-2 – Buckle my shoes

3-4 – Knock on the door

5-6 – Pick up the stick

7-8 – Lay hands straight

9-10 – A big fat hand

Rhyme: *Tweba* (Mouse)…. (Log 14/7/10).

Extract 4.4: Counting rhyme

I tried to make sense of this by looking at the number of languages used during the interaction, Sesotho and English, but since the isiZulu class had joined the Sesotho class to form a combined group it created a multi-language context. Some of the children seemed to experience communication problems as they were not responding to the questions asked, which based on personal experience and classroom observations indicated that not every child in the combined group was conversant with more than one language, in this case, Sesotho and isiZulu. The same applies to the children's parents and Kopanong adults in general. For example, as an adult, I cannot understand or speak all the languages spoken fluently in Kopanong, isiZulu included, even though I grew up there.

In addition to the history of Kopang urban community, the parents also contributed towards weaving the story of dual medium in Thutong multilingual context. Given the diverse languages in the community where the school was situated, that Thutong was a

dual medium school with three prescribed languages (Sesotho, isiZulu and English), and my observation of the children mixing more than three different languages during the outdoor play, I asked the parents for their views on mixed or multiple languages spoken by children. In the following Extract 4.5, the six parents that I interviewed, with regard to language teaching and learning of their children, provided the following information.

Interviewer: What do you think of mixed languages?

Interviewee **1**: They are right. You don't feel bad when you meet a particular nation.

Interviewee **2**: I think it is important but I still prefer one language – English. I still prefer mix language but English is still the one.

Interviewee **3** (Auntie): In general they learn, for example, yesterday Naome greeted us in Venda, saying that there is Venda child at school. (Mother): They enable you to communicate and to be proudly South African.

Interviewee **4**: They are fine because you are learning, so that you don't speak one language – and to understand the languages of those who live with us.

Interviewee **5**: It is number one, because you also learn other languages.

Interviewee **6** (Father): I think that we have an advantage that we have mixed language. One can express oneself. It advances your communication skill. In school, it is good as well. It raises awareness in children – that we have to accept one another – to get rid of things like xenophobia (Int. 23, 24 & 25/11/10).

Extract 4.5: Parents' views on mixed languages

I made sense of parents' perceptions and understanding of mixed language, mainly relating to economic and social benefits of the multilingual context of South Africa and the globalisation, as opposed to academic and cognitive benefits of language teaching.

According to my interpretation, the parents did not have a problem with mixed languages as they were looking at the wider picture of a diverse South Africa (Extract 4.5). South Africa's linguistic diversity means all 11 languages have a profound effect on each other. Having grown up in the same context, knowing more than one's home language is an advantage in the community because it makes communication easier. It is a survival skill

and empowers individuals to thrive in their community. I understood the parents, bearing in mind how diverse the Kopanong urban community is, its 11 languages of South Africa and scores of unofficial ones.

Pondering on why English was part of the story of Thutong I remembered that it has always been part of the dual and multiple medium schooling of Kopanong and wider South Africa, so I decided to seek the parents' perspectives. Thutong parents' expectations of learning in English are provided in the following responses, based on interviews between 24 and 26 November 2010.

Interviewer: What is your view on English as language to use in the classroom for all subjects?

Interviewee **1**: English is a requirement. Wherever you go is English.

Interviewee **2**: I will be happy for her to do everything in English. It is one language that is so popular, especially for our continent Southern Africa.

Interviewee **3**: I don't have problem with English because it is the main language that people use after finishing school, university and for communicating with white people.

Interviewee **4**: It is right because she even tries to communicate in it. I feel good but not to lose her Zulu. She needs to learn English for her future.

Interviewee **5**: It is also a good language. I feel happy because English is an official language.

Interviewee **6**: I feel very strong about it. English is a medium of communication everywhere, although the child must not lose home language (Int. 24-26/11/10).

Extract 4.6: Parents' view on English

The privileged position occupied by English language in a dual or multi-medium context of South African schools in black urban community was evident at Thutong. English has to be the first or second choice and it is either put on the same level or above the home or first languages, such as Sesotho and isiZulu. Schools teach English as a result of the general public's expectation that knowing it is an advantage and a privilege because it is a global language. Furthermore, schools in black townships such as Kopanong are considered to lag behind when children (both black and white) attending schools in

affluent former model C schools in suburbs take English to be their first or home language. Even the Grade R learners who travel from Kopanong to these suburb schools learn in English, irrespective of their African languages background. English is preeminent even if supposedly on a par or below others when a school is declared as dual medium.

Thutong, being a dual medium school, and Kopanong, characterised by multiple and diverse languages, thus led to code switching and translation, as presented in the following section.

4.3   LANGUAGE CODE SWITCHING AND TRANSLATION STORY

Three examples of code switching as a daily practice at Thutong classrooms are provided in the two field note extracts below, based on observation. The underlining represents code switching with one or more languages.

> In the following instance, Ratang was reminding them of classroom rules:
>
> *"O nka <u>school bag</u>, o sheba <u>transport</u>, ha e fihla wa tsamaya. Molao wa hoseng: Nna ha ke so tle, ba butse menyako, wa tsena. O nka di<u>puzzles</u> wa <u>dlala</u>. Ha o mathe. Ha o <u>rase</u>. Ha o mathe ka mo <u>klaseng</u>, hobaneng? ....* (*You take your school bag, you look for transport, when it arrives you leave? Morning rule: If I have not yet arrived, and the doors are open, you get in. You take the puzzles and play. You don't run. You don't make noise. You don't run inside the classroom, why*?) (Log 23/07/10).

Extract 4.7: *"O nka dipuzzles wa dlala"* (You take the puzzles and play)

> Teacher Mabotse pointed at number 10 (symbol) in the calendar and asked them to tell what it is:
>
> Children (Group): <u>*Iten*</u> (ten).
>
> Teacher Mabotse: *Uma ususa <u>uOne</u> kuleven kusalani?* (If you take away one from eleven, what remains)?
>
> Children (Group): Ten (Log 11/05/10).

Extract 4.8: Counting activity

Based on my observation, the activity presented in Extract (4.7) was in the Sesotho classroom. However, the underlined words: *School bag, transport, puzzles* are English words; *dlala* is isiZulu word meaning 'play'; *rase* is originally an Afrikaans word *raas*; *klaseng* is either the English word 'class' or Afrikaans - *klas*. During the activity in the isiZulu class (Extract 4.8) the words underlined, *Iten* and *uOne kuleven* provide another example of code switching. The two examples above are typical township lingo, which I also spoke during my childhood, and still can. However, what was interesting then, irrespective of our age or standards (grades) during that time, was how we could make a clear distinction between the formal environment of classroom and the informal outside one. For example, during teaching and learning in the classroom the rule would be to speak in a formal way, either in Setswana or English, but when we were playing outside at school or at home we mainly spoke mixed languages or township lingo. Observed in the two Thutong classrooms, regardless of code switching or mixed languages, was that teacher Ratang and teacher Mabotse strove to guide the children to speak the correct prescribed language during the lessons. For example, if it was an English lesson the children were helped and encouraged to speak English, and similarly Sesotho or isiZulu in those lessons.

I thought that the Thutong Grade R children were code switching because of their upbringing in their community. My interview with Bathabile (pseudonym), a girl in the Sesotho class (refer to field note Extract 4.9), is an example. The activity was to complete the weather puzzle, matching clothes and different weather patterns, such as warm, cloudy, rainy, and windy. I asked Bathabile to explain to me how they matched the weather and the clothes, and she responded as follows:

Bathabile: Picture 1 - *Lightening, wa tshaba* (Lightening, she runs away). <u>Sesotho and English</u>

Bathabile: Picture 2 - *O mo puleng o tshwere umbrella* (She is in the rain holding an umbrella). <u>Sesotho and English</u>

Interviewer: *Kante ka Sesotho ke umbrella* (Is it 'umbrella' in Sesotho)? (I asked deliberately as I have been listening to teacher Ratang earlier on when she was translating the word 'umbrella' in Sesotho)

Bathabile: *Ke eng teacher* (What is it teacher)? <u>Sesotho and English</u>

Teacher Ratang: *Tsa mo botsa ba bangwe* (Go and ask others).

Bathabile: *Ke sehla sa letsatsi* (It is the season of the sun).

(Teacher Ratang asks the whole class again but no one gives the correct answer.)

Teacher Ratang: *Sekgele* (Umbrella).

Children: *Sekgele sa rona sa letsatsi* (Our umbrella for the sun).

Bathabile: Picture 3 - *Ha go chesa o ya ko Durban* (When it is hot you go to Durban). (She is pointing at a person wearing short pants).

Bathabile: Picture 4 - *O apere jacket le scarf le katiba* (She is wearing a jacket and scarf and hat). <u>Sesotho and English</u>

Interviewer: Why?

Bathabile: *Hobane ho a bata* (Because it is cold). (Int. 21/07/10).

Extract 4.9: Weather Puzzles activity

Of significance was the point when Bathabile, on her own initiative, asked teacher Ratang to explain again the meaning of the word 'umbrella' in Sesotho, only to realise that nor did other children understand or they may have forgotten. This experience appeared to confirm the challenge of introducing the home or first language during early childhood education. Based on my observation and experience, by the time many Grade R children start formal schooling in black urban community schools such as Thutong they have already acquired English, so it was not surprising for me to notice that Bathabile and the other children were more familiar with 'umbrella' than '*sekgele*'.

Regarding the above-mentioned overlap of code switching and translation during teaching and learning, based on my observations there were also instances of teachers and children consistently using English names, such as 'teacher', 'fire fighter', 'librarian', 'pilot', 'traffic cop', even if the lessons were conducted in isiZulu or Sesotho. For example, in both classrooms the names of the jobs or careers were not translated into home language but code switched instead of being translated, as shown in the following two field notes Extracts, 4.10 and 4.11:

> The only name that I heard being translated by teacher Mabotse in isiZulu during this specific lesson and subsequent ones on careers was the word 'aeroplane'. She said: "*indizam'shini*". So, no extra effort was taken to check and translate these names (Diary 13-17/09/10).

Extract 4.10: *Indizamshini* (aeroplane)

> Teacher Mabotse: *Motho o ke librarian* (This person is a librarian). Log 14/09/10

Extract 4.11: Librarian

The two field notes Extracts (4.12 and 4.13) below are examples of stories of how the two teachers translated the learning material, despite the language challenges they experienced with the Grade R children. If the lessons were, for example, conducted in Sesotho or isiZulu the teachers would translate into English, or vice versa.

> ..... It was 8:35. They started their classroom activities with an English song: "Good morning everybody, how do you do". After some time teacher Ratang asked them what they would say in Sesotho. They kept quiet and then she asked: "*Le dumedisa joang ka Sesotho?*" (How do you greet in Sesotho?) They answered by saying, "*Dumelang*". Then she translated the song for them, "*Dumelang batho kaofela, le kae, le kae*" (Log 17/02/10).

Extract: 4.12: *"Le dumedisa joang ka Sesotho?"* (How do you greet in Sesotho?)

Teacher Mabotse: *Red is Bloodshed. Kusho ukuthi kumele igazi elachitheka labantu eAfrika* (Red is bloodshed. It stands for the blood that came from the people in Africa).

Teacher: *Black and White. Kumele abantu abahlala eMzansi Afrika. Abamnyama nabamhlophe.* (Black and white. It stands for all the people who live in South Africa. Black and white).

Teacher: *Blue - Iblue imele ini?* (Blue – what does it stands for?)

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Children: *Izulu* (Sky)

Teacher: *Good. Green, imeleni okuhlaza njengotshani?* (Good. Green, what does it stands for?).

Child: Green is for the land.

Teacher Mabotse: *Ok. Yini iland ngesiZulu? Okuhlaza njengotshani kumele umhlaba wethu. Yellow, Phuzi?* (Ok. What is land in isiZulu? The green colour stands for our land. Yellow, Yellow?)

Child: *Igolide...* (Log 13/05/10)

Extract: 4.13: "*Yini iland ngesiZulu*" (What is land in isiZulu)?

The artefacts were also used to enhance learning through translation. For example, a chart of 'My Senses' (Figure 4.3) translated from English to isiZulu was displayed on the board in the isiZulu classroom (Log 16/04/10). All the artefacts put on a display table, such as Figures 4.4 and 4.5, were explained to children as they represented the weekly themes. However, I observed that some of the artefacts put on the sides of the walls, such as Figure 4.3, were not discussed with the children. I therefore wondered about the sense the Grade R children made of the images and words, especially since they could not yet read.

Figure 4.3: My senses

Figure 4.4: *Baleloko la ka* – My family

Figure 4.5: *Umdeni wami* – My family

I observed and noted the available learning material at school that was used by the teachers, such as charts and books, as shown and Figures 4.5 and 4.6.

> Something drew my attention: A box containing Grade R books on teacher Mabotse's table. On top it is written: *Laying Solid Foundations for Learning. Grade R Resource Kit.* What drew my attention as I paged through the document was the following translation of isiZulu months (Log 31/05/10).

Extract 4.14: Grade R Resource Kit

Figure 4.6: Grade R resource kit

I was surprised by the manner in which isiZulu months were written (Figure 4.6). According to my understanding, I saw borrowing rather than translation. I immediately asked teacher Mabotse why the months were not written in isiZulu first language, for example, uJanuwari instead of Masingana, to which she also reported surprise. She explained that Mrs Moabi, the principal, had brought the material from a workshop she attended. She immediately went to her drawer and took out a piece of paper on which she wrote the months in what she said was the correct isiZulu (Log 31/05/10), as indicated in

Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: English to isiZulu translation of months

January – *Masingana*	July – *Ntulikazi*
February – *Nhlolanja*	August – *Ncwaba*
March - *Ndasa*	September – *Mandulo*
April – *Mbasa*	October – *Mfumfu*
May – *Nhlaba*	November – *Lwezi*
June – *Nhlangulana*	December – *Zibandlela*

I therefore asked myself the following questions: Why was the additional information on proper isiZulu months not readily available for the teacher in the first place? Who recommends and has the final say on the prescribed material, the school or the Department of Education or the publishers? What roles do publishers play in promoting the indigenous languages of South Africa? Which practice is the most appropriate or to be prioritised when declaring African languages as languages of instruction, translation or borrowing? My observation of translation went further to ponder the teaching and learning sounds, letter recognition and writing for the Grade R children in a dual or multilingual context of Thutong. I present this in the following section.

4.4 THE STORY OF SOUND AND LETTER RECOGNITION AND WRITING

Letter 'c':

Figure 4.7: Artefact of English letter 'c' in Sesotho classroom

Sound and letter recognition was another notable incident during my observation of language teaching and learning of the Grade R children at Thutong. The extracts of letter recognition activities are provided below and an artefact (Figure 4.7. above) of individual activities in which children were instructed to trace the letter 'c' by pasting cotton wool inside the lines.

> Teacher Mabotse was teaching the children about "*amafu*" (clouds). At one stage she asked the children:
>
> "*Amafu aqala ngayiphi **isound***? *Ngo 'em' (m). Amafu ngesulungu yini*? Clouds. Clouds starts with 'c' (Which sound do the clouds start with? What are clouds in English? Clouds start with 'c').
>
> Each child was given a letter c drawn on A4 paper. The instruction was to put cotton wool inside the letter c, using glue stick (Log 20/07/10).

Extract 4.15: Letter 'c'

Letter 'f':

Children were identifying things that start with the letter 'f' on the A4 papers provided

to them by teacher Ratang. The paper had different drawings. The ones that they were supposed to colour were starting with 'f'. I approached one table in which a group of four was sitting. I asked Bathabile (child), "*Le etsa eng*" (What are you doing)? She said, "*Re coloura ntho tse di qalang ka 'f'*" (We are colouring the things that starts with 'f'). She showed me the names: **f**rog; **f**ork; and **f**lowers she had already coloured. Teacher Ratang displayed the model on the chalkboard so that the children can refer. After the activity I asked teacher Ratang, "Are you teaching the letter 'f'? She said she taught them how to write 'f' on the day before. She immediately brought me the children's answer sheets, showing how they traced the letter (Log 13/08/10). I concluded that sound and letter recognition were important for Grade R learning in Thutong.

Extract 4.16: Letter 'f'

Figure 4.8: Colouring the things that starts with 'f'

What stood out for me in Figures 4.7 and 4.8 was that the Grade R children were given an opportunity to use their senses and to trace (writing) in a practical way. However, I noticed that the instruction was only in English sounds 'c' and 'f'. I thought that maybe one day I would see the same activity of sound and letter recognition be applied to Sesotho and

isiZulu sounds, but that did not happen during my classroom observations until the end of the year 2010.

Letter 'q'

Figure 4.9: Letter 'q'

Teacher Ratang took wooden blocks and builds letter 'q' on the carpet. She asked the children, who sat in a circle, to tell what they see. After this activity she gave them homework:

"*Ee, o tshwanetse hore o mpolelle hore "queen'' ke eng. O nketsetse di 'q' tse six, mo pampering o tle le tsona kaosane*" (Yes, you have to tell me what 'queen' is. Make me six 'q', on a paper and bring them tomorrow) (Log 17/08/10).

Extract 4.17: Letter 'q'

In short, Figures 4.9 (above) and 4.10 (below) show how teachers enhanced teaching and learning of the Grade R children through practical demonstrations.

Figure 4.10: Letter 'q'

What stood out for me was the difference I observed when I zoomed in on the letter 'q' alone and when I zoomed out to include the children sitting in a circular formation, as shown in Figures 4.9 and 4.10 above. I was puzzled and this experience provided me with a new understanding of how the same letter can be perceived differently, depending on the position of the child, especially small children such as the Grade R ones. I wondered what could be happening in their perceptions. I asked myself about the appropriateness of forming a circle during the teaching and learning of the Grade R children. From the position of our strengths and experiences as adults (the teacher and the researcher), it was obvious that the letter was 'q' and we already knew what it looked like, irrespective of the angles. Despite the positioning of children, my observations of 'q' and other letters confirmed that Thutong teachers regarded the perceptual development as an important aspect of the Grade R children's learning. Thus, I pondered on the relevance and the importance of spatial orientation and the learning of the Grade R children. For example, I wondered at the confusion that could be experienced by the children exhibiting directionality problems, even if familiar with the letters. I even wondered at the importance of observing the lateralisation of the manual skills of the Grade R children. More observations during the teaching of mathematics or numeracy are further presented in

section 4.5.

4.5 NUMERACY TEACHING AND LEARNING

This section presents a story of numeracy teaching and learning at Thutong. During my year of research, I was intrigued by the following: counting, manipulative tools, teaching aids, and geometry.

4.5.1 Counting

Counting from one to five was more evident during the first term of the year but faded as the second term of the school calendar got under way, the focus shifting to counting from one to ten. During the first term, Grade R children could count in both their home languages and English, however, the emphasis was more on rote learning until the children grasped the concepts (see section 4.8). Visualisation and writing of numbers one to ten was part of the daily lessons for two Grade R groups. The number charts were also displayed on 'numeracy corners' in the two classrooms, for children to see. Thus, mastering the writing of the symbols and learning the numerical value of numbers appeared to be important during the teaching and learning of the Grade R children in Thutong classrooms. For example, field note Extract 4.18 and Figure 4.11 show the importance of mastering the writing of the symbol 5 and learning the number's value. Every child was given the opportunity to write, confirming how the teachers valued practice and active participation. The acquisition of numeracy skills involved motor-based activities.

> Teacher Ratang grouped them into four groups and gave them instructions: ...... I used A, B, C& D to identify the groups. In group C, 4 members took turns to write. They sat around the table, each with a page and a crayon. They wrote on a paper as the teacher gave instructions. They were practicing 1- 5. There were squares next to the numbers in which they have to demonstrate by putting dots representing the numbers. They had to point to the number (symbol) first and draw dots inside the box…. (Log 11/03/10).

Extract 4.18: Counting to five
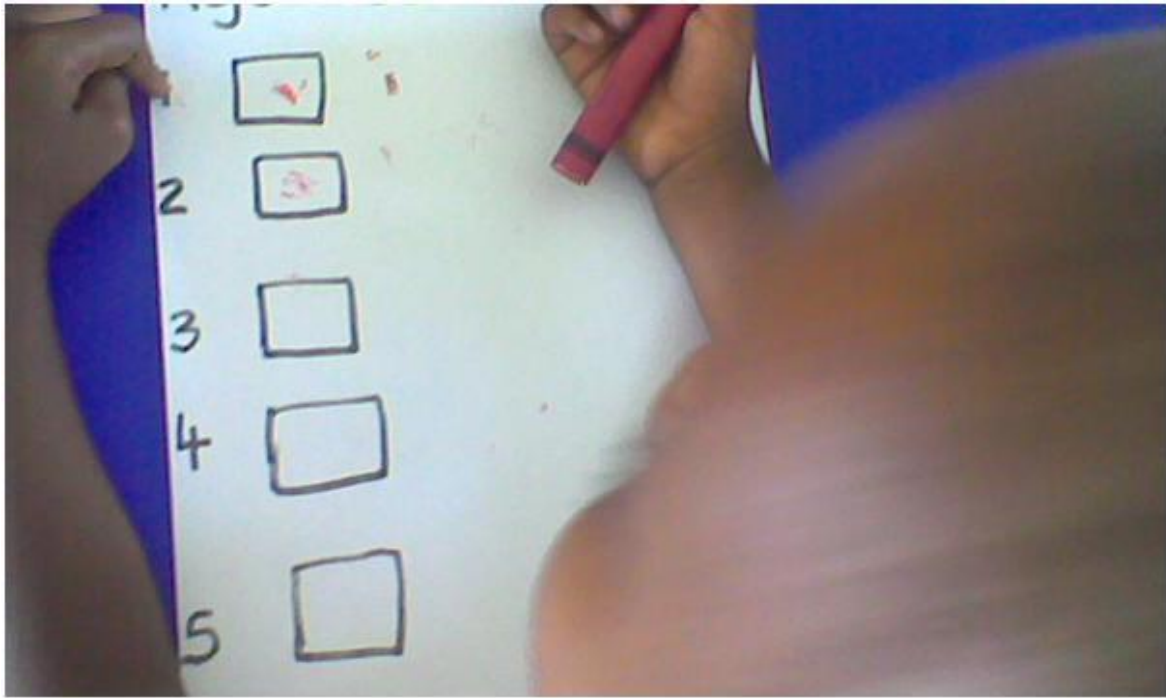
Figure 4.11: Counting to five

Based on my observation of numeracy, counting from one to ten (Extract 4.19 below) on a daily basis prepared the Grade R children for future counting in units of ten, because once they mastered number ten they were gradually introduced to number twenty. However, counting was not necessarily restricted up to number twenty, especially in English, so children, with the help of the teachers, could still count beyond twenty. In addition, they were introduced to the number shape of numeric value.

> Counting from one to ten was the most prevalent activity in the two classrooms "*nngwe ho fihla ka leshome*" (one to ten) during my classroom observations. Depending on the lesson content, the children would either start to count in isiZulu or Sesotho in their respective classrooms and translate to English or vice versa (Log 11/03/10).

Extract 4.19: Counting to ten

During the mathematics teaching, of significance, especially in Sesotho class, was how teacher Ratang taught number recognition. In addition to the counting activity she took time to explain the meaning of numbers in Sesotho language, coupled with demonstrations. Her explanation of numbers one to ten was very interesting, practical and clearly explained. Based on what I observed, I assumed that the children also understood her presentation. What stood out for me was how she explained the number 9, as illustrated

below, in Extract 4.20.

They were sitting in a circle. Teacher Ratang instructed them to count from 1 to 10. She also explained to them why number nine is called "Robong" in Sesotho:

"*O roba monwana o le mongwe*" (You bend one finger). She demonstrated with her 10 fingers, lifting them all. She then bent finger number ten. She then asked them to show by their fingers from number ten downwards (backwards): "*O ka mpontsha menwana e lesome, robong, robedi, (and so on) until lefela*" (Can you show ten, nine, eight.....until zero). "Lefela ke eng" (What is zero)?

Children (With her help): "Ke zero" (Log 12/04/10).

Extract 4.20: Demonstration of number 9

4.5.2   Manipulative tools

Figure 4.12 (below) shows examples of manipulative tools, such as coins, wooden blocks, beads and toilet roll holders used for numeracy teaching and learning at Thutong. The use of manipulative tools appeared to be linked with the perceptual and sensory engagement in learning.

Figure 4.12: Examples of manipulative tools used in Thutong Grade R classrooms

Of significance in Thutong classrooms was the physical manipulation of objects during counting and other activities, as children could practice in various ways such as physically pointing or using string to count beads in groups of ten. Objects such as wooden blocks and beads were provided by the school, whilst children collected the objects such as toilet roll holders and bottle lids from home (Figure 4.12). It was interesting to notice that they took an active role in their learning, through the help of the parents. What came to my mind was that the lack of resources cannot always be an excuse in township schools because what is available in the community can still be used to enhance learning. It showed that home and school education cannot be separated, thus helping the children to see a link and the collective effort of all the systems. My observation of the use of these manipulative tools reminded me that tools do not necessarily have to be fancy. It even reminded me of my past in primary school years, when we collected bottles lids, ice cream sticks and stones to count. It showed this practice has been passed down from one generation to another and Thutong teachers, parents and children could also relate to it and regarded it as a valuable contribution from the community. However, other means of counting such as modern beads and abacus can still be used in a black urban community

school like Thutong.

4.5.3   Teaching aids

I observed how counting activity was usually linked to symbol identification. Teachers enhanced numeracy teaching by using teaching aids such as charts and a calendar.

- **Charts**

In the following instance, for example, the instruction was to count from one to ten in English, then translate to Sesotho from "*nngwe ho ya ho leshome*" (one to ten). Teacher Ratang helped them by pointing at a chart on the wall as shown in Figure 4.13 below.
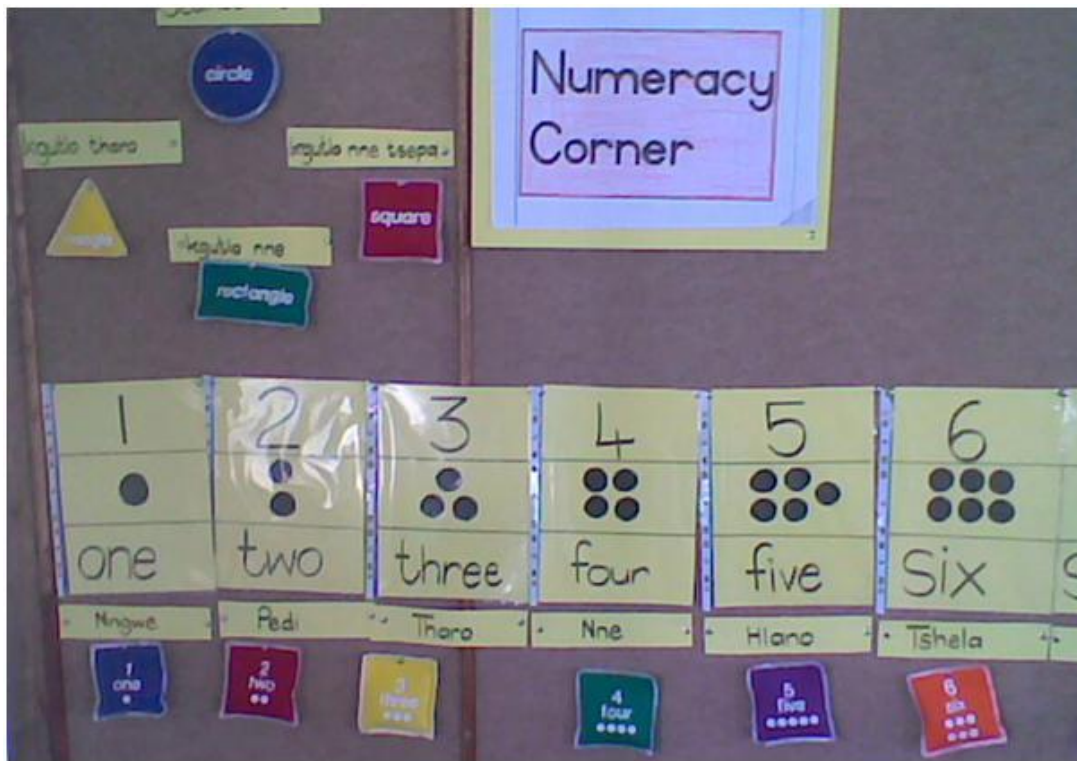
Figure 4.13: Numeracy corner – Sesotho classroom

Figure 4.14: Numeracy corner – isiZulu classroom

During my observation, as I also engaged with such objects as the charts, I wondered why the writing was first in English and in letters larger than that of Sesotho (Figure 4.13). In the isiZulu classroom, as shown in Figure 4.14, two sets of numbers were displayed. In the first set, isiZulu numbers were above the English ones. But when I looked at the second set, put up by Mrs Moabi in February, whilst waiting for the arrival of teacher Mabotse, it was similar to the one in the Sesotho classroom. Thus, according to my observation, the order of putting up the numbers suggested English as main language of communication.

- **My calendar**

Figure 4.15: My Calendar

As part of numeric literacy, the telling of the date by children was part of the daily learning in the two classrooms. It had to do with conceptual understanding, not only exposed to numeric learning but also language acquisition. What stood out for me was the use of the 'My Calendar' for the entire year during the teaching of mathematics. As a teaching aid, an English calendar (Figure 4.15) was used throughout the entire year to teach and tell the date. I had observed that there were no Sesotho or isiZulu calendars displayed in the classrooms, and therefore wondered about the availability of African language calendars in schools, black urban community schools in particular. I cannot recall when I last saw a calendar in my home language or the three languages with which I am most familiar, namely, Setswana, Sepedi, Sesotho (Southern Sotho). I have not seen the African language calendars or personal diaries in the languages marketed as in English, in, for example,

homes, schools, stores or bookshops. I wondered who could have provided Thutong with African language calendars, for example, whether the DoE, the school, the teachers themselves or the publishers.

The following two field notes (Extracts 4.21 and 4.22) show how teachers and children engaged with 'My Calendar':

Teacher Ratang: *Ka jeno ke la bokae? Ke mang **a ka mpontshang**? Labone, Laboraro, Mantaga?* (No response) *Ke mang a neng a ile kerekeng maabane ha e ne ele Sontaga? Ka jeno ke la bokae?* (What day is today? Who can show me? Thursday, Wednesday, Monday? Who went to church yesterday when it was Sunday? What day is today?)

Children (with teacher's help): *Mantaga* (Is Monday) (Log 12/04/10).

Extract 4.21: My Calendar - Sesotho

Teacher Mabotse asked them which day it was:

Children (Group): *UMsombuluko* (Monday).

Teacher: Good. *Thuli woza uzosifakela uMsomboloko* (Thuli come and put Monday).

Thuli put the tag written 'Monday' on 'My Calendar'...........(Log 19/04/12)

Extract 4.22: My Calendar - isiZulu

I noticed the teachers would struggle in helping with the calendar activity because the children found it easier to tell the date in English than in isiZulu or Sesotho. As indicated above, there were no isiZulu or Sesotho calendars. An interesting observation was that the children in both classrooms could point to, for example, days of the week in the two languages using the English calendar. For instance, teacher Mabotse would say in isiZulu, '*uMsomboloko*' and individual children would correctly point to Monday in an English calendar. This highlighted the aspect of more complex learning demands experienced by the teachers and Grade R children. In addition, one noticeable common incident which was also a challenge was the naming of the months in Sesotho language, as shown in the following example.

Ratang taught them the date in Sesotho. She asked them to count up to 19 as it was the current date, and then up to 20. She reminded them they were in the month, *Motshehanong* (May), after which she made them to mention all the months of the year from *Pherikgong* (January) to *Tshitwe* (December). They had not yet mastered that in Sesotho and they were struggling. So, they followed after the teacher. They also told months in English from January to December with the help of the teacher Ratang .... (Log 23/05/10).

Extract 4.23: Date in Sesotho

In the isiZulu classroom, the months of the year were only taught in English during all my 11 months of observations I spent at the school. Based on my observation, the following factors were contributory: lack of material; the months were too difficult for the children to learn in their home language; and the teacher lacked motivation after she realised that it was difficult for the Grade R children to grasp them in isiZulu.

4.5.4   Description, sorting and classification of shapes

The teaching and learning of Geometry at Thutong was part of the learning content, as shown in Figure 4.16 (below) and field notes Extract 4.24. Thus, the children could describe the shapes based on what they looked like, and sort and classify shapes based solely on their appearance in their prescribed home languages and English. They could also recognise and describe shapes by their attributes and properties, and identify, for example, the figure representing a square because it has four sides as part of numeracy development. Shape identification and creation was thus linked to perceptual development.
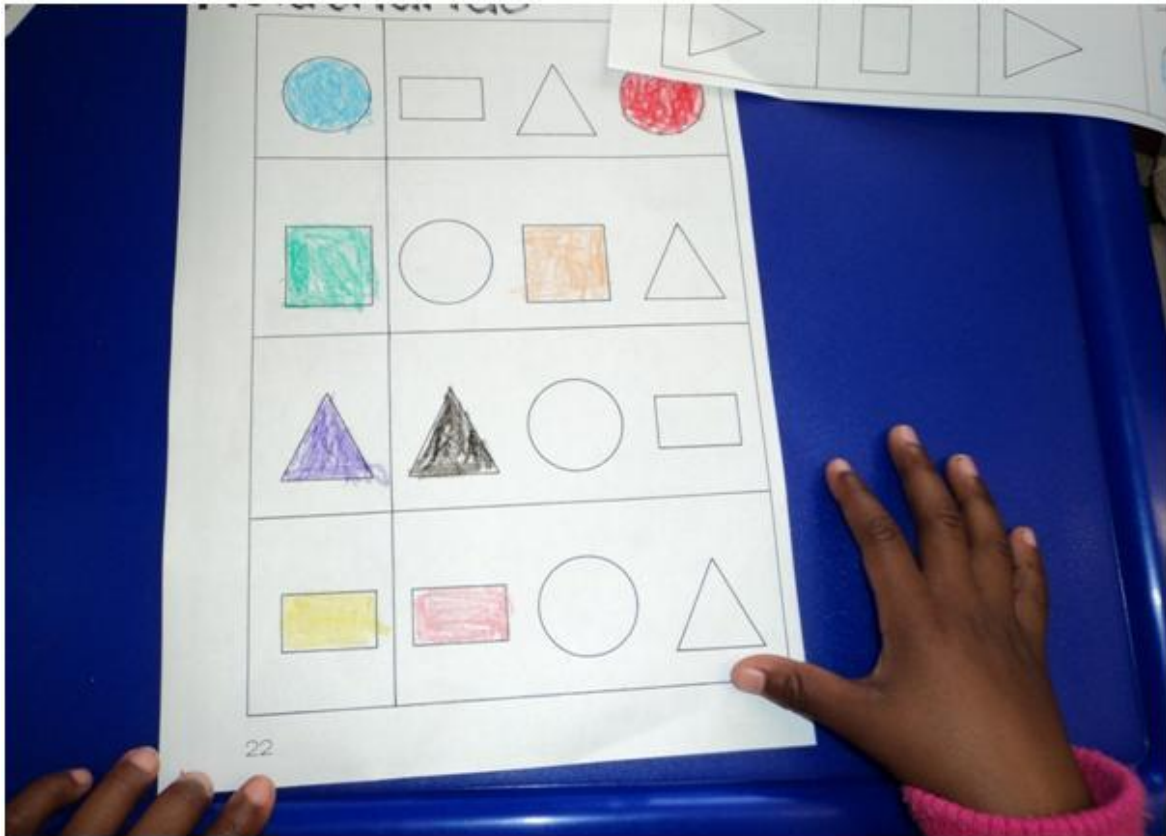
Figure 4.16: Individual classroom activity – Matching the shapes

Children were to count and draw the shapes that equal the number. The shapes ranged from 2-5. The 4 circles in the left column have the following shapes each: 4 triangles, 3 rectangles, 2 squares and 5 circles. The children were to put shapes equalling the number in the empty circles on the right. The teacher **demonstrated** the first one to the children. She asked them: "*Yini lezimo lela?*" (What is that shape?) and the children said "*uxanthato*" (triangle). She then asked them to **count** loud the number of the triangles….. after which she drew them in the opposite, empty circle on the right. She moved around the tables to further explain and assist the children........... Some successfully completed the tasks. There were those who were very slow and making mistakes but they improved as the teacher and their classmates helped them (Log 12/05/10).

Extract 4.24: Shapes and Colours

Of interest during the learning of the shapes was how the teachers explained and demonstrated them to the children. For example, teacher Mabotse confirmed the importance of practical demonstration, practice, monitoring of children and group work in Grade R children. These children were able to learn successfully with the guidance of

committed and patient teacher. Data presentation extends further to Thutong's stories and rhymes, which also entail language and numeracy development.

4.6   STORIES AND STORYTELLING AT THUTONG

This section is about the stories I heard and saw being performed by the teachers and children in the two classrooms of Thutong. I observed how the stories were told to children and how they enhanced learning in a school in a black urban community. My observation entailed different aspects, such as the type of the stories presented to the Grade R children, the availability, learning material, story content and meaning, characters, props used, and the parents' role in stories and storytelling. Table 4.2 (below) provides the stories taught to Grade R children during my observations in 2010.

Table 4.2: Thutong stories

IsiZulu	Sesotho	English
• *Ingulube* (Pig) • *Izingulube ezinhlanu* (Five pigs) • (Stories in English column were translated)	• (Stories in English column were translated)	• Ginger Bread Man • Cinderella • Three little pigs • Three Bears (Goldilocks) • Three Little Monkeys

Looking at the list of stories I wondered why the stories were so few and why there were no traditional African ones. Of significance was the importance and the value that the teachers attached to stories and storytelling, thus emphasising them as important component of Grade R teaching and learning. Storytelling excited me because the stories reminded me of my primary school experience of stories. I remember the stories I had learnt during the early 1970s in first grade at school (Sub A), their moral lessons, in addition to rich language acquisition and development benefits. The most frequently related stories at Thutong were *The Three Bears (Goldilocks), Cinderella,* and *The Gingerbread Man*. The following examples of two field notes Extracts (4.25 and 4.26) show how the teachers frequently used stories and storytelling to stimulate the Grade R's

thinking.

