

AN INVESTIGATION OF LISTENING AS A LEARNING OUTCOME
OF THE LITERACY PROGRAMME IN GRADE ONE

by

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DECLARATION

I declare that “AN INVESTIGATION OF LISTENING AS A LEARNING OUTCOME OF THE LITERACY PROGRAMME IN GRADE ONE” is my own work and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

MRS N. SHAIK

DATE

DEDICATION

THIS THESES IS DEDICATED

TO MY LATE PARENTS

DAWOOD

AND

FATHIMA VAWDA

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am most grateful to Almighty God for guiding and helping me throughout this journey. I am content and most grateful for following the principles of our beloved Prophet Muhammed (PBUH), as guidelines to follow in order to achieve success in this life and in the hereafter.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how listening, as part of the literacy learning programme is planned for and taught in the grade one class. The data was produced through semi-structured interviews of five participants, who were grade one educators in the urban area of Durban, Kwa Zulu Natal. Findings suggested the many factors that accounted for why some children in the grade one class do not listen and that educators need to plan for the teaching of listening. The researcher examines the use of multiple strategies, such as teaching responsively, including stimulating tasks, reading aloud, creating a purpose for listening, setting the stage for listening and modeling as strategies to teach listening. The study ends with recommendations for the Department of Education to present workshops to educators on the teaching of listening and for module courses at colleges and universities to offer specialized courses on the teaching of listening. The aim of this research which was conducted in the urban area of Durban, Kwa Zulu Natal, was to investigate how grade one educators were planning for and teaching listening. During this study, data was produced through semi-structured interviews of five participants, who were grade one educators. Findings of this study suggest that there were many factors that accounted for why some children in the grade one class do not listen. Findings also indicated that educators need to plan for the teaching of listening.

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTORY ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

*“Compared with the ability
to read and write, listening
is the weakest “- Mrs Greensill, Durban Preparatory School*

*“ Children are not learning
because they do not listen”- Mrs Africa, Charles Hugo*

These voices from two grade one educators in the Central Durban area, in the Kwa Zulu Natal Province of South Africa, express the concern about the lack of listening from learners in their class. These concerns about the lack of listening are common amongst many children. The lack of listening skills creates a level of dysfunction that needs to be addressed by proactive intervention at multiple levels, most notably by educators. Although these comments have been documented from only two grade one educators, according to Mc Devitt (1990:713), research has shown that most children do not listen effectively. The reasons for ineffective listening are multiple but unless the problem of ineffective listening is not addressed, one cannot expect to achieve a positive listening environment.

Listening plays an important role in the life of a child. As Machado (2003:226) indicates that listening is one of the factors that account for successful social interaction, one's level of functioning and overall success in life. Listening is also seen as the most fundamental skill of a child's schooling career, Palmer & Bayley (2005:7).

In our education system, the teaching of listening must not be taken lightly by educators. The importance of listening is reflected as being the first learning outcome in the Revised National Curriculum Statement of the Languages Learning area. The reason for this is that listening is the first language arts skill to appear, and listening is acquired before speaking, Machado (2003:226). The skills of speaking, reading and writing are so highly dependent on

listening, that if a child does not listen effectively these skills will suffer. The need to listen effectively is not only required for language but listening is also required for overall learning as well. As Mulvany (1998:20), states that without the proper level of listening, learners learning will decrease. It is also through listening that learners acquire the beliefs, norms and knowledge of their society Mc Devitt (1990:713).

Children are engaged in a large part of the school day in listening. As Burrows & Guthrie (2001:17), states learners spend between seventy five to eighty percent of time listening to the educator, to other students or to audio-visual media. A study done by Nichols (1984) cited in Machado 2003:226; found that individuals listen to fifty percent of what they hear and only comprehend twenty five percent of that. Although a considerable amount of time is spent in listening, most learners are still doing it ineffectively.

The reasons for ineffective listening could stem from the child's physical, social, environmental or cognitive backgrounds. The researcher investigates this in (Ch 1, Para 1.2)

It is in grade one, that the foundations for teaching listening should be firmly laid as grade one is the beginning of the formal learning stage and they play an important role in determining school success of a child. As Yeo & Clarke 2006: 55; states that the early primary school years have been hailed as critical for school success. Since the early years are critical for school success, the skill of listening should be taught during this important year of formal schooling. If children are taught listening early in their lives, they will be able to identify the important role that listening plays in their lives and how the use of effective listening benefit them in their schooling career and social life as well. Learners will also be able to build on the knowledge of listening and thus be able to recall the strategies required for listening, in later years, thus practicing effective listening.

1.2 AIM OF RESEARCH

The purpose of this research is to create an awareness of listening, so that educators and grade one learners will feel more equipped in improving the quality of the learners listening. Educators need to realize that listening is not a discrete skill that stands alone, but it is embodied into a family of counterparts and these counterparts are all linked to each other, thus facilitating the successful accomplishment of listening. This will be further investigated in chapter two.

1.3 ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM

1.3.1 FACTORS RELATED TO THE LACK OF LISTENING

1.3.2 INTRODUCTION

Research has identified physical, social, cognitive, and environmental factors that contribute to the lack of effective listening in the young child; Bellis 2002:10; Thompson 2001:263; Burrow & Guthrie 2001:34; Wilson 1996:6 and Palmer & Bayley 2005:7. For the purpose of this study, the focus is limited to the child's physical make up, the child's home environment, the school environment, and the development of language.

1.3.3 PHYSICAL FACTORS RELATED TO THE CHILD

Physical factors such as hearing loss, ear infections and auditory processing deficit or disorder can be important factors that contributes to poor listening, Thompson 2001:263; Bellis 2002:102

1.3.3 .1 Hearing Loss

Hearing loss plays an important role in the process of listening and learning. As www.heartouch.com 2007:3; states that mild hearing loss can interfere with the reception of spoken language and the performance of education. Bellis 2002:30; also states that if a child experiences hearing loss then listening and learning will be affected.

According to www.heartouch.com 2007:3; there are three types of hearing loss, which are:

- sensorineural hearing loss
- conductive hearing loss
- mixed hearing loss.

Sensorineural hearing loss is caused by damage to the inner ear which results from ageing, pre-natal and birth related problems, viral and bacterial infections, heredity, trauma, exposure to loud noise, fluid back-up or a benign tumor in the inner ear. Most sensorineural hearing loss can be effectively treated with hearing aids. The second type of hearing loss is conductive

hearing loss which involves both the outer and middle ear and may result from a blockage or punctured eardrum, birth defects, ear infection or heredity and can be treated medically or surgically. The third type of hearing loss is referred to as mixed hearing loss which is a combination of conductive and sensorineural and means that the problem occurs in both the outer, or middle or the inner ear.

In the young child if hearing loss is detected early and appropriate treatment is administered then the child will experience better speech and comprehension and these children can be mainstreamed into elementary and secondary schools.

1.3.3.2 Ear Infections

Ear infections are very common in children and between seventy five to ninety five percent of children are affected by it before the age of six. A common ear infection in children is otitis media. Otitis media is an infection of the middle ear and is known to be prevalent due to the dysfunction of the Eustachian tube. According to Bellis 2002:91; ear infections occur more frequently in children because of the horizontal position of the Eustachian tube which runs between the middle ear and the back of the throat. Because this tube is narrower in children, it can get easily blocked through inflammation associated with colds, tonsillitis and other respiratory conditions which allows children to become more susceptible to ear infections, (Bellis 2002:91).

Otitis media is more than just a medical problem as it affects hearing, develops faulty listening habits with poor attention, it develops problems with auditory processing, language development and even cognitive effects, (Bester:2007:2). Since otitis media is more than just a medical problem, medical treatment is not sufficient enough for treating otitis media but intervention through a language screening assessment and possibly a language enrichment program should be undertaken (Bester:2007:2).

1.3.3.3 Auditory Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

A common disorder in children known as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder is another important factor that relates to poor listening. Auditory processing refers to what we do with what we hear, Bellis (2002:102). Auditory processing is the ability to give meaning to incoming stimuli from the environment. Many children exhibit signs of auditory deficit and educators might not be aware of the signs of auditory deficit and therefore will not be able to identify it.

Some children hear normally but have difficulty in making sense of what they hear. Thus they find it difficult to interpret, integrate, associate, comprehend and store information, Bellis (2002:26). According to the United States Department of Education 2006:2; and Biederman J 2007:1; an important symptom of children who suffer from attention deficit hyperactivity disorder is that they do not seem to listen or they have difficulty in listening to others without being distracted or interrupting. Bellis 2002:102; also states that auditory deficit problems can be one of the reasons that the child will not be able to listen effectively. For the purpose of this study, it is imperative to focus on the symptom of poor listening in attention deficit hyperactivity disorder as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder is one of the contributing factors that relates to poor listening.

There are three symptoms related to attention deficit hyperactivity disorder which are attentional deficits, impulsivity and hyperactivity. With attentional deficit the child has a short attention span and thus fails to complete tasks, has poor listening and is easily distracted or disorganized.

With impulsivity the child does not think before he acts, does not remain focused on one activity but rapidly moves from one activity to another and has difficulty waiting for a turn in groups or games.

With hyperactivity children are described as always being on the go. They have difficulty sitting still as they fidget, wiggle and move excessively. Children suffering from attention deficit hyperactivity disorder can be helped through educational practices which are associated with academic instruction or they are treated through medical intervention. According to the United States Department of Education Institute for Research Report 2006:3; teachers who successfully educate children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, use a three pronged strategy, which are evaluating the child's needs and strengths,

selecting appropriate instructional practices and for children receiving special education services, to integrate appropriate practices.

Medical professionals state that attention deficit hyperactivity disorder can be treated through medical intervention. According to Biederman J 2007:3; the treatment of children or adults suffering from attention deficit hyperactivity disorder is through evaluation, explanation of the problem to parents and the child and therapeutic intervention. Through evaluation a detailed history of the child's psychological development is obtained and which is followed by detailed information about the child. An individual intelligence test is also carried out in order to determine the academic status of the child.

Biederman 2007:3; states that medication is a focal point of helping the child suffering from attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, since these provide a therapeutic effect. Although medication helps to reduce the symptoms of Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, medication alone does not help to reduce dyslexia, or co-ordination problems.

Children suffering from attention deficit hyperactivity disorder exhibit poor listening as one of the symptoms. If attention deficit hyperactivity disorder is treated appropriately either through appropriate educational practices and or medical intervention then the problem of listening can be addressed.

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1.4 SOCIAL FACTORS

1.4.1 PARENT - CHILD INTERACTION

The home environment plays an important part in the lack of listening in the child, as it is considered to be an important place for working on listening skills; Burrows and Guthrie 2001:34. Individuals who are responsible for working on these listening skills in the home are the parents as they are the most important role players in developing strong listening skills with their children. Usually young children look forward to conversing with their parents about the day's events at school and in return expect their parents to listen and offer valuable responses. When parents encourage this type of interaction, by listening and conversing with their children, asking questions which illicit appropriate answers and showing genuine interest

to what their children have to say, children begin to realize that their parents have listened, and thus what they have to say is important. Wilson 1997:6; states that children's listening ability can be improved when parents ask and encourage questions, discuss feelings, share thoughts and give praise.

Burrows and Guthrie 2001:34; refers to a study done by Ward as cited in Palmer, (1997), showed that in the home environment, when the television was switched off and the parents were involved in meaningful interaction with their children, the listening skills of the children were greatly improved.

-Unfortunately because some children may come from single parent homes, these parents may not have the time to talk to their children, owing to the demands of playing the role of both parents, the listening abilities of these children may suffer. As Wilson 1997:6; states that latch key children and single parent children may not receive enough meaningful experiences to question and discuss experiences.

Some children might have lost both their parents and they are forced to live with grandparents, who are not proficient in English and this could also hinder the lack of listening skills. On the other hand, there might be some children who after having lost both their parents are forced to live in an orphanage home and these children might not have adequate interaction with their caregivers and this could also affect listening. It is equally important for all children irrespective of their family situations to be exposed to meaningful conversation, as this can lead to better listening.

1.4.2 THE EFFECTS OF TELEVISION

-Television is currently playing a prominent role in childrens' lives, as they spend many hours a day watching television. According to thinkquest 2007:1; children spend more hours watching television than doing any other activity and elementary school learners watch television between twenty five hours a week. Although television is of interest to children, it has also robbed children and adults of arousing interest in enquiry, asking questions, and receiving positive feedback. . As Palmer & Bayley 2005:7; and thinkquest 2007:1; contend that family mealtimes which were once considered a daily opportunity for conversational speaking and listening and language skills has now been replaced by television viewing. Burrows & Guthrie 2001:20; and Palmer & Bayley 2005:7; and thinkquest 2007:1 agree that

television viewing time was one of the factors related to poor listening habits, as television reduced the amount of time interacting with others.

According to thinkquest 2007:1; television also has negative effects on childrens' learning abilities. Due to fast paced programs and special effects on television, children do not remain focused when they are exposed to slower learning activities such as a complex puzzle. Television also has negative effects on receptive learning skills such as reading and listening, as children are watching television passively and thus do not comprehend well, (thinkquest 2007:1)

1.5 ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

1.5.1 THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

Since learners spend a great part of their day in the classroom, the classroom environment should be inviting for the child to actively listen and thus learn. Classrooms that are uninviting will fail to meet the listening and learning demands of the child.

The educator should be aware of any auditory and visual distractions that might be present in the class, such as a hanging mobile or the disturbing sound of a fan, which will affect the child's ability to listen. As Thompson 2001:263 states, because young children have limited attention span, all visual and auditory distractions must be eliminated. Although all visual distractions must be removed, the educator must also ensure that the classroom is visually attractive, in order to sustain the child's listening ability. As Thompson 2001:263 states, the educator should promote an adequate physical environment, whereby there is visual and auditory contact with the educator and learner.

According to Crawford A; Saul E.W; Mathews S; and Mackinster J; 2005:7; states that classrooms that invite students to learn actively and think critically have the following features in common. Although Crawford A; Saul E.W; Mathews S; and Mackinster J discuss learning actively and thinking critically, the process of listening is part of learning actively and thinking critically. As was mentioned in (para. 1), listening and learning are directly

linked. What follows are the common features that invite students to learn actively and think critically. (Crawford A; Saul E.W; Mathews S and Mackinster 2005:7).

-Teachers and students share responsibility for the classroom climate.

For example students may participate in developing class rules for conduct. Teachers invite students to take initiative. If children do not listen actively, they will not be able to formulate their own rules and they will also be unable to follow the rules of the class.

- Teachers model thinking for students and support students as they share their thinking strategies.

Teachers demonstrate how a person thinks critically, not by propounding ideas as if everything that comes out of their mouths was a certainty but by approaching ideas tentatively, conditionally, and promoting respect for different points of view in their lesson. Students have open discussions with each other, and learn not only each others ideas, but each others ways of thinking. Teachers may question their own, their students, and others' conclusions and knowledge, and encourage students to do likewise. Children can only respect others points of view if they listen closely to that view. Children can have open discussions with other children, if they listen actively and thus will they be able to make appropriate responses.

- There is an important atmosphere of inquiry and openness

The teacher and student use high level questions (That is, not just "What?" "Where?" and "When?"; but "Why?", "What if?" and Why not?") as they analyze problems and make decisions. Students take certain roles in activities as they practice different kinds of thinking: they make predictions, gather information, organize the information, and question conclusions. Teachers show students ways to carry out tasks in the classroom, and they give students more corrective advice than criticism and evaluation. Teachers thus model correct listening behaviour and practice being good listeners themselves, by valuing what children have to say and offering correct advice.

- Students are given support, but just the right amount of it

Teachers pay close attention to what students are learning and how they are thinking, investigating, and communicating as they go about learning. Students are taught to examine their own learning and to improve their own performance. Teachers vary the

amount of guidance they give students. And offer them more independence as they show they are ready for it. There is an emotionally secure learning environment in which students feel free to try new tasks, and in which unsuccessful attempts may lead to eventual success.

- The arrangement of the space makes it easy and natural for the students to work together and talk to each other

Traditional classrooms are arranged so they resemble ceremonial places, where the students sit in rows like an audience or a congregation, and the teacher sits in front, often on an elevated plane, like the mayor or the priest. If we want to stress the idea that students are important, that what they have to say is interesting and should be shared, then we should arrange the classroom space to allow for them to talk to each other, and to work together.

Fracarco 2001:3; (as cited in Armstrong 2001:10); further states that in order for students to obtain a higher level of thinking, educators need to emphasize better listening skills.

1.5.2 EFFECTS OF A NOISY CLASSROOM

Young children can be very easily distracted by noise as they are exposed to a noise filled environment, especially in urban areas. From the researcher's experience as a grade one educator, the grade one learners in the researcher's class experienced various distractions created by noise. This school catered for learners from grade R to matric. Therefore the break times of the foundation phase, intermediate phase and the secondary phase differed from that of the Foundation phase resulting in the foundation phase being back in their class after their break and the other phases outside, which ended in a huge amount of noise, which easily distracted the learners in the foundation phase. Also the cheering of a netball match on the field, adjacent to the Foundation phase classes, created a huge distraction, which made it extremely difficult for learners to listen to the educator.

-As Palmer and Bayley 2005:7; states that children's listening is slowly being eroded, as they are part of a noise filled world. In noise filled environments, listening to the teacher makes it

difficult, as children have to contend with the noise that filters from outside the classroom and from inside the classroom as well.

-According to Mc Sporran 1997:14, noise refers to any unwanted sound that is generated outside and inside the classroom, which interferes with listening and reception. In Mc Sporran 1997:13; research that was conducted by Finitzo-Hieber and Tillman (1978), Crandell (1991), Pekkarinen and Viljanen (1991) found that the effects of noise, distance and reverberation had a serious impact on children's special recognition abilities and learning behaviours in a typical classroom. Effective listening in classrooms where noise levels are high make it impossible to for learners to listen to the educators, as those noises are even louder than the educators voice, (Mc Sporran 1997:14). In South Africa the OBE classroom is a noisy one and as a result, Gultig, Hoadley & Jansen 2002:76; state that a South African grade one educator commented that it was difficult to teach in her class, as the outcomes based classroom was very noisy.

1.6 COGNITIVE FACTORS

1.6.1 Language Development

Language forms an important part of the young child's life as it is through language that he learns to express thoughts and convey meaning. (Godwin and Perkins 1998:4) Language comprises of oracy and literacy. According to Godwin and Perkins 1998:4; oracy is used to describe speaking and listening, while literacy is used to describe reading and writing. Oracy plays a significant role in the acquisition of language, as oracy gives access to literacy (Grugeon and Hubbard 2001:V). As described by Grugeon and Hubbard 2001:V; oracy lies at the very heart of literacy. Progression to reading and writing can only be made once listening and speaking have been mastered.

-According to Riley, Burrell and Mc Callum 2004:657; there is a positive correlation between language and the education system. The development of listening is a contributing factor to the development of language, as listening is the first language art to appear in the young child. Riley, Burrell and Mc Callum 2004:657; state that a government document in the United

Kingdom states that pupil's use of language is a vital skill which has an influence on their progress in every area of the curriculum.

—According to Wilson 1997:4; there are four modes of language, which are, listening, speaking, reading and writing of which listening forms the first mode. Research shows us that when all four modes of language have been integrated, children are able to meet the demands of our social world (Wilson 1997:4). According to Riley, Burrell and Mc Callum 2004:657; speaking and listening is a key area of the National Curriculum for English in the British Educational context, however it receives very little attention. In the South African educational context, listening and speaking also forms the first two learning outcomes of the learning area of language. However, just like in the British educational system, the teaching of these important skills are neglected. Wilson 1997:4; also agrees that more time is spent in the classroom on reading and writing thus neglecting the skills of speaking and listening.

-In Wilson 1997:5; a study done by Edleston found that kindergarten children lacked attention, concentration and appropriate responses to discussion questions. Some of these children could not attend to verbal directions and commands as well, which made it necessary for the educator to repeat the same information more than once- (Edleston 1987) sited in Wilson 1997:5). Although this observation was made at kindergarten children, some children in grade one also experience the same problem. According to Burrows and Guthrie 2001:31; by teaching children specific skills such as, appreciating language, to teach children to predict what they might hear, to follow directions, to identify main ideas and supporting details, to draw justifiable inferences, to differentiate fact from fiction and to analyse critically, these specific skills assist learners in becoming better listeners.

1.6.2 LISTENING AND SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS

South African classrooms comprise of cultural and racial diversity. For most of these learners English is a second language. According to Mwamwenda 1995 :169; in South Africa, English becomes the medium of instruction, while the mother tongue is still being retained. Some children begin school without being able to speak English and they may be placed in classrooms where English is the medium of instruction. Stewart, Friedman & Koch 1985:444; refer to this as 'Total Immersion' which refers to a child being left to sink and swim.

Considering that English is a second language to some learners listening becomes a prime factor that poses difficulty to them. As Goh & Taib 2006:222; states, that listening becomes difficult for second language learners because they cannot make sense of what is being said, as they are unable to process information quickly enough.

1.7 FACTORS RELATED TO THE EDUCATOR

1.7.1 LACK OF INSTRUCTION

Educators play an important role helping learners to construct knowledge. As such, most educators take the time to actively teach reading and writing but fail to teach learners the skill of speaking and listening. Research shows that with the direct teaching of listening, there can be corresponding improvement with the other related language arts; (Gratz 1973:268).

Educators may not teach listening for a number of reasons. Firstly, most educators assume that the skills of speaking and listening have already been developed, whilst some educators believe that listening is a natural or inborn trait (Gratz 1973:268). Another reason that educators may fail to teach listening, is that they are not quite sure as to how to teach listening. As Grugeon, Hubbard & Smith 1988:8; state that listening activities has a low status in the classroom situation and teachers feel less confident about planning for listening and speaking, than they did for reading and writing.

The educator should provide the tools that are necessary for learners to become effective listeners (Burrows & Guthrie 2001:18). One of the tools for teaching effective listening is to teach children the effective strategies for listening.