> … It was the story of three bears. Teacher Ratang started by saying: "*Maabane ke rileng? Ne ke le bolella story*" (What did I say yesterday? I was telling you a story). Four children raised their hands and related the story *The Three Bears*. She asked the class questions to determine if they still recalled what she told them the previous day. At the same time she was bringing in new information, adding to the story. They were sitting next to the display board where the pictures of all the characters in the story were placed by Ratang one after another on the board (Log 11/03/10).

Extract 4.25: *The Three Bears*

Teacher Mabotse seemed to use the stories to develop memory (short term), as indicated in the following Extract 4.26 below.

> It was story time and I had missed the introduction. It was '*Cinderella*' story, how she got married to king's son. Teacher Mabotse was relating it in isiZulu. It was quiet and the children were listening. She was using the pictures and put them according to the sequence of the story on the display wall as she related about different characters.

> At the end of the story teacher Mabotse asked the children questions based on the story, for example:

> Teacher: *Story sakabani*? (Whose story is it?)

> Children: *UCinderella*. (Cinderella)

> Teacher: *Kwenzakalani ngaye?* (What happened to her?)

> Children: *Bayamhlukumeza* (They abuse her) (Log 16/04/10)

Extract 4.26: *Cinderella*

Figure 4.17: *The Three Bears* and *Goldilocks* props

Figure 4.17 (above) provides evidence that the teachers used props during teaching and learning. It shows a character, Goldilocks. I wondered at the relevance of the props used, considering that Thutong was situated in a black urban community. Most noticeable was a young girl who appeared to be a white girl representing Goldilocks. I wondered how the Thutong Grade R children were identifying with the Goldilocks prop, for example, her long curly hair, considering their identity as black children.

Further, I observed the storybooks and material used for Grade R children in the two classrooms. During storytelling, the two teachers used to read from a few copies of English storybooks that were available in the classrooms. I did not see any African language storybooks and upon asking the teachers about this they indicated that they resorted to translating English stories into Sesotho and isiZulu. For example, Figure 4.18 (below) shows a little storybook that teacher Ratang used to relate a story of the *Three Little Pigs*. The book was so small that it could fit in the palms of her hands. However, the teacher engaged with the children about the story and they in turn answered her questions. To address what seemed to be their challenge of lack of books or the one of the small book,

the two teachers would instruct and remind the children to listen carefully, as in this instance.

Figure 4.18: Storytelling

I wondered why the school did not have African language storybooks in their mini-classroom bookshelves and why they had to rely on English books (Figure 4.18), leading them to translate in Sesotho and isiZulu. I wondered how the children made sense of the story they listened to without clear or large pictures or visuals which could enhance their understanding.

In the following instance (Extract 4.27), Teacher Ratang acknowledged that she accommodated children's own stories. I had asked her about her understanding on the Grade R teaching.

Teacher Ratang: …. when you relate stories, children become more excited and they are excited that they grasp something. That is how they learn. They can tell their own stories and sequence them…..Children are very creative. If you tell them it is story time, they choose their own stories- when you teach them song they put their own words (Int. 07/06/10).

Extract 4.27: Grade R teaching

It was therefore evident from teacher Ratang's experience that the Grade R children were

co-constructors of knowledge, meaning that they played an active role in their own learning. Of significance for me was the teacher's acknowledgement that the creativity the children brought to the classroom must not be underestimated by an adult, a teacher in this particular instance, during learning. I also witnessed this as there were times when children were given an opportunity to tell their own stories.

Since stories and storytelling constituted an important component of teaching and learning at Thutong, getting the views of the parents was important even if it was at a minimal scale due to time and other constraints. What was important though was the meaning or the sense I got from reflecting on the parents' views. The six parents who were interviewed on the 24th to 26th of November 2010 provided their views on stories and storytelling. Their responses (translated from Sesotho and isiZulu) are in the interview Extract below (4.28).

Interviewer: What type of stories do you read to your child?

Interviewee **1**: We are not story people.

Interviewee **2**: Bible stories. I encourage them to attend Sunday school as they teach a lot of things. At home she watches movies and likes movies – some scary, international ones even the Nigerians movies. She is not scared to see things like blood or people shooting each other (father).

Interviewee **3**: They are stories I read at school, for example, *Ledimo*, *Three Little Bears* and TV ones – *Fundani nathi* and *Takalani Sesame*.

Interviewee **4**: The ones like *Three Little Bears*, *Intsomi* (Folktales) - she also watches *Ben Ten* and *Shreck*, Cartoons on TV.

Interviewee **5**: The school gave us books. *Mr Big* – we read it a lot and *The Story Teller*. I read in English and explain to him in Zulu.

Interviewee **6**: We usually read the Bible. There are certain memory verses she does. From school, she tells us every day about *Goldilocks* (Int. 24, 25, 26/11/10.

Extract 4.28: Parents' views on stories and storytelling

It struck me that the *Goldilocks* story was confirmed by one parent as one of the most frequent stories related every day in Thutong's two classrooms. What was also interesting was that the parents referred to three sources of stories, namely, the Bible, television, and

school. Thus, they excluded themselves, suggesting that they did not regard themselves or the information that they had as important or relevant to their children's learning. In addition, I reflected on parents' (Interviewee 2) statements that their child "is not scared to see things like blood or people shooting each other". In my critical analysis I considered the following: whether the parents were aware of what they were exposing their child to by allowing her to watch horror movies; how the frightening films and television content were affecting the minds of the Grade R child; the availability of storybooks in children's homes, as well as the knowledge of stories and the importance attached to storytelling to children by the parents or caregivers. It was encouraging to hear that the school was helpful in providing books to read at home, however, I was struck by the fact that the parents had to translate an English story, suggesting that English was used more at home because the parents had to take the role of language translators, as with the two teachers at the school.

In my reflection on the lack of telling African stories I looked through the lens of sociocultural theory to determine why parents and children were not given Sesotho and isiZulu storybooks as these were the prescribed languages of the school. During my early childhood and in my first year at school I learnt the story of *Tselane le Dimo* (*Tselane and the Cannibal or Giant*). Tselane is an African name given to girls. She was warned by her parents not to trust strangers and instructed not to open the door for anyone who knocked when the parents were away. Instead, Tselane opened the door and was kidnapped by the cannibal. I thought of this old story because I found it to be relevant to the modern day world in which child kidnapping and trafficking are rife, South Africa included. Thus, this story warns children not to trust strangers and encourages them to listen to their parents.

Finally, in my interview with the parents, they did not consider the relevance or meaning or impact of the stories to which the children were exposed as my aim was to get an idea of the stories they read to their children. Close to stories and storytelling in Thutong were the rhymes of which the data is presented below.

4.7   RHYMES

The teaching and learning of rhymes was a continuous process from as early as February 2010 to the end of the year. Of the many rhymes (Appendix 3) recited at Thutong, four notable ones were: *Bombela wes'timela; Madlamini* (Ms Dlamini); *Izinyoni ezinhlanu*

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(Five little birds) and *Bana ba Sekolo* (*School Children)* as in data sets provided below in Table 4.3. The other rhymes are in Appendix 3.

Table 4.3: Thutong Grade R Rhymes in 2010

    1.   ***Bombela weS'timela*** (Mbombela train):

Bombela, bombela we'stimela (Bombela, bombela train)

Wenzani lomama (What is this mother doing?)

Washiya bantwana (Left the children behind)

*sh-sh-sh, sh-sh-sh (*sh-sh-sh, sh-sh-sh) (Log 24/02/10)

    2.   ***Madlamini*** (Ms Dlamini):

Sawubona Masithole (Hallo Ms Sithole)

Yebo Madlamini (Hallo Ms Dlamini)

Ubuyaphi Masithole? (Where are you from?)

Ngibuya edolobheni (I am from town)

Ubuyothengani na? (What were you going to buy?)

Bengiyothenga isigqoko (To buy a hat) (Log 23/02/10)

    3.   ***Izinyoni ezinhlanu*** (Five little birds):

After the song Mrs Moabi said: "*Izinyoni Ezinhlanu*" (Five Birds):

Izinyoni ezinhlanu (Five little birds)

Zazihlezi emthini (Sitting on a tree)

Enye yathi, bheka laphaya (One said, look over there)

Enye yathi, indoda enesibhamu (One said, a man with a gun)

Enye yathi, masicasheni (One said, let's hide)

Enye yathi, masibalekeni (One said, let's run away)

Enye yathi, asibasabi thina (x2) One said, we are not afraid of them

Saqhuma isibhamu (Off went the gun)

Zabaleka izinyoni (The birds flew away) (Log 23/02/10).

4. **Bana ba sekolo** (School children)

Bana ba sekolo x2 (School children)

Tlang sekolong x2 (Come to school)

Utlwa tshipi yalla x2 (Listen the bell rings)

Ding-dong-belele x2 (Ding-dong-bell)

As an educational psychologist ethnographer I was interested in the role of rhymes in learning aspects such as rhythm and language patterns to enhance language enrichment. For example, the repetition of '*Enye yathi*' words in rhyme number three, '*Izinyoni ezinhlanu' (Five little birds)*. Significant about these rhymes was the implicit meaning of their content in 2010 in contrast to when I first learned them as a youth. In the past I mainly looked at the rhymes as a means of entertainment, in addition to the moral lesson, without seriously engaging in their implicit and explicit messages. I provide as examples the first three rhymes in Table 4.3 because they were the ones most recited by two Grade R groups at Thutong. From an educational psychology point of view, I wondered how the content of the rhymes was consciously or unconsciously influencing the children. Using the lens of sociocultural theory, my interest in the fourth ryhme, *Bana ba Sekolo*, was based on my childhood reminiscences. We used to recite it almost every day at school during my first year in primary school, and frequently heard it on the radio. It gave me a sense of hope because I thought that if this rhyme was still passed from one generation to another the same would be possible with other traditional or old rhymes I had learnt with my peers in the 1970s.

I observed that the moral lesson of the rhymes was not emphasised in Thutong classrooms. It seemed the focus was more on play, language and mathematics development. During my classroom observations, for example, the children were not asked what they had learnt from the rhymes after performing and reciting. My interview with teacher Ratang on 6

June 2010 hinted, for example, at the relevance of rhymes using *Madlamini* rhyme in the following interview Extract.

Interviewer: How do you see play in Grade R?

Teacher Ratang: ....The child gets into **play** with the idea that he is going to play, whereas on the other side he is going to **learn** something. Like **'Sawubona MaSithole'** play, if you take it according to the document we have, you will be addressing LO (Learning Outcome): Listening without interruption. The child must wait for their turn to speak by not interrupting the speaker. It is **LO1: AS 2**.

......The children can **recognise sounds** at a certain level. In the case of **MaSithole and maDlamini** game, the child can associate the letters, **'s'** and **'d'** from the surnames Sithole and Dlamini with their names. They know that if my name is Lefa, it starts with 'l'.

Numeracy - We can **make sequence of events**, for example in maSithole game, Masithole went to town - bought a hat – and she met her friend maDlamini. It is sequence...... (Audio DS300112 09/06/10).

Extract 4.29: Madlamini rhyme

"*Amadada wethu; Anyakaza kanjena; Ayo phuza amanzi; Kwakwa*!" (Our duck shake like this; They are going to drink water; Kwakwa!)". The children used to do duck-like movements. They seemed to enjoy the movements and always kept on laughing during this performance.

Extract 4.30: Amadada wethu – Our ducks

The rhymes were also used for entertainment, as indicated in the field note Extract 4.30 above. In addition, I observed that the emphasis on education, entertainment and fun during the teaching of rhymes was achieved through rote learning or drilling, as the children had to recite them almost every day.

4.8 ROTE LEARNING

Both rote learning and play (see section 4.9) seemed to permeate all areas of teaching and learning at Thutong, including literacy and numeracy, as shown in the examples of rhymes, stories and mathematics below.

The children recited the rhymes and moved on to the next one or to a different activity, without interpreting or discussing them. For example, the rhyme '*Bombela weS'timela*' was sung or recited on most days during the first term by the two classes, as shown in the following extract:

> This took place in Sesotho classroom. Bombela weStimela, Zulu rhyme, already echoed in my ears...... I think I will always relate it to the school....... It became part of their identity for the year 2010 (Log 24/02/10).

Extract 4.31: *Bombela wes'timela* rhyme

In addition, children had to repeatedly retell and perform stories on a daily basis as an important outcome of teaching and learning of the Grade R, as shown in the following field note extract:

> Children were retelling the story that the teacher related yesterday. It was isiZulu story, "*Ingulube Ezinhlanu*" (Five Pigs). Seven children took turns and they seemed to have grasped the story content (Log 04/05/10).

Extract 4.32: *Ingulube Ezinhlanu* (Five pigs)

Revising what was learnt and drilling the activities were conducted on an almost daily basis during teaching and learning of numeracy for Thutong Grade R children. Shapes and colours were also taught on a regular basis and drilled every day, as shown in the field note Extract 4.33 below. From an educational psychology point of view I also reflected on the relevance of learning through repetition or rote learning and its impact on the learning of young children such as the Grade R's, considering both the short-term and long-term memory, as well as how repetition can help young children to learn through understanding.

> Teacher Mabotse marked the register after which she took the children to the Numeracy corner. After the children mentioned twelve months of the year in English, they **revised**

colours and shapes that were pasted on the wall. As they mentioned the colours the teacher asked those who were wearing those colours to stand up, for example, "*Ubani ogqoke impahla ezimbomvu namhlanje?*" (Who is wearing red clothes)? They started with isiZulu and then in English, as follows (Log 25/03/10):

Imibala - Colours:	**Izimo - Shapes:**
Kusawolintshi - Orange	*Uxantathu* – Triangle
Kuphuzi - Yellow	*Unxande* - Rectangle
Kubomvu - Red	*Isikwele* - Square
Kuluhlaza okwesibhakabhaka - Blue	*Indinlinga* - Circle
Kuluhlaza okotshani - Green	

Extract 4.33: Colours and shapes

I considered how children felt and thought about drilling the same content one day after another, as it was tiring to me as an adult to hear the repetition for many consecutive days. However, from an educational psychology point of view, rote learning is one way to move short-term to long-term memory. In addition, rote learning was integrated with play, which helped the Grade R children to cope. This makes sense because play is the leading activity of this developmental phase.

4.9   PLAY AND GRADE R LEARNING

As an educational psychologist I observed how play was integrated in the learning of the Grade R children at Thutong primary school. It permeated all areas of teaching and learning but I provide only a few examples to indicate its relevance to language acquisition and mathematics development, as evidenced through the data collected. How play unfolded at this school was mainly captured under my classroom (Figure 4.19) and outdoor observations in the context of language teaching and development.

Figure 4.19: Indoor play

Data presentation includes the teachers' views on play as it relates to language acquisition and its relation to Grade R programme in 2010. The teachers' approach to teaching Grade R learners was that children learn through play, whether it was structured or not, as shown in the following summarised extract from teacher Mabotse's interview. The full extracts of the two teachers interviews are provided in Appendix 2.

> Teaching….is not to tighten muscles". According **to the teachers, Grade R teaching was about promoting learning through play** whether it is structured or any play**.** It was more about play than formality as children are not supposed to be serious. You do not have to force things to children as things just happen on their own (spontaneously). When you formalise they get bored quickly. As they play, you have to incorporate what you teach. They are not aware that they are learning. They develop their gross motor and fine motor muscles like when playing with clay (Int. 07/06/10).

Extract 4.34: Learning through play

Observing the children I was intrigued by their interaction during outdoor play because their 'natural' communication (community language) was not restricted to the three prescribed languages of the school, Sesotho, isiZulu and English. Each day after lunch break they played outside for about 30 minutes or more, depending on their daily

programmes. When outside they and the teachers used other languages spoken in Kopanong Township. Many were conversant in both Sesotho and isiZulu, including other languages that were not taught at Thutong, such as TshiVenda. English was mainly used when the game was in English. The *township lingo* was also featured as some of the games originated in the township, for example, "*Tamatisoso-sososo. O bitsa mang nna a ke batle. Elizage-age-agegege*" (Tomato souse-souse-sousoso. Who are you calling? Me, I don't want. Elizage-age-agegege). ʻ*Tamatisoso-sososo*ʼ is a children's game that has been played at home with friends in black urban areas such as Kopanong for many years. I used to play it when I was young.

Figure 4.20: Outdoor play

I observed that the children, on their own and through teaching, played a variety of **indigenous games** such as hopscotch, skipping, balancing a ball and wheelbarrow exercise as part of adult-guided activity.

Figure 4.21: Hopscotch

In the following two interview Extracts (4.35 and 4.36), the teachers also indicated the need for the indigenous games:

Teacher Ratang: Different kinds of play.......Indigenous games – Such as *Diketo* (stone game), **Morabara**, *Kgati* (Skipping), Hopscotch. The games help develop their morals, intellect, fine and gross motor skills, counting and so on (Int. 09/6/10).

Extract 4.35: Indigenous games – Teacher Ratang

Teacher Mabotse: Indigenous games - Such as *maSithole* (Ms Sithole), *diketo* (stones game), skipping, **legusha**, teach the children about their cultural values (Int. 9/6/10).

Extract 4.36: Indigenous games – Teacher Mabotse

Based on my observation, it seemed that the role of play at Thutong was important and it appeared to be linked to language development, perceptual development, socialisation and imagination of the Grade R children.

4.10 LANGUAGE BARRIERS

As an educational psychologist I took note of writing and spelling difficulties as well as first (home language) and additional (second) language teaching because they seemed to be the most prevalent learning barriers during teaching and learning at Thutong. Of interest in teaching letter recognition was the use of children's names to assist print awareness. During the first and second terms of the year, teachers wrote the names of children in their activities sheets, so the children got used to this arrangement. In the third term they had to do it on their own.

Writing and spelling difficulties (Figure 4.22, below) became more evident during the third term of the year, when some of the children struggled to write their first names. This made me wonder on the level of the Thutong Grade R children's perceptual development and on the level of their readiness to write and spell either Sesotho or isiZulu and English letters or their names. It was evident that communication skills such as reading, writing and speaking involved motor-based activities. Thus, spelling and writing difficulties experienced by Thutong's Grade R children seemed also to link to their perceptual development.

Figure 4.22: Samples of writing and spelling difficulties

The teaching of the first language (IsiZulu and Sesotho) and second (English) languages simultaneously seemed to create language barriers for the Grade R children with regard to language acquisition and mathematics development. This resulted in translating and code switching challenges, as noted above (section 4.3).

4.11 KEY EVENTS OR CRITICAL INCIDENTS

As part of data collection I picked out a few critical incidents depicting a story of Thutong as another focus for the qualitative description as indicated in Chapter Three (Figure 3.19).

- **Registration**

Based on my observation, 'Registration' (Extract 4.37) appeared to be one of the key events at Thutong in 2010 and contributed to weaving the story of this school. According to the process of registration, the school principal is entrusted by the DoE to ensure that, procedurally and in line with the relevant circular and related legislation, the administration of admissions is carried out and that time frames are adhered to. The parents wished to enrol their children in Thutong primary school because of the dual medium it offered, namely, Sesotho and English and isiZulu and English.

> The principal explained the process to the parents. Parents were divided into two groups according to the languages, isiZulu and Sesotho. I was helping the Sesotho group. Each group wrote the new name lists which according to the principal's explanation, would be later compared to the information they already had........ At the end our list contained twenty Sesotho learners. There were two coloured parents, whose children spoke English. Their parents spoke to me and said that their children, since they accompany each other to school, they will both do Sesotho. There was also a Zulu father who was not sure as to which class must his son join as they speak both isiZulu and Sesotho at home. He said his wife was actually Sesotho speaking. He called the mother who was around to help him decide and she chose Sesotho..... The isiZulu statistic was reported to be 36 learners (Log 01/02/10).

Extract 4.37: Registration

Sesotho and isiZulu are among the 11 South African official languages spoken in this school's catchment area. As a result, the two home languages influenced the process of

registration and admission of the learners at Thutong. The diverse nature of the family dynamics in Kopanong makes the registration and admission process even more complex. For example, in a case in which a father is Xhosa speaking and a mother Sotho speaking both languages are spoken at home. As a result, it is difficult for an outsider such as a principal or teacher to decide or determine whether or not the child is a good candidate for a specific class. It is therefore convenient for the parent(s) who want their child to attend at Thutong to say the dominant language at home is Sesotho, which may not be the case. It is important also to note that the opening of the newly established school, coupled with the extension of registration to the first day of its opening (1 February 2010) and beyond implied that teaching and learning started late.

- **Absenteeism**

The rate of absenteeism at Thutong was high throughout 2010. Children enrolled in formal education in South Africa are expected to be regular at school and attend school for the entire school year, except for exceptional reasons. The field notes Extract below (4.38) provides information on absenteeism at the school. Even if it relates specifically to an incident of strike, the absenteeism rate was generally high at Thutong during all the four terms.

Due to teacher's strike the absenteeism statistics was as follows:

Tuesday 10/08/2010 = All the children were absent

Wednesday 11/08/2010 = 42

Thursday 12/08/2010 = 35

Friday 13/08/2010 = 37 (Log 10-14/08/10)

Extract 4.38: Absenteeism

- **Industrial Action**

Figure 4.23: Teachers' industrial action (Anonymous, 2011, 11 March, Sowetan)

Life in South Africa is often affected by industrial action, two incidences of which impacted on teaching and learning at Thutong during 2010, adding to the problem of absenteeism amongst both teachers and all the children. During a taxi strike passengers had to take alternative measures to go to work or school. Teachers' strike action, as reported in the newspaper clipping above (Figure 4.23) affected Kopanong in 2010, for longer than expected, almost three weeks. The following field notes show how the taxi strike (Extract 4.39) impacted on teaching and learning at Thutong for almost two days and how the teachers' strike (Extract 4.40) impacted on teaching and learning for almost three weeks.

This week is totally different from others at the school because of the 'taxi' strike which is taking place in this area. …some of the learners couldn't make it to school. I joined Ms Moabi, teacher Ratang, and the three student assistants at the assembly… teacher Mabotse as she had already called the admin clerk to make them aware that she was

experiencing transport difficulties at the railway station… commuters were left stranded… As we were standing outside the classrooms Ms Moabi got a call from one of the drivers who were transporting children to school reporting that the children won't make it to school because it was unsafe for him and the children... Another parent called to say their child was not coming to school….. In Sesotho class three were absent... Mabotse arrived just after 9h00 … She marked the register… twenty five children were present and seven were absent... (Log 15/03/10). On Tuesday the taxi strike continued. I arrived at the school at 8h15. To my surprise Ratang is alone … Apparently for Mabotse it is the same transport problem….. One student assistant could not make it as well... In Sesotho class: The number of absenteeism rose from three (Monday) to six on Tuesday… (Log 16/03/10).

Extract 4.39: Taxi strike

There was no school on Friday (06/08/10). The principal told the drivers on Thursday not to bring the children to school on Friday. She said to me she did not want to put the children's lives in danger. The two teachers used the time to prepare their lesson plans (Log 6/8/10). My expectation was that the school will open today (Tuesday) after a long **three weeks** teachers' strike.... I arrive at the school gate at 8h15. There are no children and the gates are locked. I called Mrs Moabi. She said she has just left as the children did not turn up (Log 07/8/10).

Extract 4.40: Teachers' strike action

- **FIFA World Cup**

Figure 4.24: Soccer celebration by fans (Anonymous, 2013, 18 January, Sowetan)

Soccer is one of the sports codes that are popular and liked in South Africa. The newspaper clipping above (Figure 4.24) shows fans of the South African national squad, Bafana-Bafana. Professional soccer players may achieve certain celebrity status in their local community. The popularity of soccer in Kopanong Township extends to its schools. Thutong was not an exception and soccer was the main sport there. South Africa's hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup event from June to July intensified interest and emotions and became part of the learning content for much of the second term (April to June). Every Friday was declared a 'soccer Friday' and Thutong children wore soccer t-shirts representing the national team, as shown in Figure 4.25 (below). However, in the midst of celebration and support of 2010 FIFA World Cup, teaching and learning were compromised at Thutong, as in many schools because of longer school holidays.

Figure 4.25: FIFA world cup

• **Birthday celebration**

Figure 4.26: Display table – Birthday theme

Birthday celebration was the most followed function in Thutong and the celebrant would bring a birthday cake and party packs. However, the celebration of birthdays in the classrooms in black urban communities seems to be a modern trend (Figure 4.26). When I

grew up in Kopanong Township, children used to celebrate their birthdays with their families, friends and neighbours in a unique way that would suit their preferences and background. In addition, the celebration was not a great issue and it was not common to organise birthday parties. I wondered at the meaning that the Grade R children attached to celebrating the event in the classroom. What stood out for me at Thutong was observing how Teacher Ratang used the celebration as a learning opportunity during her interaction with children (Extract 4.41).

They are drawing cakes as birthday is one of the celebrated functions in the school. It is Osiame's birthday. He is sitting alone on the table. Teacher Ratang put a blue crown on his head. He brought two cakes and party packs for his classmates.

Teacher: *Re rile maabane e ne e le dikae? Lebelo ha o tsebe?* (We said yesterday's date was? Lebelo you don't know?)

Child: **Di-sixteen** *tsa August* (16 August).

Teacher: *Ka jeno Lesego* (Today Lesego)?

Lesego: *Ke **di-seventeen** tsa August* (17 August)?

Teacher: *Ra re Osiame o na le dilemo tse kae* (We say Osiame is how old)?

Children: Six.

Teacher: *Osiame, **e re today I am 6 years old*** (Osiame, say today I am 6 years old).

Teacher tells the whole class to say the same

Children (group): **Osiame today you are 6 years old.**

Teacher: *So, **Osiame ka jeko o na le dilemo tse tshelela.** A re e bone tshelela ka menwana ya hao. Re re happy birthday Osiame. Ke maong **chomi** ya Osiame* (So, Osiame today you are six years old. Let's see six with your fingers. Who is your friend)?

Children (group): *Ke nna* (It's me).

Teacher: *Osiame **o supa two boys** - Legae and Kagiso. Ke batla o mo lakaletse mahlohonolo. O re ke ho lakaletsa mahlohonolo ka letsatsi la hao la matswalo. Re mo*

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opella eng? Ke mang a tlo re ntshetsang yona (Osiame you point two boys, Legae and Kagiso? I want you to wish him the blessings on his birthday. What do we sing for him? Who will start the song?)

Osiame dance for them as they sing "Happy Birthday to you" and "He is a jolly good fellow".

As they are singing, other children say 'she' instead of 'he'.

Teacher: **Ba bang ba re 'she'. Ke 'he'. 'She' ke ngwanyana**, *a kere* (Others say 'she'. It's he. 'She', is a girl, neh).

They also sing: *"**Dichomi** tsa Osiame. Tlang le boneng Osiame wa **'forjara'**. O tshwara six years"*… Osiame cuts the cake. (They also sing "Osiame's friends. Come and see Osiame is growing. He is becoming six years")…. (Log 17/08/10).

Extract 4.41: Birthday celebration

Thus, the five key events contributed to weaving a story of Thutong. What stood out for me was that all the key or critical events, unique and different as they appear, impacted on teaching and learning of the Grade R children in 2010. There were the positive and negative aspects of these events. For example, what struck me was how teacher Ratang used a birthday celebration to teach language and numeracy in a simple and practical way, and the interaction during this activity further revealed the Thutong's story of code switching and translation. Registration, absenteeism, industrial action, and the World Cup contributed to reducing the contact time, which was the negative side of these critical incidents. Thus, when the total days lost were added together it showed a significant diminution of teaching and learning opportunity.

4.12   SUMMARY

In summary, this chapter has presented the story of Thutong weaved from the data collected during the teaching and learning of Grade R at Thutong Primary School in 2010 as well as from the critical incidents that took place there. The shared stories formed part of the overall story of a developing school and the experiences of the teachers, learners and parents. The findings of this study are discussed in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

5.1   INTRODUCTION

In eliciting the story of Thutong Primary School, considering the Grade R programme in 2010, Chapter Five presents a discussion of the findings obtained from an analysis of the data collected. These findings are presented in Figure 5.1 (below) under the ten sub-themes and an overarching theme. The final themes which captured the story of Thutong and the interpretation of the results with the existing literature on the story of this school are presented.
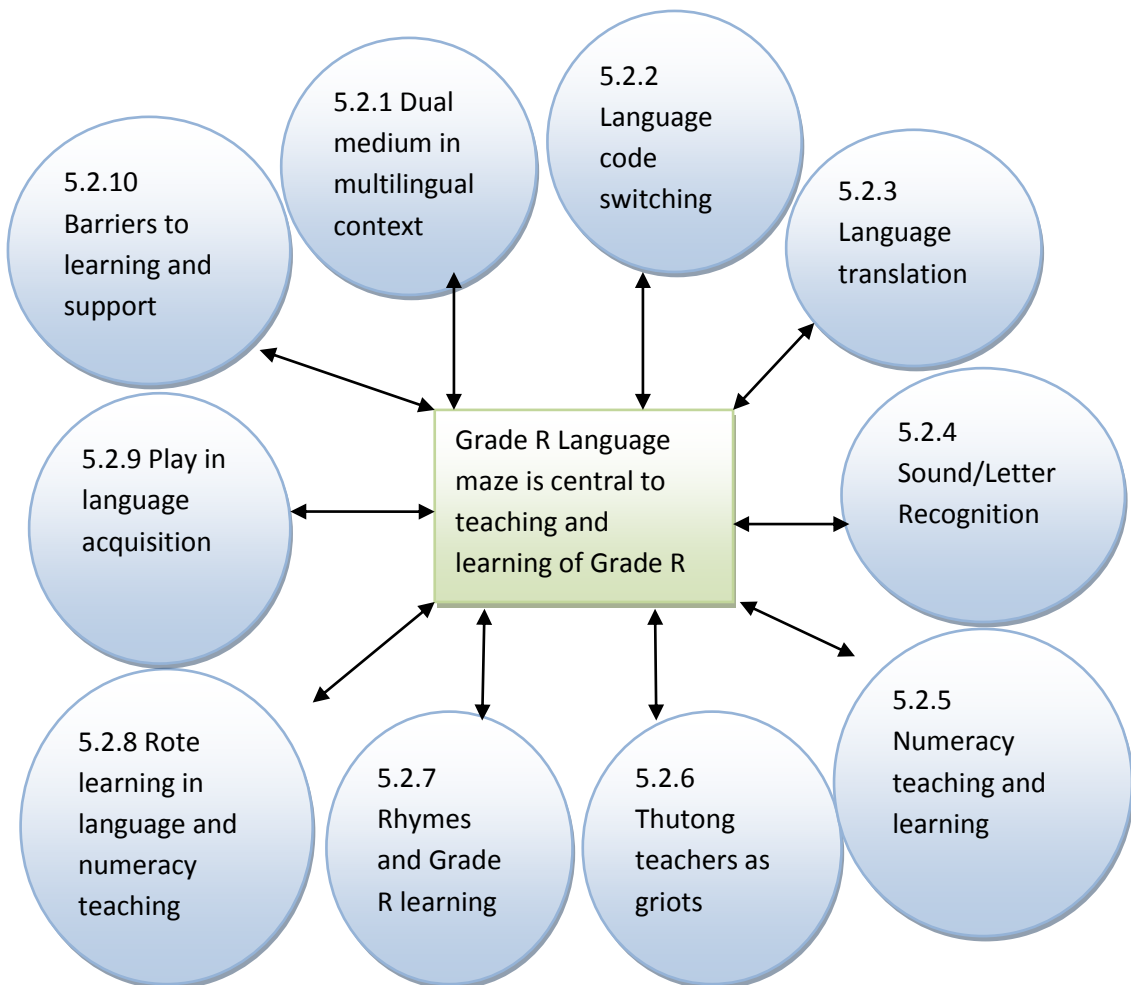
Figure 5.1: Sub-themes to overarching theme

5.2   THUTONG EMERGENT THEMES

The findings aim to answer the research question: What is the story of a developing school in a black urban community, considering the Grade R programme in 2010, from my view as an educational psychologist? Sub-questions are: What are the experiences of the teachers, learners, and parents or caregivers involved in the Grade R development? How can the story of the two Grade R classes in the school contribute to a better understanding of how Early Childhood Development (ECD) could be strengthened in South Africa?

In engaging with my findings I agree with Brewer (2000, p.49) that "ethnographic findings must be valid and relevant to issues of public concern". I indicated in Chapter One that, in the past, ECD and education, including Grade R, was fragmented and did not receive adequate funding or support from the government. However, the DoE is revisiting its stance and currently giving Grade R more attention in order to enhance ECD and education in South Africa.

In discussing the findings I draw on Hammersley (1998, p.47) for relevant "descriptions and explanations," whereby the former are one of the most important types of argument to be found in ethnographic research reports, and the latter, with theories and evaluations, depend on them. Thus, I could not explain, generalise, theorise about or evaluate the teaching and learning of the Thutong Grade R programme without describing it, or at least assuming some description of it. By a description I refer to a verbal or numerical representation of some feature of a scene presented in chapter four. Explanations are concerned with why one or more of those features occurred, and seek to show that they are the product of particular factors, direct or indirect (Hammersley, 1998). For example, I briefly explained in Chapter Three how the vuvuzela instrument became an important aspect in learning because of a football tournament. In this section I allude to the concept, "thick description" (Brewer, 2000, p.138), because of my close involvement in the field. The thick description and verbatim quotations are rhetorical devices used to establish the authority of my voice, as suggested by Brewer. In addition, the examples of verbatim quotations provided in my data presentation in Chapter Four have conveyed a sense of immediacy and provided authenticity and support for my analysis.

My discussion of the findings is informed by a sociocultural theory of learning and development based on the notion that "human activities take place in cultural contexts, are mediated by language and other symbolic systems, and can be best understood when

investigated in their historical development" (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996, p.191). The emerging themes in both theory and practice were the collaborative and transformative way in which knowledge was constructed. The following section focuses on the discussion of sub-themes, leading to an overarching theme.

5.2.1 Dual medium in multilingual context

Combined Grade R classes were standard practice at Thutong, and even if the school declared itself to be dual medium, meaning isiZulu and English and Sesotho and English, multilingualism was promoted through combining the two classes on many occasions, as indicated in field notes Extracts 4.3 and 4.4.

5.2.2.1 Combined classes

Based on the data, such as Extracts 4.3, 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6 in Chapter Four I discussed the issue of multilingualism versus bilingualism in Thutong classrooms and during their guided outdoor activities. However, I avoided interpretations in terms of deficits when comparing them. According to Ucelli and Paez (2007), considering the words a child knows in one and/or the other language, bilingual children's skills may equal or exceed those of monolingual children. In some cases of bilingualism, however, that may not be the case, and children might be at a serious disadvantage in one or both languages, even more so in the case of multilingual children.

It appeared that, consciously or subconsciously, the teachers' intention was to promote both multilingualism and bilingualism. I have acknowledged the role played by context and historical background of the teachers and children as members of this multilingual community, which I believe to a large extent contributed to this. I also acknowledge the benefits of being multilingual in South Africa's diverse context. However, I wished to determine whether it was impacting on those children who were struggling to learn at least two prescribed languages, isiZulu and English and Sesotho and English. According to du Plessis and Louw (2008), the adults involved with multilingual learners carry the responsibility for meeting these learners' needs. They argue that, considering the ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity of the South African population, this responsibility presents a daunting challenge (du Plessis & Louw, 2008). In as much as parents want their

children to learn English and other African languages in addition to home language, they also expect teachers to support the cultural values and norms at home.

It therefore appeared that the standard practice of combining the two Grade R classes at Thutong emanated from the daily life of the broader community in Kopanong. This historical experience in the wider society had filtered through to this school. Traditionally, people in this community mixed languages both outside and inside their homes so the school community language learning resembled the broader culture of this urban area. The school had shifted from its language plan of isiZulu and English and Sesotho and English, as explained during the parents' meeting (Extract 4.1).

I wished to examine the extent to which this impacted on children's ability to learn the two languages of teaching and learning at this stage of their development. I noticed that some were at the initial stage of acquiring a new language. In the Sesotho class, for example, three mixed race learners, who I later refer to in regard to registration (Extract 4.37), were learning Sesotho for the first time. In addition, there were those who were speaking both isiZulu and Sesotho or more than two languages at home. Of relevance here is that somehow they were learning in three languages instead of two, hence I raised the issue of multilingualism as opposed to bilingualism in this section.

According to Riley and Reedy (2003), there may be a need for specific considerations for children for whom English is an additional language and who are at various stages of developing their competence in language in the early years. These children may be bilingual, trilingual or multilingual and, as such, "will bring to the classroom a wide variety of experience and use in their first additional languages" (Riley & Reedy, 2003, p.71). Sometimes settings may have substantial numbers of bilingual learners with one dominant first language whilst others may have a small group or individual learners who have a range of home languages. Thutong was characterised by both and this is typical of the South African context, Kopanong Township included. In addition, the children represented several different categories of bilingual learners, at various stages of competency of English, with some taking it for the first time and some having attended English medium pre-schools and therefore showing some competency.

Thus, the combined classes, the parents' views (Extract 4.5) on mixed languages in a school in a black urban community, and the high status attributed to English indicate the pressure that was exerted on teachers in language acquisition of the Grade R children. The

parents acknowledged the importance of mixed languages, given the diverse South African context. In addition, they held English in high esteem, which is a reality in South Africa and which means it will continue to play a significant role as part of mixed languages or multilingualism. However, mixed languages can also explain the difficulty for white people wishing to learn African languages, because they have nine non-European official languages from which to choose. In conclusion, interpreting the impact of the language of teaching and learning on bilingual or multilingual Grade R children in South Africa is a complex yet necessary task, with practical implications.

5.2.2 Language code switching

The terminology relating to language code switching is not consistent in the literature, but I align myself with the following two definitions as they depict the two classrooms of Thutong. Firstly, code switching is the alternation between two or more languages by a speaker and, secondly, it is the alternate use of two or more languages within the same utterance or during the same conversation (Ariffin & Rafik-Galea, 2009; Hoffman, 1991). For example, Extract 4.7: "*O nka dipuzzles wa dlala*", and Extract 4.8: Counting activity, reflect that teachers had an extra load and challenge of having to either code switch or translate to isiZulu and Sesotho or from English to these two languages.

I observed during my one-year engagement at the school that the two practices of language code switching (mainly from Sesotho or isiZulu to English) and translation were applied interchangeably to language teaching and development. They received equal status and the teachers consciously or unconsciously did not determine or realise their impact on teaching and learning of the language or literacy. Perhaps teachers had this at the back of their minds in exposing children to English. Therefore, in this section (5.2.2) I briefly refer simultaneously to both code switching and translation, although they are mainly treated as individual sub-themes in sections 5.2.2 and 5.2.3.

The two teachers were moving between code switching and translation, because there was overlap in some instances when the two languages were applied concurrently in a single text. However, translation was more of a challenge than code switching. On Thursday 7 October (Extract 4.3), for example, the children were taught the story of '*The Three Bears*' using three languages concurrently. I had heard this story many times but not its pure translation in Sesotho or isiZulu. Each time it was narrated in a mixed language it slanted

more to code switching. Even the English name 'bear' was used rather than being translated into home language, as were 'mother bear' and 'baby bear'.

It is significant that code switching was relevant in the Thutong context, also in relation to Kopanong township lingo, comprising elements of up to 11 South African official languages, used on a daily basis. This cannot be regarded a 'pure' form of language, considering the difference between informal basic communication and the cognitive academic language used in the school, and the diverse posed challenges for both teachers and children during teaching and learning.

The diverse needs of the black urban community and the South African context in general were emphasised by six parents (Extract 4.5), who regarded the mixed languages as a solution and not a threat to their children's learning. They saw it as enhancing the acquisition of language and development, though during the formal teaching of the first language and English first additional language I observed how difficult it was for the children and teachers as they struggled to communicate during the classroom interactions. It took several months for teachers to formally engage the Grade R children in the two prescribed home languages and English.

Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2010) state that while there is a need to address language challenges at all levels of the system, a teacher's role in the classroom is particularly important, but the teacher must also empower and enlighten the parents. In the context of South Africa, language challenges also manifest under xenophobia, as mentioned by one of the parents in Extract 4.5. Some people who speak foreign languages are discriminated against and foreign languages add to the challenges of code switching and translation. This was confirmed by the teachers during our discussion of the findings meeting on 20 June 2012. They indicated that children from Maputo in Mozambique, for example, were adding to the problem.

5.2.2.1 Code switching and multiple languages

In Extract 4.8 in Chapter Four, the isiZulu prefixes **i, u, ku** are attached to English numbers: <u>ten</u> to pronounce as *iten*, <u>one</u> to pronounce as *uone* and <u>eleven</u> to make *kuleven*. The mixing of English and vernacular languages in the same conversation is a common feature of black South African discourse (de Klerk, 2003). According to Foley (2008, p.6),

it is necessary to "make a distinction between employing the African languages as authentic media of instruction throughout the curriculum and using the languages in the classroom in an informal, ad hoc manner in some or other form of code switching". Further, Foley asserts that given the diverse linguistic profiles of many South African classrooms, in black urban schools such as Thutong in particular, it is inevitable that teachers will resort to a mixture of languages for purposes of clarification and explication. The situation is made worse by learners' limited grasp of English. If the goal is to develop the African languages into genuine academic languages, and have teachers use them as such, then the code switching cannot be viewed as anything more than a partial and transitional support mechanism. Furthermore, given the highly context-specific, personal and arbitrary nature of code switching it is impossible to construct generally comprehensible and enduring academic texts in a mixed-language format. Thus, while code-switching practices currently play an important role in many South African classroom environments, they cannot be construed as constituting a target language of acquisition, or as representing a viable alternative to the development of formal academic proficiency in the standard form of a language. Thus, I argue that code switching poses a challenge for laying a solid foundation for home language or first language acquisition in Grade R, confronted with multiple language learners.

5.2.2.2 Code switching as a compensatory strategy

According to Murray (in de Klerk, 2003), the level of code-switching evident in some simple exchanges suggests there may be problems in determining which language is being used, and it may even be problematic for the speakers themselves to say what language they are speaking. They also point out that code switching is not always a signal of ease and competence in two languages, but is often a signal of lack of competence in both. Insufficient access to English and contexts of subtractive bilingualism makes code switching a compensatory strategy (Murray, in de Klerk, 2003). Thus, the expertise of the teacher should also be a factor, which further complicates the issue. From a sociocultural point of view, I believe that a teacher should be an expert in the transmission of cultural tools, of which language is the most important. I argue that teachers should first acquire academic competency in a language before they consider using code switching as a compensatory strategy.

It was not my intention to determine if code switching practice in Thutong classrooms was

due to a lack of competency, and acknowledge that it could assist in later acquisition of English. However, based on Sesotho and isiZulu home languages my question is: Will competency in mother tongue later help children who will have to learn in English? In terms of my question, Foley (2008, p.1) asserts that most current research suggests that "learners entering school are able to learn best through their mother-tongue, and that a second language (such as English) is more easily acquired if the learner already has a firm grasp of his or her home language". According to Donald et al. (2010), the language issue is a complex one that has specific cognitive, scholastic, social, and emotional implications for educational development. For example, referring to the social aspect I found code switching as a sociolinguistic phenomenon to be common during the same utterance or conversation, in line with the sociocultural theory.

Ariffin and Rafik-Galea's (2009) study in Malaysia examined the purposes of code switching and how it was being used to achieve the speaker's communicative intents in Bahasa Melayu English bilingual conversations. They found code switching behaviour to be a compensation for linguistic deficiency or inadequacy and also of use in organising, enhancing and enriching speech in order to achieve communicative objectives between speakers.

5.2.2.3 Sociolinguistic perspective of code switching

Sociolinguists who studied code switching drew attention to "extra linguistic factors such as topic, setting, relationships between participants, community norms and values, and societal, political and ideological developments influencing speaker's choice of language in conversation" (Ariffin & Rafik-Galea, 2009, p.2). It means a sociolinguistic approach is concerned with the role of social factors in the occurrence of code switching, such as the context. Thus, in the discussion of code switching as one of the findings I took a sociolinguistic rather than a grammatical perspective, which entails syntax and aspects of morphology.

First, in Kopanong Township, the 11 official languages of South Africa are spoken. Second, the teachers were raised in Kopanong, working and residing there prior to their employment at Thutong. From what I observed in the classroom, the way the two teachers applied code switching appeared to have emanated from the broader community so it was normal to code switch in this specific context. As Extract 4.7 attests, English, Sesotho,

isiZulu and Afrikaans languages were used, and many children joined this school already knowing some of the English concepts, such as counting numbers one to ten, which they could not do in isiZulu or Sesotho home languages. This could be attributed to a number of factors, such as learning to count in English from some of the local crèches, exposure to television at home, and the general trend of mixing the languages during communication by both children and adults, with English dominance. For example, during my classroom observations in the first and second terms, children were repeatedly asked to use Sesotho and isiZulu as they could easily switch to English during such activities as counting and days of the week. Furthermore, code switching in the two classrooms was not limited to two prescribed languages but also included other languages and even the 'township lingo'. For example, in Extract 4.7, code switching includes the use of isiZulu word '*dlala*' (play) in the Sesotho classroom. Dednam (in Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005) adds that, in South Africa, mixing of languages often occurs and dialect and communication differences make communication difficult, yet the parents expressed a believed that mixed language would benefit the children, given the diverse languages of South Africa, and added that mixed languages helped the children to embrace and accept others.

Code switching is thus part of communication used generally, due to diverse languages spoken in this area. In addition to township lingo, all the official languages are spoken in this area. Since teachers and children are part of this context it was easier and more natural for them to apply code switching. They brought it from home and the teachers enhanced it during teaching and learning. This was not surprising, and confirmed the findings of Klerk (2003) and du Plessis and Louw (2008) that the incidence of code switching between and among the languages of South Africa is high. They add that much of the code switching research carried out in South Africa focuses on code switching in the educational setting, the aim being to identify its incidence and functions in teachers and students.

5.2.3   Language translation

Based on my observation and understanding of the concept of translation, the following three definitions of translation in Sokolovsky (2010, p.286) were relevant for the Thutong context:

1. Translation is "the *replacement* of textual material" in one language by equivalent textual material in another language (Catford, 2004).

2. Translation is "a creative intellectual *activity*", denoting the transmission of information from a source language into a target language (Solodub, 2005).

3. To translate means "to precisely and completely *express*" by means of one language the things that had been expressed earlier by the means of another language (Fedorov, 2002).

Even if teacher Ratang and the children translated appropriately (Extract 4.12) under section 4.3, the Sesotho translated version needs to be clarified. In Sesotho, contrary to English, the greeting "*Dumelang*" represents any time, for example, morning, noon or evening. This example shows how the meaning can be lost in the process of translation, especially when the concepts are not adequately explained and clarified to young children.

5.2.3.1 Translation through artefacts

The artefacts that were used to enhance learning through translation related to the language used, as did nouns borrowed from Afrikaans and English. To the teachers, translation mainly took the form of 'borrowing', for example, the Sesotho words '*ausi*' (sister), '*aubuti*' (brother) in Figure 4.4 and isiZulu words '*usisi*' (sister) and '*ubuti*' (brother) in Figure 4.5 were borrowed from the Afrikaans language. In Afrikaans there are '*ou sus*' (old sister) and '*ou boet*' (old brother), however, as stated above, the challenge to translate is also attributed to the language context of this black urban community and South Africa in general, making the practice of using borrowed nouns take precedence over the appropriate vocabulary as far as the African languages are concerned.

The positive aspect of our talk with teacher Mabotse concerning the translated isiZulu months (Figure 4.6) was to notice her pro-activeness because she made sure that she wrote her own list of months in proper isiZulu (first language), as shown in Table 4.1, instead of the borrowed names. The document (Figure 4.6) contained in the Grade R resource kit provided by the DoE raised questions in my mind pertaining to 'borrowing' instead of translation. Hansen (in Derada, 2007) argues that the school as an institution introduces a regime of action that belongs to a planned bureaucracy. In the case of Thutong it appeared that bureaucratic processing blurred the cultural definitions, because the two teachers accepted some learning material supplied by the DoE without critically applying their minds to it. Foley (2008, p.5) contends that for translation to be conducted successfully, "it is imperative to amplify and clarify the subject-specific terminology in the African

languages, as well as to develop their capacity for generic academic discourse". He adds that it is necessary to develop the African languages as academic and scientific, at least to a certain level, before the Foundation Phase curriculum can be translated. In the South African context, the Foundation Phase refers to Grades R to 3. Consequently, Foley proposes that this development of African languages has to take place before one can expect teachers to begin teaching the curriculum in the learners' mother tongues with any degree of consistency and precision. Donald et al. (2010, p.184) emphasise that at all times respect for the first language and all that is culturally associated with it need to be maintained alongside any other language(s). Furthermore, "positive value must be attributed to the language, particular knowledge, experience, and world views that learners from different sociocultural contexts bring to the classroom". The practice of translation raised the question of how we differentiate between teaching home language or first language and the second or additional language, and how we make the two distinct in terms of the Grade R programme.

5.2.4   Sound and letter recognition and writing

Sound and letter recognition (Figures 4.7, 4.8, 4.9, and 4.10 and Extracts 4.15, 4.16 and 4.17), as another notable practice during my observation of language teaching and learning of the Grade R children at Thutong, highlighted the challenges of teaching sound and letter recognition using dual medium language of instruction. Both teachers found it easier to teach English language sounds and letters than the Sesotho and isiZulu sounds. The sounds and letters presented in section 4.4 were English, which can also explain the difficulty in teaching sound and letter recognition, as African languages' rules are not the same as those for English. Based on Extract 4.15, I investigated what happens to the children who have to learn what they hear in English and associate it with sounds in the vernacular, as in the case of 'c'. In isiZulu, for example, the articulation of the sound 'c' is different from the English 'c'. This will have to be explained to children.

I noticed during my observation how the teachers mixed or interchangeably used letter recognition and sound recognition and considered what was actually relevant for the Grade R's teaching and learning, and which one to start with for teaching and learning, letter or sound, or vice versa? I considered reason(s) to start teaching letter and sound recognition in English, for example, lack of teaching and learning material in African languages or difficulty in teaching letter and sound recognition in two home languages, Sesotho and

isiZulu. Also, could it be because the language of instruction would later be in English?

Considering what literacy development says about teaching letters or sounds recognition I first discuss the phonics approach as Thutong slanted to this approach. Spelling difficulties also relate to the phonic structure of particular languages. First, I agree with Donald et al. (2010) that, in South Africa, African languages such as Sesotho and isiZulu and Afrikaans are mostly phonically regular in the way words are spelled. Thus, the same sound is spelled with the same letters in all words. In contrast, English is different in the sense that many common words are phonically irregular, for example, *there, their, hair, hare, wear*. As Donald et al. (2010, p. 332) argue, "learners cannot rely only on a sounding out approach". Their argument clarified the questions I raised concerning letter or sound recognition in section 4.4. First, in the majority of classrooms the teaching of phonics breaks up reading into small units, individual letters, and consonants and vowel combinations. They caution that beginning readers may have difficulty in sounding out most of the very long (polysyllabic) words in the African languages, and if sounds are taught in isolation they may have difficulty in blending the sound to form the whole words. They further state that readers who have visual difficulties in perceiving similarities and differences in letter shapes (b/d), or auditory difficulties in finding the right sound for the letter (d/t), may have difficulties in learning phonics, and that learning disabilities can result.

On the contrary, the whole language approach appears to be an alternative to the traditional language lessons such as phonetics teaching. It is based on a belief that both oral and written language are best acquired through natural authentic settings and integrate many areas of learning such as language acquisition, social learning, child development and literature (Lazarus, Daniels & Engelbrecht, 1991). According to Goodman (in John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996, p.192), Vygotsky's advice about teaching literacy as a natural process "is realized in whole language emphasising the dynamic interdependence of social and individual processes as a natural part of each learner's development". This is in line with a sociocultural approach. In order to work out what a sentence means, for example, Wild (in Hardman, Jansen, Moletsane, Neves, Soudien, Stroud, Swartz & Wild, 2012) suggests that children need to be able to link it with what they can see happening around them. Wild adds that children also learn better if they are actively involved in social interactions and when people talk to them.

In light of the aforementioned I advocate an integrated approach of the two. Beginning readers, such as the Grade R children, may have difficulty in sounding out most of the very long (polysyllabic) words in the African languages and if sounds are taught in isolation they may have difficulty in blending them to form the whole words. Through a whole language approach the children learn in a natural authentic way that is non-threating. However, the greatest challenge for them and the teachers in general is dual medium instruction, and in which language to start sound and letter recognition as well as writing. I considered whether it was appropriate to introduce the phonics approach in both English and African languages or to start with one language, because the dual medium factor posed challenges with regard to sound-letter recognition.

Despite the challenges experienced during sound and letter recognition, Figures 4.7, 4.8, 4.9 and 4.10 showed how teachers enhanced teaching and learning of the Grade R children through practical demonstrations. This good practice was confirmed by Riley and Reedy (2003), who asserted that the child's understanding of what is being said is important, and this it is enhanced if visual and contextual support is used to accompany instructions and explanations with a practical demonstration and lively gestures, intonations, eye contact and frequent repetitions (Riley & Reedy, 2003, p.73). However, to augment the spoken word, careful planning is essential, as I indicate with the example of letter 'q' below.

5.2.4.1 Perceptual development and letter recognition

It is important to note that when Figures 4.9 and 4.10 are presented together they show different meaning and presentation of a letter 'q'. Figure 4.10 shows how letter recognition teaching and learning can create distortion in children if not planned carefully. As I was observing the teacher's demonstration with the children I wondered how individual children viewed the letter 'q' from where they were sitting, because they formed a circle. I asked myself, for example, how the child sitting on the left or right hand side perceived the letter. Figure 4.10 highlights the appropriate use of circle time during teaching and learning. Much as it may be a standard practice at Thutong and in other schools, teachers have to take into account its impact on perceptual development of Grade R children during teaching and learning of letter recognition. Thus, spatial orientation is important in learning by young children. Their learning success and happiness depend upon their ability to gain control over spatial patterns of the objects with which they come into contact in their daily activities, and move efficiently among them, even if some of these objects have

fixed positions. Asking the children to write individual letters, write their names and copy letters were among several ways teachers Ratang and Mabotse used to assess children's writing abilities. According to Sattler and Hoge (2006, p.565), these ways "help us clarify the relationships among the various output modalities and determine more precisely the nature of the child's functional impairment". The positioning of children in their observation of the letters, for example, Figures 4.7 and 4.10, raised the question of its implication for a child experiencing spatial orientation difficulties and who has to write or copy the letters after visualising them, for example, q, p, d. t, m, and s. Thus, it was evident from the Thutong story that one of the learning outcomes of the Grade R is to exhibit spatial orientation.

Close to spatial orientation is lateralisation, which refers to "the specialization of the two hemispheres of the cerebral cortex for cognitive, perceptual, motor, and sensory activities" (Sattler & Hoge, 2006, p.511). By laterality is meant the behavioural difference between the two sides of the bodies caused by different degrees of dominance in the brain. Thus, Thutong results confirmed that it is important to observe the lateralisation of the manual skills of the Grade R children. Sattler and Hoge assert that, for most children, linguistic functions are localised in the left hemisphere at birth, whereas others become lateralised during development, for example, processing spatial information.

Based on the examples of letter or sounds, c, r, f, and q, in Chapter Four, the challenge of teaching English first additional language was evident during the letter or sound recognition teaching. I asked why this important aspect of language foundation and acquisition was given priority to be taught mainly in English than isiZulu and Sesotho first languages. De Klerk (2003) argues that after the Soweto uprising of 1976, in which pupils protesting about language issues lost their lives, the education policy was rapidly changed to increase access to English, but that changes came too late to save a teetering black educational system from ruin. She further asserts that despite the manifest desire for English, most could not acquire it in its prestigious form, resulting in 50 years of inadequate English for the average black child. By 1980 most teachers of English in the former Department of Education and Training (DET) were second language speakers, products of inadequate Bantu education, a situation that had not changed in Thutong. In addition, de Klerk (2003) argues that the long-term effects of underfunding, overcrowding and teacher incompetence, combined with limited contact with native English speakers, led

to characteristic patterns of pronunciation and syntax becoming entrenched as a norm, with resultant reduced levels of comprehensibility. The nature of schooling in South Africa also deserves consideration, since the English taught in the former DET was very different from that used in the formerly whites-only model C schools. It is important to indicate that Thutong, newly established in 2010 in a black urban community, was also affected.

The Sesotho class appeared to have an additional challenge, considering that three mixed race children and one boy whose home language was predominantly isiZulu were placed in this classroom. Based on my classroom observation I found the situation too complex and challenging for the teacher who battled to accommodate all children equally. I considered how many children could be affected by similar encounters in the two classrooms, given the complexity of determining the home languages of the children in this community. It later emerged that there were children who spoke, for example, TshiVenda and isiXhosa at home, despite the three mixed race children in the Sesotho classroom. Because of the background of the community in which Thutong is situated it will not be easy to find the target group in terms of the language requirement or prescription of the school. All the 11 official languages of South Africa are spoken in Kopanong, unlike the other areas, in which indigenous languages tend to be localised. It was not a surprise that Thutong deviated from its initial plan of registering children whose home languages were strictly Sesotho and isiZulu during its registration and placement process.

Cummins (2000, p.59 in O'Conner & Geiger, 2009) distinguished between basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP), "the registers of language that children acquire in school and which they need to use effectively if they are to progress successfully through the grades". According to my observation, many children appeared to have started Grade R with a lack of competency in basic interpersonal communication skills in English second language and minimal competency in isiZulu and Sesotho first language. At what level of competency were the teachers, including the quality of the learning content, to help build the solid language foundation in the Grade R programme at this developing school? I also acknowledged that since this was the first grade of the foundation phase it posed an additional challenge to the Grade R teachers.

Adding to the challenge of teaching language were the parents' established views and attitudes to language education. Thutong parents' expectations of learning in English were

provided during the interview from 24 to 26 November 2010 (Extract 4.6). Even though I interviewed only six parents they expressed sentiments that South African parents or caregivers often choose English as the preferred first language for their children (Biersteker & Robinson in Donald et al., 2010). As a result, Donald and his colleagues caution that the conclusion that multilingualism is less effective is deeply rooted throughout Africa, political and socio-economic views that indigenous first language instruction limits students' access to further education and opportunities.

In summary, letter or sound recognition was one of the important components of the Grade R programme, however, the challenges of teaching these in English second language or first additional language were evident, as were the expectations of the parents that their children would learn in English against all odds.

5.2.5 Numeracy teaching and learning

Numeracy teaching and learning sub-themes are presented under several headings, as listed in Figure 5.2.
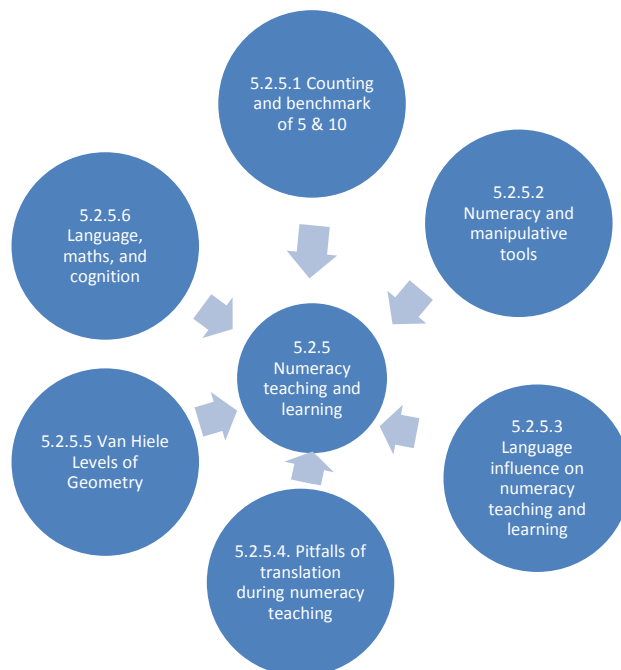
Figure 5.2: Numeracy teaching and learning

As the Grade R programme was integrated it posed a challenge for me during the analysis of data, so there is some overlapping of information. Numeracy at Thutong Primary School was mainly taught through activities such as counting, date, shapes, colouring, and

opposites. Numeracy[10] is essentially a means of communication through interpretation of information involving numerical (mathematical) elements (Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker, & Engelbrecht, 1999). What I explain under this section was evident throughout my classroom observations for the one year I spent in the school.

It is also important to note that this sub-theme's emphasis is on the centrality of language in teaching and learning of numeracy, so the emphasis is more on the language aspect than on standard procedures of teaching mathematics. As Riley and Reedy (2003) argue, language has a supportive role in clarifying and organising the thought processes. In addition, concepts are developed through the awareness of specific and precise vocabulary, for example, the particular features of a rectangle are learnt by knowing the mathematical term.

I allude to Marmasse, Bletsas and Marti's (2000) assertion that there are two approaches to arithmetic development and teaching, the traditional and constructive approaches. Both are briefly explained in order to clarify the stance that I took in line with my theoretical slant. This ethnography adopted the constructive approach because it suggests that "logico-mathematical knowledge, is a kind of knowledge that each child must create from within, in interaction with the environment, rather than acquire it directly from the environment" (Marmasse et al., 2000, p.6). In addition, learners are viewed as thinkers with emerging theories about the world, while teachers refrain from teaching procedures and algorithms, instead interacting with children and encouraging them to invent their own methodologies for all four basic arithmetical operations. On the contrary, the traditional arithmetic curriculum's emphasis is placed on the dissemination of formal definitions to learners who are viewed as blank slates onto which information is etched by the teacher, in a didactic manner (this applies to language acquisition). With this authoritative pedagogy of arithmetic, children ought to start thinking in a certain way in order to solve numerical problems, therefore they might be forced to change their own way of thinking. Marmasse et al. (2000) argue that this approach restricts the variety of useful representations for mathematical thinking. Thutong teaching slanted more to the traditional approach, because the teachers imparted knowledge to children, channelling them to think in a particular way.

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[10] The terms 'numeracy' and 'mathematics' are used interchangeably.

5.2.5.1 Counting and benchmarks of 5 and 10

According to Marmasse et al. (2000), the notions of numbers and counting dates back to prehistory, and all tribes or societies, however simple, have some system of counting. They add that with the invention of writing, symbols were found to represent the numbers. Different methods of representing numerical symbols were invented, but the most common was division into groups of ten. The same applied to counting activities in Thutong classrooms, which incorporated mainly basic counting to 5 and 10, as shown in Extracts 4.18, 4.19 and Figure 4.11. Marmasse et al. (2000, p.4) add that as the child learns the culture's number words and associates these with sets of objects, for example, 5 with all of the fingers on one hand, the manipulation of quantities larger than those the child can perceive innately becomes feasible.

The basis for arithmetical development is formed initially through simple counting, using fingers and objects so that the child does not lose track of what has already been counted. They add that, later, after the child has gained some linguistic competence, verbal counting (thinking with numbers) shapes mathematical development. Based on my daily classrooms observations, a positive aspect about Thutong was that their Grade R children were familiar with these important benchmark numbers 5 and 10, suggesting that a good foundation had been laid. Damon and de Garcia (2010, p.49) add that these "benchmark combinations will prove invaluable when learning basic facts and making tens to solve double-digit problems". In addition, because 5 is a quantity most students can recognise easily they tend to learn these combinations quickly.

5.2.5.2 Numeracy and manipulative tools

This subsection shows how mental processes were mediated by language tools such as puzzles, blocks and a calendar. However, language tool usage extended to bodily engagement, objects, and group activities. Figure 4.12 showed examples of the manipulative tools such as money coins, wooden blocks, beads and toilet roll holders used for numeracy teaching and learning.

As I saw with Thutong children, manipulative tools were part of their mathematical experiences. According to Damon and de Garcia (2010), the intent of these physical objects is to demonstrate mathematical ideas and construct mathematical understanding. I agree with their assertion that the physical tools give children valuable and engaging first-

hand experience with mathematics and give them a way to make abstract ideas concrete. As Vygotsky argued, "early mathematical knowledge develops primarily in social settings with mathematics content, concrete manipulatives, and scaffolding" by a more competent agent, typically a parent or teacher (Starkey, Klein & Wakeley, 2004, p.102).

5.2.5.3 Language influences on numeracy teaching and learning

In field note Extract 4.20: Demonstration of number 9, it was interesting to see how teacher Ratang demonstrated the number 9 to children, by first counting to 10, and bending (*roba*) her one finger. This showed the distinctiveness of Sesotho language as opposed to English with regard to conceptualisation of numbers, for example, 9. In English, 9 is 'nine', meaning that children had to memorise the name 'nine' without any explanation as to why it is called 'nine'. This confirmed the finding of Engelbrecht et al. (1999), that success in numeracy requires insight into problem-solving and factual knowledge. Thus, the way teacher Ratang taught number 9 to her Grade R Sesotho learners was distinct, unique, meaningful and very helpful for this particular group. Considering numbers, number words and counting, "the numeric systems invented vary across time and place, and there is no doubt that the properties of such a system can facilitate or impede the development of children's mathematical understanding" (Marmasse et al., 2000, p.2). Van Oers (2010, p.28) adds that mathematics is a "cultural activity that emerged somewhere in man's cultural history and went through a rich and remarkable cultural–historical development to end up in the multi-faceted and highly sophisticated discipline as we know it today". The above example of the teaching and learning of number 9 in Sesotho, indicates that using the mother tongue, learners were usually introduced very early to the system of manipulating figures involving counting, adding and subtracting, which I considered to be a very important foundation for this age group.

I noticed that in both Sesotho and isiZulu languages, spoken numbers correspond closely to their written equivalent: number 15 is spoken as '*leshome hlano*' or '*ishumi nanhlanu*' ('ten five'). As Marmasse et al. (2000) assert, Chinese (and Asian languages based on ancient Chinese) are organised such that the numerical names are compatible with the traditional 10-base numeric system. Thus, language is clearly deeply imbedded in mathematics learning and teaching (Ginsburg, Lee, & Boyd, 2008).

- **Mathematical development using life world experiences**

During my observations I noticed how children could relate or bring in answers from their own personal experiences and understanding. This confirmed the notion that children are co-constructors of knowledge and teachers need to acknowledge the Grade R's own way of thinking. If Piaget has helped to highlight the way in which children are actively able to construct their own understanding, Vygotsky has helped to focus attention on the social dimension of cognitive development (Rose, in Willan, Parker & Savage, 2008). In addition, while Vygotsky shares Piaget's constructivist views of children's learning, he emphasises the importance of social interaction and the way in which their experiences are embedded in the social context. Thus, this study acknowledges Vygotsky's concern with the process of cultural transmission over the role of biology in cognitive development.

Considering children's own experiences that they bring to classrooms by collecting the objects such as toilet rolls holders and bottle lids from home (Figure 4.12), this highlights the need to accommodate and acknowledge the knowledge children bring to the classroom and that relates to their daily life. As indicated above, the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) also promotes knowledge in a local context. As Aubrey and Barber (in Riley, 2003) argue, children's response to the mathematics presented will be influenced by the way they define and respond to the social situations in which it is presented. Using life world experiences can enhance mathematical development and education. I agree that the emergence of mathematical thinking in young children is a culturally guided process, wherein mathematical meaning can be assigned to (spontaneous) actions of the child. These actions can be further developed through "collaborative problem solving with more knowledgeable others in the context of activities that make sense to the children" (Van Oers, 2010, p.34).

As stated in Chapter Two, I observed the teaching and learning of the Grade R at Thutong from a sociocultural perspective, based on the ideas of Vygotsky, as Van Oers (2010, p.28) asserts, Vygotsky's theory of children's early development might provide the beginning of an answer. In addition, it is the interaction between young children and more knowledgeable others that creates the conditions for the emergence of mathematical actions, when external meanings (e.g., mathematical meanings) are interactively assigned to children's actions. The emergence of mathematical thinking in young children is a culturally guided process.

For Thutong Grade R children, mathematics was embedded in a realistic context and situationally accomplished. Specific artefacts and procedures, in this case, the English calendar, small charts on the display boards, were part of the resources used to organise the specific class context. Learning maths in the classroom also includes learning about context, as is the case in other everyday social and cultural contexts.

5.2.5.4 Pitfalls of translation during numeracy teaching

As mentioned above, the most difficult part of translation, according to my observation, for both the teachers and children, was numeracy teaching. Teachers enhanced this process by using teaching aids such as charts and a calendar.

- **My calendar**

Considering the use of a calendar as a tool, Thutong teachers would struggle in helping the children because they found it easier to tell the date in English than in isiZulu or Sesotho during the calendar activity. There were no isiZulu or Sesotho calendars. The sole use of 'My Calendar' was to raise the question: what are the financial implications of making teaching aids in South Africa in all eleven languages? Language influenced and impacted on numeracy teaching and learning at Thutong. For example, one noticeable common incident which was adding to the challenge of date or using 'My Calendar' was mainly the name of the months in Sesotho, as shown in the following example:

> Ratang taught them the date in Sesotho. She asked them to count up to 19 as it was the current date, and then up to 20. She reminded them they were in the month, *Motshehanong* (May), after which she made them to mention all the months of the year from *Pherikgong* (January) to *Tshitwe* (December). They had not yet mastered that in Sesotho and they were struggling. So, they followed after the teacher. They also told months in English from January to December with the help of the teacher Ratang .... (Log 23/05/10).

Extract 5.1: Date in Sesotho

In the isiZulu classroom the months of the year were only taught in English during all my observations for the one year I spent at the school.

It was evident from the findings that both teachers struggled to teach the date or calendar in Sesotho and IsiZulu. Equally, it was difficult for many children to express themselves in their home languages as far as numeracy was concerned. According to my experience as a teacher and knowledge of Sesotho language, the expected answer, "*Letsatsi la lesome le metso e robong*" meaning 'the 19th day' (Extract 5.1) above, telling the date in Sesotho, will always be a challenge for learners at Grade R level.

The question of teaching the children the date or calendar in both the classrooms was a persistent consideration. Why did the teachers prefer to switch to English when telling the date, even if the learning content at that particular point was in isiZulu or Sesotho? Even though I did not ask the two teachers I asked myself the following questions: Was it because they wanted to accommodate children, because according to my observation, learning in home language, especially mathematics, was a challenge? Were the teachers not competent, confident or comfortable using the home languages? Was it because of lack of the resources? Was it because the provided resource, the calendar in particular, was an English one? I had not heard any attempt from either teacher to tell the year in one of the two prescribed home languages offered at the school. As I am conversant in these two languages I acknowledged that it must have been extremely difficult for the teachers and children to tell the date in their mother tongue because to do so requires more effort than to do so in English. The following example of translating the year '2010' in these two specific languages could have led to code switching practice during teaching and learning:

English: The year 2010

IsiZulu: *Unyaka wezinkulungwane ezimbili neshume*

Sesotho: *Ngwaha oa ketepedi le leshome*

Marmasse et al. (2000) caution that the more complicated the number word system, the more difficult it is for children to learn the counting sequence. The issue of language acquisition raised issues of first and second language competency or proficiency as well as basic interpersonal communication skills and cognitive academic language proficiency alluded to in section 5.2.4.1. The above example confirms the claim by Marmasse et al. (2000, p.2) that "the linguistic aspects of numeration systems not only can affect the speed of learning the counting sequence, but also influence the children's understanding of base structure, place value (units, tens, etc.) and associated arithmetical computations".

The above numeracy examples illustrate the challenges or pitfalls of the translation process experienced by the teachers. The main challenges during long discussions were use and construction of sentences. Teachers and children would still revert to code switching to compensate for lack of words and concepts. Based on informal interviews, observations, artefacts and document available there was lack of translated material or the appropriate ones that could be used by the teachers to enhance language acquisition of the Grade R children. Based on my observation, the two teachers did not have both English and African languages books, but used worksheets or developed their own material.

5.2.5.5 Van Hiele Levels of Geometry

In line with my findings, the learning of geometry at Thutong resembled Van Hiele levels of geometry (Table 5.1, below) or a model similar to that. The Levels 0 and 1 applied to Thutong classrooms. The children could describe the shapes based on their appearance, sort and classify shapes based solely on their appearance, as indicated in Figure 5.3 (below), in their prescribed home languages and English. In addition, the children could recognise and describe shapes by their attributes and properties. They could identify, for example, the figure representing a square because it has four sides.
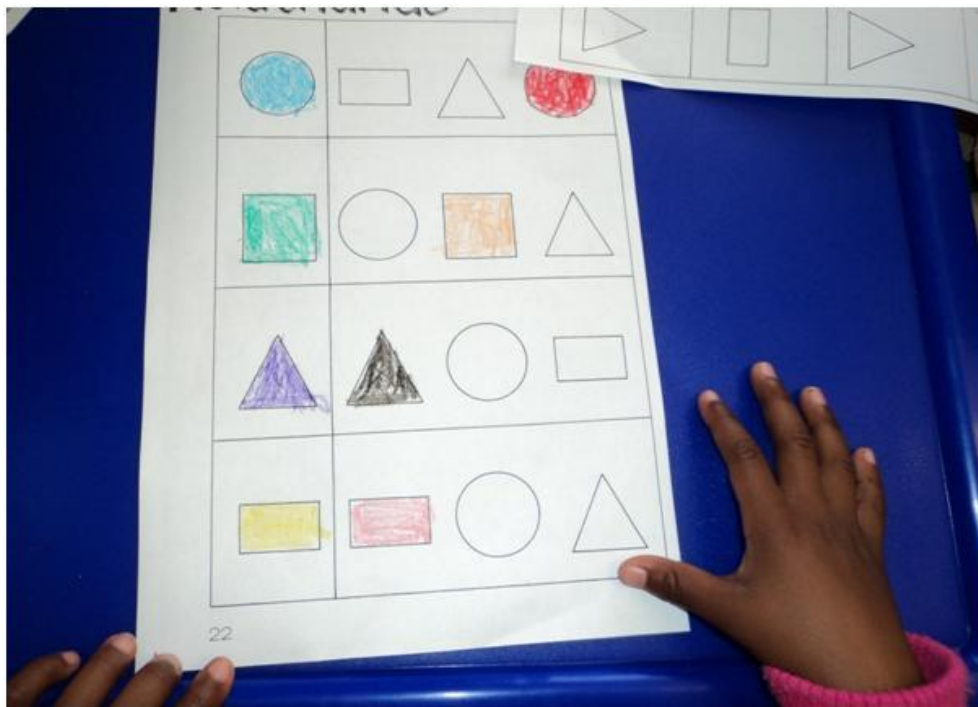
Figure 5.3: Individual classroom activity – Matching the shapes

Pierre van Hiele and Dina van Hiele-Geldof studied differences in geometric thinking and levels that students of all ages pass through when studying geometry. Their theory of the five levels of geometric thought is known as 'van Hiele levels,' developed in the late 1950s and widely used today. It is helpful to be familiar with these levels because they make it easier to locate students' progress when working with geometric ideas. In elementary school, students work mostly on the levels 0 and 1 and start to advance into level 2 (Damon & de Garcia, 2010; Bassarear, 2008).