Some educators may be unaware of effective strategies for effective listening and will feel less confident to teach listening. As Burrows & Guthrie (2001:17) confirm that educators neglect to teach learners the effective strategies for effective listening. Strategies include making the child aware about the purpose of his listening. The child should understand why he is listening. Is he listening for information, for enjoyment, to follow instructions or is he listening to comfort a friend. Both Thompson (2001:263) and Burrows & Guthrie (2001:31), agree that the purposes for listening must be made clear to the child. When direct attention

and practice is given in listening for definite purposes, the child will listen carefully, (Thompson 2001:263). If educators want their children to listen effectively, they need to help their learners to focus their learning. As Burrows & Guthrie 2001:30; suggests that instruction begins by creating activities that directs students to discover the importance of focusing their listening. As learners become aware of the purpose of their listening, additional activities are included to help them refine their listening strategies. In Wilson 1997:5; Thayer-Bacon (1992), states that educators might not teach listening due to an overcrowded curriculum which comprises of the many demands such as:-

- physical education,
- art,
- music,
- classroom management duties
- transition to lunch and recess,

Because of an overcrowded curriculum and the demands related to the duties of being an educator, educators are left with little or no time to constructively teach listening.

Another tool that is required for effective listening is when the educator models to the children as being a good listener herself. As Renaldi 2002:18; states that the prerequisite of any teaching is based on listening. In most classroom situations, when the educator listens to the child talking about their activities, this actually helps to develop the child's confidence as a speaker. Renaldi 2002:16; refers to the pedagogy of listening, where she emphasizes a democratic culture. A democratic culture refers to expressing ones own ideas and listening to others as well. Renaldi 2002:16; further states that students tend to respond more thoughtfully when their teachers show that they are listening. Students in return formulate their thoughts more carefully once they know that someone is listening to them. If educators want their learners to listen effectively, they have to also listen well themselves. Some educators are unaware of their own listening habits and this needs to be assessed (Machado 2003:229). According to Machado 2003:229; there are two factors which may decrease educator's abilities to listen and model listening behaviour, which are:-

- Educators themselves may have not experienced educators in their own schooling (including college professors) who listened cared and valued child enquiry

- They are busy imparting information that they missed profound questions and comments of young children. Grant & Murray (1999) (sited in Machado 2003:226), observe this as an interactive teaching style which teaches children to sit passively and withdraw.

1.8 THE IMPORTANCE OF EFFECTIVE LISTENING

Listening is an important skill that needs to be developed in the Foundation phase and later built upon in the phases that follow. Listening effectively has many advantages. According to research by Wessels & Van Den Berg 1998:115; Petress 1999:2; and Fracarco 2001:3-4; state that listening has many advantages. For the purpose of this study, it is imperative to outline these importance's of effective listening by the different authors.

Wessels & Van Den Berg 1998:115; states that listening is important for the following reasons:

- If we listen to and understand what other people are saying to us we will probably be able to build good relationships with our fellow human beings.
- Learners who listen and understand in class will manage to learn more easily than the ones whose thoughts have wandered.
- Facilitators need to listen in order to understand the needs of their pupils.
- People at work need to listen to their employers, their colleagues and their customers. Good listening habits may save valuable time and money.
- The listening skill needs to be developed in the additional language too. This must be done not only because the learner must converse, learn and work, using this language as a medium, but also because if learners do not pay attention to the sounds of the additional languages they will not learn to pronounce the words correctly.

According to Fracarco 2001:3-4; the importance of effective listening is as follows:-

- Effective listening increases knowledge. Individuals listen in order to learn and retain information.

- Effective listening broadens understanding. When one listens carefully to the words of another person, then the person can realize what the other person's intention is and what it may be in the future.
- Effective listening develops insight. Insight is a clear understanding of the nature of someone or something. Insight is an important tool to have available so that the individual knows what the other person is thinking and will thus have a powerful clue as to that person's future thoughts and actions.
- Effective listening reduces friction. The reasons for friction between people are usually unknown. Listen and acquire much information from people in order to analyse a problem to determine the underlying cause of a conflict.
- Effective listening resolves problems. Problems can arise between employee-employee, employee-manager or manager-manager during the communication process. Listening effectively can help resolve problems.
- Listening effectively helps to win people's trust. Interest shown by the listener earns the confidence of the speaker to open up and relate to what is on his or her mind.
- Listen effectively creates an audience. Listen to others and they will listen to you. Everyone wants to feel important and to have to be shown faith in his or her ideas and thoughts. If a speaker perceives someone to be smart enough to listen to them, they will in turn want to feel just as smart and will listen to the other person.

Unfortunately many individuals are unaware of the importance of effective listening. The importance of effective listening benefits the individual in many different contexts, including the workplace and in the educational context as well.

1.9 LISTENING AS THE FIRST LEARNING OUTCOME

Since this study investigates listening, and the first learning outcome of the languages learning area in the Revised National Curriculum Statement is listening, the researcher finds it

imperative to highlight the first learning outcome and the assessment standards that are linked to it. The reason for highlighting the learning outcome of listening and its assessment standards, is to provide an indication of what the contents of the first learning outcome and assessment standard of listening are. Further in the study, in chapter three the researcher will investigate the teaching of the assessment standards, which will be revolved around a theoretical framework of the different listening types.

“Learning Outcome: 1 Listening

The learner will be able to listen for information
And enjoyment, and respond critically in a wide
Range of situations”. (Revised National Curriculum
Statement:2002:24)

1.9.1 THE ASSESSMENT STANDARDS OF THE LEARNING OUTCOME OF LISTENING

The Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9 (2002:24), states that the following assessment standards for the learning outcome of listening, are appropriate for grade one

“We know this when the learner:

- Listens attentively to instructions and announcements. And responds appropriately
- Demonstrates appropriate listening behaviour
Listening without interrupting, showing respect for the speaker, taking turns to speak, and asking questions for clarification.
- Listens with enjoyment to short stories, rhymes, poems and songs from a Variety of cultures, and shows understanding.

- Listens for the main idea and important details in the story
- Acts out parts of the story, song or rhyme

1.10 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

The interest of this research pertaining to the lack of listening and possible didactical interventions stems from the researchers experience as an early childhood educator, for the past thirteen years. This experience ranged from teaching children from reception year to grade three. This interest also stems from concerns of other educators, who the researcher has had informal discussions with about the lack of listening and what possible solutions to the problem can be implemented. The researcher felt that it was crucial to base this study specifically on the grade one child, since grade one is the point of entry into the formal learning structures.. It is during this stage that the foundation should be laid to strengthen the skill of listening in order for the child to master learning and overall success.

1.11 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The current Revised National Curriculum Statement outlines the learning outcome of listening and it also outlines the assessment standards related to the outcome of listening. However these assessment standards are not clear enough as to how the educator will use these assessment standards in order to reach the outcome of listening. The Revised National Curriculum Statement clearly indicates that there are no prescribed methods for reaching the assessment standards, however, the researcher feels that it is imperative that the learning outcome of listening and the assessment standards related to it should be more informative. There are no guidelines for the educator to follow in order to teach listening.

As such:-

- there is limited information available for the educator to follow as to how to teach listening
- educators are unaware that listening can be taught just the way reading and writing can be taught
- knowledge has to be provided on the different listening types and how these listening types tie in with the assessment standards

It is clear that the Revised National Curriculum Statement should place more awareness on the learning outcome of listening and the assessment standards should be more specific. The

assessment standards for the outcome of listening should fit into the particular listening type that it belongs to.

1.12 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology that will be undertaken for this study will be of a qualitative study. According to Mc Millan and Schumacher 2001:15; qualitative data is a presentation and narration of words. The data that will be collected through semi structured interviews. A detailed description of the research methodology will be included in chapter four.

1.13 TERMINOLGY

The definition of terminology will be highlighted in this study to provide clarity on each aspect specifically, and to avoid any form of ambiguity. The intention to provide definitions is to prevent any misunderstandings of various meanings and terms.

1.13.1 LISTENING

According to Clark (2005:491), listening is an active process of communication which involves hearing, interpreting and constructing meaning.

According to Feeney, Christensen and Moravcik (2006:264), listening means being able to pay attention to the message while another person is communicating.

According to Thompson (2001:261), listening directs some attention to the meaning of sound and where that sound is coming from. People listen closely so that they will be able to understand.

Egan (1991:89), in Lam (2000:267), states that the goal of listening is to understand.

Listening is just not hearing. Robbins (1996:388), in Lam (2000:268), states that hearing and listening are not the same things. Hearing is just picking up sound vibrations while listening requires one to pay attention, interpret and to remember certain stimuli.

According to Petress (1999:1), listening is an awareness of attending to the organization and operationalization of the data entering our nervous system via our hearing mechanism.

According to the Oxford Learners Dictionary, (1998:687), to listen is to make an effort to hear.

According to Mc Sporrán (1997:15), listening is a necessary interactive process that enables the brain to make meaning from the sounds that are heard.

Sampson and Allen (1995:78), state that listening is many things and not just one thing. Listening is a transactive process that involves many processes such as receiving, focusing, discriminating, assigning meaning, monitoring, remembering and responding to auditory messages.

Roach and Wyatt (1988:3), claim that listening is mainly a process of discriminating and identifying which sounds are meaningful and important to us and those which are not.

Hennings (1992), in Wilson (1997:8), states that listening is just not hearing, as listening is the active construction of verbal and non-verbal signals which the speaker sends.

Lundsteen (1971), states that listening is the process by which spoken language is converted to meaning in the mind.

Listening is a conscious effort Sampson and Allen(1995:78)

Listening requires attention Thompson (2001:261)

Listening is discriminating and identifying meaningful and important sounds Sampson and Allen (1995:78)

Listening is assigning meaning and it requires interpretation Robbins (1996:385)

Listening is remembering certain stimuli Robbins (1996:385) and Sampson and Allen (1995:78)

The end result of listening is understanding, Egan (1999) in Thompson (2001).

Most of the above definitions of listening stem from a cognitive viewpoint. For the purpose of this study, it can be deduced that listening is not just a passive skill, but it is an active skill that requires concerted effort. Listening is not a physiological activity like hearing, where the body is in control of hearing. Hearing does play a major part in listening, because without the faculty of hearing, one will not be able to listen. However, hearing and listening are not the same things. With listening, one has to consciously prepare for the process of listening. When one listens, he is not just hearing, but he is firstly receiving, interpreting, analysing, and processing and then finally giving meaning to what he has listened to, thus being able to respond.

1.13.2. LEARNING OUTCOME

According to Jacobs, Gawe & Vakalisa 2002:29; the word outcome has two meanings. The first meaning relates to the accomplishment of a desired task, skill or set of behaviours, which a learner demonstrates at the end of a learning experience. The second meaning relates to the ability to determine at the end of a learning experience, a pre-determined task, skill or set of behaviours in a way that involves understanding and truthfulness. According to the Revised National Curriculum Statement Policy Grades R-9 2002; a learning outcome is derived from the critical outcome and developmental outcomes. It is a description of what knowledge, skills and values learners should know, demonstrate and be able to do at the end of the learning process.

1.13.3. ASSESSMENT STANDARDS

According to the Revised National Curriculum Statement Policy (Grades R-9), (2002:14) the assessment standards convey what the learner should be doing in terms of the achievement of the learning and the ways of demonstrating the depth and breadth of demonstrating their achievement. The Revised National Curriculum Statement indicates clearly in the policy document that it does not prescribe any method for implementing these assessment standards, Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9 (schools) Policy, (2002:14).

1.13.4. LITERACY LEARNING PROGRAM

The literacy learning program in our current education system moves away from the traditional focus of reading, writing and maths. 'Literacy' is not only referred to language alone, but encompasses cultural, critical, visual media, numerical, computer literacy as well. The literacy learning program includes eight learning areas which are mathematics, natural sciences, social sciences, arts and culture, life orientation, economic and management sciences and technology Dept of Education 1997 (c): LLC5.

1.13.5. FOUNDATION PHASE

The foundation phase which is part of ECD, includes children who are in grade R (reception year) to grade three of formal schooling. The White Paper on Education and training (1995:33), defines ECD as "an umbrella term which encompasses the process by which children from birth to nine years develop physically, mentally, emotionally, morally and socially".

1.13.6 GRADE ONE LEARNER

These are learners who are in their first year of formal schooling. They are generally between the ages of six and seven, Sharma (1995:51-52)

1.14 PROGRAM OF RESEARCH

The study will be undertaken with grade one educators in the foundation phase. The program of research will be as follows:-

Chapter one

Introductory orientation. Chapter one highlights the importance of listening and the factors related to the lack of listening are also investigated. These factors are investigated from a physical, sociological and educational perspective.

Chapter two

The process of listening is investigated from a physical and psychological perspective. The various types of listening are also studied and their relevance to the learning of the grade one learner is also investigated.

Chapter three

The teaching of listening will be examined. Close examination is taken with exploration of the various methods that are suited to the teaching of listening.

Chapter Four

A design and description of the qualitative study will be undertaken through semi-structured interviews to examine the teaching of listening as the first learning outcome of the Revised National Curriculum Statement.

Chapter Five

An analysis and results of the semi-structured interviews will be recorded in order to determine the results of the teaching of listening in grade one.

Chapter six

Conclusions and recommendations.

1.15. SUMMARY

Listening being the first learning outcome of the Revised National curriculum statement, is also the first language art to appear in the development of language. Listening is not seen as a discrete skill. Listening is strongly associated with its counterpart which is speaking. Both listening and speaking are seen as receptive skills, while reading and writing are seen as expressive skills. Listening is made up of many different types and processes and chapter two clarifies this.

Most educators are unsure as to how to teach listening, as listening is an unobservable skill. Unlike reading and writing which is planned for, there is little or no planning for the teaching of listening. The researcher investigates ways in which educators plan for and teach listening.

CHAPTER TWO

2. THE PROCESS OF LISTENING

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reports on the researcher's investigation into the process of listening and demonstrates how the different types of listening contribute to the process of learning for the grade one learner.

In order for an educator to teach listening skills, it is imperative that the educator gains a perspective on the processes of hearing and listening. Since listening is not a discrete skill, but one that comprises of integrated listening types, it is vitally important that the educator gains an understanding of the listening types and processes in order to assist the grade one learner in improving his listening skills. Listening comprises of physiological, psychological and social processes (Roach & Wyatt, 1988:48)

2.2 THE PHYSIOLOGICAL PROCESS OF LISTENING

The prerequisite for listening is hearing. Listening will not function without the faculty of hearing. According to Wolvin and Coakley (1988:48), the physiological process of listening refers to being able to physically hear, as well as being able to physically see. Changingminds.org (2007:1) also states that listening is both a visual and an auditory act. It is a visual act because we communicate through body language. When individuals communicate with one another, they need to be able to discriminate between muscle and skeletal movements which convey different meanings. However, according to Hacks (2005:147), the auditory system processes auditory information differently to the way that the visual system processes visual information. For the purpose of this study, this discussion will first focus on the physiological process of listening, which is hearing.

Hearing maintains such an important status within the human body that it is the first sense to develop in the mother's womb (Hacks, 2005:147). In the womb the regions of the brain of the unborn foetus that deal with hearing are the first to complete the developmental process called myelination, where connecting wires of neurons are completed with fatty sheaths that insulate the neurons, thus speeding up their electrical signals (Hacks, 2005:147). The visual system, on the other hand, does not complete this last step of myelination until a few months after birth (Hacks, 2005:147). In order for one to understand the process of hearing, it is

imperative to indicate the structure of the ear and the process by which hearing is accommodated within this structure.

2.3 THE STRUCTURE OF THE EAR

The structure of the ear is most crucial in determining how sound is received. It is emphasised by Hacks (2005:148) that, in the eye, light is converted to neural impulses by a slow chemical process in the receptor cells. However, in the ears sound is converted to neural impulses by a fast mechanical system. This mechanical system only functions with the efficiency of the parts of the ear, which are the outer ear, the middle ear and the inner ear.

2.3.1 THE OUTER EAR

The outer ear contains two parts which are the pinna and the ear canal. The pinna is the projecting and visible part of the outer ear which extends from the side of the head (Siekel, King & Drumright, 2005:52). Although the pinna collects sound and is referred to as a 'sound funnel', it does not as such play a major part in hearing (Answers.com, 2006:1). The ear canal also forms part of the outer ear and is a long, narrow canal which leads to the eardrum. The ear canal is responsible for directing sound waves to the hearing mechanism (Answers.com, 2006:1). The long, narrow ear canal protects the middle ear and the inner ear. The outer part of the ear canal is composed of skin and cartilage which comprises of glands and hairs. These glands are known as ceruminous glands which secrete a substance better known as wax that harms intruders such as insects (Siekel, King & Drumright, 2005:53). These substances that are excreted from the ceruminous glands also help to protect the auditory peripheral system from dirt and harmful objects (Siekel, King & Drumright, 2005:53). The outer ear also plays a part in the elevation of a sound source, which is performed by the air-filled cavities which are the concha and the ear canal (Siekel, King & Drumright, 2005:54). The outer ear provides a primary cue for determining the elevation of the source of a sound. Finally, the outer ear assists in distinguishing between sounds that arise from the front of the ear and those that arise from behind the listener (Siekel, King & Drumright, 2005:54).

2.3.2 THE MIDDLE EAR

The middle ear comprises of the tympanic membrane - better known as the eardrum - the ossicles and the oval window, which is the entry to the cochlea (Bess, 2003:467). The cochlea is a fluid filled cavity which contains a curled wedge called the basilar membrane. Due to the thickness of the basilar membrane, it is able to vibrate to different frequencies at different points along its length (Hacks, 2005:148). Bess (2003:467) confirms that the middle ear mechanism is designed to increase the pressure arriving at the cochlea, which is known as impedance. The primary function of the middle ear is to match the impedance of the two conductive systems, which are the outer ear and the cochlea (Bess, 2003:467).

2.3.3 THE INNER EAR

According to Answers.com (2006:1), the inner ear serves as the final organ for hearing and as the sensory organ for balance. The balance results from the vestibular apparatus containing the utricle, saccule and semicircular canals. The hearing part of the inner ear is the cochlea, which resembles the shell of a snail. The inner ear is filled with fluid. The cochlear duct containing this fluid includes the organ of corti, which is the end organ of hearing. This organ consists of four or five rows of hair cells which connect with nerve fibres which run into the center of the cochlea and form the cochlear branch of the eighth nerve (the auditory nerve). This branch joins the vestibular branch, and the eighth nerve proceeds to the brain stem and the cerebral cortex (Answers.com, 2006:1). Wolvin and Coakley (1988:51) state that we normally hear by air conduction since most sounds are air borne and the air conduction mechanism is more sensitive than the mechanism of bone conduction.

2.4 THE PSYCHOLOGICAL PROCESS OF LISTENING

The psychological process of hearing also includes to the cognitive process of listening, which occurs within the brain. Lilly and Green (2004:24) state that listening is an active process that involves physical and cognitive engagement. The brain plays an important part in the psychological process of listening. Although sounds are processed in the same way by the ear, the brain sorts out these sounds into meaningful and non-meaningful sounds. As such listening is considered to be a conscious, purposeful psychological process, we decide which

things or sounds we want to listen to and which things or sounds we want to ignore (Roach & Wyatt, 1988:13).

2.4.1 RECEIVING

Wolvin and Coakley (1988:48) and Kline (1996:2) state that the first component of the psychological process of listening is receiving. When a message is sent by the sender, the receiver will either receive or not receive the message. On receiving the message, the receiver will convey that he has received the message by responding to it. There may be many reasons as to why a message is not received. There may be physiological reasons such as a hearing deficiency due to a congenital or inherited weakness, or perhaps the deficiency resulted from an accident or prolonged exposure to loud noises (Kline, 1996:2).

2.4.2 ATTENDING

Prior to learning any task, one has to first listen and then pay attention. Attention plays an important role in the acquisition of learning. Gomes, Molholm *et al.* (2000:112) state that the distribution of attention is vital for the process of learning and development. Attending refers to an individual's focused perception on some form of selected stimuli. This usually occurs just before and during the reception of the potential stimulus (Wolvin & Coakley, 1988:55). Stimulus can be external such as the sound of traffic passing by, the telephone ringing, the radio playing or even the refrigerator humming, a poster on the wall. Stimulus can also be internal such as a deadline one has to meet, (Kline 1996:3). As such there are numerous messages competing for our attention. However, the individual cannot focus on all of them at the same time.

Attending has been categorised into different types which are:

- selective attention
- strength of attention
- sustainment of attention.

2.4.2.1 SELECTIVE ATTENTION

Selective attention is the process whereby an individual focuses on a specific stimulus stream for the processing of information while ignoring the other stimuli which are potentially distracting (Gomes, Molholm *et al.*, 2000:112). At certain times there may be more than one stimulus competing for an individual's attention. However, there is no limit to the number of stimuli competing for an individual's attention at the same time (Wolvin & Coakley, 1988:56). An individual will direct his attention to certain things to prevent an information overload (Kline, 1996:3). This is very common when one is trying to read a book and watch television at the same time. Although some people claim that they can do this, both activities suffer. If all stimuli which need our attention at the same time were sent to the cortex, there would be an information overload, or a neural overload would result (Wolvin & Coakley, 1988:56). Therefore we must only engage in the stimuli that we will attend to.

Gomes, Molholm *et al.* (2000:112) state that unfamiliar or novel situations require controlled or effortful processing, which is attentionally demanding. Wolvin and Coakley (1988:56) state that there is some form of mechanism that helps us to choose the wanted stimuli from the unwanted stimuli. Gomes, Molholm *et al.* (2000:112) state that with experience and practice the processing of materials can become automatic. Being selective of what we attend to, explains why we pay attention when something is familiar or interesting to us.

In the school environment, there are many situations which require children to attend to a specific stimulus that contains competing signals. The process of selectively attending when there is distracting stimuli requires the ability to differentiate between the two stimulus streams, to select the relevant stream, to inhibit the processing of the irrelevant stream and to sustain focused attention on the wanted stream (Gomes, Molholm *et al.*, 2000:112). According to these authors, a study done by Maccoby suggests that there are age related improvements in the ability to differentiate among stimuli that are associated with perceptual learning and improvements in automatic processing. Thus younger children have a poorer ability at distracting out irrelevant stimuli than older children, who are able to separate the channels in memory and to selectively report only the target stimuli. It can thus be stated that older children have better perceptual abilities than younger children.

2.4.2.2 STRENGTH OF ATTENTION

When a stimulus demands our attention, not only is the attention selective, but the attention also requires energy. According to Kline (1996:3), attention is only selective if it possesses energy or strength. Attention will possess strength if a child possesses persistence. According to Ahola and Kovacic (2007:174), some children possess a low persistence and some children possess a high persistence. Those children with a low persistence possess a short attention span and will not pursue an activity whilst those children with a high persistence possess a long attention span and will continue being absorbed in an activity for a long duration (Ahola & Koravic, 2007:174).

2.4.2.3 SUSTAINMENT OF ATTENTION

According to Gomes, Molholm *et al.* (2000:112), sustained attention is the ability to maintain attentional focus over time. Sustaining attention during the listening process is an important factor as it determines our understanding of what is being delivered to us by the speaker. If the delivered material is of little or no interest to us, then the individual's attention will wane (Kline, 1996:3). Gomes, Molholm *et al.* (2000:112) agree that over time individuals' ability to sustain attention deteriorates.

2.4.3 UNDERSTANDING

Kline (1996:4) states that effective communication will not take place if there is no understanding. There may be many reasons why misunderstanding occurs. During the process of communication, the receiver does not receive the information that was expected. Often failure in getting to the point can also lead to misunderstanding, as sometimes individuals attach different meanings to words (Kline, 1996:4).

2.4.4 REMEMBERING

Memory plays an integral part of the listening process (Kline, 1996:8). Memory and listening in young children are very closely related as the young child needs to listen attentively, store the information received and then use it for future purposes. Ahola and Koravic (2007:121) state that memory follows a developmental course which includes the interconnected processes of encoding, storage and retrieval. Since this study revolved around the teaching of

listening skills to the grade one child, the researcher placed emphasis on the encoding stage, as it is during this stage that the child has to pay careful attention to the information, clarify it if anything is unclear and sometimes has to produce visual images that will help him/her to make recalls when necessary. This recall process of information is called retrieval. During the retrieval process grade one learners use memory strategies to recall information since this faculty has matured sufficiently to enable them to elaborate and rehearse. Grade one learners understand how their minds work through a process called metacognition. Memory comprises of short term memory, long term memory and the short term register memory.

2.4.4.1 Short term memory

Mwamwenda (1995:235) states that short term memory is of a limited capacity and thus can only store information for a limited period. Newman and Newman (2006:477) state that short term memory is considered to be a scratch pad of memory as it is used for storing information for a short period of time such as recording a person's telephone number, or recording a person's address. Short term memory has the working capacity to encode and retrieve small bits of information within a short space of time (Newman & Newman, 2006:476) .

2.4.4.2 Long term memory

The long term memory is a permanent storage system which enables one to recall all that was previously learned. Mwamwenda (1995:236) highlights that long term memory is not only unlimited in capacity, but it is also capable of storing all the experiences a person has during his life. Long term memory enables us to recall information and events that occurred hours, days, weeks, months or even years earlier. Newman and Newman (2006:476) state that long term memory is a storehouse of a lifetime of information. Evidence of long term memory is when information is remembered for a few minutes and is moved from short term memory to long term memory, and this information is stored in relation to knowledge that was previously stored with the ability to recognize, retrieve and reconstruct it at a later stage when it is needed. Information that is stored in long term memory is not forgotten easily. Mwamwenda (1995:237) further states that forgetting will only occur if the activation of cues that are necessary to recall the information is not present.

2.4.4.3 Sensory register

Sensory register is the neurological processing activity which takes in visual, auditory, tactile and olfactory information (Newman & Newman 2006:476). The emphasis of the sensory register is the speed at which it processes information. This speed can be slowed down as a result of illness.

2.5 THE SOCIOLOGICAL PROCESS OF LISTENING

The sociological process of listening includes the use of both listening and speaking skills as an act of meaningful communication. According to Wells (2001:190), the relationship between listening and speaking is present in the relationship between thought and word. Individuals use thought and word to share information and to achieve a common goal.

Feeney, Christensen and Moravcik (2006:117) state that the social origins of language and thought have been theorised by Vygotsky (1896-1934), a Russian psychologist, who developed a theory called *socio-cultural* theory. Vygotsky believed that when children form relationships with other individuals, this process develops in a social cultural context. Thus the early communicative interactions with adults becomes internalised within the young child and this forms a basis for speech and writing. The socio-cultural theory is largely favoured in the foundation phase since young learners use language and thought to interact with adults and peers in order to communicate and learn. This theory will be further discussed in Chapter three.

The sociological process of listening is also pertinent to this study, as listening and speaking are seen as receptive and expressive skills which are important language skills to be developed in the foundation phase.

2.5.1 LISTENING AS A RECEPTIVE SKILL

Gordon and Browne (2004:493) explain that listening is seen as a receptive skill while speaking is seen as an expressive skill. The receptive skill of language is acquired when young learners learn to listen and understand. The receptive skill enables young learners to understand directions, answer questions and to follow a sequence of events. A very important

component of the receptive skill is that it aids young learners to understand relationships as well as the outcome(s) of their own behaviour and the behaviour of others.

2.5.2 SPEAKING, THE EXPRESSIVE SKILL

According to Gordon and Browne (2004:493), the expressive skill refers to words, grammar and elaboration. Young learners use words to convey meaning, express thoughts and extend their knowledge. Grammatical structures are learnt when young learners hear the speech patterns of adults and then use these speech patterns to organize their own language. Elaboration is the expansion of language whereby language takes place through verbal description, narration, explanation and communication. As adults verbalize a problem, young learners observe how the adult has used language to work through a problem.

Listening also comprises of three stages (Machado, 2003:227). These three stages focus on the response to stimuli, the organizing of stimuli and the understanding of meaning. Once the individual responds to the stimuli, there is an awareness of sound: was there sound?; where was the sound coming from?; which sound was it?; was there more than one sound?; and were the sounds the same? In organizing the stimuli, the brain focuses on the sequence of the sounds in order to determine the length of time between the sounds to establish whether the current sounds are familiar in relation to sounds that have been heard previously. In the final listening stage, the focus is on understanding the meaning of the sounds and words (Machado 2003:227).

The awareness that is gained from the information of the listening stages provides the educator with a clearer outlook when teaching listening skills. The educator should be well informed in order to ensure that each stage is fulfilled within the teaching and learning situation.

2.6 HEARING AND LISTENING

For the purpose of this study, it is important to highlight the differences between hearing and listening. Often the two processes of hearing and listening are confused as being the same thing and because of this, the impression that is received is that listening develops on its own.

Burley-Allen (1988:3) states that because most of us feel that listening develops instinctively, we make little or no effort to learn or develop listening skills.

As stated earlier, hearing is a physiological process through which an individual experiences change in air pressure which is turned into electrochemical processes in the brain. Hearing is an automatic and natural process under normal circumstances that goes on without our conscious control, while listening is a conscious behaviour whereby we select what we want to hear (Roach & Wyatt, 1988:13). Roach and Wyatt (1985:2) state that humans can hear the changes in air pressure which range from twenty to twenty thousand cycles per second. These changes in air pressure have an impact on the eardrum and are transmitted through the middle ear to the inner ear. It is from the middle ear that these changes in air pressure are sent to the hearing centre in the brain.

According to Virtual Parkland Education (2006:1), listening is considered to be an active process as we use our mental processes to receive the message. Hearing requires little or no effort to understand what the speaker has to say or express, while listening involves an effort to receive, understand or process the information from others (Virtual Parkland Education, 2006:1). Hearing means that the speaker is secondary, while listening means that the speaker is primary. Hearing means that the listener's needs are important, while listening means that the speaker's needs are important. Hearing involves no effort to receive the message, while listening involves a concerted effort to prepare oneself to be better able to receive the message.

The above descriptions of listening and hearing stem from a physiological and psychological viewpoint. It can be said that the process of hearing is physiological and the process of listening is psychological. According to Hacks (2004:147), hearing is the first sense that is developed in the womb and hearing is the last sense to go as we fall asleep at night. Listening is a conscious, learned behaviour of being selective in responding to the sounds that we hear (Roach & Wyatt, 1988:13). Listening is a psychological process of different processes such as identifying, classifying and interpreting electrochemical processes into meaning and action (Roach & Wyatt, 1988:13). The above viewpoints stem from a psychological and physiological viewpoint. However, listening can be described as a psychological and sociological process as well.

2.7 TYPES OF LISTENING

During the foundation phase the learners should be involved in activities that highlight the different types of listening. In the following paragraphs the researcher identifies the different listening types that should be prevalent in the grade one classroom. According to Botha and Hugo (2002:15), discriminative listening, appreciative listening and critical listening should be taught in the grade one classroom. The teaching of these listening types is investigated in Chapter three.

2.7.1 DISCRIMINATIVE LISTENING

Discriminative listening is considered to be the basis of all listening types, as an individual must identify between different sounds. By identifying different sounds, the individual is able to make sense of the meaning of the words. Children need help in developing the skill of discriminative listening as discriminative listening contributes to language learning. Palmer (2005:8) states that discriminative listening plays an important role in the acquisition of language, as young learners need to be able to distinguish between a foreground sound against a background sound and they also need to become aware of changes in pitch and loudness. Machado (2003:227) states that discriminative listening is when sounds become differentiated within the environment and the child is able to discriminate between speech sounds.

In the grade one classroom discriminative listening is used when one is acquiring phonological knowledge. Phonological knowledge comprises of phonological awareness and phonemic awareness (Lilly & Green, 2004:17).

Discriminative listening is present during the teaching of phonological awareness and phonemic awareness. Phonological awareness is awareness of sounds which include intonation of patterns, sounds of words and syllables and sounds of a phoneme, while phonemic awareness refers to the ability to hear and distinguish phonemes (Lilly & Green, 2004:18) Children who are phonemically aware recognise rhymes, can substitute sounds in spoken words, hear syllables and orally segment words. Children who are phonemically aware are also successful readers. Phonemic awareness is not taught as an isolated skill but it can be integrated into language and literacy practices, as it contributes greatly to the development of reading (Larson *et al.*, (2003:215).

2.7.2 FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE DISCRIMINATIVE LISTENING

According to Kline (2003:53), there are three factors that influence discriminative listening, namely hearing ability, awareness of sound structure and integration of nonverbal cues.

2.7.2.1 Hearing ability

Kline (2003:53) states that individuals who lack the ability to hear well will have problems in discriminating between various sounds. This problem can be very apparent for some frequencies, or pitches. Some individuals may have a high frequency hearing loss which results from prolonged exposure to noise, while still being able to retain normal or near normal hearing for low frequencies. Such individuals will have little difficulty in discriminating among lower pitched vowel sounds, but may have more difficulty in discriminating among higher pitched consonant sounds. For instance, they may experience difficulty in distinguishing among the words *thin, fin, tin, sin*. They would hear the *-in* part of each word clearly, but would have difficulty in distinguishing the weak high pitched sounds at the beginning of each word, which results in the significant misunderstanding of a message (Kline 2003:53).

2.7.1.2 Awareness of Sound Structure

An important skill that children develop after the primary years is recognizing the sound structure of language (Wolvin & Coakley, 1983:117). Recognizing the sound structure of language is referred to as phonological awareness. Phonological awareness involves the awareness of sounds which include intonation of patterns, sounds of words and syllables and sounds of a phoneme. In the early stages of a child's life, he or she becomes quite familiar with identifying the various vowel and consonant sounds in the initial, medial and final positions and are aware that English words for instance do not begin with 'sr'. For this reason they will not mishear *this rip* as *this srip*. Moreover, if the individual is trying to identify words at the beginning of a sentence where they are quite unpredictable, and he knows that *mg* cannot start a word in English, he will not perceive a sentence beginning with *I'm g . . .* as anything but *I'm* plus the start of the new word. However, he could perceive a sentence beginning with *I'm a* as *I may* or the start of *I'm making*. According to Wolvin and Coakley

(1983:117), when stimuli are categorised, an individual's initial decisions are made on a phonetic basis. Wolvin and Coakley (1983:117) state that Goss, in his listening model, directs the listener's attention to making phonetic decisions in the initial phase of listening. This model is based on an information processing perspective. Goss refers to this phase as the signal processing stage (SP) stage. During this stage the listener must segment and structure the speech signal into potentially meaningful units. For example, the listener who recognizes the sound structure of the language would know that a rapidly spoken "*Idrankitfirst*" could be segmented and structured in two ways: "*I drank it first*" or "*I'd rank it first*" (Wolvin & Coakley, 1983:117). For discriminative listening and assigning of meaning to be improved, the young learner must increase their understanding of phonology, which is the structure of sound.

2.7.1.3 Detecting and Isolating Vocal Cues

To be effective in discriminative listening, the young learner must develop the skill of isolating vocal cues, by noting how a message is vocalized. The noting of how a message is vocalized is known as phonemic awareness. Phonemic awareness refers to the ability to hear and distinguish phonemes (Lilly & Green, 2004:18). Children who are phonemically aware recognise rhymes, can substitute sounds in words, hear syllables and orally segment words. Phonemic awareness is not taught as an isolated skill but it can be integrated into language and literacy practices, as it contributes to the development of reading (Larson *et al.*, 2003:215). The young learner needs to develop the sensory awareness and increase the understanding of paralanguage (vocal characteristics-pitch, inflection, tension, volume, intensity, rate quality, tone and dynamics of the speaking voice, and nonverbal vocalizations such as *ah*). Individuals must be able to distinguish whether the paralanguage reinforces or contradicts the verbal message (Wolvin & Coakley, 1983:118). The research report by Wolvin and Coakley (1983:118) states that when the paralanguage is contradictory, listeners rely heavily on the vocal expression to infer the sender's feelings (Wolvin & Coakley, 1983:118). Thus, if the individual becomes more aware of vocal cues and learns to distinguish obvious and subtle differences in paralanguage, he may understand the messages of others.

2.7.1.4 Recognizing Environmental Sounds

Listening carefully to environmental sounds can increase an individual's listening efficiency (Wolvin & Coakley, 1983:119). According to Wolvin and Coakley (1983:119), people in general and students in particular do not listen adequately to environmental sounds. Discriminative listening enables the child to differentiate between differing sounds in the environment (Machado 2003:227). Research that was carried out showed a tape recording of fifty different sounds. These sounds ranged from the clicking of a pen to the sound of percolating coffee to the trumpeting of an elephant. The results showed how non-discriminative the listening behaviour of students who came from different grade levels and from different suburban and rural schools was. The researcher concluded that the problem was not related to the fact that individuals are not exposed to a variety of sounds, but that individuals do not consciously attend to the sounds (Wolvin & Coakley, 1983:119). It can be noted that children need to spend more attention and energy on perceiving the sounds of the environment, so that they can improve their recognition of these sounds.

According to Wolvin and Coakley (1983:115), a very important hierarchy of auditory skills, which are grouped according to the time periods at which these skills were developed, was compiled by Weaver and Rutherford. Although the authors of this hierarchy have distinguished between environmental skills (skills pertaining to sounds other than verbal) and discrimination skills (skills pertaining to verbal sounds), both these sections are pertinent to the development of auditory discrimination. For the purpose of this study, the researcher feels that it is important to highlight this hierarchy.

2.7.1.5 Environmental Skills

Prenatal

Foetal movement in response to sound.

Infancy

Responds reflexively to sudden loud noises.

Responds to loud noises by crying.

Listens to the human voice.

Is quietened by sound.

Changes activity in response to the human voice.

Turns head in search of sound (VH)

Learns that people and objects make sounds.
Learns that objects make sound with manipulation.
Localizes sound sources and moves towards them (VH).

Preschool

Associates a sound with an object.
Repeats a sequence of sounds.
Learns that unseen objects make sounds.
Learns that sound sources can be labelled or named.
Given three noisemakers, can find the one that sounds different.
Can identify people and animals by sound.

Kindergarten - Grade 3

Learns that sounds differ in intensity (VH).
Learns that sounds differ in pitch (VH).
Learns that sounds differ in pattern.
Learns that sounds differ in duration (the length of time they can be heard).
Learns the concept distance in relation to sound for localization and movement (VH).

Grade 4 - Grade 6

Identifies sounds in the environment at certain times of the day and evaluates them in terms of orientation and mobility (VH).
Promotes growth of echo perception and spatial orientation (VH).

2.7.1.6 Discrimination Skills

Infancy

Responds differently to various sounds.
Responds to his name.
Begins imitating speech sounds.

Preschool

Separates certain sounds from background sounds.
Identifies similar sounds and different sounds.

Can match verbal sounds.

Kindergarten - Grade 3

Learns that sounds differ in intensity (VH).

Learns that sounds differ in pitch (VH).

Learns that sounds differ in pattern.

Learns that sounds differ in duration.

Recognizes differences in word sounds.

Recognizes differences in initial consonants (cat-mat) auditorily.

Recognizes differences in final consonants (mat-map) auditorily.

Recognizes differences in medial sounds (map-mop) auditorily.

Recognizes discrete words within a sentence.

Recognizes sequences of words within a sentence.

Identifies accented words within a sentence.

Identifies number of syllables within a word.

Identifies accented syllable within a word.

Identifies number of syllables within a word.

Identifies accented syllables within a word.

Changes accent from one syllable to another.

Recognizes initial and final consonant sounds.

Recognizes short vowel sounds.

Recognizes long vowel sounds.

Recognizes rhyming words.

Recognizes and discriminates between word endings (s, ing, er).

Discriminates temporal order of sounds within words.

Learning to listen discriminatively forms an important component of listening and children need to master this skill in order to learn language successfully.

2.8 CRITICAL LISTENING

Listening for understanding is called critical listening. As Machado (2003:227) states, critical listening is when the child understands, evaluates, makes decisions and is able to formulate opinions. The critical listener decides as to whether he or she should accept or reject a

message on the basis of sound criteria (Wolvin & Coakley, 1982:247). Critical listening is essential in a society that boasts of democracy, as it enables individuals to control and protect themselves rather than being controlled by others.

Critical listening involves evaluating, interpreting and assessing what the speaker is saying (www.chass.ncgu.edu, 2008:2) According to Botha and Hugo (2003:15), critical listening in the grade one learner involves analysing what they hear in accordance with their own experience. Being able to critically listen helps them to relate what is meaningful to them. Critical listening plays an important role in early childhood education in that critical listening develops critical thinking and critical literacy. Since listening is the first learning outcome of literacy, and critical listening develops critical thinking and critical literacy, the researcher strongly feels that it is important to outline the connection between critical listening and critical literacy.

2.8.1 The Link between Critical listening and Critical literacy

Critical literacy has been well grounded in secondary schools and adult and community settings rather than in primary schools (Larson *et al.*, 2003:360). In recent years, critical literacy has been positioned in an important spot in early childhood literacy, as researchers have concluded that questions of power, language and representation can be tackled in early childhood (Larson *et al.*, 2003:360). This adds a new dimension to the broad term of literacy, as literacy is defined as the ability to read and write in different contexts; this means being literate. But critical literacy moves away from the conventional understanding of literacy, as critical literacy is being directed at encouraging children to represent what they want out of life that which results from their personal daily experiences (Larson *et al.*, 2003:361).

Critical listening leads to critical thinking as it involves children to actively ask questions and make predictions rather than to passively listen. Critical listening encourages analytic, interactive and dialogic talk. In the case of story telling, interactive or dialogic talk involves children being engaged in asking questions and receiving responses related to the story, while analytic talk involves children being able to analyse the story as they make predictions or inferences that help to describe a character's motivation or connect events from the different parts of the story (Mcgee & Schickedanz, 2007:742). According to Wolvin and Coakley (1983:161), the critical listener is successful if the message that was received was attended to

and meaning was assigned to it as closely as possible to what the sender intended. One of the major components of critical listening is remembering, where the listener's purpose is not only to understand the message, but also to retain it for future use.

Critical listening is found in all areas of the individual's life. Much of the individual's learning involves listening critically to lectures and listening to other lessons delivered by the educators in the classroom settings. How well individuals perform depends on how well they listen. Individuals listen to speeches, lectures, instructions and if they listen poorly, they will not be equipped with the information that they need.

In order for critical listening to be effective, vocabulary, concentration and memory will have to be well developed (Kline, 2003:45).

2.8.2 Vocabulary

According to Kline (2003:45), increasing one's vocabulary will increase one's understanding. Kline (2003:45) states:

“Cultivating a genuine interest in words and language, making a conscious effort to learn new words and breaking down unfamiliar words into their components will help an individual to improve his vocabulary.”

Kline (2003:45) suggests that one way an individual can improve their vocabulary is by being sensitive to the context in which words are used. In the grade one classroom new words are introduced on a daily basis as children begin to write their own news and ask the educator for assistance with difficult or unfamiliar words. At times unfamiliar words appear with synonyms. Sometimes an unfamiliar word is used to summarize a situation or quality. At this level it is vitally important that new words are learnt each day in order to increase vocabulary.

2.8.3 Concentration

Concentration plays a major role in critical listening. Concentrating on the sender's message may be the listener's most difficult task. Often listeners try to divide their attention between

two competing stimuli. At other times listeners are preoccupied with something other than the speaker. Sometimes listeners are too concerned with their own needs to concentrate on the message being delivered. Listeners may lack curiosity, energy or interest. Many people have not learned to discipline themselves whilst listening and concentrating, thus they lack the motivation to accept responsibility for good listening. Concentration requires discipline, motivation and acceptance of responsibility (Kline, 2003:45).

2.8.4 Memory

Memory is another important component of critical listening. One cannot process information without bringing memory into play. According to Kline (2003:46), memory helps critical listening in three ways. Firstly, it helps a person to recall experiences and information necessary to function in the world around him. Memory is important for one's knowledge bank. Secondly, memory establishes expectations about what one will encounter. For example, one would not be able to drive in heavy traffic, react to new situations, or make common decisions without memory. Thirdly, it allows one to understand what others say. Without the simple memory of the meaning of words, one could not communicate with anyone else. Kline (2003:46) states that without memory of concepts and ideas one cannot understand the meaning of messages.

2.9 APPRECIATIVE LISTENING

Appreciative listening is a highly individualized process of listening in order to obtain sensory stimulation or enjoyment through the work and experiences of others (Wolvin & Coakley, 1982:281). Machado (2003:227) also states that appreciative listening is personal for each child, as each child finds personal pleasure and entertainment in listening to music, poems and stories.

2.9.1 Music

All young children need music and music provides individuals with different emotions such as love, sadness, happiness and being calm or excited (Feeney *et al.*, 2006:311). Most grade one classrooms offer an interesting music curriculum which comprises of singing songs and playing instruments. According to Feeney *et al.* (2006:311) singing and playing instruments

encourage children to experience music together with developing musical skills. Listening skills are developed in conjunction with musical skills. As children listen to music created by others, they learn to appreciate it (Feeney *et al.*, 2006:312).