Table 5.1: Adapted from Damon and de Garcia (2010, p.390)

The van Hiele Levels of Geometry:

Level 0: Visualisation	Seeing shapes as a whole and describe them based on what they look like. Students are able to sort and classify shapes based solely on their appearance. *"The red shape is not a triangle because it looks different."*
Level 1: Analysis	Describing and classifying shapes based on their properties. *"A square has four sides and four right angles."*
Level 2: Informal deduction or abstraction	Developing more abstract and generalised definitions of shapes based on their properties. Students make relationships between properties using if-then reasoning. *"If a square has four sides and four right angles, then it must be a type of rectangle."*
Level 3: Formal deduction	The level of high school geometry. Students appreciate and understand that the use of theorems, axioms, and

| Level 4: Rigour | The level of geometry for a college maths major. Students study and compare axioms of different geometric systems. |

In Sesotho and IsiZulu, the name of the shape itself carries the attributes in a clear manner, unlike in English. For example, in Sesotho, *khutlo-nne* (square) means 'four corners', whilst isiZulu borrowed version is '*isikwele*'. In isiZulu, the name *uxantathu* (triangle) means 'three sides'. In English the name 'square' itself does not tell of any attribute, because it is not defined by its attributes for the children to recognise with ease. This seems to be a good argument for mother tongue teaching to be introduced in the beginning of formal schooling. Contrary to popular belief, mathematics is not language-free or culture-free (Damon & de Garcia, 2010). The language used in mathematics and the ways it is used are more specialised. Mathematics is a product of investigation by different cultures, a purposeful activity in the context of social, political and economic goals and constraints (DoE, 2002). Referring to ethnography, I looked at numeracy instruction and learning through the eyes of teachers and children, and how they perceived and engaged with numeracy practices in their daily lives (Lopez, 2010).

Although early childhood instruction must be sensitive to young learning styles and capabilities it also "must anticipate the mathematical challenges that children will meet in future years in order to prepare them to be successful mathematical learners" (Sophian, 2003, p.215). Further, Sophian asserts that a curriculum that introduces children to the concept of unit as it applies to counting, measurement and geometry has had the potential to meet both of these important considerations.

5.2.5.6 Language, mathematics and cognitive development

Language has a supportive role in clarifying and organising thought processes, with thinking developed through the child's growing control of spoken language, and concepts are developed through awareness of specific and precise vocabulary (Riley & Reedy, 2003). For example, the particular features of a rectangle ('*khutlonnetsepa*' in Sesotho and '*unxande*' in isiZulu) are learnt by knowing the mathematical terms. Mathematics

education "begins in language, it advances and stumbles because of language, and its outcomes are often assessed in language" (Durkin, in Botes & Mji, 2010, p.123).

Language is therefore critical for cognitive development as it provides the concepts for thinking and therefore a means for expressing ideas and asking questions (Botes & Mji, 2010). According to Botes and Mji, in order to achieve in-depth mathematical understanding it has been suggested that effective communication of mathematical ideas is central because language forms an integral part of this communication. Proficiency in conversational English is not sufficient for learners to master mathematics because learners need also to be familiar with scientific English. This poses a challenge for those teachers and children who are at the very early stage of language and mathematics acquisition, such as is the case at Thutong. In addition, the learners have to be proficient in spoken everyday language and mathematics language, but it is important to note that competency in the former does not suggest or imply competency in the latter.

According to Schoenfeld (in Damon & de Garcia, 2010), goals for mathematics instruction depend on one's conceptualisation of what it is and what it means to understand it. Such conceptualisations vary widely. At one end of the spectrum, mathematical knowledge is seen as a body of facts and procedures dealing with quantities, magnitudes, and forms, and the relationships among them; knowing mathematics is seen as having mastered these facts and procedures. At the other end of the spectrum it is conceptualised as the "science of patterns, an (almost) empirical discipline closely akin to the sciences in its emphasis on pattern-seeking on the basis of empirical evidence" (Schoenfeld, in Damon & de Garcia, 2010, p.3). What one thinks mathematics is will shape the kinds of mathematical environments one creates, and thus the kinds of mathematical understandings that one's students will develop. Either way, it is worth noting that mathematics involves language and thinking, as shown in the examples below:

Shapes and Colours:

Children were to count and draw the shapes that equal the number. The shapes ranged from 2-5. The 4 circles in the left column have the following shapes each: 4 triangles, 3 rectangles, 2 squares and 5 circles. The children were to put shapes equalling the number in the empty circles on the right. The teacher **demonstrated** the first one to the children. She asked them: "*Yini lezimo lela*" (What is that shape) and the children said

"*uxanthato*" *(triangle).* She then made them **count** out loud the number of the triangles… after which she drew them in the opposite, empty circle on the right. She moved around the tables to further explain and assist the children… Some successfully completed the tasks. There were those who were very slow and making mistakes but they improved as the teacher and their classmates helped them (Log 12/05/10).

Extract 5.2: Shapes and colours

According to Sophian (2003), an important goal of teaching mathematics to young children is to give them a sound foundation for future mathematics learning. Therefore, teachers must identify how the things they teach young children and the ways in which they teach them can impact on ways of thinking about mathematical concepts that will become important in the elementary school years and beyond. Sophian (2003, p.210) argues that this perspective differs from the traditional ideas about "developmentally appropriate practice" in that it gauges what is appropriate to teach children by considering the kinds of learning toward which students are moving rather than just their current knowledge and capabilities.

In the midst of the positive aspects and challenges experienced by teachers and children during teaching and learning at Thutong, the teachers worked hard to develop effective ways of teaching both the language of mathematics and the language of teaching and learning, in this particular case, Sesotho and English and isiZulu and English respectively. However, the contextual factors discussed in Chapters One to Four, for example multilingualism, posed more challenges for a dual language medium school such as Thutong. In addition, based on Thutong children's way of learning that permitted them to master numeracy, their methods for solving problems might have differed from those prescribed by instruction. It is important to note that this study considered that knowledge is actively constructed, as alluded to in Chapter Two (Engelbrecht et al., 1999). Teachers' application of problem solving methods may be reviewed to accommodate the needs of these specific learners. For example, when I reviewed the results with the teachers on 20 June 2012, teacher Mabotse stated that she had changed the way she taught children the months of the year. Instead of teaching the children for 12 months she had started to teach them about the current month until a new one started, and built on the following ones in a similar way.

5.2.6 Thutong teachers as griots

From the findings, the sub-theme and the four headings (Figure 5.4, below) will be discussed in the following sections. These, based on my data collection, played a very important role in teaching and learning of the Grade R learners at Thutong. For the purpose of clarification, the metaphor 'Thutong teachers as griots' is used to refer to stories and storytelling.
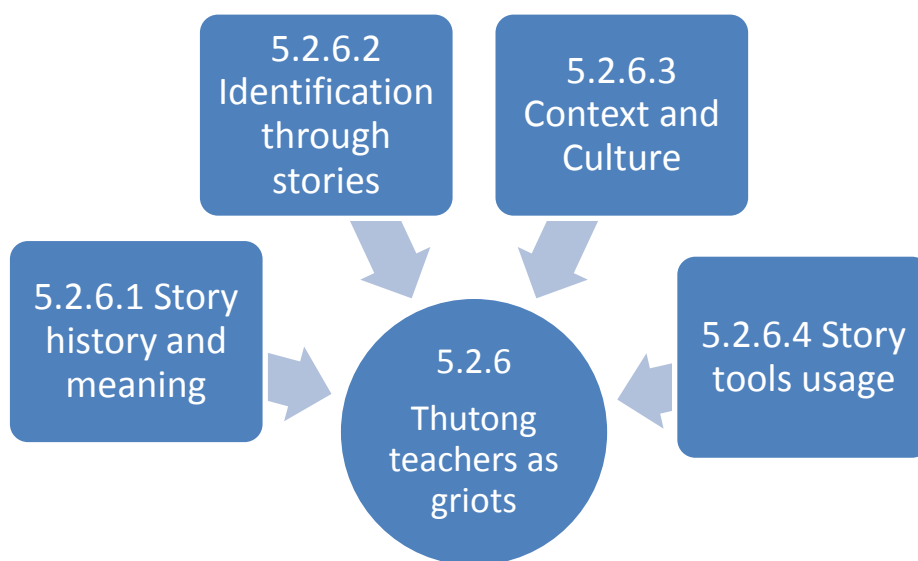
Figure 5.4: Thutong teachers as griots

Since the academic literature offers a variety of definitions of a story from different perspectives, this study is informed by a sociocultural perspective. From an African perspective, a story is a primary form of oral tradition used in conveying "culture, experience, values, knowledge and wisdom" (Fasokun, in Omolewa, 2007, p.596), and traditionally Africans have revered good stories and storytellers. Children learn by listening to their elders, imitating or emulating them. According to Hamstra (2011), a story is an account or recital of an event or series of events or incidents that are either true or fictitious, and the telling of the significant actions of characters over time.

Stories help us to make sense of our worlds and help us to know ourselves in the midst of incompleteness. They also impose order on the flow of experience and allow us to interpret reality because they help us decide what a particular experience is about and with whom various elements of our experiences are connected (Stallings & Foss, in White, 2009).

Orally transmitted information such as stories, inherited from past generations, may be shared in both structured and unstructured contexts and constitute a major resource (Omolewa, 2007, p.598). However, in the structured context of Thutong, the Grade R children were taught stories based on Anglo-Saxon predecessors.

The basis of the story is rooted in the social interaction of individuals. From a sociocultural point of view, a story is an attempt to understand the words and utterances of the individual and how these back-and-forth interactions ultimately develop into shared meanings. According to Hamstra (2011), the social construction of stories provides a unique perspective in which to examine different understandings and perspectives in the modern organisation. While it is important to look at the speaker within social construction, an interesting perspective that has not received much attention involves the "listener", because storytelling is also a "pull strategy" in which listeners willingly (refer to Extracts 4.25 and 4.26) come to engage instead of forcing information from the speaker (Hamstra, 2011, p.88). While the voluntary engagement can be beneficial, with the many perspectives and views from individuals, groups and organisations, it is important for the listener to engage paradigms that may be different from the accepted norms. This was confirmed by teacher Ratang (Extract 4.27) and my observations that Thutong Grade R children also brought their own perspectives. It is therefore important for teachers to understand that the area of stories provides unique perspectives with which to examine the interactions through an understanding of the co-constructed reality found in storytelling.

In giving a brief historical background of storytelling in the African community, White, (2009, p.33) traces the origins of the African storyteller, the *griot*, who was the official bearer of tradition. Traditionally, the griots served several functions, including performing rituals, entertainment and didactic instruction, however, their primary function was education. Oral communication was a fundamental means of transmitting information and ideas. Historically, storytelling as part of African culture was also used to provide wisdom, guidance and strength. As Smith (in White, 2009) argued, Africans place high value on the spoken word in comparison to the written word, coupled with strong oral traditions. According to ter Asvet and Bakker (2009), storytelling has a natural disposition of persons, providing "a lever for transforming curriculum and pedagogy", making schools into places in which children and adults might engage in rich forms of communication and meaningful activities (Doecke & Parr, 2009, p.66).

At Thutong, the main or chief storytellers were the two teachers. Storytelling was a dominant strategy used in the teaching and learning of the Grade R learners, and both teacher Ratang and Mabotse embraced the practice. As storytellers they were to decide what stories to tell, irrespective of whether the stories and storytelling would resonate with their audience. They used the stories mainly for rote learning and entertainment but the moral of the stories was not imparted to children at the conclusion. Children were mainly expected to retell or answer the questions on story content at the end of the lesson, begging the question as to the essence of the stories selected as part of the Grade R curriculum. Hamstra (2011) cautions that the understanding of how to use stories as an adult is misunderstood and underused because of the belief that stories are just for children. Research (Riley & Reedy, 2003) suggests that children learn language best not through drills and instruction but when adults attend to, and are interested in, what children are saying and enter with them in real conversations. Children's language skills need personal interaction in order to develop.

According to Smith (2009), storytelling is one of the most effective means of public speech in any given context, in this particular instance the school. The teacher's ability to tell a story will usually influence if not determine its effectiveness in connecting with the audience, in this instance the Grade R children. My observations raised questions regarding the stories and storytelling: the cultural context (cultural lenses), the moral story; cultural transfer; the role of storytelling in African culture; the history; meaning and rhymes; cultural message and linguistic language development; psychological discourses behind them; who chose them and why; and props. I strongly argue that each of these aspects needs to be critically looked at by griots in the schools, acknowledging Doecke and Parr's (2009) contention that teachers are constrained by centrally generated statements about what all students *should* know and be able to do at certain levels of schooling, rather than what they *might* do, given the opportunity to share their experiences and jointly explore the complexities of language and meaning. I agree with them that curriculum and pedagogy should do far more than induct young people into existing culture. It should enable them to imagine the future differently and to work together to bring about social change. This is very important in South Africa because children need to be able to think critically so that they apply the acquire knowledge and skills in a meaningful way to their own lives in local contexts and globally.

According to Riley and Reedy (2003), human beings are born with a predisposition to communicate and to form relationships, and the "infant's drive to communicate is matched by the adult's desire to enable the child to enter into a world of shared meanings" (p.62). Speech develops through richly varied language experiences, spoken language through a range of experiences such as one-to-one conversations, stories, songs and rhymes. Vygotsky's cultural theory has profound implications for teaching, schooling and education (de Valenzuela, 2006). The sociocultural perspective has adapted and enhanced the ideas of Vygotsky and provided valuable insights into the collaborative nature of learning and the social construction of knowledge. This perspective takes into account not just the child but also the social, historical, institutional and cultural acts in which he or she participates and co-constructs. Schools cannot therefore separate learning and development from the concerns of families and interpersonal and community processes (Waller, 2009).

5.2.6.1 Story history and meaning

At Thutong, the black urban school's original (indigenous) voices were scarce in the literature available at their school. Based on my observation of the selected stories and the storytelling during classroom observations, I concluded that the children's own traditions were being lost, and that the available children's literature had no connection with their own culture as more focus was given to Western stories, mainly: *Cinderella*, *The Story of the Three Bears* and *The Gingerbread Man*. Restoring to students their "story-telling rights" means acknowledging that their local experiences and affiliations are primary (Doecke & Parr, 2009, p.66). In addition, both teachers and children need to see themselves as authors of their experiences, values and beliefs. A brief history of these stories is provided below.

- *Cinderella*

According to the literature there are many early versions of the Cinderella story, with thousands of variants known around the world, all of them of Western origin. This suggests that even if folklorists have long studied variants on this story across cultures, African culture was not included. However, it is important to note that the still-popular story continues to influence popular culture internationally, lending plot elements, allusions, and tropes to a wide variety of media. The story was first published by Charles

Perrault, in France, in 1697. According to early versions, the Cinderella theme may well have originated in classical antiquity, in the context of palace, prince, princess and lords. The focus of this study is on the plot taken from Perrault's variant or version of the story since it was the first to be published (Shi, 2010). One of the moral lessons pertinent to the story is that all people, rich or poor, should be treated with respect and dignity.

- *The Story of the Three Bears*

Lotherington and Chow (2006) tracked the evolution of the *Story of the Three Bears* (sometimes known as *The Three Bears, Goldilocks and the Three Bears* or simply *Goldilocks*) in British and American literary publications through the 19th and into the early 20th century. Their tracking indicated that *Goldilocks* had a circuitous origin, for example, in the original Scottish folktale from which the narrative is theorised to have evolved, Goldilocks was a she-fox who was eaten for her transgression after entering the lair of three bears. She was later reinterpreted as a vindictive old woman living in an English manor, in Eleanor Mure's handwritten story to her nephew. She became a blonde girl later in the 19th century, but does not emerge consistently as Goldilocks until the early 20th century. A moral that can be derived from this story is that there are inevitable consequences to wrong doing. Goldilocks should have waited for the owner to return and not just entered, eaten and faced ruin.

- *The Gingerbread Man*

Volumes exist on the origins of gingerbread, with an early form traceable to the ancient Greeks and Egyptians who used it for ceremonial purposes. Gingerbread made an appearance in Europe when 11th century crusaders brought back spices from the Middle East for wealthy folks' cooks to experiment with. As ginger and other spices became more affordable to the masses, gingerbread became popular. A 'gingerbread man' is a biscuit, usually in the shape of a stylised human, commonly male as the name suggests. The first gingerbread men are credited to Queen Elizabeth I, who presented them in the likeness of some of her important guests (Rolek, Retrieved February 12, 2012). The moral of the story is that one should not trust anyone without consideration.

As indicated above, storytelling in Thutong classrooms was based on three popular stories presented for the entire year. I noticed that African stories were not taught, raising the question as to what had happened to both the oral and written tradition.

During my discussion of the findings on 20 June 2012, I asked the two teachers what informed their choice of the stories. Their responses made up the following.

- **Themes**

They chose the stories because they related to or reinforced the themes they had to teach, for example, when they taught 'seasons' as a theme they choose a story that related to them.

Three little pigs: Theme of **shelter**

Three bears or Goldilocks: Theme of **family**

Cinderella: (There was no answer for this story from the teachers)

- **Vocabulary**

Children need to learn language.

- **What you get on the shelf**

There were no books, even if they checked with the local university library. They cited the "problem of the system" because there were no books. Books with old indigenous stories (such as *Tselane le Dimo*) that they also learned in childhood were not available in libraries.

I asked them to cite examples of the old or traditional stories or folktales. They mentioned: *Modjadji* (Bapedi rain queen), *Unogwaja* (isiZulu story) and *Sekolopata* (Sesotho borrowed name from Afrikaans - *Skoolpad*).

- **Lesson plans**

Lesson plans also provide stories to teach, especially English ones.

- **Publishers**

Publishers provide their own stories.

- **Fun**

The teachers indicated that they looked at the fun or entertainment side of the stories and storytelling.

I am convinced that the processes of "restorying" and truth-telling for indigenous people are "not effective without larger community-centred, decolonising actions behind them, and entail questioning the imposition of colonial histories on African communities" (Corntassel & T'lakwadzi, 2009, p.139). Omolewa (2007, p.595) argues that although Africans do not have the same or equal educational experience in traditional ways of knowing, "the basic characteristic of traditional education in Africa is that it is intimately integrated with the social, cultural, political, occupational, artistic, religious, and recreational life of the people". It is usually stored in people's memories and activities and is expressed, for example, in stories, songs, dance, community laws, and local language.

In referring to the griot's chief function, which was to educate people about themselves and their past, it appeared that the stories chosen at Thutong did not play that role. In addition, these stories did not provide characters with which the children could identify in order to examine their own lives. For example, I was wondering if children knew what a 'bear' was, since I did not hear the teachers asking them about it. I have not seen any pictures in the classrooms or heard any discussion around it. This reminded me of the pieces of the Cinderella characters that were displayed on the walls in both classrooms in plastic transparent bags for children to see. They were dressed in what I could express as 'Cinderella style' (Figure 5.4 in isiZulu classroom). I wondered if children could relate to that style of dressing.

Figure 5.4: Cinderella props were always kept in plastic pockets for safe keeping

The three stories discussed above prompt me to shed light on Glaveanu's (2010, p.48) concept of the psychology of cultural creativity, when he asserts that "understanding

creativity means understanding the various systems that contribute to its development and manifestation, from the biological to the cultural, from the individual expressions to social dynamics". He argues that creativity is both individual and sociocultural, mainly because individuals themselves are sociocultural beings, and asserts that there is a general consensus among specialists that something is creative when it is new and useful, appropriate or meaningful. However, it would seem that in Thutong no one in authority was questioning the relevance of the stories taught and learned by Grade R children. I therefore argue that stories and storytelling need to be revisited in schools, because they provide a valuable intellectual resource with which to challenge the discourse centred around them, especially on "standards and testing" as argued by Doecke and Parr (2009).

Finally, children need to hear and participate in a wide array of stories as young language learners. One of the most effective ways to show them that people live in differing communities is to share stories with them that come from those cultures. They need to hear the culture through its narratives rather than hearing about a culture. Engel (1997) asserts that introducing children to other communities through stories from those communities is also an effective way of validating the narrative styles and habits of the children with whom one is working, as children internalise the storytelling values of their communities. I agree with Engel that it can be seriously limiting for a child to enter a setting in which their way of telling or responding to stories is not accepted or celebrated.

According to Fetterman (2010), folktales are important to both literate and non-literate societies because they crystallise a way of being. Further, cultures often use folktales to transmit critical cultural values from one generation to the next. Folktales usually draw on familiar surroundings and on figures relevant to the local setting. Stories provide ethnographers with an insight into "the secular and the sacred and the intellectual and the emotional life" of a people (Fetterman, 2010, p.65).

In conclusion, the three Thutong stories reinforced the argument that what comes from Western countries is the best or most relevant for teaching African children. As explained above (5.2.6), I found out from the teachers where they obtained the stories, and this led to important insights into the first Grade R programme in a newly developed school. They signified the effort of teachers in a difficult time of starting a programme with what was available at their disposal.

The parents who were interviewed on 24 to 26 November highlighted a need for reviving stories and storytelling culture in this Thutong community. Their responses (translated) in the Interviews Extract 4.28 suggested a diminution if not lack of a culture of stories and storytelling in this particular black urban school community.

Given the above status of stories and storytelling the role of teachers in preserving or transmitting culture to Grade R children at Thutong primary school is further discussed in the next section.

5.2.6.2 Identification through stories

……... It was the story of 'Three Bears'. Teacher Ratang started by saying: "*Maabane ke rileng? Ne ke le bolella story*" (What did I say yesterday? I was telling you a story). Four children raised their hands and related the *Story of the Three Bears*. She asked the class questions to determine if they still remembered what she told them the previous day. At the same time she was bringing in new information, adding to the story. They were sitting next to the display board where the pictures of all the characters in the story were placed by Ratang one after another on the board (Log 11/03/10).

Extract 5.3: Three Bears

Once again, the above Extract 5.3 presented in Chapter Four indicates how the content does not seem to be aligned with context and life world of the children in this sub-theme. Children in the black urban community may not know what a bear is, unless they see it in pictures or go to the zoo. Sociocultural theory promotes a particular conception of internalisation, which is not simply "to copy, to memorise or to transfer something from the *outside* to the *inside*" (Glaveanu, 2010, p.57). Cultural approaches contest this traditional Cartesian image of a psychological world separated from the sociocultural one. According to Vygotsky, adults, as representatives of children's social environment, supply them with so-called psychological tools (such as language, concepts, signs, and symbols), which are being acquired and internalised, and come to mediate children's mental processes (Karpov, 2005). Internalisation is an important component of enculturation, supporting the process of learning one's culture and defining a position within it. Thus, stories provide a whole person experience which connects an external and internal search for meaning (Hamstra, 2011).

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Figure 4.17 shows a white character, Goldilocks, whose long blonde hair might be difficult for black children to relate to. The teaching of stories also involves auditory memory and performance to the exclusion of children's identity. This also applied to the isiZulu class because Goldilocks pictures were pinned on the display board. They served as props when the two teachers related the story. I agree with Hughes-Hassel, Koehler and Cox's (2011, p.37) assertion that the messages that black children receive from society include "stereotypes, omissions, and distortions, along with the image of white superiority", that ultimately socialise them to value role models, lifestyles, and images of beauty in white culture more than those of their own cultural group.

The two Extracts, 4.25 and 4.26, show how the teachers frequently used stories and storytelling to stimulate the Grade Rs' thinking. The context of the story was that of a palace and she was married to king's son. I did not know if children understood what a king was in an African context, as teacher Mabotse did not explore or explain this concept when relating the story. During my observation I got the impression that teachers assumed that children knew and understood the meanings of some words, names or concepts, given their context of staying in a black urban area (township), and wondered how this could influence their thinking and identity construction, as a long-lasting process of telling and retelling stories (Ter Avest & Bakker, 2009). Packer and Goicoechea (2000, p.229) argue that:

> whereas much psychological research treats identity simply as self-concept, as knowledge of self, that is, as epistemological, the sociocultural conception of identity addresses the fluid character of human being and the way identity is closely linked to participation and learning in a community.

5.2.6.3 Context and culture

The sub-theme of context and culture indicates how these two aspects play important roles in choosing stories, and story tools such as language, both written and spoken, concepts and props. Traditional African education is an integral part of the culture and history of a local community, which is stored in various forms and transmitted through various modes, including language, stories, culture and music. Traditional African education, which is passed down from one generation to another, is usually by word of mouth and cultural rituals, and has by and large been used as a way of acquiring lifelong learning. Ter Avest and Bakker (2009) assert that narratives that are told in the cultural context offer plots as

examples of possible scripts for the life story, adding that an example of good practice cannot be hold without making use of culturally embedded stories. Omolewa (2007, p.594) argues that:

> … the coming of European (Western) education from the late 15th century onwards disrupted the traditional system at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, the learning of European languages, literature, history, philosophy, as well as the science subjects, including mathematics.

We want an education for our youth that enables them to embrace their culture as well as diverse culture. Nsamenang (2005, p.85) argues that "the modernist methods of isolating particular behaviours from the full range of contextual variables can provide only a partial picture of an otherwise rich and contextually-nested phenomenon". He asserts that the total African context shapes the pattern of childcare and human development in Africa.

Willis (2008) argues that we have a romantic view of a previous organic community, in which people relate directly, utilising local products of their own making. Willis suggests that people can think of this ideal model, a previous stage at which human relations were more intimately lodged within a sensuous community, when "activities and rituals were formed and informed by care and tradition, including storytelling by known others, and at which objects and artefacts were known, made and passed on by traditional crafts in specific unique ways" (Willis, 2008, p.48). However, Africans are undergoing profound transformation and so their knowledge systems and practices are changing. According to Omolewa (2007), their ways of knowing continue to be transformed by diversity in colonial experience, religion, customs, and languages, among others, and Thutong Primary school is no exception. However, the stories discussed under story, history and meaning (section 5.2.6.1) as part of the curriculum do not represent the black urban community the school was supposed to serve. I argue that the transformation taking place in black communities still needs to take place within the context of their knowledge systems and practices.

Traditional African education is usually generated within the communities, essentially as a way of life, so it cannot be compartmentalised or separated from the people who are involved in it (Omolewa, 2007). Thus, traditional African education was excluded from the Grade R programme at Thutong. Western stories were imposed on children as part of teaching and learning and as a result they were separated from their identity and reality.

The school as an organisation seemed aloof from its black urban community, teaching stories which according to my observation seemed not to be applicable to the Grade R children in a black urban community. According to Hamstra (2011), organisational stories, rather than being factual accounts, enrich facts and infuse them with meanings.

5.2.6.4 Stories as tools

This section highlights the importance of stories as tools from a sociocultural point of view. According to Stetsenko (2004), cultural tools such as stories allow people to embody their collective experiences, skills and knowledge in external forms, for example, material objects, words, pictures and books. Narrative has been widely understood as a mechanism through which cultural meanings and cultural ways of being are preserved, passed on, and enacted (Lee & Johnson, 2007). In engaging the Grade Rs to think, teachers seemed to make use of any available material at the school. It appeared that the goals of teaching were to achieve the learning outcomes, such as stories and storytelling. For example, during my one-year observations at Thutong I did not see any African storybook, yet during my childhood, especially in primary school, there were what I consider to have been a wealth of African storybooks in the same community. The teachers then were not borrowing or translating from those books, as were Thutong teachers, because they were written in indigenous African languages. In this instance, as in the case of Goldilocks' long curly hair, white Cinderella and 'Cinderella dress', children had to rely on their imagination instead of concrete evidence from their local environment or from pictures that would provide a clear depiction or representation of the subject under discussion. I do not necessarily dispute the props as such, as in the case of Cinderella and Goldilocks, but rather question their relevance to Grade R children in a black urban community. I concur with Engel (1996) that stories need not only come from books, because many communities, like the community in which Thutong is situated, have a flourishing tradition of oral stories, which form a tremendous rich strand of everyday spoken conversation.

Uccelli and Paez (2007) wrote of Gutierrez-Clellen's (2002) comparison of spontaneous narrative production with story recalls and story comprehension in English and Spanish for fluent bilingual children, the findings of which showed that children performed significantly better in spontaneous narrative production than in story recalls. I believe that allowing children to be who they are by narrating what relates to their context and culture helps them learn much better than when using foreign cultural tools such as language and

props.

The teachers would be the only ones in possession of little stories books during the storytelling, as indicated in Figure 4.18 under section 4.6, and as a result the teachers instructed the children to listen carefully and attentively. Based on my observation of books as tools I used to ask myself how children's observation of the storybooks enhanced their memory. According to Stetsenko (2004), Vygotsky pointed to unity of mental processes, for example, drawing together memory and thinking processes or functions. In addition, memory in its mature form includes active conceptualising and reasoning about what has to be memorised. One area of memory function that is very important during storytelling in Thutong classrooms was visual memory, in particular, an important factor in many areas of the learning process, for example, reading, as the child must be able to recall information that has been visually presented. Very small pictures or items impact on children's ability to remember what the eyes have seen or read (visual memory). Research evidence (Duncan, Whitney & Kunen, 1982) indicates that when subjects demonstrate good memory of the original visual events, the effects of the verbal information increase with age. In addition, younger children are more likely to engage in sensory than in semantic processing. According to Zaporozhets (2003, p.60), it has been shown in some widely known studies of visual deprivation that "the first to break down are the mechanisms of comprehension, interpretation, and utilization of incoming information for the organization and regulation of behaviour", but that the image of the visual environment in the cerebral cortex remains intact.

In their study, with 32 participants working with pre-school learners in Gauteng province, Du Plessis and Naude (2003) identified needed and helpful strategies that included assistance in developing and selecting appropriate tools for language lessons (O'Conner & Geiger, 2009). Purposeful conversations are embedded in the ebb and flow of daily life, but books also offer access to a wider and fascinating world. Narrative has its own important role to play in the intellectual and emotional development of young children. Stories provide a basis for stimulation, discussion, debate and fantasy. Children will talk extensively about the stories told and read to them, whilst imaginations are sparked by the colour, humour and intrigue held within the covers of a picture book (Riley & Reedy, 2003). Donald, Lazarus, and Lolwana (2010) add that language development also depends on reading and that access is essential to a range of books and other reading materials that

are not only written in a learner's first language but also have a content to which a learner can relate, especially in the early phases of schooling.

Hamstra (2011) argues that the ancient art of storytelling is a foundational element for modern practitioners and academics, and provides a unique perspective on the concept of intersections. He adds that stories provide a whole person (intellect, emotion, spirit, and body) experience which connects an external and internal search for meaning. Unfortunately, the understanding of how to use stories as an adult is misunderstood and underused because of a lack of knowledge. The relevance of stories and early childhood education and development is evident in Forster, Cebis, Majteles, and Mathur's assertion in Hamstra (2011, p.86), that "listening to a story and learning from it is a skill that we learn at an early age and remains an important method of learning throughout adulthood".

Thutong elicited the theme of stories and storytelling, and the subsequent sub-themes of story history and meaning; identification through stories; context and culture and the usage of story tools. The discussion of these themes and the evidence provided by the literature that I reviewed indicated to me the need for the preservation of traditional stories and storytelling by integrating them into the school curriculum.

In conclusion, I argue that there is room for all kinds of storytelling. As Engel (1996) wrote, these differences can reflect personality, culture, and interest, and the richer the repertoire of storytelling styles to which a child is exposed the more possibilities for that child to develop his or her own powerful narrative voice, and one that reflects his or her community, family, and inner life. I align myself with Engel's assertion that it is important to introduce children to other communities through stories from those communities. This is also an effective way to validate the narrative styles and habits of the children with whom one is working. Further, children internalise the storytelling values of their community. In line with Karpov and Bransford (1995), according to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, the child's mind develops in the course of acquisition of social experiences, which are represented to the child in the form of special psychological tools such as stories.

The stories were presented to the children by teachers in the course of their joint activity. Given to and used by the child first at the external level, these stories are then internalised and become the internal possession of the child, altering his or her mental functions. These points caution the teachers about the internalisation of stories as tools, for example, the

three stories discussed in this sub-theme, *Cinderella, Three Bears* and *Gingerbread Man* when internalised. However, they denied the children the opportunity to create a voice that would reflect their own identity, stemming from their families and community. Stetsenko (2004) argues that people use cultural tools such as stories to transform the world rather than passively adapt to the world's conditions. Finally, I acknowledge that it would have been interesting to find out what the children internalised, which I regard as a limitation on my part.

5.2.7 Rhymes and Grade R learning

What appeared to be the three main roles of rhymes: rote learning, learning linked to physical development, or whole body learning and learning through fun or play, as indicted below, are treated separately as independent themes in other sections of Chapter Five. They permeated other teaching and learning activities. Figure 5.5 (below) provides the headings that will be discussed under this sub-theme.
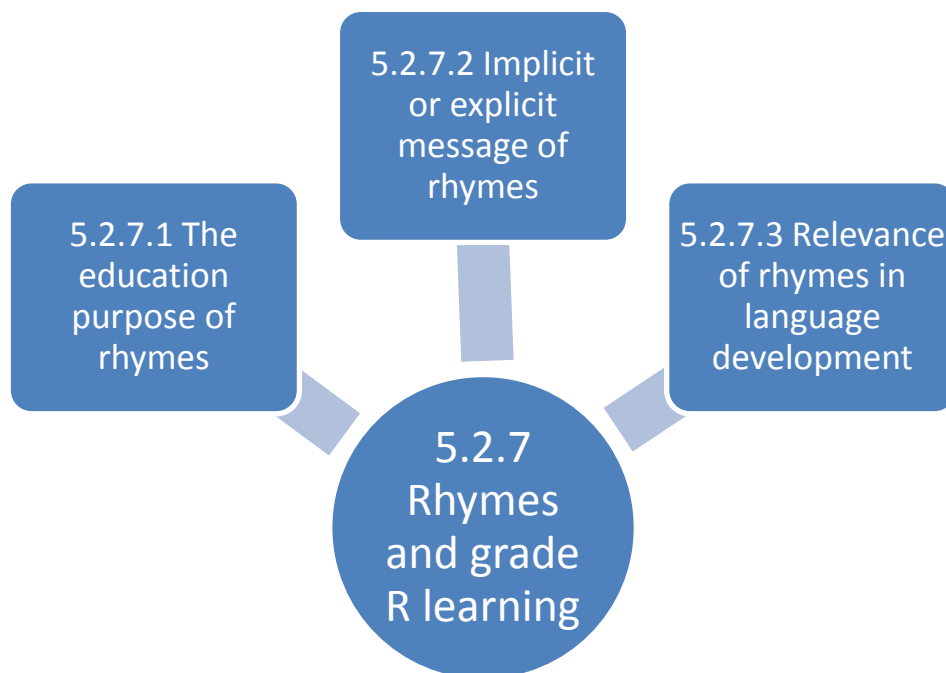

Figure 5.5: Rhymes and Grade R learning

5.2.7.1 The educational purpose of rhymes

From the first to the fourth terms of the 2010 academic year at Thutong, I noted that the rhymes that I discuss in my findings were orally presented by the teachers and children as they were not documented, except for a few English rhymes. The rhymes appeared to be

contextually appropriate and transferred from generation to generation in Kopanong community, however, there seemed to be a lack of engagement with them. The teachers rarely discussed the content of these rhymes with the children as they were mainly used for rote learning, entertainment and playing. For example: "*Amadada wethu; Anyakaza ka njena; Ayophuza amanzi; Kwakwa!"* (Our duck shakes like this; going to drink water; Kwakwa!)". The children used to do duck-like movements and laugh during the performance, confirming the importance of motor engagement and perceptual development for Grade R children. During the recitation of rhymes I tried to keep pace with the children as they recited the rhymes. In the beginning of the first term, during several classroom observations, I realised that I was not going to catch up with the fast pace at which the rhymes were performed. They recited these rhymes and moved on to the next or a different activity without interpreting or discussing them. In my engagement with the rhymes I wondered about their relevance and essence in language development in Thutong (to be discussed in section 5.2.7.3). As Nwosu (2000) found, from the basic to the complex aspects of life and living, much is missing from the African people. He further asserts that African people are now interested in reviving their culture, literature, folklore and other related oral traditions, games, songs, and dances, hence this study.

5.2.7.2 Implicit and explicit message of rhymes

Contrary to the explicit message of rhymes is the implicit message of the language used in rhymes considering the South African context, for example the abandoned children in the case of 'Bombela' rhyme, and how they could inform the curriculum of Thutong. The essence of this finding evoked the following thinking: What was the children's understanding of "*Weshiya bantwana*" (Left the children behind); "*Saqhuma isibhamu"* (Off went the gun); and their understanding of the word "*edolobheni*" (town). The meaning of 'town' has changed. When I grew up as child in Kopanong, the place my community used to call 'town' was situated in the then central business district (CBD), where one could buy groceries, for example, but when the new culture of shopping malls emerged in the early 1990s, people in this area ceased to frequent 'town'.

The essence of *Izinyoni ezinhlanu* (Five little birds) rhyme was that children are exposed to violence in South Africa, for example, the use of guns. I already knew some of the rhymes, based on my classroom observations and from early childhood experience. For example, I

learnt the Sesotho rhyme, '*Bana ba sekolo*' (School children) in my first grade at primary school in the early 1970s. As children, we used to recite '*Sibade siyakhula*' (We are tall we are growing) during my playtime with peers and friends in our neighbourhood. How did teachers view these rhymes in relation to how we use language as adults? Do teachers unconsciously use the language to promote violence and normalise the use of guns to children? Are the teachers suggesting through the language used that the birds have to be treated as such by human beings? I therefore argue that the implicit meanings of rhymes are important because the children internalise the messages they receive from hearing, especially when rote learning is a daily practice. I considered the relevance of these rhymes to Grade R programme in this modern era. Did children know what the school bell (*tshipi*) looked like or how it sounded? Thutong was not using the bell with which children could identify.

During my meeting with the two teachers on 20 June 2012, in which they reviewed the results and confirm or dispute the results, I asked why they used these rhymes. They responded as follows.