2.9.2 Stories

Stories are another building block in developing children's listening skills. According to Lilly and Green (2004:41), stories are the vehicles that provide individuals with explanations of beliefs, attitudes and values of a culture. As children listen to stories they are transported to other places and they are informed. Stories also have the ability to make a child's life magical.

2.9.3 Poetry

Poetry allows children to see the world with new eyes and they are able to recognise familiar feelings (Lilly & Green, 2004:63). Through poetry, children develop listening skills as they play and experiment with language (Lilly & Green, 2004:63).

According to Kline (2003:48), our appreciation depends on three factors: presentation, perception and previous experience.

2.9.3.1 *Presentation*

Presentation depends on factors such as the medium, the setting and the style and personality of the presenter (Kline, 2003:49). For example, a listener will enjoy a speaker's expertise on a particular subject.

2.9.3.2 *Perception*

Perception is an important factor in appreciative listening. Our perception of a presentation over the actual presentation will influence our pleasure or displeasure. Expectations also play an important part in perception (Kline, 2003:50).

2.9.3.3 *Previous experience*

Previous experience has an impact on what the individual enjoys listening to (Kline, 2003:50). Usually, if one associates sounds or other experiences with pleasant memories, then one's mind is open to new experiences.

2.10 CONCLUSION

All the types of listening indicated in this study play an important role in the teaching and learning of listening skills in the grade one learner. However, most grade one educators are unaware of these listening types and it is therefore necessary that they are made aware of these listening types so that they will be able to better inform their learners of the use of these listening types in the classroom. In Chapter three emphasis is placed on the teaching of listening in grade one, but the suggested teaching methods do not place sole preference on the listening types to teach listening skills, as other methods may also be used.

CHAPTER THREE

THE TEACHING OF LISTENING SKILLS IN THE GRADE ONE CLASS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the grade one classroom the educator is faced with many challenges when teaching. Teaching listening skills is an even greater challenge and the educator must be well informed on how to teach these vital skills. In this chapter the researcher highlights information from the literature on the teaching of listening skills as the first learning outcome in the grade one learning programme.

3.2 THE COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT OF LEARNERS IN THE GRADE ONE CLASS

Before the researcher explores the reason for teaching listening, it is vital to understand the cognitive developmental level at which the grade one learner operates. The grade one learner is an active child who has just left the reception class as an eager, energy bursting individual who has also become less egocentric. The grade one learner is more group orientated, making new friends and associations. During this time the grade one learner is learning important skills that are valued by society. As children gain confidence in their abilities, they begin to see themselves as potential contributors to society (Newman & Newman, 2006:264).

Learners in grade one are at the concrete operational stage. During this stage children have developed concrete operational thinking. They don't rely solely on visual impressions but can logically manipulate information mentally. Therefore, in Fisher (2000:8), Blenkin *et al.* (1996) state that the development of self motivated, confident learners requires a curriculum that is well suited to their level of development. They are also able to solve more complex problems mentally and do not have the need to physically manipulate objects as they did in the reception year (Feeney, Christensen & Moravcik, 2006:115). However, because children are still bound to concrete concepts that they have experienced, it is important that learners in grade one have knowledgeable educators who will facilitate their learning.

3.3 WHY TEACH LISTENING SKILLS?

With reading, writing and speaking, there are visible components to confirm that these skills are being practised. With reading and speaking the educator can hear the learner read the words of a story or poem, or during a conversation the educator can hear the spoken words of a child. With writing the educator can see the formation of letters and words but with listening there are no visible components to confirm that the child has listened. As Brindley (1998:171) states, listening is a difficult skill to describe and assess as it is an 'invisible cognitive operation'.

Listening is indicated as the first learning outcome of the Language Learning Area in the Revised National Curriculum Statement (your source?, 2002:24). The rationale for this is that listening is the first language arts skill to appear in the young child (Machado, 2003:226). However, the importance of teaching this skill has not received the attention it deserves within the educational context (Riley, 2004:658). As a foundation phase educator, the researcher found that most children lacked the skill of listening and that most foundation phase educators lacked the knowledge to teach this skill. However, according to Funk and Funk (1989:660), a study done by Devine, Jacobs, Pearson and Strother (1987) states that listening can and should be taught.

This research therefore commenced with a perusal of the Outcomes Based Education system in South Africa and the socio-constructivist theory that underpins it, together with teacher behaviour within such a theory. This was followed by an investigation into the various teaching strategies used to teach listening, and how the teaching of listening skills ties in with the socio-constructivist theory. This chapter is a report on this investigation of the related literature.

3.4 OUTCOMES BASED EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Outcomes Based Education (OBE) is an educational system that was adopted (not created) in South Africa in order to transform a society from being racist and undemocratic to one that respects multiculturalism and nation-building (Jacobs *et al.*, 2002:103). One of the best ways to achieve this is to have a curriculum in which young people learn to be active, creative, critical thinkers who will be productive and lead fulfilling lives when they are adults (Jacobs *et al.*, 2002:103). It is clear that the underlying message of OBE is to develop learners who will contribute economically and academically to the South African society. In order to gain a better understanding of OBE, the researcher looked at the socio-constructivist approach which is the theoretical foundation of outcomes based education.

3.5 SOCIO-CONSTRUCTIVIST LEARNING PERSPECTIVE

The focus of the socio-constructivist theory is based on the work by Vygotsky, who theorised socio-cultural theory. According to Gordon and Browne (2004:149), Vygotsky placed emphasis on the important role that adults and other important people play in the interactive activities and development of the child. Vygotsky believed that children's learning is much influenced by the adults and what their social world values are.

3.5.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF A SOCIO-CONSTRUCTIVIST CURRICULUM

According to Jacobs, Gawe and Vakalisa (2002:183), outcomes based education is based on the socio-constructivist learning perspective. The socio-constructivist theory is based on a curriculum that is the result of negotiation. This negotiation is with parents, teachers, caregivers and all other interested stakeholders. In Ryan and Katz (2005:??), Knuth and Cunningham outlined seven principles that underpin constructivist learning. The researcher highlights these principles to allow the reader to have a broader perspective on what constructivist learning entails.

- "Authentic tasks are embedded in tasks that are relevant in the real world.
- social context is where dialogue and negotiation of meaning provide students with the means
for developing, testing and refining ideas.
- Students are encouraged to have voice and ownership in the learning process.

- Students experience the knowledge construction process.
- Students reflect on their own thinking and decision making process.”

The researcher also outlines the characteristics of a constructivist curriculum as highlighted by Jacobs (2002:183)

According to Jacobs *et al.* (2002:183), the characteristics of the socio-constructivist learning content are as follows:

- “it will reduce the amount of content information and not merely add more facts as research produces new information
- The focus will be on processes to develop connections and form conceptual frameworks into which new information may be integrated, rather than to teach content loaded with detail. The emphasis will be on holistic concepts.
- Disciplinary boundaries will be blurred as the learning content will be more transdisciplinary.
- Instead of the content being selected and organised around the structure of the discipline, it will be organised around themes, current issues and real life problems. The curriculum will be problem based rather than discipline based.
- Science is portrayed as a dynamic discipline challenging established ‘truths’; that is, science is doing rather than a set of abstract rules defining reality.
- Learning is seen as scientific enquiry in which new meanings are constructed. Scientific activity is regarded as human and responsive to human perceptions and interpretation contrary to the established view of science as impersonal, objective and mechanistic. The scientist is regarded as someone who is empowered to look for answers and solutions to the problems of society.”

The socio-constructivist theory looks at the learner as being able to making meaning of his learning. The learner’s learning and meaning making are also considerably influenced by the adults in his environment who help him in constructing learning and thus making meaning from it.

Considering the facts that the educator plays an important role in the socio-constructivist approach, the researcher reviewed the educator’s role in the socio-constructivist and the socio-cultural curriculum.

3.5.2 TEACHER BEHAVIOUR IN A SOCIO-CULTURAL CURRICULUM

The socio-cultural approach forms the foundation from which the principles of socio-constructivist theory have been extracted. According to Gordon and Browne (2004:150-151), there are four implications for the classroom educator who incorporates the socio-cultural approach.

Firstly, educators need to understand the family and culture from which the child comes. This understanding is implemented into their teaching as they gain knowledge of multicultural education. Because children of colour are socialised to operate in 'two worlds', they must achieve a *bicognitive development* together with bicultural and bilingual skills. The 'two worlds' refer to the child's home environment where he uses his mother tongue and the school environment where he uses the second language. When educators plan for learning activities, it is very important to consider the culture that the child is coming from.

Secondly, according to Gordon and Browne (2004:150), the relationship that educators form with their learners is of great importance, as learning is considered to be an interpersonal and dynamic process. The educator uses what she knows about the learner in order to plan for learning.

Thirdly, Gordon and Browne (2004:151) state that educators look closely at the psychological 'tools' that are used for learning, which are the tools that are culturally and universally derived. Culturally derived tools would for example include a string that children from United States would tie around their finger as a memory device. A universal tool would include tools used for drawing, language and maths. Using the senses requires very little effort and these are included as lower mental functions while higher mental functions require the help of an individual who knows the tools of the society in order to learn.

Finally, a classroom that encourages a socio-cultural perspective will have an educator who pays close attention to individual differences and she will plan activities that encourage co-operative learning (Gordon & Browne, 2004:151).

3.5.3 TEACHER BEHAVIOUR IN A SOCIO-CONSTRUCTIVIST CLASSROOM

Teacher behaviour in a socio-constructivist classroom is very similar to that of a socio-cultural classroom. However, in a socio-constructivist classroom more emphasis is placed on learners being active constructors of their own knowledge and thus making meaning of their own learning.

Jacobs *et al.* (2002: 185) outline the following teacher behaviour that is present in a socio-constructivist curriculum:

- the teacher will be guided by their learners' questions and their need to know
- the teacher will assume that learners have pre-knowledge and a frame of reference based on experience
- she will be sensitive to the values of multiple cultures, races and of both females and males
- she will incorporate different ways of knowing and allow for different learning styles and expression
- she will focus on inquiry and communication rather than on drill and practice
- the teacher will exemplify lines of reason to build theories, rather than focus on the rhetoric of conclusions.
- she will respond to questions which develop lines of questioning (patterns of reasoning) rather than on those which are closed.
- she will support open ended activities, active learning and inductive reasoning
- she will break free from a textbook and worksheet approach to a hands on/minds on experience
- she will create learning experiences rather than present learning content
- she will devise co-operative learning strategies, foster a collaborative environment and discourage a teacher-dependent attitude.

A socio-constructivist learning content is based on learners being encouraged to become lifelong learners, with the emphasis being on 'learning to learn'. This approach is a notable shift from a "product orientated curriculum" to a "process orientated curriculum". In order to understand how listening is taught it is also imperative to investigate the type of teacher behaviour that should be prevalent in the teaching of listening. The researcher subscribes to the teacher roles acknowledged by Machado (2003:195-210) who looks at the teacher as a

model, an interactor and a provider. In the teaching of listening skills the educator has to assume these teacher roles as they are pertinent to the teaching of listening within a socio-constructivist curriculum.

3.6 LEARNING OUTCOMES

The Revised National Curriculum Statement comprises of outcomes and assessment standards.

The researcher indicates the first learning outcome of the language learning area, which is listening. Thereafter, the researcher indicates what the term 'outcome' entails.

3.6.1 Learning outcome: Listening

According to the Revised National Curriculum Statement (2002:24), the first outcome of the Languages Learning area is listening.

“ The learner will be able to listen for information and enjoyment, and respond appropriately and critically in a wide range of situations.” (National Curriculum Statement 2002:24).

Outcomes based education focuses on the desired end results of each learning process. These desired end results are called outcomes of learning and learners have to demonstrate that these outcomes have been achieved (Van den Horst *et al.*, 1997:7). The second focus of outcomes based education is on the instructive and learning processes that are used in order to guide the learners to achieve the desired results (Van den Horst *et al.*, 1997:7). According to Jacobs *et al.* (2002:102), outcomes based education is a curriculum approach to teaching and learning that needs a shift from teacher input through syllabuses to a focus on learner outcomes.

According to Jacobs, Gawe and Vakalisa (2002:29), outcome has two meanings:

“- outcome is the statement of a desired task, skill or set of behaviours which a learner should be able to demonstrate at the end of a learning experience.

- An outcome is the ability to demonstrate, at the end of a learning experience, a pre-determined task, skill or set of behaviours in a manner that involves understanding and truthfulness.”

Jacobs, Gawe and Vakalisa (2002:29) explain that the first definition of the word outcome is mainly theoretical, whereby an educator indicates the goal that he or she wishes to achieve. The second definition of outcome relates to the practical meaning of the word. They state: “The emphasis is not on how something should be done, but it is on how something has actually happened”.

3.7 ASSESSMENT STANDARDS FOR LISTENING

This section outlines the assessment standards for the outcomes of listening. This is important for the educator when he/she plans for listening activities. Knowledge of the listening types will assist the educator in this regard as he/she will consult the listening types when planning for a listening activity which will be followed by an assessment of that activity.

According to the Revised National Curriculum Statement (2002:24), the assessment standards linked to the outcome of listening are:

1. “Listens attentively to instructions and announcements and responds appropriately
2. Demonstrates appropriate listening behaviour by listening without interrupting, showing respect for the speaker, taking turns to speak, asking questions for clarification
3. Listens with enjoyment to short stories, rhymes, poems and songs from a variety of cultures and shows understanding
 - a. listens for the main idea and important details in the story
 - b. acts out part of the story, song or rhyme
 - c. joins in choruses
 - d. draws a picture of a story and writes a few words about it
 - e. puts pictures in right sequence and matches captions with pictures
 - f. answers open questions about the story
 - g. expresses feelings about the story
 - h. communicates back the sequence of ideas
4. Listens, enjoys and responds appropriately to riddles and jokes
5. Listens to messages and conveys them correctly
6. Develops phonic awareness

- a. distinguishes between different phonemes, especially at the beginning of words;
- b. recognizes some rhyming words in common rhymes such as ‘We ‘re going to the zoo; You can come too, too, too;
- c. recognizes plurals (‘s’ and ‘es’), ‘-ing’ and ‘-ed’ at the end of words.”

Assessment forms an important part of an educator’s responsibility during the school day. According to Jacobs, Gawe and Vakalisa (2002:279), assessment has been foregrounded as one of the teacher’s essential responsibilities of outcomes based education.

According to Van den Horst (1997:167), without valid and reliable assessment, an educator will not know whether her learners have achieved the learning outcomes that are the focus of the programme, unit or lesson. Assessment is not something that is done at the end of a unit of work, or at the end of a lesson, it must be an integral part of all planning and preparation. Van den Horst (1997:167) states that assessment procedures give a clear indication of what learners are learning.

Assessment needs to be flexible and equitable and it must be specifically designed to match the learning outcome that learners are striving to achieve (Van den Horst *et al.*, 1997:167). Learners must be given the opportunity to show teachers what they know and can do. If educators are aware of the listening types, they will be able to plan for assessment accordingly.

3.8 EDUCATORS’ PERCEPTIONS OF EFFECTIVE LISTENERS

The researcher found that most grade one educators perceived listening as an important skill that the learners should possess but that they were unaware of the background knowledge related to listening. Their idea of a good listener was a child sitting quietly, looking at the person who is talking and responding appropriately. Marsh and Hallet (1999:45) state that good listening is not just sitting still and quietly. Although these may be some necessary qualities that the learner should have, these qualities are not evident of a good listener.

Good listening results in understanding, memory and response (Marsh & Hallet, 1999:45). Research according to Brent and Anderson (1993:123) has shown that good listeners are those individuals who make appropriate responses to what they hear, they actively process information, they make pertinent comments and ask relevant questions. As was stated in Chapter one, according to Funk and Funk (1989:660) the major factor contributing to the neglect of listening instruction is that many educators are unaware of how to teach listening; or perhaps the educators received very little or no training themselves in order to teach listening.

3.9 THE METHODOLOGY FOR TEACHING LISTENING

The importance of teaching the skill of listening cannot be ignored in grade one. Young children during their developmental years require this important and necessary skill in order to gain overall success in life. Spira, Bracken and Fischel (2005:225) state that the early literacy skills which children acquire in elementary school are the building blocks for future academic, social and entrepreneurial success. However, according to Burley-Allen (1995:38), young children during their developmental years do not receive training or practice in order to become better listeners.

Listening is seen as a skill and according to Gordon and Browne (2004:463), a skill possesses two qualities. These two qualities are trans-curricular and dynamic.

Listening can be seen as a skill which is firstly trans-curricular because it is a skill that can be used in a variety of learning and communication situations. Secondly, listening is seen as a dynamic skill because through listening, the child is able to respond and interact, which leads to dynamic responses. Since listening is seen as a trans-curricular and dynamic skill, children should be trained to transfer these skills within the listening situation.

Much emphasis has been placed on practising the skill of listening rather than teaching it. According to Field (1998:111), success in listening is seen as the correct responses to questions or tasks. Thus most educators focus on the outcomes of listening rather than on the process of listening. Field (1998:111) argues that when a learner provides a correct answer there is no indication as to how that answer was reached.

In the research of listening in grade one, not much information has come to the fore about how to teach listening skills. However, the researcher identified strategies that can be used by both the educator and learners in the grade one class. It must be understood that in order for learners to be effective listeners, both educators and learners have to partake in the use of strategies in order for the process of listening to be successful.

3.9.1 THE USE OF STRATEGIES TO TEACH LISTENING SKILLS

Teaching children various strategies to promote effective listening should be seen as the foundation for teaching listening skills. Mendelsohn (1998:81) confirms that teaching learning strategies forms an important component in teaching learners how to listen. Strategies are used by both learners and educators. However, it should not be the only method used to teach listening as there are additional methods that are also used to teach listening. According to Jacobs, Gawe and Vakalisa (2002:210), a strategy is a plan that will facilitate teaching-learning activities, so that the outcome/s can be achieved.

3.9.2 TEACHING RESPONSIVELY

Teaching responsively is a strategy to link reading, writing, speaking and listening effectively (Wold, 2002:22). Responsive teaching involves careful listening to children while their talk is supported and their ideas and questions are also encouraged (Wold, 2002:30). Teaching responsively also encourages children not to feel less competent than their peers as constructive feedback for their thinking is given.

During responsive teaching, children work in small groups as they share and notice what others do to achieve an outcome. In such a learning situation, listening is improved as children ask questions and receive appropriate responses which improve their understanding.

3.9.3 STIMULATING TASKS

Stimulating tasks is another strategy that the teacher incorporates into her daily lessons to induce listening. Stimulating tasks refer to a classroom activity that arouses interest within the children (Guthrie *et al.*, 2006:234). One way in which stimulating tasks is exhibited within the classroom is through the use of hands-on activities. For example, after having done a discussion on the lifecycle of a butterfly, children can observe, feel and draw a caterpillar. During stimulating tasks children are involved in using their multiple senses of hearing, seeing, touching and smelling to describe an object. During hands-on interactions, children are not passively observing but they are expected to ask questions such as: “What is it?”; “What are its parts?”

3.9.4 READING ALOUD AS A METHOD TO TEACH LISTENING

Reading aloud is another effective method that aids in the teaching of listening. Hall *et al.* (2003:231) state that it is important that children hear, read and talk about texts. Listening is the first most important step in the process of reading aloud. Reading aloud should not allow children to passively sit and listen to stories but instead it should be interactive, like allowing children to ask and answer questions (McGee & Schickedanz, 2007:742). Such reading aloud activities are referred to as dialogic, which means conversational, thus allowing the reading aloud activity to be interactive. As children listen, they benefit from gains in vocabulary, comprehension strategy and story schema. Mc Gee and Schickedanz (2007:742) further state that growth during interactive reading aloud is related to how frequently children become involved in analytic talking. Analytic talk refers to making predictions that explain a character’s motivation or explanation of how different events are connected within the story. Children are encouraged to engage in analytical thinking by asking questions and making inferences.

Hall *et al.* (2003:228) state that story book reading aloud serves as a foundation for literary meanings. As the adult reader and children read the story, the adult reader and children construct meaning together. This is noted as children ask questions, answer questions, make comments and also offer interpretations.

Teachers play an important role during the reading aloud and listening processes (Hall *et al.*, 2003:229). Teachers take on roles of facilitator, helper, responder, literary curator and reader.

So the teacher does not just read the story while the children sit passively and listen. During reading aloud activities, teachers invite their children to initiate discussions and topics (Hall *et al.*, 2003:229).

3.9.5 CREATING A PURPOSE FOR LISTENING AS A LEARNING STRATEGY

According to Funk (1989:660), providing a purpose for listening is the single most important responsibility of the educator. As much as listening is important, learners must be directed towards what to listen for and a clear distinction must be made between listening and what to listen for. Sheerin (1987:126) states that it is extremely important to prepare learners before the actual listening exercise. Educators should guide learners to predict what they can expect in a text. This helps them to predict that the story will have a beginning and an end; it will consist of a sequence of actions and reactions which will be in relation to one another. Marsh and Hallet (1999:46) state that at times questions should be asked before commencing with an activity, especially when reading poems, so as to direct the children's listening focus. In the listening context the learner is taught to articulate to himself the following:

- Am I listening to follow instructions?
- Am I listening to appreciate?
- Am I listening to evaluate information?
- Am I listening for pleasure?
- Am I listening to empathize?

The discussion in Chapter two of the various listening types has provided a clear guideline for the educator to follow when she teaches learners about creating a purpose for listening. Thus learners will be aware of what their reason for listening is.

3.9.6 SETTING THE STAGE FOR LISTENING

In most grade one classes educators are so busy initiating a lesson that creating a listening atmosphere is furthest from their minds. Creating a listening atmosphere is most vital in

inviting children to listen. According to Funk and Funk (1989:661), the educator should ensure that once the learners need to listen:

- “all prior activities should be terminated
- distractions should be eliminated
- interesting lead-up activities should be included
- flexible seating should be arranged
- follow up activities should be provided for”.

3.9.7 MODELLING AS A STRATEGY USED BY THE EDUCATOR

Learners in grade one are still immature thinkers (Edwards & Knights, 1997:21). Not all activities undertaken by the grade one learner are successfully accomplished and it is for this reason that the grade one learner will need a guiding educator to facilitate his learning. This process is known as modelling.