Teacher Ratang said the 'explicit and implicit message' of rhymes was an eye-opener for them after the three of us briefly discussed the rhymes: *Five Little Birds; Bombela we Stimela; Madlamini;* and *Bana ba Sekolo* (Table 4.3). She acknowledged that she was not aware of "such important thing", and that they were hearing about it for the first time. She stated that it had brought awareness to them that they had to interrogate the content of the rhymes. Teacher Mabotse agreed.

When I asked about the source of the rhymes they said:

- They did not have books and so had to translate the few English rhymes they had into Sesotho and Isizulu.
- They learnt some of the rhymes from other teachers during meetings/workshops.
- Some of the rhymes are generally known from communities, e.g., Madlamini.

Based on my observations and the teachers' experiences, I considered what happened to the rhymes we learnt during childhood in Kopanong Township, either from school and the elderly people from home, as well as the schoolbooks that contained rich African traditional literature and folklore. According to Stetsenko (2004), the existence and continuous exponential growth of human culture expands the horizons of human

development because large amounts of collectively accumulated experience are passed from one generation to another in teaching and learning processes.

5.2.7.3 The relevance of rhymes in language development

Thutong rhymes are related to the relevance of rhymes in language development. My interview with teacher Ratang on 6 June 2010 about play hinted, for example, at the relevance of rhymes using Madlamini rhyme.

The NCS, LO1: AS 2, to which teacher Ratang was referring in the interview Extract 4.29, is explained as follows: Learning Outcome 1 – Listening: Assessment Standard 2: Demonstrates appropriate listening behaviour by listening without interrupting, showing respect for the speaker, and taking turns to speak (GDE, 2005). However, I noticed that during the rhyme presentations the issue of the home language teaching was not given priority because isiZulu children could speak Sesotho rhymes or vice versa, as shown in Extract 4.29. It is important to emphasise that there could be benefits and disadvantages to this. Knowing and speaking in more than one language is relevant and good for Kopanong community and South Africa in general, however, its impact on dual medium classrooms such as those of Thutong with regard to first language acquisition is problematic.

Referring to English as a first additional language I consistently noticed that during the performance of rhymes the focus of teaching was not on explaining the meaning of the English words or content and language aspects such as pronunciation, but rather on rote learning and entertainment, as indicated above. When I wrote down the rhymes during my observations my writing also included what I heard children reciting and not what I thought could be said by the participants, for example, "If you happy *any nou* clap your hands". It highlighted the importance of pronunciation during the language acquisition of Thutong Grade R children, considering second language teaching and learning. Rhymes seemed to be one of the opportunities that could be created to help in this regard. In order to gain more understanding and clarity I discussed a few rhymes with the teachers on 24 and 25 May 2010. Our discussion confirmed the importance of pronunciation during rhyming as well as the words or phrases used. For example, I noticed that teachers said things in some of the rhymes contrary to what I wrote or heard, and that helped us to engage in a further discussion around the rhymes. The three of us learned from that process.

5.2.8   Rote learning in language and numeracy teaching

I stated in the previous chapter that rote learning permeated all areas of teaching and learning at Thutong, for example, stories, rhymes, shapes and colours. The focus was on a traditional teaching approach (Fata-Hartley, 2011), which meant an ongoing repetition, retelling and performance of the same aspects during learning was an important outcome of teaching and learning of the Grade R.

According to Riley and Reedy (2003), research findings suggest that children learn language best not through drills and instruction but when adults attend to, and are interested in what they are saying and enter with them in real conversations. Fata-Hartley (2011) emphasises the value and superiority of active learning over rote memorisation and the importance of creating activities in which students apply knowledge and engage in the material in a thoughtful manner.

My discussion of this finding of rote learning is not based on what does or does not constitute appropriate instruction for Grade R children in a black urban school. I argue that there is also room for rote learning, and although Kohn's focus is on African-American children I align myself with his assertion that, looking at school-related factors, socio-economic factors are also contributing to rote learning, especially for black children. For example, he argues that the curriculum consists of "a series of separate skills, with more worksheets than real books, more rote practice than exploration of ideas, more memorization (sometimes assisted with chanting and clapping) than thinking" (Kohn, 2011, p.2). Thutong was not an exception with rote practice and memorisation, considering a lack of real books, especially in isiZulu and Sesotho. Kohn argues that those who demand that we close the achievement gap generally focus on results, which in practice refer to test scores. Based on my personal observation, rote learning is widely used in some of the South African classrooms to assist in achieving these test scores.

According to the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), the National Curriculum Statement Grades R–12 is based on, among others, the following principles:

- Active and critical learning: encouraging an active and critical approach to learning, rather than rote and uncritical learning of given truths.
- Valuing indigenous knowledge systems: acknowledging the rich history and

heritage of South Africa as important contributors to nurturing the values contained in the Constitution (DoE, 2011).

However, I share Kohn's (2011) sentiment that policymakers and the general public have paid much less attention to what happens inside classrooms and the particulars of teaching and learning, especially in low-income neighbourhoods. Thutong Primary School and Kopanong Township are not exceptions.

In the case of second language learning, Donald et al. (2010, p.183) caution that "teaching and learning process may shift from active learning to a passive process of information-giving and rote learning, as this is linguistically easier to handle".

In conclusion, a theme of rote learning indicated a need to take a wider perspective and dialogue as opposed to rushing into its merits and demerits. Rather that singling out teachers or instruction in this regard, all the root causes and contextual factors that contribute to this old practice that still take precedence, even in this era, must be thoroughly dealt with. However, learning is not just memorising. Children must talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences, and apply it to their daily lives (Fata-Hartley, 2011).

5.2.9 Play in language acquisition and development

As indicated in Chapter Four, an integral part of learning at Thutong was play, permeating all areas of teaching and learning as a 'golden thread'. Figure 5.6 shows four themes that emanated from the activity of play in Thutong.
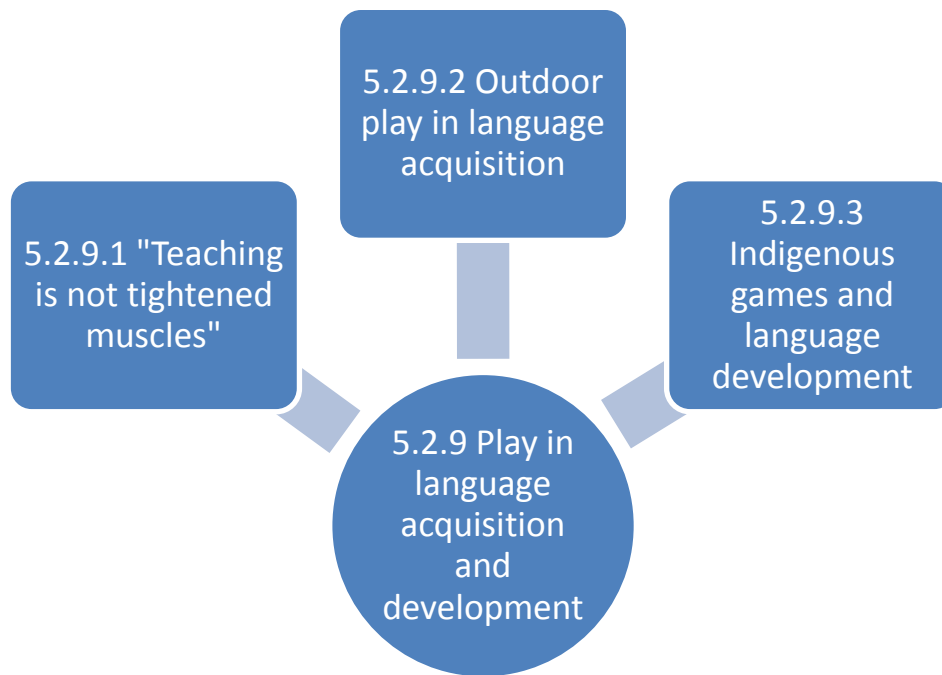
Figure 5.6: Play in language acquisition and development

5.2.9.1 "Teaching is not tightened muscles"

It is clear that learning language through play was very important at Thutong, as indicated by the metaphor "teaching is not tightened muscles", expressed by teacher Ratang. Through drawing insight from the sociocultural theory to observe play in the context of Thutong local culture, the teachers' views on play as it relates to language acquisition and its relation to Grade R programme in 2010 in particular, were important. They highlighted the importance of linking theory and practice and their perceptions of the importance of play was confirmed in practice, for example, during the teaching of letters or sound recognition of q, r, and f in section 4.4. Referring to play and pedagogy, it has been long recognised that most high-quality, well-planned and developmentally appropriate experiences will have play as the means to promote learning. Through the effort of Thutong teachers in promoting play I align myself to Riley (2003) when she asserts that through the motivating nature of play-based activities the child has the opportunity to experiment, to explore and to engage for long periods of time. However, I believe that the emphasis should not isolate play from approaches to language development and numeracy. According to Fleer and Raban (2007), Siraj-Blatchford (2004) found that play-based programmes with qualified staff taking an active teaching role yielded the highest attainments in learning outcomes for children later at school.

Seeing play from a sociocultural point of view, it is an important activity for child development, including language acquisition. It is in play that children create, usually in collaboration with other children, a zone of proximal development in which they perform beyond their current abilities. This is space between what a child can accomplish on his or her own and what he or she can accomplish with the help of a more "culturally knowledgeable" peer or teacher (Hardman in Hardman et al., 2012, p.44). Furthermore, in line with the sociocultural theory, the use of language as a cultural tool allowed the Grade R children to embody their collective experiences in external forms such as words, pictures, and books (Stetsenko, 2004). Language, in particular, played an important role in incorporating play during acquisition of home language and numeracy teaching. For example, how teacher Ratang taught children number concepts such as *robong* (nine) in section 4.5.1 made it more simple than in English, in which the children and the teachers could not trace the origin of number names.

Based on my understanding and observation, the teacher's demonstration by fingers and the explanation of why the numbers were given their specific names enhanced an understanding of counting with these numbers. According to Ginsburg, Lee, and Boyd (2008), although essential for children's intellectual development generally and for mathematics learning in particular, play is not enough. They assert that "the teachable moment is a form of adult guidance" that involves the teacher's careful observation of children's play and other activities "in order to identify the spontaneously emerging situation that can be exploited to promote learning" (Ginsburg, Lee, & Boyd, 2008, p.7). Doherty, Lero, Goelman, La Granje and Tougas (2000, p.3) assert that "the amount of social, language and or cognitive stimulation provided by the adult is related to children's social skills, verbal abilities, and complexity of play behaviour".

Finally, Eckhoff and Urbach (2008) argue that the view of imagination presented by Vygotsky goes beyond popular conceptions of imaginative thinking as mere fantasy play: "The child's daily life and experiences are the fuel for the beginning of creative imagination" (p.182). The child must take information gleaned from personal experience or social interactions and begin the process of active re-construction, which involves the necessary conditions of both disassociation and association.

5.2.9.2 Outdoor play and language acquisition and development

Through outdoor play, Grade R children excitedly explored features in their natural surroundings and this acted as added stimuli for their activities, including the acquisition of the multilingual language considering the diverse language backgrounds of Thutong environment. According to Riley and Reedy (in Riley, 2003), outdoor play holds a special place in the education of young children, offering countless experiences that contribute to their healthy development. In the midst of their urban, multilingual and multicultural circumstances, it was interesting to notice that when they were in their respective classrooms they spoke languages assigned for the classrooms, isiZulu for teacher Mabotse's group and Sesotho for teacher Ratang's group. However, as a result of outdoor play and interaction, they resorted to even more than two official African languages prescribed by the school, for example, TshiVenda and Setswana. Of significance here is the challenge of language acquisition and teaching on the part of teachers and children with this kind of multilingual background, as alluded to in section 5.2.1.

The Thutong study showed how much more difficult it is to teach and learn language in this context than in cases where one or two languages are spoken, enabling children to be much better grounded than Thutong ones. Thus, my findings should be treated with caution as the two teachers' experiences were unique, both with strengths and challenges. Given the Thutong situation, I draw from Glaveanu's (2011c, p.474) assertion that the socio-cognitive stance largely supports studies of "group creativity or team creativity". He cautions that the striving for unanimity and the need to conform have disastrous consequences for the group outcome, and this includes diminished creativity.

5.2.9.3 Indigenous games and language development

It was significant that through indigenous games the Grade R children's home language learning could be enhanced. For example, they learned the vocabulary such as *diketo* (stone game), *morabaraba, kgati* (skipping), and that play assists in cognitive and cultural transformation. With a major concern for the development of higher mental psychological functions, Vygotsky's discussion of sign use in play "helps us to see clearly how one aspect of the transformation takes place in play" (Tsai, 1997, p.4). However, the learning of indigenous games raised the challenge of translation. For example, I found it difficult to

translate the two names: *'morabaraba'* and *'legusha'* in Extracts 4.35 and 4.36, even if in practice, *diketo* (stone game), *'morabara', and 'legusha'* games were not played during my observation of one year at Thutong. What was of interest to me here was the terminology, as indicated above. I considered what could be the 'proper' translation of these names because the games were called as such in the Thutong school community. To an outsider or language expert these names may be unacceptable. To me this was very interesting and I speculated what teachers were to record on their daily work plans, as their preparation sheets were in English. Even in my childhood days we used the same names for these games, which adds to the complexity of home language acquisition for the Grade R learners or early childhood in this context. The same applied to the artefact, *'vuvuzela'* as it was only during the later stage of analysis when I engaged with artefacts that I concluded that this concept has added to the language development as a new term incorporated in language teaching and development for both isiZulu and Sesotho children.

The early years of the curriculum are play-based, which means that children's learning should be embedded in imitative participation in meaningful cultural practices. The format of these is that children are allowed a high degree of freedom with regard to how they want to carry out or elaborate the rule-governed activity (Van Oers, 2010). In Thutong primary school, for example, the Grade R children were involved in role play settings, such as playing a teacher or a family, and stories. I agree with Edwards and Cutter-Mackenzie (2011) that play-based learning needs to draw on and recognise children's existing cultural competencies, acknowledge and actively include the role of the adult educator in connecting children's play activities to particular conceptual and content-based ideas

According to Karpov (2005, p.152), socio-dramatic play "contributes substantially to children's intellectual, cognitive, emotional, and language development; to their social competence, perspective-taking skills, school achievement; and to other developmental accomplishment during this period" of three to six years olds (Karpov, 2005, p.152). Karpov asserts that this stage deals with children's imitation of social roles and relations, which children need to know if they are to imitate them. The explanation to children of different social roles and relations is the major content of adult mediation of socio-dramatic play. For example, in the case of the Cinderella story, children need to know the role of the prince and princess, not just acting them out following the script. In addition, socio-dramatic play is considered to be children's free and spontaneous activity in which they do what they want, liberating themselves from any rules and social pressure;

therefore, adults are not supposed to interfere with children's play. I considered socio-dramatic play relevant in this section considering the role of play during storytelling and rhymes, of which one of their purposes was language enrichment. Gupta (2009) adds that the telling of stories and the dramatisation of those stories provide a powerful medium for the promotion of language development.

According to Glaveanu (2011b, p.122), children play, sing, dance, draw, tell stories and make up riddles in such "a natural, spontaneous and creative way that it goes without saying there is such a thing as children's creativity". His findings revealed a strongly held conviction that children are much more free and creative in their expression than adults, which is relevant in early childhood development as it cautions the adults involved against underestimating their capabilities. However, Glaveanu remarked that this kind of understanding needs to be historically situated and prevents us from exaggerating the creative value of children's products. In addition to Glaveanu's point of a need to interpret his concept of 'children's creativity' within the historical context, the existence of rules as suggested by Vygotsky is important. Given the three sub-themes I discussed in this section (5.2.9), the relevant point that Vygotsky made in discussing play is that he insisted on the existence of rules, whether explicit or implicit, in the context of play (Tsai, 1997). Tsai asserts that Vygotsky has taken both the psychological as well as the cultural dimensions when discussing play. In addition, play enables children to assimilate, accommodate, transform, and to submit to cultural constraints.

5.2.10 Language barriers and learning support
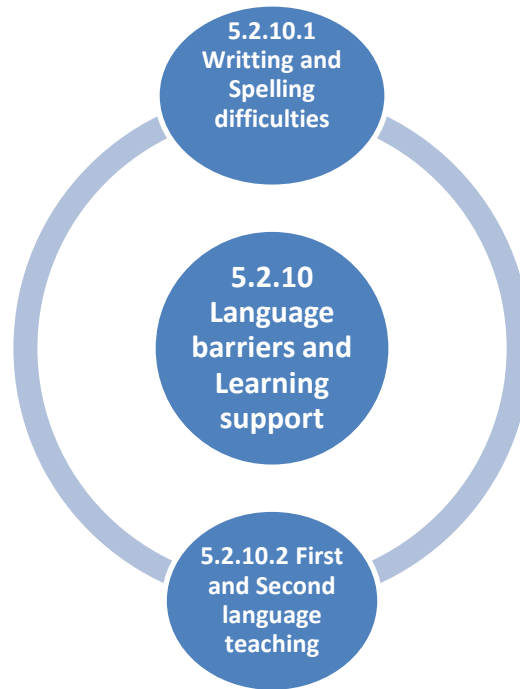
Figure 5.7: Language barriers and Learning support

Language barriers and support of children are among the findings of this study. Challenges with regard to writing and spelling difficulties, as shown in Figure 4.22, were evident. Spelling difficulties also relate to the phonic structure of particular languages (Donald et al., 2010) as discussed in section 5.2.4. Most students with a specific phonic difficulty in reading will also have a spelling difficulty. As opposed to reading, spelling relies mainly on processing phonic information. In line with claims by Donald et al. (2010) the Grade R teachers, in addition to facing difficulties with visual perception, auditory perception, short-term memory, and attention, often have specific spelling difficulties. It was clear from my classroom observations in Thutong that there were children who needed learning support for their optimal learning. In addition to telling the story of Thutong and the experiences of the participants, this study aimed at using the story to strengthen Early Childhood Development and education in South Africa. This theme relates to the research question because the language barriers that existed in Thutong highlighted the need to include how to address learning barriers in the Grade R programme. It is important that this should form part of the Grade R programme as one means of providing support as well as cautioning teachers about possible barriers in this specific grade.

5.2.10.1 Writing and spelling difficulties in Grade R

Figure 4.22 provides examples of the following spelling difficulties experienced by Thutong Grade R children:

Reversals, omissions, and mixing of small and capital letters, for example:

- Reversals: b for d or vice versa; **L** for something like **7**; **s** for **z**; **f** for **t**; **b** for **p**; **n** for **u**; **n** for **z**

- Omission of vowels

- Mixing capital letters with small letters, for example, *THANDolwethu*

Based on my personal experience as a parent, teacher and psychologist, it is important to note that the writing and spelling difficulties I observed at Thutong are not unique to this specific school, but are experienced by many young learners, including the specific age group of the Grade Rs. Donald et al. (2010) confirmed that, particularly in the early stages of learning to read, a number of difficulties may arise in letter-sound or phonic information.

The DoE emphasises the importance of handwriting and writing in Grade R, and the teachers at Thutong were in line with the curriculum outcomes by focusing on these two aspects. According to the new CAPS Policy Document Grade R (GDE, 2011), one of the outcomes of the language skills to be taught in the home language is for Grade Rs to begin to recognise that words are made up of sounds, for example, the beginning letter(s) of their names as presented in Figure 4.22. I make specific reference to the CAPS policy document as it currently provides a new framework for the Grade R teaching and learning.

According to Dednam (in Landsberg et al., 2005), written language is a more complex use of language than speaking or reading, and the development of written language occurs concurrently with reading, although learners first become aware that signs or scribbles on paper have meaning. Lastly, most learners are able to use written language adequately after they have mastered reading. I agree with their assertion, considering the South African context of multilingualism and diversity, making written language even more complex, and black urban communities. As a result, the provision of learning support is more diffcicult.

Considering the challenges experienced by teachers to provide support at Thutong, Riley (2003, p.70) argues that the obvious one in schools is "the unrealistic expectations that one

teacher can communicate effectively with 30 or more young pupils – the factor that runs counter to a supportive linguistic learning environment in the classroom". However, the reality in South African context is that pupil numbers exceed 30 in many classrooms. In addition, Bakker (1999, in Ter Avest & Bakker, 2009), asserts that diversity in the classroom can be perceived in many different ways, and that since children have different backgrounds there are a host of variables to consider, such as differences in character, in socio-economic background, religious backgrounds, intelligence, learning styles and skills in cooperation and communication.

5.2.10.2 First (home language) and additional (second) language teaching

The teaching of the first language (isiZulu and Sesotho) and second (English) languages simultaneously and the parents' expectations about English have posed more challenges for the two teachers and children, which made their work more difficult in their effort to lay a good foundation. This resulted in translating and code switching challenges discussed in this chapter. However, I also acknowledged the benefit during the discussion of code switching and translation sub-themes in 5.2.2 and 5.2.3.

According to Donald et al. (2010, p.183), there is clear evidence that "if a student's formal learning is abruptly cut off from his first language, this cutting off can negatively affect cognitive development in general and the scholastic performance", because of the basic relationship between language, thinking, and learning. According to Riley and Reedy (2003, p.71), there is evidence to reinforce the most supportive conditions that enable effective learning of a second language to occur, "if it is developed from the basis of a flourishing, maintained and supported first language". The earliest stages of additional language learning are also crucial for language acquisition. Children who are in the very early stages of learning English as a second or additional language are aware of the communicative purpose and function of a language, but will go through the following stages of English acquisition (Riley, 2003, p.72):

- A period of silence during which the children have an increasingly receptive language capability, indicated by what they can understand, but they appear to have little or no productive ability. Communication will occur through gesture, mood

and non-verbal utterance. This stage is followed by single words, such as 'Yes', 'Me', 'No', 'See'.

- Children gradually begin to put together two and three words in order to express themselves in increasingly complex ways (for example, 'Me too', 'Me go too', 'Come see', 'Go away!') with the use of gesture and intonation appropriately emphasising the intention.

- It may take up to two years for children to achieve fluency in face-to-face contextually supportive situations, and much longer to use oral language accurately in abstract situations (Cummins, in Riley, 2003, p.72).

It thus appears that the implications of language teaching and development in a South African context in the long term is to strengthen the support for teachers and children in terms of providing the resources such as books and materials that cater for all the official languages as well as revisiting teacher training and development in all official languages. In my opinion, the curriculum has to be contextualised to South Africa's diverse context in order to accommodate the needs of all the Grade R learners. In addition, the CAPS Policy Document Grade R (GDE, 2011) also states that for languages in the Foundation Phase time will be determined by the language context of the school. The suggestion is in line with sociocultural theory, thus schools can choose whether to give relatively more or less time to the home and first additional languages, depending on the needs of their learners. However, CAPS suggests that the minimum time for the Grade R home language be 8 (7) hours and 3 (2) hours for first additional language. According to my understanding of the CAPS, the teaching of First Additional Language, English in Thutong, for instance, is not recommended or compulsory for Grade R. This was confirmed by the teachers during our review meeting when I visited the school on 20 June 2012. They stated that in line with CAPS, their Grade R children would no longer be taught in English, until they reached Grade 1. I wondered how this would proceeds in reality, seeing as a challenge, a multilingual background of Thutong children and the community of Kopanong.

5.2.11 Grade R language maze is central to teaching and learning of Grade R children

The 'Grade R language maze is central to teaching and learning of Grade R children' appeared to be an overarching theme from the findings. In order to capture the essence and

meaning of the events unfolding around the Grade R programme, as explained, I used the metaphor of the 'language maze' because, as in the maze game, children and teachers had to find their way through the language maze unique to Thutong.
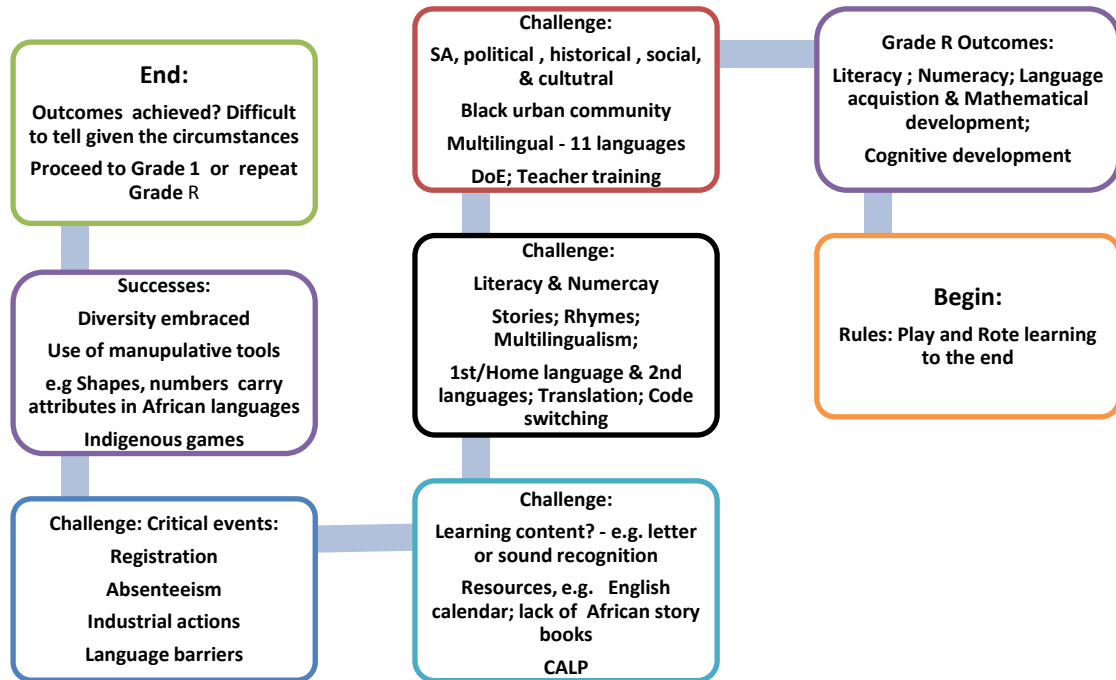
Figure 5.8: Children finding their way through Thutong language maze

Maze is a complex network of paths through which a player has to find a way, the outcome being determined by how the players tackle their playing. The sequence of the maze in Figure 5.8 (above) is presented in linear form for the sake of simplicity. In reality, Thutong presented with these complex interrelated factors that impacted on each other, and both the success and the obstacles were present from the beginning of the maze to the end, even if the successes were overshadowed by the latter. In this game, the referees were adults, including families, teachers and the DoE. Their expectation was for the child to navigate successfully through the maze against all odds, thus external pressure such as parental expectations and the policies and curriculum guidelines devised by the DoE also determined navigation through the language maze.

Based on the many challenges the teachers and children experienced it is not easy to tell whether at the end the outcomes had been adequately achieved. It depends on whether I looked at the results qualitatively or quantitatively, based on the marks allocated according to assessment criteria and standards. Second, it depends on whether I look at the long-term goal by examining their performance beyond Grade R. Furthermore, Grade R teaching and

learning at Thutong revolved around play, hence the use of a maze to portray what was happening. It was evident from the findings of this study that the teaching and the learning of the Grade R children is not as easy as people may assume, because every school is unique in a number of factors, such as culture, geographical location, historical background, and socio-economic conditions. In addition, the 'language maze' metaphor fits into ten linked sub-themes and an overarching theme that emerged from this study. For example, all aspects of teaching and learning at Thutong, such as the sub-themes of play, numeracy teaching, storytelling, rote learning, centred on language.

Thutong findings highlight the significance of the broader policy or community context for shaping early childhood education for Grade R children (Fleer & Raban, 2007). I agree with Foley (2008, p.2) that the 11 official languages are able to function as media of communication at such levels of interpersonal conversation, narrative and cultural practice. However, as they currently exist, the standard written forms of the languages have not been developed to a point that they are able to carry academic discourse effectively, and therefore function as fully-fledged languages of teaching and learning, even at the Foundation Phase, especially considering the significant role ascribed to English. The sub-themes, language translation, and language code switching attest to this.

The role played by language and social interaction is a central aspect in Vygotsky's theory (Gupta, 2009) and enhanced the overarching theme for this study. From a Vygotskian perspective, the process of cognitive development is sociocultural in nature and involves the development of skills as supported by cultural tools such as language. When children are involved in collaboration with peers and adults, a shared thinking is produced by the interaction which is qualitatively different from the thinking produced by the individual. This reminded me of two Setswana proverbs: *Kopano ke matla* and *Tsie e kgonwa ka go tshwaraganelwa*, both of which mean 'unity is strength.' Further, this shared thinking provides the individual opportunity to be involved in collaborative decision-making processes, which are more sociocultural in nature.

Without language, no transfer of culture between generations is possible, as parents and caregivers communicate to their children cultural values that underlie language and inform practice. In this way, the mother tongue is tied to the learner's culture, and "loss of mother tongue may lead to the loss of significant social relationships and cultural knowledge and information" (du Plessis & Louw, 2008, p.2). This alerted me to a language dilemma, for

example, in the sub-themes of stories and storytelling, rhymes and Grade R learning, as well as language translation.

I stated in chapter one that the early years are critical for the acquisition of concepts, skills and attitude that lay the foundation for lifelong learning, therefore the issue is how the Grade R children navigate through this language maze, given the circumstances of a black urban community in South Africa, in order to lay a solid foundation as the first grade of formal schooling. The Grade R children had to navigate to language acquisition in the midst of prevailing strengths and barriers in the Thutong setting, while the children and two teachers had to pass through successes, obstacles and challenges to get there. However, it appeared that teachers were determined to help children overcome the obstacles in the maze in order to achieve the learning outcomes as determined by the curriculum of the DoE, literacy and numeracy.

It is clear that during the teaching and learning of Grade Rs, which is similar to playing a game such as the Grade R language maze, thinking is required. In addition, the ultimate goal is to learn something from that particular game, thus it is important to note that the findings of this study show that language, thinking and learning are closely related. As Donald, Lazarus, and Lolwana (2010) argue, the close relation of these three concepts is a fundamental and uncontested understanding in Educational Psychology, and if the Grade R children are not adequately grounded in language acquisition it will be difficult for them to develop adequately in their cognitive domain to enhance their learning. It is important to emphasise that cognitive academic language cmpetency is essential for both teaching and learning of the Grade R learners, in addition to basic communication skills that they acquire through interpersonal relations at home, with their peers and others. According to O'Conner and Geiger (2009), Cummins (2000, p.59) distinguishes between basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP), "the registers of language that children acquire in school and which they need to use effectively if they are to progress successfully through the grades". The ability to use basic interpersonal communication skills does not suggest proficiency in cognitive academic language proficiency. According to Cummins, while it takes English Second (or other) Language (ESOL) learners approximately two years to become competent in English basic interpersonal communication skills, it takes them five to seven years to reach the same levels as their first language peers in terms of cognitive academic language proficiency. So, considering the dominant language of instruction in South Africa, which is

English, this poses language challenges. It is important to emphasise that the interpretation of Thutong multilingual context and its dual medium instruction in 2010 were among the challenges the teachers and children experienced with regard to language acquisition, when I viewed the situation from the framework of CALP and BICS. Considering the concept CALP, for example, it is clear that academic concepts are removed from everyday practice, such as knowledge of classification (Fleer & Raban, 2007).

For the purpose of this study, the terms 'language', 'communication' and 'literacy' were coined under the umbrella term, 'language'. According to John-Steiner and Mahn (1996) literacy acquisition has been a central concern of sociocultural theory. When children begin formal schooling they start with a foundation that is shaped by "the nature of the interaction between caretaker and child, by literacy uses valued by a particular culture, by print in the environment, and by the child's own activity in literacy events" (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996, p.203). The challenge is to value and build on what the child brings to the classroom. Riley and Reedy (2003) argue that the ability to communicate effectively is fundamental to all aspects of human development: the capacity to think and to learn and, ultimately, to be successful in life depends upon it. According to Donald et al. (2010), the issues are complex as language has very specific cognitive, scholastic, social, and emotional implications for educational development. The South African context, with 11 official languages and diverse classrooms, challenges such as poor literacy and communication arise.

According to Karpov (2005, p.18), Vygotsky's basic assumption is that "the systematic use of tools requires a principally new level of mental processes" to serve this activity. Furthermore, mental processes are mediated by psychological tools such as language, concepts, signs, and symbols. Psychological tools reflect the accumulated experience of humankind. Rather than being born with such tools, children acquire and master them. Having been mastered by children, they come to mediate their mental processes, called 'higher mental processes' by Vygotsky to distinguish them from the lower ones with which children are born. The development of higher mental processes of a child is the result of his or her mastery of psychological tools that represent the history of human culture into which a child is born, rather than being predetermined.

Children's mastery of psychological tools, which leads to the development of their higher mental processes, is a process that has two components. The first deals with an adult's

handing over a new psychological tool to the child and mediating the mastery of it. As an example, I made a specific reference to 'q' under the sub-theme, 'letter and sound recognition and writing', which indicated how the letter 'q' was handed over to children in order to master it. It showed that if the presentation of the symbol was not carefully planned it might impact on perceptual development of the child. Vygotsky held that, being products of human culture, psychological tools should be taught to children by representatives of this culture, teachers in the case of Thutong. However, I argue that the representatives of culture must exercise caution when teaching such psychological tools as language. The second component is the internalisation of these tools. An adult presents a new psychological tool to the child in the form of an external device, which the child appropriates and uses initially in the same form of an external device as it was presented. As the child increasingly masters the tool it is internalised as a mediator of the child's mental processes (Karpov, 2005).

In light of the above findings I agree with Atkinson, Delamont and Housley (2008), that educational sites provide settings in which one can make sense of authority and knowledge reproduction. It is clear that the enactment of teaching and learning is accomplished through the exchange of talk between teachers and students, however, the teacher's pedagogic authority is embedded in the "implicit rights to particular kinds of spoken action" (Atkinson et al., 2008, p.69). Further, classroom encounters are particular kinds of speech events in which speech is differentially distributed. The same encounter applied to Thutong, in which teachers had more turns to speak. These included highly characteristic sequences in which teachers elicited responses from their learners (often in the form of questions), learners attempted to respond (answer), and the teacher completed that particular three-part chain by evaluating the learners' replies. Thus, the *formal* structures of spoken action inscribed pedagogic authority, and provided the fundamental machinery through which teaching and comprehension were performed.

In addition to my findings regarding the language teaching and development, I realised how difficult it was to appropriately interpret the concept of 'home language' because it appeared not to be fitting well with this particular 'rainbow' group (diverse) of the Grade R children, the two teachers included. Despite the language challenges that I highlighted with regard to the learning content, isiZulu and Sesotho home languages were taught whilst English second language was allocated 10 minutes in the timetable, according to

both teachers. However, considering the practicality and the reality of teaching children with a multilingual background, it appeared to be difficult for Thutong teachers to adhere to stipulated time frames. These children needed more time to learn both the prescribed languages of the school. Furthermore, sociocultural theory recognises "the need for cultural, cognitive, and attitudinal bridges between English Second Language (ESL) students and their new environment" (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996, p.203).

A more specific question raised by Foley (2008) relates to home language or mother-tongue teaching in schools in relation to the role of English. No matter how rapidly or to what degree the African languages are developed, it is reasonable to assume that English will continue to occupy a role of crucial importance in South Africa for the foreseeable future. According to Foley (2008, p.10), even if African languages are utilised as languages of learning and teaching in the first years of school, "at some point there will have to be a switch to English as the medium of instruction". Thus, this point justifies language code switching and translation at Thutong, despite the merits and demerits of these practices. Furthermore, the importance of learning English and the reason for using it as the language of teaching and learning was highlighted by some of Thutong parents during their individual interviews (Extract 4.6).

Snow, Burn, and Griffin (1998), as noted by Uccelli and Paez (2007) argue that the large differences between the language skills of struggling bilingual students and monolingual students usually arise from the confluence of factors such as low socio-economic status (SES), home language other than English, and low levels of parental education. I agree with Uccelli and Paez that, although independent effects of these co-occurring factors are hard to disentangle, the academic performance of bilingual students is at risk, as is the case of Thutong Grade R children. My findings regarding the low levels of English language development (vocabulary skills) were consistent with those reported in previous research with Spanish-English children (Uccelli & Paez, 2007). Foley (2008) cautions that since many learners have often not been taught English successfully they find themselves unable to communicate effectively in their second language, in either oral or written mode. While they may have attained a certain level of basic interpersonal communicative competence (BICS), they lack cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP), and thus are not prepared for higher education or for training in a sophisticated work environment. Poor matriculation pass rate and unskilled youth in South African are the results of a lack of good cognitive academic language proficiency. It is significant that, despite recent changes

in the country to redress former imbalances by improving the status of the indigenous languages and down-grading English and Afrikaans, the pressure to master English had not declined, because it has a privileged status over African languages (de Klerk, 2003).

The amended NCS and recently introduced CAPS aim to ensure that children acquire and apply knowledge and skills in ways that are relevant to their own lives. In this regard, the curriculum promotes knowledge in local contexts, while being sensitive to global imperatives (DoE, 2011). This is in line with sociocultural theory. In my opinion, the emphasis on learning the home language first in Grade R is important as it strengthens the solid foundation for language acquisition. However, I have a concern when I consider the earlier years before the children start Grade R as part of formal education. If the other early childhood (ECD) institutions, such as crèches, are left to introduce English language in black urban communities it means they are ahead of the DoE in the introduction of English. This concern was also raised by the teachers during our discussion of the findings meeting on 20 June 2012. Teacher Ratang emphasised that in terms of the language there was influence from crèches that children attend before registering with them, so there is confusion around the language of teaching and learning in black urban communities considering childhood education in general. When I take a wider perspective of the formative years, from birth to nine years, it is dangerous to look at Grade R in isolation because by the time they start this grade many children have already begun to learn in English.

The findings indicate that the learning experiences teachers offered for children were influenced by a number of factors, such as being the first Grade R children at the school and the multilingual background of the children. I showed how the culture of literacy, learning and young children influenced the teaching approaches selected. I agree with David, Goouch and Jago (2001) that assumptions about children's cognitive development, theories of how reading and writing should be taught, issues concerning maturation, external pressures such as parental expectations, the policies, and curriculum guidelines devised by the DoE, all add to a range of issues educators will take into account when making decisions about early literacy. Further, some of the differences in the practices adopted by early childhood teachers in the different countries reveal differences in those cultural assumptions and understandings about young children and their literacy learning (David et al., 2001).

I agree with Riley and Reedy (2003) that the ability to communicate effectively is fundamental to all aspects of human development. In addition, the capacity to think and to learn and, ultimately, to be successful in life depends upon it. The old NCS, as well as the amended NCS and CAPS all recognise the importance of developing spoken language as a key starting point for learning in Grade R setting (DoE, 2002a & DoE, 2011). Thutong teachers adhered to the curriculum needs as expected by the DoE. Some of the language skills to be taught in the Home Language Grade R to 12 according to NCS and CAPS are listed below:

- Listen to stories and act these out
- Sing simple songs and do action rhymes
- Act out parts of a story, song or rhymes
- Answer questions based on the story read
- Draw pictures capturing main ideas of the stories
- Begin to recognise that words are made up of sounds, for example, the initial letter(s) of their names
- Recognise own name and names of some of other children in the class (DoE, 2002a, 2011).

The bureaucratic processing blurred the cultural definitions of the Thutong community because the school appeared to adhere to the curriculum delivery as expected by the DoE, without adjusting it to its unique context. As a school ethnographer I was also captivated by the unveiling of what this school does beyond its officially declared purposes. A mere formalist examination of the school would be useless, hence this study also reveals the concrete process of cultural production and the socialisation processes that are part of the school (De Rada, 2007). According to Stetsenko (2004), Vygotsky asserts that psychological development proceeds to overcome the natural constraints of environment by involving the use of signs, symbols, and other cultural tools, mostly important, language. Thus, people use these tools to transform the world rather than passively adapt to its conditions.

In summary, I used the metaphor 'Grade R language maze' to depict the story of a developing school (Thutong) in a black urban community of Kopanong, considering the Grade R programme in 2010, from my view as educational psychologist. The objective was to describe my experience as well as those of teachers, learners and parents. I defined

this experience in which the children, with the scaffolding of teachers, had to go through a maze, as in a game, with several obstacles and successes to reach the centre or end. The findings indicate that the rules of Grade R in this research were determined by contextual factors, meaning that a universally conformist approach to teaching and learning of the Grade R could not apply to Thutong. This is confirmed by Nsamenang (2004), when he cautions that learners differ from one another in important ways, for example, environment, culture, family, social class and economic conditions. He emphasises that when they are placed in the same circumstances they do not all behave in the same way.

5.3   CRITICAL INCIDENTS

Figure 5.9: Critical incidents

In addition to themes, I looked at how critical or key events contributed to the depicting of the story of Thutong, considering the Grade R programme in 2010 by focusing on the experiences of the teachers, learners and parents. I also considered how the story of the two Grade R classes in the school could be used to contribute to a better understanding of how Early Childhood Development (ECD) could be strengthened in South Africa. I also looked at how these events impacted on learning, considering the challenges of teaching and learning of the Grade R children. When viewed from the point of view of time, the incidents contributed to a loss of quality teaching and learning time, so teachers were pressured to keep up with the set standard timeframes of curriculum completion, though these incidents took almost half of their time. I argue that it would be unfair to focus attention on teaching and learning in Thutong to the exclusion of some of the contextual

factors that impacted on learning. A brief discussion on some of these critical incidents is provided below.

5.3.1 Registration

The important process of registration impacted on language teaching and learning of the Grade R programme at this school, considering the multilingual aspect of this black urban school and its community in which all the 11 official languages of South Africa are spoken. The point here is that, given the home or family backgrounds in this specific context of Kopanong Township, it is not easy for the school to enrol children who are 'purely' isiZulu or Sesotho. An example is from Extract 4.38 in Chapter Four, in which a Zulu father's wife was Sesotho speaking and not sure in which class to enrol their child as they spoke all the languages at home. According to Glaveanu (2011c, p.476), most socio-cognitive theories envision the person as "a unit that processes information from the environment and environment as an asset of variables that come to offer diverse types of stimulation". So, the social environment can facilitate or constrain individual expression. I also considered the impact of this late registration on children that I referred to under section 4.11. Thus, the point I make on registration is that if it is not carefully planned, by thoroughly considering the demographics such as home languages and the appropriate time of registration, it may impact negatively on teaching and learning of the Grade R children. It simply means that these children will proceed to Grade R inadequately prepared for the future.

5.3.2 Absenteeism

A high rate of child absenteeism at Thutong posed a challenge for teaching and learning. My focus at Thutong was merely to observe the incident of absenteeism, which means the focus was not to distinguish between different categories such as authorised and unauthorised absenteeism or necessarily the reasons for learner absenteeism. However, in their study on learner absenteeism in South Africa, Weidman, Goga, Lopez, Mayet, Macun and Barry (2007) revealed that among the causes were personal factors such as illness and socio-economic problems relating to transport and dysfunctional families. These factors were also evident in Thutong, therefore, the teachers and professionals in ECD and education must address the challenge. In line with the sociocultural theory, it makes sense

because the social and cultural contexts have to be considered in order to manage absenteeism, thus calling for a holistic approach. As Ndani and Kimani (2010, p.35) argue, "increased urbanization, introduction of formal education, the universal use of the money economy and the multiplicity of the role of mothers, pose challenges in the use of the traditionally effective childcare systems". Addressing the incident of absenteeism must therefore not be oversimplified.

I argue that there is an urgent need to attend to this challenge during ECD, Grade R in particular, to uproot it at the earliest convenience. Moreover, based on the findings of their research, Weidman et al. (2007) indicate that absenteeism results in children becoming socially isolated and prone to leaving school early. Romero and Lee (2007) cautioned against chronic school absenteeism among early elementary school children, asserting that early absenteeism negatively impacts on academic achievement in reading, mathematics, and general knowledge in early school years. As with their colleagues in all other public schools, Thutong teachers were expected to complete the curriculum within the required timeframes. This suggests that the gaps were created in knowledge and basic skills acquisition for the Grade R children, because teachers did not have time to catch up with the affected learners.

5.3.3   Industrial action

Two incidents of industrial action by teachers and taxi drivers impacted negatively on teaching and learning at Thutong during 2010, adding to the problem of absenteeism from both teachers and all the children. The year saw the largest and most extended strike action in the history of the South African education system (Rossouw, 2012). In addition, Rossouw argues that strike action by educators is intrinsically an infringement of the right of learners to education, and should always be regarded as a last resort to bring about change. The taxi drivers' strike indirectly impacted on teaching and learning at Thutong for almost two days, as taxis have been an important mode of transport in this black suburb for many years. Any industrial action from the taxi drivers and owners impacts negatively on the daily activities of the whole community, including schooling. The majority of the Kopanong Township community relies on taxis as a primary means of transport. Depending on how long they last, industrial strike actions left parents and teachers scrambling to make alternative childcare arrangements and jeopardised the remainder of

the term. This compromised the teaching and learning of the Grade R children in the year 2010.

5.3.4   2010 World Cup

The opportunity given to host the 2010 football World Cup was considered by some to be a great economic and social milestone for South Africa. However, that the event was held from 11 June to 11 July 2010 influenced teaching and learning in the country, Thutong Primary School in particular. The tournament was also part of the learning content for many days during the Second Term (April – June), thus providing an opportunity for relevant experiences for Grade R children to relate to what was happening in the country during that historical moment. Thutong, like other public schools in South Africa, enjoyed longer holidays than in previous years, because of the event. Long school holidays reduced the time of teaching and learning for Grade R children in 2010.

One of the potential risks children faced, according to UNICEF South Africa Programmes (2010), was that school closure during the tournament would lead to a sharp increase in the number of unattended children. Despite the challenges, this study acknowledges that it left a lasting social, cultural and economic legacy for the country. The question can however be asked: How do such events interfere with the learning process?

In conclusion, upon evaluating the rate of absenteeism due to a general tendency for some of the parents to absent their children from school, industrial actions, global and national events, and the World Cup, it was clear that too much teaching and learning time was taken up by them. Thus, at Thutong these critical incidents presented barriers to learning and development as they interfered with the process. The implications in the South African context are very serious, given that the country is currently struggling to provide quality teaching and learning for young children.

5.3.5   Birthday celebration

Birthday celebration as a critical or key event in Thutong classrooms was used to enhance teaching and learning of the Grade R children. It thus appeared that its purpose was not only celebration and entertainment. Extract 4.40 demonstrates how teacher Ratang used

this event to teach, among others, language, for example, children stating the date of birthday celebrant in both (home language and English) and mathematics (for example, using a calendar and counting). However, even if the intention was good, the teaching and learning was affected by contextual factors (such as languages), as discussed in the ten sub-themes above. It was interesting to note that there were elements of language code switching and translation. The languages involved were Sesotho, English, Afrikaans and township lingo, as seen in the three examples below. This observation confirms the nature of multilingual context of Kopanong, as well as the uniqueness of this particular school environment, a black urban context.

Examples:

a) **English and Sesotho translation:**
   English: Children (group): Osiame today you are six years old.
   Sesotho: Teacher: So, *Osiame ka jeko o na le dilemo tse tshelela*.
b) **Afrikaans**: _forjaar_ is Afrikaans borrowed noun from Afrikaans, '*jaar*'.
c) **Township lingo**: Chomi means friend.

In addition to my observation of birthday celebration, I noticed that these celebrations were done the Western way. For example, the celebrant would provide a cake and party packs to his classmates. In addition to culture I considered the socio-economic implications of this practice, which was not common in black urban community schools such as Thutong. According to Kopanong Township local culture, the person celebrating his or her birthday would invite the guests home to treat the party guests, both young and old. In terms of birthday greetings, a similar English song 'Happy Birthday to You' exists in Sesotho and isiZulu languages.

To sum up, it is important to consider key or critical events such as registration and absenteeism that impact on teaching and learning. For example, the registration or placement of learners impacts negatively on language acquisition during teaching and learning of Grade R children if the selection criterion, such as home language, is flawed with inconsistencies. So, the teachers are cautioned on the registration and the placement of the Grade R children in order to lay a solid and good foundation for their learning. A high absenteeism rate denies these children good language and mathematics competency and is thus not preparing them adequately for the future.

5.4   CONCLUSION

Through my ethnographic account I attempted to answer the question: What is the story of a developing school in a black urban community, considering the Grade R programme in 2010, from my view as an educational psychologist? As a result, I was able to view education at Thutong not in isolation but as part of the wider social, cultural and economic context of which it is a part (Pole & Morrison, 2003), thus considering sociocultural theory. However, I was at the same time holding on to the detail of specific location or setting and an event in order to give an ethnographic account of the first Grade R programme in Thutong and to use my story of the two Grade R classes to contribute to a better understanding of how Early Childhood Development (ECD) could be strengthened in South Africa. Thus, I used ethnographic data to generate knowledge for a practical purpose.

The sociocultural theory was deemed appropriate to constructing a framework for this study. A goal for sociocultural theorists is to focus on process and provide ways of documenting change and transformation (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). In this study I presented a sociocultural approach to learning and development and implications for classroom learning and teaching. The teaching and learning of the Grade R children need to be understood first and carefully planned, instead of being imposed without the analysis of the community involved. The findings that emerged from the data in this study displayed the importance of sociocultural aspect of Grade R education in a black urban community school. I explained in chapter three that, in the South African context, black urban communities in particular, the diverse cultural groups and backgrounds make it difficult to conceive culture as a clearly bounded system both for home and school environments. One way to think about culture nowadays is "to focus on cultural productions - the discourses, meanings, materials, practices, and group processes to explore, understand, and creatively occupy particular positions in sets of general possibilities" (Willis, 1981, p.59, in Eisenhart, 2001, p.20). In addition, "culture is not something exotic or different from us. Rather, it is the ways we learn to be, to be understood, and to understand one another" (Casper & Theilheimer, 2010, p.35).

The Thutong context highlighted the difficulties of dual medium instruction considering both home language (first language) and English first additional language (second language) in a school in a black urban multilingual community. This difficulty raises the

importance of learning support, resources, and children's identity in the school and the important aspect of teacher training. I echo the sentiments raised by de Klerk (2003), as against the political background I refer to what she calls the unprecedented 'rush' to English medium, which results in a loss of loyalty to the mother-tongue as a consequential steady language shift among the new generation of children has begun to make itself felt. I agree with her argument that support among mother-tongue speakers for their own languages is worryingly low. In addition, decreased competency in home languages was a result of the 'rush' for English. Despite the attempts by the state to legislate and entrench language rights it appears that little is being achieved on the ground to maintain the indigenous languages.

Teachers are not equipped or trained to teach these languages and prospects for the establishment of adequate training facilities are not promising. Du Plessis and Louw (2008) also argue that the apt change from mother tongue to English instruction has created a challenging environment for both learner and teacher. Despite the challenges, this study acknowledged the benefits of multilingualism and bilingualism, given the diverse context of South Africa.

The fundamental focus of this research inquiry has been pivoted upon the language maze, as individuals make sense of their lives by creating narratives (stories) that explain their experiences. In so doing, I constructed subjective reality about what happened, what is, and what will be as far as this study is concerned. At Thutong primary school, my intention was a search for meaning, not truth. I wanted to gain insight into why the teachers, children and parents acted and thought the way they did in this particular school and what was meaningful to them. Hansen (2006) asserts that narratives constructed and used by a particular group can be revealing. The story of Thutong revealed that the teaching and learning of their first Grade R programme revolve around language teaching and development.

Referring to storytelling and rhymes I agree with Omolewa (2007) that it would be appropriate to describe the basic characteristic of traditional education in Africa as that which is initially integrated with the social, cultural, political, occupational, artistic, religious, and recreational life of the people. This is in line with sociocultural theory. According to Stetsenko (2004), because complex cultural signs embody experiences and

skills of previous generations, learning to use them brings a dimension of social history and culture into each individual's development.

Within the context of the school under investigation, the literature confirmed that language and contextual factors play a very important role in teaching and learning of the Grade R children. In every aspect of the curriculum that the children had to learn and the teachers had to teach, they had to overcome the challenges of what I refer to as a language maze. In both Sesotho and isiZulu home languages and English additional language, the oral and written proficiency proved to be crucial areas of concern and intervention for the teachers and Grade R children.

After the Soweto uprising of 1976, in which students protested about language issues, the South African education policy rapidly changed to increase access to English. However, I agree with de Klerk (2003, p.2) that, despite the manifest desire for English, most could not acquire it in its prestigious form: "For 50 years the contexts for learning English for the average black child had been appallingly inadequate". De Klerk also notes that by 1980 most teachers of English in the DET were second language speakers, products of Bantu Education, the long-term effects of under-funding, overcrowding, teacher incompetence, and limited contact with English mother tongue speakers, all of which led to characteristic patterns of pronunciation and syntax.

The findings of this study indicate that Thutong, being a newly established school in the year 2010, had been affected by similar challenges. They emphasised teaching and development of language and numeracy teaching through play and rote learning and stressed the importance of addressing learning barriers such as writing and spelling difficulties as early as Grade R in order to strengthen childhood development.

This chapter has discussed the themes that emerged from the data analysis collected from teaching and learning of Grade R at Thutong Primary School, and finalised the identified ten sub-themes, leading into one overarching theme, namely: the Grade R language maze is central to teaching and learning of Grade R children. The suggested comprehensive framework, based on the emergent themes is discussed in Chapter Six.

CHAPTER 6

A COMPREHENSIVE FRAMEWORK TO ENHANCE LANGUAGE AND MATHEMATICS TEACHING AND LEARNING OF GRADE R CHILDREN IN A BLACK URBAN COMMUNITY SCHOOL

6.1   INTRODUCTION

Grade R children in black urban areas have traditionally been supported by their communities at home and day care centres, however, in the context of being formalised by the Department of Education (DoE), communities are increasingly being relieved of this responsibility as the Grade R currently forms part of formal schooling. In this chapter I integrate the recommendations into a developed framework for Grade R teaching and learning in two critical areas: language acquisition and mathematics development for a developing school in a black urban community.

6.2   AIMS OF GRADE R FRAMEWORK

Although the Grade R is formalised as the reception year of formal schooling, as indicated in Chapter One, findings from Thutong highlight the hardship experienced by teachers and children in securing children's needs and rights, including the one to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions in which that education was reasonably practicable (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). As Botes and Mji's (2010) assert, in the South African context linguistic diversity is a complex issue and it has increasingly become the task and responsibility of teachers to develop strategies to facilitate quality education for their learners. Such a struggle highlights the strain the Grade R classes endured and suggests that neither the public sector, the DoE in particular, nor the communities are currently providing adequate support to Grade R teaching and learning in a black urban community.

The emergent themes from this study revealed that the provision of a framework providing a solution to the problems posed by the Grade R language maze is essential if children are to navigate successfully through it. Also, there is an urgent need for the support of Grade R teachers because they are the ones who scaffold these learners to the next level of learning. However, I believe that such support should mainly target theory and practice in critical

areas of language teaching and acquisition, as well as mathematics teaching. Thus, the aim of the framework is to make a significant contribution to Grade R programmes in black urban community schools. I acknowledge that this framework will not solve all the challenges of Grade R teaching and learning and that it is limited to language and mathematics development.

I developed a framework for Grade R teaching and learning in a dual medium or multilingual school in a black urban community, which I consider crucial for all education stakeholders at various levels of intervention, such as teaching, planning and the implementation of the Grade R programme. It aims to guide, assist, and support Grade R teaching and learning. It should be viewed as exciting and thought-provoking and context-specific, rather than daunting. Given the diverse social and cultural backgrounds of South Africa it may appeal to Grade R programmes on different levels.

I developed a framework to engage early childhood professionals with knowledge about everyday concepts and academic concepts (Fleer & Raban, 2007), informed by sociocultural theory, detailing mainly Vygotsky's work on routine or academic concept formation.

6.3   DETERMINING THE CONTENT OF A FRAMEWORK USING EMERGENT THEMES

Development of my framework was informed by the findings of Thutong's story, and is compatible with sociocultural theory. The study revealed an overarching theme and ten subthemes (Figure 5.1) which formed the basis of my framework, as did the existing literature on childhood development and education. The emergent themes provide a summary of these aspects.

In conceptualising a framework that is most likely to provide optimal teaching, learning and support for Grade R learners, I compiled Figure 6.1 (below) as a schematic presentation. Based on my findings, the emergent themes in both theory and practice discussed in chapter five, the framework depicts the collaborative and transformative way in which knowledge was co-constructed (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996).

The framework serves three functions: first, to encourage teachers and other professionals to review the environments they set up for young children for language development and mathematics development; second, it aims to engage teachers in examining the interactions they have with children and knowledge they have about the Grade R children; third, it can guide teachers and other early childhood practitioners to understand the importance of linking everyday concepts with academic concepts to support early language and numeracy development. Thus, the framework is a sociocultural tool for developing teachers' theoretical knowledge of the Grade R language and mathematics development. The practical side of the framework is integrated with the recommendations based on the findings of this study. Central to the task of educators, psychologists, and all stakeholders involved in Early Childhood Development and education is conceiving of this framework and recommendations as a system rather than as a set of isolated activities. Figure 6.1 (below) provides a framework for language and mathematics teaching and learning of the Grade R children in a black urban community school.
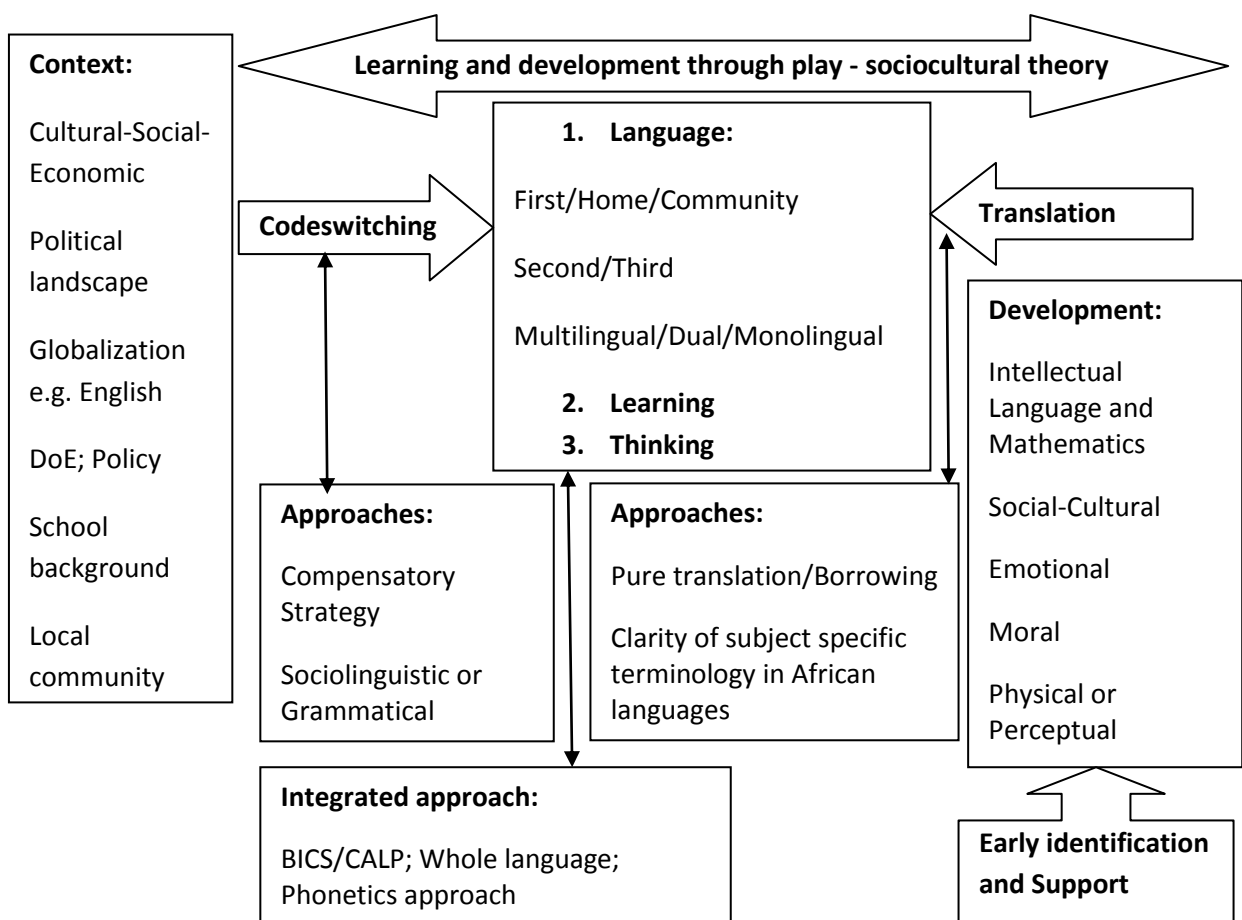

Figure 6.1: Framework for teaching and learning of the Grade R children

Based on the overarching theme, this framework suggests the multiple roles for the teachers, for example, researchers, socio-linguists, sociocultural activists, learning support specialists, and African storytellers. It suggests that the starting point is for the teachers to look first at the local context, South Africa, at all systemic levels, such as the family, school background, local community, and the DoE. The additional important factors to consider when looking at the local context are, for example, social, cultural, historical and economic. The second point is to look at what a particular school strives to offer for its Grade R learners with regard to medium of instruction, for example, dual medium such as an African language and English. Thus, there are challenges to teaching in a dual medium or multilingual classroom context which need to be interrogated and addressed before teaching and learning of Grade R, such as teaching sounds-letter recognition and mixing the languages. For example, the following questions can be asked: What are the challenges of multilingualism and teaching in dual medium in South Africa, especially in a black urban community classroom environment? In addition to local context, the influence of globalization, especially the role played by English language, needs to be looked at by critical minds as far as language teaching and learning are concerned.

Play is an integral part of Grade R and permeates all areas of teaching and learning. According to Eckhoff and Urbach (2008, p.181), Vygotsky described two types of cognitive behaviours: "first, those that are merely reproductive of our past experiences, which lack a creative quality, and second, those that he called imaginative". Furthermore, the imaginative behaviour is based on the ability of the brain to draw upon and combine elements from previous experiences. Imaginative play and problem solving skills are therefore important for Grade R children and teachers need to consider questions such as the following: Is our teaching and learning focus infusing imaginative thinking into the curriculum instead of covering the content and teaching to test the children? Do we view imaginative thought and creativity as fundamental to cognition?

The Grade R teachers need to understand and make a clear distinction during teaching and learning with regard to basic interpersonal communication and cognitive academic language. Young children have to master the academic language as early as Grade R because it has been a formalised school grade since 2010. Most often, children have already acquired basic communication from home when they start school. It means the school has to make a clear decision as to when and how to bring in academic language.

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This is when the issue of subject specific terminology in African languages becomes significant.

The whole language approach as an alternative to the traditional language approach such as phonetics teaching needs consideration. In addition, teachers should consider first the various approaches to code switching and translation during learning, such as the sociolinguistic approach versus the grammatical approach. They need to make an informed decision as to whether their focus is on the role of the social factors in the occurrence of code switching or on the structural aspect, with the aim of determining the syntax and morphology. My framework is geared towards an integrated approach, thus the training of teachers with regard to the understanding of various approaches is crucial.

In order to address the language challenges and deficit posed by the diversity of languages in South African black urban community classrooms, we need to make a clear distinction between pure translation and borrowing. For example, referring to the days of the week, the two names, '*Mosupulogo*' and '*Mantaha*' can be used in Sesotho. However, '*Mantaha*' is borrowed from the English 'Monday' and Afrikaans 'Maandag', whereas '*Mosupulugo*' is a proper translation of the name 'Monday'. I acknowledge that code switching is part of communication used generally in diverse languages of South Africa, however, coupled with borrowing it poses more challenges in black urban community classrooms when considering the need for cognitive academic language competency as well as first language or home language development and acquisition. As indicated in section 5.2.2, code switching can be used as a compensatory strategy or can be a signal of a lack of competence in both languages (de Klerk, 2003). Thus, I caution teachers on their usage of the two practices, code switching and translation.

It is important to emphasise that the three concepts, learning, language and thinking are interlinked and inseparable (Donald et al., 2010), as discussed in Chapter Five. The teaching and learning process therefore need to embrace critical thinking as an approach to learning for the Grade R children.

Language is linked to all areas of development, referring to intellectual, social, cultural, emotional, moral, physical or perceptual. All these are integrated during teaching and learning, with perceptual and language acquisition particularly strongly linked. For example, when a teacher teaches the letter 'q' to a circle of learners, this may distort the perception of this letter for those not seated directly below the letter. On a positive note,

children can use different body parts to present or imaginatively draw letters or sounds, such as c, r, and f. In addition to their education purpose, rhymes can contribute to learning linked to physical and moral development and learning through fun or play. As a result it is important to consider the implicit and explicit messages of rhymes and stories during language teaching and learning, making the transfer of culture important from early childhood. For example, four aspects to be considered by the teachers are story history and meaning; identification through stories; culture and context; and stories as tools. The rich repertoire of storytelling styles to which a child is exposed creates a strong possibility for him or her to develop a powerful narrative voice that reflects the community, family and inner life. It is important to consider the diverse context of the country by developing stories that integrate the various cultures. Furthermore, respect for the first language or home language and all that is culturally associated with it must be maintained alongside other language(s).

The framework indicates that language influences and life world experiences are among factors that are important for mathematical development of the Grade R children. Pitfalls of translation during mathematics teaching are highlighted and have implications for language acquisition and an understanding of mathematical concepts, for example, teaching tools such as a calendar written in African languages. Understanding of levels of geometry for the Grade R is essential, thus language, mathematics and cognitive development cannot be separated. It also emphasises the importance of early identification and support for Grade R learners. For example, the following question can be asked: What are possible language barriers in the classrooms as a result of multilingualism or dual medium in black urban community Grade R classrooms? Based on the findings of my study at Thutong primary school, language barriers such as writing, spelling and second or third language learning are also experienced by Grade R learners and therefore need not be overlooked by teachers. The diverse language background in black urban community adds profusely to this challenge, cautioning teachers not to attribute all failures to children alone by ignoring all the systems and factors that impact on learning. Therefore, learning support and preventative measures such as early identification and support should be provided.

In addition, the framework suggests the following important factors to consider for the learning of the Grade R children in line with sociocultural theory:

- Language and social interaction are inseparable. Without language there is no transfer of culture. A school is one place in which much social interaction takes place in the life of children.

- It is worthwhile building on what the child brings to the classroom, because learning begins at home, then in the community and society.

- Language issues are complex as they have very specific cognitive, scholastic, social, and emotional implications for educational development. The process of cognitive development is sociocultural in nature and involves the development of skills as supported by cultural tools such as language.

- Language, thinking and learning cannot be isolated, thus mental processes are mediated by psychological tools such as language, concepts, signs, and symbols.

- The South African context, with 11 official languages and diverse classrooms, determines the direction that language and mathematics development will take, given its multilingual context.

- Based on my experience and personal observation in matters pertaining to Grade R teaching and learning, as well as the findings of this study, I argue that Grade R curriculum and intervention in black urban communities also have disappointing results. It is so because curriculum and intervention have involved interventions by professionals who often have poor understanding of the needs, interests and worldviews of target Grade R community members, for example, teachers, children and parents. I agree with Campbell (2003) that "programmes should seek to identify and facilitate local community responses rather than intervention from outside" (in Skovdal & Campbell, 2010, p.23). She argues that people are most likely to respond effectively when they have confidence in their ability to respond and make partnerships with supportive outside agencies.

6.4   RECOMMENDATIONS

The role played by language is a central aspect of Grade R teaching and learning, particularly through play, numeracy, storytelling and perceptual development. In corroboration with the findings of this study a number of recommendations are made, which integrate with my framework. However, these are not exhaustive, but rather aim at broadly proposing various strategies that may be implemented in order to enhance early

childhood development. They focus on strengthening the overall teaching and learning of learners, considering the Grade R programme.

On the basis of my findings, I make recommendations that professionals (early childhood development specialists; Grade R educators, curriculum specialists, and other professionals) and training institutes such as universities and colleges, may consider in their educational planning of the Grade R programme for this population of learners.

- **School curricula for the African languages**

Understanding of what language acquisition and teaching constitute for black urban, multicultural and multilingual Grade R children, calls for the revision of traditional literacy curriculum in a multilingual context such as the Kopanong Township. It is also important for the African languages curricula to be revisited and revised. It is evident from the forgoing discussion how much work is needed for teachers to begin teaching the Grade R in the indigenous languages. Foley (2008) cautions that such teaching can begin immediately but believes that rapid policy changes to this effect would be both disingenuous and irresponsible. In line with Noswu (2000), I recommend curricular reform in the school that reflects the rich cultural heritage of Africa. The schools had been transmitting the Anglo-American culture of the colonial masters as exemplified in stories and rhymes and in the process of this acculturation, African traditional systems of education, with their collective value orientation, were gradually giving way.

This study acknowledges the need for children of South Africa, Kopanong Township in particular, to have the beginnings of education founded on the fundamental tenets of a collective value system, keeping diversity in mind. This involves sharing and working together in harmony by schools, community, curriculum planners and other professionals in Early Childhood Development (ECD). For example, in Kopanong Township, there are elders such as grandparents, retired school teachers, and African storytellers from whom the schools can draw a wealth of traditional literature and information, not discarding modern approaches and learning content but integrating learning from different cultures. In addition, there must be clarity as to who recommends and has the final say on the prescribed material, the school, the DoE, or the publishers. Thus, the subtheme of

translation at Thutong has highlighted the need for rigorous scrutiny of the recommended learning material and books for childhood education.

If African languages are to be used as languages of learning and teaching in the classroom, the first and most obvious step that must be taken is to translate the newly adapted National Curriculum Statement (NCS), Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) into these languages. Currently, the only curricula which appear in the indigenous languages are the African languages as subjects themselves. It is unjustifiable to propose that subjects be taught in the African languages when, for example, the CAPS, the basis of all subject content and methodology, is not available in the putative languages of learning and teaching (Foley, 2008). Given the newly implemented CAPS in 2012, the language will remain problematic in teaching and learning of the Grade R children.

- **Teacher training**

The findings of this study also suggest a crisis in African language teacher training, when looking at the qualifications of Thutong teachers as far as the children' home languages were concerned. A crucial aspect of providing mother tongue education in South Africa lies in the field of teacher education or teacher training (Foley, 2008). District or DoE practical support is crucial, however, it remains to be seen whether sufficient support and capacity in home languages (African languages) by the DoE will be offered to Grade R teachers. It is necessary to remember that the issue is not merely that of teaching African languages as subjects, but rather the ability to use them as the media of instruction for the entire curriculum.

Language competency in teaching both the Home Language and English First Additional Language need serious attention. Language is an important element in the development of the child, and no one is considered adequately developed without considerable mastery of the use of language for effective communication (Omolewa, 2007). Teacher training on language teaching, proficiency and acquisition is crucial. Home language or first language and English second language training should be given more priority. Continuing in-service training and workshops training is recommended, therefore the strengthening of teachers' cognitive academic language competency is strongly recommended, as are interpersonal communication skills.

All teachers and student teachers in South Africa, should be adequately trained and equipped to cater specifically for the needs of learners learning in, for instance, their second and third language. According to Uccelli and Paez (2007), studies revealed that among the various English oral proficiency skills, vocabulary knowledge and narrative ability have been found to be important precursors to literacy for monolingual and bilingual students. In addition, research findings on their study of the developmental patterns and associations among oral vocabulary and narrative skills in a longitudinal study sample of 24 Spanish-English bilingual children from low socio-economic backgrounds, identified these skills as an area of special vulnerability in this population.

In addition to their training I recommend that teachers be provided with supportive and sympathetic social spaces in which they can discuss collectively their anxieties about the Grade R issues, brainstorm ways in which they might teach and support Grade R children and the type of support they require. In order to accomplish the art of utilising experience as a means of contextualising in teaching and learning, there is a need to find ways of supporting teachers, both materially and psychologically, and so enable and encourage them to develop new strategies and approaches that will facilitate the use of contextualisation in the classroom (Omolewa, 2007).

- **Publishers' role in language code switching and translation**

Thutong findings also highlight the need for teacher development and support in the areas of language code switching and translation, as these two important concepts impact heavily on teaching and learning of language of the Grade R children in black urban school. To address the issue of translation, I agree with Foley (2008) that it is not only National Curriculum Statement (NCS) or Curriculum Assessment Policy (CAPS) which must be available in the indigenous languages. All textbooks, readers, support material, teaching aids, guides and literature must be made readily accessible in these languages and continuously updated. This also applies in the fields of mathematics in which an extensive range of new terms and phrases will have to be developed, learnt by teachers then communicated to learners. Moreover, from the findings presented, the role played by the publishers in poor translation of the African languages was also evident. As a result, the teachers had to make an extra effort to search for relevant material, which was difficult to get. It is clear from the findings that teachers in Thutong had less access to resources, and

were less well informed of cultural differences or how to work with learners from black urban communities. Furthermore, the emergent theme, stories and storytelling, for example, suggests there is an over-reliance on print versions of Anglo-American or Western authors. It is necessary to create South African stories and rhymes representative of the country's diversity, with closer collaboration between stakeholders, for example, publishers, faculties of education and languages in institutions for teacher training such as universities, and the DoE.

- **Monolingual**, **bilingual and multilingual Grade R programme must be distinct**

Bilingual children's English skills develop in coexistence with those in another language. Therefore, to better understand how to improve the English oral proficiency of bilingual children we need to explore developmental patterns and associations within and across the languages they speak (Uccelli & Paez, 2007). Thus, the bilingual and multilingual Grade R programme must be distinct from the monolingual one. It is a challenge for the teachers and children as they have to acquire the academic cognitive skills for both languages, whilst the teachers must develop awareness that the classroom, even for the same cultural or ethnic group, is a multicultural context by virtue of sub-cultures and differences in family circumstances and social class (Nsameng, 2004).

- **Early screening, identification and intervention**

The implementation of early screening, identification, assessment and support in early school-age years, preferably in Grade R is crucial. The teachers, with the help of skilled professionals such as educational psychologists, should assess language abilities in the child's first language, as well as in English, to monitor progress in oral language skills from Grade R. Knowledge of the child's dual language abilities can help them identify those children who might be at risk due to low levels of skills in both languages (Uccelli & Paez, 2007). Early screening, identification and intervention are also important for perceptual development, as confirmed by the finding 'sound and letter recognition and letter recognition'.

Since this study was conducted within the parameters of educational psychology, the

findings highlights the need for educational psychologists to become more actively involved in informing and management of the Grade R programme in black urban communities. Greater emphasis needs to be placed on the collaborative and consultative role of the educational psychologist as researchers, curriculum planners and policymakers for quality and appropriate service delivery.

Considering the concept of ECD and education it is important to look at Grade R as part of the formative years from birth to nine, and not in isolation. In order to improve the efficiency of Grade R programmes in South African classrooms, especially in black urban community, children at all levels of development must acquire basic concepts, skills and attitude before entering the school system. Thus, the entire ECD system, especially in black urban communities such as Kopanong should be revisited and constantly monitored, as far as language teaching and learning are concerned. For instance, we cannot allow a situation where English language teaching and development is taking place in crèches and other ECD centres and disapprove or discourage it in Grade R. It is important that the same measure and treatment be applied to the entire early childhood education system. However, given the complexity of the diverse languages in black urban communities and the poor history of early childhood education in black communities, I acknowledge that it is not easy to address language issues in areas such as Kopanong.

- **The use of cultural tools**

Tools include oral language, written symbols, skills that learners have already acquired in line with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and other tools such as books, games and objects. Thutong teachers raised a very important issue during the review meeting of the findings of this research under section 5.2.7.2, when they said there were no relevant books, even in the library of the local university. The provision of books as tools is crucial, however, they must be relevant and appropriate for the Grade R concerned. As adults, we cannot assume that children come to us knowing how to use any tools, simply because it is obvious to us. Children require experience of using tools to develop meaning for them,m and so that they can subsequently use them to solve problems. Even the most basic tool, the fingers, must be discovered (Damon & de Garcia, 2010).