According to Machado (2003:194), modelling or observational learning is a skill or desirable way of behaviour displayed by the educator in the classroom. Modelling is displayed by actions, cues, prompts or other forms of coaching. The concept of modelling arose from the social learning theory of Albert Bandura. This theory revolves around the idea that children learn through example. Children imitate the actions or behaviours used by adults as examples in situations relating to their own life.

Brent and Anderson (1993:125) state that when an educator displays effective listening behaviour towards her learners, they will in turn emulate that behaviour. Effective listening behaviour includes verbal and non-verbal behaviour. Verbal behaviour includes appropriate and positive responses made by the educator as she interacts with her learners. Non- verbal behaviour includes body actions such as eye contact, the nodding of the head and facing the speaker.

3.9.8 A DIAGNOSTIC APPROACH TO THE TEACHING OF LISTENING

A diagnostic approach to listening involves the teacher identifying and addressing the learners' weaknesses and strengths (Field, 1998:112). Very often wrong answers may be more significant than right answers (Field, 1998:111). Instead of the educator judging the number of learners who answered correctly, educators need to follow up the incorrect responses in order to identify where understanding broke down.

Sheerin (1987:126) states that if there is a breakdown in understanding, then the problem should be identified and remedial action should be undertaken. This is true for second language learners, especially when they are learning second language comprehension. However, the same techniques can be used in everyday listening activities with home language listeners. The educator could set a few minutes aside each day to plan a series of short dictation sentences, which will emphasize a particular listening difficulty. In the case of a grade one child, the relevance of the sub-skill must be linked to the appropriate type of text.

Sheerin (1987:126) states that the keys to success in an efficient listening program are a properly graded syllabus, adequate preparation of learners, visual and written support and appropriate tasks.

3.9.9 VISUALS AS A SUPPORT TO LISTENING

Sheerin (1987:126) and Vandergrift (2004:5) agree that visuals are one of the aids to listening. Sheerin (1987:126) states that visuals in the form of pictures, graphs, diagrams and maps are very important in a listening course. Although she is referring to second language learners again, the researcher feels that visuals do play an important part in the teaching of listening activities with all grade one learners. According to Choates and Rakes (1987) in Hyslop (1988:5), visuals help the child to focus his attention and the message to be transferred will be reinforced. Thus learners will focus their attention on the important parts of the message and learners will be trained for specific information (Sheerin, 1987:127).

Vandergrift (2004:5) discusses two types of visuals namely context visuals and content visuals. Context visuals set the scene for the imminent verbal exchange or text while content visuals prepare the learner for the imminent message.

3.10 PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNERS TO PRACTISE EFFECTIVE LISTENING SKILLS

It is important for the educator to provide as many opportunities that will promote effective listening as possible. The following suggestions have been proposed by Brent and Anderson (1993:124):

3.10.1 Author's Chair - Author's chair promotes selective listening. Students are reminded of previously learned strategies and they are encouraged to use these strategies to evaluate their own success.

3.10.2 Reading aloud to the class – Reading aloud to the class allows for many types of listening activities. Learners may be asked to predict what the title or the main idea of the story is, or they may be asked to predict from the title or illustrations what they expect to hear in the story. This creates a purpose for their listening.

3.10.3 Writing workshop – During a writing workshop learners are involved in a variety of tasks that will encourage active listening which includes talking with a friend to clarify a topic, meeting with the teacher or other learners for help with revising or sharing a finished story.

3.10.4 Cooperative groups – Active listening is required when children work together in buddy groups. Before children begin the discussion of a story and answering questions, they will review listening strategies such as offering encouraging comments. Once the discussion is over, they will assess whether they effectively used the strategy of encouraging one another.

3.10.5 Readers' Theatre - A story is turned into a script for reading aloud (Shanklin & Rhodes, 1989). This may be done through choral reading where students must listen and follow the script in order to read their parts. During group unison reading, the students listen to other speakers who attempt to read with the same inflection and speed. Rehearsal of script reading provides good opportunities for brief oral language lessons. The educator may later ask what can be done to help the audience listen, enjoy and understand the selection. Learners

may offer varied responses such as more expression, speaking slowly and distinctly and looking frequently at the audience.

3.10.6 Retelling – When children share a favourite story or parts of that story with a friend, it gives them great pleasure and opportunities for listening are encouraged.

When specific skill lessons in listening are well planned and when encouraging opportunities for meaningful listening are applied, then learners will be helped to develop their own listening skills.

3.11 WHEN TO TEACH LISTENING SKILLS

Some authors like Abelleira (1987) in Hyslop (1988:5) state that listening should be taught as a separate mode, while Funk and Funk (1989:662) argue that listening instruction should permeate throughout the school day. The researcher agrees with Funk and Funk, as listening is an activity that continues throughout the school day. Learners are not only listening to the educators but educators should also be listening to the learners while learners are also listening to their peers. It is imperative to understand that listening instruction should not only take place during literacy time but it should be enhanced throughout the school day as each learning area calls for the instruction and use of listening. Funk and Funk (1989:662) argue that when listening instruction is limited to a certain part of the school day, then listening does not transfer to real life applications. Some of the appropriate times that are used to implement listening instruction are during art, music, physical education, social studies and science activities.

3.12 PROBLEMS FACED BY YOUNG LISTENERS

3.12.1 The difference between hearing and listening

Most young children do not understand the difference between hearing and listening. They feel that hearing and listening are the same thing. They do not realize that hearing is a physiological process which is passive, whereas listening is an active process that can be learnt. Abelleira (1987) states that the first thing that should be done when teaching first

graders how to listen is to teach them how the auditory system functions. Considering this, educators need to educate learners on the difference between hearing and listening so that they can actively engage in the process of listening.

3.12.2 The importance of message quality

Young listeners face many listening problems during the process of listening. Lynch (1988:27) states that problems faced by young listeners comprise three types.

Message quality

Many children up to the age of seven do not realize the importance of message quality. In referential tasks the listeners blame themselves rather than the quality of the message, even if this was highly ambiguous. If the message is highly ambiguous, most young listeners blame themselves for not understanding the message rather than blaming the quality of the message. On the other hand, if they have guessed correctly, they think even an ambiguous message is adequate (Lynch, 1988:27).

Assessing message quality

Secondly, young listeners have difficulty in assessing message quality when the input is ambiguous or uninformative (Lynch, 1988:27).

Providing feedback for learners

Thirdly, young listeners do not provide feedback for speakers. In some communication tasks and certain types of spontaneous conversation, children do not provide feedback to the speaker in order to confirm the message, even if the message was clear and simple. Even when a message is highly ambiguous or unclear, young listeners do not ask for clarification, nor do they comment or query or request more information (Lynch, 1988:27).

3.12.3 Other distortions faced by young learners

According to Lundsteen (1971:81), there are other distortions or problems that young listeners face. The four distortions that Lundsteen (1971:81) outlines are the following:-

Attitude

Attitude cut off blocks the reception of information at the spoken source because expectation acts on selection. For example, if a student has a strong negative reaction every time he hears the word 'test', he might not hear the rest of the message.

Motive attributing

Motive attributing is illustrated by the person who says of a speaker, "He is just selling me a public relations line for the establishment," and by the child who thinks, "Teachers just like to talk, they don't really expect me to listen the first time because they are going to repeat instructions ten times anyway."

Organizational mix-up

Organizational mix-up happens while one is trying to put someone else's message together. "Did he say turn left, then right, then left?", or "Did he say 'tired' or 'tried' "?

Self pre-occupation

Self preoccupation causes distortion because the "listener" is busy formulating his reply and never hears the message: "I'll get him for that; as soon as he stops talking. I'll make a crack about how short he is, then ..."

Young listeners should not place their listening in isolation. Because grade one learners are young and immature thinkers, they do not verify any misunderstandings when they listen. Many educators are unaware of the listening problems that young learners face. The problems as highlighted above provide a guideline for the educator to follow when listening problems arise. Also, educators need to understand that the lack of listening skills is not an isolated

problem, but that there are many factors contributing to the lack of listening skills during the listening process. It is therefore important that the educator encourages and coaches children to ask for clarity if information is unclear or inadequate to their understanding.

3.13 CONCLUSION

This chapter reported on the investigation into the promotion of effective listening skills. Some suggested ways of teaching listening skills were reviewed. Since listening is viewed as an invisible skill, more practical applications were suggested. These applications would provide the foundation phase educator with a clearer understanding of how to teach listening skills. It was also highlighted in this chapter that the teaching of listening should not only be confined to the educator teaching the skill of listening, but that the educator should also guide the learner so that the learner is aware of adopting appropriate strategies to master listening as well. This view is in favour of socio-constructivist learning where the learner also makes meaning of his learning.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH DESIGN

Note: letter size for headings not same as in rest of text. I am changing to letter size 12 where possible, but all these must be checked carefully before final printing. Also, you need to look carefully at paragraph numbering to ensure that no ambiguities occur there.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of this chapter is to report on the investigation into the teaching of listening skills in grade one. The previous chapters have reflected on what listening is and on the important ways of teaching listening skills. This chapter will describe how the research design was planned in order to verify the process, implementation and validity of the research. This chapter is subjected to an empirical investigation by means of a qualitative study. I do not understand this previous sentence. The chapter is merely a report of what was done in the research. Could it be: "The research design was based on an empirical investigation by means of ... ? Please check. McMillan and Schumacher (2001:15) state that qualitative data are (all data are) a presentation of data as a narration of words. This research fell into the category of qualitative data collection as the researcher wanted to understand how teachers perceived the teaching of listening skills and how important they considered the listening skills to be. Gay and Airasian (2003:163) state that in qualitative research, the researcher seeks to describe the perspectives of participants towards events, practices or beliefs. In this chapter the researcher describes the research problem, the aim of the research and the research paradigm that framed the study. Finally, the researcher provides an explanation of the research method that was carried out in this study.

4.2 Research Problem

As a teacher in the foundation phase, the researcher observed that a number of grade one children experienced difficulty in listening. This observation is confirmed by Gratz (1973:268) who states that listening still remains an underdeveloped skill and that it gets the least amount of attention in the language arts class. McDevitt (1990:713) concurs, stating that in the last decade developmental research that was conducted on children's listening performance indicated that children are strikingly poor at evaluating and regulating their comprehension levels. During a number of informal conversations with other grade one

teachers at the school where the researcher worked, it was found that they had observed the same problem and therefore expressed the same concerns.

A comprehensive review of the literature revealed that the importance of listening has been well endorsed, but that there is a paucity in research on the actual teaching of listening skills. It is argued that because listening is seen as a skill, it can be taught. Moreover, as part of an empirical study, it should be possible to validate the findings of research on the teaching of listening skills. *Please check the previous sentence as I was not quite sure what your intention with the original sentence was. Please change back if I went off the tracks!* McSporrán (1997:150) states that it is of paramount importance that children at the point of entry into school receive the opportunity to refine their listening competencies.

Based on the observed problems related to listening among grade one learners and the concerns expressed by grade one educators, the question that was researched in this study was the following: *How are teachers planning for and teaching listening skills in the grade one class?*

4.3 AIM OF THE RESEARCH

Some learners in the grade one classroom do not listen effectively. The aim of this study was to determine why some children in the grade one class do not listen. The study also investigated the challenges that educators face when they attempt to teach listening skills. Moreover, the study aimed to identify ways in which educators were actually teaching listening skills. As a springboard for the empirical study, the researcher investigated the theoretical background through a literature review in order to gain insight into why some grade one children do not listen effectively. The theoretical study was subsequently complemented with an empirical investigation by means of semi-structured interviews conducted with educators in grade one classrooms. The responses obtained from these interviews were then analyzed.

4.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design lays the foundation for any study. Marshall and Rossman (2006:13) state that the research design builds a sound argument for the study at hand. A research design is a

set of guidelines and instructions which are followed when the research problem is being addressed (Mouton, 1996:107). This research was designed as a qualitative study, which is expanded on in the following paragraph.

4.5 THE NATURE OF QUALITATIVE DESIGN

Cresswell (1998:2), in De Vos (2006:268), defines the term design as “the entire process of research from conceptualizing a problem, to writing the narrative”. In this study a qualitative method was employed and the method of inquiry used to develop the insights of this study was framed around phenomenology. The paradigm that was selected to frame this study was the interpretive [interpretative?](#) social paradigm. The reasoning behind this was that the researcher wanted to understand why children were not listening and she also wanted to investigate how teachers were teaching listening skills.

The methodology that was followed for the structured interviews was that the researcher entered the teaching environment of the educators while she interviewed them. Gay and Airasian (2003:163) state that in qualitative research the researcher seeks to describe the perspectives of participants towards events and practices or beliefs. Marshall and Rossman (2006:3) confirm that qualitative research is undertaken in the natural world by using multiple methods that are interactive and humanistic.

4.6 RESEARCH PARADIGM

This research fell under the umbrella of social science and was based on the paradigm of an interpretive [interpretative?](#) social paradigm. This theory promotes qualitative research methodologies. In De Vos (2006:39), it is highlighted by Thomas Kuhn (1970) that a paradigm refers to the nature, growth and development of the sciences.

In this study the researcher employed the interpretive [interpretative?](#) constructivist approach. According to Neuman (1997:70), three approaches are used when conducting research in the social sciences, namely:

- Positivist Social Sciences
- Interpretive Social Sciences [interpretative?](#)
- Critical Social Sciences

4.6.1 Positivist Social Sciences

Positivism sees social science as structured and organized. Most positivist researchers prefer to adopt quantitative methods when analyzing data, as they often use experiments, surveys and statistics (Neuman 1997:73). Critics argue that positivism reduces people to numbers. It places emphasis on abstract laws and formulas rather than on actual lives of people.

The researcher chose not to adopt the positivist approach as the study in question was not quantifiable but rather took a qualitative route.

4.6.2 Critical Social Science

Critical social science revolves around the empowerment of individuals (Neuman, 1997:74). Critical researchers thus conduct research to question and critique relations in order to empower less powerful people. Critical social researchers are concerned with helping people change conditions in order to build a better life for themselves. Most critical social researchers involve themselves in making drastic changes in governmental and political issues (Neuman, 1997:74). The researcher could not choose this approach as the study in question was concerned with the social interaction between the teacher and child and the critical social science approach refers to a process of critical inquiry.

4.6.3 Interpretive Social Science [Interpretative?](#)

In this study the researcher employed the interpretive interpretative social science paradigm. The interpretive social paradigm has its roots in phenomenology. De Vos (2006:264) states that a phenomenological study is a study that aims to understand peoples' perceptions, perspectives and their understanding of a particular phenomenon. From a phenomenological perspective, the researcher wished to interpret the meaning of this experience for the individual (Gay & Airasian, 2003:166). Marshall and Rossman (2006:5) further state that the

researcher wants to understand the meaning participants attach to their lives, but that a sense of neutrality should be maintained by the research.

In interpretive social science a researcher seeks to understand how the parts of a text relate to its whole. Interpretive? social science researchers want to understand and describe meaningful social action. As they create meaning, they are able to make sense of the world (Neuman 2003:83). As an interpretive? social researcher, the researcher chose to use this paradigm because she wanted to research how teachers are teaching listening. The researcher wanted to investigate which activities the grade one educators were using to explicitly promote the teaching of listening. She also wanted to know what problems, from an educator's perspective, the educators experienced with the teaching of listening skills. As part of the study, the researcher also wanted to know how the educators handled the problem of limited listening skills within the educational context of the grade one class.

4.7 RESEARCH METHOD

The research method that was undertaken in this study was data collection through semi-structured interviews, followed by data analysis.

4.7.1 Data Collection

As an interpretive? social researcher, I carried out semi-structured interviews during my research. Semi-structured questions are open-ended questions that allow for individual responses (McMillan & Schumaker, 2001:269). De Vos (2006:296) states that semi-structured interviews are used in order to gain a detailed picture of a particular topic, or of a participant's beliefs. While interviewing the participants, the information was taped using a dictaphone. McMillan and Schumaker (2001:450) state that tape recorders give a complete account of the verbal interaction. This also provides material to check for reliability. After the interviews, the information obtained from the interviews was transcribed.

During the semi-structured interview, the researcher made use of open-ended questions. According to Cohen and Mannion (1994:277), open-ended questions are those questions that

place no restrictions on the responses the interviewees provide other than the nature of the problem under investigation. Open-ended questions have a number of advantages. They are flexible as they allow the interviewer to further probe so that she/he may go deeper if she/he chooses to. Open-ended questions also give the interviewer the opportunity to clear up any misunderstandings that might occur with the interpretation of the question.

An important element of the interview is probing. According to Schumacher and McMillan (2001:271), probing is a skill that the researcher uses in order to provide clarification of a potential answer. De Vos (2006:290) further states that probing is used to deepen the response to a question in order to increase the richness of the data being obtained. Participants should be made aware that, considering that the given response is accepted, further information is required. Taking this into consideration, the participant should never get the impression that their incomplete response was rejected or inadequate. This is when the interviewer uses the step of linking which is part of the probing process to help the participant to impart with information that the researcher wants (De Vos, 2006:290).

The data collection method that was employed in this study was in the form of semi-structured interviews. According to De Vos (2005:287), interviewing is the most preferred or predominant method of data collection in qualitative analysis. An interview is an active process between the researcher and the participant where both individuals are involved in a discussion which is directed to a central focus in order to make meaning.

4.7.2 Ethical measures

Being ethical forms an important component of the research process. The researcher plays an important role when considering the pivotal role that ethics play during the research process. A researcher must possess a personal moral code against unethical behaviour (Neuman 1997:445). Ethical measures fall into the categories of moral, ethical and legal categories.

4.7.3 Avoidance of Harm

Although in this study there was little possibility that any physical harm could befall the respondents, the researcher had to take extra precautions to prevent any emotional discomfort

for the respondents. To this end the researcher read the questions prior to the actual interview and checked whether the respondents felt confident to answer the questions. De Vos (2006:58) states that emotional harm is often more difficult to predict than physical discomfort and emotional discomfort has greater consequences than physical discomfort. For these reasons respondents had to be informed of the impact of the investigation prior to the interviews (De Vos 2006:59).

4.7.4 Informed Consent

From a legal point of view, the researcher applied in writing to the Department of Education to be granted consent for carrying out the research at the schools. De Vos (2006:59) states that gaining consent is not a luxury but a necessary condition. The researcher also wrote to the principals in order to gain consent to carry out the research at the schools. Once consent had been granted - initially from the Department of Education and the schools - the researcher requested the educators' written consent for their participation in the study. (Annexure?????).

Comment [D1]: Remember to mention the annexures

4.7.5 Violation of Confidentiality

Respecting the confidentiality of participants in a research study is vitally important. Sieber (1982:145), in De Vos (2006:61), views confidentiality as an agreement that limits others from gaining access to the private information that is given. From an ethical and moral point of view, the participants were asked to place their trust in the researcher. Their confidentiality during the interview process was assured, which was clearly stipulated in the letter of consent signed by the participants..

4.7.6 Participants in the study

The researcher adopted maximum variation as eight grade one educators were selected to participate in this study. Two participants were chosen from four schools in the Central Durban area situated in the Province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Two of the schools were state schools and two of the schools were private schools. Schumaker and Mc Millan (2001:402) state that maximum variation is a strategy used so that different participants will highlight different aspects to the problem. All the participants were qualified and

experienced grade one educators. The reason that the researcher chose these participants was that due to their experience as grade one teachers they would bring relevant information and rich perspectives to the interview.

4.7.7 Procedure of the interviews

Each participant was interviewed individually and the duration of the interview was an hour. The researcher prepared an interview schedule of five open-ended questions relating to the teaching and problems pertaining to listening. According to De Vos *et al.* (2005:318), the concepts to be investigated during the interview must be clearly defined in the interview schedule. This was undertaken cautiously by the researcher prior to the actual interviewing, so as to familiarise the participants with what the focus of the interview would be. This was also done to prevent any misunderstandings that might occur during the interview process.

4.7.8 Validity and Reliability (Trustworthiness)

Validity during the research process forms an important step. Validity focuses on the appropriate interpretations that are gained from the testing (Gay & Airasian, 2003:135). Testing is done for a purpose and the results derived from that testing prove its validity. In this research interviews were used to gain feedback on whether teachers were actually teaching listening and if they were, how were they doing it. The interviews were an informed way to gain entry into the class of the participants and to thus see how they channelled the teaching of listening. It was important that the researcher incorporated the necessary research methodology techniques when she entered the interview.

Reliability refers to trustworthiness. In this study, the researcher interviewed the participants under the same conditions and a reliable measurement procedure was used. De Vos (2006:163) confirms that if the same variable is measured under the same conditions, then a reliable measurement procedure will result in identical or nearly identical results. In order for reliability to be well incorporated, standard conditions should be prevalent for all participants. During the interviewing process, the researcher used the same time frame with all participants. The participants were interviewed in their own language. The researchers were all interviewed in their natural setting, that is the classroom. No other interviewer was involved during the interviewing process except the researcher. Reliability basically focuses on how well something is being measured rather than on what is being measured (De Vos

2006:160). To verify reliability semi-structured interviews were conducted and the interviews were recorded on a dictaphone. Thereafter the interviews were transcribed and analyzed.

4.7.9 The Questionnaire

The questionnaire comprised of five questions pertaining to listening. These questions focused on the following:-

- problems that learners experience with listening.
- activities that are presented in the class that enhance listening.
- emphasis on listening that indicates that the lesson was pre-planned and the focus was specifically on listening.
- considering that listening is the first learning outcome of the National Curriculum Statement, how does the teacher use the assessment standards to teach listening?.
- What problems does the teacher experience with the teaching of listening?

These questions were constructed by the researcher as a result of her experience as a grade one teacher. As was mentioned previously, other grade one teachers also experienced the same problem. Since this research focused on the investigation of teaching listening in the grade one class, the researcher found it imperative to base her questions on the teaching of listening with the focus on the problems, the educator, the child and the National Curriculum Statement.

4.8 DATA ANALYSIS

After the interviews had been transcribed, the researcher had to make sense of the data. In qualitative data analysis, the data obtained from the interviews are organized into categories and from those categories patterns emerge (Schumaker & McMillan, 2003:461). This process

entailed comprehensive, repeated reading of each each line, through which certain main categories based on key words began to emerge. Once the main categories had been identified, sub-categories were identified. The topic that framed the question was converted into a category. Five categories were identified that emerged from the participants' responses. These highlighted the picture which is presented in the next chapter.