Since the spoken language serves as an important tool in this particular age group, a strong base of home languages on the sides of teachers, children and parents, as well as cognitive

academic language is required to enhance language and mathematics development. The involvement of old people and African storytellers is recommended in this regard, particularly in telling indigenous stories to children, as this will enhance and strengthen their language acquisition and transmission of culture. It will also be interesting to find out what the children internalise during their learning of language, including important components such as stories and rhymes. I agree with Noswu's (2000) assertion that the sociocultural perspective can also thrive with the continued articulation of the many voices of wisdom from the community. Thus, if care is not taken to introduce African children to some aspects of their cultural heritage, they will grow up alienated from their roots. Noswu adds that children must be introduced to language, folklore, rhymes, songs, games, proverbs and adages, as aspects of African culture that form part of their education.

Manipulative tools were confirmed by research to be important for the Grade R learners and in all mathematical strands. They help students construct mathematical concepts and problem-solving abilities (Clements & McMillen, 1996, in Damon & de Garcia (2010). Studies have also shown that students who use these tools to learn abstract mathematical concepts out-achieve students who do not (Sowell; Suydam in Damon & de Garcia (2010). For example, with the use of Base 10 blocks, if a child is learning how to count he or she probably uses this tool to develop counting with one-to-one correspondence. As the child matures and develops more abstract ideas, s/he will be able to use this tool for more sophisticated counting using tens and ones. At this point, this tool can help support understanding of addition with regrouping. Later, when the child understands parts of a whole, base 10 blocks can be supportive in learning tenths and hundredths (Damon & de Garcia, 2010). The base 10 blocks are tools that require many experiences, but teachers argue about the appropriate time to introduce them. Concreteness is now seen as "necessary and unavoidable only as a stepping stone for developing abstract thinking – as a means, not as an end itself" (Vygotsky, in Damon & de Garcia, 2010, p.24). Games and objects as tools add to the base 10 blocks.

- **Vocabulary and narrative skills and socio-drama**

The use of socio-drama in the classroom is recommended, however, attention should be given to different components of oral language ability, such as vocabulary knowledge and the language, versus story features involved in narration. My findings indicate that

vocabulary and narrative skills can have different developmental trajectories in dual medium of Sesotho and English, as well as isiZulu and English, and perhaps should be considered independently for assessment and targeted instruction.

Furthermore, since socio-dramatic play (Karpov, 2005) deals with children's imitation of social roles and relations, as in the case of rhymes, stories and role play, children need to know these roles and relations to be able to imitate them. The explanation to children of different social roles and relations is "the major content of adult mediation" of socio-dramatic play (Karpov, 2005, p.146).

- **Questioning the imposition of colonial histories on black urban communities**

Taylor and White (2000, in Haines & Livesley, 2008, p.231) argue that practitioners should examine and become more explicit about the "kinds of knowledge" they use in their practice and how they apply these to make sense of events and situations they confront. For example, storytelling as an effective pedagogical device requires that stories used for the Grade R purpose should be chosen carefully. According to Corntassel, Chawin-win-is and T'lakwadzi, (2009, p.139) "the process of restorying is not effective without some larger community-centred, decolonizing actions behind them". A restorying process for indigenous people entails questioning the imposition of colonial histories on communities, thus there is a need to update the traditional children's stories by focusing on culture.

Furthermore, curriculum planners must understand and appreciate variations in "local knowledge" by identifying unifying themes, which can provide a direct link to the experience of most if not all the learners in a particular area, and can readily be adapted through participative processes to fit each local situation (Omolewa, 2007, p.606). Given the imbalances of the past the planners needs to think of South African transformation at large, embracing peace and reconciliation. Pence and Nsamenang (2008) call for Africa to review and renew its long-established systems of education in the cause of promoting ECD and education services that are respectful of families and societies and their ability to transfer knowledge, values, and skills across generations. They further assert that in so doing, Africa will gain through a re-familiarisation with its own traditions and other societies around the world will also gain through those same discoveries and invention. It is through taking account of children's communities' indigenous language, teaching

strategies and the complex dynamics between children and teachers that interventions have the best chance of supporting Grade R school communities so that they can best facilitate language teaching and acquisition and the wellbeing of children under their guidance.

It is important to acknowledge the active participation of Grade R children as co-constructors of the Grade R programme, rather than seeing them as passive role players. Children need to learn what a story is and to retell a traditional story from their perspectives, grounded in contemporary reality and context, so that the story would become more inclusive of their worlds (Lothering & Chow, 2006).

- **Play permeates all areas of teaching and learning of the Grade R children**

The Grade R learning is based on the principles of play and integration. Play is important for the development of young children's identities and sense of belonging to a community (Ansell, 2005). In addition, the attitudes of adults towards play and the time available for it vary between societies. Wood and Attfield (in Waller & Swann, 2009, p.42) identify seven principles underpinning the role of the adult when interacting with children in their play:

    a) Support and respond to children's needs and potential
    b) Support children's skills as players
    c) Enrich the content of their play
    d) Support their own ideas and provide additional ideas and stimuli
    e) Enable children to elaborate and develop their own themes
    f) Be responsive to the level of play development
    g) Remain sensitive to the ideas that children are trying to express.

- **Support and guidance to parents**

Thutong parents who I interviewed did not have a problem with mixed languages as they were looking at the bigger picture of South Africa and its multiple languages (Extract 4.5). However, it seemed their understanding and interpretation seemed to be more on the basic interpersonal communication than the cognitive academic language. It is worth mentioning that I cannot expect them to understand and know everything with regard to language teaching and learning, given the circumstance and the South African multilingual context and their understanding at the academic level. It is for this reason that both the parents need support and guidance from Grade R teachers and other professional in early

childhood development with regard to language acquisition of their children and the role of engaging with books.

- **Solidarity and connectedness**

Considering the Thutong story, I allude to what Skovdal and Cambell (2010) suggest in building solidarity and connectedness by the school community. A school that is characterised by sympathetic and supportive relationships provides the optimal context in which children and families of Grade R children can negotiate support. This includes access to much-needed resources, such as books, money for school-related costs, and empathy. Solidarity and connectedness allow people to support each other.

In summary, the findings of this study were presented under the ten subthemes and an overarching theme. The final theme which captured the story of Thutong indicates that the Grade R language maze is central to teaching and learning of Grade R children. The rules and hints of the language maze and its implications for teaching and learning of the Grade R children must be interrogated before the implementation of the Grade R programme. It means that there are several contextual factors such as culture and socio-economic conditions to consider for the Grade R programme, as well as where the school is situated. It is clear from the findings that all those involved in ECD and education, such as teachers, parents, educational psychologists, the community, and the DOE must work together to revisit and enhance teaching and learning of the Grade R teaching.

Finally, Thutong, being a newly developed school, required constant monitoring and support for teachers and Grade R learners from all education stakeholders. A comprehensive framework addresses the developmental, social, cultural, intellectual, physical, moral, psychological and emotional dimensions during teaching and learning, considering the Grade R programme. It is supportive at school level but it should also be useful for education stakeholders involved in Grade R programmes.

6.5   CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided the Grade R teachers with a framework using the themes that emerged from the study. Recommendations were made based on the importance of how

researchers and education stakeholders approach the teaching and learning of Grade R children in a black urban community, considering the Grade R programme. The provided framework may not be simple as its success depends on the attitude and views of all the people involved. It was also important to take into account the local context of the Grade R children when developing it, suggesting that it can be adapted to suit the needs of different communities.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY, LIMITATIONS AND CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

7.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter will focus on the summary, limitations and contribution of the study. It provides a brief summary of the research that was conducted then delineates the perceived limitations of this ethnography and its contributions to a Grade R programme, Early Childhood Development (ECD) and education in general.

7.2   SUMMARY

With the particular aim and objectives in mind, the focus of this study was to give an ethnographic account of teaching and learning of the Grade R programme in a developing school in 2010 in a black urban community, from my view as educational psychologist, and to use my story of the Grade R learning and development to strengthen knowledge in the field of ECD and education in South Africa. The objectives were set to explore and describe the development of Grade R classes as part of the developing Foundation Phase in 2010 and to describe my experience as well as those of the teachers, learners, and parents or caregivers at the school involved in Grade R.

Informed by an interpretivist, naturalistic paradigm, this ethnographic inquiry with elements of autoethnography has explored and described the meaning that two Thutong Primary School teachers and 60 Grade R learners have ascribed to their experience of teaching and learning at this school. Some elements were much easier to describe than others due to the multiple data sources that were available. It was noted in Chapter Three that the Grade R curriculum is integrated to the extent that it was extremely difficult to treat aspects such as literacy, numeracy, play and development in isolation.

In Chapter Five I outlined the results of my findings following the *Atlas.ti* version 6.2 analysis and Brewer's (2000) steps of analysis from organising data into manageable units; coding by indexing the data into categories and themes and writing memos; identifying key events, people, behaviour; and providing vignettes. The experiences of the teachers and learners were recorded and classified, then compared across categories, which finally led to an overarching theme and ten sub-themes emerging, in order to conceptualise the story of this developing black urban school, Thutong.

From the findings presented, this inquiry has fulfilled its objective as initially stated in chapter one, that is, giving an ethnographic account of the first Grade R programme in a developing school in 2010 in a black urban community. It has provided an in-depth description of the extent to which teaching and learning of the Grade R learners was experienced by teachers and learners. Consequently, it has been possible to show that language plays a crucial role in teaching and learning of the Grade R children and is influenced and shaped by culture, context and the diverse nature of the South African society. The overarching theme was therefore 'Grade R language maze is central to teaching and learning of Grade R children '.

7.3   LIMITATIONS

Researching a school, considering my roles as a teacher, district official and educational psychologist, as well as my involvement as a researcher, was challenging. My own assumptions and biases could have limited me, however, I addressed these through supervision, reflexivity, distancing and anchoring, as indicated in Chapter Three.

The focus of this study has been on a specific and contextualised investigation of one particular and developing primary school. However, I did not regard engaging in a school as a limitation, seeing as my design was ethnography. I believe that through qualitative methods of data collection employed and thick description of the social context of the Thutong primary school, it has worked towards achieving and maintaining credibility, transferability, and confirmabilty. Future research with a large sample of schools developing Grade R programme is needed.

Investigation around the role of language teaching and learning of the Grade R programme was limited by the complexity of observing the spoken language and interaction that took place. Since language is a very important tool for teaching and learning, further research in first and second language teaching in the Foundation Phase, Grade R in particular, is recommended. Further research in the areas of bilingual and multilingual language development is also recommended.

I indicated in Chapter Three the uniqueness of the Grade R programme, because the curriculum or learning content was so integrated in all the three learning areas (subjects), Literacy, Numeracy and Life Skills. This posed a challenge during the classification or

clustering of my data from the initial to final stages of the analysis process. As a result, I sometimes found it difficult to single out Numeracy learning area as it was woven into the Literacy or vice versa. Further research is needed into Mathematics as it is a very important component of the Grade R programme. In addition, I would like to draw the attention to a significant gap in this study, namely the absence of Life Skills as third subject within the Foundation Phase. Although it was addressed in an integrated way in the school, this vital aspect within the Grade R curriculum which is also very relevant concerning culture, was not dealt with. I struggled to weave it in as my third area of focus because of time constraints. According to my view, on its own, Life Skills is a broad topic which needs sufficient time in order to address all the domains of development such as, the physical, moral, emotional, and so on. So, for this study, this subject was weaved in with the specific focus on how language was broad in during the teaching and learning of the Grade R children.

Involvement of parents or caregivers and the community was not adequately examined, so their stories form minor part of the greater story of Thutong as far as this study is concerned. I consulted with only six parents. Upon reflection, I realised that I had not captured the experiences of the parents or learners adequately. I could have also elaborated more on the differences in the two classrooms considering the fact that the two teachers were at different tertiary institutions, spoke different languages and had different teaching styles. However, I was more interested in exploring the story of a developing school in a black urban community, considering the Grade R programme.

7.4   CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

According to John-Steiner and Mahn (1996), a goal for sociocultural theorists is the sustained development of methodological approaches to educational and psychological research that focus on process and provide ways of documenting change and transformation. In line with sociocultural theory, this study looked at change on different levels of analysis and organisation, for example, children, teachers, parents, school, community, and the Department of Education (DoE). Mouton's (2001) 'three worlds, as outlined in Chapters One and Three, provided a framework in which to conduct this study. The three worlds or frames are (i) everyday life and lay knowledge; (ii) the world of science and scientific research; and (iii) the world of meta-science.

In terms of contribution to methodology, this ethnographic study embarked on the world of science by selecting phenomenon in multiple contexts of school, home and community (World 1) and subjected it to systemic and rigorous enquiry in World 2. However, in line with Mouton, I acknowledge that it is not possible to produce scientific results that are infallible and absolutely true, but I was motivated to strive constantly for the most truthful and valid results practically possible. I constantly subjected my work to critical reflection, for example, considering which theory and research design to select, which is World 3. Reflexivity was maintained by improving the rigour of the processs of generating critical consciousness as a researcher (Mcilveen, 2008). Thus, the phasing in of compulsory Grade R by the DoE, with no good understanding of this important year of schooling within the South African context, was part of World 1 and offered a real world problem worthy of scientific research.

Theoretically, the study contributes to a better understanding of Grade R as the first year of schooling. I indicated in Chapter One and in the previous paragraph that the DoE is currently phasing in compulsory Grade R, but generally there is no good understanding of this important year of schooling within the South African context. It is necessary here to follow theories on childhood development and education derived mainly from the local context, thus this study has addressed the need to support and promote local perspectives, questions and issues, and move beyond the singular image of the global child (Pence & Nsamenang, 2008). The study also contributes to the body of knowledge in the domain of Early Childhood Education in South Africa. The school that is studied in this research is unique in South Africa, as it is not only a public school but also a research school and the study has provided insights into its establishment.

The three philosophical anchors, ontology, epistemology and axiology (Ponterotto, 2005) were considered. Ontology concerns the nature of reality and being and it touched on my theoretical framework and research paradigm. In ethnography, epistemology refers to power relations. As a result, my stance maintained that reality is socially constructed and therefore the dynamic interaction between me and participants was central to capturing and describing their lived experience. Axiology refers to the role of my values in the scientific process. In my ethical approach when conducting this research, I acknowledged and described my values through personal reflections and supervision.

Formalising Grade R means formalising the teaching and learning of this specific age group in critical areas such as literacy and numeracy. In the interests of providing support, development, and enhancement of the Grade R programme in terms of practice and theory my contribution was a framework that I developed in this regard, based on my findings. Thus, the framework is a sociocultural tool (section 6.3) contributing to teachers' theoretical knowledge of the Grade R language and mathematics development.

The study's practical contribution lies in workshops that were presented to the school community, including the DoE, on the findings and the Grade R framework I developed, as well as articles upon acceptance for publication. In addition, the practical side of the framework is integrated with the recommendations (section 6.4) based on the findings of this study.

This study makes room for further research as it was carried out at the beginning of the compulsory introduction of Grade R by the DoE in 2010. It presented an opportunity to generate research strategies uniquely suited to the South African environment and to examine previously unexplored territory in early childhood education provisioning.

In addition, findings from this study can be used by researchers, policymakers and Grade R practitioners and foundation phase teachers who are trying to understand the development of language acquisition in Sesotho-English and isiZulu-English bilingual or multilingual Grade R children from a black urban community (township). The findings of this study show that the Grade R programme revolves around language acquisition and development, and propose further investigation on the development of teaching and learning for this population.

7.5   CONCLUSION

The fundamental focus of this ethnographic study was on teaching and learning of the first Grade R programme in 2010 in a black urban community. I trust this study has clarified some misunderstanding and help teachers and other role-players in the Grade R programme to cultivate the use of African perspectives. It depicted the diversity in South African schools, especially for those who work with children in black urban communities. Culture and context were used as building blocks towards the story that developed from Thutong primary school, considering the experiences of teachers, children, and parents or

caregivers. In line with the sociocultural theory, a proposal for reform in Thutong would have to consider economic, political, historical, social, and cultural factors because the school is a part of and reflects the larger social system in which it is situated. The story reflected an urgent need to strengthen Early Childhood Development (ECD) and education in South Africa.

The diverse population of the black urban community in which the school is situated cautions stakeholders to plan carefully the Grade R programme, whilst considering sociocultural and contextual factors. For example, they have to be careful how they conceptualise the term 'Home Language', remembering that many children in black urban community are not monolingual owing to the background of their parents or caregivers. A child can even learn more than two languages from home, so this poses a serious challenge to teaching and learning. In addition, teachers and other professionals must not assume that Grade R children understand what is perceived as their home language. On the same note, knowing and understanding a spoken language does not necessarily mean the teachers master the children's home language. Thus, from an educational psychology point of view, it was clear from the Thutong story that language, thinking, and learning are inseparable.

This study also revealed that dual medium was not a bad idea as the school feared during its inception in 2010. However, the findings highlighted the importance of teacher training, intense support to teachers and children by the DoE, planning with regard to matters such as time allocation, resources such as books, language competency, children readiness to learn and parental involvement and support in language acquisition and development.

It is hard to make predictions about the direction in which Thutong will move after the study. Generally, while the issues around language teaching and development are difficult to anticipate in South Africa, the future of Grade R learners remain bright as long as there is a willingness, resilience, reflection, and dialogue from all education stakeholders to help this specific grade. In addition, the good practices that came out of Thutong were acknowledged and have to be taken into account in matters pertaining to the Grade R programme. Considering the role of culture in education, I agree with Eisenhart (2001, p.24) that what is different now is that everyday life, including that in schools, seems to be "faster paced, more diverse, more complicated, more entangled than before". For example, when I reviewed the results with teachers on 20 June 2012, they added that children from Maputo (Mozambique) were adding to the challenge of multiple languages.

Also, there is an influence from crèches that children attend before registering with regard to language acquisition and development (Teacher Mabotse emphasised this statement thrice). This suggests that the challenges of language acquisition in Grade R children emanate prior this particular grade and this is a serious challenge for Early Childhood Development (ECD) and education system in Kopanong Township. Second, during the review of the results meeting, the teachers revealed that Thutong Grade R learners had just started to be taught in Home language, isiZulu and Sesotho. Children were to start English in Grade 1 according to Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) which was implemented by the DoE in 2012. This was a shift from dual medium to monolingual for Grade R.

As Thutong found itself just beginning the journey as a newly established school in a black urban community, and appeared to have been overwhelmed by the distance yet to travel, as a participant-observer I drew upon the wisdom of Lao-Tzu (Fetterman, 2010, p.1), in the final analysis: "A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step".

I conclude with two Sepedi proverbs expressing my advocacy for the Grade R children, which express the importance of teaching and grounding children from the early stages of their development and learning.

- *Mohlare o kobjwa o sa le o monanana.*
- *Tlogatloga e tloga kgale, modisha wa kgomo o tswa nayo shakeng.*

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Permission letters and consent forms

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

February 2010

Dear Parent/Guardian

RE: PARENT/GUARDIAN – INFORMATION LETTER REGARDING RESEARCH WHCH WILL BE CONDUCTED AT _____ SCHOOL

We welcome you to the _____ School and thank you for choosing this school for your child. As you might know the school is a GDE registered school, but in the school is also in partnership with the University of Johannesburg. The school will therefore also be used for research purposes.

This letter serves to inform you about what the research will involve. Research will be conducted in the following manner:

1. Classroom visits and observations

2. Interviews with the teachers, families of the children and the children themselves

3. Documents and Artefacts e.g. examples of the children's work

4. Ongoing assessments to plot each child's progress

The main idea behind the research will always be the optimal support for your child. That is why all research will always be conducted in an ethical manner. Your child will never be harmed or will feel intimidated in any way. For the purposes of anonymity and confidentiality the names of the school and your child

will not be mentioned throughout the data and findings of the case study. Pseudonyms will always be used when reporting findings.

Should you have any questions or enquiries about this case study, please do not hesitate to contact the school principal (_____) or the research co-ordinator for the university _____ .

Thanking you in advance

Yours sincerely,

_____

University of Johannesburg

Faculty of Education

_____

I hereby confirm that I understand that the _____ School will participate in an ongoing research project with the University of Johannesburg and agree that my child _____ (name) and my family will be willing to participate in the research process.

_____   _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian   **Date**

Informed Consent/Assent Form

Project Title:
An ethnographic account of teaching and learning of the first Grade R programme in a developing school in 2010 in a black urban community

Investigator:
C D Sekhukhune

Date:
28 July 2010

I hereby:
☐ Agree to be involved in the above research project as a participant.
☐ Agree that my child, _____ may participate in the above research project.
☐ Agree that my staff may be involved in the above research project as participants.

I have read the research information sheet pertaining to this research project and understand the nature of the research and my role in it. In addition, I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details I requested. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

☐ Please allow me to review the report prior to publication.

Name: _____

Phone or Cell number: _____

e-mail address: _____

Signature: _____

If applicable:
☐ I consent/assent to audio recording of my/the participant's contributions.
☐ I consent/assent to video recording of my/the participant's contributions.

Signature: _____

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

☎ :	(011) 559-2280	
Fax :	(011) 559-2292	
E- mail :	hselolo@uj.ac.za	

Enquiries	:	H Selolo
Ref	:	902009594
Date	:	2010-06-29

Mrs C D Sekhukhune
P O Box 3414
Southgate
2082

Dear Mrs Sekhukhune,

APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL – PhD EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

I take pleasure in informing that your research proposal entitled "**An ethnographic account of teaching and learning of the first Grade R programme in a developing school in 2010 in a black urban community**" has been approved by the Faculty Higher Degrees Committee.

Supervisor: Dr E Fritz

Please ensure that the abovementioned title appears on the front page of your research project. Any further changes must be approved by the Faculty Higher Degrees Committee beforehand.

Yours sincerely

Ms H Selolo
University of Johannesburg
Faculty of Education
Kingsway Campus
Room Bring 232
Auckland Park
2006

Copy Dr E Fritz

UNIVERSITY
— OF —
JOHANNESBURG

ETHICS CLEARANCE

Dear Ms Catherine Dikeledi Sekhukhune

Ethical Clearance Number: 2010-024

Re: An ethnographic account of teaching and learning of the first Grade R programme in a developing school in 2010 in a black urban community.

The FAEC has decided to

☒ Approve the proposal
☐ Provisionally approve the proposal with recommended changes
☐ Recommend revision and resubmission of the proposal

Sincerely,

Professor Alan Amory
Chair: FACULTY ACADEMIC ETHICS COMMITTEE

21 July 2010

FIELD NOTES OF THE PARENTS' MEETING AND REGISTRATION

Venue: Thutong Hall

What I factually saw and heard:

Meeting: I arrived at the school at 7:45. Few parents and their children were already there. Many parents arrived between 8:00 and 9:30. The UJ team helped the principal and her staff with the welcoming of the parents and children and the preparation for the meeting. Mrs Moabi, the principal, Sesotho teacher, Ratang, and the school administration clerk, Ingrid, were the three staff members on site. The key aspect seemed to be the parents meeting and the first attendance of the Grade R children. Eventually the meeting started and the programme was as follows:

- Members of the advisory board welcomed the parents and introduced the staff members and their roles.

- The principal welcomed and addressed the parents on several issues including their roles. She explained the school rules by elaborating on each aspect tabulated on the copies that were handed to parents. She emphasized the issue of LOLT, that isiZulu and Sesotho would be used. Ms Naledi (board member) added that English was to be used concurrently with the two African languages. This emanated from a question that was asked by one mixed race parent who seemed to be concerned about the language issue.

- Mrs Moabi explained to the parents that after the meeting registration matters would be attended to after which they had to leave and come back around 13:00 to fetch the children.

- The District's Institutional Development and Support Officer (IDSO) of the school Ms. Morwesi addressed the parents and explained the GDE's expectations of them. She also helped with the registration process...

Registration: The principal explained the process to the parents. Parents were divided into two groups according to the languages, isiZulu and Sesotho. I was helping the Sesotho

group... There were two mixed race parents, whose children speak English. They spoke to me and said that their children, since they accompany each other to school, they would both do Sesotho. There was also the father (Zulu) who was not sure with which group his son had to register as they spoke both isZulu and Sesotho at home. The mother was Sotho. He called the mother who was also around to help him decide and she chose Sesotho. He reported that their child was conversant in both languages. The forms that were initially filled in by some of the parents in 2009 were also sorted. Parents were issued with the registration forms to fill in and were requested to bring them the following day (Tuesday)… The isiZulu teacher did not report for work. I asked the principal and she explained to me that her contract was in the process of being finalised (Log 01/02/10).

TRANSCRIPTS OF INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS WITH TEACHERS CONDUCTED IN JUNE 2010

Pseudonyms were used for all the names.

Interviewer: Dikeledi Sekhukhune

Interview questions:

1. Tell me about Grade R teaching
2. What stood out for you?
3. Any area of concern that needs attention?
4. How do you wrap up or summarise the term?

Interview with teacher Ratang on the 7th of June 2010 (DS300104)

Interviewer: Tell me about Grade R teaching

Teacher Ratang:

It is more of beefing up their vocabulary - but mostly you don't have to do it in a formal way. When you talk to them you increase the concepts in them. To them it's more about play than formality. It's about promoting learning through play. When you relate stories, they become more excited and they are excited that they grasp something. That is how they learn. When you formalise they get bored quickly. As they play, you have to incorporate what you want to teach. They get tired quickly – the lessons have to be short and have more play in between. When I started with them I thought that they are just children. When you probe for answerers, they show understanding. They can tell their own stories and sequence them. Children are very creative. If you tell them it is story time, they choose their own stories - when you teach them song they put their own words. They don't want seriousness in whatever they are doing. After few days you will notice that they have grasped the concept you were teaching.

Sometimes they create their own language – if they don't remember the right word they put any word for example, one child said to me: "*Teacher wa tseba hore Thabile o difficult*". I asked her: "*O cho hore eng*"? The child responded, "*Ke re o difficult because o kgona ho ekisa motho o mong*". I responded, "*A re re okgona ho ekisa motho e*

mong".The child wanted to say 'mime' but instead uses the word 'difficult'. When we go through the grade she will understand.

When you tell them to write or give them work, for the child is not necessarily about completing the task for example, Godfrey. When you say to him, "go and colour this work by using different colours", when he likes red colour he will use it in the whole drawing. They don't care much about providing detail. As long as the teacher says they have to bring the work, they rush to submit without completing it. There are those who are colour conscious.

Interviewer: What stood out for you?

Teacher Ratang:

The way they think. We underestimate the Grade R level of thinking. They can be six years old but they can surprise you. Given the opportunity they are capable of explaining. It's just that the way they structure need modification here and there.

Interviewer: Any area of concern that needs attention?

Teacher Ratang:

The children get tired at a particular time and adjustment is required. By the story time, which is twelve forty five children are already tired. Maybe by fourth Term they shall have adjusted.

Language, especially from home. You find that at home they want to teach the child English, the father is Zulu, and the mother is Sotho. So you find that the child mixes all the three languages within one sentence or when they express them during story time.

Interviewer: How do you wrap up or summarise the term?

Teacher Ratang:

This term surprised me. In the beginning I had more than five children who were a challenge for me. But they got into routine faster than I thought, especially Cathy because at some point she could not answer or say anything and not understanding.

They now know the different months of the year. The child can tell you that "*Ke tswetswe ka kgwedi ya Phuphu*" (I was born in June). Cathy is shy but she is coping. Sometimes she

is just afraid to say something because she is concerned that other children may laugh at her.

What discouraged me is Desire. First Term she showed eagerness to learn. Her Second Term performance was negatively affected by her staying at home. As a result she seemed to lack confidence. Others like Bogosi, Kgopolo, Naome they can do the work even if they seem lost. In a way I see the results of what I am doing. When I wake up in the morning, I look forward to the day and to the surprise they may bring. It was the right term because one can see the difference. They are adjusting. Though Lebelo is still behind maybe he will improve next year. They keep you on your toes. I enjoyed the term.

Interview with Teacher Mabotse on the 07th of June 2010 (DS300106 and DS300107)

Interviewer: Dikeledi Sekhukhune

Interviewer: Tell me about Grade R teaching

Teacher Mabotse:

The first time when I came it was challenging because it was a new thing for me. Even the walls were bare. Kids were not used to the environment. It was a new thing all together. Starting a new thing helped me to grow in my Grade R venture.

You don't have to force things to children. Things just happen on their own. As a teacher you have to try to develop them holistically - for example, in terms of their language, the child socialises with other children, they develop their gross motor - large muscles, fine motor - small muscles, such as playing with clay.

Children learn through play whether it is structured or any play. They are not aware that they are learning. That is why it is important to do away with formal things in Grade R. Children do not take time to get used to new things. In my arrival they did not take time to get used to me and my routine.

I found some of the children quiet and withdrawn but they are now coping. They are free. Involving kids is very important as it makes them to open up and express themselves freely. You involve them in stories. Mentioning their names is also very important. For example, I noticed that Mpumi likes to be on her own in her small corner and play alone. So, during play I send her to get the toys that she likes - I involve her.

Their speech is not fully developed - I talk to them in complete language or normal language that they speak at home for their speech development and vocabulary - not baby language.

Manners - we must teach them manners. In the beginning, they used to stand up immediately and leave the place unclean after lunch. But now they tidy up and throw in the dustbin.

When you show them that you love them, they become happy - they even get happy as they enter the school gate. In return they also express the love to others. They even went to the extent of remembering my birthday which was on Saturday the eighth of May. On

Monday some of them told me that they sang for me on Saturday. It means that when they are at home they also think about school.

When you realise that something is not right with the child, bring him closer to you. Like in the morning ring, I observe them. For example, Siboniso was sad. He said his mom spanked him that morning because he forgot the jersey at the school, though I didn't know whether he was telling the truth because children can create stories. If I did not notice the child was going to have a bad day.

Interviewer: What stood out for you?

Teacher Mabotse:

Seeing them developing in all aspects socially, emotionally and so on from the first day until now. Now they are open. They can talk about their emotions. The relationship that I managed to establish with them makes me to talk the way I am talking now. The foundation I built helped me to see their progress. If I came here with my muscle tightened I wouldn't have achieved this.

Following their progress, for example, knowing that a child like Lucy, when it comes to tracing is weak, I made follow up by giving her activities to help develop fine motor.

The children can now tell the stories with the beginning, middle and end. Their stories have sequence.

Interviewer: Any area of concern that needs attention?

Teacher Mabotse:

It would be nice to know parents and to work with them because if I am alone, the outcome is not as good like when the parents are involved. We need parents meetings or open days to discuss the progress of the children and show them how they can also help the children.

Our work progress reports challenges in the office: I wish that to change. We always experience problems when we are supposed to do anything that relates to progress report for children. There are so many errors in the office and this affects the contact time with the children. We must not have too much workload within a short space of time as a result of that. The office must run smooth without wasting the children's time – contact time.

Interviewer: How do you wrap up or summarise the term?

Teacher Mabotse:

Compared to the last term, I have adjusted in this term because the first term was very short and things were too many.

We also managed to provide individual attention to the children and put them in a World Cup mood.

Most of the things were covered according to the assessment tasks. Work schedules, plans, themes and activities were covered.

The term was fruitful. Hoping the next term will be fruitful in that way.

Interview with teacher Ratang on play: 9 June 2010 (DS300112)

Interviewer: Dikeledi Sekhukhune

Interview question:

1. How do you see play in Grade R?

Interviewer: How do you see play in Grade R?

Teacher Ratang:

If children play they own up, unlike in a situation where there is formality. The child gets into play with the idea that he is going to play, whereas on the other side he is going to learn something. Like 'Saubona Masithole' *(Hallow Ms Sithole)* play, if you take it according to the document we have, you will be addressing LO [Learning Outcome]: Listening without interruption. The child must wait for their turn to speak by not interrupting the speaker. It is LO1: AS 2.

Attitude – To comfort others. Through play you build the communication skills for example, if a person gives 'this attitude' I can answer back depending on what I pick. Like in a case where the person is angry, I can comfort her.

Children socialise more with ease, unlike in a formal situation. A child happens to know and have contact with many children at one time, as they hug this child and that one and so on.

Play portrays the morals that the children have. For example you can pick up the themes like bullying. You can identify the behaviours that can help you to groom the child, such as making the child aware that other children have the rights like him or her.

Children can express their feelings and show how they are groomed at home, for example, when they play family, the 'father' will often show what the real father does at home .For example, when the child's father likes reading, you will see during play that particular child doing the same. When the father is always away from home, you will see the child playing with a tyre - driving a motor car, as the father is always away or absent from home.

Through play the child is exposed to the type of life they live at home. The children will show, for example, whether they are independent or dependent at home. The child who is dependent will, for example, always ask "Please untie my shoes" during play.

The children can recognise sounds at a certain level. In the case of MaSithole and maDlamini game, the child can associate the letters 's' and 'd' from the surnames Sithole and Dlamini with their names. They know that if my name is Lerato, it starts with 'L.'

Numeracy - We can make sequence of events, for example in maSithole game, Masithole went to town-bought a hat – and she met her friend maDlamini. It is sequence.

You can also address mid-line crossing like when they do 'Mbombela'.

During free play, you can hear themes such as sharing and being cooperative, like in a case where the child says, "Give me that ball". Also it creates a sense of belonging to a group.

Different kinds of play: Structured play, for example, obstacle course, in which the children have to do challenging tasks like crawling under a chair, walking on a plank, and so on.

Role play – The children role play the stories that are related by the teacher, for example, *Three Little Pigs*.

Free play – individual child choose their preference.

Indigenous games – Such as diketo *(stone game)*, 'morabara', kgati *(skipping)*, hop-scotch. The games help develop their morals, intellect, fine and gross motor skills, counting and so on.

Other examples of play include: Finger play – for example, when teaching the concept five; Puppet – a puppet stand can be created for the use of puppets in story telling; Broken telephone, and so on.

Interview with teacher Mabotse on play: 9 June 2010 (DS300113)

Interviewer: Dikeledi Sekhukhune

Interviewer: How do you see play in Grade R?

Teacher Mabotse:

They learn through play. In the case of these children the formality is not supposed to be there. They are not supposed to be serious. The children develop holistically:

Numeracy - They play with blocks using and learning about different sizes and shapes. They also learn about balancing things, for example, when they build bridge during play.

Colours - During play they sort colours. During sorting the children are in a process of learning though they are not aware of it.

Sequencing cards - They learn about sequencing, for example, a person wakes up, eats and goes to school.

Literacy – Books. The children do not know how to read. They do incidental reading – by reading the pictures.

Sequencing - You can hear when they are on their own and playing class, that they understand sequence. I heard them for example telling the story, with the *introduction* 'Kwasukesukela' from the story teller and the group responding with "Xosi", *middle*, and the *end*.

Life Skills (Fantasy) Corner - Values, they learn about manners, sharing, and roles such as being a father or mother. If you are father, for example, you must provide. They play but it is life time learning. They know that after play, they must tidy up. When they play outside they know that it is their responsibility to tidy up, pack things and take them back.

They learn about social life – changing groups through assessing others or their own behaviour. They are able to take decisions on their own. They also develop fine and gross motor skills, for example, rolling, jump

Structured play - During obstacle course-, for example, you want to see if the child understands or knows the words such as 'cross', 'under rope', 'jump', and so on.

Songs: For example, through 'Tamati soso' *(Tomato Sauce)* play, you want to see if the child can do certain actions.

Indigenous games - Such as maSithole *(Ms Sithole)*, diketo *(Stone game)*, skipping, 'legusha', teach the children about their cultural values.

Free play - They do anything. Others just sit and talk or tell a story and so on. They also play soccer. But soccer can also be structured like during that tournament we had last time. It also helped me to discover talents in children, like Mlungisi who is very good and passionate about soccer. He actually surprised me. Playing is very important to a Grade R child as you can see through it that a child is going to be an architect, for example.

TRANSCRIPTS OF INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS WITH PARENTS CONDUCTED IN NOVEMBER 2010

Interview with parents on the 23rd, 24th and 25th of November 2010

Interviewer: Dikeledi Sekhukhune

Interviewees: 6 parents represented by their children's names and numbered 1 to 6.

6 Children (Pseudonyms):

Sesotho: 1. Tshiamo; 2. Reabetswe; 3. Naome

IsiZulu: 1. Beauty; 2. Khulu; 3. Thuli

Language(s) used during the interviews: Sesotho, isiZulu and English. Final transcript was translated to English

Interview questions:

1. What is the main language that your child is exposed to?
2. What is your view on English as language to use in the classroom for all subjects?
3. What is your primary language?
4. Which language do you use at home most?
5. What type of stories do you read to your child?
6. What type of books do you buy for your child?
7. What is the main language of Kopanong?
8. What is the main language of the area where you live?
9. What do you think of mixed languages?
10. What do you do to make your child aware of numbers?

Parent 1:

Interviewer: What is the main language that your child is exposed to?

Interviewee 1: Sesotho

Interviewer: What is your view on English as language to use in the classroom for all subjects?

Interviewee 1: English is a requirement. Wherever you go is English.

Interviewer: What is your primary language?

Interviewee 1: Sesotho

Interviewer: Which language do you use at home most?

Interviewee 1: Sesotho and English. We mix.

Interviewer: What type of stories do you read to your child?

Interviewee 1: We are not story people.

Interviewer: What type of books do you buy for your child?

Interviewee 1: English. Religious. The ones with big letters (fonts)

Interviewer: What is the main language of Kopanong?

Interviewee 1: SeZulu

Interviewer: What is the main language of the area where you live?

Interviewee 1: Setswana

Interviewer: What do you think of mixed languages?

Interviewee 1: They are right. You don't feel bad when you meet a particular nation.