4.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study was limited to interviewing grade one educators within the area of Durban and did not include interviewing the children. Only limited recent research was available in the literature on the teaching of listening. There were time limitations during the interview process as the researcher had to stick to a specific time frame. The educators were interviewed after school and they were anxious to leave for the afternoon.

4.10 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has presented a detailed description of the layout of the research design that was undertaken in this study. The paradigm that was used to frame this study and the data collection process were discussed. Semi-structured interviews were used as the main data collection method. The researcher used the information that was gathered from the semi-structured interviews to analyze the results. The next chapter discusses the findings.

Chapter Five

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF DATA

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the analysis of the semi-structured interviews that were carried out with grade one educators. The interview schedule comprised of five (questions. Refer to (4.7.9).Once the interviews were completed, the interviews were transcribed and then recorded verbatim. The researcher then proceeded to extract categories from the data. McMillan & Schumaker (2003:473) state that a category represents the meaning of similar topics. Categories have a major role to play when analyzing the data. As De Vos et al (2006:337) state that category information is at the heart of qualitative data analysis. As data was analyzed each category was further divided into subcategories. Subcategories involve breaking the information down into a smaller, manageable set of themes De Vos (2003:338). Finally, the researcher gives a detailed narrative presentation of the findings. As y McMillan & Schumacher (2003:490), state that in an analysis the overall meaning and interpretation is discussed. De Vos et al (2003:338) state that interpretation refers to making sense of the data.

5.2 Category 1

The researcher firstly, presents each category which is followed by a subcategory. Thereafter, the researcher analyses each subcategory in detail.

Problems experienced by grade one educators, with children's ability to listen. (Please look at above and the next paragraphs.Please note that I have given indicated each subcategory first and thereafter I have discussed them in detail at the bottom.

Comment [D2]: What are you going to discuss now. Give an introductory paragraph

. The first question that was posed to the participants was problems that were experienced by educators, with the children's ability to listen. From the literature review, it was gathered that some children do not listen for several reasons. (1.2)

5.2.1 Sub-category

1. **English as a second language.** (Please look at the bottom discussion)

Comment [D3]: For me the reader I need more of an explanation – this implies the discussion to follow as well. Remember you know what you mean by this but I do not

“You find the teacher is not good at speaking a second language. A second language learner has a problem with listening”., commented an educator

2. Focusing on the teachers voice and disregarding surrounding stimuli.

‘It is important for children to focus firstly on the teachers voice and to disregard all other stimuli and surrounding noises’, said an educator. (Please look at discussion at the bottom)

Comment [D4]: It must be in a framework in order to understand it better. This implies the whole section – just to cryptic

3. Listening to instructions

“You can often tell a child something and they seem to have heard you, but they haven’t actually listened to your instruction for instance, giving instructions like their seating, their posture”.. said an educator

4. Home background

“Mums will repeat 3,4,5 times go and bath, half an hour later it is not done. How children are expected to listen at home and how children are expected to listen to their parents at home, definitely carries through to the school as well.’, commented an educator

5. Age maturity

“Often with grade ones, it’s a maturity thing. Er, some of them just don’t have the maturity yet. In my classroom I’ve got a fourteen month age difference so my first one turned seven this year February and I’ve got little girls that are only going to turn seven next year in March/April. I think that affects some of them with their listening skills.”, said an educator.

6. Viewing of television play station and computer games

“ I think also things like television, play station and computer games, the children switch off and I think that happens in the classroom as well”, said an educator

7. Parental interaction with children

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“A relationship with parents and children at home, where parents sit and talk to their children because children are now sitting and watching television, so there is no interaction.”
responded an educator

8. Reading of stories to children (Please look at the bottom for discussion)

Comment [D5]: Introductory remarks please
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“Children who do not read at home and stories that are not read to children are actually poor listeners”, commented an educator

The first category that emerged from the analysis of the interviews was the problems that educators experience with the children’s ability to listen in the grade one class. It was gleaned from the data that the responses from the educators were rich with information pertaining to the problems, that affected the children’s ability to listen. After the categories were identified, eight sub categories were then extracted from the first category. The sub categories were educators responses and they were also identified in the literature review. The eight sub categories that emerged from the main category were:

The researcher gives a narrative of each sub category.

- English as a second language
- Focusing on the teachers voice and disregarding other stimuli
- Listening to instructions
- Home background
- Age maturity
- Viewing of television, computer games and play stations
- Parental interaction with children
- Reading of stories to children

English as a second language

It was gleaned from the data that some grade one educators experienced that children whose mother tongue was not English found it difficult to listen, as they could not understand what was being told. In the literature study, it was found that it becomes difficult for second

language learners to listen as they cannot process information quickly enough and as a result they cannot make sense of what is being said.(Goh & Taib 2006:222).

Comment [D6]: Also refer to the relevant paragraph in your literature study. Remember you must link the literature and your research findings now

Focusing on the teachers voice and disregarding surrounding stimuli

During the interviews, an educator commented that some children do not focus on the teachers voice while she is talking, as they are easily distracted by other sounds. According to the literature, it was found that from the researchers experience as a grade one educator, that noise filtered through to her classroom because of the activities that were taking place on the outside. Palmer & Bayley (2005:7) confirm that as part of a noise filled world, children's listening skills are slowly being eroded.

Age maturity

Some educators commented on the lack of maturity of grade one children. They felt that some children who entered grade one and who were younger than the rest of the class were immature. The educators felt that age maturity contributed to poor listening ability.

Viewing of television, computer games and play station games

Some educators felt that exposure to television and the playing of computer games and play station games affected the ability for children to listen. Educators commented that children who watched too much of television 'switched off' in class when it was necessary for them to listen. Palmer & Bayley (2005:7) & Thinkquest (2007:1) confirm that television has robbed opportunities for conversational speaking and listening amongst some parents and children.

Parental interaction with children

An important sub category that was identified from the interview analysis with educators was on the lack of parent child interaction. Educators felt that some parents were too busy and did not have the time to sit and talk to their children, and as a result there was a lack of listening with children. Educators further commented that parents needed to talk to their children and build a relationship with them. This would greatly contribute to enhancing the listening skills of children. A study done by Wilson (1997:6) shows that children's listening ability can

improve when parents ask and encourage questions, discuss feelings, share thoughts and give praise.

Reading of stories to children

Some educators felt that reading of stories positively contributes to the ability for children to listen. In the analysis some educators indicated that those children, whose listening ability was poor, were those children who do not read and were not read to at home.

After an in depth analysis was undertaken, it was found that category one was so rich with information that eight sub categories were investigated. The researcher further analyzed each sub category. It was found that the information that was analyzed from the interviews tied with the information found in the literature review, thus confirming the results.

5.3 Category two

The second question focused on the types of activities that educators were incorporating in order to enhance listening. The researcher was interested to know which activities were taught to ensure that listening was being taught effectively.

Activities that enhanced listening.

Comment [D7]: Introductory paragraph please

5.3.1 Sub category

1. Songs

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“The child gets to listen and repeat the words that has been sung”, said by an educator

Comment [D8]: Is this the responses of the teachers or what – see I do not know as reader what you mean by this – just to cryptic

2. Stories

“The grade one child has to actually sit down and listen to the stories because it is so interesting”, said an educator

3. Dramatization

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“In dramatization they’ve got to listen. There is repetition of words and there is viewing and reading.”, commented an educator

4. Instructions

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“ We did a specific listening activity today where they had to listen to the instruction. I’ve tried to give it once, pick up the red roll, colour the heart in red...” , explained an educator

5. Oral maths

“During maths, counting and counting patterns enhances listening.”, explained an educator

Category two revolved around activities that were used in the classroom to enhance listening. The five sub categories that were identified in this theme were:

Songs

Stories

Dramatization

Instructions

Oral maths

The researcher gives an analysis of each sub category.

Songs

The first sub category that was identified from category two was on the singing of songs to improve listening in the grade one class. An educator commented that singing songs help children to improve their listening, as they have to repeat what has been sung and this means that the child has to attentively listen to the words in order for him or her to repeat it. As Palmer & Bayley (2006:14) state that children should be given every opportunity to use action rhymes and songs as it is considered to be a medium for learning.

Stories

Sub category two referred to the importance of children listening to stories. The educator commented that children enjoy listening to stories because they are so interesting. The importance of reading stories to children and children who are being read to is well documented.

Dramatization

Sub category three of category two related to the use of drama activities in the grade one classroom. As an educator commented, that through drama children have to repeat the words and therefore they have to listen. Drama can be considered to be an instructional strategy. According to the literature study, (par 3.10.5) drama or theatre script can improve children's listening, as they have to respond to the text and they have to organize what is important to say and what is meaningful (Shanklin & Rhodes 1989:499).

Comment [D9]: What about linking it to your lit study

Instructions

Some grade one educators described that children experienced difficulty in carrying out instructions. They further commented that although instructions were clearly explained, some grade one learners, still experienced difficulty carrying out the instruction. Thompson (2001:263) and Burrows & Guthrie (2001:31) state that the purposes for listening must be made clear to the children before any activity is carried out.

Oral maths

Sub category five of category two was directed at the use of oral maths. An educator stated that oral counting in maths and counting patterns, helped to improve the listening skills of children, as they had to listen carefully to the educator count first and thereafter they had to concentrate and count themselves.

Although five sub categories emerged from this theme, it was noted that there were limitations on the activities that promote listening in the grade one classroom. From the research compiled in the literature review, (par 3.10), the researcher found that there are various activities that can be taught in the grade one class to teach listening.

Comment [D10]: Why do you say so – remember this is a statement – you need to verify it

5.4 Category three

The pre-planning of activities which enhanced listening

The next question was based on how were educators pre planning for the teaching of listening.

Comment [D11]: Introductory remarks please

5.4.1. Sub category

1. Pre-planned discussions

“We doing the theme on the farm and we started talking about the cow today. They were sitting on the mat and they had to listen”, said an educator.

Comment [D12]: Is this the general response – is it the response of one person. I the reader do not understand. Is it the question to the teacher?

2. Giving instructions for a worksheet

“When you give an activity and the worksheets, and if the concept is new, the child has to listen.”, explained an educator

3. Listening activities were incidental

“Listening occurs incidentally throughout the day in a grade one class”, said an educator

The theme that emerged from theme three was the pre planning of activities that enhanced listening. The researcher wanted to investigate whether teachers were planning lessons that emphasized the teaching of listening. The three sub themes that emerged from this sub theme were:

Pre planned discussions

Giving instructions for a worksheet

Listening activities were incidental

Pre planned discussions

Some educators felt that discussions played an important role in improving listening.

As one educator stated that when a certain theme was being covered, then discussion around that theme enhanced listening.

Giving instructions for a worksheet

The second sub theme that was identified in category three was giving instructions for a worksheet. An educator stated that when instructions for a new worksheet is given then the child has to listen.

Listening activities were incidental

The third sub category that emerged from category three was that listening was incidental. An educator felt that listening was incidental in the grade one class, as children had to listen throughout the day.

With the category of the pre planning of listening activities, three sub categories emerged. The researcher found that educators were not actively planning constructively for listening activities. There could be several reasons for this. It may be that the educators were not given any instructional guidelines on how to teach listening. Another important factor that could be contributed to the lack of planning for the teaching of listening, could be that educators have a very busy **a** day and thus, there is not sufficient time for the teaching of listening.

Comment [D13]: Look at language

5.5 Category four

The use of assessment standards that are related to the outcome of listening in grade **one**.

Comment [D14]: Introductory remarks please

The researcher asked this question to see how educators were using the assessment standards to teach listening. From this category, the following sub categories emerged:-

5.5.1 Sub category

1. Oral Feedback

“Check if learners understand the concept during oral feedback”, responded an educator

2. Written Representation

“What they are able to produce in their books”., commented an educator.

3. Verbal and Physical Responses

“... With little ones, it’s a verbal or a physical response...”, said an educator.

4. Questioning about a story

“So the child sits and listens to the story. You can actually stop, have a break in between and find out if the child has actually listened. At the end of the story you will actually question to find out whether the child has actually listened or not.”, explained an educator

5. Segmentation of a sentence

“We break the sentence down and we have to look for the key word or the main idea as I read it to them...”, said an educator

The focus of category four was to question educators on how they were using the assessment standards to assess listening. From category 4, five sub categories emerged.

The five sub categories that emerged were:

Oral feedback

Written representation

Verbal and physical responses

Comment [D15]: Look your numbers moved here. Make sure it is in line in the final document

Questioning about a story
Segmentation of a sentence

Oral feedback

When children responded positively to what was being asked, then this was an indicator to the educator that the child listened effectively. As an educator stated that when a new concept is taught, then understanding is checked by whether the child has listened.

From the responses of the educators, it was found that they were not paying too much of attention to the assessment standards when teaching listening. Educators gave brief overall responses such as oral feedback, relating back a story, whereas other important details of the assessment standards were not discussed.

Written representation

Some educators reported that what children are able to represent in their books is an indication that they were listening. By carefully listening to the instructions given by the educator, children are then able to follow it through in their books.

Verbal and physical responses

One educator stated that because the grade one child is still young, their response to listening is physical and verbal. It was noted by the researcher that some educators were not keeping the assessment standards in mind. The reason for this was that some educators were not constantly referring to the learning outcome and the assessment standards related to it.

Questioning about a story

Some educators explained that children actually listen to a story. The educator further explained that at some point during the story telling, the educator asks a question to check if the child is listening.

Segmentation of a sentence

This was an interesting response as the focus was on segmentation of a sentence. Segmentation of a sentence leads to the identification of the main idea or the key word.

As the educator reads the sentence, the child listens and then identifies the main idea or key word. This plays an important role when assessing grade one children.

5.6 Category five

Comment [D16]: Introductory remarks

The final question was focused on the problems that educators experienced with the teaching of listening. From this category the following three sub categories emerged:

Problems experienced by educators with the teaching of listening

5.6.1

Comment [D17]: Just look at the numbering here. Dit it moved?

Sub category

1. Large numbers of children in the classroom

“...Big numbers is number one! Because of big numbers ... So we are not getting to ALL the children.”, commented an educator

2. Repetition Overload

“They shut out, the MOMENT, there is too much of repetition”, said an educator

3. Lack of guidance with teaching strategies

“My life would be easier if I was given some techniques as to how to teach listening”., commented an educator

Three sub categories were identified from category five. The three sub categories were:

Large numbers of children in classrooms

Repetition overload

Lack of guidance with teaching strategies

Large numbers in classrooms

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An important theme that was highlighted was large numbers in the classroom. Currently this is a serious problem in some South African schools. Large numbers in the classrooms makes it difficult for the educator to teach and to teach listening in particular. In some large classrooms there is too much of noise, there is lack of discipline and the classroom is overcrowded.

Repetition overload

Some educators felt that too much of repetition impacted negatively on the children's ability to listen. As an educator stated that children "shut out" the moment there is too much of repetition.

Lack of guidance with teaching strategies

Some educators felt that they did not receive adequate teaching guidelines on how to teach listening. One educator stated that her life would be so much easier if she was given the appropriate guidelines to teach listening.

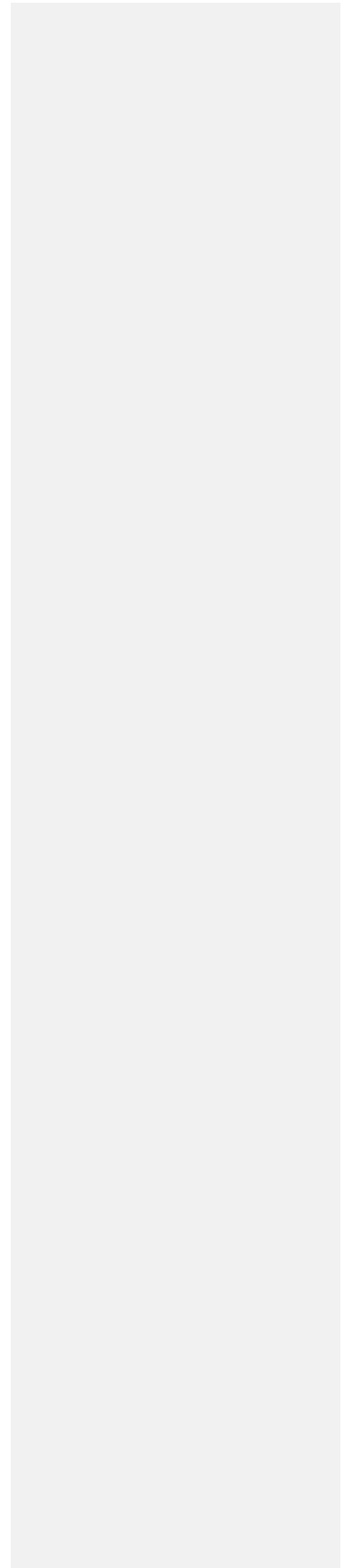
5.7 Table to indicate the various categories and subcategories

The researcher in this study, chose to use a table to outline the five categories and the sub categories. The reason for this is that she wanted to illustrate the relationship between the various categories.

Upon analysis of the first category there is an incline with regards to the problems pertaining to why children don't listen. The table shows a gradual decline, as indicated by category two and three. The main focus of this study is to investigate how educators are teaching listening in the grade one class. In category two, it shows that educators are not indicating many activities that help to enhance listening. In category three, educators are not planning for the teaching of listening. Category four related to the use of assessment standards related to the teaching of listening. Here it was noticed that educators were not using the assessment standards. The fifth category relates to the problems experienced by educators with their

teaching of listening in the classroom. Although, this category in the table, indicates a decline, the information is rich and meaningful. In this category educators are commenting on the lack of teaching strategies, repetition overload and overcrowded classrooms. An important component of this study was to investigate how educators are teaching listening in the grade one class. An important sub category that emerged from this study was that educators commented that they did not have adequate teaching strategies to help them with the teaching of listening. This will be further discussed in the final chapter, as part of the recommendations.

Comment [D18]: I do not know how to delete the space here



| Category one | Category two | Category three | Category four | Category five |
|---|-------------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Problems experienced by educators with children's ability to listen. | Activities that enhanced listening. | The pre planning of activities which enhanced listening. | The use of assessment standards that are related to the outcome of listening. | Problems experienced by educators with the teaching of listening. |
| Sub categories | Sub category | Sub category | Sub category | Sub category |
| <i>1. English as a second language</i> | <i>1. Songs</i> | <i>1. Pre planned discussions</i> | <i>1. Oral feedback</i> | <i>1. Large numbers in the classroom</i> |
| <i>2. Focusing on the teachers voice and disregarding surrounding stimuli</i> | <i>2. Stories</i> | <i>2. Giving instructions for a worksheet</i> | <i>2. Written representation</i> | <i>2. Repetition overload</i> |
| <i>3. Listening to instructions</i> | <i>3. Dramatization</i> | <i>3. Listening activities were incidental</i> | <i>3. Verbal and Physical responses</i> | <i>3. Lack of guidance with teaching strategies</i> |
| <i>4. Home background</i> | <i>4. Instructions</i> | | <i>4. Questioning about a story</i> | |
| <i>5. Age maturity</i> | <i>5. Oral Maths</i> | | <i>5. Segmentation of a sentence</i> | |
| <i>6. Viewing of television, play station and computer games</i> | | | | |
| <i>7. Parental interaction with children</i> | | | | |
| <i>8. Reading of</i> | | | | |

| | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| <i>stories to children</i> | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--|--|--|--|

5.8 CONCLUSION

The semi structured interviews provided the researcher with information that was rich and meaningful. From category one, which was the related to the problems that educators experienced with the children’s ability to listen it was gleaned, that educators identified the most problems that were related to listening. The focus of this question was to determine what problems the educators thought that the children experienced with regards to listening. The researcher wanted to investigate “why” some of the grade children were not listening.

Category two focused on activities that enhanced listening. The researcher proceeded to research which activities that were taught in the grade one classroom, were helping children to improve their listening. It was found from the data, that there were fewer activities that educators thought that enhanced listening.

Category three related to the pre planning of listening activities which enhanced listening. This was a very important question of the study as it related to how educators were planning in advance for the teaching of listening. The data gathered from the analysis of category three showed that educators were not planning in advance for the teaching of listening in the grade one class. There could be many reasons for this. The researcher discusses these in chapter six.

Category four focused on the use of assessment standards that related to the outcome of listening in grade one. The researcher wanted to investigate how the grade one educators in this study were using the assessment standards related to the teaching of listening, to assess listening. The researcher wanted to see how educators were checking for understanding of children’s listening against the backdrop of the assessment standards related to listening. It was found that educators were to a certain extent using the assessment standards, but there were some restrictions in their use of the assessment standards with regards to assessing listening.

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Category five related to the problems experienced by grade one educators with the teaching of listening. Although only a few sub categories emerged from this category, they confirmed what the researcher had studied in the literature review.

In the next chapter, the researcher provides the conclusion for this study and she also offers some recommendations.

CHAPTER SIX

Comment [D20]: See that you use the same for all the chapters

CHAPTER SIX

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The researcher having experience as a foundation phase educator for thirteen years, and upon consultation with other foundation phase educators, found that children especially in grade one, displayed problems with not listening. Since listening is the first outcome of the National Curriculum Standard (NCS), the educator was interested to know how educators were teaching listening. Grade one is the first point of formal entry into the foundation phase, and therefore the foundation should be firmly laid for the teaching of listening during this year. Thus, the researcher wanted to investigate how educators were experiencing and teaching listening in grade one.

The investigation of the semi-structured interviews highlighted some interesting results. Upon investigating the teaching of listening, it was found that educators in grade one were not actually planning for the teaching of listening as such, as some of them felt that listening occurred incidentally.