Interviewer: What do you do to make your child aware of numbers?

Interviewee 1: He does not know them yet. But he knows his age. We make him to write. Thapelo (9 year old brother) is helping him.

Parent 2:

Interviewer: What is the main language that your child is exposed to?

Interviewee 2: Sesotho

Interviewer: What is your view on English as language to use in the classroom for all subjects?

Interviewee 2: I will be happy for her to do everything in English. It is one language that is so popular, especially for our continent Southern Africa.

Interviewer: What is your primary language?

Interviewee 2: Sesotho

Interviewer: Which language do you use at home most?

Interviewee 2: Sesotho

Interviewer: What type of stories do you read to your child?

Interviewee 2: Bible stories. I encourage them to attend Sunday school as they teach a lot of things. At home she watches movies and likes movies – some scary, international ones even the Nigerians movies. She is not scared to see things like blood or people shooting each other (father).

Interviewer: What type of books do you buy for your child?

Interviewee 2: We have not bought much for now and we also bought (father points at the vowel and alphabet chart hanging on the hall) and we have the ones from the school.

Interviewer: What is the main language of Kopanong?

Interviewee 2: It goes according to zones – like where we are, in zone 1. It seems the main one is Sezulu, then Sesotho. But – Kopanong, Sesotho and Sezulu are the same.

Interviewer: What is the main language of the area where you live?

Interviewee 2: Sezulu

Interviewer: What do you think of mixed languages?

Interviewee 2: I think it is important but I still prefer one language – English. I still prefer mix language but English is still the one.

Interviewer: What do you do to make your child aware of numbers?

Interviewee 2: (Father) We try to help. If I am not wrong, from her former school where she started she could remember to count to 20 or 25. (Mother) Since she started at Thutong she is doing very well. (Father) At the moment I make her count 1, 2 and so on, and help her when she jumps or can't differentiate 5 and S or 1 and I.

Parent 3:

Interviewer: What is the main language that your child is exposed to?

Interviewee 3: South Sotho

Interviewer: What is your view on English as language to use in the classroom for all subjects?

Interviewee 3: I don't have problem with English because it is the main language that people use after finishing school, university and for communicating with white people.

Interviewer: What is your primary language?

Interviewee 3: South Sotho

Interviewer: Which language do you use at home most?

Interviewee 3: South Sotho

Interviewer: What type of stories do you read to your child?

Interviewee 3: They are stories I read at school, for example, Ledimo, 3 Little Bears and TV ones – Fundani nathi and Takalani Sesame.

Interviewer: What type of books do you buy for your child?

Interviewee 3: I don't buy her books. She has colouring books that come out from the magazines and from the newspapers.

Interviewer: What is the main language of Kopanong?

Interviewee 3: Vernac – It is depends where a person is, for example, at Chiawelo they speak Shangaan and Venda.

Interviewer: What is the main language of the area where you live?

Interviewee 3: Basotho – South Sotho

Interviewer: What do you think of mixed languages?

Interviewee 3: (Auntie) In general they learn, for example, yesterday N... greeted us in Venda, saying that there is Venda child at school. (Mother) They enable you to communicate and to be proudly South African.

Interviewer: What do you do to make your child aware of numbers?

Interviewee 3: I listen to her, correct where she jumps. I even teach her in other languages, including Afrikaans.

Parent 4:

Interviewer: What is the main language that your child is exposed to?

Interviewee 4: IsiZulu

Interviewer: What is your view on English as language to use in the classroom for all subjects?

Interviewee 4: It is right because she even tries to communicate in it. I feel good but not to lose her Zulu. She needs to learn English for her future.

Interviewer: What is your primary language?

Interviewee 4: IsiZulu

Interviewer: Which language do you use at home most?

Interviewee 4: Zulu

Interviewer: What type of stories do you read to your child?

Interviewee 4: The ones like Three Little Bears, Intsomi (Folktales) - she also watches Ben Ten and Shreck, Cartoons on TV.

Interviewer: What type of books do you buy for your child?

Interviewee 4: The colouring book and activity book, also making her to count and do lot of things.

Interviewer: What is the main language of Kopanong?

Interviewee 4: Sesotho

Interviewer: What is the main language of the area where you live?

Interviewee 4: Zulu

Interviewer: What do you think of mixed languages?

Interviewee 4: They are fine because you are learning, so that you don't speak one language – and to understand the languages of those who live with us.

Interviewer: What do you do to make your child aware of numbers?

Interviewee 4: We are always counting and she is always using her toy computer. She counts and writes 1 to 10.

Parent 5:

Interviewer: What is the main language that your child is exposed to?

Interviewee 5: IsiZulu

Interviewer: What is your view on English as language to use in the classroom for all subjects?

Interviewee 5: It is also a good language. I feel happy because English is an official language.

Interviewer: What is your primary language?

Interviewee 5: IsiZulu

Interviewer: Which language do you use at home most?

Interviewee 5: Zulu

Interviewer: What type of stories do you read to your child?

Interviewee 5: The school gave us books. Mr Big – we read it a lot and The Story Teller. I read in English and explain to him in Zulu.

Interviewer: What type of books do you buy for your child?

Interviewee 5: At the moment are the crayons ones. With stories I started with the books provided by the school.

Interviewer: What is the main language of Kopanong?

Interviewee 5: Zulu

Interviewer: What is the main language of the area where you live?

Interviewee 5: Zulu

Interviewer: What do you think of mixed languages?

Interviewee 5: It is number one, because you also learn other languages.

Interviewer: What do you do to make your child aware of numbers?

Interviewee 5: I told him to collect 'dipaniki' (*bottle caps*) to learn counting. I correct him if he skips numbers.

Parent 6:

Interviewer: What is the main language that your child is exposed to?

Interviewee 6: Xhosa, because she stayed with grandmother (maternal).

Interviewer: What is your view on English as language to use in the classroom for all subjects?

Interviewee 6: (Father) I feel very strong about it. English is a medium of communication everywhere, although the child must not lose home language.

Interviewer: What is your primary language?

Interviewee 6: Xhosa

Interviewer: Which language do you use at home most?

Interviewee 6: Xhosa

Interviewer: What type of stories do you read to your child?

Interviewee 6: We usually read the Bible. There are certain memory verses she does. From school, she tells us every day about Goldilocks.

Interviewer: What type of books do you buy for your child?

Interviewee 6: We have not yet started. I am thinking of buying her DVDs of cartoons.

Interviewer: What is the main language of Kopanong?

Interviewee 6: Zulu

Interviewer: What is the main language of the area where you live?

Interviewee 6: (Mother) Mixed. (Father) I think it is Zulu

Interviewer: What do you think of mixed languages?

Interviewee 6: (Father) I think that we have an advantage that we have mixed language. One can express oneself. It advances your communication skill or barrier. In school, it is good as well. It raises awareness in children – that we have to accept one another – to get rid of things like xenophobia.

Interviewer: What do you do to make your child aware of numbers?

Interviewee 6: (Father) The mother will write 1 to 10 and she has to copy those numbers. Mother marks our birthdays on a calendar and always show her when it is

APPENDIX 3:

Thutong additional rhymes in 2010

Sesotho classroom: A day in the life of the Grade R children

isiZulu classroom: A day in the life of the Grade R children

Thutong additional rhymes in 2010

1. *Sibade-siyakhula* (We are tall-we are growing)
   Sibade, siyakhula ((We are tall, we are growing) x2
   Sibafishane (We are short)
   Bobaby (Babies)

2. **Telephone to Jesus**
   Telephone to Jesus, every day
   I want to talk to Jesus, ever day
   Jesus says I love you, everyday

3. *Re banana ba ba nyenyane* **(We are little children)**
   Re banana ba ba nyenyane (We are little children)
   Re rutiwa kwa sekolong (We are taught at school)
   Re bala one, two, three, four (We count one, two, three, four)

   Re bala a, b, c, d (We count a, b, c, d)

   Otla sehlako (Stamp your feet)
   Opa diatla (Clap your hands)
   Re rutiwa kwa sekolong (We are taught at school)

4. **Three little monkeys x2**
   Teasing Mr. Crocodile
   You can't catch me x2
   Along Mr Crocodile
   As hungry as you can be
   And snap two little monkeys

5. **Three little monkeys**

   Three little monkeys, jumping on the bed

   One fell down and bumped his head
   Mommy called the doctor, the doctor said
   No more monkeys jumping on the bed
   Two little monkeys …
   One little monkey ….

6. **Happy song**
   If you are happy and you know it clap your hands x2
   If you are happy and you know it nod your head
   If you are happy and you know it stamp your feet
   If you are happy and you know it say amen
   If you are happy and you know it just sit down
   If you are happy and you know it do them all

7. **Thunder**
   I hear thunder x2
   Or don't you? x2
   Petter –patter raindrop x2
   I am wet, so are you

A day in the life of the Grade R children

Logbook notes: 17 February 2010

Thutong Primary School

Sesotho classroom: A day in the life of the Grade R children

I arrived at the school at 7:50. My first impression consisted of the gathering of the teachers and children at assembly as a ritual at Thutong. At 8:00 all the children were at assembly that was conducted by teacher Ratang. With her help, the children were stretching to different directions as she repeatedly instructed them: "forward's, up, sideways, and down". After the stretch, the children sang the following popular song/hymn in the community and churches of Kopanong as well as in the radio stations:

Jesu ke ena wa mathomo (*Jesus is the beginning*)

Jesu ke ena wa mafelo (*Jesus is the end*)

Ke Alfa le Omega (*He is Alpha and Omega*)

I noticed how children immediately connected to this song, and sang with excitement, enthusiasm, with others screaming at the top of their voices as if they were in a competition. I thought this could relate to their knowledge of the song from their homes hence it was easy for them to relate to it. The morning devotion was until 8:15 and the children walked in lines to their toilets under the supervision of teacher Ratang and the lady cleaner in the school. The children were monitored so that they followed the queue and were even reminded to wash their hands on the basins before they left individually to the classroom on their own because the teachers made sure that all the children were attended to by remaining behind.

At 8:30 they started their day with an English song, "Good morning everybody, how do you do"? After some time Ratang asked them what would they say if they were singing the same song in Sesotho language. They kept quiet and then she asked: "Le dumedisa joang ka Sesotho (*How do you greet in Sesotho*)? They answered by saying: "Dumelang" (*Hallo*). Then she translated the song to Sesotho language, "Dumelang batho kaofela, le kae, le kae" after which they sang. They grasped the translated version easily because these are the words used on a daily basis in Sesotho greetings.

At 08:40 they were already seated as teacher Ratang gave them few minutes to settle down and put their school bags on the allocated individual shelves. All the children sat down on a carpet and they formed a circle after teacher Ratang instructed them to do so. I noticed how they spontaneously placed themselves anywhere in the circle instead of choosing their friends or sitting according to gender. Before they started with the activities of the day teacher Ratang marked the register. As soon as she opened the register, some of the children were competing to tell teacher Ratang today's date, yet she did not ask any question. They were guessing and some said:" 8th" or "9th" or any number they thought of. Before she responded I asked her why children decided to tell the date. She said: "because I always teach them about the date", meaning it was a daily routine. As she was marking the register I noticed that some of the children were not responding when the teacher called them by surname. Noticing this herself, teacher Ratang explained the difference between surname and first name. Thabile said, "Nna ompitse ka sefane" *(Call me by my surname)*. When it was her turn, teacher Ratang did as Thabile requested. She indeed responded when the teacher called her by her surname instead of her name. This could relate to culture because traditionally or historically children in Kopanong schools are used to be called either by their names or surnames by teachers. Still in the circle, the teacher asked them about what had happened at home the previous day. Individually, children had to share their experiences with the big group. The responses were for example: "Ne ke shebile TV" (*I was watching the TV*) or "Mamaka le papaka ne ba lwana" (*My father and mother were arguing*) and so on. They did not engage with their experiences. Teacher thanked the children for sharing their experiences and told them that they will continue with the next activity.

Teacher Ratang said: "Matsatsi a supa a beke – 7 days of the week. Ke dikae ka jeno (*What is the date today?*) Sehla sa rona ke eng" (*What is our season*)?

Children put up their hands, shouted out, eager to answer. They simultaneously answered in a group as everyone wanted to respond or to be heard. I was curious about how they were going to tell the date in Sesotho as I knew it is almost a sentence long compared to the English response.

They gave the following appropriate Sesotho answer: "Letsatsi la leshome le metso e supa" (*Seventeen*). Teacher Ratang assisted them as they struggled to put all the words together and in order, including to name the month of February.

Teacher Ratang continued: "Kgwedi e ke mang (What is this *month*)?

Realising that they were struggling she said to them: "Kgwedi ya Hlakola (*February month*).

A re fe dikgwedi tse leshome le metso e mebedi tsa ngwaga" (*Let's name twelve months of the year*). The children gave the months first in Sesotho, but struggling to recall them and then in English, which was easier than Sesotho.

For a season they responded: "Selemo" (*Summer*).

I asked myself what made it so difficult for the children to tell the moths in their home language as compared to English? To my mind, came the importance of the learning foundations the children's parents or caregivers can lay before the children are taught at school. After the calendar activity, Numeracy continued by counting through engaging in activities such as hopping, clapping hands and by shaking their bodies. Teacher Ratang instructed the children to go to their tables, which they shared in groups of four. She provided them with blocks and each child in a group had to physically count three blocks of different colours by saying out loud: "1, 2, 3", and for example, "yellow, green, blue" to his or her group members. The language used to count and describe was English.

Teacher Ratang told the children to stand up. She engaged them in physical exercises for example, shaking their bodies, hopping, and jumping. They were then instructed to engage in the rhyme, 'Body Parts' in Sesotho: 'Hlogo magetla, sefuba le letheka….' Then they translated it to the English rhyme (*Head, shoulders, and so on*). As they were doing this, I noticed that Kgopolo was confusing the body parts in both Sesotho and English rhymes. Teacher Ratang stood next to her and helped by demonstrating to her. Before they moved to the Life Skills corner, for group activities, teacher grouped them into four groups (I use A, B, C& D to name the groups) and gave them the following instructions:

Group A (5 members): "Ha le tloha mo le ya ko ntlong. Batho ba ba yang ko ntlong ba etsang? A go motho o ilo tshwarang dilo tse chesang. Ke dife tseo? *(From here you go to the house. What do people who go to the house do? No one must touch hot things. What are those)?* Two responses from children: "Setofo, toast" (*Stove and toast*). Others mentioned things that are not in the display kitchen such as kettle and pan but she corrected them. She even explained to Cathy (Afrikaans speaking girl) in English.

Group B (6 Members): They had to answer the question: "Ke eng dilo tse di ka lematsang ka mo ntlong *(What things inside the house can hurt a person)*?"

> Group C (4 members): It was their turn to write. They sat around the table, each with a page and a crayon. They wrote on a paper according to the teacher's instructions. They were practicing the numbers 1-5.
>
> Group D (11 members): To answer the question: "Ke eng ntho e ka re lematsang mo sekolong" (*What can hurt us at school*)? The teacher showed them art paint as an example. Some of the groups were playing around, talking to each other and laughing instead of doing what teacher Ratang instructed them to do. Some were quite as the talkative ones dominated the discussions, talking in Sesotho. The teacher kept on reminding them about their tasks and reprimanding those who were 'disruptive' and making noise. She reprimanded them by calling their names and told them to focus on their groups activities

At 9:30 it was toilet break. They all walked in rows to the toilets. I noticed the discipline. They came back and retrieved their lunch boxes. They prayed first: "For the food we are just about to receive, we thank you O Lord. Amen", led by teacher Ratang in English. As I observed the children eating, I saw that children had brought a variety of food from home. Food included both white and brown bread, dumblings and fatcakes. The amount of bread differed from two to four slices per child. There were 'french' or chicken polony, eggs – boiled, fried and scrambled, fish fingers, and fried chips. Snacks – chips and pop corns. Different types of juice. As for fruits – I only saw one apple and two bananas brought by two children. One boy brought five biscuits and a packet of popcorn.

After mealtime (10:00) the children went outside to play, with teachers and two student assistants supervising them. The games the children engaged in were indigenous ones, such as skipping, 'katse le legotlo' (cat and mouse) and hide and seek, jungle gym, soccer as well as solitary play. During play the children spoke other Kopanong languages such as TshiVenda, Xhosa, Setswana, township lingo in addition to the three prescribed languages of the school, isiZulu, Sesotho and English.

After the siren rang, at about 11:20, the children were back in the classroom. They first stood in two lines, separate for boys and girls, before entering the classroom. They started with a 'Butterfly exercise'. The children were laughing and giggling. Then the following English rhymes followed: 'A, B, C, D...', based on English 26 letters; 'Twinkle-Twinkle Little Star'; and lastly, 'My name is ......What is your name'? After doing the rhymes, teacher Ratang moved them to a memory corner. She then asked them about the words

they had already learnt during the previous lessons such as: Sedikadikwe (*circle)*, Khutlo-tharo (*triangle)* and Khutlo-nne *(square)*. They continued with counting 1 to10 in English then translated to Sesotho from 'Nngwe ho fihla ka Leshome' (*one to ten)*. Teacher Ratang helped by showing them the chart on the wall. As she was doing that the children had to also say the number she was pointing at or she would ask a few individuals to stand up and point with their fingers at the numbers on the chart.

Around 12:00 it was discussion time for about 15 minutes. The topic was: Nako ya moqoqo (*Discussion time)*. The children sat on the carpet in a circle. The topic was about the environment. One of the themes was, "Go dlala ka mo morago ha ditlelase" (*To play behind the classroom)*. Teacher Ratang asked them "why it is not safe to play behind the classrooms"? Reponses: "Di tla re lematsa" (*They will hurt us)*; "o dlalle mo boteacher ba leng teng" (*Play where the teachers are*) ….. The teacher kept on asking: "Ke eng hape ntho eo e ka ho lematsang ko ntle, Bathabile" *(What else can hurt you outside, Bathabile*)? Bathabile answered: "Ke thapo e tla go dripa" *(It is a rope, it will trip you)*. As they responded, the children would shout out, speaking in Sesotho. Teacher Ratang kept on reminding them to wait for their turn. She attended to those who raised their hands but at the same time asked for answers from those who appeared to be quiet and reserved. After the discussion time children were engaged in about 15 minutes of story time. Three children, with the help of the whole class, were retelling the story of the Three Bears that the teacher related to them the previous day and other days. I noticed that group work was encouraged as the children would help each other in telling the whole or full story based on individual contributions from the bigger group, and in so doing, reminded each other of the elements missing. Storytelling was followed by free play before they left for home at 13:00. I observed that by this time the children were exhausted and teacher Ratang left two learners who were sleeping, to rest. She said that at that time of the year some of the learners are still in a transition period from crèches where they used to sleep. She added that these two learners and their peers would outgrow the phase as time went on. The children were collected by parents and taxis.

Logbook notes: 23 March 2010

Thutong Primary School

isiZulu classroom: A day in the life of the Grade R children

I arrived at the school at 7:50. Before I went to the isiZulu classroom, my first impression consisted of the morning's devotion as a ritual at Thutong and the welcome of children by the principal, Mrs Moabi. The principal was conducting the assembly. She welcomed the children as they just came back from the public holiday (21 March). She commented that she hoped they enjoyed it. This holiday was actually on Sunday 21 March. In South Africa, if the public holiday is on a Sunday, it is carried over to a Monday. So, Monday the 22nd was a holiday, meaning that the children came back to school on the 23rd.

When I entered the isiZulu class at 8:00, teacher Mabotse was marking the register. As she called their names, children responded either by saying "present" or "not present" in either isiZulu or English. One girl and two boys were absent. Mabotse indicated that it was because of transport problem. She explained that one taxi collecting children was reported to have broken down. She said she was not sure how long this was going to take place because it would depend on how soon the taxi was going to be fixed because the parents had already paid their monthly transport fee to the driver.

Around 8:30 teacher Mabotse engaged the children in the following activity: they started by clicking their fingers for about a minute. I noticed that this was one of the relaxation techniques which also enhanced their motor functioning. They then followed teacher Mabotse as she instructed them to touch their body parts, first, in isiZulu saying: "Bamba indlebe, ikhanda", and so on. She then translated to English: "Touch your ear, head," and so on.

Teacher Mabotse took the children to the numeracy corner. After the children mentioned the twelve months of the year in English, they revised colours and shapes that were pasted on the wall. The teacher would point at the item and the group or individual children would give answers. The children were confident and they would shout the answers with teacher Mabotse reminding them that they had to wait for their turns. In some instances she would pick those who were seated at the back and who seemed to be quiet, calling their names. The activity started with isiZulu and then English, in the following manner:

Imibala – Colours:	Izimo – Shapes:
Orange – kusawolintshi	triangle – uxantathu
yellow – kuphuzi	rectangle – unxande
red – kubomvu	square – isikwele
blue – kuluhlaza okwesibhakabhaka	circle – indinlinga
green – kuluhlaza okotshani	

I noticed how English concepts would be introduced first before isiZulu concepts and how children could interchangeable used both languages for these concepts despite which one came first. My impression was that at this time they mastered these concepts introduced to them since the beginning of the first term. However, as this lesson continued, teacher Mabotse asked them in isiZulu: What is the difference between square and rectangle? The children took longer to provide answer, accompanied by a long silence. Then teacher Mabotse rephrased the question, noticing that they were not sure what to say. She then asked in isiZulu: How many sides do the following have: the triangle, square and rectangle? The children immediately put up their hands, shouted out and were eager to answer. Some of the children responded in a group, in isiZulu, as follows: "Four corners, four sides" for rectangle. For a square they said: "All sides are equal". I noticed from their answers that the rephrasing of the question by teacher Mabotse made a big difference. This helped the children to understand as the teacher simplified her instruction. Noticing that some of the children, like Neo, were not concentrating, Mabotse started the rhyme: "If you know you are happy now, clap your hands", to get all the attention from all the children. After they repeated this rhyme it was quiet in the room. Teacher Mabotse asked them to stand up and make a line and she hugged them, calling each by their names saying: "Ngiyakuthanda" (*I love you*).

They moved to the Life Skills corner. Teacher Mabotse instructed them to do the following activity, for example: "Hlala, lala, sokuma, and so on, and repeated that in English (Sit; Sleep; Stand*). They repeated the actions in different paces: from very slow, to slow, fast and very fast. The children seemed to enjoy this activity, as they giggled, especially when teacher Mabotse increased the pace. Thato asked teacher Mabotse to go

to the toilet. Teacher told all the children to prepare for toilet break as it was almost 9:30. They formed two lines. Before they left teacher Mabotse reminded them about the 'outside rules' as they were standing in two rows for boys and girls. Jacky mentioned the two rules in isiZulu as teacher Mabotse was asking children to mention some of the rules:

"Ungaqhithi amanzi (*Do not spill water*)"

"Ungalahli amaphepha (*Do not litter*)"

After toilet break, they came back individually, sat down on their tables in groups of four until everyone was back, to continue with their lesson. Teacher Mabotse gave them blank A4 papers for an individual activity. The instructions were first in isiZulu and code switched using both isiZulu and English. They had to draw the shapes and colour them in colours of their choice. After completing the task each child took their papers to the teacher, to be signed and put in the child's file. Immediately after this activity it was lunch time. Children took their bags from their shelves and unpacked their lunch boxes with different meals such as bread, porridge, dumbling, juice, few fruits, yoghurt and sweets. One did not bring her lunch box. Teacher asked the children to share with her. I noticed how other children were willing to share with that girl and within a short time she had something to eat. To my mind, this made sense seeing as sharing, collaboration and group work were part of teaching and learning in Thutong classrooms.

After lunch it was playtime-outside from about 10:15 to 11h00. Some of the children played alone in a sand pit for example, some were singing, running around and placed themselves in groups of their choices since they mingled with children from the Sesotho class and even spoke languages of their choices in addition to isiZulu and English. Outside activities involved many games such as jungle gym play, skipping and soccer. After the break, they formed two lines and walked to the toilets. After the toilet break they continued with the following activities:

Job/ Work/Careers – Individual Activity:

Children were instructed to draw what they want to be when they grow up. Their chosen jobs were written by teacher Mabotse on their behalf on individual A4 paper she provided, after which they had to explain individually to her what they wrote.
Group activity – Children were to discuss different jobs: Teacher Mabotse grouped them

according to the job that is demonstrated on the papers she had provided. Then they formed five rows and make five groups of seven or eight:

"Listen to the instructions" said teacher Mabotse explaining in English and isiZulu. "Each one has a paper next to her/him. On those papers there is something. You have to talk as a group. Discuss what you see. What work does that person do and what tools does that person use at work. After that you will tell the class what you discussed".

Teacher moved around and listened briefly to individual groups as they discussed amongst themselves - about 3 minutes.

Group presentation to the class: (The following responses or explanations were mainly in isiZulu. There was code switching - the underlined words were English words used in the children's responses)

Fire-fighter picture: He uses axe; (teacher adds hose pipe)

Police officer picture: "They guard the thieves so that they don't steal; to arrest people, when they smoke dagga/ they work in jail; police station"

Pilot picture: "Is the person who drives an aeroplane; he is working at the aeroplanes"

Doctor picture: "He helps people when they are sick; give them medicine, injection, tablets. "He is working at the clinic; hospital; surgery; ekhaya (*home*)".

Librarian picture: "Borrows people books; works at the library; also teaches at school"

Counting: The class (children) had to count the number of workers (presenters) in each group before they sat down.

Children role played their career/job of their choices. But only two were given the opportunity to do so. Teacher Mabotse notified them that she could not afford every one the opportunity to role play because they still had other activities to do. This reminded me of the weekly plan that they had to follow to meet the curriculum requirements. As a result the presentation went as follows:

Teacher: One girl role played as a teacher: She was teaching a group of five children and the whole group (class) was observing. She (as a teacher) asked the children (learners) their ages. Teacher Mabotse commended her for her good effort.

The second role play was a traffic cop: The boy struggled to demonstrate what he was supposed to enact. He was supposed to talk to the driver of a speeding car. The teacher, with the help of other children, gave him ideas on how to carry out his duty as a traffic officer, and they provided the following examples: A traffic cop can ask for the licence card; can check the engine; whether the car is stolen; to check for guns; Mabotse added

that they can check the discs on the windscreen.

Homework: Teacher Mabotse said to the children in isiZulu: "When you arrive at home, tell your family that at school we talked about jobs. Ask them to tell you about different jobs that you can do when you are grown up. Colour the paper of your job and bring it tomorrow and tell me what they said about different jobs. Tomorrow, we will engage in that activity after marking the register.

It was free play inside the classroom (12:15). Children played with different puzzles. Some played with wooden and plastic blocks; colouring in pictures on A4 papers, bead work and so on. After the free play teacher Mabotse instructed them to go to the literacy corner for stories and storytelling:

Storytelling: five pigs

The children retold the story that teacher Mabotse related the previous day, Ingulube ezinhlano (*Five pigs*). Three children who were selected by the teacher narrated the story successfully. The fourth one struggled but the teacher commended him for his effort as well. Every time an individual child finished telling the story, teacher Mabotse, joined by the other children said: "Thank you very much. Keep it up. Shine like a big star!" However about four children looked tired and restless and the fifth one was fast asleep. I noticed that it was 12:45 and wondered if it could be because of the time allocated for this storytelling activity or hot temperature as it was very hot outside or whether the child was grappling with the Grade R expectations. After school, the parents and taxis collected the children.

APPENDIX 4: Thutong documents/artefacts

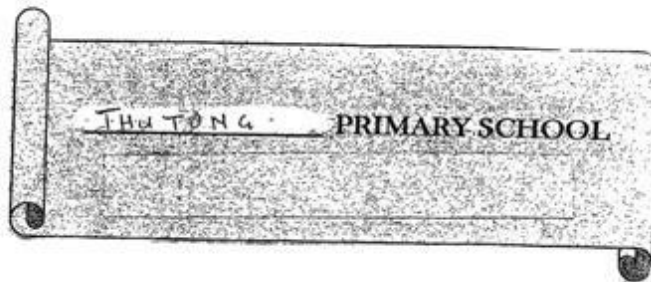**Term 2 Schedule: Literacy**

Term 2 Schedule: Numeracy

Term 3: Checklist for phonics assessment task

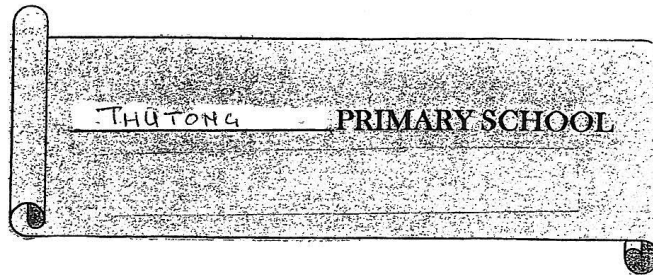**Term 3: Checklist for numeracy assessment task**

Second term report card

LITERACY — LO1 AS1, AS2, AS3c . LO2 AS2, AS3, AS5. LO3 AS3b, LO4 AS1c&d. LO6 AS1a&b

NAMES GIRLS (assessment criteria)
Listen attentively to questions, instructions and announcements ,sings and recites simple sings and rhymes
Demonstrate appropriate listening behavior by listening without interruptions.
Draw pictures of story songs and rhymes.
Express own feelings and the feelings of real or imaginary people.
Sings and recites simple songs and rhymes.
Asks questions when learner does not understand or needs more information and responds clearly to questions asked.
Reads in a group with the teacher.
Writes and asks others to give meaning of what has been written.
Understands that writing and drawing are different.
Recognize that words are made up of sounds.
Recognize sounds at the beginning of the same words.

LIFE SKILLS — LO1 AS4, LO2 AS2, AS3. LO3 AS3, LO4 AS3, AS4.

| (assessment criteria) |
|---|
| Explain safety in the home and at school. |
| Recognize SA flag. |
| Knows member of own family peers and care givers. |
| Express emotion without harming self, others or property |
| Performs expressive movement using different parts of the body. |
| Participate in free play activities. |

NAMES

NUMERACY Term 2

LO1 AS1, AS3, AS4, LO2 AS1, AS2 . LO3 AS2, AS4, AS6, LO4 AS2, AS3, AS4, LO5 AS1

Assessment criteria	Values
Counts at least 10 everyday objects reliably.	3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 2 3 3 3 3
Knows number names and symbols 1-10	3 3 3 3 2 3 3 3 2 3 3 3 3
Orders and compares collections of objects using the words 'more 'less and equal.	3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3
Copies and extends simple patterns using physical objects and drawings.	3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3
Creates own patterns.	3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3
Describe ,sorts and compares physical three dimensional objects according to size ,objects that roll, objects that slides	3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3
Recognize symmetry in self and own environment.	3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3
Follow direction to move or place self within the classroom.	3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3
Orders recurring events in own daily life	3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3
Sequences events within one day.	3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3
Work concretely comparing and ordering objects	3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3
Collects physical objects in the environment according to stated features.	3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

THU TONG PRIMARY SCHOOL

Grade R: Term 3		
Checklist for Phonics Assessment Task		
Name:	Date:	
The learner is able to:	Yes	No
1. identify a learnt letter and say the letter sound (c, q, p, t, f, m, a): 1.1		
1.2 q		
1.3 t		
1.4 f		
1.5 m		
1.6 a		
2. hear a sound spoken by the teacher and say a word beginning with that sound.		

THUTONG PRIMARY SCHOOL

Grade R: Term 3		
Checklist for Numeracy Assessment Task		
Name:	Date:	
The learner is able to:	Yes	No
1. Count objects to 10		
2. Use apparatus to work out verbal subtraction		
3. Recognise numerals from 1 to 10		
Copy this rubric. You will need one for each learner.		
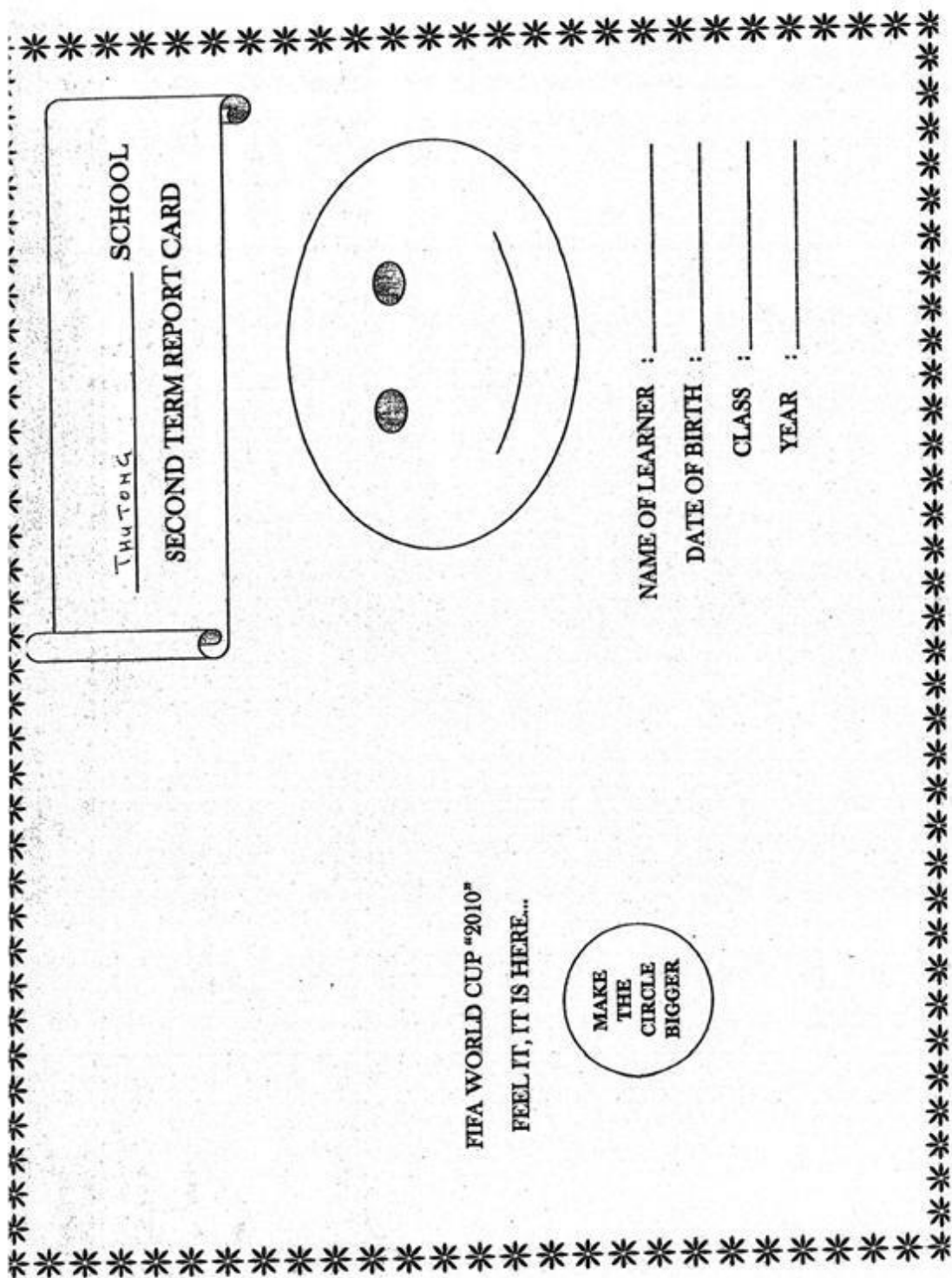
Thutong _____ SCHOOL

SECOND TERM REPORT CARD

NAME OF LEARNER : _____

DATE OF BIRTH : _____
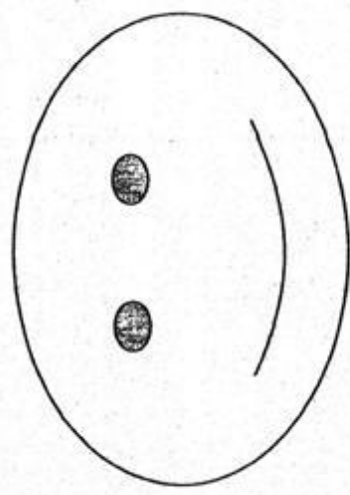
CLASS : _____

YEAR : _____

FIFA WORLD CUP "2010"

FEEL IT, IT IS HERE...

MAKE THE CIRCLE BIGGER

KEY

4	OUTSTANDING
3	ACHIEVED
2	PARTIALLY ACHIEVED
1	NOT YET ACHIEVED

LITERACY

❖ Listens attentively to questions and announcements.	
❖ Sings and recites simple songs and rhymes.	
❖ Demonstrates appropriate listening behavior by listening without interruptions.	
❖ Draws pictures of story, songs and rhymes.	
❖ Sings and recites simple songs and rhymes.	
❖ Understands that writing and drawing are different.	
❖ Recognises sounds at the beginning of the words.	

NUMERACY

❖ Knows number names and symbols 1 - 10	
❖ Copies and extends simple patterns using physical objects and drawings.	
❖ Follows directions to move or place self within the classroom.	
❖ Sequences events within one day.	
❖ Works concretely comparing and ordering objects.	
❖ Collects physical objects in the environment according to stated features.	

LIFE SKILLS

❖ Explains safety in the home and at school.	
❖ Recognises SA Flag.	
❖ Knows members of own family, peers and caregivers.	
❖ Expresses emotions without harming self, others or property.	
❖ Performs expressive movements using different parts of the body.	

COMMENT: _____

_____

_____

Number of Days Absent

SIGNATURES

EDUCATOR: _____   DATE: _____

PRINCIPAL: _____   DATE: _____

· School Closed: 09 June 2010

School Re - Open: 18 July 2010

Acknowledgment of Language Editing

Date: Sunday, 31 March 2013

This is to certify that Language Editing has been carried out on the following:

AN ETHNOGRAPHIC ACCOUNT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING OF THE FIRST GRADE R PROGRAMME IN A DEVELOPING SCHOOL IN 2010 IN A BLACK URBAN COMMUNITY

by

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