6.2 THE PROGRAMME OF INVESTIGATION

In the first chapter an introductory orientation relating to the problem of listening was highlighted. The focus was steered at the importance of listening for the grade one child. The researcher placed the initial study under the physical, social, environmental and cognitive factors relating to the child, that affected listening.(par.1.2.2 –1.5.2). The role of the educator was also investigated with regards to the teaching of listening. The learning outcome of the National curriculum statement was also looked at together with the assessment standards that are attached to it. (par.1.9)

The second chapter focused on the different processes of listening. The emphasis was to break down listening as physiological, psychological and a social process. Special reference was made to listening as a receptive skill and speaking as an expressive skill. Listening is seen as a receptive skill which focuses on children listening and understanding while speaking is seen

as an expressive skill which focuses on learners being able to use words to convey what they mean. (par. 2.5). The researcher identifies three stages of listening which are response to stimuli, organizing of stimuli and understanding of meaning. Since hearing and listening are sometimes confused, the researcher then proceeds to offer a distinction between hearing and listening. This chapter comes to a close with an explanation of the different types of listening and how they are linked to learning in the grade one classroom.

Chapter three focuses on the teaching of listening within the grade one classroom. The researcher begins by looking at the level of development that grade one children are at. (par. 3.2). An explanation is made of the concrete operational level that grade one children are at. It is at this level that children are able to manipulate information mentally and they do not have to rely only on visual representations. The researcher looks at why listening should be taught in the grade one classroom. It was found during the study that listening is the first language arts skill that appears in the young child. Yet listening is the most neglected skill that is taught.

The researcher then investigates the current educational system which our country is framed by, which is Outcomes based education. Upon researching that the outcomes based education is based on the learning theory by Lev Vygotsky, which is the Socio-constructivist theory, the researcher provides information on this theory.(par 3.5). This theory emphasized the role adults play in the interaction and development of the child. Vygotsky believed that children's learning is very much influenced by adults and what their social world values. An in depth explanation is provided on the learning outcome of listening and the assessment standards attached to it. The researcher then focuses on the methodology (par.3.9) for teaching listening in the grade one classroom. The researcher looks at the importance of using strategies, teaching responsively, and including stimulating tasks during the teaching of listening. The researcher also includes the importance of using read alouds, creating a purpose for listening, setting the stage for listening and modeling as a strategy to teach listening. The researcher then focuses on a diagnostic approach to teach listening, using visuals to support listening and providing many different opportunities to teach listening. Some of the many different opportunities that could be used to teach listening are authors chair, reading aloud to the class, writer's workshop, co-operative groups, readers theatre and retelling.

Chapter four places this study under empirical investigation by way of a qualitative study. The researcher uses semi structured interviews to investigate the teaching of listening.

Chapter five presents the analysis and results of the study.

6.3 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher is able to draw conclusions and make recommendations after an in depth literature review and qualitative research analysis was undertaken.

6.3.1 PROBLEMS THAT GRADE ONE EDUCATORS EXPERIENCE WITH CHILDREN'S ABILITY TO LISTEN

Conclusions

It was found in the empirical investigation that there were many problems that accounted for why children do not listen. The information that was analysed in the empirical investigation confirmed what was found in the literature review. Some important problems that emerged during the analysis and literature review were the following:-

- ❖ Problems experienced by second language learners
- ❖ Focusing on the teachers voice
- ❖ Listening to instructions
- ❖ Home background
- ❖ Viewing of television, play station and computer games
- ❖ Age maturity
- ❖ Parental interaction
- ❖ Reading of stories

Recommendations

- ❖ **Second language learners**

Many classrooms in the South African context have learners, to whom English is a second language thus listening to the educator makes it extremely difficult. It is suggested that the Department of Education places the services of a teacher aid who is fluent in the language of the second language learner. The teacher aid will be able to translate the information clearly. It is also suggested that teacher courses should be modified whereby one of the official languages are offered. The new teacher should be advised on taking the official language that is most pertinent to his or her province.

❖ **Focusing on the teachers voice and disregarding other stimuli**

Teacher training courses should be modified to include exciting ways for new educators to keep their classrooms aesthetically attractive. During these courses some generic aspects should be included. Educators need to be informed about removing all types of distractions including visual or auditory. In these courses, educators must also use a clear and articulate voice. Educators must be informed on how important voice projection is in order to invite children into the lesson. Lessons must be interesting so that children will be keen to listen.

Comment [D21]: Be more specific. This is too general and vague

❖ **Listening to instructions**

Educators should be taught as to how to guide learners during the listening process. Educators need to teach children as to what to listen for before the actual lesson begins. Educators must stress on this so that learners will have some prior understanding, as to what to listen out for during the listening process. Thus if children are taught adequately, then they will know how to listen for the main heading or topic. They will know that there is a reason for their listening, and they must be taught how to interpret the meaning in order to make sense of their listening and learning

Comment [D22]: How and what?

❖ **Home background and parental interaction**

The researcher chose to discuss both these issues relating to the problem of children's listening, as she felt that they were very much interlinked. Considering that some children come from various backgrounds where parental and child interaction is not very evident, it is important that schools plan for organized parent child development workshops. These

workshops should be designed around the needs that are prevalent to the schools community. These workshops should be based on improving listening with special emphasis on the importance of parental interactions. It should not just be a once off thing but it should be a course that parents follow and improvements must be noted through feedback from the parents. During these workshops educational psychologists and educators can plan extensively as to which aspects should be covered.

❖ **Viewing of television, play station and computer games**

In the study it was revealed that some children spend many hours viewing television and playing games on the play station and computer. It is recommended that schools offer parental workshops to highlight to parents the effects of television has on children's listening.

❖ **Age maturity**

Many children enter school when they are emotionally and intellectually not ready. This has an effect on their ability to listen. It is recommended that the Department of Education sticks to a standard formal age entry for grade one. In the past there were some changes each year, with regards to school age entry. As such there was not a fixed school age entry.

Comment [D23]: Be more specific – just to general

❖ **Reading of stories**

The importance of reading stories to children has been well established in this study. Reading stories to children and encouraging children to read serves positively towards improving listening. However, there are many schools in South Africa that are under resourced to stock a wide range of story books for young children. It is recommended that the Department of Education fund these schools, as a project to help them build up a collection of books as part of their media center. Those schools that are under resourced can attach themselves to a sister school in South Africa or abroad. The sister school can help to build the media center of the under resourced school. It is also recommended that parents should also be given workshops on the importance of reading to their children.

6.3.2 THE ROLE OF PARENTS

Conclusions

In the study it was found that some parents are too busy with their own lives and as a result do not have time to interact with their children. (par. 1.4.1). This impacts negatively on some children's ability to listen. This is also the case with children who come from single parent homes.

Recommendations

Parents play a vital role in developing their children's ability to listen. Some parents are unaware about how to improve their children' listening skills. Parents need to be involved in a parent development workshop, where strategies are taught for them to use, in order to hone their children's listening skills. If parents and educators can work together, there will be an improvement in children's listening. As was mentioned above, many occasions call for parents to help their children to improve their listening. The most appropriate way to do this is through a parent development workshop, where all factors responsible for poor listening are addressed and possible solutions can be offered. The workshop should be interactive where, parents can ask questions. There should be pertinent information in the form of booklets, which can provide parents with useful information, regarding listening.

6.3.3 THE ROLE OF THE EDUCATOR

Conclusions

It was found in the literature review that some educators were not quite sure, as to how to teach listening (par.1.7.1). Similar results were confirmed in the empirical investigation. They stated that if only they had some informed strategies or guidelines to assist them with how to teach listening, their lives would be much easier.

Recommendations

The Department of Education must consider offering specialized workshops that specifically focus on the teaching of listening. This must be made compulsory for all grade one educators. In these courses, educators must be given in depth material about the *what, why and how* of listening. Educators should also be given information on the various types of listening and when these types of listening are used. Educators should also be introduced to the various methodologies of teaching listening.

6.3.4 THE ASSESSMENT STANDARDS RELATED TO THE OUTCOME OF LISTENING

Conclusions

It was found that the assessment standards for the outcome of listening was not very clear. Some educators were not using the assessment standards effectively as part of the assessment process of listening (par.5.5).

Recommendations

The Department should provide workshops to educators on how to use the assessment standards when assessing listening. These workshops should not be a once off program but they should be a consistent type of workshop, where there is a follow up. At these workshops educators will have an opportunity to address any problems that they are experiencing with regard to their assessing listening.

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6.3.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- Since receptive language (listening), is the first language skill to appear in the young child and thereafter expressive language (speaking) follows, the researcher in this study, found that more research needs to be completed in expressive and receptive language skills in the foundation phase.

- The National Curriculum statement needs to be re looked at and adjustments should be made in order to make it more user friendly. (This is a different recommendation therefore I have placed it next to another point)

Comment [D25]: How does this relates to the previous paragraph

6.3.6 SHORTCOMINGS OF THIS RESEARCH

During this research, the researcher found that it was a tedious task on obtaining literature on the teaching of listening, specifically for the grade one child. The researcher found that literature was available on listening in general. However, the researcher found that there was very limited recent literature available on the teaching of listening in grade one. There is a limited number of recent literature available on the teaching of listening, in grade one.

Comment [D26]: Statement – verify it

6.3.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study focused on the teaching of listening. An intensive literature study looked at the factors contributing to the reasons that children do not listen. The aim was specifically placed on how do educators teach listening in the grade one class. methods Thus, the researcher identified various methods by which listening could be implemented in grade one.

The problem of children not listening effectively has been an ongoing problem that has dated back many years. The teaching of listening has not earnehe attention of interested stakeholders and policy makers of education in South Africa. The teaching of listening should be given the status it deserves and it should not go by unnoticed.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTORY ORIENTATION

- 1.1. INTRODUCTION
- 1.2 AIM OF THE RESEARCH
- 1.3 ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM
 - 1.3.1 FACTORS LEADING TO THE LACK OF LISTENING
 - 1.3.2. INTRODUCTION
 - 1.3.3 PHYSICAL FACTORS LEADING TO THE LACK OF LISTENING
 - 1.3.3.1 Hearing loss
 - 1.3.3.2 Ear infections
 - 1.3.3.3 Auditory Processing Disorder
- 1.4 SOCIAL FACTORS LEADING TO THE LACK OF LISTENING
 - 1.4.1. Parent-Child Interaction
 - 1.4.2 Effects of television
- 1.5 ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS LEADING TO THE LACK OF LISTENING
 - 1.5.1 The classroom environment
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- 1.6. COGNITIVE FACTORS LEADING TO THE LACK OF LISTENING
 - 1.6.1. Language development
 - 1.6.2 Listening and second language learners
- 1.7 FACTORS RELATED TO THE EDUCATOR
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- 1.8 THE IMPORTANCE OF EFFECTIVE LISTENING
- 1.9 LISTENING AS THE FIRST LEARNING OUTCOME
 - 1.9.1 THE ASSESMENT STANDARDS OF THE LEARNING OUTCOME OF LISTENING
- 1.10 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY
- 1.11 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM
- 1.12 TERMINOLOGY
 - 1.12.1 Listening
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 - 1.12.4 Literacy Learning Program
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1.15 Bibliography

1.1 INTRODUCTORY ORIENTATION

*“Compared with the ability
to read and write, listening*

is the weakest “- Mrs Greensill, DPHS

*“ Children are not learning
because they do not listen”*- Mrs Africa, Charles Hugo

These voices from two grade one educators in the Central Durban area, in the Kwa Zulu Natal Province of South Africa, express the concern about the lack of listening from learners in their class. These concerns about the lack of listening are common amongst many children. The lack of listening skills creates a level of dysfunction that needs to be addressed by proactive intervention at multiple levels, most notably by educators. Although these comments have been documented from only two grade one educators, according to Mc Devitt (1990:713), research has shown that most children do not listen effectively. The reasons for ineffective listening are multiple but unless the problem of ineffective listening is not addressed, one cannot expect to achieve a positive listening environment.

Listening plays an important role in the life of a child. As Machado (2003:226) indicates that listening is one of the factors that account for successful social interaction, one’s level of functioning and overall success in life. Listening is also seen as the most fundamental skill of a child’s schooling career, Palmer & Bayley (2005:7).

In our education system, the teaching of listening must not be taken lightly by educators. The importance of listening is reflected as being the first learning outcome in the Revised National Curriculum Statement of the Languages Learning area. The reason for this is that listening is the first language arts skill to appear, and listening is acquired before speaking, Machado (2003:226). The skills of speaking, reading and writing are so highly dependent on listening, that if a child does not listen effectively these skills will suffer. The need to listen effectively is not only required for language but listening is also required for overall learning as well. As Mulvany (1998:20), states that without the proper level of listening, learners learning will decrease. It is also through listening that learners acquire the beliefs, norms and knowledge of their society Mc Devitt (1990:713).

Children are engaged in a large part of the school day in listening. As Burrows & Guthrie (2001:17), states learners spend between seventy five to eighty percent of time listening to the educator, to other students or to audio-visual media. A study done by Nichols (1984) cited in Machado 2003:226; found that individuals listen to fifty percent of what they hear and only comprehend twenty five percent of that. Although a considerable amount of time is spent in listening, most learners are still doing it ineffectively.

The reasons for ineffective listening could stem from the child's physical, social, environmental or cognitive backgrounds. The researcher investigates this in (Ch 1, Para 1.2)

It is in grade one, that the foundations for teaching listening should be firmly laid as grade one is the beginning of the formal learning stage and they play an important role in determining school success of a child. As Yeo & Clarke 2006: 55; states that the early primary school years have been hailed as critical for school success. Since the early years are critical for school success, the skill of listening should be taught during this important year of formal schooling. If children are taught listening early in their lives, they will be able to identify the important role that listening plays in their lives and how the use of effective listening benefit them in their schooling career and social life as well. Learners will also be able to build on the knowledge of listening and thus be able to recall the strategies required for listening, in later years, thus practicing effective listening.

1.2 AIM OF RESEARCH

The purpose of this research is to create an awareness of listening, so that educators and grade one learners will feel more equipped in improving the quality of the learners listening. Educators need to realize that listening is not a discrete skill that stands alone, but it is embodied into a family of counterparts and these counterparts are all linked to each other, thus facilitating the successful accomplishment of listening. This will be further investigated in chapter two.

1.3 ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM

1.3.1 FACTORS RELATED TO THE LACK OF LISTENING

1.3.2 INTRODUCTION

Research has identified physical, social, cognitive, and environmental factors that contribute to the lack of effective listening in the young child; Bellis 2002:10; Thompson 2001:263; Burrow & Guthrie 2001:34; Wilson 1996:6 and Palmer & Bayley 2005:7. For the purpose of this study, the focus is limited to the child's physical make up, the child's home environment, the school environment, and the development of language.

1.3.3 PHYSICAL FACTORS RELATED TO THE CHILD

Physical factors such as hearing loss, ear infections and auditory processing deficit or disorder can be important factors that contributes to poor listening, Thompson 2001:263; Bellis 2002:102

1.3.3 .1 Hearing Loss

Hearing loss plays an important role in the process of listening and learning. As www.hearttouch.com 2007:3; states that mild hearing loss can interfere with the reception of spoken language and the performance of education. Bellis 2002:30; also states that if a child experiences hearing loss then listening and learning will be affected.

According to www.hearttouch.com 2007:3; there are three types of hearing loss, which are:

- sensorineural hearing loss
- conductive hearing loss
- mixed hearing loss.

Sensorineural hearing loss is caused by damage to the inner ear which results from ageing, pre-natal and birth related problems, viral and bacterial infections, heredity, trauma, exposure to loud noise, fluid back-up or a benign tumor in the inner ear. Most sensorineural hearing loss can be effectively treated with hearing aids. The second type of hearing loss is conductive hearing loss which involves both the outer and middle ear and may result from a blockage or punctured eardrum, birth defects, ear infection or heredity and can be treated medically or surgically. The third type of hearing loss is referred to as mixed hearing loss which is a combination of conductive and sensorineural and means that the problem occurs in both the outer, or middle or the inner ear.

In the young child if hearing loss is detected early and appropriate treatment is administered then the child will experience better speech and comprehension and these children can be mainstreamed into elementary and secondary schools.

1.3.3.4 Ear Infections

Ear infections are very common in children and between seventy five to ninety five percent of children are affected by it before the age of six. A common ear infection in children is otitis media. Otitis media is an infection of the middle ear and is known to be prevalent due to the dysfunction of the Eustachian tube. According to Bellis 2002:91; ear infections occur more frequently in children because of the horizontal position of the Eustachian tube which runs between the middle ear and the back of the throat. Because this tube is narrower in children, it can get easily blocked through inflammation associated with colds, tonsillitis and other respiratory conditions which allows children to become more susceptible to ear infections, (Bellis 2002:91).

Otitis media is more than just a medical problem as it affects hearing, develops faulty listening habits with poor attention, it develops problems with auditory processing, language development and even cognitive effects, (Bester:2007:2). Since otitis media is more than just a medical problem, medical treatment is not sufficient enough for treating otitis media but intervention through a language screening assessment and possibly a language enrichment program should be undertaken (Bester:2007:2).

1.3.3.5 Auditory Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

A common disorder in children known as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder is another important factor that relates to poor listening. Auditory processing refers to what we do with what we hear, Bellis (2002:102). Auditory processing is the ability to give meaning to incoming stimuli from the environment. Many children exhibit signs of auditory deficit and educators might not be aware of the signs of auditory deficit and therefore will not be able to identify it.

Some children hear normally but have difficulty in making sense of what they hear. Thus they find it difficult to interpret, integrate, associate, comprehend and store information, Bellis (2002:26). According to the United States Department of Education 2006:2; and Biederman J 2007:1; an important symptom of children who suffer from attention deficit hyperactivity disorder is that they do not seem to listen or they have difficulty in listening to others without being distracted or interrupting. Bellis 2002:102; also states that auditory deficit problems can be one of the reasons that the child will not be able to listen effectively. For the purpose of this study, it is imperative to focus on the symptom of poor listening in attention deficit hyperactivity disorder as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder is one of the contributing factors that relates to poor listening.

There are three symptoms related to attention deficit hyperactivity disorder which are attentional deficits, impulsivity and hyperactivity. With attentional deficit the child has a short attention span and thus fails to complete tasks, has poor listening and is easily distracted or disorganized.

With impulsivity the child does not think before he acts, does not remain focused on one activity but rapidly moves from one activity to another and has difficulty waiting for a turn in groups or games.

With hyperactivity children are described as always being on the go. They have difficulty sitting still as they fidget, wiggle and move excessively. Children suffering from attention deficit hyperactivity disorder can be helped through educational practices which are associated with academic instruction or they are treated through medical intervention. According to the United States Department of Education Institute for Research Report 2006:3; teachers who successfully educate children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, use a three pronged strategy, which are evaluating the child's needs and strengths, selecting appropriate instructional practices and for children receiving special education services, to integrate appropriate practices.

Medical professionals state that attention deficit hyperactivity disorder can be treated through medical intervention. According to Biederman J 2007:3; the treatment of children or adults suffering from attention deficit hyperactivity disorder is through evaluation, explanation of

the problem to parents and the child and therapeutic intervention. Through evaluation a detailed history of the child's psychological development is obtained and which is followed by detailed information about the child. An individual intelligence test is also carried out in order to determine the academic status of the child.

Biederman 2007:3; states that medication is a focal point of helping the child suffering from attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, since these provide a therapeutic effect. Although medication helps to reduce the symptoms of Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, medication alone does not help to reduce dyslexia, or co-ordination problems.

Children suffering from attention deficit hyperactivity disorder exhibit poor listening as one of the symptoms. If attention deficit hyperactivity disorder is treated appropriately either through appropriate educational practices and or medical intervention then the problem of listening can be addressed.

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1.4 SOCIAL FACTORS

1.4.1 PARENT - CHILD INTERACTION

The home environment plays an important part in the lack of listening in the child, as it is considered to be an important place for working on listening skills; Burrows and Guthrie 2001:34. Individuals who are responsible for working on these listening skills in the home are the parents as they are the most important role players in developing strong listening skills with their children. Usually young children look forward to conversing with their parents about the day's events at school and in return expect their parents to listen and offer valuable responses. When parents encourage this type of interaction, by listening and conversing with their children, asking questions which illicit appropriate answers and showing genuine interest to what their children have to say, children begin to realize that their parents have listened, and thus what they have to say is important. Wilson 1997:6; states that children's listening ability can be improved when parents ask and encourage questions, discuss feelings, share thoughts and give praise.

Burrows and Guthrie 2001:34; refers to a study done by Ward as cited in Palmer, (1997), showed that in the home environment, when the television was switched off and the parents

were involved in meaningful interaction with their children, the listening skills of the children were greatly improved.

-Unfortunately because some children may come from single parent homes, these parents may not have the time to talk to their children, owing to the demands of playing the role of both parents, the listening abilities of these children may suffer. As Wilson 1997:6; states that latch key children and single parent children may not receive enough meaningful experiences to question and discuss experiences.

Some children might have lost both their parents and they are forced to live with grandparents, who are not proficient in English and this could also hinder the lack of listening skills. On the other hand, there might be some children who after having lost both their parents are forced to live in an orphanage home and these children might not have adequate interaction with their caregivers and this could also affect listening. It is equally important for all children irrespective of their family situations to be exposed to meaningful conversation, as this can lead to better listening.

1.4.2 THE EFFECTS OF TELEVISION

-Television is currently playing a prominent role in childrens' lives, as they spend many hours a day watching television. According to thinkquest 2007:1; children spend more hours watching television than doing any other activity and elementary school learners watch television between twenty five hours a week. Although television is of interest to children, it has also robbed children and adults of arousing interest in enquiry, asking questions, and receiving positive feedback. . As Palmer & Bayley 2005:7; and thinkquest 2007:1; contend that family mealtimes which were once considered a daily opportunity for conversational speaking and listening and language skills has now been replaced by television viewing. Burrows & Guthrie 2001:20; and Palmer & Bayley 2005:7; and thinkquest 2007:1 agree that television viewing time was one of the factors related to poor listening habits, as television reduced the amount of time interacting with others.

According to thinkquest 2007:1; television also has negative effects on childrens' learning abilities. Due to fast paced programs and special effects on television, children do not remain focused when they are exposed to slower learning activities such as a complex puzzle.

Television also has negative effects on receptive learning skills such as reading and listening, as children are watching television passively and thus do not comprehend well, (thinkquest 2007:1)

1.5 ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

1.5.1 THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

Since learners spend a great part of their day in the classroom, the classroom environment should be inviting for the child to actively listen and thus learn. Classrooms that are uninviting will fail to meet the listening and learning demands of the child.

The educator should be aware of any auditory and visual distractions that might be present in the class, such as a hanging mobile or the disturbing sound of a fan, which will affect the child's ability to listen. As Thompson 2001:263 states, because young children have limited attention span, all visual and auditory distractions must be eliminated. Although all visual distractions must be removed, the educator must also ensure that the classroom is visually attractive, in order to sustain the child's listening ability. As Thompson 2001:263 states, the educator should promote an adequate physical environment, whereby there is visual and auditory contact with the educator and learner.

According to Crawford A; Saul E.W; Mathews S; and Mackinster J; 2005:7; states that classrooms that invite students to learn actively and think critically have the following features in common. Although Crawford A; Saul E.W; Mathews S; and Mackinster J discuss learning actively and thinking critically, the process of listening is part of learning actively and thinking critically. As was mentioned in (para. 1), listening and learning are directly linked. What follows are the common features that invite students to learn actively and think critically. (Crawford A; Saul E.W; Mathews S and Mackinster 2005:7).

-Teachers and students share responsibility for the classroom climate.

For example students may participate in developing class rules for conduct. Teachers invite students to take initiative. If children do not listen actively, they will not be able to formulate their own rules and they will also be unable to follow the rules of the class.

- Teachers model thinking for students and support students as they share their thinking strategies.

Teachers demonstrate how a person thinks critically, not by propounding ideas as if everything that comes out of their mouths was a certainty but by approaching ideas tentatively, conditionally, and promoting respect for different points of view in their lesson. Students have open discussions with each other, and learn not only each others ideas, but each others ways of thinking. Teachers may question their own, their students, and others' conclusions and knowledge, and encourage students to do likewise. Children can only respect others points of view if they listen closely to that view. Children can have open discussions with other children, if they listen actively and thus will they be able to make appropriate responses.

- There is an important atmosphere of inquiry and openness

The teacher and student use high level questions (That is, not just "What?" "Where?" and "When?"; but "Why?", "What if?" and Why not?") as they analyze problems and make decisions. Students take certain roles in activities as they practice different kinds of thinking: they make predictions, gather information, organize the information, and question conclusions. Teachers show students ways to carry out tasks in the classroom, and they give students more corrective advice than criticism and evaluation. Teachers thus model correct listening behaviour and practice being good listeners themselves, by valuing what children have to say and offering correct advice.

- Students are given support, but just the right amount of it

Teachers pay close attention to what students are learning and how they are thinking, investigating, and communicating as they go about learning. Students are taught to examine their own learning and to improve their own performance. Teachers vary the amount of guidance they give students. And offer them more independence as they show they are ready for it. There is an emotionally secure learning environment in which students feel free to try new tasks, and in which unsuccessful attempts may lead to eventual success.

- The arrangement of the space makes it easy and natural for the students to work together and talk to each other

Traditional classrooms are arranged so they resemble ceremonial places, where the students sit in rows like an audience or a congregation, and the teacher sits in front, often on an elevated plane, like the mayor or the priest. If we want to stress the idea that students are important, that what they have to say is interesting and should be shared, then we should arrange the classroom space to allow for them to talk to each other, and to work together.

Fracarco 2001:3; (as cited in Armstrong 2001:10); further states that in order for students to obtain a higher level of thinking, educators need to emphasize better listening skills.

1.5.2 EFFECTS OF A NOISY CLASSROOM

-Young children can be very easily distracted by noise as they are exposed to a noise filled environment, especially in urban areas. From the researchers experience as a grade one educator, the grade one learners in the researcher's class experienced various distractions created by noise. This school catered for learners from grade R to matric. Therefore the break times of the foundation phase, intermediate phase and the secondary phase differed from that of the Foundation phase resulting in the foundation phase being back in their class after their break and the other phases outside, which ended in a huge amount of noise, which easily distracted the learners in the foundation phase. Also the cheering of a netball match on the field, adjacent to the Foundation phase classes, created a huge distraction, which made it extremely difficult for learners to listen to the educator.

-As Palmer and Bayley 2005:7; states that children's listening is slowly being eroded, as they are part of a noise filled world. In noise filled environments, listening to the teacher makes it difficult, as children have to contend with the noise that filters from outside the classroom and from inside the classroom as well.

-According to Mc Sporrán 1997:14; noise refers to any unwanted sound that is generated outside and inside the classroom, which interferes with listening and reception. In Mc Sporrán 1997:13; research that was conducted by Finitzo-Hieber and Tillman (1978), Crandell (1991), Pekkarinen and Viljanen (1991) found that the effects of noise, distance and reverberation had

a serious impact on children's special recognition abilities and learning behaviours in a typical classroom. Effective listening in classrooms where noise levels are high make it impossible to for learners to listen to the educators, as those noises are even louder than the educators voice, (Mc Sporrán 1997:14). In South Africa the OBE classroom is a noisy one and as a result, Gultig, Hoadley & Jansen 2002:76; state that a South African grade one educator commented that it was difficult to teach in her class, as the outcomes based classroom was very noisy.

1.6 COGNITIVE FACTORS

1.6.1 Language Development

Language forms an important part of the young child's life as it is through language that he learns to express thoughts and convey meaning. (Godwin and Perkins 1998:4) Language comprises of oracy and literacy. According to Godwin and Perkins 1998:4; oracy is used to describe speaking and listening, while literacy is used to describe reading and writing. Oracy plays a significant role in the acquisition of language, as oracy gives access to literacy (Grugeon and Hubbard 2001:V). As described by Grugeon and Hubbard 2001:V; oracy lies at the very heart of literacy. Progression to reading and writing can only be made once listening and speaking have been mastered.

-According to Riley, Burrell and Mc Callum 2004:657; there is a positive correlation between language and the education system. The development of listening is a contributing factor to the development of language, as listening is the first language art to appear in the young child. Riley, Burrell and Mc Callum 2004:657; state that a government document in the United Kingdom states that pupil's use of language is a vital skill which has an influence on their progress in every area of the curriculum.

-According to Wilson 1997:4; there are four modes of language, which are, listening, speaking, reading and writing of which listening forms the first mode. Research shows us that when all four modes of language have been integrated, children are able to meet the demands of our social world (Wilson 1997:4). According to Riley, Burrell and Mc Callum 2004:657;

speaking and listening is a key area of the National Curriculum for English in the British Educational context, however it receives very little attention. In the South African educational context, listening and speaking also forms the first two learning outcomes of the learning area of language. However, just like in the British educational system, the teaching of these important skills are neglected. Wilson 1997:4; also agrees that more time is spent in the classroom on reading and writing thus neglecting the skills of speaking and listening.

-In Wilson 1997:5; a study done by Edleston found that kindergarten children lacked attention, concentration and appropriate responses to discussion questions. Some of these children could not attend to verbal directions and commands as well, which made it necessary for the educator to repeat the same information more than once- (Edleston (1987) sited in Wilson 1997:5). Although this observation was made at kindergarten children, some children in grade one also experience the same problem. According to Burrows and Guthrie 2001:31; by teaching children specific skills such as, appreciating language, to teach children to predict what they might hear, to follow directions, to identify main ideas and supporting details, to draw justifiable inferences, to differentiate fact from fiction and to analyse critically, these specific skills assist learners in becoming better listeners.

1.6.2 LISTENING AND SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS

South African classrooms comprise of cultural and racial diversity. For most of these learners English is a second language. According to Mwamwenda 1995 :169; in South Africa, English becomes the medium of instruction, while the mother tongue is still being retained. Some children begin school without being able to speak English and they may be placed in classrooms where English is the medium of instruction. Stewart, Friedman & Koch 1985:444; refer to this as ‘Total Immersion’ which refers to a child being left to sink and swim.

Considering that English is a second language to some learners listening becomes a prime factor that poses difficulty to them. As Goh & Taib 2006:222; states, that listening becomes difficult for second language learners because they cannot make sense of what is being said, as they are unable to process information quickly enough.

1.7 FACTORS RELATED TO THE EDUCATOR

1.7.1 LACK OF INSTRUCTION

Educators play an important role helping learners to construct knowledge. As such, most educators take the time to actively teach reading and writing but fail to teach learners the skill of speaking and listening. Research shows that with the direct teaching of listening, there can be corresponding improvement with the other related language arts; (Gratz 1973:268).

Educators may not teach listening for a number of reasons. Firstly, most educators assume that the skills of speaking and listening have already been developed, whilst some educators believe that listening is a natural or inborn trait (Gratz 1973:268). Another reason that educators may fail to teach listening, is that they are not quite sure as to how to teach listening. As Grugeon, Hubbard & Smith 1988:8; state that listening activities has a low status in the classroom situation and teachers feel less confident about planning for listening and speaking, than they did for reading and writing.

The educator should provide the tools that are necessary for learners to become effective listeners (Burrows & Guthrie 2001:18). One of the tools for teaching effective listening is to teach children the effective strategies for listening.

Some educators may be unaware of effective strategies for effective listening and will feel less confident to teach listening. As Burrows & Guthrie (2001:17) confirm that educators neglect to teach learners the effective strategies for effective listening. Strategies include making the child aware about the purpose of his listening. The child should understand why he is listening. Is he listening for information, for enjoyment, to follow instructions or is he listening to comfort a friend. Both Thompson (2001:263) and Burrows & Guthrie (2001:31), agree that the purposes for listening must be made clear to the child. When direct attention and practice is given in listening for definite purposes, the child will listen carefully, (Thompson 2001:263). If educators want their children to listen effectively, they need to help their learners to focus their learning. As Burrows & Guthrie 2001:30; suggests that instruction begins by creating activities that directs students to discover the importance of focusing their listening. As learners become aware of the purpose of their listening, additional activities are included to help them refine their listening strategies. In Wilson 1997:5;

Thayer-Bacon (1992), states that educators might not teach listening due to an overcrowded curriculum which comprises of the many demands such as:-

- physical education,
- art,
- music,
- classroom management duties
- transition to lunch and recess,

Because of an overcrowded curriculum and the demands related to the duties of being an educator, educators are left with little or no time to constructively teach listening.

Another tool that is required for effective listening is when the educator models to the children as being a good listener herself. As Renaldi 2002:18; states that the prerequisite of any teaching is based on listening. In most classroom situations, when the educator listens to the child talking about their activities, this actually helps to develop the child's confidence as a speaker. Renaldi 2002:16; refers to the pedagogy of listening, where she emphasizes a democratic culture. A democratic culture refers to expressing ones own ideas and listening to others as well. Renaldi 2002:16; further states that students tend to respond more thoughtfully when their teachers show that they are listening. Students in return formulate their thoughts more carefully once they know that someone is listening to them. If educators want their learners to listen effectively, they have to also listen well themselves. Some educators are unaware of their own listening habits and this needs to be assessed (Machado 2003:229). According to Machado 2003:229; there are two factors which may decrease educator's abilities to listen and model listening behaviour, which are:-

- Educators themselves may have not experienced educators in their own schooling (including college professors) who listened cared and valued child enquiry
- They are busy imparting information that they missed profound questions and comments of young children. Grant & Murray (1999) (sited in Machado 2003:226), observe this as an interactive teaching style which teaches children to sit passively and withdraw.

1.8 THE IMPORTANCE OF EFFECTIVE LISTENING

Listening is an important skill that needs to be developed in the Foundation phase and later built upon in the phases that follow. Listening effectively has many advantages. According to research by Wessels & Van Den Berg 1998:115; Petress 1999:2; and Fracarco 2001:3-4; state that listening has many advantages. For the purpose of this study, it is imperative to outline these importance's of effective listening by the different authors.

Wessels & Van Den Berg 1998:115; states that listening is important for the following reasons:

- If we listen to and understand what other people are saying to us we will probably be able to build good relationships with our fellow human beings.
- Learners who listen and understand in class will manage to learn more easily than the ones whose thoughts have wandered.
- Facilitators need to listen in order to understand the needs of their pupils.
- People at work need to listen to their employers, their colleagues and their customers. Good listening habits may save valuable time and money.
- The listening skill needs to be developed in the additional language too. This must be done not only because the learner must converse, learn and work, using this language as a medium, but also because if learners do not pay attention to the sounds of the additional languages they will not learn to pronounce the words correctly.

According to Fracarco 2001:3-4; the importance of effective listening is as follows:-

- Effective listening increases knowledge. Individuals listen in order to learn and retain information.
- Effective listening broadens understanding. When one listens carefully to the words of another person, then the person can realize what the other persons intention is and what it may be in the future.

- Effective listening develops insight. Insight is a clear understanding of the nature of someone or something. Insight is an important tool to have available so that the individual knows what the other person is thinking and will thus have a powerful clue as to that person's future thoughts and actions.
- Effective listening reduces friction. The reasons for friction between people are usually unknown. Listen and acquire much information from people in order to analyse a problem to determine the underlying cause of a conflict.
- Effective listening resolves problems. Problems can arise between employee-employee, employee-manager or manager-manager during the communication process. Listening effectively can help resolve problems.
- Listening effectively helps to win peoples trust. Interest shown by the listener earns the confidence of the speaker to open up and relate to what is on his or her mind.
- Listen effectively creates an audience. Listen to others and they will listen to you. Everyone wants to feel important and to have to be shown faith in his or her ideas and thoughts. If a speaker perceives someone to be smart enough to listen to them, they will in turn want to feel just as smart and will listen to the other person.

Unfortunately many individuals are unaware of the importance of effective listening. The importance of effective listening benefits the individual in many different contexts, including the workplace and in the educational context as well.

1.9 LISTENING AS THE FIRST LEARNING OUTCOME

Since this study investigates listening, and the first learning outcome of the languages learning area in the Revised National Curriculum Statement is listening, the researcher finds it imperative to highlight the first learning outcome and the assessment standards that are linked to it. The reason for highlighting the learning outcome of listening and its assessment standards, is to provide an indication of what the contents of the first learning outcome and

assessment standard of listening are. Further in the study, in chapter three the researcher will investigate the teaching of the assessment standards, which will be revolved around a theoretical framework of the different listening types.

“Learning Outcome: 1 Listening

The learner will be able to listen for information
And enjoyment, and respond critically in a wide
Range of situations”. (Revised National Curriculum
Statement:2002:24)

1.9.1 THE ASSESSMENT STANDARDS OF THE LEARNING OUTCOME OF LISTENING

The Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9 (2002:24), states that the following assessment standards for the learning outcome of listening, are appropriate for grade one

“We know this when the learner:

- Listens attentively to instructions and announcements. And responds appropriately
- Demonstrates appropriate listening behaviour
Listening without interrupting, showing respect for the speaker, taking turns to speak, and asking questions for clarification.
- Listens with enjoyment to short stories, rhymes, poems and songs from a
Variety of cultures, and shows understanding.

- Listens for the main idea and important details in the story
- Acts out parts of the story, song or rhyme

1.10 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

The interest of this research pertaining to the lack of listening and possible didactical interventions stems from the researchers experience as an early childhood educator, for the past thirteen years. This experience ranged from teaching children from reception year to grade three. This interest also stems from concerns of other educators, who the researcher has had informal discussions with about the lack of listening and what possible solutions to the problem can be implemented. The researcher felt that it was crucial to base this study specifically on the grade one child, since grade one is the point of entry into the formal learning structures.. It is during this stage that the foundation should be laid to strengthen the skill of listening in order for the child to master learning and overall success.

1.11 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The current Revised National Curriculum Statement outlines the learning outcome of listening and it also outlines the assessment standards related to the outcome of listening. However these assessment standards are not clear enough as to how the educator will use these assessment standards in order to reach the outcome of listening. The Revised National Curriculum Statement clearly indicates that there are no prescribed methods for reaching the assessment standards, however, the researcher feels that it is imperative that the learning outcome of listening and the assessment standards related to it should be more informative. There are no guidelines for the educator to follow in order to teach listening.

As such:-

- there is limited information available for the educator to follow as to how to teach listening
- educators are unaware that listening can be taught just the way reading and writing can be taught
- knowledge has to be provided on the different listening types and how these listening types tie in with the assessment standards

It is clear that the Revised National Curriculum Statement should place more awareness on the learning outcome of listening and the assessment standards should be more specific. The assessment standards for the outcome of listening should fit into the particular listening type that it belongs to.

1.12 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology that will be undertaken for this study will be of a qualitative study. According to Mc Millan and Schumacher 2001:15; qualitative data is a presentation and narration of words. The data that will be collected through semi structured interviews. A detailed description of the research methodology will be included in chapter four.

1.13 TERMINOLGY

The definition of terminology will be highlighted in this study to provide clarity on each aspect specifically, and to avoid any form of ambiguity. The intention to provide definitions is to prevent any misunderstandings of various meanings and terms.

1.13.1 LISTENING

According to Clark (2005:491), listening is an active process of communication which involves hearing, interpreting and constructing meaning.

According to Feeney, Christensen and Moravcik (2006:264), listening means being able to pay attention to the message while another person is communicating.

According to Thompson (2001:261), listening directs some attention to the meaning of sound and where that sound is coming from. People listen closely so that they will be able to understand.

Egan (1991:89), in Lam (2000:267), states that the goal of listening is to understand.

Listening is just not hearing. Robbins (1996:388), in Lam (2000:268), states that hearing and listening are not the same things. Hearing is just picking up sound vibrations while listening requires one to pay attention, interpret and to remember certain stimuli.

According to Petress (1999:1), listening is an awareness of attending to the organization and operationalization of the data entering our nervous system via our hearing mechanism.

According to the Oxford Learners Dictionary, (1998:687), to listen is to make an effort to hear.

According to Mc Sporrán (1997:15), listening is a necessary interactive process that enables the brain to make meaning from the sounds that are heard.

Sampson and Allen (1995:78), state that listening is many things and not just one thing. Listening is a transactive process that involves many processes such as receiving, focusing, discriminating, assigning meaning, monitoring, remembering and responding to auditory messages.

Roach and Wyatt (1988:3), claim that listening is mainly a process of discriminating and identifying which sounds are meaningful and important to us and those which are not.

Hennings (1992), in Wilson (1997:8), states that listening is just not hearing, as listening is the active construction of verbal and non-verbal signals which the speaker sends.

Lundsteen (1971), states that listening is the process by which spoken language is converted to meaning in the mind.

Listening is a conscious effort Sampson and Allen(1995:78)

Listening requires attention Thompson (2001:261)

Listening is discriminating and identifying meaningful and important sounds Sampson and Allen (1995:78)

Listening is assigning meaning and it requires interpretation Robbins (1996:385)

Listening is remembering certain stimuli Robbins (1996:385) and Sampson and Allen (1995:78)

The end result of listening is understanding, Egan (1999) in Thompson (2001).

Most of the above definitions of listening stem from a cognitive viewpoint. For the purpose of this study, it can be deduced that listening is not just a passive skill, but it is an active skill that requires concerted effort. Listening is not a physiological activity like hearing, where the body is in control of hearing. Hearing does play a major part in listening, because without the faculty of hearing, one will not be able to listen. However, hearing and listening are not the same things. With listening, one has to consciously prepare for the process of listening. When one listens, he is not just hearing, but he is firstly receiving, interpreting, analysing, and processing and then finally giving meaning to what he has listened to, thus being able to respond.

1.13.2. LEARNING OUTCOME

According to Jacobs, Gawe & Vakalisa 2002:29; the word outcome has two meanings. The first meaning relates to the accomplishment of a desired task, skill or set of behaviours, which a learner demonstrates at the end of a learning experience. The second meaning relates to the ability to determine at the end of a learning experience, a pre-determined task, skill or set of behaviours in a way that involves understanding and truthfulness. According to the Revised National Curriculum Statement Policy Grades R-9 2002; a learning outcome is derived from the critical outcome and developmental outcomes. It is a description of what knowledge, skills and values learners should know, demonstrate and be able to do at the end of the learning process.

1.13.3. ASSESSMENT STANDARDS

According to the Revised National Curriculum Statement Policy (Grades R-9), (2002:14) the assessment standards convey what the learner should be doing in terms of the achievement of the learning and the ways of demonstrating the depth and breadth of demonstrating their achievement. The Revised National Curriculum Statement indicates clearly in the policy document that it does not prescribe any method for implementing these assessment standards, Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9 (schools) Policy, (2002:14).

1.13.4. LITERACY LEARNING PROGRAM

The literacy learning program in our current education system moves away from the traditional focus of reading, writing and maths. 'Literacy' is not only referred to language alone, but encompasses cultural, critical, visual media, numerical, computer literacy as well. The literacy learning program includes eight learning areas which are mathematics, natural sciences, social sciences, arts and culture, life orientation, economic and management sciences and technology Dept of Education 1997 (c): LLC5.

1.13.5. FOUNDATION PHASE

The foundation phase which is part of ECD, includes children who are in grade R (reception year) to grade three of formal schooling. The White Paper on Education and training (1995:33), defines ECD as "an umbrella term which encompasses the process by which children from birth to nine years develop physically, mentally, emotionally, morally and socially".

1.13.6 GRADE ONE LEARNER

These are learners who are in their first year of formal schooling. They are generally between the ages of six and seven, Sharma (1995:51-52)

1.14 PROGRAM OF RESEARCH

The study will be undertaken with grade one educators in the foundation phase. The program of research will be as follows:-

Chapter one

Introductory orientation. Chapter one highlights the importance of listening and the factors related to the lack of listening are also investigated. These factors are investigated from a physical, sociological and educational perspective.

Chapter two

The process of listening is investigated from a physical and psychological perspective. The various types of listening are also studied and their relevance to the learning of the grade one learner is also investigated.

Chapter three

The teaching of listening will be examined. Close examination is taken with exploration of the various methods that are suited to the teaching of listening.

Chapter Four

A design and description of the qualitative study will be undertaken through semi-structured interviews to examine the teaching of listening as the first learning outcome of the Revised National Curriculum Statement.

Chapter Five

An analysis and results of the semi-structured interviews will be recorded in order to determine the results of the teaching of listening in grade one.

Chapter six

Conclusions and recommendations.

1.15. SUMMARY

Listening being the first learning outcome of the Revised National curriculum statement, is also the first language art to appear in the development of language. Listening is not seen as a discrete skill. Listening is strongly associated with its counterpart which is speaking. Both listening and speaking are seen as receptive skills, while reading and writing are seen as expressive skills. Listening is made up of many different types and processes and chapter two clarifies this.

Most educators are unsure as to how to teach listening, as listening is an unobservable skill. Unlike reading and writing which is planned for, there is little or no planning for the teaching of listening. The researcher investigates ways in which educators plan for and teach listening.